

now lacks. But despite this weakness Nelli has produced a first rate study.

Indiana University, Bloomington

John V. Lombardi

*The Inland Ground: An Evocation of the American Middle West.* By Richard Rhodes. (New York: Atheneum, 1970. Pp. 351. Illustrations, notes, index. \$7.95.)

Richard Rhodes' Middle West is a sweep of the American earth from the St. Louis arch to the eastern border of Colorado. It includes, principally, the states of Missouri and Kansas, where he was born and grew up and to which he has recently returned after an education at Yale University, a brief stint on the staff of *Newsweek* magazine, and a tour of duty with the Air Force.

In an introductory chapter recalling his boyhood on a farm near Independence, Missouri, the author explains that succeeding chapters will discuss many different subjects but will, in the end, "come together to demonstrate something of the region, this place or these places, this inland ground" (p. 10).

The book is what the subtitle promises: an evocation. Short on historical background, it treats the "forbears" of the region with three pages about Thomas Jefferson, who "shaped the inland ground," and with somewhat longer passages about Josiah Gregg, who published a book of his travels as bookkeeper for a Santa Fe trader in 1844; Henry Chatillon, Francis Parkman's guide; William Hornaday, who reported on the vanishing buffalo herd to the Smithsonian Institution in the 1880s; and a Nebraska settler's wife named Mollie Sanford, who kept a diary in the 1850s. Nothing more.

The rest is a twentieth century kaleidoscope. Fulton, Missouri, where Winston Churchill gave his famous address in 1946, is, more importantly for Rhodes, the home of Jesse Ernest "Outlaw" Howard, locally famous for his roadside signs—"Whatever Became of John the Baptist's Head?"—and the author of an unpublished autobiography. Independence inspires a moving tribute to Harry Truman and Abilene an equally moving eulogy of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Iowa City is Paul Engle and the program in creative writing of the University of Iowa. Kansas City is Homer Clark Wadsworth of the Lincoln Foundation. St. Louis is the Reproductive Biology Research Foundation of sexologists William H. Masters and Virginia Johnson and the arch.

*Inland Ground* is an uneven book. On the subjects of wheat, coyote hunting, hog butchering, Truman, and Eisenhower Rhodes is poetic. At other times, as in his chapters on Wadsworth and Masters and Johnson, he hardly rises above the journalistic level of the Sunday

supplements of provincial newspapers. But in the end the book does "come together to demonstrate something of the region . . . this inland ground."

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William E. Wilson

*The Lure of the Land: A Social History of the Public Lands from the Articles of Confederation to the New Deal.* By Everett Dick. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970. Pp. xii, 413. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$9.50.)

The objective of this latest history of the public domain is to trace the process by which ownership of land was transferred from the government to private hands. Everett Dick has oriented his study around the accepted thesis that a great difference in viewpoint separated the law givers in the East from the land users in the West. This difference in attitude towards the land decreed that the nation "was a house divided against itself" from the very beginning of the westward movement. That the nation was not rent asunder over this division, Dick maintains, was due to the fluidity of the frontier—the process by which "new settlers gradually became old settlers and their attitude and thinking gradually became more eastern, yet they retained a measure of the western outlook" (p. 350). Given the present ecological crisis which is the result of the continuing mismanagement and exploitation of the natural environment, most readers will find it rather difficult to accept Dick's conclusion that the western viewpoint "vanished" with the closing of the frontier.

In developing this theme the author has largely plowed old ground in relating the story of the attempts of the pioneers to satisfy their hunger for land—either with the aid of federal laws or, more usually, in spite of them. Dick's effort is commendable for focusing more than most other accounts on the role of the farmer-settlers as speculators and "land hogs." Furthermore, he raises the central question of "what per cent of the land was subject to these practices" but he unfortunately dismisses it as "difficult to determine" (p. 364). With all due respect for Dick's very significant contributions to our understanding of western history, it must be pointed out that if the question of "how much" is to be answered at all, it will be through the techniques of quantification that recent students have brought to the problem—techniques and results which are unfortunately ignored in this traditionally oriented descriptive history.

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