

The Places of Man: Nostalgia and Loss in The Last Picture Show

Altha Cravey, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Leo Zonn, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The narrative of *The Last Picture Show* mourns the loss of the iconic westerner as well as the passing of his home place, the Old West. It is a tale set in the 1950s that links the loss of the Old West to the 'decline of man' through the diminishment of his powers, practices, places, and his all-important history. Our interrogation of masculinity and place in *The Last Picture Show* suggests that the film represents a clear and yet powerful sensitivity to the ways in which particular masculinities are constituted in specific places as a means of exploring broader US social transformations caught up with shifting gender and sexual relationships in the mid-twentieth century. Ultimately, the film is a nostalgic lamentation for the decline of masculinity within the settings of his places that is less than relational, because the focus is upon a weakened man in terms of his daily lived practices and identities, yet ultimately it is not concerned with the nature of the hegemonic discourse within which he has been operating vis a vis women, and so it is about his loss, not her gain.