

**HORSE SENSE:
THE HORSE AS A CHARACTER
IN SELECTED WORKS OF SOUTHWESTERN LITERATURE**

THESIS

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By

Crystalyn Janette Steubing

2004

**This thesis is dedicated to
My Mother, My Grandparents, and My Husband.
Thank you all for believing in me.**

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take,
But by the moments that take our breath away.
-Dr. Moorehead*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iv |
| CHAPTER: | |
| I. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| II. WILD AND UNBROKEN..... | 8 |
| Tamable Through Horsemanship | |
| Untamable | |
| Horse I.Q. | |
| Nature | |
| Horse Against Horse | |
| III. THE BOND BETWEEN HORSE AND HUMAN..... | 47 |
| Loyalty | |
| The Cowboy Way | |
| Half Human, Half Horse | |
| Biscuit | |
| Rafter | |
| IV. SMOKY THE COWHORSE..... | 77 |
| About a Horse | |
| As an Innocent | |
| Connection with Clint -- Teamwork | |
| Smoky's Troubles | |
| Smoky's Return | |
| END NOTES | 108 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 116 |

I.
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Equines—horses, mules, and donkeys, but mostly horses—are significant characters in Southwestern Literature. Critics have often failed to recognize the importance of a horse as a character when critiquing a novel. Critics of Southwestern literature commonly focus on the human characters of Southwestern novels, and overlook the significance of a horse as a character. Throughout this thesis I will be primarily looking at the horse as a character in Southwestern literature, though some mules and donkeys will also be included.

One definition of a character in literary works is, “Broadly speaking, a person in a literary work. The actions of characters are what constitute the plot of a story, novel, or poem. In the techniques of anthropomorphism and personification, animals can assume aspects of character” (Gale.com). I will show the many ways horses function as characters in the plots of some Southwestern novels: *The Man Who Rode Midnight* (1987), *Smiling Country* (1998), *The Good Old Boys* (1996) by Elmer Kelton, *Where the Wind Lives* (1995) by Jack Walker, *Trail to Ogallala* (1964) by Benjamin Capps, *The Big Fist* (1946) by Clyde Ragsdale, and *Smoky the Cowhorse* (1946) by Will James.

The horses in these novels vary as characters, ranging from uncomplicated, stereotypical figures to those that are complicated and multitalented. The role of the character is also important. Does the character act as an antagonist or a protagonist?

This thesis is arranged in three chapters. The first chapter deals with horses, and their tameability. The first section discusses horses that are unbroken but not unbreakable. The horses referenced in this section are not hard to break. All they need is a competent rider. In section two, those horses that cannot be tamed are mentioned. These horses will do anything they need to in order to not be tamed. In section three I discuss horses that are a combination of sections one and two. These horses are tamable but they need a skilled and knowledgeable rider to tame them. Section four helps the reader learn about the horse's nature. This information better helps the reader understand why a horse is tamable or not. This chapter is concluded with section five. Instead of focusing on the conflict between horse and man, it focuses on the possible conflict of two equines.

The second chapter deals with the horse's ability to connect with a human and vice versa. In the first section of this chapter, the loyalty between horse and man is examined. Section two considers instances where the life of a human is dependant upon a horse. Section three delves deeper into the connection between horse and man. In this section the reader learns of a boy who is able to build a significant

relationship with every horse he meets. Sections four and five talk about two significant horse characters. Biscuit and Rafter each have a significant relationship with the protagonist of the story where they are mentioned. The bond between human and horse in these instances is apparent in and essential to the individual story.

Chapter three discusses the one horse that critics have noticed. Smoky is the protagonist in *Smoky the Cowhorse*. Critics have considered Smoky a character only because he is the main character of the book and because the semi-omnipotent narrator allows the reader to know what Smoky is thinking and feeling. *Smoky the Cowhorse* is given its own chapter because he takes on the roles of all of the other horses mentioned throughout the thesis. Smoky can be considered the archetype of this thesis. Although this book has been published in both adult and children's literature, it was originally published as adult reading, and I have considered this book to be comparable to the others mentioned in this thesis.

Though I know that some of these books are not popular and well known, I chose these books for a number of reasons. First, all of the horses in these novels are easily considered characters. The horses in books such as *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormac McCarthy, *The Horse Whisperer* by Nicholas Evens, and *Breaking Gentle* by Beverly Lowry are only symbolic. Although these horses are a part of the story, they do not have the qualities needed to stand alone as a character. Second, each of

these novels falls into the genre of Southwestern fiction. Although books such as *The Mustang* by J. Frank Dobie and *Seabiscuit* by Laura Hillenbrand are well known, they are considered non-fiction. Other popular novels such as *My Friend Flicka* by Mary O'Hara, *The Black Stallion* by Walter Farley, and *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell, were not used because they are not recognizably Southwestern. Because I chose to use adult fictional books set in the Southwest, none of these books could be considered.

In the past, horses in Southwestern literature that are not the main character of a novel have been ignored as characters. There are many horses in these novels that act as antagonists or supporting characters. Some of these horses are Biscuit, Pilgrim, Rafter, and Old Heck. Those who critique Southwestern literature should consider these horses and multiple other horses worthy of example. While the majority of Southwestern critics do not share my viewpoint, I believe these horses are important enough to the plot of their novel to be given attention.

The use of characterization is the most significant way in which the author can present the horse as important to the story. Characterization is shown by, "(1) direct description of the character by the narrator; (2) the direct presentation of the speech, thoughts, or actions of the character; and (3) the responses of other characters to the character" (Gale.com).

In particular, the reader can focus on the type of conflicts between horse and man. I have chosen these books because almost all of the essential episodes of Southwestern stories are used: good guy versus bad guy, a chase, a showdown, and a test of wills. In many novels, each of these conflicts is presented in the form of man vs. man. In the novels mentioned above these conflicts are often between man and horse.

In order to use the horses for work or transportation, the human characters in these novels have to control extraordinarily powerful animals, ones that will sometime resist that control. Thus the two are thrown into conflict. Sometimes, the man leads the horse to join him to accomplish the work at hand, and they form a bond. Each of these authors deploys a rich imagery concerning the union and/or confrontation between man and horse in the novel.

In *The Good Old Boys*, *Smiling Country*, *The Big Fist*, *Where the Wind lives*, and *The Trail to Ogallala*, the horse plays the role of the main supporting character to the novel's protagonist. These horses act as a best friend and protector to their human counterpart. In *The Man Who Rode Midnight*, *Where the Wind Lives*, and *Smiling Country*, the horse is used to teach a human a lesson. The horses in these books are also used to show the human character's skill level in horsemanship.

These horses are not only shown in circumstances where they are associated with human characters. They are shown to have their own personalities, thought processes, and beliefs. I have considered how

each author invents his horse character without taking away its “horseness.” Each of the horses I have examined act like horses and display horse characteristics. Some of the horses in these books may seem exceptionally talented, and thus, fictional. However, most of these equine characters essentially represent the true nature of a horse. The horses in these stories are just that, horses. These horses are no less authentic than the human characters in the novels.

Examples of each of these horses’ character traits, and their connection with human characters in each book are reflected in the following thesis. In summary, this thesis will show how the horse fits into the literary definition of a character. The horse as a character in literature in general is an important issue. The horse is an important part of American culture and for centuries has been included as a character in novels. Although the horse as a character has been noticed in other genres, it has yet to be considered significant in Southwestern literature. Consequently, critics should regularly notice these horses as significant characters when critiquing a Southwestern novel.

II.

WILD AND UNBROKEN

TAMEABLE THROUGH HORSEMANSHIP

In general, horses are very complex animals. The size and power of these animals, in addition to their intelligence and instinct, make them quite intimidating. Whether a horse is trained to the saddle or not makes a significant difference in how it interacts with a human. Horses that have spent a majority of their life in the wild are sometimes captured for breaking. Because they have never had contact with humans, these horses are more difficult to break. It is not that these wild horses are spiteful. They only require a rider strong enough and experienced enough to earn their respect. Horses that only spend their first years in the wild or are bred in captivity can be different. Some of these horses are wild but tamable; others are wild, mean, and downright crazy.

In Elmer Kelton's *Smiling Country*, horses are significant characters throughout the story. One of the horses outlasts every rider that tries to break him. He becomes the central figure in a bet that occurs between two senior members of opposing ranches. Hewey Calloway of the J Bar and Snort Yarnell of the Slash R have worked in ranching for years and are close friends. Both men have spent the majority of their lives cowboying so they understand the amount of skill it takes to ride a horse that does not want to be ridden.

Although Snort is the older of the two men, he remains “an adolescent forever except in years” (*Smiling* 37). Keeping with his personality, Snort suggests a wager between the cowhands of the two ranches once the work has been completed. With a challenging tone, Snort points out a black gelding with a “white stockin’ foot” (*Smiling* 37). He then goes on to tell Hewey that this black horse has “thrown every cowboy on the Slash R payroll” (*Smiling* 37). Snort then suggests that none of the J Bar men have enough talent or skill to ride this horse. Hewey disagrees with Snort’s statement and the bets are made. The only catch to this bet is Snort gets to pick the man who is to ride this mysterious black horse.

Because none of the men on the Slash R, in spite of their experience, has been able to ride this horse, it is understood that he must be a significantly hard mount. After looking around the group, Snort finally chooses the ranch boss’s driver. This takes Hewey by surprise, and he responds, “But he’s not a hand. He just jockeys that automobile” (*Smiling* 39). Everything that has been said about the driver prior to this incident convinces us that this man has had no experience with horses.

The driver is first described by Hewey as seeming “as out of place in a cow camp as a monkey in a church” (*Smiling* 23). It is evident that Peeler does not impress Hewey. Hewey believes that “anybody who went around holding his nose that high was in danger of drowning if he ever

got caught in a rain" (*Smiling* 23). Hewey believes the driver seems to have a high opinion of himself because he knows how to drive a car. When Peeler compares an automobile to a filly, Hewey's disdain is once again made clear when he says that the "driver wouldn't know a young filly from an old stud" (*Smiling* 27).

Considering Hewey's portrayal of Peeler, once Snort picks him, it is automatically assumed the bet is lost. Hewey has the same notion and tries to forfeit the bet. Surprisingly, Peeler steps up and asks to be given a chance, borrows Hewey's boots (which are small for his feet) and walks up to the horse. The tension in this part of the story is thick. Up to this point, we only know the basics: we have two main characters, a horse that cannot be ridden, and a rider who can only drive a car. This is a recipe for the destruction of either horse or rider, and the odds are not good for the rider.

Peeler approaches the black gelding. "The animal appeared unperturbed. It stood calmly while the hackamore was slipped over his head and the saddle was girted down tightly" (*Smiling* 40). Hewey is surprised when Peeler correctly mounts the horse and excuses this coincidence by telling himself that Peeler "must have seen it somewhere" (*Smiling* 40). Even at this point in the story, we are still urged to doubt Peeler's horsemanship abilities.

The knowledge of Hewey's thoughts helps keep us wondering what will happen to Peeler. At the bronc's first jump, Peeler is not thrown

immediately as expected. Instead, he is able to stay on the gelding and continues to “anticipate the bronc’s moves and meet them halfway” (*Smiling* 41). Peeler rides the pony until he stops bucking, which quickly clarifies the meaning of his nickname. Peeler stands for bronc peeler. Before Peeler was an “auto jockey,” he was a bronc buster (*Smiling* 41).

There are horses that many men will mount and try to break. Each man fails until one with an adequate amount of experience finally gets the job done. Then there are horses whose first contact with a human and saddle ends with the horse having no choice but to give in to the human's wishes. This is because the trainer has the experience needed to do the job. In *Where the Wind Lives*, Hawk is an example of the latter. Hawk is a remarkable piece of horseflesh. His owner Finch Fauntleroy goes through quite a bit of searching to find a stallion of his caliber. After searching for over three days, Finch sees Hawk in a corral at the house of a friend. Hawk is a four-year-old and a full brother to Rafter, Finch’s old horse. He has beautiful conformation, brains, breeding, and speed. He is full of power and fight and is described as having an explosive temperament. His breeding is well known, and he is the last of his bloodline. Finch has a hard time convincing Hawk’s owner to sell him. When Finch first asks to buy Hawk, his owner responds, “I’d reckon you’d have to shoot me in both laigs to lead him off from here” (*Wind* 410). Hawk is “a light sorrel, [with a] deep chest, bulging muscles,

short back, neatly sloped shoulders, and a small, dainty head" (*Wind* 412).

Finch was raised on a cattle ranch that was raided by Indians when he was a teenager. After trying to save the family ranch, in his early twenties, he became a Texas Ranger. By his early thirties, he is once again a ranch owner. He and his partner, Humphrey Beatenbow, make a dangerous trek to establish their ranch in the middle of Indian country. He is a strong man and a great horseman.

Hawk and Finch's relationship is first built upon necessity. Finch goes out to find a new stallion because his other stallion is killed in a fight. On the way back to the ranch with Hawk, Indians chase Finch and his men. Gato, the horse Finch is riding, is killed in the chase. Not having another horse to ride, Finch decides he has to break the new stallion before he had actually planned. Otherwise, he would have to walk home. Finch is soon to find out he is in for the ride of his life.

Like the black gelding, Hawk remains rather calm while he is being tacked up. His mood quickly changes once Finch climbs onto his back, and the man holding Hawk releases him. Once released, Hawk whirls and jumps trying to throw Finch from his back. Hawk jumps "higher than he had ever seen a horse jump and screamed his rage as Finch jabbed savagely with his spurs" (*Wind* 421). The sound Hawk makes is "like a gut-shot panther" and after an hour and a full workout for both man and horse; Hawk is broken (*Wind* 421).

Later, Finch and his men decide to stop and rest. Finch moves slowly with Hawk and is careful to be ready for whatever stunts Hawk might try. When he remounts, the horse never falters. He keeps his poise and calm instead of returning to his previous state of fight like some freshly broken horses.

Hawk's calm demeanor shows that Hawk is broken and broken for life. Even Matt, a long-time friend of Finch's, is surprised at the horse's calm. When Hawk stands as Finch mounts him for the second time, Matt says, "I'll be damned. I've heard them Old Billy horses had a lot of sense. I reckon now I believe it" (*Wind* 422). This entire event brings Finch and Hawk closer together; man and horse learn a new respect for each other.

There are also horses that carry a combination of the characteristics shown by Hawk and the black gelding. These horses fall into the category of horses that are broken but frequently need a refresher course in manners. In *Where the Wind Lives*, Old Heck is a Black, thoroughbred stallion who is considerably lacking in the manners department. Old Heck is described as having a stubborn streak, and at times he is known for being down right mean. Still, just like Hawk, Old Heck is a rather smart horse. Hawk has never been under saddle when Finch first gets on him. Old Heck is older and broken. He does not have a stable head on him like Hawk and sometimes has to be reminded that

he is not the one in charge. However, just like Hawk, all Old Heck needs in the end is a little persuasion.

Humphrey, who is Finch's partner and best friend, owns Old Heck. Although Humphrey comes from a different background, he too has experience with horses. Humphrey considers Old Heck a piece of property, a symbol of Humphrey's family wealth. Old Heck is an asset to Humphrey by way of creating strong offspring to work on the ranch. Old Heck is also used as a riding horse and companion to Humphrey.

