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The passing of the mythicized frontier father figure and its effect
on the son in Larry McMurtry's *Horseman, Pass By*

by

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INTRODUCTION

For this thesis the term "frontier" means more than the definition of having no more than two non-Indian settlers per square mile (Turner 3). The values and attitudes accompanying the physical frontier are more pertinent to this study of Larry McMurry's *Horseman, Pass By*. However, to recognize McMurry's use of conventional perceptions of the frontier's influence in this novel, we must first trace the development of these associations.

The first Euro-American settlers brought conflicting views about the wilderness they set out to inhabit. Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1967) takes a detailed look at the early perceptions of the American wilderness. He states that the first white settlers saw the wilderness as an understandable threat to their lives and their existence as civilized people (24). More idealistic notions of the American frontier grew with eighteenth-century Romanticism, when the wilderness of the frontier was assumed to provide certain desirable qualities in individuals and a unique national identity (47, 69). What was once perceived as a never-ending expanse of "cursed and chaotic wasteland" (24) became a means to improve one's self and one's nation as Americans successfully moved westward.

The white settlers pushed beyond the Appalachian Mountain Range by the 1700s, and into the generally wooded Ohio Valley. By the early 1800s they settled in the Mississippi Valley and continued up the Missouri River. They entered Spanish Texas and began to rush through

the Great Plains region toward the west coast by the 1830s. The major part of the Great Plains was opened to settlement after the 1870s, and was first utilized for raising cattle before being cultivated as farmland (Athearn 251). By 1890 the frontier was assumed to be "closed" (Turner 1).

Although the lives of the frontiersmen varied with their locales, times, and occupations, the white settlers' frontier experience was commonly seen as providing some universal benefits to the participants (Smith 3). Frederick Jackson Turner, in his 1893 thesis "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and later essays, drew attention to assumptions that the frontier brought out such virtues as energy, individualism, inventiveness, and strength in Americans (37). The basic assumption he makes is that the "perennial rebirth" offered by the frontier, "this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society furnish the forces dominating American character" (2-3).

Since Turner's hypothesis there have been many different interpretations of the frontier's influence. Historians Walter Prescott Webb and Ray Allen Billington largely work in the Turnerian tradition in that they also examine the values associated with the frontier. Henry Nash Smith's 1950 *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* is indebted to Turner, but Smith examines in depth the creation and progression of the frontier mythos and how myth and reality fed on each other (102), focusing much of his attention on the frontier's

assumed influence on individualism. More recently, with revisionist historians like Patricia Limerick and Robert V. Hine, the frontier has been examined from the perspective of how people affected the frontier more than how it affected them. Limerick explores the religious, social, and economic motives of the settlers, arguing that they came to change the frontier, rather than hoping to be changed by it. She argues that they frequently felt "victimized" rather than enriched by the land (42). Revisionist historians also emphasize the ethnic and racial groups formerly overlooked by more traditionalist historians, as well as the negative aspects of frontier life. This can be seen in Hine's discussion on the cowboy's involvement in a "brutal" frontier lifestyle, as well as his inclusion of statistics on non-white cowboys (132). Revisionist historians are interested in separating the "mythic" West from the "real" West (Nichols 2).

Literary expressions of the frontier have also varied over the years. Henry Nash Smith and James K. Folsom are two of the better literary critics who trace the creation and development of the early frontier characters of dime novels and pulp Westerns. Both give much attention to James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and his character Natty Bumppo. For Cooper, the frontier experience fostered "natural" nobility and a sensitivity for the land. For decades Western literary heroes imitated Cooper's frontier character with only minor alterations, even to the popular Westerns of today. Owen Wister's 1902 *The Virginian* helped to legitimize Western literature (Sonnichsen 7), although it still presented a highly romantic view of frontier life.

Wister presents a frontier hero who successfully incorporates the benefits of his frontier experience with civilizations (Bold 42). Wister portrays individualism, self-reliance, and a close association with the land as frontier values which could be successfully incorporated into civilized society rather than being in opposition to encroaching society.

Favorable portrayals of the frontier West began to change in the 1950s and 60s. While television helped to bring new life to the frontier mythos, there was also a trend toward showing frontier heroes more realistically, and not always in the best light (Sonnichsen 117). This altered view of the frontier began the anti-western tradition, which showed that the frontier did not necessarily bring out the best in people. Doubts about the West's supposed beneficial influence caused more cynical portrayals to join the more romantic depictions. Frontiersmen were frequently shown to be brutal and irresponsible (Hine 282), if not completely repulsive. Gerald W. Haslam's introduction to "Rediscovering the West" in *A Literary History of the American West* summarizes the development of this trend, discussing the emergence of more regional Western novels in the process.

William T. Pilkington explores the Southwestern region specifically in his "Introduction" for *A Literary History of the American West*. For him, the Southwest is unique as a region because of its social conflicts and compromises (497). Pilkington notes that the cattle industry and the cowboy have long been the distinguishing elements in Southwestern literature, but that movement of society from a rural to urban setting has become the contemporary focus (511).

The southwestern frontier, argues Pilkington, is unique in that it exposed the white frontiersmen to Hispanic, Indian and Black cultures. His article, however, mentions little more than this ethnic contact as characteristic of Southwestern literature.

In his book *Talking with Texas Writers: Twelve Interviews* (1980) Patrick Bennet focuses on Texas writers, claiming that "'Southwestern' has nothing to do with [defining them]" (6). His narrowing of his selection to any writer who has lived in Texas at some time (6) is not entirely helpful, but reflects the wide definition most critics use to distinguish Texas literature from Southwestern literature.

Larry McMurtry considers himself to be a regionalist writer (*In a Narrow Grave* xviii) and frequently discusses Texas literature in his essays. He, too, is very general in his criteria for defining Texas literature, saying that a work need only be "set here [in Texas], centered here, and, for the most part, written here" (*ING* 31). He does note that most Texas writers still use the "emotions, images [and] symbols" of the country used by earlier Texas writers, and that they are "symbolic frontiersmen" by trying to retain a "sense of daring and independence" (*ING* 137).

Larry McMurtry acknowledges the strides made by revisionist historians to present more realistic and representative interpretations of the West, but is not impressed by their attempts to "de-mythicize" the frontier experience ("How" 35). For McMurtry, the "real" West is the "West of the imagination" ("How" 36), which gives the mythic and

romantic associations of the frontier credence even today. It is this West that McMurtry shows passing in *Horseman, Pass By*.

