



The Field of Vision

Wright Morris

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The Field of Vision Wright Morris
Winner of the National Book Award

"Wright Morris seems to me the most important novelist of the American middle generation. Through a large body of work—which, unaccountably, has yet to receive the wide attention it deserves—Mr. Morris has adhered to standards which we have come to identify as those of the most serious literary art. His novel *The Field of Vision* brilliantly climaxes his most richly creative period. It is a work of permanent significance and relevance to those who cannot be content with less than a full effort to cope with the symbolic possibilities of the human condition at the present time."—John W. Aldridge

One of America's most distinguished authors, Wright Morris (1910–1988) wrote thirty-three books.

The Field of Vision Details

Date : Published by Signet (first published 1956)

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Author : Wright Morris

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From Reader Review The Field of Vision for online ebook

Catherine Lienhard says

The McKees at a bull fight in Mexico. The impact on the various lives of the protagonist. Young Jordon McKee is in his Davy Crockett hat and his great grandfather the old frontiersman. Boyd is the soliloquizer, squirting soda pop at the bull who loses.

(read 8/14/67)

Jerry Pogan says

Well written but incredibly boring. Narrated from the viewpoint of several different characters I could never find a central point or, really, a story.

Caroline says

A book about transformation, the past and the present. I loved the structure and the prose.

Patrick Murtha says

One of Morris's three or four best novels, which means that it is among the best American novels of the 20th Century. Never destined for popularity, though, because Morris is always astringent and unsentimental, and many readers cringe from that.

Miriam says

I thought the narrative got progressively weaker. At first, I could find differences between the various characters as the omniscient narrator takes turns on their views and experiences. McKee at the beginning is not particularly likable, but he's a recognizable fellow: a narrow-minded, small-town guy who finds derisive humor in everything different from him, except his friend Boyd, whom he worships. As time goes by, the characters lose their distinctness and it's more the narrator's voice as he ruminates on all sorts of things, using the characters just as jumping-off points.

If Scanlon found the trip out West to be so difficult and terrifying, why does he decide to live that moment over and over in his memory? He says that you have to go through hell to get to heaven, but his life nearly freezing to death with his feet in a stove and living in a town that never really became a town doesn't seem like heaven to me (or to him, really). Where did all his strength go?

I don't get Boyd, either. He's charismatic and daring and full of potential. But just potential, nothing actual to

show for it. All that stuff about hitting bottom and failure being the new success just doesn't resonate with me. At a certain point, I found myself agreeing with McKee (!): quit talking about stuff and splitting hairs and just do something.

It's not the same for Boyd to throw young Gordon over the fence to retrieve his cap. I don't believe he's reproducing himself or his view by forcing someone else into it. That seems anti-thetical to Boyd's view that the people who are different stand out on their own.

As for the bullfighting/Mexico stuff: meh.

Judy says

The National Book Award winner for 1957 was a challenging read. The entire story, such as it is, takes place during a bullfight in Mexico. I have yet to read a bullfight story I liked. Most of the book consists of flashbacks concerning the people involved in the life of a man named McKee. For the entire first half of it, I was not completely sure who anyone was.

Each character is a variation on eccentricity and most of them live in Omaha, Nebraska, though off the beaten path of mainstream American life. Some of them have sparks of being gifted, whether as an artist or a frontiersman, except for McKee himself who is a dud trying to make sense of all these oddballs.

The bullfight and arena (the field of vision) are meant to be symbolic. The theme seemed to me to be something about the banality of America. Wright Morris claims that he wrote the book to show that "the range and nature of the plains imagination...contains elements that are peculiarly American...There, mirrored in the bullring, a group of touring plainsmen see, for the first time, the drama of their tangled lives."

I am grateful he explained that on the jacket flap because otherwise I would have missed it. I did not enjoy reading this book.

Rachel says

1957 National Book Award winner. I liked it at first, but soon got tired of the frequent shifts of perspective and of one character's use of "bullfight as metaphor for his life." Blame Hemingway if you like, but using bullfights as a metaphor for anything strikes me as boring. Even though it was only 250 pages, it felt overlong.
