



Markings on Earth (First Book Award Series)

Karenne Wood

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*“Ten thousand years of history, and we find the remains
of ancestors removed from their burial mound . . . “*

Impressions of the past, markings on earth, are part of the world of Karenne Wood. A member of the Monacan tribe of Virginia, she writes with insight and grace on topics that both reflect and extend her Native heritage.

Markings on Earth is a cyclical work that explores the many dimensions of human experience, from our interaction with the environment to personal relationships. In these pages we relive the arrival of John Smith in America and visit the burial mounds of the Monacan people, experience the flight of the great blue heron and witness the dance of the spider. We also share the personal journey of one individual who seeks to overcome her sense of alienation from her people and her past.

Wood’s palette is not only Nature but human nature as well. She writes pointedly about shameful episodes of American history, such as the devastation of Appalachia by mining companies and the “disappearance” of Indian peoples. She also addresses forms of everyday violence known to many of us, such as alcoholism and sexual abuse. Wood conveys an acceptance of history and personal trauma, but she finds redemption in a return to tradition and a perception of the world’s natural grace.

Through these elegantly crafted words, we come to know that Native writers need not be limited to categorical roles determined by their heritage. *Markings on Earth* displays a fidelity to human experience, evoking that experience through poems honed to perfection. It is an affirmation of survival, a work that suggests one person’s life cannot be separated from the larger story of its community, its rootedness in history, and its timeless connections to the world.

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