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Advancing a Curriculum of Place for Justice and Sustainability: American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies Presidential Address

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New York City, New York
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Patrick:

Tonight Susan and I are presenting this Presidential Address as a duet, and our title is “Advancing a Curriculum of Place for Justice and Sustainability.”

Susan:

We were both born in Shreveport, Louisiana, in the mid-1950s, and we both studied the sciences as undergraduates in Louisiana colleges, Chemistry for me and Computer Science for Patrick. My first job was a chemist for, I’m ashamed to say, an ammunition plant in Minden, Louisiana. It was the beginning of a new kind of political education for me. The street sign outside the plant read “Goodwill Road/Ammunition Plant.” (It showed up in a National Lampoon piece on ironic signs from around the country one year.) Patrick’s first job was a programmer on a Honeywell 360 Mainframe in downtown New Orleans for a

corporate hospital chain. Later, and after significant consciousness raising in our first careers, we both moved to second careers as teachers in Louisiana schools. Patrick was also a principal in Louisiana for seven years.

Patrick:

Susan and I both took classes and completed our doctoral work in Curriculum Theory at LSU under the guidance of our PhD mentors, Bill Pinar and Bill Doll. Today, and for the past five years, we both teach in the summer leadership academy of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts where we have been able to develop an innovative graduate curriculum in social justice through the arts. Our involvement in the MCLA academy is perhaps the single most promising and exciting curriculum innovation of our entire careers.

Susan:

There is something very significant and spiritual about our Louisiana heritage that enriches our work at MCLA and Texas A&M University and continues to deeply impact our teaching, research, and educational experiences. Patrick and I have been blessed with a friendship and cultural connections in Louisiana that informs our understanding of curriculum. Tonight we will explore the unique dimensions of our curriculum of place in light of current events in the US and globally.

Patrick:

Brian Casemore (2008) in his new book "The Autobiographical Demand of Place: Curriculum inquiry in the American South" expresses our sentiments when he writes: "I want to understand the role of place in my experience. As a figure of autobiographical inquiry, place signifies the diverse and intersecting worlds in which I dwell, to which I contribute meaning, and from which I take the measure of my being. Place indicates particular contexts in which I am immersed as well as my subjective interaction with these private, social, and aesthetic spaces. In my encounter with the particularities of place, an elusive past and an ambiguous future coalesce. Through place I question the relationship between the object world and my internal landscape, the public sphere and the localities of my internal life. My experience of place thus bears the history of the way I have been called into various forms of culture and community and can reveal possibilities for my continual reengagement with a complex social world" (p. 1).

Susan:

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) in "Curriculum as Social Psychoanalysis: The Significance of Place" compare the significance of place for the novelist with that for the curriculum theorist. They write: "Place, [as Eudora] Welty speculated, is not simply to be *used* by the fiction writer; place is to be unearthed, discovered as the novelist plies his or her trade. The act of writing is self-reflective; it reveals the connection between self and place. This discovery, she concluded, does not connote that place is something new—it suggests that *we* are. Thus, the analyzed sense of place is a window to the *Lebenswelt*, a vehicle to self-knowledge, and a crack in the structure that allows the archeologist of self to discover the etymology of one's research act. Why, as curriculum theorists, were we drawn to a particular topic? What predispositions inform our approach? Sense of place provokes insight into such inquiries" (p. 6).

Patrick:

Ugena Whitlock (2008) in her witty and poignant paper "Jesus Died for NASCAR Fans: The Significance of Rural Formation of Queerness to Curriculum Studies" writes, "The rural South is a contested site, where race, class, religion, and sexuality play out continually and comprehensively. Voices of gay, lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual people who are raised and perhaps choose to remain on these landscapes add layers of complication, complexity, and understanding that are significant to both queer studies and curriculum studies." Whitlock argues, and we agree, that the shifting space of curriculum literature offers the possibility of creating a productive disequilibrium that will bring understanding, and perhaps even mutual acceptance and compassionate engagement, to the bifurcated forces that dominate and destroy schools and society.

