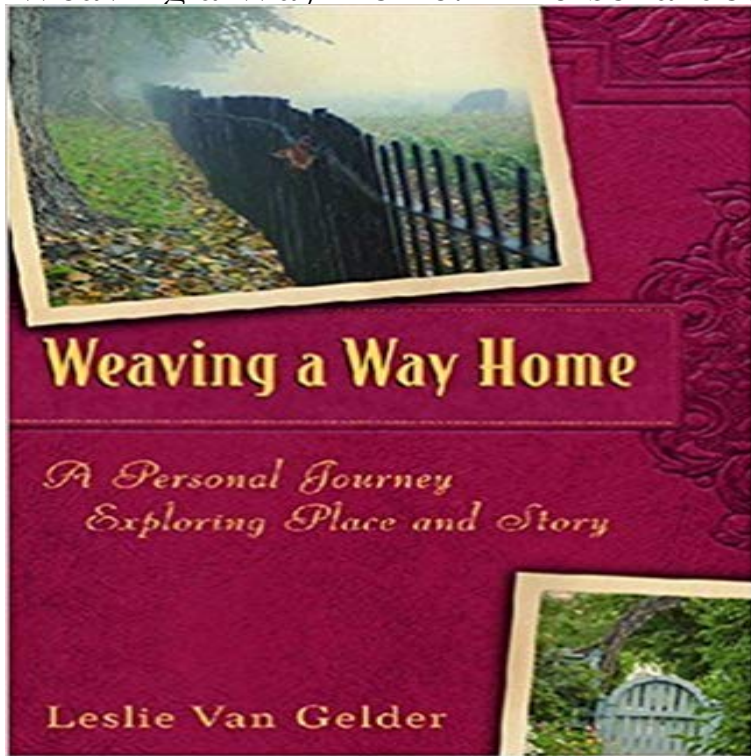


## Weaving a Way Home: A Personal Journey Exploring Place and Story



An inquiry into how we engage with the world, and how solutions to environmental challenges can be found in the heart of our emotional relationships with places. No one with a working heart will fail to be moved by Van Gelder. With passion and intelligence, she explores the way we story places and places story all life. ---Patrick Curry, Lecturer in Religious Studies, University of Kent, and author of *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction and Defending Middle-Earth*. With grace and passion Leslie Van Gelder weaves together stories of her own encounters with an amazing variety of places ---riverside meadows of Oxford, racially sundered Cyprus, fly-tormented Canadian muskeg, caves stroked by Paleolithic fingertips, derelict Coney Island, grasslands through which lion cubs follow the black tip of their mothers tail ---to show us how Place and Story are the warp and weft of our being as earth-dwellers. ---Tim Robinson, *Folding Landscapes*, and author of *Connemara: Listening to the Wind*. Travel narrative, memoir, literary criticism, and anthropology fuse in this highly original and moving exploration of place and home. ---John Elder, author of *Reading the Mountains of Home* and *Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa*. Van Gelder offers her most deeply personal stories as microcosmic examples of universal human experience, thus creating an empathic bond with her reader that conveys power and understanding simultaneously, and stimulates the readers imagination toward reflection upon similarly personal stories of place. Van Gelder has modeled the relationship between story and place by telling placeful stories, and so has licensed the reader to do the same. Her writing throughout is rich and metaphoric. She is a gifted storyteller and a competent scholar, a combination to be treasured. ---Joseph W. Meeker, Professor Emeritus, College of Arts/Science, Union Institute and

University, and author of *The Spheres of Life*, *The Comedy of Survival*, and *Minding the Earth*. *Weaving a Way Home* is an inquiry into the complex relationship between people, place, and story. In our memories and connections to a place, we are given one of the few opportunities to have deep relationships with place---relationships that cannot be described in words. Place can embody powerful emotions for us, and Leslie Van Gelder argues that we ourselves are places---geographical points possessing unique perspectives---that can feel displaced, replaced, or immovable. While the places of the external world can be accessed through maps and a good GPS system, our emotional landscapes are best reached through the sharing of stories. In the tradition of writers Lewis Hyde, Barry Lopez, Peter Matthiessen, Joseph Meeker, Steven Mithen, Paul Shepard, Gary Snyder, and Terry Tempest Williams, Van Gelder uses both creative nonfiction narrative and evolutionary biological theory to explore complex terrain. Following Van Gelder's own travels, the book moves from the caves of the Dordogne lit only by the small beam of a flashlight, to an acacia thicket in Mozambique, to a black fly-infested bay inappropriately named Baie de Ha Ha in the inlands of Quebec, to the green line wrapped in barbed wire separating northern and southern Cyprus, to Abu Simbel's empty stone eyes in the Egyptian desert, and finally to the high road above Pelorus Sound on the rocky coasts of New Zealand. The author takes the reader to each place to create a storied landscape and explore new intellectual terrain. Van Gelder shows us that our collections of experiences, unique to us, can only be shared through the articulation of narrative. *Weaving a Way Home* will appeal to those deeply interested in knowing how we forge relationships with places and how that shapes who we are. Jacket photographs: Garden gate: [iStockphoto.com/Richard Goerg](https://www.iStockphoto.com/RichardGoerg). Iron fence: Christ Church Meadow in Oxford, Leslie Van Gelder. Author photograph: Kevin Sharpe

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