



daily GOOD

When we tell them that the tree is not a who, but an it, we make that maple an object; we put a barrier between us, absolving ourselves of moral responsibility and opening the door to exploitation. --Robin Wall Kimmerer

Speaking of Nature

"We have a special grammar for personhood. We would never say of our late neighbor, "It is buried in Oakwood Cemetery." Such language would be deeply disrespectful and would rob him of his humanity. We use instead a special grammar for humans: we distinguish them with the use of he or she, a grammar of personhood for both living and dead Homo sapiens. Yet we say of the oriole warbling comfort to mourners from the treetops or the oak tree herself beneath whom we stand, "It lives in Oakwood Cemetery." In the English language, a human alone has distinction while all other living beings are lumped with the nonliving "its." As a botany professor, I am as interested in the pale-green lichens slowly dissolving the words on the gravestones as in the almost-forgotten names, and the students, too, look past the stones for inky cap mushrooms in the grass or a glimpse of an urban fox." Robin Wall Kimmerer shares more on the grammar of animacy in this shimmering piece.

Be The Change:

For more inspiration from Kimmerer read this excerpt, "Returning the Gift."