McMurtry's frontier is late nineteenth-century Texas: the "Cowboy's Golden Age" (ING 24). With this frontier he associates many of the same values Turner enumerates and which many Western writers have developed over time. He specifically names the values of "asceticism, . . . pride, stoicism, directness, restlessness, and independence" (ING 26) as qualities brought out in the frontier figure of the cowboy. McMurtry also frequently refers to the frontier as masculine (ING 44) and points out the difficulty raised by the role to which women are relegated by the frontier mythos (ING 149).

McMurtry creates father figures who transmit the values and qualities of the frontier. By focusing on the relationships between the father figures and the "son" in *Horseman, Pass By*, this thesis will show the underlying difficulties faced because of the passing of the physical, and lingering of the mythic, frontier. By studying this novel one can find where McMurtry is working from and better understand the conflicts between the past and present McMurtry portrays in other works.

CHAPTER ONE

Larry McMurtry is frequently hailed as one of the finest contemporary writers in America. His novels have been rated highly overall, although critics generally prefer his earlier works. Jane Nelson is just one critic who believes McMurtry's work "falls off" after his first three novels, a belief Charles D. Peavy supports by stating that the later novels are overly sociologic and analytical (107). McMurtry's first three novels, *Horseman, Pass By* (1961), *Leaving Cheyenne* (1963), and *The Last Picture Show* (1966), capture a majority of critics' attention and are frequently referred to as McMurtry's "rural trilogy."

Although critics have singled out such themes as initiation into adulthood in McMurtry's novels, they have almost universally focused on McMurtry's portrayal of the modern Southwest in transition from a rural to urban society, especially when discussing his first three novels. Raymond Neinstein, who examines McMurtry's first five novels in *The Ghost Country* (1976), was one of the first to credit McMurtry with "finding a new fictional form through which the 'new-regional' problem can be re-enacted" (iii). This emphasis on McMurtry's regional themes is supported by several others, most notably Charles D. Peavy, author of the Twayne Series volume *Larry McMurtry* (1977), who labels McMurtry as "pre-eminently a regional novelist, the finest Texas has produced" (118). McMurtry's early novels capture the difficulties faced in Texas as one way of life is replaced with another through the use

offather figures who transmit many of the qualities associated with the frontier society to the younger male generation, who need not be their biological sons.

Critics of McMurtry's works frequently examine the theme of the transition from rural to urban society. Andrew Macdonald discusses this transition in his 1978 article "The Passing Frontier in McMurtry's *Hud/Horseman, Pass By* [sic]," as does Gina McDonald in "Values in Transition in *The Last Picture Show* [sic], or How to Make a Citybilly." These two articles are representative of the main school of McMurtry criticism, which focuses on the passing of the frontier and frontier society. This is especially true when critics discuss *Horseman, Pass By*.

Generally described as a novel dealing with a young man's initiation into adulthood, *Horseman, Pass By* focuses on the passing of the frontier society in Texas. Critics tend to emphasize the conflict between Homer Bannon, the aged rancher, and his stepson Hud, the wild, more urbanized, twentieth-century cowboy. Charles Peavy is one of the first critics to focus on the Homer/Hud conflict (300), and even Larry McMurtry finds the movie version of the novel to be stronger because of its more obvious emphasis on Hud (*In a Narrow Grave* 17). However, like critic Kerry Aheam, I find Homer's grandson Lonnie to be worth studying in detail, especially in his relationships with the three father figures.

While Homer Bannon is Lonnie's biological grandfather, it is his role as transmitter of frontier values which contributes to the tension

in the novel. As a frontier father figure, Homer presents Lonnie with a long-accepted ideal to follow. At the same time, Lonnie's stepuncle, Hud, and ranch hand, Jesse Logan, are also father figures, offering alternatives to the nineteenth-century lifestyle Homer represents. It is the three men's roles as transmitters of values to Lonnie which make them father figures, not their biologic relationships or fatherly behavior.

Horseman, Pass By is set in Texas in 1954. Lonnie Bannon, whose parents are dead, lives with his grandfather, step-grandmother, and step-uncle on their ranch. Also living on the ranch are a hired hand named Jesse Logan, and Halmea, the black, attractive housekeeper. Lonnie is portrayed as being in the middle of adolescent feelings of loneliness, restlessness, and sexual longings. He admires his grandfather Homer and his lifestyle, lusts after Halmea, and longs to strike up a friendship with Jesse. Lonnie never really goes beyond just observing Hud.

Early in the novel Homer's cattle contract hoof and mouth disease and must be killed to prevent the disease from spreading. This situation openly sets Hud and Homer against each other, with Hud threatening to take over the ranch.

After the cattle are killed, Homer quickly disintegrates into senility while Hud successfully seems to have made some deal to take over the ranch. He rapes Halmea, which causes her to quit and eventually leave town.

Lonnie witnesses all of these happenings and feels caught up in a situation too large for him. He tries to use Jesse as a stabilizer, but Jesse only becomes more depressed and withdrawn as the novel progresses, leaving right before Lonnie's most trying experience.

The climax occurs on a dark road on the ranch where Lonnie and Hud find Homer lying in a ditch after presumably falling off the porch and breaking his hip. While Lonnie tries to wave down help, Hud shoots Homer, although it is uncertain if he does so out of pity and mercy, or for darker motives. Homer's death hits Lonnie hard, and at the end of the novel Lonnie is shown hitchhiking away from the ranch with no clear, long-range destination in mind.

The standard approach critics take when discussing this novel is to see Homer and Hud as opposing archetypes, with Homer representing idealized nineteenth-century values, and Hud the twentieth-century ones. Raymond Neinstein sees Homer as representing "the mythic 'Homeric' world," and as a man whose life is "tied closely to the land and whose values derive from that bond, from the land's rhythms and cycles" (2). The connection with the land and frontier is emphasized by many critics, including Andrew Macdonald, Christopher Baker, and Charles Peavy. Andrew Macdonald writes of the frontier in general terms as "days [that] are past" (6), but Baker is more specific in his use of the frontier, focusing on "the loss of certain frontier attitudes" (44). Charles Peavy ties Homer Bannon directly to the frontier, saying "he represents a class of men who have virtually vanished with the frontier they helped to conquer," and "epitomizes all the rugged virtues of

pioneer life" (28). Hud, conversely, is seen in one of two ways: completely opposite of Homer, or more as a "warped" Homer.

Those who analyze Hud as the "evil stepson" do so to heighten the conflict between the two men. Where Homer is seen as the epitome of virtue, Hud is seen as "egotistical, ruthless, and totally unscrupulous in his pursuit of pleasure, be it sex, liquor, or money" (Peavy 28). Mark Busby notes Hud's "raw amorality" (535), which Kerry Aheam echoes, seeing Hud's actions as "villany" (284).