Susan:

These curriculum scholars provoke us to imagine the power of place as a power that cuts many ways. Place, as we sometimes see in distorted versions of place-based education, as well as in the violence of provincialism, can be a marshal for conformity, exclusion, and stupidity. At the same time, sense of place explored is also a source of our deepest intelligence and sense of connection to others in the natural world, both human and not. Why is the South of the US, and Louisiana in particular, so important for us to explore? Besides the fact that Patrick and I are from there, post-Katrina New Orleans and south Louisiana is currently a focal point in the US for

creating new structures of education with a focus on charter schools and politically aligned curricula that are antithetical to much of what curriculum theorists like Brain Casemore, William Pinar, and Ugena Whitlock are writing.

Patrick:

Uncovering the layers of social and psychoanalytic history of Louisiana may help us to address the crisis in US education and explore alternative visions for curriculum theories of place in our work at AAACS and beyond. We also believe that attention to place -- particularly race, gender, sexuality, poverty, religion, culture, music, and the arts -- is the most essential missing ingredient in the rebuilding efforts in New Orleans today. The schools will never be rebuilt and the city will never recover without social psychoanalytic therapy. I have recently been involved in the "New Schools for New Orleans" program, and I have first hand frustration and deep concerns with the process, a process that is also capturing the imagination of deans and department heads in colleges of education who see the professor as an "Entrepreneur" and curriculum as a "corporate data spread sheet." Corporate business models are now firmly entrenched. I recently submitted a grant proposal to the New Orleans Recovery district to open a new school with a focus on place, but my model did not conform to the corporate curriculum expectations of drill, test, and comply.

Susan:

Katrina not only destroyed the homes and lives of hundreds of thousands of people along the Gulf Coast, but the hurricane also destroyed the social and cultural fabric of communities. This destruction was welcomed by some politicians—some of whom were caught on camera gleefully rejoicing in the burgeoning diaspora of poor and black citizens in the wake of Katrina, and destruction of the public schools in particular—as a way to dismantle institutions such as teachers/unions and replace them with charter schools and private schools more in line with the "entrepreneurial" and "corporate" agenda of No Child Left Behind.

Patrick:

Susan and I will examine the Katrina destruction through the eyes of several Louisiana authors and artists as a way to point toward another vision of possible futures for Louisiana, the US, and by implications AAACS and curriculum studies.

Susan:

We were both born in the north Louisiana city of Shreveport, but only I stayed in the north, as different from south Louisiana as another country. My childhood from age two on happened in the small college town of Ruston, about 70 miles east of Shreveport. Unlike many other places in Louisiana, there are hills in this area, including one that boasts the highest elevation in the state, all of 500 feet. My Ruston neighborhood was heavily wooded, and I spent countless hours in the woods, near ponds, and on my bicycle riding all over town. I was intimately familiar with the woods so that I knew the flora and fauna well; if not by name always, then by what I could eat, what smelled good and bad, what could harm me. There was a significant black population in Ruston, but due to the severe segregation of living space and all public institutions, my world was mostly white. A mere three miles from Ruston to the west is the town of Grambling, home of Grambling State University, an historically black university. In 1968, when Martin Luther King, Jr. was murdered in Memphis, the National Guard drove tanks down Highway 80 from Ruston to Grambling for fear that the college students there would riot. I was in the eighth grade, by then a slightly integrated school (there were two African American kids), and was not told of either the murder or the local event. Nevertheless, events of this magnitude have life and breath such that no amount of dissimulation or disguise by fearful adults can extinguish their felt presence. These events and others live there now for me as what Toni Morrison calls "rememory" something sensed, even if not experienced directly.

Patrick:

My family moved from Shreveport to New Orleans shortly after I was born. I grew up a short distance from the Mississippi River, and rode the St. Charles streetcar to school from first grade through high school graduation. I have fond memories of riding my bicycle to Audubon Park to sit on the levee for hours watching cargo vessels and listening to the tugboat horns. I imagined distant lands and exotic destinations as I watched huge ships glide past me on the river. However, at other times the Mississippi became my feared enemy. When the water rose to flood stage, I would stand on top of the levee and look down in amazement at the houses behind the levee lower than the water level. The levees protected us, but on September 9, 1965, during Hurricane Betsy, the levee broke and drowned many New Orleanians. I vividly remember that night; it was my twelfth birthday and my family was huddled in the center closet of our home as the roaring winds blew out our

windows, tore off our roof, and disintegrated our garage. We even re-lit my birthday candles when the electricity went out so that we could see in the dark. Certainly, the most precious gift I received that horrible night was the survival of my family and friends. No one paid attention to the levees after 1965, perhaps because the people who drowned were poor and black. We should have known better. Have you listened to Louisiana native Randy Newman sing "Louisiana 1927?"

