



# Journal of Sedimentary Research

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*Bedrock—Writers on the Wonders of Geology*, edited by Lauret E. Savoy, Eldridge M. Moores & Judith E. Moores, 2006. Trinity University Press, 1 Trinity Place, San Antonio, TX 78212-7200, USA. xvii + 339 pages. Hardcover: price USD 45.00; ISBN 1-59534-022-X. Paperback: price USD 24.95; ISBN 1-59534-023-8.



Every now and then geologists are surprised by the publication of a book that merits their attention, though the book has little or nothing to do with their specialism. This is such a book. It deals with the earth sciences, but few earth scientists will learn something new in their discipline. On the other hand, all earth scientists with an open mind for beauty—but this holds also for other scientists, and without doubt also for millions of non-scientists—will feel happy reading this exceptional book.

It is an anthology, composed by Lauret Savoy (professor of geology and environmental studies at Mount Holyoke College), Eldridge Moore (professor emeritus of geology at the University of California, Davis) and his wife Judith. With the advise of numerous helpers, and apparently letting a small project run out of hand, they collected a huge amount of geology-related texts, 74 of which were selected to be included in this book, obviously mainly in the form of excerpts. The original texts cover a wide variety of topics, have been written by an equally wide variety of authors, ranging from classical ones such as Pliny the Younger to the pioneers of geology such as James Hutton and Archibald Geikie, to well known geologists of the last century such as Hans Cloos, Haroun Tazieff, Stephen Jay Gould and John Imbrie, to nature conservationists such as Rachel Carson and John Muir, to famous literature writers such as James Joyce, Mark Twain and John Steinbeck, to poets such as Charles Simic, Ofelia Zepeda and Gary Snyder. In combination with many more authors, they are responsible for high-quality, well readable texts, that either deal with earth-science phenomena or express feelings that they underwent when “taking a bath” in a specific landscape.

Many of the authors will be unknown for most of the readers, and, obviously, not all authors will appeal to all readers. On the other hand, I am convinced that each reader will be struck by at least a few of the contributions. It has therefore been a wise decision of the editors to include a list with some of the most relevant data concerning each of the contributors, including the titles of some other works that they have published. This provides the opportunity to the reader to easily find more works of the authors that impressed him for one reason or another.

The contributions to *Bedrock* have been grouped by the editors according to 9 topics: (1) Of Rock and Stone (with my favorite: an excerpt from *A Passage to India* by E.M. Foster); (2) Deep Time (my favorite: an excerpt from the English translation *Wind, Sand and Stars* from an originally French work by Antoine de Saint-Exupérie); (3) Faults, Earthquakes, and Tsunamis (my favorite: an excerpt from the English translation of *An Account of my Hut* from an originally Japanese work by Kamo no Chomei); (4) Volcanoes and Eruptions (my favorite: an excerpt from *Life on the Rocks: The Galápagos* [in: *Teaching a Stone to Talk*] by Annie Dillard); (5) On Mountains and Highlands (my favourite: an excerpt from *My First Summer in the Sierra* by John

Muir); (6) Rivers to the Sea (my favorite: an excerpt from *Atchafalaya* [in: *The Control of Nature*] by John McPhee); (7) The Work of Ice (my favorite: an excerpt from *Ice Ages: Solving the Mystery* by John Imbrie and his daughter Katherine Palmer Imbrie); (8) Wind and Desert (my favorite: an excerpt from *How the Flow of Air has Shaped Life, Myth, and the Land* by Jan DeBlieu); and (9) Living on Earth (with my favorite: an excerpt from *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck).

Where I mention my favorite contributions in the above paragraph, I am aware that this is not only a very subjective judgment, but also a judgment that is not completely fair. But reviewers can never be truly objective, as they carry with them their own past, with the preferences that developed at least partly on the basis of personal experiences. And those are never the same for others. But that is just why this book is so exciting: I'm sure that everybody will be touched by some stories, reports or poems. That is why this book is an ideal present: for earth scientists who might become too much absorbed by their own specialism and who need a view of the earth sciences from an entirely different perspective, but also for people who do not understand why most earth scientists are so fascinated by their profession: this book will give them a clue.

For most earth-science books, the role of the editor(s) is relatively easy to judge on the basis of structure of the book, omissions or overlapping chapters, consequent use of symbols and terminology throughout the book, etc. A judgment on such criteria is impossible here: only the selection of the contributions can be considered as their main achievement (in addition to the smaller tasks such as writing an introduction, preparing short biographies of the contributors, etc.). I feel, however, that the editors did a wonderful job in their selection procedure, and I can only hope that this anthology will become a classic in itself, just as some of the works from which excerpts have been included.

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