Larry McMurtry is one of those who sees Hud in a somewhat more sympathetic light, going so far as to see a relationship between Hud and legendary Charles Goodnight (*ING* 19). What has made Hud different from the traditional Western hero for McMurtry is that "he is one of the many people whose capacities no longer fit their situations" (*ING* 27). Andrew Macdonald is one critic who also reads Hud in this way, seeing him as "another failure adjusting to new circumstances . . . [having] capitulated to the twentieth century" (6).

In this thesis I will examine Homer and Hud's conflicting lifestyles by how they affect Lonnie. I am focusing on Lonnie because, much as society according to McMurtry, he is faced with having to choose between the two life-styles. McMurtry is interested in tracing the growing urbanization of Texas and the passing of the frontier life. He shows the increasing difficulties faced as the distance between the idealized image of the nineteenth century and the reality of the twentieth widens. Lonnie is McMurtry's first character to be faced with a choice between trying to live up to the mythicized past or trying

to adapt to an uncertain, less glorified present. Neither Homer nor Hud's ways are presented as best for Lonnie's future, as shown by Lonnie's inability to choose between the two.

Critics tend to spend so much time discussing Homer and Hud that little mention is made of Jesse Logan. Perhaps the best handling comes in Andrew Macdonald's brief mention of Jesse's failure to act as a role model for Lonnie, having himself "failed at rodeoing, the attempt to combine cowboy life with big city excitement and twentieth century travel, and [having] accepted his sad fate as a migrant cowboy" (6). I will look at Jesse more closely, using him to support my belief that Lonnie would have failed if he had tried to live his grandfather's life simply to avoid Hud's all-too-obviously unacceptable life. There is no easy solution for Lonnie, or for McMurtry's Texans in general.

In claiming that Lonnie is adversely affected by having no other alternatives besides Homer and Hud for role models, I also want to bring up other issues closely tied to the conflict of the two lifestyles they represent. One issue is that of the land. Homer has been shaped by his closeness to the land, whereas Hud has not had a connection with the land fostered by a frontier life. Homer's way of life is doomed because of the increasing urbanization of society, while Hud's lack of regard for the land and the values attributed to it makes his way of life threatened as well. Lonnie becomes aware of his dilemma in being trapped by his appreciation of the frontier values associated with land, and modern society's values.

A second issue is that of women. Jane Nelson points out that "Lonnie witnesses the ugly consequences of the cowboy's creed" (63) with respect to women. Although McMurtry's later novels, especially *Lonesome Dove* (1985), address the changing role of women more thoroughly, this novel sets the stage with Halmea. Most critics remark on Lonnie's sexual awareness of Halmea, or on her role as a mother figure, but few address her as a symbol of one change modern society experiences in McMurtry's fiction. Lonnie's conflicting feelings for Halmea put him directly between Homer's code and Hud's code (or lack of code) concerning women.

Lonnie is a key character in that he shows how living in the past or completely rejecting the past are not suitable options for him or modern Texans. *Horseman, Pass By* is more than a novel comparing two ways of life through archetypal figures, but is a novel which shows the difficulties faced when there is no viable compromise between the two. One main problem McMurtry presents is that of having only two extremes to choose from. The underlying desire is for a successful incorporation, which I will emphasize by looking at Lonnie's voiced frustrations and wishes.

This novel is also not attempting to supply an answer to the question of how to make a successful transition from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. McMurtry has Lonnie riding off at the end without giving the reader any clues as to how he will carry out his life. The novel is more interested in bringing to light the conflict

McMurtry's Texans face because of the lingering influence of a passing frontier.

I will examine *Horseman, Pass By* chapter by chapter, tracing the build-up of conflict between Homer and Hud and the increasing uncertainty and confusion Lonnie faces as the two lifestyles become more polarized. I will focus on Lonnie's attempts to choose or attempts to create a compromise (mainly through Jesse). I will also show how Lonnie witnesses the consequences of living by either man's code by specifically looking at Halmea throughout the novel, and at incidents during Lonnie's trips into Thalia and Wichita.

As a first novel *Horseman, Pass By* develops one of the more pervasive themes of Larry McMurtry's later works. The father figure/son relationships built here become an almost trademark for McMurtry's later characters, especially in such novels as *The Last Picture Show*, *All My Friends Are Going to be Strangers*, and *Lonesome Dove*. By examining how Lonnie's relationships with each of the three father figures affects him as a whole, I believe McMurtry's later novels can be appreciated more completely. McMurtry gives a view of the conflict facing his fictional characters and society in general in microcosm with Lonnie, Homer, Hud, and Jesse.

CHAPTER TWO

Larry McMurtry notes that since the 1950s "The state [of Texas] is at that stage of metamorphosis when it is most fertile with conflict, when rural and soil traditions are competing most desperately with urban traditions--competing for the allegiance of the young" (*ING* xv). The difficulties inherent in this conflict are illustrated in *Horseman, Pass By* (1961) by the lack of a viable role model for 17-year-old Lonnie Bannon and, by extension, his generation as a whole. Lonnie finds himself caught in this conflict as the frontier past becomes more mythological but no less valued, and society gives mixed signals of what it values and expects. McMurtry claims "the city will win, of course, but it's [sic] victory won't be cheap--the country traditions were very strong" (*ING* xv). Lonnie and his generation need to find a way to incorporate the values associated with the passing frontier into their society.

The Prologue of *Horseman, Pass By* shows Lonnie as feeling comfortable in Homer Bannon's world. This is evident in Lonnie's description of how he and his grandfather spend the evenings together, Lonnie "taking in every word he said" (4) when Homer recounts his past ranching days. Lonnie also begins to paint Homer as a strong, admirable man. Charles Peavy states that "Honest, hard working, dignified, Homer Bannon epitomizes all the rugged virtues of a pioneer ethic" (28). While critics like Kerry Aheam acknowledge that Homer is perhaps too idealized (284), it is important to remember that we see Homer through

Lonnie's eyes. Lonnie is a product of his time and place, and is still at that stage of accepting the values society assigns without much questioning. Being impressionable, Lonnie can readily make unqualified statements about his grandfather's hard working nature (4) and closeness with the land (3).

The foreshadowing of the disappearance of Homer's world and the end of Lonnie's peaceful existence in it underlies the calm of the prologue. The first indication of coming change appears in Lonnie's description of the ranch lands finally turning green after seven years of drought when "Granddad and the other cattlemen in Dry Bean County had had to watch the bare spots widening in their pastures" (3). This is symbolic of the frontier West dying; it is given brief respites from time to time, but eventually will become part of the past.

