



Wondering Toward Center

Kathy A. Bradley

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In her second book of essays, Kathy Bradley continues her examination of the natural world as a prism through which to understand the human experience. With her family farm in the coastal plains of South Georgia serving as the anchor, Bradley uses her observations of animal life, agriculture, and the seasons to create what others have called parables, but what she calls "a map key or decoder ring" for some of the dilemmas of twenty-first-century life.

Bradley shares the story of how, through wandering, she came to know the land that became her home and how that knowledge worked as ransom to gain her release from societal expectations. "Like numbness beginning to thaw," she writes, "I felt the pinpricks of pain. I rambled with no purpose beyond looking in order to see, listening so that I might hear."

The chronological stories, four years' worth of tales that began life as newspaper columns, are inhabited by wild and unpredictable animals, civilized and unpredictable people, moons and cornfields, tides and floods and droughts--each described in sensory detail, each a metaphor rich in meaning. Bradley invites readers along on her wanderings in order that they might find their own meaning in the recounting of commonplace events and the lives of ordinary people.

Along the way, Bradley decides to build a labyrinth at the farm, a decision that brings a new perspective to her exploration of the world. "The deliberate and contemplative act of walking an actual labyrinth, the physical movements that I... imagined would mesh body and spirit and leave me enlightened, the slow and purposeful wandering toward a literal center and back out again has become, instead, a slow and purposeful wondering."

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Brandi Johnson:

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