



Lone Wolf Theatre Company

HIGHLIGHTS

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Lone Wolf Howl: GREAT CHARACTERS AREN'T JUST FOUND INSIDE BOOKS

(Originally published in Cochrane Times: August 17, 2005)

Guess it was Peter who first told me about Cormac McCarthy and lent me a copy of All the Pretty Horses.

Read that in four days flat and continued on to the next two books in the Border Trilogy. Still that wasn't enough so I dug back to his early years and read everything from The Orchard Keeper right through to Suttree and Blood Meridian.

The latter one struck me as familiar in its brutality, so I checked over some reading journals and realized that I'd read part of it during university but somehow it never stuck then. It sticks now, boy. That's a book and half, that one.

Now I'm on McCarthy's latest called No Country for Old Men, him being an old man himself something more than 70. I was beginning to worry that he'd check out before handing in another book, but a first edition is in my hands safe and sound with its man-on-the-run-in-the-blood-red-sun cover and I come back to it every night regardless of the hour with tired eyes and a finger or two of Bushmills.

Guess it was Peter too who first told me about Wallace Stegner and Peter's wife Louise who turned me onto Jim Harrison. Peter and Lou lived in a farmhouse south of Cochrane for eight years with their daughters and it's the same house we moved into with ours four years ago this fall.

He and his family moved to his native England at that time but they'll be living back in these parts afore too long. He knows it, Lou knows it, and their daughters know it too but one of them ain't so happy with the knowledge as the other.

The Murdocks are moving back 'cause they say they can't drain the West from their blood. He's a teacher from a working-class English family -- not to mention a practicing Buddhist -- and she's from South Africa and still they can't drain the West from their blood.

It may have happened anyway, but I'll wager much of the Western staining in their corpuscles came from the books they read.

Neither Peter nor Louise have mentioned a new writer to me lately, what with them being in England and all. Guess that's why I ran into Greg when I did.

Greg lives in town and was the one who first told me about Paul Horgan and a fantastic little book called Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen by Larry McMurtry.

Whenever I run into Greg at Coffee Traders (which tends to happen with a consistency not unlike the rising of the sun), we ask watcha' reading before we ever get to how ya' doing. For those of us who enjoy our literature written with cracked and dirty fingernails -- books that are more about dust than dust jackets -- there are no writers finer than McCarthy, Stegner & Harrison, nor no better friends to discover these guys with than Peter, Lou or Greg.

The story of these friends and these books finds its beginning, middle and end all at the same place: 118 2nd Ave. West.

The proprietor's name is George, and like some saloon-stall medicine man, he can take one look at you and set you up with a reading list long as your arm.

Don't know how he does it and I don't want to. I just know he does it like nobody else anywhere anytime. It's where I bought No Country for Old Men. It's where I'll buy the new Harrison novel. Someday it's where folks will buy my books if I ever quit reading long enough to get some written.

They say like breeds like but the first like must've been sired by someone, so I figure 'round here that someone must've been George Parry. George was the one who originally hitched Peter and Lou up with the writers that later made their way to me.

Get into his good books, and he'll get you into a lifetime of great ones. It's easy enough to do... just poke your head into Westlands and say watcha' reading, George? If he ain't in, ask Greg. (info@lonewolftheatre.com)

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