The Burlington Zephyr passing by the Bannon ranch every evening also suggests coming changes. While Homer feels saddened when he hears the train, Lonnie is excited and intrigued by it. Although Lonnie is still able to think of "all the reckless things that could happen in the next few years" (6) and yet not feel torn between life on the ranch and life in the cities, the Zephyr will continue to appear every evening. The encroachment of modern society is inevitable, and reaches even the most remote ranches. McMurtry notes that as the cowboy's world becomes smaller,

The effect of this has been to diminish the cowboy's isolation, his sense of himself as a man alone. From solitude and the clarity solitude sometimes brings he is

being drawn toward the confusions of the urban or suburban neighborhood. (*ING* 26)

Eventually, Lonnie will have to face a future not revolving around the ranch. While Homer can go to bed after listening to the train, Lonnie stays up to contemplate his future: a future in a world of airport beacons, oil derricks, and the lights of town (5,6). For now, however, Lonnie does not experience any conflict between his grandfather's way of life and that of modern-day Texas: he still sleeps backwards in his bed so as to more easily watch his grandfather ride out in the mornings (6).

Hud, Homer, and Jesse are not presented as representatives of different life-styles in Chapter One. Lonnie has not yet seriously considered his future on or off the ranch, and therefore does not perceive the three men as rival role models. However, hints of their differences are still implied in Lonnie's descriptions.

Our first encounter with Hud is his pushing Lonnie aside to get the ice cream dasher. Lonnie does not comment further on this action; Hud has not taken on any true antagonistic qualities for Lonnie yet, beyond that of an older relative. We are given evidence of Hud's less desirable characteristics in his behavior towards Halmea, the maid. While Homer is respectful towards Halmea doing the dishes, Hud tells Homer and Lonnie to "let the nigger bitch gather 'em [the ice cream bowls] up herself" (8). This is not the behavior expected of ideal cowboys who approach "women through a romantic convention" (*ING* 149). Already Hud does not come across as a desirable role model for Lonnie.

Homer has already been established as a hard-working rancher in the prologue, and Lonnie continues to present him in a favorable light, saying that although his grandfather is old, his eyes are "steady and clear" (8).

Jesse Logan immediately takes center stage, already showing himself caught between Homer and Hud: "Hud was against him from the minute he came through the gate, but Hud was against hiring anybody, and Granddad took Jesse on anyway" (10). Hud sees Jesse as another cowboy perpetuating Homer's way of life. Lonnie finds Jesse to be more compatible as a companion than Homer, although their relationship is portrayed as tentative early on.

Jesse is shown to be closer to Homer than Hud through his behavior towards Lonnie's stepgrandmother Jewel and Halmea, and Lonnie notes that "Hud's style was strange to him [Jesse] and around Hud he never knew quite what to say" (12). Although Jesse may exhibit qualities associated with Homer, his presence begins to disrupt Lonnie's complacent existence on the ranch by showing Lonnie that he does not quite belong. "It's a way older people have: without even meaning to they let people younger than them know that they aren't in the same club," (16) complains Lonnie. Jesse, more than he acts as a potential role model, acts as a figure who heightens Lonnie's sense of being "alone and restless and left out" (16).

Lonnie's restlessness is fueled by the stories Jesse tells about his rodeoing days. Jesse can provide Lonnie with a way to learn more about life away from Homer's world without Lonnie having to

completely reject that life. Lonnie sees Jesse as a modern extension of Homer's nineteenth-century life-style, believing that Jesse

could open things up. Granddad didn't talk much to me anymore, and anyway, Granddad and I were in such separate times and separate places. I had got where I would rather go to Thalia and goof around on the square than listen to his old-timy stories. (22)

Halmea is most useful in this chapter for showing the differences in the four men's behavior. Homer is considerate, Jesse is friendly but distanced, and Hud is disrespectful. Lonnie, a healthy teenager, is attracted to her physically, but also treats her with the same amount of respect he shows Jesse due to their age difference.

In Chapter Two the dead heifer mentioned in the previous chapter is examined, and the indication is that the cause of death is a serious disease. Hud is away, taking his mother to the hospital for surgery. By this time Jesse begins to appear less and less like a suitable role model after all. Lonnie begins to resent the fact that "In no time he [Jesse] could turn so gloomy and sad it made you uncomfortable to be around him" (27). Jesse is not exactly what Lonnie hopes for, and neither is he quite the best alternative to Homer. Jesse looks "out across the pastures with a disappointed expression on his face" (27); the land does not hold as much for him as it does for Homer or Lonnie. When he is in town, though, Lonnie detects "a big lonesomeness [which] hung over Jesse all right" (34). Jesse does not appear happy either on the ranch or in town.

Jesse's sense of unfulfillment is elaborated on in Chapter Three when Lonnie and he visit Hank Hutch, a cowboy scratching out a living for himself and his family (46). Lonnie can not understand why Jesse pities Hank's family, thinking that Jesse must be the sulking type. Jesse's dissatisfaction with his in-between life is beginning to disturb Lonnie, even though he is willing to overlook it now. He does not realize that Jesse and Hank are simply surviving in comparison to living up to the legendary cowboy tradition.

This chapter also foreshadows more strongly the fall of the ranch. When the vet alludes to hoof-and-mouth disease, Lonnie watches his grandfather, observing that "Squatting there with his brown hat pulled way down over his forehead he looked awful small and old, but awful determined" (42). Lonnie does not fully comprehend the threat to the ranch, although he is beginning to see Homer in a more realistic light.

Lonnie still mixes idealistic and more realistic perceptions concerning ranch life. While he feels pride in the hard work he put in on the roundup (51), Lonnie also expresses reluctance to continue the next day (53). He appreciates the beauty of the land, describing it as being "as perfect as some ranch picture on a serum calendar" (51). However, he leaves at the first opportunity to spend the evening in Thalia rather than sit on the porch to cap off a day of working on the land. Lonnie can identify with the traditional ranch values of hard work, oneness with the land, and stoicism, but he does not participate fully in this tradition.

Even as Homer's health begins to fail and Lonnie is made more restless with Jesse's influence, Lonnie still carefully 'categorizes' his life. He does not have a problem with longing for the excitement of the cities and functioning in Homer's world at the same time. He is careful not to disrupt one life for the other. When Hud guns his car and disrupts the calm of the ranch when he leaves for town (13), Lonnie drives slow[ly] till [he] got out to the horse pasture, so as not to bump the old cows that stood in the road" (53).