When we first meet Humphrey, he is returning from the Civil War to an empty house and a run down plantation. His parents died while he was at war and the slaves are free. One of the few things he possesses that he still considers useful is Old Heck. Humphrey's first stop after checking on the house is the barn. When he walks into the stable, he approaches "the stall of his prize stallion with some trepidation" and "the big black horse neighed his recognition" (*Wind* 16). Humphrey reaches his hand into the stall to pet the stallion that proceeds to try "to bite him" (*Wind* 16). This reaction from the stud shows his orneriness and causes Humphrey to decide that he needs to "take some of that vinegar" out of Old Heck (*Wind* 16).

The relationship between Humphrey and Old Heck is one of power, a test of wills. Who is stronger? Who is in charge? Is it man or horse? Old Heck is aware of his strength and power of intimidation, so only force can make Old Heck behave. This attitude is somewhat common with

stallions. They are not necessarily mean, but sometimes they have to be reminded that they are not in charge. When Humphrey decides to ride Old Heck and give him a refresher course in manners, he is warned by the horse's keeper that the "stud sho has gone mean" (*Wind* 17).

Humphrey replies, "Old Heck knows better than to rile me" (*Wind* 17).

When Humphrey approaches Old Heck, the horse immediately balks so Humphrey becomes angry and kicks the horse "in the belly three times just as hard as he" can (*Wind* 17). Some would consider this abuse on Humphrey's part. In reality, Old Heck is a horse that cannot be reasoned with, and the only way to make him behave is with force. After kicking the horse in the stomach, Humphrey mounts him and Old Heck responds by biting at Humphrey's leg. To teach Old Heck a lesson, Humphrey tears into him, beating him over the head with his quirt. When Humphrey is finished, Old Heck is left standing with "blood running from his mouth and nose" and Humphrey still on his back (*Wind* 17). Humphrey asks, "got enough old feller?" (*Wind* 17) Humphrey knows he has won the battle when Old Heck begins "walking sedately" and takes his cues from Humphrey without contest (*Wind* 17). This instance shows Old Heck is not unmanageable. He is just ornery.

Just as humans are used to train horses, there are times when horses are used to train humans. To gain skill and experience with horses, you have to start somewhere. At one time in their life, those skilled in the art of breaking horses, have never been on a horse. If you

put an inexperienced rider on an inexperienced horse, you are just asking for trouble. An experienced horse must be used to teach a human how to ride.

In *Where the Wind Lives*, some of the cowhands have the job of teaching some of the black men how to ride. The cowhands believe it will be funny to see what will happen when an inexperienced rider is put on an inexperienced horse. They provide a rather rough looking bay horse to the first man who will take his chances. This horse is green broken and not meant for an inexperienced rider. Once the Negro follows instructions and mounts the horse, the cowboy holding the horse lets him go. When the horse is first released, it stands quietly for a moment. Silence surrounds the men while they wait so see how the horse is going to react. Then the horse suddenly ducks its head and bucks with all it has. The Negro quickly loses his seat. After bouncing around a bit, he hits the ground. Humphrey reprimands the cowboys, who then bring up a new horse that is more appropriate for beginning riders.

This horse actually ends up teaching the Negroes and the cowboys a thing or two. He teaches the Negroes that horses are much more complicated than they look. A horse that may not look dangerous is not necessarily safe. Inadvertently, this horse shows the cowboys that the Negroes have much more drive and spirit than they originally recognize. The black man who tries to ride the horse falls off. Although he is already walking with a limp, he immediately rises to his feet and is ready

to try again. Then he says, "I didn't do so good that time, but I'll shore do better next time" (*Wind* 93). This man has as much determination as the unbroken horse that throws him.

After this incident, the white cowboys, Choc and Bart, go back to the remuda to pull two horses that are more versed in the ways of riding. When the men go to mount their horses, Choc is asked to use the crazy bay to ride back to the remuda. Once Choc mounts the bay, it is evident that this horse is "old, expert, and mean" (*Wind* 94). Choc put his spurs into the bay. The horse then squeals loudly and plunges into the air, hitting the ground with significant force with each jump. The bay works hard to throw his rider. "He sunfished until Choc's offside boot could be seen under the horse's belly" (*Wind* 94). Although the horse tries his best, he cannot throw Choc. When the bay finally stops fighting, he is "panting heavily," and he has sweat dripping off of him (*Wind* 94). Not yet finished with the horse, Choc spurs him off once more to check his reaction, and the horse trots "docilely away" (*Wind* 94). This horse is tamable but needs an experienced hand to be able to manage him. He does not need someone who has never been on a horse before. To teach an inexperienced rider, you need an experienced horse. Once the human is trained, he can begin to train the horse.

After the small rodeo, Choc and Bart ride back to the remuda and two gentle horses are brought back to teach the men how to ride. Choc thinks it is a good idea to start these men riding with a "surcingle ... just

a strap around the girth of the horse and a hand hold” (*Wind* 94). This is a good idea because the men are wearing “flat heeled shoes” (*Wind* 94). It is dangerous if you are riding in a saddle without a heeled shoe. If the horse acts up, there is a greater chance that your foot will slip though the stirrup. If you get bucked off, then the horse will drag you until either the horse stops or your foot slips out of the stirrup.

In addition to the safety factors, this also makes better riders out of the men. Because there is no saddle and no saddle horn to hold onto, the men learn to rely on balance and the feel of the horse underneath them. The rider is more aware of the horse’s movement with the use of a surcingle because the only thing between the back of the horse and the rider is a pair of pants. Using the surcingle instead of a saddle, the black men learn quickly and soon become adept riders.

Humans train those horses that can be trained. Still, not all people are equipped with the knowledge of how to train a horse. In this instance, a well-trained horse is used to teach a person. Unfortunately, there are still some horses that refuse to be broken, even to the detriment of themselves and those humans around them.

UNTAMABLE

Some horses are beyond wild. To make their way back to the wilderness they will risk their own life, as well as the lives of the humans around them. These wild and untamable horses are the most dangerous of horses. The horse has a natural instinct to flee from what it fears. If the horse is not able to flee, it fights. If a horse has a mean streak along with this fear, it may be fatal to man, horse, or both. In Southwestern literature, many novels contain narratives of a wild horse bringing harm to a human. This conflict is in some way found in most of the books discussed in this thesis.

In *Where the Wind Lives*, a wild mustang, in his haste to get away from his captors, kills a woman. Former members of Humphrey's plantation in Louisiana are on a wagon train headed toward their new home range. The plan to round up unbranded cattle on the way to help build their herd cannot be fulfilled without more horses. Accordingly, the bosses make the decision to capture and break a herd of wild mustangs to use for workhorses.

The cowboys surround the mustang herd and run them into a canyon to trap them. Once trapped, the horses are kept in by putting a barrier at the canyon mouth. Because they do not have the materials

needed to build a fence, the cowboys park the wagons at the mouth of the canyon to serve as a makeshift barrier. Once the mustangs are contained, the cowboys go into the canyon to rope and subdue them. Three of the men are placed near the mouth of the canyon to turn back any horse that tries to break from the herd and escape. A few mustangs are still able to break from the herd, evade the men and head toward the mouth of the canyon. Instead of chasing the horses that escape them, the cowboys let the horses go. They expect those left at the wagons will turn them back. The cowboys hear “yells from the canyon mouth” (*Wind* 183). They think that the yelling is a result of those at the wagon doing as they have been told, yelling to scare the mustangs back to the herd (*Wind* 183). They find out differently: “But almost immediately the yells were replaced by screaming and then the sound of a crash” (*Wind* 183). In spite of the commotion, the cowboys stay where they are to avoid losing any other mustangs.

When the boys come back to the wagons, they realize the damage the renegade mustangs have caused. The mustangs, running for their life, are not detoured by those at the wagons. They refuse to turn back into the canyon. Their fear causes these horses to have tunnel vision. The only thing these mustangs see is a way out. They are only worried about making it through that passageway to freedom. The wagons at the mouth of the canyon are not enough to hold the mustangs in, and

anything in their way, including humans, are trampled. When the boss asks the men at the wagons what has happened, they tell him:

...we all waved and yelled like yo say to, but they don' stop. The fust one, he run plumb over Dodie...and jump de wagon. He done took the top offen it when he jump, and the others, dey follow 'im. I reckon one of 'em step on Dodie an' jis caved her chest plumb in...her dress top had been removed revealing that her chest was caved in. Humphrey knelt beside her. He could see the outline of a hoof (*Wind* 183).

A group of wild horses, scared and unsure, runs over Dodie.

These horses are not intentionally malicious. Dodie just happens to be in their way while they are following their instinct to flee from what they consider threatening.

In some cases, a horse will cause harm to a human on purpose. The Black is an example of a horse wild and malicious enough to do just that. The Black is a complex character in *Smiling County*, and it is immediately evident that this horse is a threat. Although The Black is connected to multiple characters, his principal victim is Hewey Calloway.

The Black is the only stallion in a herd picked up by Hewey upon order of his boss. Hewey notices The Black displaying “signs of antisocial behavior that bordered on criminal, biting, kicking at every horse it could reach” (*Smiling* 126). Those who know horses know being a stallion is not ordinarily a positive quality. It is even more of an affliction in those

horses that have not been raised by humans. Stallions have a heightened sense of unpredictability, are harder to tame, and tend to be more aggressive than mares or geldings. Hewey describes The Black as “crazy as a bed bug” and “a loco outlaw” (*Smiling* 146).

The Black is extremely dangerous because he is a stallion and he has a bad attitude. His character follows the trait patterns of the traditional villain. In traditional archetypal symbolism, the color black is considered negative and is associated with evil or danger. The Black is a representation of this standard. He is associated with this archetypal symbolism because of his color and because of his personality.

The first sign that The Black is a negative character is the horse’s link to Fat Gervin, a character in *The Good Old Boys* and in *Smiling Country*. Fat is depicted as an overweight, selfish, money-grubbing, backstabbing idiot. There is a mutual dislike between Fat Gervin and Hewey Calloway, the main character in both of these novels. When asked if Fat is dependable, Hewey replies, “You can always depend on him to do the wrong thing” (*Smiling* 88).

This is proven true when Hewey makes a trip to Upton County to pick up a group of horses from Fat and transfer them back to the ranch. When Hewey first sees this herd, he thinks he has “never seen a sorrier-looking bunch of scrubs in his life” (*Smiling* 120). Trying to stand up for his boss’ best interest, Hewey confronts Fat about the condition of the herd and tries to get Fat to take the horses back. In response, Fat points

a rifle at Hewey and tells him to leave the property or die. Ultimately, Hewey decides to take the horses back to the ranch.

When Hewey returns with the horses, he meets the new ranch foreman, Ralph Underhill, whom Kelton describes in an unflattering way: “he’s got sore toes on both feet. Even his momma probably didn’t like him much” (*Smiling* 131). From the moment Ralph and Hewey meet, they are like oil and water. Ralph instructs Hewey to put the horses in a corral so he can inspect them closer.

When Ralph first approaches the herd, the stud bares his teeth, and Hewey warns Ralph to “keep an eye on that one” (*Smiling* 134). Undaunted, Ralph continues toward The Black who then tries to paw him. Instead of turning away from the stallion, Ralph swipes The Black on the nose with his hat. Ralph’s reaction surprises the horse, and he returns to the herd for protection, which signifies Ralph’s strength and places him in a superior position to the horse. Ralph’s job is to lead the cowboys, but he also leads the happenings to come.

When the horses are assigned for breaking, Ralph assigns The Black to Hewey’s nephew, Tommy. Both Tommy and Hewey fear The Black. Because Hewey and Tommy have seen and broken many horses, their fear of The Black accentuates this horse’s wickedness and strength. Still, neither man has a choice, so they start the breaking process with The Black.

It was common practice to tie an unbroken horse to a heavy log as a method of training. A hackamore or halter is placed on the horse's head; a lead rope is attached to the headstall, and then the other end of the rope is tied around a large fallen log. This practice teaches the horse two lessons: to obey the rope and to learn not to fight what was on the other end of the rope. This practice works because the log picked would be heavier than what the horse could pull. No matter how hard the horse fights, it cannot win the battle with the log. Over the period of a few days, the rope hackamore cuts and chafes the horse's nose. The pain of the wound causes the horse to quit fighting, and realize that if it does not fight, it will not hurt.

This method also stops the horse from fearing the human as much as it would have if it were the human creating the pain. On *The Black*, the expected effect is not reached. Being tied only seems to agitate *The Black* more: "The stud fought his head, trying in vain to free himself from the tyranny of the hackamore" (*Smiling* 140). Even after being tied to the log for a few days, there is no change in *The Black's* personality. He is still mean and even angrier than before.

When *The Black* is caught and led into the arena for breaking, he fights his captors. "The Black fought so hard that Hewey had to rope it by its forefeet and trip it then tie up one foot while the horse was down" (*Smiling* 145). "Even on three feet the squealing stud was formidable,

lunging against the rope, eyes rolling and nostrils flaring as Tommy kept trying to place the saddle blanket on its back” (*Smiling* 145).

They manage to get the saddle on The Black, and Tommy tries to mount the stud. Even without the use of one of his legs, the stud manages to kick Tommy and knock him off balance. Hewey fears for Tommy’s life and refuses to let Tommy ride the horse. Instead, he decides to take Tommy’s place and bronc The Black out himself. Once in the saddle, Hewey realizes The Black is even worse from this perspective than he is when both feet are on the ground. The Black starts bucking immediately, and “the impact of hooves against the ground jammed Hewey’s teeth together so hard he feared some might shatter” (*Smiling* 146). Wildly trying to dislodge Hewey from his back, The Black heads for the first stationary object he can find. Once Hewey realizes where The Black is headed, he can do nothing “to protect himself from impact” (*Smiling* 146).

The impact caused by The Black throwing himself against the fence pins Hewey’s leg to the fence, shattering his knee. This injury makes it almost impossible for Hewey to stay on the horse when he hits the fence a second time: “The force of the stop hurled Hewey forward. He smashed against the fence and fell away. The back of his head slammed against the ground” (*Smiling* 147). This second impact injures Hewey severely. Hewey’s life changes forever, but the result for The Black is greater. Breaking his neck upon impact, The Black loses his life.

While trying to save his nephew, Hewey is injured in such a way that his life, as a working cowboy is over. Here, The Black as a villainous character succeeds, and in only a few seconds The Black takes away the way of life Hewey has known.

This event serves as a building block for the rest of the story, which is built upon Hewey's recovery. We learn of his coming to terms with his new life and his struggles with leaving his old one behind. The importance of The Black as a character is evident. Still, one has to ask, why does Hewey decide to get on The Black? He knows The Black is rank and crazy. Furthermore, multiple times in each chapter before Hewey gets hurt, he is told that he needs to quit riding broncs. His friends and family believe it is time for him to quit acting younger than he is and step aside to let the younger cowboys do the breaking. His body also tells him that he is in need of a rest. Hewey refuses to give up his youth and, in his mind, his worth as a "true" cowboy. He rejects the advice of his friends, family, and even his own body.

Hewey does not have to break the most difficult horse he can find to show his skill. Considering the reasons why Hewey mounted this insane horse, a few explanations come to mind. Primarily, Hewey chooses to get on The Black to save his nephew. He believes that the boy is not yet experienced enough to handle such a rank horse and fears the boy will get hurt trying. Second, somewhere inside of Hewey there is the need to conquer this horse. Even if he is not sure he can ride The Black,

he feels he needs to try. If he is able to tame this beast, he can prove to himself and to others that he is still not too old to be a cowboy.

