



Larry McMurry and the Victorian Novel (Tarleton State University Southwestern Studies in the Humanities)

Roger Walton Jones

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Millions have read Larry McMurtry's novel, though few consciously understand the subtle underlying themes that characterize his fiction.

Roger Walton Jones examines McMurtry's lifelong interest in Victorian authors and their influence on his novels. Emphasizing the common sense of displacement McMurtry shared with the Victorians, Jones identifies three Victorian themes by which McMurtry reconciles the reader to experience and gives his art a religious function: the individual's importance to society; the conflict between civilization and nature in an industrial age; and the attempt to find a basis for spirituality in a world without God or faith in organized religion.

Jones explores these themes as they are played out in all of McMurtry's fiction, paying particular attention to *The Last Picture Show* and *Lonesome Dove*. Unpublished letters and an early, unpublished short story shed light on the interpretation.

In this thought-provoking analysis, Jones helps correct the injustice done McMurtry when his work has been ignored or treated with condescension by literary critics charmed by the convolutions of postmodernism. Readers of McMurtry's work, as well as students of Victorian literature, will find Jones's treatment stimulating, insightful, and perhaps unexpectedly positive and will benefit from seeing a new moral and spiritual dimension in the work of one of the most interesting contemporary American authors.

ROGER WALTON JONES received his MA from Southern Illinois University and his PhD from Texas A&M University. He specializes in modern American and British Victorian literature and has written numerous short stories. He is the division chair of the Humanities & Social/Behavioral Science department at Ranger College and has served as director of the Academic Honors Program.

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