Susan:

What has happened down here is the wind have changed. Clouds roll in from the north and it started to rain. Rained real hard and rained for a real long time. Six feet of water in the streets of Evangeline. The river rose all day. The river rose all night. Some people got lost in the flood. Some people got away alright. The river have busted through cleared down to Plaquemines. Six feet of water in the streets of Evangeline.

Patrick:

Louisiana, Louisiana, They're tyrin' to wash us away,
They're tryin' to wash us away. Louisiana, Louisiana,
They're tryin' to wash us away. They're tryin' to wash
us away.

Susan:

President Coolidge came down in a railroad train with
a little fat man with a note-pad in his hand The
President say,
"Little fat man isn't it a shame what the river has done
To this poor crackers land."

Patrick:

As Randy Newman sings "Louisiana, they're tryin' to
wash us away" in reference to the great floods of 1927,
and the ascendancy of the "Little Fat Man" Herbert
Hoover who would use these events to catapult
himself into the White House, we are reminded that
while politicians grandstand, the people suffer.
Lessons were not learned in 1927; the poor, rural,
Black, and Cajun people never received the help they
were promised. It is the same story in the aftermath of
Katrina in 2005 and beyond.

Susan:

In An Unnatural History of Cypress Parish, Elise

Blackwell's second novel, she beautifully recounts events immediately preceding the great flood of 1927. The disaster is, as the liner notes inform, "at once natural and manmade," and happens at "a time when the powerful prove themselves willing to sacrifice the poor to protect their position." Blackwell's artful interweaving of natural and human-contrived histories set in southern Louisiana coincidentally came off the press just in time for our witnessing of this most recent Louisiana disaster, also at once natural and manmade. The response to Katrina would seem to indicate that nothing has changed since 1927, nor since 1965, and nothing will change in the decades ahead. The US does not have the capacity nor the will to address entrenched racism, witness some of the vitriolic reactions on Fox TV and radio talk shows to Barak Obama's recent speech on race . as well as an insidious heritage of sexism and heterosexism, and the widening economic disparity with a health care crisis that abandons millions of people and dooms them to suffering and death.

Patrick:

Our communities are rotting and our inferior and unsafe infrastructure such as levees, schools, and bridges are collapsing. We are, perhaps, witnesses to the collapse of not only the US economic system BB a supposed "free market" economy until Bear Sterns and other Wall Street firms collapse under the weight of their illogical and immoral investments in risky derivatives just like the "Saving and Loan" scandal of the 1980s at the hands of John McCain, Charles Keating, and others, but also the collapse of the very foundation of our fragile, faltering, and noble in many ways, experiment in democracy.

Susan:

It is into this crisis that Curriculum Studies has an opportunity to speak with a prophetic voice. Where and how do these global cataclysms encounter our local experiences? How might we imagine a curriculum that can bring the local and the global, the private and the public, the present and the past, into conversation. Citing again "Curriculum as Social Psychoanalysis, A[Eudora]Welty held the concept of "regional" literature in disdain, terming it a "careless term." Regional writing fails to distinguish, she maintained, between localized raw material of life and the subtle process that transforms this primary data into art. Welty's insight informs the labor to incorporate the concept of place into educational research. For place to inform the act of inquiry it must be turned inside out. . . . The raw material of place must be bracketed in such a way that grants insight

into the human condition, historical movement and/or anthropological expression . . . [Welty] could create a context in which the universal was subtly evoked in the clarity of the particular” (p. 7). As such we take the experiences of living in Louisiana into the arms of a national experience of the tragedy of Katrina, and alongside a global experience of degradation of the language of connection, compassion, and democracy.