The Black's is the most interwoven character in *Smiling Country* next to Hewey Calloway. Many of the characters The Black is associated with are also antagonistic characters such as Fat and Ralph. For one reason or another, they dislike Hewey. A strongly interwoven connection brings The Black and Hewey together in the end. The Black is not the only character responsible for Hewey's accident there are human characters that are also to blame. The Black is a member of the herd of horses that Fat forces Hewey to take back to his boss. Fat may not have known how dangerous The Black is to become, but his dislike for Hewey allows Fat to force the horse on him.

Fat is aware the horses he sells to Hewey's boss are not what he implied and could be dangerous due to their wildness. Fat swindles Hewey's boss and by doing so he seals Hewey's fate. If Fat would have owned up to his offense and taken the herd back, The Black would not have been able to injure Hewey. Due to the hatred Fat feels for Hewey and his desire to defeat him, this horse is placed in Hewey's path. Because Fat knows he is cheating Hewey, it can be concluded that Fat Gervin is part of Hewey's defeat. Furthermore, The Black can be considered a mirror to Fat Gervin.

The Black could be considered Fat's parallel animal character. The Black and Fat carry several of the same characteristics. They are both

self-absorbed, and both will do what they must in order to become dominant. Furthermore, both characters are untrustworthy, dangerous, heartless, ruthless, unmanageable, and blind in their own stupidity. Lastly, both man and animal dislike and want to rid themselves of Hewey Calloway.

The Black's connection to Tommy and Ralph is interwoven. Ralph Underhill is the new camp master of the J Bar Ranch when Hewey returns with the horses. Ralph quickly buffalos the stallion and then assigns The Black to Tommy, which completes the connection between Ralph and the horse.

HORSE IQ

Could it be possible that The Black understands what he is doing when he pitches about trying to get Hewey off his back? Let us say he is aware of his actions, and he just gets carried away. The Black could possibly be considered a genius in the horse sense. He refuses to be broken, quickly figuring out the movements and methods of his human captors. In the end, he just goes too far, and in his temporary insanity, commits suicide. I have heard there is a very thin line between crazy and genius. The horse is an intelligent animal. The authors that include the horse as a character in their books are also aware of the horse's intelligence. Just like humans, horses have varying degrees of intellect. In some instances, it seems the horse may be smarter than its human counterpart. The horse uses its intelligence to help a human they care for or to stay away from a human they do not. Sometimes the horse characters use intellect to help themselves, to help their human counterparts, or to teach a lesson.

Rowdy is a horse that has learned to entertain himself by manipulating humans. Rowdy, a character in *The Man Who Rode Midnight*, plays the role of friend, foe, and teacher. He is a well-trained cowhorse owned by Jim Ed's grandfather. Because of his long time

interaction with humans, he has learned to understand human actions and emotions.

Jim Ed, a city boy, comes to visit his grandfather, Wes, in West Texas. While there, he is expected to learn the cowboy trade. Rowdy plays a significant role in Jim Ed's first lesson. Not knowing the skill it takes to be a cowboy, Jim Ed considers the work mediocre. Rowdy is the first one to help change Jim Ed's mind.

The day before Jim Ed is to ride Rowdy, Wes says, "I take it for granted that you know how to ride" (*Midnight* 30). Jim Ed confirms that he has ridden before but only a few times on his friend's horses in the city. When it comes time for Jim Ed to ride Rowdy, his grandfather gives him a piece of advice. Wes tries to help his grandson, knowing that Jim Ed does not have a lot of experience with horses. Wes tells him that the horse has "been known to hump a little," in response Jim Ed says, "You ride him don't you?" (*Midnight* 36).

When it comes to working with horses, the rider needs to know how the horse thinks. If the rider is at all unsure and the horse knows it, the horse will probably take advantage of the rider. Cockiness can be dangerous when riding a well broken horse. A horse that knows humans well is able to outwit those that do not give him the credit he deserves. Jim Ed acts sure of himself when he gets on Rowdy even though he does not know enough about horses and riding to feel comfortable with the situation. Jim Ed's response to his grandfather's warning is rather

ironic. Yes, his grandfather rides the horse, but his grandfather also has a great deal more experience.

When Jim Ed goes to mount Rowdy, the horse gives him trouble. Anticipating his rider, "Rowdy never let Jim Ed's foot hit the stirrup" (*Midnight* 37). Rowdy's actions and natural "playfulness" allow Jim Ed to realize that not everything is always as it seems (*Midnight* 37). What the other cowboys consider playful, Jim Ed finds impossible. By reacting to Jim Ed in this way, Rowdy acts as a wise old teacher allowing Jim Ed to make mistakes and learn from them. Even though Rowdy's little spectacle hurts Jim Ed's pride, the horse still does him a favor. Rowdy is not trying to hurt Jim Ed. He just reminds him to leave his ego at home.

Rowdy and Jim Ed's relationship resurfaces later in the story when the hint of a growing friendship and mutual understanding between horse and man emerges. This second encounter takes place on Wes' ranch when a situation calls for Jim Ed to ride Rowdy again. Just as before, when Jim Ed tries to settle his foot in the stirrup, Rowdy lunges forward. He then jumps into the air leaving Jim Ed on the ground. Rowdy runs from Jim Ed but does not go far (*Midnight* 120). Rowdy acts like he is curious about why Jim Ed is on the ground. The horse apparently is checking on Jim Ed just to make sure he is still there. This is a sign of Rowdy's intelligence and the establishment of a growing bond between horse and rider. After Jim Ed is thrown, Wes says, "Ol' horse is getting' to like you, I think. He didn't damage you none" (*Midnight* 120).

Jim Ed approaches Rowdy to mount him again, and the horse stands quietly and calmly follows his rider's cues. Rowdy is just teaching Jim Ed that he should not underestimate a horse and reminds him that he has more to learn. In these examples, the horse appears, in some ways, smarter than the rider².

In *Smiling Country*, two other horses seem to have more intelligence or to be quicker thinkers than their rider. Just as with Jim Ed and Rowdy, these horses are paired with a human whose ego is a bit larger than it should be. The first horse is a green broken colt, full of surprises. His only shortcoming is that he is just recently broken, so he is still full of spunk and unreliable.

The second horse is a wild bay mare that is captured on the range and then brought onto the ranch to be broken. She is a "long-tailed bay whose conformation indicated a strain of mustang and whose rolling eyes suggested war" (*Smiling* 56). As the story progresses we learn that this mare's main concern is getting away from the humans that are holding her captive.

Skip is the rider of both of these horses. He is "eighteen, no more than nineteen at the outside, with his heart in the right place but his head on backward" (*Smiling* 10). He is a proficient horseman though he is new to the cowboy trade and innocently fears nothing. When the narrator first mentions Skip, he is riding a green broken colt: "It had already pitched twice.... The two outbursts had been little challenge, for

skip was young and wiry and laughed at every jump” (*Smiling* 9). When the pony pitches, Skip encourages him to do his worst, considering himself invincible.

Just like this green broken colt, Skip is wild and free, most of the time, not thinking things through before he tackles them. Skip is only looking to have fun and feels he cannot be harmed. The last thing on his mind is what might happen when he hits the proverbial barbed wire fence. Skip and the colt have a lot in common. However, their differences are significant. Skip lacks the one thing the colt has, the common sense of knowing when to give up. Skip and the colt come head to head with an angry bull. “The horse galloped away, holding its head high and wringing its tail” (*Smiling* 14). Instead of following the colt’s lead, Skip grabs the rope that is around the bull’s horns with his bare hands. It never crosses Skip’s mind that the fifteen hundred pound animal on the other end of the rope does not want to be restrained. Skip does not let go until the bull is charging towards him. The colt knows immediately that the bull means trouble and the odds are not in their favor. It takes Skip longer to realize it.

Skip’s experience with the colt and the bull has no effect on the size of his ego. He chalks the whole incident up to bad luck. He believes that if the colt had not run off, then he could have handled the bull without Hewey’s help. Skip thinks that the colt is just inexperienced and all he needs is a little more time and training. Because of the colt’s age,

he is easier to handle and break than an older horse. The colt is exposed to humans early in his life whereas an older horse has had more time in the wild with very little, if any, human contact. An older horse puts up more of a fight against the breaking process, and it requires a rider with more experience to break it. Skip encounters one of these horses by choice, choosing a mare to break because of her uncontrollability.

At the J-Bar ranch, wild horses are collected, brought onto the ranch, and then corralled. Each cowboy selects a horse(s) to break. When picking his horses, Skip “makes his first choice on the basis of the wildest looking, the most likely to offer him a rousing fight” (*Smiling* 56). This method is only one for the young and naïve. When warned against the rankness of this bay mare, Skip says, “That’s the way I like them” (*Smiling* 57).

This bay mare challenges Skip’s expertise from the moment he tries to catch her. When the bay horse is caught in Skip’s latigo, she struggles against the rope and pulls back with all her weight. Caught off guard and off balance, Skip falls on his face. This is just the first of many instances in which the bay mare gets the better of Skip.

After the bay mare is kept tied for a few days, none of the fight has been taken out of her. The bay’s fear and dedication to getting away outweighs the pain caused by the rope cutting into her nose. Skip finally realizes that this mare will be more trouble than he thought. The bay gives Skip a lesson in humility. When it comes time for the bronc to be

ridden, Skip does not want to ride her. Still, Skip allows his pride to get in the way, and he puts up a big face saying, "I reckon its time he learns who's boss" (*Smiling* 59). Skip's faltering voice reveals how he is feeling, but he still believes it would be worse to back down in front of the other men than to suffer a busted nose or a broken bone.

Skip's fear shows that he realizes the danger of the situation. He figures out that the horse is probably going to win this battle. After procrastinating as much as he can, Skip mounts the mare but does not stay there long. It does not take long for the horse to get the better of Skip. Although Skip puts up a fight, his endurance is wearing down. "The bronc seemed only to gain strength and determination" (*Smiling* 61). When the bay bucks Skip off, the boy's head hits the ground, and he is knocked unconscious. Though the bay is able to overcome Skip, she does not avoid being broken.

From the time Skip picks the bay, Tommy helps him when handling the horse. Tommy is about the same age as Skip though he is more mature. Unlike Skip, Tommy has a tendency to think things through before he tackles them. Tommy has experience breaking horses in his hometown and has sense on his side. When the bay is caught, she puts up quite a fight and ends up getting the best of Skip, but Tommy is able to outthink the horse. When the bay mare fights and pulls against the rope, Tommy braces the rope around his hip. By doing this and digging his feet into the ground, Tommy is able to gain leverage on the

mare. Even though the bay continues to fight the rope, she cannot get rid of Tommy.

After the mare knocks Skip unconscious, Tommy decides to break the horse himself. Tommy wins the battle with the bay, riding “the bronc until it quit pitching and began circling the corral in a run” (*Smiling* 62). After the bay is ridden, Tommy tells the other men not to tell Skip that he was the one who finished out the bronc. Here Tommy is depicted as a young man with talent in horsemanship and compassion for others.

The bay horse is an instrument used to teach Skip his limitations and show Tommy’s skill. This horse puts up a good fight although she is overcome. This bay mare has a high enough intelligence to outsmart and out maneuver Skip from the beginning, knowing she has the upper hand. Horses can smell fear, so when a rider is scared the horse knows it, creating one of two responses. One reaction is that the horse becomes afraid itself, not understanding why the rider is nervous. The other is that the horse becomes aware it is in charge because of the rider’s fear, and the horse then takes advantage of the rider.

Skip considers himself practically invincible and smarter than the average cowboy. His egotism ends up getting him in more trouble than he plans. It seems he is not as smart as he believes. On the other hand, Tommy shows that with enough experience, there is less chance that a horse will get the upper hand. Tommy does not fear the horse. He is smart enough and has enough experience to be able to predict the mare’s

movements. This allows him to stay on her and finish the breaking process.

Another horse in *Smiling Country* that shows his intellect, common sense, his life experience, and a true connection with his rider is Hewey Calloway's horse, Biscuit. In both *Smiling Country* and in *The Good Old Boys*, Biscuit is depicted as Hewey's trusted old friend. Biscuit is described as being "able to outguess a cow nine out of ten times" which is a well sought after trait in a cow pony (*Smiling* 9). When Skip comes into contact with the bull mentioned earlier who "had a reputation of being easy to find but hard to catch," Hewey ends up having to save Skip's rear. He catches the bull's attention long enough to allow Skip time to get away. Hewey makes noise to upset the bull. Angry, the bull charges Hewey and Biscuit. Before Hewey can react to the bull's movement, Biscuit does the thinking for them both. "The horse whirled [away from the bull] so quickly that Hewey had to grab the saddle horn to keep his seat... the horse was an old hand at avoiding such calamities" (*Smiling* 13).

Biscuit is a horse that becomes more versed than his human counterpart when it comes to out-thinking and outmaneuvering another animal. If Biscuit had not been smart enough to avoid the bull, both he and Hewey would have been severely injured.

Just as there are horses that can outmaneuver or outguess an animal or human, there are also those that have to be protected by humans and those that protect humans³.

NATURE

By nature, horses are fleeing animals. When they are scared, they run from what they feel is threatening them. If a horse cannot run, it will fight. It is nature's basic rule of fight or flight. Nature tells the horse to fear anything it does not know or understand. Most horses that are broken become desensitized and do not react with fear towards the same stimuli that affect unbroken horses. They learn to tolerate loud noises and things they are unsure of by being put in the same situation multiple times or by learning to follow their rider's cue. However, just because a horse is broken does not mean it will never falter. Unfortunately, there are still times when a situation causes a horse to become nervous and to revert to what it knows instinctively. So there is always some question about how a horse will react in a threatening situation.

In *The Man Who Rode Midnight*, there is a red roan mare that is normally steady and trustworthy. She is a trained and levelheaded mare, owned and ridden by Glory B, a cowgirl in a world of cowboys. Glory B prides herself on being able to fill the shoes of any of the cowboys on her grandmother's ranch. Ever since she was a little girl,

she insists on being part of the working ranch. This makes her a good rider and a hard worker.

Glory B's incident with her mare takes place when the new calves are brought in for branding. Glory B's job is to rope the calves and then drag them over to the men who throw them on their sides, brand them, and then move onto the next calf. One of the calves Glory B roped decides against being dragged to the other side of the pen; instead, the calf runs under Glory B's horse. Glory B's roan mare is well versed in the ways of cattle and ropes. Still, the rope under her belly and across her flank spooks her causing her to balk. Her leg gets tangled in the rope. When the calf hits the end of the rope, he doubles back and trips the roan mare. Stumbling because of the movement of the calf, the horse goes "down, slamming Glory B, to the ground" (*Midnight 62*). The slack in the rope tangles around Glory B, tightly binding her to the scared mare. The combined movements of the calf and horse cause the rope to "crush her ribs, or even break her neck" (*Midnight 62*).

Jim Ed rescues Glory B by cutting the rope. The mare, feeling the tension of the rope release, tries to get up, hitting Jim Ed with her shoulder and knocking him off his feet. Jim Ed is stepped on when the horse tries to get away from the situation. This is an atypical reaction for this mare, but the situation scares her enough for her to revert to her instincts.

Inside of every horse, there is a wild and untamed animal, even if the horse is already broken. Sometimes a horse will run from something it fears or fight to keep its wildness. Because of their size and speed, horses can cause a good deal of damage when they are scared.

