

The virginian essay

Literature



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The Virginian Owen Wister's *The Virginian* is well-known for its over-romantic attitudes toward the cowboy past in America – the attitudes that are not unique for the history of American literature.

Despite the visible complexity and controversial nature of the Virginian's character, Wister was able to depict the Virginian in ways that position him as a new prototype of a romantic and sensible hero of the Wild West. "The Virginian's pistol came out, and his hand lay on the table, holding it unaimed. And with a voice as gentle as ever, the voice that sounded almost like a caress, but drawling a very little more than usual, so that there was almost a space between each word, he issues his orders to the man Trampas: 'When you call me that, SMILE.' And he looked at Trampas across the table.

"(Wister) No other passage from Wister's book is as popular as the already legendary phrase "when you call me that, SMILE" (Wister). This ordinary set of words reveals extraordinary Wister's attitudes towards his character, which stretch from oversimplification of the Wild Western ideology to the almost excessive romanticism of the cowboy culture. In this context, the writer seeks to establish a new sense of the code of honor, which his protagonist so zealously follows from the very beginning to the very end of the book. The passage that follows reveals the true Wister's attitude towards his character: "So I perceived a new example of the old truth, that the letter means nothing until the spirit gives it life" (Wister). Idealization of the West, along with the intensive sensibility and rough commitment to justice turn into the two opposite ends of the one continuum, where the writer as an intermediate tries to prove the relevance of his love toward the Virginian – the feeling that closely resembles a pleasant and almost caring feelings,

which school teachers usually experience toward their best pupils. Works

CitedWister, O. The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains.

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