Patrick:

From Louisiana writer Walker Percy's book “The Message in the Bottle” it is clear that poets and novelists have an insight very different from modern scientists and humanists. Percy (1982) writes:

Susan:

“The modern age began to come to an end when people discovered that they could no longer understand themselves by the theory professed by the age. They...lived by reason during the day and at night dream bad dreams. The scientists were saying that by science [people] were learning more and more about the world as an environment and that accordingly the world could be changed and [people] made to feel more and more at home. The humanists were saying that through education man's lot was certain to improve. But poets and novelists and artists were saying something else: that at a time when, according to the theory of the age, people should feel most at home they felt most homeless. Someone was wrong” (p. 25).

Patrick:

Why do people feel so disconnected from the Earth and alienated from each other? Why are we fragmented as a human community and torn apart by religious fanaticism, senseless wars, ecological destruction, and economic greed? We contend that the poets and artists are correct; they expose the anguish of homelessness and place-less-ness of contemporary women and men. Our challenge is to discover the capacity to envision ecological interdependence and actively work for environmental sustainability in the public sphere. Jeanne Brady, Michael O'Malley, and Audrey Dentith's work in Public Pedagogy, Chet Bower's work in community commons, and Lisa Cary's book on A Curriculum Spaces inspire our vision. These author remind us that this is perhaps the place where curriculum studies can have the most immediate and dramatic influence.

Susan:

Language and literature are lovers. Good literature is deemed so only through the power of its language. Through what better field, therefore, might one explore the power of language? As Chet Bowers contends, it is the root metaphors of our languages that direct our thoughts and actions. And if our root metaphors send us to the shopping mall, to war, to all the various places and means through which we self-destruct, then perhaps we should be rooting out our root metaphors. A vision of curriculum studies that is sustainable, international, ecological, and communal clearly seems to be possible *only* through the cultural change that may come from a challenge to where we have allowed language to take us.

Patrick:

Fiction and essays by Walker Percy are most certainly placed in Louisiana. But, we contend, it is not what Eudora Welty would call a regional literature. Percy writes well beyond those political boundaries, but he does so with the focus and power of place. Hence, we proceed with our duet stories through readings from Walker Percy and others, some from Louisiana and some not, and an examination of the significance of language and metaphor to our curriculum theorizing. In the opening scene of Walker Percy's *The Thanatos Syndrome*, Tom More, the protagonist and a psychiatrist, begins to arrive at this conclusion:

Susan:

"Something strange is occurring in my region [of Louisiana] a strangeness that began with little things, certain small clinical changes which I observed" (1987, p. 3).

Patrick:

Tom goes on to say that these "little" things are important, and says further "Even more important is the ability— call it knack, hunch, providence, good luck, whatever—to know what you are looking for and to put two and two together" (1987, p. 3). We are told by Tom that this process "consists not in making great discoveries but in seeing the connection between small discoveries" (1987, p. 3).

Susan:

In all of these statements by his narrator, Percy is setting the scene for the process through which Tom More comes to discover the horror of the Blue Boy

project, an attempt by some to flood the water supply in the Mississippi River with heavy sodium in order to control unwanted defects in the population of Feliciana, the setting for the novel, and to increase certain brain functions which would contribute to an increase, if not perfection, of the intelligence of those persons. Might we ponder recent reports about pharmaceuticals in the US drinking water supply as a verification of Percy's fictional account? The most striking example of strangeness of which Tom More takes note is the inability of some of the infected persons to have self-reflection and context. In other words, these individuals can respond to questions with the accuracy and precision of a savant, and yet display no sense of self-reflection or no sense of the context in which the language is being used. In the opening chapter of the novel, Tom More notes of a patient named Mickey LaFay:

Patrick:

"For some reason-- perhaps it is her disconnectedness-- she reminds me of my daughter as a four-year-old. It is the age when children have caught on to language, do not stick to one subject, are open to any subject, would as soon be asked any question as long as one keeps playing the language game. A child does not need a context like you and me. Mickey LaFaye, like four-year-old Meg, is out of context" (Percy, 1987, p. 8).

Susan:

Tom's reflection here is quite important to our overall thesis because it is precisely this inability to provide connection and context to a given place and person in that place that inevitably leads to indifference about other people and destruction of the environment. Furthermore, such effects eradicate in individuals the important quality of self-reflection which is essential for autobiographical analysis and imagination, two pivotal ingredients in the development of a curriculum for sustainability and justice.