They are not only capable of harming humans; they are capable of destroying property and upsetting everything in their path. In *Where the Wind Lives* a mustang causes quite a stir when he is running from what he thinks is an unknown threat, which in reality it is a raccoon. This is one of the wild mustangs that has been turned into a working horse. His rider, Alf, is one of the black members of the HF ranch. Alf develops the habit of throwing his rope around anything he can find, practicing his aim and consistency. This mustang has become used to the movement and sounds of the rope, rarely reacting to it anymore.

While traveling along catching “rocks, sticks, or anything else that he could dab his rope on,” Alf catches sight of a raccoon coming out of the brush (*Wind* 296). Trying to get away from Alf, the raccoon climbs a tree. As far as Alf is concerned, the tree is a perfect place for the raccoon, trapped with nowhere to go but down. “Alf grinned delightedly, and his long rope flew like an arrow, the small loop settling snugly around the coon’s neck” (*Wind* 296). Once the coon is caught, Alf pulls his loop snug. While doing this he accidentally pulls the raccoon on top of his head. When the coon lands on Alf’s head he screams. He drops the reins while trying to dislodge the coon. All of the commotion spooks the

mustang. In response, the little horse starts pitching. Alf unceremoniously hits the ground. When he pulls his face out of the dirt, he looks up “just in time to see the mustang running and bawling straight toward the form of the herd” (*Wind* 297). The rope is still around the saddle horn. The coon, with the rope still around its neck, bounces behind the mustang screaming out of fear.

The herd reacts by running from the frightened horse, and the captured raccoon causes a full-blown stampede as it bounces behind the terrified animal. This mustang is already broken, but the ruckus caused by his rider and the raccoon scares him enough that he runs. Because the rope is tied to the surcingle, the mustang cannot escape the source of his fear, so he continues to run.

Both the roan mare and the mustang are put in situations where their instinct to flee kicks in, leaving their human riders and their surroundings worse. Horses are very intelligent, but they still have a weak spot when it comes to those things that frighten them. When scared, horses like the mustang and the roan mare try to run from whatever scares them. Other horses like The Black and the bay mare fight. Both behaviors can cause serious damage, to humans and to other animals.

HORSE AGAINST HORSE

The Black, the bay mare, colts, Rowdy, the roan mare, Hawk, Old Heck, and all of the Mustangs act as the antagonist while the humans are protagonists. In *Where the Wind Lives* and *Smiling Country*, a horse sometimes is an antagonist to another equine. There are only a few reasons horses fight, and these reasons are rather instinctual. A horse will fight to either dominate another horse, or to protect their young and/or their territory. When equines fight, one can be killed if one does not submit to the other.

In *Smiling Country*, Biscuit has a disagreement with a burro over territory. Hewey is at his brother Walter's house and corrals Biscuit with the workhorses and the farm burro. When they are first fed, Biscuit stands away from the other stock. He acts "a little superior in attitude, his custom among strangers" (GOB 44). Nevertheless, when he hears their teeth grinding the feed, he turns "democrat" and joins them at the trough (GOB 44). Biscuit is the most dominant of the group until he meets the burro. Biscuit believes that he is superior to the burro, and he should be the dominant member of the group. The Burro is used to being the most dominant of the group and is willing to fight Biscuit for this position. Biscuit bares his teeth and bites at the burro's flank. The

burro turns and kicks Biscuit square in the stomach. His point made, the burro returns to the trough.

The burro puts Biscuit back in his place, and wounds the horses pride. After a few minutes of contemplation, Biscuit also returns to the trough. However, this time he makes sure to keep “one of the work stock between him and the burro” (*GOB* 45).

This type of “fighting” between two equines is superficial. There are instances when two equines come together in battle, and the ending is not so friendly. In *Where the Wind Lives*, Old Heck also serves as the antagonist to the Beatenbow Jackass. Old Heck is a stallion, and the donkey is a jack. Depending on if the ranch needs more horses or more mules, both males are used to service the same mares. In the wild, there can be only one dominant male per herd. As a result, a stallion will fight to defend “his” herd of mares. On the ranch, both the Jackass and Old Heck are used for one group of mares. This is against the ways of nature, so naturally these two equines dislike each other.

At the ranch, Old Heck and the Beatenbow Jackass are stalled in adjoining corrals. Near the end of the story, Finch and Humphrey hear a wild scream coming from outside: “A scream which sounded neither animal nor human, but was carried on waves of agony, pain, and terror [and] penetrated the thick adobe walls of the ranch house” (*Wind* 381).

Finch is the first to reach the corrals. He immediately notices that the gates to the pens that held the jackass and stud are wide open: “The

stud and the jackass, who had hated each other for years, were finally locked in mortal combat" (*Wind* 381). The cowboys try to distract the two animals by throwing things at them. Humphrey tries to break up the fight by walking towards the two cracking his bullwhip, but it seems nothing is going to stop this duel other than the surrender or death of either the stud or the Jackass.

Old Heck is larger and more muscular than the Jackass by about five hundred pounds. "The jackass was quicker and apparently possessed a primitive instinct for combat" (*Wind* 382). The fight is soon over. The Jackass,

...with the speed of a striking rattler, grabbed a large chunk of hide and meat in his strong iron jaws. He wheeled away, taking a strip of bloody hide more than a foot long. The stud screamed again in agony and reared in the air, whereupon the jackass darted in to whirl and kick viciously with both back feet (*Wind* 382).

This last kick breaks the stallion's leg and ends the battle. The jackass has won, and the only thing left to do is to put the stud out of his misery.

This incident shows the strength of the equine animal. It helps confirm the fact that an angry horse is not something to take lightly. However, bigger and stronger is not always better, as in this case. Here the smaller of the two wins out.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE BOND BETWEEN HORSE AND HUMAN

LOYALTY

When a human breaks a horse, the human wins. It is not because he overpowers the horse. It is because he outmaneuvers it both physically and mentally. Such battles between equines or between horse and man are battles of dominance. Horse and man often form a bond once the horse has learned to respect the human. Drawing from literature and the authors' experience, we learn how horses enrich our lives and connect us to nature – making us readers of the profound and intense relationship between humans and horses. The actions of the horses in these books are realistic in that a horse must learn respect for a human before a bond is formed.

A bond can form while the cowboy is breaking a horse, yet there are times when a green broke horse is purchased. The new owner is responsible for finishing out the horse. The horse still has some rough edges and is quite touchy. Usually when purchasing a young horse that has already been under saddle, the prospective owner takes a test ride on the horse to make sure that they “fit.” In *The Man Who Ride Midnight*, Glory B is trying out a new colt. She immediately likes the way the horse moves and decides she wants to purchase him. Even though both still

have a lot to learn about one another, the bond between horse and rider is almost immediate.

The reader is aware of Glory B's attachment to the colt when she decides to name him Pilgrim. This name is significant because it is the same as the nickname she previously used for Jim Ed. It is soon apparent that the man and the animal have a lot in common as far as Glory B is concerned. Both the horse and Jim Ed are young and inexperienced in the ranching world, and according to Glory B, both are "skittish but can be gentled," (*Midnight* 132).

Some may think that naming a horse after a human is silly. In truth it is a significant sign of a bond with the human who names it. By naming one's horse after someone significant to them, they are verifying that person's significance and the significance of the horse. There are many other ways in which a bond between human and man is shown. Many of these bonds are a result of close contact between man and horse, though there are some instances in which a bond forms between one animal and a group of people. No matter what breed of horse one chooses to ride or work with, each horse has its own signature. This signature is a result of the horse's breeding. Often this signature is a perceptive characteristic, which is a certain touch, a greeting, a whinny, a behavior, or an unexplainable aura that surrounds each horse. This signature is usually easily recognizable by the horse's owner.

In *The Man Who Rode Midnight*, this signature is shown when Jim Ed first sees Rowdy in the light of day and realizes that he is a bay and his grandfather's horse is a dun. In the dark, Jim Ed could not tell his own horse from Wes' when they loaded them up earlier that morning. Later, Jim Ed wonders how his Grandfather could tell them apart without being able to see them. Wes could do this because he had learned his horse's traits and behavior patterns. In other words, he had learned each of their signatures.

Rowdy's signature is not the only thing Jim Ed is not aware of when it comes to working with the horse. He also does not know the horse's mannerisms or reactions. When he first approaches Rowdy, he does so without respecting the horse and soon finds out that the horse demands his respect. When approaching a horse for the first time, you have to allow it some time to get to know you. Anyone who has ever worked with or around horses knows that you need to respect them. Horses, on the other hand, have to learn to respect humans. Respect is accomplished through the art of breaking. As the horse and human have more contact with each other, respect may grow into liking and then into an unbreakable bond. This is possible because horses, just like humans, have personalities. The rider's attachment to the horse is due to its personality and to how well it performs its job. In *The Man Who Rode Midnight*, Wes sums this idea up when he says, "a man learns to appreciate a good friend and accept his faults because the friendship is

worth it. A good honest horse ought to be forgiven for one or two little flaws in his character" (*Midnight* 122).

There are many possible bonds between a human and a horse. Sometimes the bond goes no deeper than mutual respect. On the other side of the spectrum, there are human/horse relationships in which one would give his/her life for the other.

Then there are bonds in which one horse becomes a sort of favorite to all, essentially a kind of mascot. Such a bond forms between the Beatenbow Jackass and the members of the HF ranch. In *Where the Wind Lives*, the Beatenbow Jackass is first an important asset to Humphrey's plantation and then comes to be just as, if not more, important to the members of the HF ranch. The Jackass is used as a stud for some of the breeding mares so there will be mules to work first on the plantation and then on the ranch. Like most donkeys, the Beatenbow Jackass has a stubborn streak and rarely obeys anyone. On the move from the plantation to the ranch, Humphrey ties the Jackass to the rear of the last wagon to keep him out of trouble and away from Old Heck. The Jackass does not like this idea, so he kicks and fights against the wagon the entire time it is moving. Humphrey has as much of the donkey's attitude as he can handle and decides to release him instead of having to deal with him.

In the end, the Jackass becomes an asset to the train in spite of his stubborn streak. When the Jackass is untied from his wooden

captor, Humphrey expects him to run off immediately, ridding the wagon train of at least one of its problems. Instead, the Jackass stays within sight of the caravan the entire way across country. Even when the cowboys try to send their cook away on the donkey's back, the donkey soon returns, minus the cook.

The Jackass is determined to stay with the wagon train if it is on his own terms, and once they reach the ranch, the Jackass seems to once again be content in his corral. Later in the story when the Jackass sees another wagon party leaving, he takes it upon himself to break out of his corral and follow it. Already accustomed to his insistent personality, the ranch hands do not try to stop him. Because the crew finds the donkey's antics quite entertaining, he begins to win the hearts of those humans around him, and his presence becomes a sort of comfort to the men while they are on the trail.

Even though most of the time the donkey keeps his vigil over the humans from a distance, he is smart enough to go to them when he needs help. On the way home from the cattle sale, the jackass walks up to the camp one evening and startles the men with his sudden presence. They notice an arrow sticking out of his neck as he stood in front of them with "his head low...the picture of dejection" waiting for the men to help him (*Wind* 351). Once the arrow is removed, the jackass raises his head slowly and apparently feels no pain, for he immediately returns to his

previous self. Happy that the pain is gone, he “ran kicking up his heels and breaking wind, until he was out of sight” (*Wind* 351).

The little donkey is smart enough to know that the humans will help him, but he still only allows their touch on his terms. Once he is no longer in trouble, he again goes out on his own. On the trail to the ranch and on the journey to and from the sale, the donkey’s late night braying becomes a common, calming sound to the men at camp. When the men hear his “music,” it is a sign that everything is as it should be. The braying tells the men that there are no dangers nearby, and they can sleep soundly through the night assured that they will see tomorrow.

The donkey also seems to have an uncanny understanding of what is happening to the humans. One night the men on the trail have to bury a good friend after his unexpected death. This night the donkey’s bray is different than the nights prior. His song is “mute and mournful” instead of strong and hopeful as before (*Wind* 342). Jack Walker uses the donkey’s nightly braying to reflect what has happened or what is going to happen in the story. At the end of the book, we know everything is going to work out for the characters. Walker signifies this by using the braying of the jackass. “The Beatenbow jackass roared his approval to the wild and wonderful world” (*Wind* 474).

Although the donkey’s relationship with the human characters is one of distance, he still fills a significant role. There are a few instances

when he helps his human companions, and the reader comes to associate the Jackass with hope and belief.

In some instances the bond between equine and human is much stronger and closer than that of the Jackass and his companions, times when the only thing a human can trust is his horse and vice versa. While working, the only companion a cowboy often has is his horse, and he learns to trust the animal as much as another human. Commonly the cowboy comes to consider his horse his best friend and an irreplaceable part of his life. Because the horse is so important to the cowboy, he is often willing to take the horses well being into consideration over that of his own. In *The Trail to Ogallala*, the main character Scott does just that. His horse, Blackjack, has been running after cattle for three days without water, and the closest watering hole is still three miles away. The trail boss, trying to make good time, decides not make a detour just to water the horses. He heads off the crew's arguments by telling them that they are driving the herd towards the Colorado River and will have plenty of water when they hit it.

Scott knows that Blackjack is in need of water and feels the distance between their current location and the river is too much ground for Blackjack to cover without it. To remedy this problem, Scott secretly approaches the camp cook and requests water for his horse. The cook replies, "I tell you this water I got is for humans" (*Ogallala* 91). The cook's gruff response does not discourage Scott; he is determined to get

water for Blackjack. Scott tries again to convince the cook to give him some water, telling him that the Colonel does not have “to know anything about it” (*Ogallala* 92). Once again, the cook shoots down Scott’s plea, “They’s a dozen horses that hasn’t had water. What about them?” (*Ogallala* 92).

Scott feels for the other horses in the remuda, but his main concern is for Blackjack because Blackjack is *his* horse. Scott continues to plead and even beg until the cook gives Scott a little leeway. He allows Scott to water his horse out of a “dipping bucket” which might have some water in it “if it ain’t all sloshed out” (*Ogallala* 92). It is obvious that Scott is putting his horse’s needs before his own when he tries to convince the cook to sneak him some water for Blackjack. If caught, Scott will be charged with disobeying a direct order and severely reprimanded by the Colonel. If the other cowboys in the camp find out what he is doing, then he will be labeled as “soft” and the rest of the trip will be much more difficult for him (*Ogallala* 92).

In the case of Scott and Blackjack, Scott is risking his own well-being so his horse does not have to suffer. In *Where the Wind Lives*, we learn of an incident where the roles switch, and it is the horse that is looking out for the rider.

THE COWBOY WAY

In *Where the Wind Lives*, a horse named Gato ends up losing his own life to insure the safety of his rider. Gato, like Finch's former horse Rafter, is from a well-known Quarter Horse bloodline. After Rafter's death, Finch starts using Gato as his main horse. Gato's full name is, Poco Gato, which in Spanish means little cat. Gato is a very well trained, experienced trail horse and a great aid to his rider. When Finch takes a trip to Fort Worth to purchase more horses for the ranch, he uses Gato for the trip knowing the horse will be an asset to him on the trail. When Finch beds down at night, he uses Gato as his lookout. Because a horse has a more sensitive sense of hearing than a human, having a horse as your lookout is standard practice for cowboys. A horse will graze and/or stand quietly throughout the night as long as it is not disturbed. If another human or animal approaches the camp, the horse will become restless, and the noise made by the horse moving around wakes the rider. Finch trusts Gato when he is on the ground and in the saddle. Because of Gato's training Finch does not have to keep his full attention on the horse while he is riding, so he is able to enjoy the scenery and scan the horizon for danger. Gato can be trusted to walk steadily and sure-footedly, keeping his rider safe along the trail. When it comes time

for Finch to cross a river, he does not have to worry about the horse misbehaving or putting him in danger. He knows “the river-wise Gato [will] take him safely across” (*Wind* 388).

