

Winner of the PEN/Martha Albrand Award  
for the Art of the Memoir

"Jeffery Smith . . . has written a gripping personal memoir of the disease he calls by its early name, melancholia . . . He throws wonderful curve balls at his topic, using creative devices and poetic writing to get at the depth and range of depression."

—Cynthia Crossen, *The Wall Street Journal*

Jeffery Smith was working as a psychiatric case manager in Missoula, Montana, when his own clinical depression began. Eventually, all his prescribed antidepressant medications proved ineffective at any dosage. Reversing the usual plotline of the modern-day depression memoir, *Where the Roots Reach for Water* tells the story of what happened to Smith after he decided to give up his medications and situate his life to his disposition. Deftly woven into his personal history is a "natural history" of melancholia and its ancient links to love and sex, creativity, spirituality, and landscape. As Smith searches far behind and beyond modern medicine, melancholia receives the unique and sweeping treatment only the most committed scholar and truest sufferer could command.

"Like Annie Dillard's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, [this book is] a compendium of one writer's reading and thinking on the subject . . . What makes it singular is the intellectual and moral seriousness with which [Smith] thinks and writes about his illness while in the grip of it . . . A searing account."

—Greg Bottoms, *Salon*

"[A] view of melancholy . . . through the eyes of an ecologist . . . Smith is driven to map the landscape of melancholy. He finds it stretched deep through history, literature, medicine, and myth . . . [Where the Roots Reach for Water] doesn't discount the value of modern medicine, but it does soundly challenge its inviolability . . . Engrossing and persuasive."

—Joshua Wolf Shenk, *Mirabella*



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WHERE THE ROOTS REACH FOR WATER

Jeffery Smith

NORTH  
POINT  
PRESS

# WHERE the ROOTS REACH for WATER

*A Personal & Natural  
History of Melancholia*

"More than a story about  
one man's struggle with his dark  
side: It's also a fascinating  
and highly idiosyncratic  
exploration of the illness, its  
history, and its place  
in the larger world."

—Diane White,  
*The Boston Globe*

# Jeffery Smith