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Review: *The Hanford Reach: A Land of Contrasts*

By Susan Zwinger and Stamford D. Smith

Reviewed by Adam M. Sowards

University of Idaho, USA

Susan Zwinger, Stamford D. Smith, and Skip Smith (Photographer). *The Hanford Reach: A Land of Contrasts*. Desert Places series. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004. 79 pp. ISBN 0-8165-2376-2 (paper). US\$13.95.

Through words and black-and-white images, writer Susan Zwinger and photographer Skip Smith skillfully capture this unique area in south-central Washington State. The book conforms to the format of the University of Arizona Press' Desert Places series, edited by Gregory McNamee, and is a welcome addition. Simply put, *The Hanford Reach: A Land of Contrasts* is a beautiful book, depicting "a landscape of irony" through exquisite prose and stunning photographs (p. 5).

Recently protected as a national monument, the Hanford Reach is the last remaining free-flowing stretch on the Northwest's Columbia River. It also happens to run adjacent to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation where scientists processed the plutonium for the bomb dropped on Nagasaki. Over the years, Hanford produced and continues to store millions of gallons of radioactive waste, and during the infamous Green Run in 1949, the reservation released eight thousand curies of Iodine -131 over two days secretly causing a contamination far greater than the better known Three-Mile Island incident. Juxtaposed in the Reach now are rare and endangered species, amazing geological features, and some of the most wild desert spaces in the American West. The blending of these profane and sacred spaces makes the Hanford Reach a peculiar place, but one that can teach us about our society's relationship to nature.

If the place itself is curious, this small book is unusually rich. Smith's photographs are haunting while showing spare geographies, geological features, fragile flora, and human artifacts. The photos perfectly complement Zwinger's economical and evocative writing. She blurs genres, effectively moving between roles as naturalist, historian, and traveler. Because of Zwinger's versatility, readers will learn about Roza

lava and the sego lily, thunderstorms and desert heat, Yakama Natives and government scientists. Some readers may judge one or another of these subjects handled better than others. Naturalists may wish for more discussion of various plants or animals, while historians might prefer greater complexity for the American Indian history presented. Nevertheless, all readers will appreciate Zwinger's love of and respect for this desert land and its inhabitants.

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