Chapter Five is the real beginning of changes for Lonnie. Where he only observed small changes and conflicts before, he now begins to feel these changes affect his own life. Lonnie participates in running the cattle through the chutes for the veterinarian's inspection, and everything goes as it should until he is kicked by an old cow. This removes him from participating in the beginning of the fall, and he retreats to the neutral world of Halmea's. Lonnie understandably enough thinks of "how much nicer it was to be drinking Halmea's lemonade than to be chowsing cattle in the dusty pens" (63). Although Lonnie does not really choose to leave the others, he is feeling drawn away, first to Halmea and later into town. He pries Jesse into talking about what he sees as the more exciting life of the rodeo and is frustrated by Jesse's unwillingness to talk it up. Jesse is not going to give Lonnie an easy solution to his dilemma, and Lonnie comments that "I guess we coulda been wonderful friends if we coulda got together at the right times a little more often" (65). But Jesse is almost as

"separate" from Lonnie as Homer. As Jesse fails to live up to Lonnie's expectations as a role model, Hud begins to rise as a threat.

Hud returns from taking his mother to the hospital and one of the first things he does is manhandle Halmea, squeezing her breast, if nothing else. Suddenly, Lonnie finds Halmea threatened, as well as his relationship with her as she withdraws from him. Hud also warns Lonnie that when he and Homer clash for the final time, "that Grandpa of yours is gonna be the one that get's [sic] dizzy" (68). All of this leaves Lonnie "half in the mood to go to Thalia" (68), but he is not quite ready to break away from his current life.

Lonnie is willing to see Hud's threatening behavior as only one part of an increasingly stressful situation on the ranch. He traces the difficulties which have faced the ranch from his grandmother's accidental death years earlier, Hud and Homer's countless arguments over the years, the current cattle crisis, and Jesse and Halmea's emotional state (69). At this time Lonnie does not see Hud as a cause, but a symptom of a larger, worsening scene on the ranch. Lonnie has not consciously associated Hud with life outside the ranch.

To this situation Lonnie adds his increasingly romanticized view of the frontier lifestyle. His dream that evening is escapist and idealistic. The land is described as "like the opening scene in a big Western movie" (70). There are no diseased cattle or drought, the highways and towns complement the scene rather than encroach, and Lonnie and his grandfather ride together. Lonnie is beginning to mythicize his grandfather and his grandfather's life. They ride off to

the Llano Estacado rather than on the ranch around which Lonnie's life revolves.

When Lonnie goes to Wichita to help Hud and Homer with some new milk cows, he meets Marlet, a boy who hangs around the cattle pens when he isn't working. He used to live on a farm, but now lives in town working at the Dr. Pepper plant. Lonnie thinks that Marlet is strange (76) and wants to avoid him, but finds himself thinking about him later. Marlet is important because he shows that "the myth of the cowboy is still powerful but reality is increasingly a job in a bottling plant" (Macdonald 7). Marlet was forced to leave his life on the land; he shows how difficult it is to reject that life-style completely, and especially when one does not choose to leave it. Lonnie has not had to choose between life-styles and believes he can have the best of both worlds. He does not realize that the urban society does not provide a satisfactory alternative or replacement for the frontier values he still desires.

With the Marlet incident still in the back of his mind, Lonnie finds himself literally between his grandfather and Hud, where he finds his complacent life threatened. He makes a comparison between the two men, noticing that "For the first time, then, I noticed how much fresher and more powerful Hud looked than Granddad. Granddad was tough and steady, but he was looking awful tired and old" (76). Lonnie is beginning to contemplate Hud as a role model since so far he has found everyone else lacking. Homer is beginning to fade physically, and more importantly, into an idealistic world Lonnie does not think he can

realistically join. Jesse, after making Lonnie more restless than he can ignore any longer, has put him off too often and refuses to satisfy Lonnie's expectations. Halmea is Lonnie's friend and confidant, but as Charles Peavy asserts, is one of "McMurtry's women [who] are strong earth mother figures, [but] they are not aggressive enough to emerge as matriarchal leaders" (72). Lonnie can not model his life after Halmea.

Hud has not always been so different from Homer. At one time he was in Lonnie's position, as indicated by his confession: "But hell, you were Wild Horse Homer Bannon in them days, an' anything you did was right. Why, I I [sic] used to think you was a regular god" (78). Lonnie also suggests that Hud had the opportunities to become a less extreme contrast to Homer, remembering Hud's athletic bravado and rodeoing (81). McMurtry suggests that given a frontier, Hud "might become a Charles Goodnight" (*ING* 27), saying that Hud and famous Texas rancher Goodnight are similar, "though they knew different times, and put their powers to different uses" (*ING* 19).

A very important point of the novel is made in this chapter which makes the conflict between Homer and Hud more than a story of one generation simply replacing another. It is significant that Hud is Homer's stepson, for Hud will not carry on the frontier legacy. Hud may indeed inherit Homer's land, but Homer warns him ". . .you can't get my power of attorney no way in the world" (80). This implies that Hud may take over the land, but he can not replace Homer. Macdonald claims that "Hud has none of Homer and Lonnie's feeling for the land, and is happy to exploit it. . ." (6). I agree with this assessment, which helps to

illustrate why Hud, although a descendent of the frontier past, has disinherited himself and seeks to take over the land without being indebted to the traditions of Homer's world.

All the unexpected occurrences and changes have finally begun to unsettle Lonnie. Homer has not provided him with much guidance or support and by Chapter Seven Lonnie feels separated from his grandfather. Although he is reluctant to leave his grandparents, "the two old ones" (85), Lonnie finally goes out alone since Homer's behavior only makes him feel "that things were all out of kilter, all jumbled up" (85).

Lonnie takes his twenty-two and begins shooting various animals in a symbolic break from his grandfather. In reacting against the land, however, Lonnie feels "like shit, like all the bullets had been hitting me" (86). He angrily remembers Marlet, who has disturbed him enough that Lonnie wishes he could shoot him (86). Although he feels like Marlet in that he feels like he "was strangling" (86), Lonnie is still not quite ready to leave ranch life behind him completely, deciding against sitting on the windmill where he usually goes to think about life off the ranch. Instead, he goes to Halmea for help.

Lonnie and Halmea's conversation demonstrates Lonnie's realization that Homer's way of life is passing. "'Things used to be better around here,' I [Lonnie] said. 'I feel like I want something back. . . . If Granddad and Hud could get along better it would be okay. . .'" (88). This is the main theme of the novel. Much of the confusion and frustration Lonnie and his generation face stems from the separation of

the frontier past and urban present. Homer takes pride in working with the land while Hud is interested only in the money he can make from oil leases. The independence of a cowboy is replaced by the automobile which men like Hud use mainly to pick up women. Society presents an either/or solution while still wanting the values and traditions of the frontier. Lonnie recognizes that there needs to be a compromise, but does not know how to accomplish it.

