

Why Wild?

From: [Land Marks](#), Robert MacFarlane:

To celebrate the lexis of landscape is not nostalgic, but urgent. 'People exploit what they have merely concluded to be of value, but they defend what they love,' writes the American essayist and farmer Wendell Berry, 'and to defend what we love we need a particularizing language, for we love what we particularly know.'

There are experiences of landscape that will always resist articulation, and of which words offer only a remote echo – or to which silence is by far the best response. Nature does not name itself. Granite does not self-identify as igneous. Light has no grammar. Language is always late for its subject. Sometimes on the top of a mountain I just say, 'Wow.'

language is used not only to navigate but also to charm the land. Words act as compass; place-speech serves literally to en-charm the land – to sing it back into being, and to sing one's being back into it.

It is not, on the whole, that natural phenomena and entities themselves are disappearing; rather that there are fewer people able to name them, and that once they go unnamed they go to some degree unseen. Language deficit leads to attention deficit. As we further deplete our ability to name, describe and figure particular aspects of our places, our competence for understanding and imagining possible relationships with non-human nature is correspondingly depleted.

The ethno-linguist K. David Harrison bleakly declares that language death means the loss of 'long-cultivated knowledge that has guided human–environment interaction for millennia ... accumulated wisdom and observations of generations of people about the natural world, plants, animals, weather, soil. The loss [is] incalculable, the knowledge mostly unrecoverable.' Or as Tim Dee neatly puts it, 'Without a name made in our mouths, an animal or a place struggles to find purchase in our minds or our hearts.'

In 1917 the sociologist and philosopher Max Weber named 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*) as the distinctive injury of modernity. He defined disenchantment as 'the knowledge or belief that ... there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'

We have become experts in analysing what nature can do for us, but lack a language to evoke what it can do to us. The former is important; the latter is vital.

Wilderness is not a luxury, but a necessity of the human spirit. Edward Abbey

There is pleasure in the pathless woods,
there is rapture in the lonely shore,
there is society where none intrudes,
by the deep sea, and music in its roar;
I love not man the less, but nature more.
Lord George Gordon Byron

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.
Marcel Proust