Gato does more for Finch than just protect him from night crawlers and act as his travel companion. He gives his life to save Finch's. Finch makes a trip to Ft. Worth to pick up some new horses for the ranch. When he heads back home, he has to travel with four mares and a stallion named Hawk. To make it back to the ranch with these horses, Finch hires two men, and recruits an old friend to accompany him. On the trail, the men run into a group of Indians who attack them in order to steal their horses. Because the Indians cannot catch up to the men, they start to shoot at them. A bullet hits Gato burying itself into the horse's back just behind the saddle. The men find safety on a small island and dismount so they can shoot back at the Indians. When Matt and Finch return to their horses, they find Gato “lying down...blood coming from his mouth and anus” (*Wind* 420). Finch finds the wound behind the saddle where the arrow entered and knows the horse is gut-shot.

When discussing the situation with Matt, Finch says, “I felt ‘im flinch when we rode through the Indians, but I didn't think about it. He was sure one hell of a horse to run all that way with a bullet through his body” (*Wind* 420). Finch knows that only Gato's will and drive to carry his rider to safe ground keeps him from going down when he is first hit.

Finch knows there is only one thing left to be done for Gato and takes out his pistol. Finch is cut short when Gato raises his head and looks him in the eye. Filled with emotion, Finch is unable to complete the task. Gato's commitment to his rider makes it emotionally impossible for Finch to put the horse down.

Finch's reaction surprises Matt enough for him to comment about it: "He's killed more'n twenty white men and he ain't got guts enough to shoot a horse" (*Wind* 420). Truthfully, Finch does not enjoy shooting anything, man or animal. But when he shoots a man, it is in defense of his life. What Gato does for Finch is the ultimate sacrifice for any living being. At the time of the Indian attack, Finch is not aware that his life is dependent upon Gato's actions.

In *The Big Fist*, we learn of a career in which the handler is fully aware that his life is dependant on the actions of his horses. Carl is a skinner, a man who uses a team of horses in the oil field to move heavy machinery. The more teams a skinner has, the more money he can make, so Carl decides to buy a pair of unbroken blue roan geldings named Rock and Rowdy and turn them into his next team. Rock is "steady, dependable, and probably would train easily" so Carl focuses most of his energy on Rowdy who is "nervous, high strung, and sometimes downright mean" (*Fist* 79).

Rowdy fulfills Carl's expectations as soon as he starts training. When Carl starts training these horses, he puts them in the arena and

cracks a bullwhip at them. Failing to do anything but make Rowdy more nervous, Carl tries to close him into a corner and calm him down. In response the horse squeals, turns and kicks at Carl's head. Rowdy only misses his mark by an inch. "Carl ducked and his hat went sailing across the lot like a clay pigeon as the horse's massive heels whistled over his head" (*Fist* 80). Not willing to give up, Carl continues to try to calm Rowdy when the horse goes "on another mad binge" (*Fist* 80). Angry and frightened, Rowdy rears on his hindquarters and paws frantically at Carl. Missing Carl with his hooves, Rowdy then charges Carl, "his lips curled back and his big ugly teeth reaching for Carl, who has to duck quickly beneath the fence rails to get out of his way" (*Fist* 80).

Even though Rowdy is more than a handful, Carl knows he has to make this gelding work. These horses, once trained, have "to be able to understand a man's voice and commands almost as though they were men themselves," because there are times when a skinner is put "in a position where he would be mangled or crushed if his team failed him" (*Fist* 79). Those who spend their lives in the presence of horses tend to have a deep connection with them and try to understand them on their level. Whether time is spent training, breeding, working, or just having a horse as a companion, the true horseman shares a part of his soul with his horse.

Carl does this when he does not give up on Rock or Rowdy, and slowly he builds a relationship of trust between him and the two horses. When it is time for Carl to hook the horses up to the rigging for the first time, Rowdy again becomes nervous, but Carl's insistent voice soon takes "a slow hold upon the roan's quivering, sweaty body, soothing it into submission" (*Fist* 83).

After only thirty days of training, Carl puts Rock and Rowdy through the ultimate test of moving a piece of heavy machinery. Even though Carl has not had much time with these two horses, the bond between the three is quite evident. Before asking Rock and Rowdy to perform for him, Carl spends some time with the horses.

He went up to the roan team and put his hands upon their soft muzzles. He talked to them, the way a man talks to a kid. 'Slow, boys,' he said softly. 'Take it easy, but make every inch count. Make it easy. Keep it easy.' All the time he talked, Carl rubbed the roans' noses, gently patted their necks (*Fist* 87).

Once again, we see a human feeling for his horses and taking the time to build a bond. In return, these horses give all that they have to their human. Carl's life is on the line when the boomer that they are moving slips out of place. Putting all of his trust into these horses, Carl maneuvers his body under the boomer and tells the horses to back up slowly. When the boomer clicks back into place, he tells the horses to

hold. At this point, if Rock and Rowdy had not held their mark, Carl would have been crushed. Rock and Rowdy complete the job, and wrapped in emotion Carl walks “swiftly to Rowdy.” and buries his “face in the horses sweaty neck...the big roan whinnied softly.” (*Fist* 89). As the men watch this display of emotion they are choked up because they know the depth of feeling a man can have when his horse has completed the task asked of it. The horse is like a child to its trainer. When the horse proves itself, it is an overwhelming feeling of joy and relief. Because of the time he has spent with these horses and the bond he has formed with them, he puts himself in harm’s way to prove their talent. Carl forms a special bond with Rock and Rowdy, becoming very emotionally attached to them in the process.

HALF HUMAN, HALF HORSE

In *Where the Wind Lives*, we are introduced to a character who seems to have a strong bond with every horse he comes in contact with and stands out above all other characters when it comes to understanding horses. Brandy Wine is a small boy from England who is often misunderstood. He seems to have an almost mystical connection to horses. In *Where the Wind Lives*, the other men on the ranch like and admire Brandy. Though he is a boy, a part of him seems to be half horse.

The day Brandy is hired as a hand on the ranch, he tells Clem that he has “been working with horses every day of [his] life” since he was very young (*Wind* 232). One cannot argue that this exposure to horses has an effect on how one cares for these creatures. Brandy cares for all equines whether they are pure bred or crossbred. Brandy’s personal horse Punkin is a “homely mustang” and a less than perfect piece of horseflesh, but it is evident that Brandy loves this horse (*Wind* 273). Punkin feels the same way about Brandy and follows him “about like a faithful dog” (*Wind* 273).

Chance brings Brandy and Punkin together when Brandy is traveling and finds Punkin stuck in a bog:

... It took almost the entire day and part of one night for him to pull brush and weeds, and to tug to get the forlorn creature out, but he finally managed it. For two days, he pulled grass and fed the horse until it was able to stand and walk on steady legs. It followed him to Fort Worth where he bought tack for the horse... (*Wind* 232).

Because of the way in which these two come together, the bond they have is significant.

When Brandy first comes to the ranch, one of the other ranch hands insults the horse saying, "You call that a horse?" In defense, Brandy responds with "They call you a man don't they" (*Wind* 232). Brandy believes that "every horse has a personality, just like a human" and can be controlled as long as it is treated with kindness (*Wind* 233). His feeling about mules is much the same, "Mules are almost human, just like horses, maybe a bit more stubborn, but they are jolly good workers" (*Wind* 251).

Because of Brandy's outlook toward horses, he is assigned the job of equine caretaker on the ranch. When it is time for the men to move the cattle to sale, Brandy goes along and cares for the remuda. On the way to the sale, they come to a river that the horses and cattle have to cross. Clem, the foreman, is worried about the remuda misbehaving and

leaving the men with a mess on their hands. Brandy calms Clem's fears by assuring him that there will be no problem, "I'll ride Punkin in the lead, and the others will follow" (*Wind* 273). His confidence allows Clem to worry about the rest of the group while Brandy worries about the horses. The crossing begins smoothly and all of the horses follow Brandy and Punkin into the river. Halfway through the crossing Brandy and Punkin are surprised when they realize that they are on a shelf and the true river bottom is much deeper. Up to this point, Punkin is walking on the river bottom, and when he unknowingly steps off the shelf, he and Brandy immediately sink. Watching closely, the crew holds their breath as they wait for the horse and the boy to resurface.

The trust between horse and man here is unmistakable. When they sink, both horse and rider keep calm and continue forward. Not long after they sink, both resurface unharmed and at ease. Because Brandy and Punkin do not panic, the rest of the herd follows their lead quietly, and the crossing ends smoothly and successfully.

By the time Brandy has to lead the herd across the river, he is confident that they will follow him because he has had the chance to build a relationship of trust and respect with them. Brandy treats each horse in the remuda with care and kindness, relating to each horse differently. What is most important to Brandy is the well-being of the horses, and even though he is usually calm and quite, it makes him angry for someone to mistreat a horse. On the drive to the sale barn, a

confrontation occurs between Brandy and one of the men in the crew named Horst. The day starts as usual. Breakfast is finished, and the men are collecting their things and picking out their mount for the day. Horst chooses his regular mount, which this day is injured. Worried about the horse's wellbeing, Brandy tries to take the horse away from Horst so he cannot ride it.

The horse in question has a bad saddle sore, and Horst is the one that initially causes the injury by overworking the horse without adequate padding between the horse's back and the saddle. Horst's lack of care causes the sore to progress into a bleeding, oozing wound. Even though Brandy is half the size of Horst, he is fighting for a cause he believes in and will not back down. No matter what Horst does to Brandy, he refuses to "relinquish his hold on the lead strap" (*Wind* 293). Clem and the other men have to step in to insure that Horst does not beat Brandy to a pulp. It is evident that Brandy would have taken the beating if necessary, just to protect the horse.

When Clem and the other boys break up the fight, they decide that Brandy is right; Horst should have doctored the horse when the sore first appeared instead of getting mad when the sore becomes so inflamed that the horse is not rideable. Brandy's only response to the whole situation is "horses have feelings too" and since the horse cannot take care of himself in this instance Brandy will do it for him (*Wind* 293).

The type of connection Brandy has with horses is rare in humans. This connection is even more remarkable because of Brandy's age. Brandy's purity of heart and mind allows him to connect with horses in this way. The special touch he has with horses is something that makes Clem very proud. He believes that Brandy handles "the remuda better than any man he ever saw" (*Wind* 273) and is convinced that "he puts some kind of spell over'em" (*Wind* 313). Clem is not the only man on the ranch that admires Brandy's skill. In a short time, he earns the respect of every cowboy he works with. The other cowboys like Brandy for his spirit and the way he interacts with the horses. Brandy's special touch with both the men and the horses ends soon after the men have reached the sale because Brandy loses his life in a horse race.

Many of the human characters in these books have a special connection to an individual animal. The bond formed between human and animal helps the reader form a closer connection to the human. The bond between man and animal is greater than that formed between human and human. Animals have a different sort of relationship with those they care for. Unlike humans, animals hold those they trust in a high regard and are quite loyal to them. Rafter and Biscuit are good examples of this.

BISCUIT

Biscuit is a character in both *The Good Old Boys* and *Smiling Country*. In *The Good Old Boys*, he plays a significant role in the life of the main character, Hewey Calloway. Biscuit's role is not only one of transportation for Hewey; he also acts as a confidante and at times Hewey's sole companion.

In the age of cattle country, the horse often serves as the cowboy's only companion, his safety, his eyes, his ears, and even his lifeline. In both *The Good Old Boys* and *Smiling Country*, Biscuit fulfills this responsibility for Hewey, and he cares for Biscuit as he would another human. In the beginning of *The Good Old Boys*, we find Hewey considering the horse's wellbeing above his own.

In the first few paragraphs, we find that Hewey is at the end of a long journey and in terrible need of a bath. Because Biscuit is favoring one of his legs, Hewey knows the horse is in pain and probably becoming lame, so he chooses not to quicken the pace. Even though Hewey is ready for his trek to be over, he will not put Biscuit at risk just to save a little time. Hewey's regard for his horse is noticed again when he stops to rest. After dismounting, Hewey first thinks of Biscuit. Before doing

anything for himself, he takes care of Biscuit by unsaddling him and leading him to water, waiting for the horse to drink before himself (*Smiling* 3). We also learn that Hewey often talks to Biscuit as if he is an old friend and can understand every word Hewey is saying.

In *The Good Old Boys*, there is an instance where Biscuit helps his rider instead of the other way around. Early in the book, an altercation between Hewey and a town police officer takes place. Hewey is "a cowboy at heart, unfettered of spirit, ready to ride anywhere he had not already been, ready to try anything he had not already tried" (*GOB* 28). Hewey is on his way to visit his brother when he rides through a town and has a run in with a local lawman for riding his horse down a residential street where "transients ain't allowed" (*GOB* 17). Not trying to start any trouble, Hewey tries to ride away from the situation, and consequently the officer becomes angrier. The officer yells at Hewey and tells him to come back. When Hewey turns around, the officer has "his pistol in his hand, pointing it at him" (*GOB* 18). Hewey then dismounts but is "still off balance with his left foot in the stirrup" when the officer swings "the pistol barrel at his head" (*GOB* 18). Trying to dodge the blow, Hewey pulls his head back but the officer still strikes him "a glancing blow along his jaw and then hit hard on his shoulder" (*GOB* 18).

All of the commotion startles Biscuit, causing him to lunge forward and strike the officer "with his heavy fore shoulder, sending him stumbling back" which allows Hewey the time he needs to recover. In

retaliation, Hewey swings at the officer making contact with his nose and breaking it. Hewey leaves the officer “flat on his back, spread-eagled” (GOB 18). Without Biscuit, Hewey would be the one left sprawling on the ground. Is it intentional or just a coincidence that Biscuit saves Hewey from being knocked cold and thrown in jail? The truth is we will never know, but I would like to believe Biscuit is protecting his owner and following the cowboy way, man for horse and horse for man.

This duo does more than fight together. They also play together. In *The Good Old Boys*, Hewey enters a steer-roping contest. Steer roping is a contest of timing and skill for both the horse and the rider. The object is for the rider to rope the steer and then tie three of his legs together all the time racing the clock. The horse backs into a “box” while the steer is held in a chute next to the box. A gate lifts and the steer runs out of the chute towards the middle of the arena. Once the gate releases, the horse goes after the steer, making sure to keep an adequate distance between himself and the steer. This distance allows the rider the room needed to throw his rope. Once the steer is roped, the rider dismounts, throws the steer on its side, and ties three of his legs with a half hitch. The rider with the best time wins.

In truth, the horse is the most important part of this team. The horse is trained to watch the steer while he is in the chute. If the horse and steer do not leave the box at the same time, then the rider will be at a disadvantage because the steer will be too far in front for the rope to

reach him. If the horse leaves late and has to catch up to the steer, then time is wasted, and the event is lost. Not only does the horse have to be aware of when the gate releases the steer, he also has to be aware of the steer's position. The horse is trained to pace the steer and always leave a certain amount of distance between itself and the steer. This helps the rider get into a better position so he does not over or under throw the rope. If the horse does not correctly do his job, it is more difficult for the rider to catch the steer. Once the rope is thrown, the horse stops abruptly, and the rider dismounts to throw the steer on its side. When the rider has thrown the steer, the horse has to keep a constant tension on the rope to ensure that the steer is not able to get up. The rider then ties the steer's legs and the timer stops.

