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"Machines for the Subjugation of Women": Cormac McCarthy's Condemnation of the Western Myth in *All the Pretty Horses*

Zachary Perry

University of North Georgia, zdperr1274@ung.edu

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The women of Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* do not fit into the typical roles of female characters in McCarthy's novels, although they are often read as such. This assumption causes readers to overlook the impact individual female characters have on the broader narrative and implications of the novel, and mirrors the same tendency within the popular perception of the American West, which ignores important contributions of women in frontier life. McCarthy reacts to that ignorance by presenting women who are directly responsible for the forward motion of the narrative, juxtaposed against the actions of the primary male protagonist, John Grady, whose actions, which are tailored around an archaic and hyper-masculine cowboy code, are reminiscent of the parameters of action ascribed to "heroes" of the pop culture West, and among other things, follow traditional patriarchal ideals concerning women. Through the overt female involvement in the narrative direction of *APH*, McCarthy is able to condemn the vain nostalgia for the male dominated frontier myth, as it ignores any potential for feminine influence, and the unfortunate circumstances of John Grady's adventures develop a subtext which implies the potentially disastrous effects of such ignorance.