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## K. Hare, Buckled in the Denver Basin

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efficient and sustainable use of local water that careful planning and scientific advances promoted. Grace argues that with continued conservation efforts and more responsible water projects, the West may be able to sustain its most important resource, water.

Grace covers an ambitious amount of material, yet manages to draw in the reader with colorful and engaging stories that reveal a deep connection with the subject. Due to its fast pace, the scope of the book can be jarring at times. Nevertheless, the book provides glimpses into important historical events and fosters a deeper understanding of how and why the West developed the water law system it continues to struggle with today. *Dam Nation* is an excellent choice for both a reader first exploring the subject of Western water use and a more knowledgeable reader looking for a solid general background on the subject presented in a highly engaging format.

*Jenna Anderson*

**K. Hare, *Buckled in the Denver Basin*, Bluestack Consulting, Inc., Falcon (2012); 310 pp; ISBN 0985892110; paperback.**

The best kind of fiction teaches us things we could never have known about ourselves, and about the world around us. The worst kind teaches nothing at all. In *Buckled*, author K. Hare uses a murder mystery to inform the audience about real issues concerning Colorado water; namely, that groundwater in the Denver Basin is a non-renewable resource that is drying up more quickly than many realtors and politicians are ready to admit. While *Buckled* might not be an academically impressive novel, it does have something to say about water law in Colorado. The book presents secretive issues in local law and politics, which could provide insight for those unfamiliar with the intricate shortcomings of water politics in Colorado.

The novel takes place in the fictitious town of Breeze, Colorado, located somewhere on the hot, dry eastern plains. The town, like many others in the area, pumps its water directly from the Denver Basin. Since the town's inception, greedy land developers and corrupt politicians worked together on a lucrative campaign of bribery, blackmail, and public misinformation. In doing so, they convince most of the public that suburban properties will retain their value despite further development because, as the public has been falsely informed, Breeze "doesn't have a water problem." But the truth is Breeze itself was built on "lies of endless water," and, as the novel opens, Breeze and its citizens are in serious trouble. The book begins with the protagonist, writer, and activist, Aggie Boyle, stumbling across the remains of developer Randolph "Bluster" Brown lying next to the town water pump, facedown and dead in the mud, with his own belt buckle jammed between his eyes.

As the novel progresses, the relationship between the characters and the intricacies of the conspiracy are untangled, until finally, Hare presents a clear message: that the Denver Water Basin's groundwater is, in fact, a non-renewable resource, and that failing to confront that fact head-on will only lead to dire consequences, especially for small communities on Colorado's eastern plains. But that is not the book's only lesson. Throughout the narrative, Hare

provides the reader with an abundance of potential legal and political issues permeating the fictitious city of Breeze and the state's water law. For example, the novel boldly speaks of local politicians accepting bribes from out-of-state land developers, but smartly adds, "If the locals can haul in this much dough, how much do you think the Feds can grab?"

Other legal and political lessons presented by *Buckled* include: Fourth and Fifth Amendment violations; Colorado's "Make My Day" law; police misconduct; history of Colorado water law; Spanish land grants; riparian rights and prior appropriation; basic property issues like the implementation of a town's Master Plan; the media's tendency to distort facts; and basic criminal procedure. These lessons are not taught as they would be in a textbook. Instead, the author weaves them into the narrative, and uses characters and plot points to illustrate the issues, and in some instances, provide hints as to how they may be resolved.

For instance, by the novel's conclusion, it is clear that Breeze only has two remaining options: (i) lease its water rights from nearby ranchers; or (ii) pay through the nose to obtain water from "one of the three metropolitan cities." These options are all too familiar for residents of eastern Colorado. Many Colorado communities were built on the same "lies of endless water." Option one is unlikely to materialize, as water rights, not the land itself, are the main source of property value in eastern Colorado. Ranchers are entirely dependent on their water rights, and disputes sometimes lead to bloodshed, as depicted in the novel. Option two is also impracticable for most eastern Colorado communities due to the high cost of importing water. But realistically, that may be the only available option for many communities. So what is Hare's solution? The protagonist declares, "We need a comprehensive solution; an end to bluegrass lawns, golf courses in every subdivision, and approving new development when there's too little water for what's here." In short, Hare suggests that conservation and planning will be the only solution to Colorado's water problem.