When Hewey enters this event, it has "been a long time since Biscuit had been in a steer roping contest," but Biscuit remembers what he is supposed to do (GOB 196). When the steer is released from the chute, Biscuit leaps "out after the steer in a dead run" and Hewey is able to quickly rope the steer and dismount. Like a pro Biscuit keeps the rope taut "dragging the steer to keep it from gaining his feet," and allowing Hewey to tie the steer's legs. Hewey and Biscuit are able to do all of this in "thirty seconds flat" and win the competition (GOB 197). This is a great example of a horse and a human working together and a terrific example of Biscuit's talent.

Biscuit is a well-trained horse, one with a mind of his own. He is very important to Hewey, and they have a very close bond, but Biscuit's character is not dependent upon him. There are many examples where Biscuit has his own way of thinking and/or personality. In *The Good Old Boys*, once Hewey is home, he decides to go to the Lawdermilk ranch for temporary employment. Hewey is close friends with the owners of the ranch, and he enjoys himself when he is there. On the other hand, "Biscuit never cared particularly for the Lawdermilk ranch" because it is "always unpredictable, always a spooky menagerie" (GOB 135). "A horse, like a cat prefers the familiar" and because the Lawdermilk's are in the donkey, mule and horse business there is always a lot of commotion on the ranch, causing Biscuit to be uncomfortable.

Biscuit also does not like to be forced to keep the company of a number of burros while there. He dislikes their company not because he is afraid of them but because he believes himself to be better than them. Although he "is a well trained horse, supposedly more sophisticated than most, Biscuit never conceded much merit in that inferior, intractable breed" (GOB 135).

The burros are not the only animals that Biscuit feels he is superior to while staying there. Biscuit stables with a paint mare belonging to Spring Renfro, a female friend of Hewey's. During their time together Biscuit and the mare establish "a rapport of sorts" though he still considers "himself the superior" one (GOB 161). When Hewey and

Spring take a trip together to go and visit Hewey's family, Hewey has to pay close attention to Biscuit to keep him "along side by side with the teacher (Spring)" because he keeps trying "to pull ahead to the position that befit his rank" (*GOB* 161).

Although Biscuit feels that he is better than most of the animals around him, he has a deep respect for Hewey. Biscuit and Hewey have a special bond that has grown stronger over the years they have been together. They trust each other implicitly, and they each watch out for the other's well-being.

RAFTER

In *Where the Wind Lives*, Finch and Rafter have a relationship similar to that of Hewey and Biscuit. Like Hewey, Finch has acquired the habit of talking to his horse and has been with the same horse through many years. Finch is a cowboy raised on a cattle ranch where a man's horse is not only a necessity but also one of his most prized possessions. At the age of nineteen when Finch loses his ranch and family to the Indians, he becomes a Texas Ranger. Finch is often in danger while he is out on the trail. Because of this, Finch depends on Rafter not only for transportation, but for safety. If the Indians attack, Rafter either has to outrun the Indian's horses or stay completely quiet and still while hiding from them. Rafter and Finch go through so much together that over time they learn to work together closely, each knowing how the other will react to a situation before it happens. This team becomes somewhat of a legend in Texas: Rafter for his calm demeanor, dependability, breeding, and speed and Finch for his talent with a gun.

Rafter's qualities are something that Finch takes advantage of a couple of times, and he "saddles" the horse with the responsibility of taking care of a couple of humans that are important to him. The first

time Rafter takes care of one of Finch's loved ones is when Colette wishes to take a ride to see the country. Colette is the wife of Finch's partner, and the woman with whom Finch has secretly fallen in love. When traveling across country in a wagon train, it is standard to park the wagons in a circle while making camp. This allows the members to care for the livestock, eat dinner, and bed down for the night under cover of the wagon walls. During the trip to the ranch, on one occasion the train makes camp early in order to stay by a large river, and allow the livestock adequate time to rehydrate. Since they are making camp early, Finch decides to ride around for a while and check the perimeter for any signs of Indians. Colette asks to go along so she can "see more of the valley" (*Wind* 148).

Finch agrees only if Colette agrees to ride Rafter. Finch wants her to ride his horse because Rafter can run faster than any other horse on the trail, and if Indians approach them while in open country, she will have a better chance at getting away. In addition, Rafter is a lot quieter and more dependable than Colette's mare or Humphrey's stallion. The ride goes smoothly until they are on their way back to camp. Soon they notice that Indians have surrounded them. With word from Finch, Rafter takes off towards the wagons carrying Colette to safety. Even though he is running at full speed, when Rafter hears Finch's rifle shots behind him, he seems "to sink lower to the ground," instinctively protecting himself and his rider (*Wind* 153). Rafter's training, instincts, and natural

talent make him an asset to both Finch and Colette. As expected, Rafter and Colette are the first to make it back to the wagons.

Rafter is called upon a second time because of his speed and dependability, but this time the horse is loaned to Humphrey, Finch's partner and best friend. To a cowboy, loaning a horse out to another man is a significant gesture of friendship. Two things are vital for a cowboy's survival, his gun and his horse. Loaning out either of these items is a rare and significant event. When Finch tells Humphrey that he wants him to take Rafter while he is on the trail, Humphrey is overcome with emotion and responds, "God-a-mighty Finch, a man don't give his best horse away. Not unless it is mighty important" (*Wind* 253). This gesture shows just how important Humphrey is to Finch. Rafter is used as a tool to show the bond between these two men without either of them having to say it aloud. Tiny, one of the cattlemen, supports this notion when he says, "Some men don't talk much, but they feel awful deep" (*Wind* 255).

Throughout *Where the Wind Lives*, Rafter's role is that of a friend and protector. Unfortunately, in the end Rafter's speed is not only his blessing, but also his curse. Rafter loses his life in a horse race when the owner of the horse he is competing against loses his temper because his is losing.

Just before Rafter crossed the finish line, the drummer grabbed a spectator's rifle, aimed, and

fired. As Rafter's nose crossed the finish line, his rear end went into the air as he flipped...Rafter quickly got to his feet, but one foreleg was dangling, and a white bone protruded from his sorrel hide just below the knee (*Wind* 340)

Informed of Rafter's death, Finch goes in search of a horse with the same breeding as his lost companion.

IV:
SMOKY THE COWHORSE

ABOUT A HORSE

The author, Will James has a great respect for horses. In *Smoky the Cowhorse*, he uses a horse as the protagonist of the story. The author's love for horses is acknowledged in the preface of the book.

To me, the horse is a man's greatest, most useful, faithful, and powerful friend. He never whines when he's hungry or sore footed or tired, and he'll keep on a going for the human till he drops. The horse is not appreciated and never will be appreciated enough, —few humans, even them that works him, really know him, but then there's so much to know about him ... if I spent my life writing on the horse alone and lived to be a hundred I'd only said maybe half of what I feel ought to be said. (*Smoky* Preface)

Smoky the Cowhorse is written from the perspective of a semi-omnipotent narrator. From this point of view, we are able to see the world from man's as well as the horse's perspective. This book is a life story consisting of birth, education, commitment, love, loss, anger, sorrow, near death, and return. We experience his capturing, breaking, working, companionship, and loyalty of this horse through Smoky's eyes.

Smoky allows the reader to see a horse's full potential. James believes that horses are more than just work animals. He tells his readers about the multiple facets of the horse. James allows the horse to be seen as more aware and more sensitive.

When we see life through the eyes of horses, it appears that they live their lives simply. They take care of their young, protect those they care for, and work hard. The character of Smoky reflects each of these characteristics. The reader follows Smoky as he goes through many different facets of life. He is seen as an innocent colt, a spirit driven young gelding that finds pleasure in learning and enjoys his work, an outlaw, and a broken down older horse.

Will James is not only an author. He has also had his own experience with horses. This is evident in his prologue and throughout the book. As an author, he works to present Smoky as he would any other horse, realistically. The difference is Smoky has a higher intelligence level than some of the other horses mentioned in the previous chapters. James writes this novel as a fictionalized autobiography of Smoky. He does not allow Smoky to be so intelligent that it is unbelievable. He presents him as a real animal. Because of Smoky's intelligence level, some may think that there is no such thing as a horse like Smoky. This is not true. His character is just personified because we, as readers, are allowed to see into the horse's head. The reader is aware of exactly what Smoky is thinking and feeling. As a

character, Smoky fulfills all the roles of the horses in the other novels discussed in chapters one and two.

AS AN INNOCENT

Smoky is a colt of mixed breeding. His dam is “of range blood which means mostly mustang with strains of Steeldust and Coach thrown in” (*Smoky* 5). The reader must assume his sire is a cow pony of Quarter horse background as is common during this time. Because his dam’s lineage is not completely explained in the book, it can be somewhat confusing for those who do not know Quarter horse bloodlines. Steeldust and Coach are the names of two well-bred Quarter horse stallions. In short, Smoky has the breeding of a great cowhorse.

In the first few chapters, the reader finds that Smoky is a very intelligent horse. As a foal, he is naturally curious, and spends his first days of life exploring the area near where he was born. When his dam takes him back to the herd, it does not take him long to show his independence. Smoky’s curiosity allows him to conquer and learn new things: “He never passed anything which had him wondering for fear of missing something. If a limb cracked anywheres within hearing distance he’d perk his ears towards the sound and seldom would he go on until he found out just why that limb cracked that way...” (*Smoky* 25).

The first antagonist that Smoky encounters in this novel is a Coyote. To Smoky,

...the coyote was just another stump, but more interesting than the others he'd kicked at on account that this stump moved, and that promised a lot of excitement...It all was only a lot of fun to Smoky, and besides he was bound to find out what was that grey and yellow object that could move and run and didn't at all look like his mammy. His instinct was warning him, and it wasn't till he was over the hill before his instinct got above his curiosity and he seen that all wasn't well (*Smoky* 12).

Once Smoky realizes he is in danger, he lets out a distress call and his dam comes to the rescue. Although he is safe this time, Smoky "will always remember the coyote" (*Smoky* 13). After this incident, Smoky learns to listen to his instincts. Over the next few months, Smoky is quick to absorb the knowledge that his surroundings offer.

Because Smoky is born on a ranch, he comes into contact with humans much earlier than some of the other horses mentioned in the previous chapters. The ranch where Smoky is born keeps its broodmares and stallion out to pasture year around. These horses run in herds just like those in the wild. When the herd sees a human, it reacts just as a herd of mustangs would, by running away. Smoky is only four months old when he first sees a human. The herd's reaction towards the human "put the impression in Smoky's mind" that a human is not an animal that "a horse would stop to fight or argue with but

instead run away from" (*Smoky* 27). Even though Smoky is born in captivity, his first impression of humans is much like that of a horse born in the wild. He believes humans are to be feared and not trusted.

Everything that happens to Smoky once he comes into contact with humans is overwhelming to him. The human chases Smoky, and then puts him into a box where he is trapped. Then he sees the same human ride one of the older, unbroken colts in the group. Smoky watches closely as the cowboy ropes the horse and leads him out of the pen. The cowboy then cinches a "hunk of leather" to the young horse's back and mounts him (*Smoky* 28). The pony fought and bucked, "doing his daggonedest to shed that sticking and ill built wonder that was on top of him" (*Smoky* 28). Smoky's initial impression is supported as he watches the unbroke pony fight to rid himself of his rider.

Smoky's fear grows as the human starts to remove all of the adult horses from the corral. This leaves Smoky and the other foals his age in the corral for branding. When he is caught by the cowboy's rope, he figures "the end of the world had come as he felt the human touch him" (*Smoky* 32). Seeing a human from this perspective provides the reader with a better understanding of a horse's point of view. To Smoky, humans are weird creatures who seem to have an uncomfortable amount of control over his kind.

Even though Smoky does not come into contact with humans again until he is almost five years old, his first experience is still

remembered. When Smoky is caught for the second time, it is to be broke. When he sees the human who ran him into the pen when he was a foal, he runs to the other side of the corral to get away from the human: “Natural fear of the creature had a hold on him and once against the solid bars he turned and quivering faced what he felt was his worst enemy” (*Smoky* 75).

Smoky is unaware that the human is only admiring Smoky for his color and conformation. Trying to calm Smoky down, the human starts talking to him. To Smoky, the human’s words are not calming: “Every word the human was saying sounded to him like the growl of a flesh tearing animal and every move was a step closer to the victim; —he was the victim” (*Smoky* 76).

The cowboy understands Smoky’s fear of humans. Still, the horse has to be trained. The cowboy knows that Smoky will learn to trust him in time. To be able to control Smoky, the cowboy ropes the horse’s front legs and brings him down on his side. The cowboy then slowly runs his hands over Smoky, trying to get him used to the feeling. From Smoky’s point of view, the human’s actions are far from calming. Because the human has tied Smoky’s legs, he is helpless. The human has complete control over Smoky, and this is what scares the horse. It puts a “fear in him, a fear the likes of which was worse than he’d felt if he’d been cornered by a thousand bears, cougars, and wolves” (*Smoky* 77).

Once the cowboy places a hackamore around Smoky's head, he releases his legs. At first Smoky is confused. Unsure of what to do Smoky stays lying on the ground. The cowboy tugs on the rope to get Smoky to stand up, and that is all it takes. Smoky is quickly up on all fours "pawing, rearing and snorting" (*Smoky* 78). The cowboy calmly allows Smoky to throw his tantrum. After putting up quite a fight, Smoky finally stands still with his "legs wide apart sweat a dripping from his slick hide" (*Smoky* 79).

Once Smoky quits fighting, the cowboy starts him on his second lesson. Mounting his horse, the cowboy ties Smoky's lead rope to the horn of his saddle. Since the cowboy is no longer in front of Smoky, the horse allows himself to relax. Once his fear has subsided, Smoky takes the time to look around for a way to escape. Seeing an open corral gate, Smoky heads for freedom. He makes it past the gate, but it does not take long for Smoky to run out of rope, and get "jerked to a fighting standstill" (*Smoky* 79). Smoky stood while the cowboy closed the gate to the corral. "Then Smoky felt some slack. He took advantage of that and started out full speed again (*Smoky* 79). The cowboy paced Smoky and let him run until they reached the creek. Once at their desired destination, the cowboy starts to apply pressure to the rope, slowing the horse down to a stop:

...Facing the rider once more [Smoky] watched him get off his horse and fasten the end of the

long rope to a log... The log which the rope was tied to was part of the teaching apparatus, heavy enough to hold the pony, and even though it could be dragged around some Smoky couldn't get very far with it. The little horse realized somehow as he sized up the contraption that the end had come to all he enjoyed with the freedom he'd had, cool shades, -- clear streams, and grassy ranges to all roam on as he pleased had been took away from him; he didn't know what was to come next, but he did know that he was on the creek bottom, close to corrals, and there to stay a spell (*Smoky* 80).

The same ground training is given to many of the horses mentioned in the other novels discussed. Horses such as the bay and The Black, fought against the rope until their noses were bloodied. They tried to get away from the "contraption" instead of accepting it. Both The Black and the bay end up chafing their noses and becoming more unmanageable the longer they are tied. Smoky accepts his situation. It only takes being roped to the ground once for Smoky to realize that the rope "could hold him" (*Smoky* 79). He figures out that it is useless to fight an object that he cannot beat. Clint, the cowboy, does not have to use an excess force when handling Smoky. When he stops him by the creek, he only has to use constant pressure. For an unbroken horse to learn not to fight the rope this quickly is quite impressive and shows Smoky's intelligence.