The second section of this chapter describes the beginning of Lonnie's active exploration of life away from his grandfather's ways. When he rides his grandfather's horse in the morning, tearing across the pasture, he explains that "It seemed like I had been waiting a week for the thrill and excitement of his speed" (91). Just as he begins to feel swept away with the experience, however, the fence to the pens blocks his path and he is thrown from the horse.

Lonnie's fall is suggestive of his moving away from Homer's world. Andrew Macdonald notes that Lonnie does not realize his leaving the frontier world (7), and this is shown in his ecstatic mood and Jesse's concerned and worried reaction to Lonnie's fall. Jesse's "face was pained, like he was the one who was hurt. It must have been a terrible fall to watch," Lonnie remarks (91). Jesse understands more than Lonnie what is happening since he finds himself caught between the two worlds. He has tried the rodeo solution Lonnie believes is the best of both worlds, but Jesse has discovered that it comes up short on both sides. Jesse wants both the independence and horsemanship of the

rodeo, but also the connection with the land, where he can create something and define himself as Homer has.

In Chapter Eight Lonnie ventures into Thalia for the rodeo. The pull of the legendary Old West is very evident in town and Lonnie is fascinated by the rodeo culture of women, cars, and wild behavior. Lonnie finds himself almost in another world: the artificial frontier world of the rodeo. Although he notes that "there were a few thin cowboys at the counter who didn't look so happy; they reminded me of Jesse, or the lonesome boys in the Fort Worth bars . . ." (99), he dismisses them in favor of watching the cowboys exhibiting the behavior he believes to be appropriate for the occasion. After leaving the diner full of rowdy cowboys, Lonnie goes to watch the bulls and makes his acquaintance with two young bull riders. Away from the hype and glamor of the rodeo, Lonnie quickly becomes dissatisfied, finding the bull riders pompous and himself restless after watching a girl mindlessly ride in circles (101).

When Lonnie returns to the ranch he learns that the cattle must be destroyed. Mr. Burris, the vet, suggests selling oil leases while the ranch is under quarantine. This allows Homer's unique relationship with the land to be explicitly laid out. His declaration that "They ain't gonna come in an' grade no roads, so the wind can blow me away" (106) is more meaningful than if he had said "so the wind can blow my land away." His statement is indicative of a bond with the land urban society is far from realizing, even with the rodeo. Homer's speech also solidifies his position as the quintessential frontiersman as he

mentions the importance of hard work and independence ("a man doing for himself" [106]). Hud walks off without commenting, having nothing to do with Homer's stand.

Chapter Nine exposes some fundamental differences between Homer and Hud which Lonnie has only glimpsed but will soon have to face personally. At this point Lonnie is still willing to believe that he will not lose much if he breaks away from the ranch, still enjoying his trips into town and what stories Jesse tells him about his life on the road. Although Jesse's story about his own grandfather's death foreshadows Homer's death, the overall mood of the evening is light. Lonnie's best supporters are finally laughing, "in about the best mood of their lives . . ." (109), and Lonnie feels good about both of them (11). However, Hud's arrival forever changes this for Lonnie.

Hud's rape of Halmea leaves no doubt about his departure from the mythicized cowboy tradition concerning the treatment of women, but more importantly it shows how, as a product of his society, he is powerful enough that the old ways can not overcome him. Jesse manages to get to Halmea's cabin, but Hud stops him just as he gets in the doorway. Homer never arrives, much less wakes up. Lonnie manages to shoot at Hud, but is stopped before he can shoot again (113). Jesse, Lonnie's 'happy medium,' is not a match for Hud, while Homer is too removed to do anything. Lonnie's two best potential role models are unable to stand up to Hud.

Chapter Ten marks the fall of Homer's world. Perhaps the most important sentence of this chapter is "Hud was not there" (123) at the

slaughtering of the herd. Hud is not the cause of the destruction, any more than modern society is the cause of the frontier era fading into history. Equally important is the fact that Lonnie only observes the shooting of the cattle; he too does not contribute to the end. The men who do the actual killing are unnamed government shooters, who Homer realizes are only doing their job (127). Lonnie does not blame anyone, either, but does recognize that his grandfather, nonetheless, "might as well be dead with them [the cattle], herd and herdsman together, in the dust with his cattle and Grandmother and his old foreman Jericho Green" (129). Homer's time has passed.

In Chapter Eleven, Lonnie goes into town alone for the second night of the rodeo. He asks Homer to join him, but his offer is declined. Lonnie looks for Jesse, but when he finds him at the rodeo Jesse does not pay any attention to him. This makes Lonnie feel out of place in Jesse's world: "I felt like I was smothering in the crowd," (135) he complains. With Homer and Jesse unreachable, Lonnie begins to look more closely at Hud.

Lonnie learns secondhand about a deal Hud is supposed to have made to buy the ranch, then learns about it from Hud himself. Lonnie begins to doubt Homer's ability to match Hud any more, for "When he [Hud] was running wide open he was a hard man to stop, and with Granddad so discouraged over the herd, and old anyway, I didn't know if he could set Hud down again" (132). Hud appears to be the most successful of the three men Lonnie looks to as potential role models, being "the only one doing any good for himself" (135) in Lonnie's eyes.

Lonnie feels he must warn Homer about the impending conflict with Hud. However, when he wakes up Homer, the ensuing conversation leaves Lonnie confused. Lonnie is disturbed when he realizes that "for some sudden reason he [Homer] wasn't with me, he was back in another time" (136). Homer looks "a thousand years old" (136) to Lonnie, who feels cut off from his grandfather and his world more than ever before. Lonnie discovers

I wanted to get out of the dark old house with its dreams and ghosts. Granddad was on the other side of a high barbed fence, with each wire a year of life, and I couldn't go over it and I couldn't crawl through. (137)

Homer has moved from being a father figure to being a representative of the mythicized frontier life, and is thus an unattainable ideal for Lonnie. This does not make Homer any less of a compelling and desirable ideal, however.

Jesse figures prominently in Chapter Twelve even though Lonnie has ceased to consider him as a desirable role model. Even though "Jesse looked pretty puny" (138) to Lonnie by now, he does listen to Jesse's advice. The rodeo life-style may appear to be the most viable choice for Lonnie, but Jesse explicitly explains its drawbacks as they have applied to his life:

'I guess I was too particular for too long, what's wrong with me. I went all over this cow country, looking for the exact right place an' the exact right people. . . I shoulda just set down an' made it right wherever the hell it was.' (148)

Jesse did not know how to take what society offered and make the best of the past within that context. He was looking for a perfect solution

one way or the other and could not find it. He is aware now that he has not found what Homer has, telling Lonnie that "He [Homer] lost something all right, but by god he's still got something too" (149).