Patrick:

It seems clear to us that Tom More's observation that those infected by the heavy sodium additive lack context and self-reflective abilities can go far at defining this necessary sense of ethical meaning. For without a context and the ability to reflect upon that context, in terms of significance and place, no true human experience can be lived. No dialectic will result between the subjectivities of humans and the objective world. In such a situation, only violence and destruction can occur. The tragedy which occurs in

The Thanatos Syndrome is an apt metaphor for the moral tragedy looming before us in schools and society. Bob Comeaux, Max Gotlieb, and Van Dorn are school administrators—yes, a department head, a counselor, and a principal—and they are the perpetrators of the Blue Boy project in the novel. Tom More calls them brain engineers and neuropharmacologists. They have discovered a chemical to deliver haunted souls from mental suffering. This would be hilarious and ridiculous if it were not so familiar to us. Comeaux outlines the reason for their Blue Boy Project in the schools:

Susan:

"Tom, get this, a one hundred percent improvement in ACT scores in computation and memory recall in these very subjects" (1987, p. 197).

Patrick:

Comeaux also gloats that he can do more than increase intellect. He proclaims that the effects of another additive, progesterone, in the drinking water can produce a reduction in sexual activity. As he says,

Susan:

"Goodbye hassles, goodbye pills, rubbers, your friendly abortionist. Goodbye promiscuity, goodbye sex ed—who needs it? Mom and Dad love it, the kids love it, and the state saves millions. Family life is improved, Tom" (1987, p. 197).

Patrick:

As we hear these words from Comeaux, we are appalled at the cynicism in such a belief. For embedded in these ideas is the desire to control the way human beings conduct themselves by stripping them of the very thing that makes them human, which is conscious awareness of their context and their reflective powers through language. Again Comeaux says to Tom:

Susan:

"The hypothesis, Tom...is that at least a segment of the human neocortex and of consciousness itself is not only an aberration of evolution but is also the scourge and curse of life on this earth, the source of wars, insanities, perversions B in short, those very pathologies which are peculiar to homo sapiens" (1987, p. 195).

Patrick:

The irony of Comeaux's words lies in the fact that the thing which he desires to suppress through the intervention of the heavy sodium in the water supply, namely consciousness, is that quality which makes us human beings with spirituality, compassion, commitment, and mystery. By removing consciousness, Comeaux hopes to control the pathologies faced by the human community, but at what cost? It is clear to us that by removing the pathologies through chemical intervention, one will also remove the possibility for self-reflection and the triumphs of the human spirit which spring from that mystery and turmoil. This establishes a context for people to be disconnected not only from themselves but also from their natural environment. Perhaps this is exactly what is happening with No Child Left Behind and the efforts in 2008 in New Orleans to transform public education into charter schools with strict adherence to accountability curriculum? Indeed, one could say that this is a part of a phenomenon connected to globalization that has been identified by anthropologists and social theorists as an "audit culture." In an audit culture, the language of accountability pervades social institutions which are being forced from "the commons" into a market mode through a process some have called the "new managerialism."

Susan:

Let's examine what happens in the novel as a result of the Blue Boy Project. As Percy's tale continues to unfold to its conclusion, we are struck by even more ironies. Comeaux continues to rattle off the advantages of the heavy sodium by responding to Tom's questions about the use of language, about "reading and writing...Like reading a book...Like writing a sentence" (1987, p. 197) in such a manner that reveals the tragedy of such actions, and by means of our metaphor, the abuse and dysfunction in schools. Comeaux says:

Patrick:

"We're in a different age of communication out of McGuffey Readers and writing a theme on what I did last summer. Tom, these kids are way past comic books and star wars. They're into graphic and binary communication, which after all is a lot more accurate than 'once upon a time there lived a wicked queen.'"

Susan:

Tom responds:

Patrick:

“AYou mean they use two- word sentences?”