Smoky continues to hold a reserved fear of Clint. Still, he seems to be able to push his fear aside and learn quickly. Based on my own experience with horses, those horses that have limited human contact are usually a lot more difficult to handle. Horses such as The Black and the bay mare support this theory. Smoky's intelligence level is the only defining factor between him and the other horses.

Man acts as Smoky's primary antagonist. The first man to fill this role is Clint. However, Clint does not stay an antagonistic character to Smoky. Clint works towards building a bond with Smoky. He works harder with and spends more quality time with Smoky than he does with any of the other horses.

When it comes time for Smoky to get used to a human's touch, Clint approaches the horse slowly and starts rubbing on his face. He continues rubbing up between the horse's ears and then slowly ventures out to his crest and neck. As Clint is rubbing, Smoky quivers and flinches, every once in awhile, but the rubbing process continues until Smoky begins to enjoy the attention. It takes two weeks of regular visits for Smoky to remain calm when Clint approaches. Although Smoky no longer acts like he fears Clint, he is still unsure of the man's intentions and watches his every move. In time, the extra attention and patience Clint gives to Smoky creates an unbreakable bond.

When it comes time for Smoky to be broken to the saddle, he again becomes nervous and unsure of the situation. Clint allows Smoky to

take all the time he needs to get acquainted with the “hunk of leather” we call a saddle (*Smoky* 91). Smoky watches the inanimate object for quite awhile before it “kinda lost its dangerous look” (*Smoky* 91). The next step for Smoky is to accept the saddle and the saddle blanket moving towards him. He is not agreeable with this idea, and from the start he fights “like a cornered wolf” to try to get away from the frightening objects (*Smoky* 92). But Smoky gives up and accepts yet another form of “torture” from Clint.

When Clint starts to saddle break Smoky, he takes extra time with Smoky, trying to earn his trust. With Smoky, Clint uses a less intimidating approach to breaking. Clint first works with Smoky on the ground instead of just throwing the saddle on Smoky’s back and climbing up on him. After introducing the saddle, Clint gives Smoky time to cool down. He then places the saddle on the horse’s back and climbs onto the horse. For Smoky, “instinct pointed out only one way for him to act” (*Smoky* 104). “Neither the human nor the leather belonged up there in the middle of him that way, and if he tried he could most likely get rid of ‘em” (*Smoky* 104). Smoky does his best to shed Clint, but Clint holds fast until the colt gives in to the situation and starts trotting around the arena.

Not wanting to push the colt too much, Clint removes the saddle once Smoky stops bucking. The next day Clint notices that Smoky has

not eaten, and decides to give the colt the day off. Clint knew that Smoky was trying to make sense of his first experience under saddle.

It appeared that the little horse, after figgering and figgering, had come to some sort of decision, and that done and settled had went to eating again...Smoky was eating like he was trying to make up for the time that he'd lost, and he seemed all at peace with everything in general. The cowboy grinned 'I know what that son of a gun has decided on...He's going to fight' (*Smoky* 109-110).

The fact that Smoky thought about his first ride for two days is a sign of his intelligence. "Smoky was taking the change, from the life he'd led to what he was now going thru kinda hard, harder than the average wild horse ever does, and Clint layed it that the little horse had more brains than the average, more sensitive maybe, and more able to realize" (*Smoky* 109).

After a couple of weeks with Clint, Smoky started to take pleasure in his work. It got to where Smoky would look forward to Clint's greeting every morning. Smoky enjoys his daily lessons with the cowboy. Clint does his part by making sure that Smoky does not get overworked: "He wanted to make it play for him and keep it that way for as long as he could, for he knowed that was the way to keep Smoky's heart and spirit all in one hunk and intact" (*Smoky* 124).

CONNECTION WITH CLINT-TEAMWORK

Smoky and Clint begin working together and building a strong relationship of trust. Clint spends a significant amount of time with Smoky to gain his confidence. It does not take long for Smoky to lose his fear of Clint. "Pretty soon he felt as Clint came and went that each visit from that crethure brought some comfort in a way" (*Smoky* 85).

By chapter seven Smoky and Clint have become very close. In comparing Smoky to Biscuit, both of them care for their riders. In *The Good Old Boys* and *Smiling Country*, Biscuit takes care of Hewey. In *Smoky the Cowhorse*, Smoky takes care of Clint. Even though these horses are comparable, they are not equal. Biscuit is an intelligent horse, but Smoky is smarter.

In chapter seven, Smoky rescues Clint. Jeff, the "foreman of the Rocking R outfit," came in from camp one afternoon to see Clint (*Smoky* 125). On his way, Jeff noticed a dust cloud in the distance. The cloud ends up being Smoky and Clint. Jeff sees Smoky "going through a performance that most gentle broke range horses wouldn't put up with, and that was to half carry and half drag a man, *and on the wrong side*" (*Smoky* 126). The "wrong side" of a horse is actually the horse's right side. When a horse is broken, it is trained to stand while the rider

mounts from the left side. Many horses are never trained to allow their rider to mount from both sides. The unfamiliar feeling of a rider mounting from the horse's right side causes most horses to spook. It is surprising for any horse that has not been trained in this way to allow pressure on its right side. For a horse that is half-broken, it is incredible. Jeff continued to watch Smoky and Clint in wonderment.

...A little while later the gelding happened along a big rock [and] the man tried to use the rock to get from it up into the saddle...The old Cowman watched for nearly half an hour while Clint tried to get on his horse he seen the horse stand there, all patience And a helping the best he could, and finally with the help of the rock, the favoring of the horse, and the little strength the man had, and all put together, Clint was] settling in the saddle at last (Smoky 127-8)

Once Clint was in the saddle, Jeff tried to approach Smoky. Noticing Smoky's nervousness, Jeff decided to follow the horse instead. Jeff soon realized that Smoky was taking Clint back to headquarters. This surprised Jeff, and once again, shows Smoky's intelligence. Once back at headquarters Smoky stopped in front of the corral. Worried that the horse will run off with Clint, Jeff approaches Smoky slowly.

...the little horse stood his ground...but Jeff hesitated somehow from coming any closer, —he noticed a light in the pony's eyes which warned him plain to keep his distance, and even tho Jeff

was half peeved and half leery at the stand the pony took he couldn't help but admire the show of liking that half broke gelding had for the rider that was still unconscious in the saddle, and laying with his head on the pony's neck (*Smoky* 129).

Jeff soon realizes that Smoky isn't going to run away with Clint on his back. He knows that he is where he needed to be as long as his rider is hurt. Smoky is just afraid that Jeff is going to harm Clint, and he is not "going to trust no stranger with that helpless pardner of his" (*Smoky* 130).

Smoky does not trust any human other than Clint. As far as Smoky is concerned, Jeff means trouble. With Clint hurt, Smoky has no intension of allowing a human he does not know near his rider. To Smoky, Jeff was the enemy: "And according to his way of thinking, he was or should be Clint's enemy too" (*Smoky* 130). Jeff was impressed by Smoky's intelligence. After thinking about the situation for a while, Jeff decided that he had to get Clint to wake up. Once Clint was semi-conscious, Jeff gets him to dismount and lead the horse to the corral. When the gate closes behind Clint and Smoky, Clint again loses consciousness. Jeff has to pull Clint out of the corral through the bars because he is afraid to enter the corral with Smoky.

Smoky shows comprehension, care, and a protective tendency towards Clint: "If Clint had been right side up and able, things would

have been different and Smoky would have hardly even noticed the stranger—the little horse knowed as well as any human that something has went wrong with his pardner, and the appearance of the stranger at such a time was worrying him” (*Smoky* 134). Smoky acts as Clint’s guardian. If Smoky had not had the intelligence to comprehend the situation, then Clint would not have made it back to headquarters.

If the bond between Smoky and Clint had not been present, then Smoky may not have reacted in the same way. Even though Clint and Smoky have only been together for two months when this incident happens, the bond between them is already strong: “Steady good treatment from the rider, no matter what the horse done, had won the pony’s heart, till the little horse could near be seen smiling with the happy feeling that was his every time Clint came, saddled him, and rode him out for a little play with the rope and critter” (*Smoky* 130). Jeff evaluates Smoky: “By japers, I’ve seen and handled thousands of horses, but I never thought any horse ever had that much sense” (*Smoky* 127).

After his accident, Clint gives up bronc riding and starts working as a cowhand. He makes a deal with Jeff that he will work for him under the condition that Smoky stays with him for as long as he is with the ranch. Jeff agrees and tells Clint, “The horse really belongs to you more than it does to the company or me. He is a one-man horse and you are the one man” (*Smoky* 137).

Smoky and Clint both enjoy working cattle. Working together almost every day makes the bond between Clint and Smoky even stronger.

The little horse had got to know Clint as well as that cowboy knowed hisself; he knowed just when Clint was a little under the weather and not feeling good, —at them times he'd kinda go easy with his bucking as the cowboy topped him off. The feel of Clint's hand was plain reading to him, and he could tell by a light touch of it whether it meant 'go get 'er,' 'easy now,' 'good work,' and so on (*Smoky* 192).

Smoky's intelligence is mentioned again when Clint starts using him for cattle work. Clint breaks Smoky in slowly just as he did in the beginning. He allows Smoky time to stand back and take in the new sights and smells. Just as before, Smoky learns quickly and is soon working cattle like a pro. Smoky is a natural and over the next few seasons, he becomes somewhat of a legend. In chapter one I discussed how, at times, Biscuit did the thinking for Hewey. Smoky does this for Clint, but on a lot higher level.

During his fourth season working cattle, Smoky performs an amazing feat. One day while Clint and Smoky are working, Clint roped a steer. Instead of the steer going down, the flank strap on the saddle broke, and it was Clint who hit the ground: "Every rider around the herd...figured how it wouldn't take long for Smoky to get himself out from under the remains of the saddle. For nearly every horse would go to

bucking and raising the dust when being pinched around the flank that way” (*Smoky* 194).

Instead of trying to get out from under the saddle, Smoky turns into it and sets the saddle back in place. Then, when the steer takes off again Smoky follows.

When the speed of both of them was up good and high Smoky of a sudden planted himself till his hocks touched the ground, and when Mr. Steer hit the end of the rope...his head was jerked up under him, he turned in the air, and when he came down *he layed* (*Smoky* 195).

Smoky illustrates an almost unbelievable ability of having a substantial amount of rational thought. In the preface, Will James makes the comment that Smoky is “not a fiction horse that’s wrote about in a dream and made to do things that’s against the nature of a horse to do. Smoky is just a horse, but all horse, and that I think is enough said” (*Smoky* Preface). In general, this statement places the horse at an even higher intelligence level. If Smoky is the model of a “normal” horse, than many of the horses in Southwestern literature have not been given the credit they are due.

When Clint first sees Smoky, the bond he feels towards the horse is immediate. Although Clint had spent the majority of his life breaking horses, he had never come into contact with a horse that matched the one he always dreamed about. When he saw Smoky, Clint believed his

dream had come true: "That pony got a holt of his heart strings from the start" (*Smoky* 84). When Clint takes Smoky to the creek, he does this for two reasons. First, he wants to keep him nearby so he can keep a close watch on him. Second, he wants to keep Smoky out of sight, so when the other cowboys come to claim the new stock they won't take him. Because of Clint's strong feelings for this horse he makes the decision that if he can't keep Smoky for himself, then he will be sure to ruin him before he will allow any one else to have him.

The cowboys in the crew envy Clint. Smoky proves himself to be an amazing horse that any man would be proud to call his own. Because of the bond between Clint and Smoky, the boys never try to separate them. They know Smoky is a one-man horse, and they respect Clint enough not to challenge him.

Old Tom, the superintendent and partial owner of the ranch, does not feel the same way. Old Tom has a reputation for having a good eye for cattle and an even better eye for horses. On one of his visits to the campsite, Tom decides to help work the herd with the cowboys. When he is out among the crew, he almost immediately notices Smoky. Clint is aware of Old Tom's interest in his horse, and it makes him nervous. Knowing Old Tom's reputation, Clint tries to keep Smoky out of his sight. Clint's efforts only seem to make Old Tom more interested in the horse. Finally, Old Tom seems to lose interest in everything else but the horse.

Because Old Tom is half owner of the ranch, he is technically the owner of Smoky. If Old Tom wants this horse, all he has to do is tell Clint. There are unwritten laws on a ranch that are followed by all cowboys. One of these involves the cowboy's livelihood, his horse. "Whenever a horse is swapped or borrowed out of a cowboy's string and handed to somebody else, that cowboy is requested to quit or be fired" (*Smoky* 181). Clint is not worried about his job. His only worry is losing Smoky, and he will do anything to make sure that he is Smoky's only owner. Although Clint is a good worker, Old Tom wants Smoky. Clint is the only thing that stands between Old Tom and Smoky. Old Tom is willing to lose Clint if it means he gets the horse. He believes that any great horse is worth losing a good cowboy.

Clint's fear of losing Smoky causes him to use desperate measures. Because Clint is the only one who has ever ridden Smoky, he knows how the horse will react in most situations. Clint uses this knowledge to his advantage. When Old Tom approaches Clint, he tells him that he is not a good enough rider to stay on Smoky. This enrages Old Tom, and he responds with, "I'll show you whether I can saddle a horse or not, why I've handled and rode broncs that you couldn't get in the same corral with, and before you even was born" (*Smoky* 183).

Clint anticipates this reaction from Old Tom. If Old Tom is angry, then he will transfer this anger to Smoky. Knowing how Smoky will react to strictness, Clint taunts Old Tom into treating the horse harshly and

without patience. In response, Smoky will fight Old Tom, making the horse less desirable. Consequently, Old Tom will no longer want him. Because Old Tom treats Smoky with no respect, the horse throws him twice before the man can blink. By using Smoky to fight his battle, Clint is able to keep his horse. If Clint had fought Old Tom on his own, he would have lost. In a confrontation that is supposed to be between two men, the horse does most of the work.

SMOKY'S TROUBLES

As mentioned before, Smoky's main antagonist in this novel is man. Clint acts as Smoky's first antagonist, but it does not take long for Clint's role to change from antagonist to companion. When Smoky comes into contact with his second human, Clint is not well. Smoky sees this man as his enemy and works to protect Clint. From the time Smoky is five, he does not come into contact with a human that he does not know without Clint there to protect him. At the age of ten, everything changes for Smoky. He comes into contact with a human that he should fear.

Every fall after the last calf had been branded and the herd had been moved to its winter range, all of the cattle horses were turned out to pasture. After Smoky's fifth year chasing cows, he was turned out with the herd. But this winter turned out to be different than any before. Throughout the winter, Clint was kept busy around the ranch and was not able to check on Smoky because of the harsh weather.

Clint was unaware that a horse rustler had been watching Smoky's herd. The rustler ends up stealing the horses from the ranch, sneaking up on the horses to take them by surprise. He runs them into a corral just outside of the ranch's fence line and sits out the winter. When the

weather lightens, he moves the horses further away from the ranch with plans to sell them. Once the horses lose their winter coats, the rustler changes their rocking R brand to a wagon wheel. When the brands are changed and the horses cannot be traced back to the ranch, the rustler gives the herd a closer look. He immediately realizes that he is the new owner of a well-known and reputable cowhorse.

From the first time the rustler tries to handle Smoky, the horse challenges the rustler's skills.

