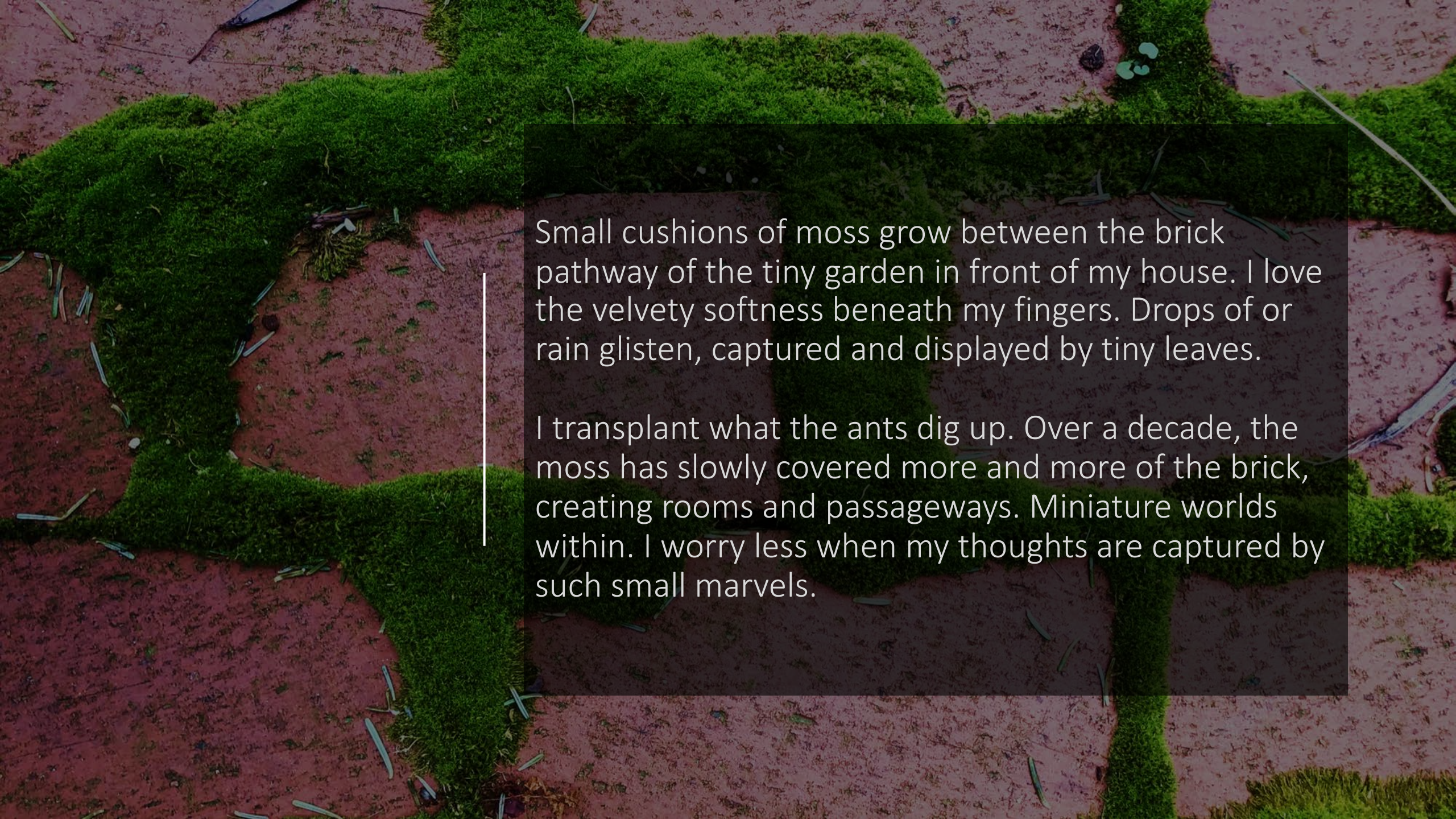


Small Marvels:
Reflective Writing
to Understand
Place and Equity

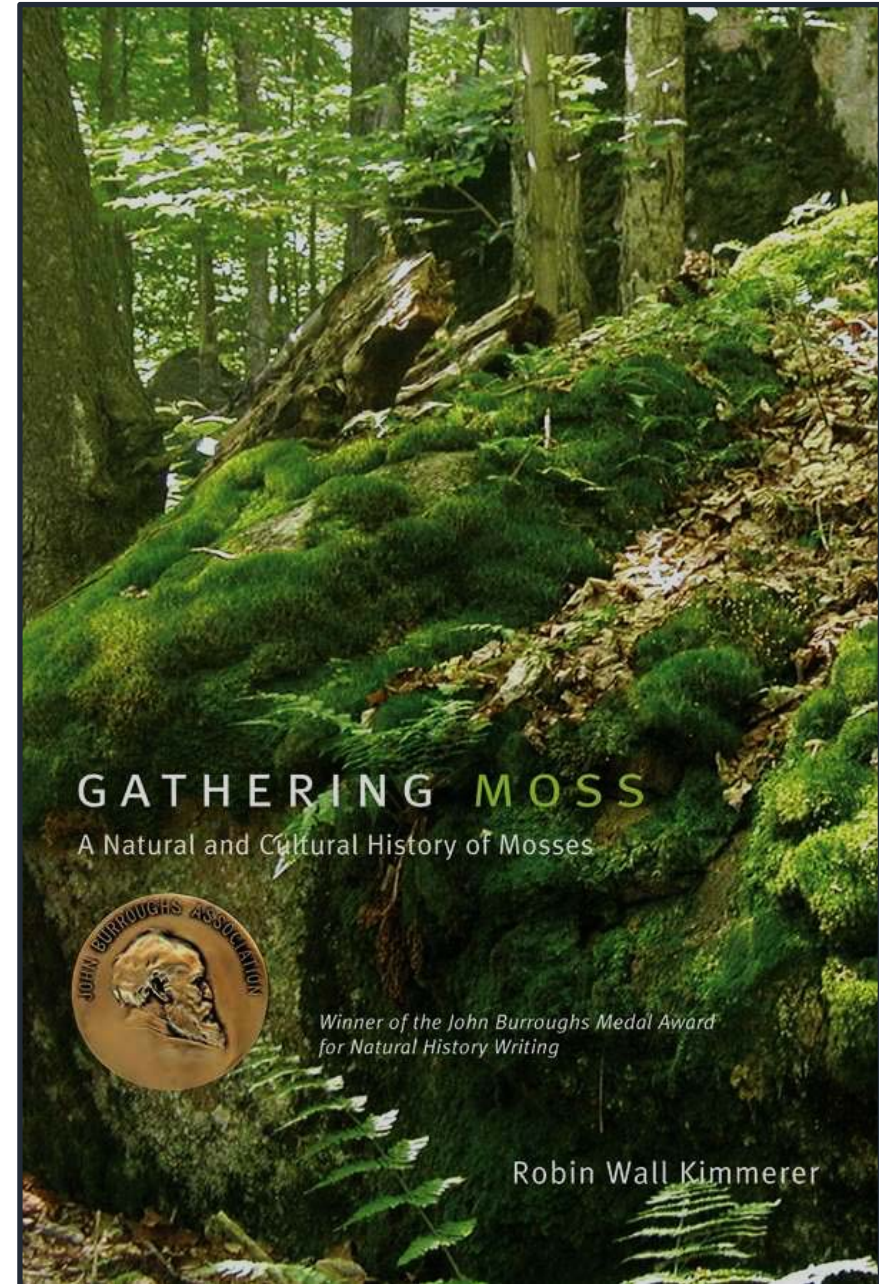




Small cushions of moss grow between the brick pathway of the tiny garden in front of my house. I love the velvety softness beneath my fingers. Drops of or rain glisten, captured and displayed by tiny leaves.

I transplant what the ants dig up. Over a decade, the moss has slowly covered more and more of the brick, creating rooms and passageways. Miniature worlds within. I worry less when my thoughts are captured by such small marvels.

Robin Wall Kimmerer describes herself as a mother, professor, scientist, and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Her books weave together scientific, personal, and indigenous understandings of nature. They also pay close attention to place, whether her cabin on Cranberry Lake or a small cave covered in an unusual glittering moss. She helps us see.





“With sophisticated technology, we strive to see what is beyond us, but are often blind to the myriad sparkling facets that lie so close at hand. We think we’re seeing when we’ve only scratched the surface. Our acuity at this middle scale seems diminished, not by any failing of the eyes, but by the willingness of the mind. Has the power of our devices led us to distrust our unaided eyes? Or have we become dismissive of what takes no technology but only time and patience to perceive? Attentiveness alone can rival the most powerful magnifying lens.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss*, p. 8

