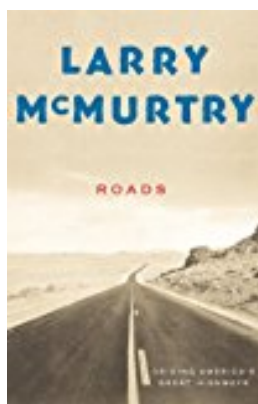


[PDF] Roads : Driving America's Great Highways

Larry McMurry - pdf download free book



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Description:

You couldn't find a blunter or more accurate title for Larry McMurry's third work of nonfiction. *Roads* is indeed an automotive odyssey, in which the author traverses America on one highway after another. As such, the book has a long and honorable pedigree, stretching back to by way of , and many readers will compare it to William Least Heat-Moon's bucolic ramble, . That, however, would be a mistake. The last thing McMurry has in mind is a leisurely tour of small-town America--he's interested in the interstates themselves, "the great roads, the major migration routes that carry

Americans long distances quickly." No wonder the speedometer seldom dips below 65 mph throughout the entire narrative. McMurtry is a man on the move, and even his meditative moments fly by in the linguistic equivalent of fourth gear.

Actually, there may be another reason the author is reluctant to apply the brakes: his distaste for various towns, villages, counties, and entire states. Planning a trip to the Texas hill country? McMurtry notes that "the soil is too stoney to farm or ranch, the hills are just sort of forested speed bumps, and the people, mostly of stern Teutonic stock, are suspicious, tightfisted, unfriendly, and mean." Missouri is "a place to get through as rapidly as possible," Ohio and Georgia "really aren't pleasant," and woe to the traveler who lingers in the one-horse towns of the West, "where it's not even wise to roll down one's windows--if you avoid getting murdered you might still breathe in some deadly desert germ."

This crankiness does have an undeniable comic appeal. Yet *Roads* turns out to be a sentimental journey after all, in the course of which McMurtry hopes to resurrect some of the *élan vital* he lost in the wake of his 1991 heart surgery. Driving, like reading itself, just may prompt some remembrance of things past: As I prepared to drive those same overfamiliar roads again it occurred to me that my effort was obliquely , a retracing of my past that is analogous to the many rereadings I've done in the last few years, always of books I read before the surgery. In these rereadings and redrivings I'm searching, not for lost time, but for lost feelings, for the elements of my old personality that are still unaccounted for. I'm not anguished about these absentees, just curious and somewhat wistful. Indeed, anguish is largely absent from McMurtry's account, and he doesn't dwell often on this scenario of loss and recovery. Still, it comes through particularly strongly at the end, when he compares his own, transient experience of place to his father's. These final chapters cast a sadder and more substantial light on the preceding ones--and make this circuitous, sometimes tetchy book a trip worth taking. --*James Marcus*

From Library Journal McMurtry, who won a Pulitzer Prize for *Lonesome Dove* and Oscar for the screenplay for *The Last Picture Show*, has now delved into the "on the road" genre. He covers most of the country with the exception of the Northeast (reflecting a dislike of I-95) and limits his roads to primarily interstate highways, usually flying to some point in the United States, renting a car, and driving back via the interstates to his home in Archer City, TX. Along the way, he comments on writers indigenous to the area, his own books and screenplays, his likes and dislikes, and his own life. On the whole, there is nothing exceptional here--the best chapter in the book concerns the dirt roads of the author's youth. Recommended only for libraries with a large demand for the author's fiction and those that wish to provide some supplemental autobiographical material on McMurtry.

--*John McCormick, New Hampshire State Lib., Concord*

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