This "something" is his sense of self and of having a clear relationship with the land. Urban society does not have that same connection, either with the land or with its own world.

Jesse also gives Lonnie good advice about how to deal with his sense of loyalty to his grandfather and his desire to enter the urban world.

'[Y]ou better stay till your Granddad gets back on his feet a little. That's a lot a good you can do. After he gets over this it might not hurt you to see the world some. . . . It don't hurt to take a little look around,' he said. 'Just don't turn into an old loose horse like me.' (148)

This is the best advice given by anyone to Lonnie. Unfortunately, Jesse does not explain how Lonnie should carry out this advice or what he should become. This question is not answered since society itself has not discovered how best to incorporate the values and qualities of the frontier.

Lonnie himself has realized this dilemma. He watches his friends in the rodeo and as he listens to a song "about the wild side of life" (144) he recognizes the problem he and his generation face:

. . . the whole song reminded me of Hermy and Buddy and the other boys I knew. All of them wanted more and seemed to end up with less; they wanted excitement and ended up stomped by a bull or smashed against a highway; or they

wanted a girl to court; and anyway, whatever it was they wanted, that was what they ended up doing without. (145)

Lonnie notes the sense of incompleteness modern society causes by both holding on to a mythicized frontier past and by not providing some way for younger generations to satisfy its idealistic intentions. They have almost been set up to fail. Their role models are still those of the frontier, while the frontier has vanished, or at least has been radically changed. Much of the difficulty comes from society's inability to provide a new, suitable replacement for the frontier fathers. The current compromise of the rodeo stars is not successful. Lonnie has already decided (if unconsciously) not to try that route.

Jesse leaves in Chapter Thirteen, abandoning Lonnie with Hud and Homer. As Lonnie returns to the ranch alone, he comments that "I felt like I was losing people every day. If there had been anyplace open in Thalia besides Bill's, I would have gone back" (151). Lonnie has already found his grandfather's world unrealistic to strive for, and the rodeo scene more image than substance. The next alternative is to go to the cities without the rodeo, a complete break from the cowboy world. However, there is no one there to replace Homer and Jesse except Hud, and Lonnie is only comfortable at the diner, where the cowboys are. There is nowhere for him to go.

On the way back to the ranch, Lonnie sees a coyote by the side of the road. This causes him to take his rifle from behind the seat and leave it where Hud can find it later. The coyote's appearance has significance of its own, however. Coyotes have been observed

throughout the novel whenever Lonnie notes the changes in the ranch or Homer, or when he is feeling the need to be closer to Homer's world. The first mention of a coyote is on page 22 when Lonnie hears "a dog yapping, stranded somewhere out in coyote country." He hears this after describing the changes in the ranch from one that used to have a full smokehouse to one that now uses the smokehouse to store broken equipment. The next appearance of the coyotes is when Lonnie describes the clouds in his dream as "coyotes in the pastures" (70). The dream is an idealistic one where Lonnie joins his grandfather on the Texas frontier. When Lonnie rides Stranger in a similar setting, he sees

two young coyotes [which] were trotting along the edge of the ridge, coming right towards us. When they were about fifty yards away I whistled and they stopped, their gray heads cocked and alert. Then they loped off the slope over the edge and I lost them among the rocks and chaparral. (90).

The coyotes become a symbol of the ranch, the natural world, the frontier, and of Homer. In the above scene Lonnie can see the coyotes, but they disappear into the trees, much as the moment of ecstasy which comes to an abrupt end with Lonnie being thrown from the horse.

After Lonnie sights the coyote on his way home from the rodeo in Chapter Thirteen, Lonnie puts on his brights and finds Homer by the road. As Homer babbles on as if he was in the past, Hud and Lonnie try to keep him still. "Hearing the whine and seeing his throat jerk the way it did made tears come to my eyes," says Lonnie. "It seemed all of a sudden like Granddad was someone I had forgotten about for a long

time, and hearing the deep hurt sound of his whine brought back all he was to me" (153-4). Homer and the ranch have been fading into the background for Lonnie, and although he has felt their influence and pull throughout the novel, it is only when he is about to permanently lose Homer that he realizes what Homer means to him.

Lonnie looks to Hud, "waiting for Hud to decide what to do" (154). Unfortunately, as McMurtry explains,

Hud, a twentieth century Westerner, is a gunfighter who lacks both guns and opponents. The land itself is the same--just as powerful and just as imprisoning--but the social context has changed so radically that Hud's impulse to violence is turned inward, on himself and his family. (*ING* 24-5)

While Lonnie is off looking for help, Hud decides to shoot Homer. Andrew Macdonald states that "If Hud's motivation never becomes clear, his role in the novel is certainly to bring to an end an era by killing Homer Bannon. . ." (7). Hud may have shot Homer out of mercy or because it happened to best suit his purpose, but he believes it was best that he sent Homer to join "them goddamn dead people a his" (159). Homer, like the frontier, is no longer a physical entity.

Lonnie, on finding Homer dead, realizes how much he still needs him and asks Hud, "'But what will I do? Granddad was always . . .'

'You'll do without like the rest of us,' he said" (159). This is not what Lonnie wants to hear, for he does not like what Hud has to offer in place of Homer. Neinstein points out that "When Hud kills Homer, he has killed off an entire tradition, but has nothing with which to replace it"

(17). Hud can only see Homer as belonging to the past (159) and is not disturbed by his death. Lonnie is the one who wants to carry the traditions and values with him and feels that he can not since he has no role model to follow. He is facing a situation which society as a whole must face as the frontier way of life 'dies' and nothing equal to it takes its place.

The final chapter shows Lonnie struggling to deal with his grandfather's death. After unsuccessfully trying to relegate Homer into being a mythic figure (163) Lonnie goes to talk with Halmea. Jane Nelson asserts that "In the modern, urban West, McMurtry suggests women are the powerful characters because they have learned to create homes without the support of a myth" (619). Halmea leaves Thalia, capable of functioning without Homer, Hud, or Jesse. Lonnie, however, can not since he is tied to the masculine world of McMurtry's frontier. Lonnie is not going to find a role model in Halmea, and feels like "the only person left in the country" (165).

His grandfather's funeral is an important turning point for Lonnie. He resists thinking of Homer as an abstraction, trying to fit him into a practical role:

I could see Granddad in my mind a thousand ways, but always he was on the ranch doing something, he wasn't in any loaf-around eternal life. I could see him tending the cattle; or see him just standing in the grass, looking at the land and trying to figure out ways to beat the dry weather and the wind. Those were good places to me. . . . (167)

Lonnie appreciates Homer's love for the land and the values associated with his lifestyle, but the urban society has lost this sense of the pragmatic aspects in mythicizing the frontier West. They go to bury Homer, literally and figuratively, but Lonnie stays behind. He wishes Homer could have been buried "like he died" (172) rather than painted up. Lonnie does not want Homer to be remembered as anything else than what he was.