From a literary standpoint, the novel is unremarkable. For all its attempts to stay grounded in reality and present real issues, *Buckled's* characters seem more like caricatures whose actions are too ridiculous to take seriously. Nomenclatures like "developer Bluster Brown," "councilman Tim Turtleman," and "lawyer Jerry Careless" add to the comic level of absurdity, and lessen the novel's potential as an informative tool. Weak prose and numerous editorial mistakes also distract the reader from otherwise valuable educational information.

The novel attempts to address many taboo social situations—including pedophilia, sexual assault, adultery, and homicide—but is only marginally successful in shining a meaningful light on them. Mostly, the situations feel forced, and the author's lack of experience writing fiction is painfully apparent in the way Hare presents the overall story. Nevertheless, at times, the social inferences are touching and the plot keeps the reader turning the pages.

*Buckled* is not a great book. The prose is lacking, the timing is inconsistent, and the dialogue is forced and unnatural. Despite its shortcomings, author K. Hare still has the courage to address taboo social issues, as well as legal and political themes not normally discussed in fiction. As a light-hearted

informative tool, *Buckled* succeeds. Anyone who is not an expert in Colorado water law will learn something from this book.

*Chris Stevens*

**Daniel McCool, *River Republic: The Fall and Rise of America's Rivers*, Columbia University Press, New York (2012); 304 PP; \$34.50; ISBN 978-0231161305; hardcover.**

Daniel McCool is the Director of the Environmental and Sustainability Program at the University of Utah. His previous works include *Native Waters: Contemporary Indian Water Settlements and the Second Treaty Era*, and *Command of the Waters: Iron Triangles, Federal Water Development, and Indian Water*. *River Republic* focuses on the history, transformation, and destruction, of the rivers of the United States. The book is divided into three parts. Part One, "The Fall," sets the historical context of the book. Part Two, "Dismemberment," explains what people have done and are still doing to the rivers of the United States. And Part Three, "Resurrection," focuses on less harmful ways to use our nation's rivers and how to implement these methods going forward.

#### PART ONE: THE FALL

*River Republic* begins with the stories of the Matlija and Glen Canyon Dams. These dams, the stories of their construction, and Matlija's removal serve as a cautionary tale of what will happen to America's rivers if the U.S. allows what McCool calls "water hubris" to cloud its judgment. According to McCool, "water hubris" is the combined false beliefs that: (i) water development can occur without costs or tradeoffs, (ii) humans are inherently superior to nature, and (iii) society has a moral right to conquer rivers. McCool concludes, however, that a new water ethic, a "River Republic," is slowly replacing "water hubris." This new ethic involves treating rivers as common property—cared for and maintained by all for future generations.

In Chapter Two, McCool details the history of the U.S Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") and explains the Corps' role in managing our Nation's rivers. McCool states that the Corps, like the nation as a whole, is a work in progress. This chapter focuses for the most part on the early failures of the Corps, such as the environmentally disastrous Kissimmee River channelization in Florida. Instead of being wholly critical, however, McCool details how the Corps is correcting past mistakes through restoration processes and applauds the cutting-edge engineering that makes such projects possible. Essentially, McCool argues that the Corps is learning and evolving from its philosophy of conquering rivers to a more modern, balanced approach.

In Chapter Three, McCool focuses on the period of American history in which the Bureau of Reclamation launched massive plans for the expansion and development of America's rivers. The chapter focuses on countless, often ill-conceived, dam projects throughout the U.S., highlighting the key supporters and opponents of each. McCool focuses on "agents of change" like Jimmy Carter, who McCool believes changed the way the Bureau of Reclamation