



Midnight Cowboy (RosettaBooks Into Film)

James Leo Herlihy

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Midnight Cowboy is considered by many to be one of the best American novels published since World War II. The main story centers around Joe Buck, a naive but eager and ambitious young Texan, who decides to leave his dead-end job in search of a grand and glamorous life he believes he will find in New York City. But the city turns out to be a much more difficult place to negotiate than Joe could ever have imagined. He soon finds himself and his dreams compromised. Buck's fall from innocence and his relationship with the crippled street hustler Ratso Rizzo form the novel's emotional nucleus. This unlikely pairing of Ratso and Joe Buck is perhaps one of the most complex portraits of friendship in contemporary literature.

The focus on male friendship follows a strong path cut by Twain's Huck and Jim, Melville's Ishmael and Queequeg, Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby, and Kerouac's Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. Midnight Cowboy takes a well-deserved place among a group of distinguished American novels that write--often with unnerving candor--about those who live on the fringe of society.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Leo Herlihy was born in 1927 in Detroit, Michigan to a working class family. After serving in World War II, Herlihy studied art, literature, and music at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, whose faculty had boasted such luminaries as William De Kooning and John Cage. After a professor told Herlihy that he had no future as a writer, the disillusioned Herlihy turned his attention to theater, where he met with considerable success and found acting roles in more than fifty plays over the span of several years.

But Herlihy continued writing fiction despite the discouragement he had received and in 1960 he published All Fall Down, a largely critically acclaimed work which was later adapted for film. In 1965 he published Midnight Cowboy, which cemented his reputation as a serious writer.

After the success of Midnight Cowboy, Herlihy retreated from the public eye and turned his attention to teaching. He took creative writing posts at the City College of New York, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Southern California. Herlihy died in Los Angeles in 1993 from an overdose of sleeping medication.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

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