

The Peace of Blue: Water Journeys

Bill Belleville

University of Florida Press (December 2014)

Softcover \$24.95 (230pp)

978-0-8130-6009-5

In one of Elizabeth Bishop's poems, which Bill Belleville quotes, she wrote that Florida is "the state that floats in brackish water / held together by mangrove roots." That sentiment serves to bolster one of his main points: that symmetry in one's life "isn't the half-mad early-morning drivers on a Florida interstate exhaling road rage. ... Nor is it the perfect geometry of walled and gated neighborhoods."

Florida is all of that, for sure, with walls of condominium developments blocking water views, and sprawling commercial developments besides. Even so, Belleville has found harmony in the "splendid visual link between what others once saw in natural systems in Florida, and what exists now." He has paddled endless stretches of those systems. He also ventured to Cuba and other islands south of Florida in the Caribbean Basin, of which much of Florida is a part.

In tightly woven essays, he strives to argue, without letting "pragmatic data about water ... overwhelm that story," that the watery wilderness is threatened. To preserve it, he writes, "depends on the kindness of strangers upstream," especially the dredgers and drainers that make way for walled worlds and glitzy resorts.

"Now, periodic droughts and the fires that follow in their wake continue that human driven work," he warns. And he finds it logical that he should worry about the health of a tiny spring.

THOMAS BEVIER (Winter 2015)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.