Smoky was born with a natural fear and hate of the human, he'd carried it always, excepting when Clint, that one man was around, but hating humans had never bothered him, not till the dark face of the breed had showed itself over the skyline. With him in sight, that hate has got to grow till murder showed in his eye, and the little fear that was still with him was all that'd kept him from doing damage to the dark complected human (*Smoky* 226).

When the breed tries to rope Smoky, he dodges the rope. Because of his experience with humans, Smoky has learned to listen for the rope. Although Clint never roped him, he was often in the remuda when other cowboys were catching their mounts. Since Smoky was around the rope so often, he learned its sound. So, when he did not want to be caught by the breed, it was easy for him to dodge the rope. It ended up taking the breed two days for him to figure out how to catch the horse. When he

finally caught Smoky, he beat him severely with a willow branch. This was only the first of many beatings. After months of abuse at the hands of the breed, Smoky's reserve dissolves. "Every blow that human had pounded on his head...had left a scar, a scar that healed on the surface, but which went to his heart instead, spread there and stayed raw" (*Smoky* 228). Smoky's heart begins to change. As a defense mechanism, the horse begins to close up. He allows his heart to grow cold and uncaring due to the regular mistreatment from the breed. Smoky's heart "fed on hate for the breed till that hate grewed to a disease [and] killing the breed would be all that could cure it" (*Smoky* 227).

When Smoky gets his first chance at killing the breed, the man is saved when a cowboy that was watching pulls him out of the horse's way. After this incident, the breed tries to starve Smoky into seeing things his way. Finally, the breed abuses Smoky for the last time. He lays a "quirt to him" for no good reason. "That took Smoky by surprise, and the flame that'd been smoldering in his heart loomed up into an active volcano all at once" (*Smoky* 239). Smoky puts all of his energy into getting the breed off his back, and he succeeds. When the breed landed on the ground, Smoky pounces on him.

In *Smiling Country*, The Black tries to kill Hewey but does not succeed. Still, these horses could not be more different. Even though both horses try to kill a human, their reasons are completely different. The Black tries to kill Hewey out of pure spite. The horse is just mean

and angry. Hewey never abuses or mistreats this horse. As for Smoky, he is not naturally mean. He had been made that way by the breed. Smoky kills the breed in retaliation not spite.

When Smoky is stolen, he is introduced to a different type of human and is forced to change his attitude. The breed that stole Smoky did him a mighty injustice by beating him. This treatment caused the gelding to hate, plan the man's death, and finally kill him. Afterward, Smoky is found in the desert with the saddle still on his back. "There'd been dried blood sticking to the hair along his jaw, and some more on his knees" (*Smoky* 242).

When the cowboys that found Smoky try to handle him, he goes wild. He is then renamed The Cougar when he is compared to a "twelve-hundred pound mountain lion" (*Smoky* 243). The Cougar soon becomes famous in the rodeo arena. Filled with the hate left over from the breed, Smoky bucks with everything he has whenever someone climbs on his back. It does not take long for him to be deemed unridable.

Even though he is thought to be crazy, Smoky's intelligence is still noticed. Smoky soon became known as the best bronc around. "There wasn't a horse in the state or any state neighboring that could compete with him in either fighting or bucking...that pony had brains, a big supply of 'em and which showed in the way he's go about throwing his man" (*Smoky* 247). Because of his abuse, Smoky becomes

untrustworthy, angry, and spiteful. Instead of a literal death, Smoky has to endure a spiritual one.

After five years of constant anger Smoky finally starts to slow down. "The heart of the Cougar was shriveling up and leaving space for the heart that was Smoky's" (*Smoky* 263). As his heart of anger shriveled, more and more cowboys ride him. Soon, Smoky is no longer of use to the rodeo circuit and he is sold to a riding stable.

SMOKY'S RETURN

A body, whether horse or human, can only take so much. Smoky's experience with the breed and the rodeo takes a toll on him. He is then sold to a stable owner who rents him out to those who for one reason or another cannot have their own horse. Smoky does his best to survive, but one day he becomes very ill. This illness is not only one of body. For Smoky, it is also one of mind and soul. Smoky is tired, rundown and has lost the will to live. Thinking the horse could not be fixed, the stable owner sells Smoky to the local butcher. A man in the village that sells vegetables purchases Smoky to pull his cart. This man does not take care of Smoky. He feeds him moldy hay and uses a whip on him daily.

After many years, Clint and Smoky's paths finally cross again. While sitting in a bar, Clint notices a man outside beating a horse with a whip. Recognizing the horse as Smoky, Clint goes after the man with the whip. He ends up breaking "the butt end of the whip over [the man's] head" and reclaims the horse (*Smoky* 302).

Clint remembers the horse Smoky once was and works hard to bring him back. After Smoky is moved back to Clint's place for recovery, he is fed grain and supplements. Clint talks to Smoky daily, trying to see just a spark of the horse that used to be. Even though Clint works with

Smoky daily, the horse does not respond. "His old heart had dwindled down till only a sputtering flame was left, and that threatened to go out with the first hint of any kind of breeze" (*Smoky* 304). The original bond between Clint and Smoky makes Clint continue to try and bring Smoky back to his former self. Two months go by with no change in Smoky. "But Clint worked on and kept a hoping" (*Smoky* 304). Watching Smoky suffer slowly begins to depress Clint. Then one day he notices a change coming over the horse. Soon Smoky's coat loses its dullness and he begins to gain weight. Trying to get the horse back that he once knew, Clint begins to let the horse out for exercise. Every day by dark, Smoky returns to the stable. Another year goes by and Smoky is still not himself. He is healthier, but Clint knows the horse is still not whole on the inside.

Then one day as Clint is riding, he spots a herd of horses and their foals. Trying everything he can to make Smoky happy, he brings the herd back to Smoky. When Smoky sees the other horses, he starts "acting near like a two-year-old" (*Smoky* 308). Finally, Clint is able to see a glimmer of the horse he knew in years past. The other horses are able to help Smoky repair the place in his heart that is so badly scarred.

Clint decides to let Smoky loose with the herd. He knows the horse will be fine on his own. When he turns him loose, it is spring and Smoky will not have to worry about food. Although Clint is happy for Smoky, he still wonders if the old horse will ever remember him.

...Then one morning... the morning sun threw a shadow on the door, and as he stuck his head out a nicker was heard...standing out a ways, slick, and shiny, was the mouse colored horse. The good care the cowboy had handed him, and afterwards, the ramblings over the old home range, had done its work. The heart of Smoky had come to life again and full size (*Smoky* 310).

The powerful relationship like no other between humans and horses is filled with lessons about commitment, power, nurturance, connection, and understanding. Here we see how the deep kinship between the human and his horse has connected us to our most intimate feelings of delight, helped us learn to solve problems and to set our creativity free. Though the horse maintains a true sense of horseness, imbedded in these books are a multitude of examples and behaviors that give the horse the complexity of a human being. In addition, these horses are diverse characters that have an effect on each of these stories. The eight different books, and six different authors referenced suggest that this idea is not limited to a certain author or plot line. Furthermore, such definitive examples of horses being portrayed with human feelings, emotions, and thoughts support the theory that each individual author characterizes these horses as significant. In conclusion, considering the horse as a character is no different than considering the human as a

character. I would like to see Southwestern critics recognize the importance of a horse as a character in the future.

END NOTES

¹ We learn about the bond formed between man and horse and its importance in a good working relationship. Some people prefer to work with certain breeds of horses. Humphrey prefers thoroughbreds, Finch, Chico, and many of the other cowboys prefer the Quarter horse or a half-Quarter. Out of necessity, many cowboys use mustangs. Oil skimmers work with draft or draft crosses. In these novels, we are able to learn about each of these breeds.

Chico Baca, a fellow Ranger and good friend to Finch says, “a good horse is like a good woman—some you never forget” (*Wind* 56). The mustang is the smallest of these breeds and usually the least appealing to the eye. However, the mustang is not inferior to the other breeds. These horses are usually bred and born in the wild so they have a rough appearance. Although mustangs are normally small, they are remarkably strong and hardy.

Because Humphrey is not familiar with the mustang, when he first encounters the rough looking little horse and its lack of breeding, he doubts its worth. Chico assures him, “the mustang ess like the Mexican! He ess a tough one” (*Wind* 55). Finch agrees with Chico and adds, “in fact those tough little critters could probably run your thoroughbreds to

death” (*Wind* 55). These horses are bred by nature to withstand nature. They are strong and hearty little creatures whose hearts will outlast the cruelties of the world and once you have earned their trust and respect, they will be loyal. Punkin and the horses caught on the way to the HF ranch are all mustangs.

Another hearty breed is the thoroughbred. This is a combination of English riding mares and Arabian stallions from the Middle East. Thoroughbreds are bred for speed and endurance. They are larger than the mustang, and their bodies are more streamlined. Many refer to these horses as warmbloods because they have a natural nervousness about them. They are also higher strung than the Quarter horse. Old Heck and some of the mares in the remuda are thoroughbreds.

Rafter, Hawk, Gato, and many of the cowponies are Quarter horses, which are specifically bred for working cattle. The Quarter horse is a combination of the “mixture of a lot of different breeds—Thoroughbreds...Arabians, Morgans and probably a little bit of mustang.” When explaining the breed to Humphrey, Finch says the quarter horse is “just a great mixture of bloodlines, but they’re smart, easy to handle, cat-quick; they have cow sense, and are tough too! And you can trust ‘em” (*Wind* 56). Quarter horses got their name because “for a quarter of a mile they can run faster than any horse alive” (*Wind* 56)

A horse not known for its speed but known for its amazing strength is the draft horse. Rock and Rowdy are both draft horses that weigh "in under harness at about sixteen hundred pounds each" (*Fist* 79). These are very large horses, and some can get up to twenty-two hundred pounds. During the day of the oil fields and the horse drawn plow, these were great assets. There would be no oil fields without the skinner and his well-trained draft horses. A pair of these horses can pull an average load of three thousand pounds.

There is also mention of the horses that make up the remuda, some of these horses are Quarters, some Thoroughbreds, some mustangs, and some are a mixture. These horses are the life's breath of the cowboys. Without horses, work on a ranch would be nearly impossible.

Horses are such a large part of the cowboy's life that he becomes dependant upon them and is somewhat lost without them. In *Where the Wind Lives*, when there is an Indian attack on the ranch, the men decide to release the horses in order to make it more difficult for the Indians to kill and/or steal them. When the Indians finally retreat, the cowboys are left horseless. Considering the ruckus the cowboys make over the situation, one would think they had lost their legs. The boys make every excuse they can think of to keep themselves from having to round up the herd on their own two feet.

The mule is another equine type animal used to keep the homestead alive. Mules are half horse and half donkey, a mixture of strength and stubbornness used to pull wagons, plow fields, and do other sorts of hard labor. Work without the mule would be a great deal more difficult and much harder on humans. Many farmers use them because they are somewhat sturdier than the horse and quite a bit cheaper.

It does not truly matter which breed of horse one prefers. What matters are the bonds formed between horse and rider. It is possible for a person to form a different type of bond with each horse based on that horse's individual personality and skills. For instance, some cowboys used one horse to round up cattle and another for travel. There are also times when the connection between a horse and its rider is so strong that the rider does all he can to insure his horse's safety and well-being. Sometimes this bond takes years to form and other times it is instantaneous.

² Another example of a horse following this trait is in a Western Novel. In the opening paragraphs of the first chapter in Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, some cowboys are having difficulty roping a horse out of the corral. We know nothing about the horse's background other than what can be assumed by what we are told. The story begins with a commotion in the train station where a horse in the corral on the landing

always seems to be one step ahead of the cowboys who are trying to catch him. This horse “would not be caught, no matter who threw the rope” (*Virginian* 1). We are given the impression that the horse is mocking the cowboys: “the gravity of his horse expression made the matter one of high comedy...the rope would sail out at him, but he was already elsewhere; and if horses laugh, gayety must have abounded in the corral (*Virginian* 1).

A man in the group has been watching this spectacle from the top rail of the corral, and he comes forward. He realizes that if they are going to catch the horse they are going to have to outthink him. Trying to outmaneuver him is not working. The man approaches the horse slowly and instead of holding his rope at his shoulder, he holds “the rope down low, by his leg” (*Virginian* 2). Before the horse can react to the man's movement, he is caught.

This horse is wise to the rope and knows how to watch the cowboy's movements and anticipate those movements before he throws the rope. The horse counteracts the movements of the cowboy to avoid the rope. The horse is so in tune to the cowboy's movements, we can assume he is broken and has perfected this talent because of his experience with humans. We can see how the horse may have considered this a game, and dodging the rope becomes a form of entertainment for him.

³ In *The Virginian*, there is a colt that has a lot of drive and that works hard for his human. He works so hard that one day he almost collapses in mid-stride. Balaam, his human counterpart, is a man who has a reputation for being cruel to horses. When Balaam and the Virginian are traveling together, searching for a bunch of runaway horses, Balaam holds true to his reputation. Mistakenly, Balaam shows this abuse to the Virginian, whipping the colt, saying, "He played he was tired" (*Virginian* 220). The first time the Virginian witnesses this abuse, he decides not to step in. When Balaam does it again, the Virginian then feels he owes it to the horse to set this man straight. This time Balaam hits the colt so hard that he collapses, and once the Virginian realizes what is happening, "vengeance like a blast struck Balaam" through the fists of the Virginian (*Virginian* 221). The Virginian beats Balaam bloody and then slings him up "so he lay across Pedro's (the horse's) saddle... vengeance...come and gone" (*Virginian* 221).

The Virginian allows Balaam to continue on the journey with him, but only on his terms. He tells Balaam that if he does not want to come along, then the colt would leave without him. The Virginian refuses to leave the colt alone with a man like Balaam. After allowing the colt time to recover, the Virginian and Balaam move on, deciding to find a resting spot shortly before sundown. While the Virginian goes to look for signs of the runaway herd, he leaves Balaam behind to find a good place to bed down.

Balaam dismounts, leading Pedro while looking for a good campsite. When they near the woods, Pedro refuses to walk any further even though Balaam is pulling on him. Instead, Pedro pulls loose and runs into the middle of the river. Balaam, trying to stop the colt, aims to fire a shot in front of Pedro. Because of his bruised hand, Balaam misses and shoots the horse in the leg. Balaam then hears noises coming from the grove of trees behind him and realizes why Pedro is spooked. There are Indians in the woods that “for the past hour had been skirting his movements unseen, and now waited for him in the woods” (*Virginian* 226). The relationship between Pedro and Balaam is full of irony.

Balaam has a reputation for mistreating horses. He ends up getting a taste of his own medicine when the *Virginian* shows him how it feels to be the one getting the beating. Over the remainder of the day, Balaam comes to terms with why the *Virginian* gave him a beating. Then he accidentally wounds Pedro when the horse is trying to save his life. If it had not been for the horse’s intelligence, he would have done what Balaam had asked of him, and they would have walked straight into a trap. Sadly, Balaam ends up rewarding the colt by shooting him between the eyes.

Balaam “looked at Pedro, the horse he had first maimed and now ruined, to whom he probably owed his life...the horse rolled over with a ball in his brain... the best reward that remained for him” (*Virginian* 227).

Because of Pedro's intelligence, the life of Balaam is saved. Some would argue that Pedro does not use his intellect to locate the Indians, but rather uses his instincts. Pedro's experience teaches him that Indians are dangerous, and he should stay away from them. Still, there are some instances where nature overrides intelligence.

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VITA

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