



From Braiding Sweetgrass -- Robin Wall Kimmerer

I sat once in a graduate writing workshop on relationships to the land. The students all demonstrated a deep respect and affection for nature. They said that nature was the place where they experienced the greatest sense of belonging and well-being. They professed without reservation that they loved the earth. And then I asked them, “Do you think that the earth loves you back?” No one was willing to answer that. It was as if I had brought a two-headed porcupine into the classroom. Unexpected. Prickly. They backed slowly away. Here was a room full of writers, passionately wallowing in unrequited love of nature.

So I made it hypothetical and asked, “What do you suppose would happen if people believed this crazy notion that the earth loved them back?” The floodgates opened. They all wanted to talk at once. We were suddenly off the deep end, heading for world peace and perfect harmony. One student summed it up: “You wouldn’t harm what gives you love.”

Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.