Goblins' Gold

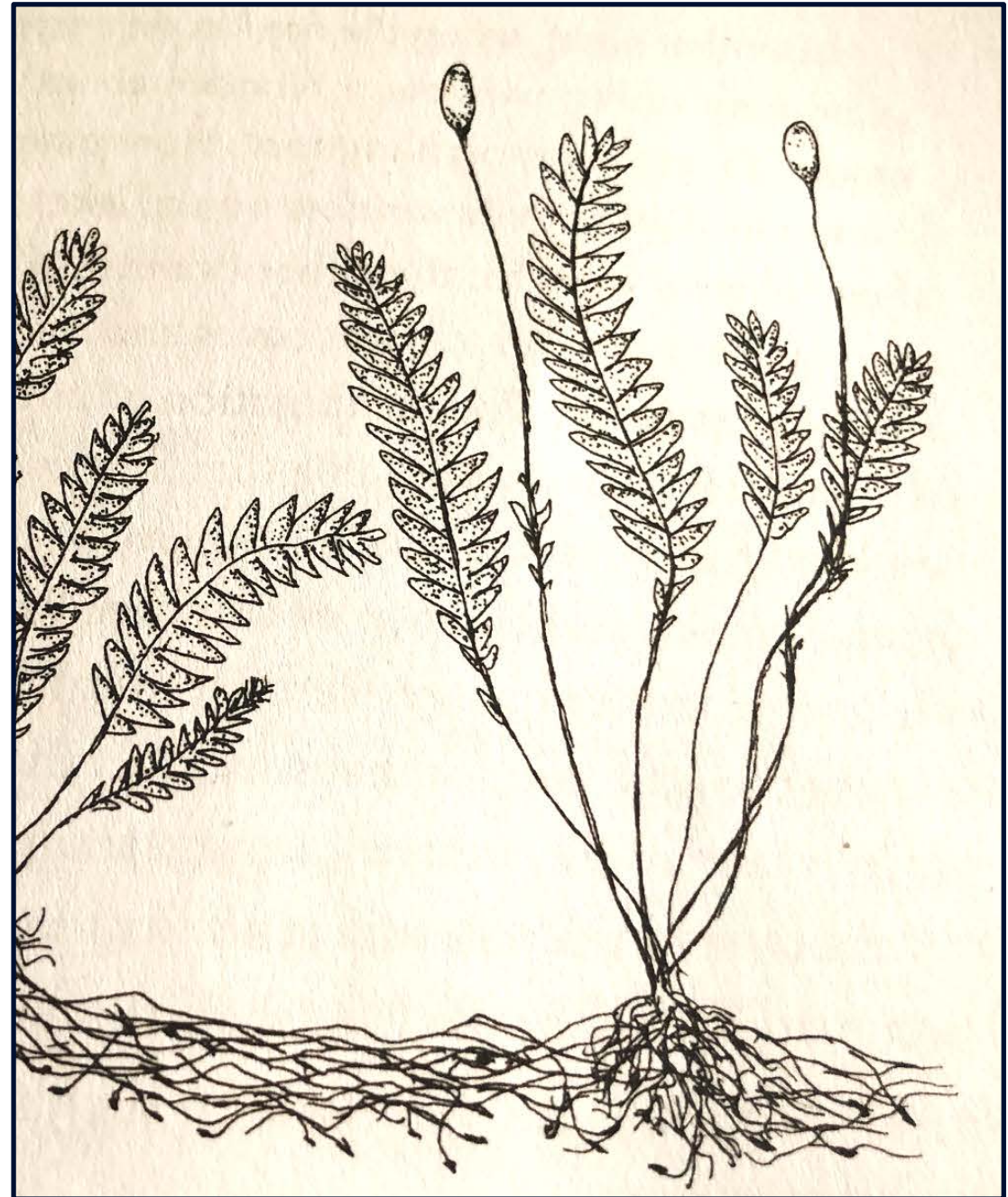
“Here on the shadowy edge of where green life seems barely possible, *Schistostega* has all it needs. Rain on the outside, fire on the inside. I feel a kinship with this being whose cold light is so different from my own. It asks very little from the world and yet glitters in response. I have been blessed by the companionship of good teachers and I count *Schistostega* among them.

My small daughter blows at the roots dangling in front of her face. She looks like a goblin herself, crouched in the darkness, guarding the gold. Outside, the sun drops lower. A wide ribbon of orange light unrolls over the lake towards us. The sun is just a degree or two above the horizon now, its rim barely touching the hills on the opposite shore, sinking. The time is almost here. We're both holding our breath as the light starts to climb the walls of the cave. At last, the sun drops low enough to reach the opening in the bank. . . . Timing is everything. Just for a moment, in the pause before the earth rotates us again into night, the cave is flooded with light.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss*, p. 159

“The near-nothingness of *Schistostega* erupts in a shower of sparkles, like green glitter spilled on the rug at Christmas. Each cell of the protonema refracts the light, transforming it to the sugar that will sustain it through the coming darkness. And then, within minutes, it’s gone. All its needs are met in an ephemeral moment at the end of the day when the sun aligns with the mouth of the cave. . . . It is so little. And yet it is enough.”

- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss*, pp. 159-160







“For us, ecological education connotes an emphasis on the inescapable embeddedness of human beings in natural systems. Rather than seeing nature as other – a set of phenomena capable of being manipulated like parts of a machine – the practice of ecological education requires viewing human beings as one part of the natural world and human cultures as an outgrowth of interactions between our species and particular places.”

- Gregory A. Smith and Dilafruz Williams, *Ecological Education in Action*, p. 3



“ In our work as teachers and researchers, we have long been concerned about the division between environmental educators and those who direct their attention to matters of social justice and equity. We are convinced that human welfare will depend on the ability to reconcile these two domains in the coming decades. . . . We suggest that reversing a slide into social and environmental degradation will require a heightened awareness of place. Sometimes, this awareness leads to [understanding and resisting] the ideas and forces that allow for the privileging of some people and the oppression of others – human and other-than-human.”

- David Gruenewald (now Greenwood) and Gregory A. Smith, *Place Based Education in the Global Age*, p. vii-viii









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