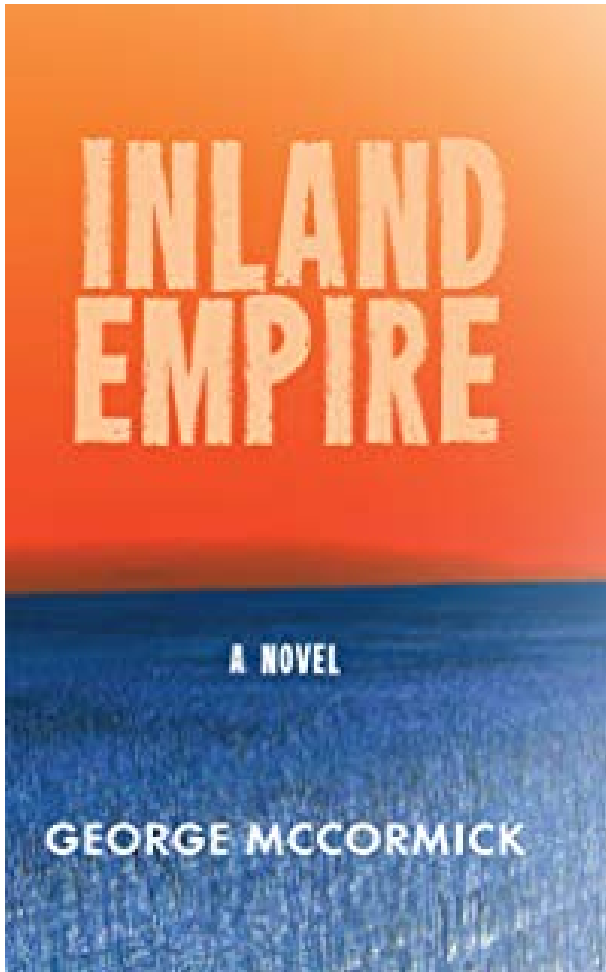


# Inland Empire



<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Author:</b>	George McCormick
<b>Goodreads Rating:</b>	4.64
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Like the smog that forms the subject of an acclaimed photographic exhibition, Inland Empire is what it isn't. The novel isn't about a young landscape photographer who leaves the concrete vistas of his California suburb for a community college teaching post in Oklahoma. It is a spiritual journey into place and time, guided by grain elevator signifiers and horizon lines. The American West. Religion. Skateboarding.

War. Masculinity. Loss.

The indelible image.

A deeply evocative tableaux, Inland Empire does what only the best art can: it resists classification. "I thought I would feel more. What I wasn't expecting was this disconnect between the blankness of these nearly anonymous spaces and the depth of sorrow they were supposed to contain. It was with this in mind that, after selecting a dozen photographs, I developed them into 16' x 20' Type C color prints. As I organized the show and thought about what to include on each photograph's placard, it occurred to me that what I had been fighting against, what had created such unease in me, was the realization of how a historical it all felt. Here

were these spaces that were supposed to be defined by the human events that had happened within them, yet they refused to act or look their part. Increasingly, these landscapes, as photographed, seemed indifferent toward the narratives that had marked them on the map. My unease came from my guilt that I was actively making photographs that encouraged the act of forgetting. Yet that guilt led to a compositional choice: maybe by refusing political geography and not naming these spaces on the placards, the photographs might begin to restore some other narrative: some story that was perhaps previous, or beside the historical one; one that wasn't totally recognizable but still signified." "Inland Empire is an astonishing book. Haunting and formally inventive, it has become one of my favorite novels of recent memory. Imagine the ghosts of Woody Guthrie and Roberto Bolaño scribbling poems together on the back of a Taco Bueno wrapper, and you begin to imagine George McCormick's Oklahoma." —Bayard Godsave, author of *er Apocalypses* and *Torture Tree*

"An exquisite meditation on place and history, a meticulous character study of an artist, a momentum-gathering page-turner—Inland Empire is all of these. McCormick somehow makes the inchoate process of creating art into the basis of an urgent private investigation drama. A distant cousin of W.G. Sebald's *Vertigo*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, or even Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, this book is deeply imagined and felt, its places and people richly textured. I savored every word, every revelation." —Jerry Gabriel, author of *Drowned Boy* and *The Let Go*

"The photographer-narrator of George McCormick's haunting, inspiring *Inland Empire* sees into the landscapes, ruins and life of the American West with a visionary urgency. As in the essay-novels of Sebald, questions of history and imagination are charged with understated and overwhelming emotion. Reading this book, you feel your eyes open and open." —Rob Roensch, author of *The Wildflowers of Baltimore*

George McCormick is the author of *Salton Sea* (Noemi Press, 2012) and his work has been published, or is forthcoming, in *Epoch*, *Willow Springs*, *The Santa Monica Review*, and *Arcadia*. His short story "The Mexican" won a 2013 O. Henry Prize. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Cameron University. He lives with wife and daughter in Lawton, Oklahoma.