Lonnie's best decision comes when he decides to neither forget Homer nor to make him into a legendary figure. "I decided then that I wouldn't need to worry a lot about keeping his ranch, or about losing it either, because whatever I did about it would just be for me," (173-4) Lonnie concludes. He knows enough to take what he can without trying to live his grandfather's life.

Unfortunately, the Epilogue shows how Lonnie still does not know how to apply what he has gotten from Homer away from the ranch. Several critics, including Jane Nelson, believe "losing the man he most admires, and unable to become Hud's apprentice, Lonnie leaves the homeplace, apparently to become a homeless wanderer like Jesse" (613). I do not think McMurtry is implying this. Lonnie does consider following the road like Jesse (179), but goes to visit his friend in Wichita instead. He thinks about those from the ranch, and when the driver Bobby Don "pulled down his old straw hat and faced the road, he reminded me [Lonnie] of someone I cared for, he reminded me of everyone I knew" (179). Lonnie is not leaving the ranch behind completely, and neither is he going on in Jesse's footsteps. He has

already seen that the rodeo life is mostly show and little substance. He is not about to follow in Hud's footsteps, either; he associates too many negatives with Hud. However, Lonnie does not have a clear idea of what he will do or where he will ultimately go. He only knows that following Jesse, Homer, or Hud's way of life is not a complete existence.

CONCLUSION

Many of McMurtry's later novels also present situations where young men (and women) are faced with a society in transition. McMurtry continues to develop the theme of a search for a role model to replace the frontier father figure, showing the increasing difficulties young Texans face as the distance between the centuries widens.

Horseman, Pass By is set in 1954, during a time when, according to McMurtry, Texas is about to lose much of its rural character. "My generation had the country only long enough to realize that something was going," McMurtry explains, "but with my father and my uncles it was different: they were of the last generations of Texans to have it fully" (ING 140). *Lonesome Dove* (1985) and *Leaving Cheyenne* (1962) are two novels which deal with these earlier generations.

One of *Lonesome Dove's* main characters, Newt Dobbs, is similar to Lonnie Bannon in that he also feels removed from his frontier father figures' world. On the surface, this novel seems to show Newt fully participating in the quintessential cowboy activity: the cattle drive. However, several parallels can be drawn between Newt and Lonnie.

Newt has three father figures who are both pragmatic and idealistic role models. Like Homer Bannon, they function more as transmitters of frontier values than as literal fathers to Newt. They are legendary as Rangers and as horsemen in general, but are also basically admirable in their day-to-day accomplishments. Augustus McCrae, Woodrow Call, and Jake Spoon are all ex-Texas rangers whose legendary status is already beginning to dim as the West becomes

settled. The cattle drive north helps them to retain their stature, and Newt joins them in this last adventure. Newt, however, never feels as if he quite belongs, much like Lonnie, who is "too young to take over" (*Horseman, Pass By* 80).

Although the novel is set in the 1860s, the imminent end of the cowboy era is beginning to arrive. Newt can join the three men on the drive, but he can not be their equal. The days of the Texas Rangers are past, towns are appearing on the ranges, and technology will soon replace many of the cowboy's activities. Newt, although he can participate in the ranching world, is similar to Lonnie in that he recognizes the beginning of the end. His role modes' accomplishments have set an unsurpassable standard since the frontier context in which they were achieved has passed. The standards for measurement have changed.

Leaving Cheyenne is set in the 1920s-50s. Like Newt in *Lonesome Dove*, the young men of this novel first appear not to face Lonnie's dilemma. Gideon Fry, a rancher, and his cowboy friend Johnny McCloud together make up a "composite figure" of the nineteenth-century frontier father (Neinstein 14). They live closely with the land and model their lives after their biological fathers.

Having seen how Lonnie views his grandfather (Gid and Johnny's peer) over time helps in understanding the loss in this novel. The two men have been able to live out their lives on the land as a full-fledged rancher and cowboy. Society has changed around them and they become part of the fading Old West. Gid, especially, has so completely

followed in his father's footsteps that he is caught in a stagnant situation. He can not make it away from this life because he has used his father and the values he represents as his measure for success. Gid's goals for his life revolve around the ranch and he measures his success in acreage and his ability to avoid farming as much as possible. He would be unsure of his success in town since monetary gain is not the main measure he uses. Neinstein notes that "There is no mode for dealing with the vanished mythic energies any longer except through memory, nostalgia, and fading desire" (16). In this way Gid and Johnny are similar to Jesse in that they have committed themselves to the nineteenth-century ideals and can not move into the modern, urban society.

The Last Picture Show gives us Sonny Crawford and his friends, teenagers in the early 1950s like Lonnie, but who are from the town of Thalia. Neinstein sees this novel as "a reprise of the thematic material" of *Horseman, Pass By* (19), and there are many parallels between Sonny and Lonnie. Here, however, the main character does not have the benefit of a physical frontier role model; the values associated with the frontier are presented only in the movies. Sam the Lion has become too much a part of town life for Sonny to equate him with the frontier past. Sam functions more as a surrogate father, than as a frontier father figure for Sonny.

Sonny is even more 'lost' than Lonnie because his possible role models are so distant. The fact that the mythic Old West heroes are provided only through movies shows how, as time progresses and even

the movie theater closes, the problems will only worsen for the younger generations. While society still values the frontier traditions and qualities, the only role models are from film. When the movie house closes in Thalia, even these representatives are unavailable.

Separated from the land, Sonny and his generation face more problems than Lonnie does. Andrew Macdonald and Gina McDonald explain that because the connection with the land has been broken, Sonny and his friends in town experience "a loss of identity, a loss which cannot be compensated for by the stereotypes of movies or television" (22). The influence of the frontier in the media only complicates the transition from a rural to urban society. While Lonnie has the benefit of deciding that his role models do not offer him workable life-styles, Sonny can only measure himself against the myth as presented to him in the media. The heroes of film are "appealing," yet "remote" (*ING* 28); they are seen as fictitious, where Lonnie's grandfather and Newt's father figures are 'living myths,' and therefore can be measured against others in life situations more critically.

Horseman, Pass By is an important work in that it presents a character caught almost squarely between two eras. By examining Lonnie's relationship with several father figures, one can better understand and recognize the development of problems as the frontier fathers become part of the past and are not replaced. Lonnie's more obvious dilemma helps to expose the more subtly presented difficulties of the characters in McMurtry's later novels.

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