



I dream of lost vocabularies that might express some of what we no longer can. – Jack Gilbert

The Lost Words: Reclaiming the Language of Nature

--by *Maria Popova*, syndicated from brainpickings.org, July 23, 2019

“Words belong to each other,” Virginia Woolf’s melodious voice unspools in **the only surviving recording of her speech** — a 1937 love letter to language. “In each word, all words,” the French philosopher Maurice Blanchot writes a generation later as he considers **the dual power of language to conceal and to reveal**. But because language is our primary sieve of perception, our mightiest means of describing what we apprehend and thus comprehending it, words also belong to that which they describe — or, rather, they are the conduit of belonging between us and the world we perceive. As the bryologist and Native American storyteller Robin Wall Kimmerer observed in her **poetic meditation on moss**, “finding the words is another step in learning to see.” Losing the words, then, is ceasing to see — a peculiar and pervasive form of blindness that dulls the shimmer of the world, a disability particularly dangerous to the young imagination just learning to apprehend the world through language.

In early 2015, when the 10,000-entry Oxford children’s dictionary dropped around fifty words related to nature — words like *fern*, *willow*, and *starling* — in favor of terms like *broadband* and *cut and paste*, some of the world’s most prominent authors composed an open letter of protest and alarm at this impoverishment of children’s vocabulary and its consequent diminishment of children’s belonging to and with the natural world. Among them was one of the great nature writers of our time: **Robert MacFarlane** — a rare descendent from the lyrical tradition of **Rachel Carson** and **Henry Beston**, and the visionary who rediscovered and brought to life the **stunning forgotten writings** of the Scottish mountaineer and poet Nan Shepherd.

Troubled by this loss of vital and vitalizing language, MacFarlane teamed up with illustrator and children’s book author **Jackie Morris**, who had reached out to him to write an introduction for a sort of “wild dictionary” she wanted to create as a counterpoint to Oxford’s erasure. Instead, MacFarlane envisioned something greater. ***The Lost Words: A Spell Book*** (*public library*) was born — an uncommonly wondrous and beguiling act of resistance to the severance of our relationship with the rest of nature, a rerooting into this living world in which, in the words of the great naturalist John Muir, “**when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe,**” just as each word is hitched to all words and to the entire web of being.

Reclaiming the Language of Love

--by [Bill Morehouse](#), from [hiskingdom.us](#), July 24, 2019

None of the books in the collection we refer to as the Bible were written in English. Those in the first canon, known as the Tanakh or Old Testament, were written in ancient Hebrew or Aramaic and later translated into Greek, while those in the New Testament were written primarily in Greek, perhaps with underlying Hebrew or Aramaic in some instances. Consequently, all texts in English and other languages are translations which do their best to convey the meaning and intent of the original authors.

English is an interesting and continuously evolving language with more vocabulary than most other languages, if not all, but it has its own deficiencies. For example, while we have about 12 words for various forms of snow, Europe's northernmost indigenous people, the Sami, have at least 180 words for snow and ice and over 1,000 words for reindeer. We're able to make up for English's deficiencies by adding adjectives to modify or enhance meaning, but often we don't. Take the word LOVE, for instance, as used in this increasingly popular phrase:

Love is love is love

It sounds remarkably like Gertrude Stein's famous line "rose is a rose is a rose is a rose," which echoes what Shakespeare's Juliet proclaimed when she said "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Is it or would it really? Perhaps we should ask a rose expert if all roses are identical or have the same fragrance. And what does our modern take-off from Gertrude about love actually mean? What kind of love are we talking about?

Hebrew	Greek	Primary Meaning
Ahab/ אָהָב	Eros/ ἔρως	Romantic – human passion, desire, appetite, sexual
Raham/ רַחֵם	Phileo/ φιλέω	Relationship – friendship, empathy, giving
Hesed/ חֶסֶד	Agape/ ἀγάπη	Mercy, Grace – divine, unconditional, sacrificial

Is romantic love an appropriate base on which to initiate sexual intimacy and build a relationship, especially one as deep and serious as marriage? What happens when the feelings fade? Which should take first priority, a flood of emotions and desire or a peaceful revelation of rightness? Should consummation precede commitment? How much commitment is needed to sustain a relationship beyond feelings? Does "Love is love is love" tell us all we really need to know about relationships and matrimony?

If we look carefully at the Biblical record we find that its underlying Hebrew and Greek vocabulary provides many different and helpful perspectives with which to view the entire subject of human relationships and to discern what is called for in various circumstances to get the best results, i.e., those which carry the blessings and support of our Creator. What? You don't think you have a Creator? Well, your Creator yearns with *agape* love for you to know that you do.