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Review: The Glen Canyon Reader

By Mathew Barrett Gross

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Mathew Barrett Gross. *The Glen Canyon Reader*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2003. 200 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2242-1 (paper). US\$17.95

In his introductory piece, "Clear Creek," Mathew Gross makes it clear that he would like to see the Glen Canyon Dam breached; so it is no surprise that nearly all of the essays he chose for this anthology support that point of view. However, Gross, a free-lance writer who lives in Moab, Utah, chose 19 essays of such historical significance or literary merit that they present a powerful image of the canyon as it was before construction of the Glen Canyon Dam, the canyon as it was shortly after the dam was completed, and what it has become today. He also includes some of the controversy surrounding the efforts that have been and are being made to drain Lake Powell.

In this anthology of memoirs and natural history Gross has chosen some of the top literature about the area. Some of the authors whose works are included are Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, John McPhee, John Wesley Powell, and Zane Grey. The book is organized chronologically and presents a historical perspective from the first written documentation about Glen Canyon (*The Dominguez-Escalante Journal*) to stories written after the dam was built ("Let the river run through it" by David Brower and "Glen Canyon and persistence of wilderness" by Jared Farmer).

Whatever your views about dams and the Glen Canyon Dam in particular, this book is worth reading for the literature included. As I read through the stories, I could visualize the area as the authors of the vignettes saw them: the Cathedral, the Music Temple, Tapestry Wall, and so forth. I hiked with Zane Grey or Charles Eggert the rugged six miles to see the Navajo Mountains framed by Rainbow Bridge at sunset. I felt the anguish of the various writers as they watched Lake Powell rise and slowly cover the many canyons and bemoaned the loss of the Anasazi ruins. This book provides a chance for people to understand the history of Glen Canyon or to "flip through the pages, to poke around and explore as one would have done in Glen Canyon and many still do at Lake Powell and elsewhere on the magnificent plateau of the Colorado River" (p. 14).

People who would find *The Glen Canyon Reader* interesting reading include

those interested in natural history and ecology; anyone interested in the Colorado River, its environment and the Southwest; anyone who enjoys good literature; and anyone who has been to Glen Canyon, or plans to go to the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The book will make a good addition to public and academic libraries.

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