

—MICHAEL V SMITH

Braiding Sweetgrass

All weekend I've been reading Robin
Wall Kimmerer

who is teaching me
how we are raised

not to recognize the world
as family.

The other-than-human
is communicating, observation

as a form of listening.
Kimmerer calls it a grammar of animacy

we are taught not to know.
Which makes me a lot less self-conscious

about my habit of talking to, well,
everything.

Last month on a walk I chatted with
a pair of deer, a wide array of plants

in too many front yards, and
a squished banana

—*why are you on the street?*
who left you here?—

then that same evening I thought
I heard our human neighbours

in their garden, only it was just a sprinkler.
So did you say hi? my husband asked.

It reminds me of the end of *Room*
—the book, not the movie—

in which the narrator says good-bye
to his friend things like Spoon, and Room

herself. As much as I was impressed
with the mastery of that ending

signifying the end of his attachment
to a place of oppression

he couldn't fathom, I was also feeling
his loss of animacy.

Now I can point my husband
to Kimmerer

who validates
my attempts to befriend the world;

Nature not as an object
we do things to

but a subject
we are in a relationship with.

So. Hello, Rock. Hello, Pond.
Hello, Banana.

Hello, Moose.