



Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen: Reflections on Sixty and Beyond

Larry McMurtry

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In a lucid, brilliant work of nonfiction -- as close to an autobiography as his readers are likely to get -- Larry McMurtry has written a family portrait that also serves as a larger portrait of Texas itself, as it was and as it has become.

Using as a springboard an essay by the German literary critic Walter Benjamin that he first read in Archer City's Dairy Queen, McMurtry examines the small-town way of life that big oil and big ranching have nearly destroyed. He praises the virtues of everything from a lime Dr. Pepper to the lost art of oral storytelling, and describes the brutal effect of the sheer vastness and emptiness of the Texas landscape on Texans, the decline of the cowboy, and the reality and the myth of the frontier.

McMurtry writes frankly and with deep feeling about his own experiences as a writer, a parent, and a heart patient, and he deftly lays bare the raw material that helped shape his life's work: the creation of a vast, ambitious, fictional panorama of Texas in the past and the present. Throughout, McMurtry leaves his readers with constant reminders of his all-encompassing, boundless love of literature and books.

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