Susan:

Comeaux continues:

Patrick:

“You got it. And using a two-word sentence, you know what you can get out of them? They can rattle off the total exports and imports of the port of Baton Rouge B like a spread sheet B or give 'em a pencil and paper and they'll give you a graphic of the tributaries of the Red River. Tom, would you laugh at me if I told you what we've done is restore the best of the Southern Way of Life?” (Percy, 1987, p. 197).

Susan:

We think the irony is clear; individuals subjected to the heavy sodium have an increase in a kind of intelligence, just as Comeaux points out, but it is an increase without any contextual, spiritual, or autobiographical meaning. This parallels projects by educators who create and deliver a curriculum that is disconnected from environmental, cultural, and personal interests. That modern ccountability movements in education attempt to produce students who can recite large amounts of data and who can perform well on a test is a given, but the students are, all too often, stripped of any kind of meaningful understanding of that data. For example, a frustration experienced by many teachers occurs when students are unable to write a critical analysis because they cannot navigate the complexity of subjective thought. While school systems may promote critical thinking skills in the published curriculum guides of the district, the effect of the emphasis on rote memorization, predetermined solutions to complex problems, canonical hegemony, rigid structural analysis, and standardized testing all contribute to the impairment of a student's ability to meander—like the Mississippi River-- and to create, discover, and respond from a self-reflective perspective.

Patrick:

So what happens to the students in the novel?

Susan:

By the end of the novel Tom More discovers that the school administrators are sexually abusing the

children in the school B and the children lack the ability to complain or resist. The children have absorbed not only the pharmaceuticals but also the message of compliance in the curriculum. They become automatons who find pleasure in submitting to the will of the administrators. They have silenced their voices and accepted the abuse as normal.

Patrick:

In other words, students *lack* words for the most meaningful aspects of their own inner and outer lives. They lack the ability to critically evaluate their place. When we lose the vocabulary of nuance, we stop seeing nuance. For example, in *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*, an edited collection of words about the landscape that have fallen out of use, Barry Lopez is arguing that our shrinking vocabulary is a significant loss. For example, what we now generally refer to as merely "mud" once had several descriptors, depending on what *kind* of mud it was. One kind, "quag," was a sort of quick sand. We now find it only within the word "quagmire," a term that usually has nothing to do with the landscape. Lopez contends that when we cease to have descriptors for the nuances of our landscape, we cease to *see* the landscape; we cease to see *place*.

Susan:

So, might this also imply that when our pedagogical and curricular language gets reduced to terms like "best practice," "data based," "annual yearly progress," "value for dollar," . . . lots of terms in the discourses around efficiency, achievement, and the like . . . when these things are all that matter we descend into a spiraling devolution of educational thought and meaning? Are we the subjects of a Blue Boy Project B literally with pharmaceuticals in our drinking water and data driven curriculum in our schools? Is our understanding of curriculum limited to the brain engineers and neuropharmacologists Percy describes?

Patrick:

Worse than that even . . . We become more pliable, docile, and passive in our accelerating ignorance and dislocation from self. An audit culture, as a culture of surveillance, requires our cooperation for its success. We have to stop seeing . . . to stop noticing nuance, complexity, deeper meaning. We succumb to abuse.

Susan:

Is this really a new thing though? Speaking of place,

and of Louisiana in particular, I am remembering how in some ways the culture in a small southern, Baptist, conservative and racist town *was* an audit culture. Surveillance was severe and a constant . . . at least that is how it seemed to me, the child of Unitarian liberal democrats who did not go to church because there was no Unitarian church there. Norms were maintained at great costs to creativity, compassion, knowledge, and honesty.

Patrick:

And in my Catholic, urban experience as a young gay kid in a prominent political family, I felt compelled to hide my identity at all costs, even to the point of marrying in my 20's and having children. My perception of surveillance was intense, but it was also ironic that our Mardi Gras culture was permissive and an inversion of our church and school culture: prostitutes dressed as nuns and nuns sometimes dressed as prostitutes for a parade. But something different is happening now. Certainly discussions of race, gender, culture, and sexual diversity are more open and nuanced. For example college students of various orientations who identify as queer. But recent films like *A Battle in Seattle*, *A Body of War*, and other political and economic documentaries point to the disparities and divisiveness embedded in US culture. Clearly the seeds for where we've come to as a nation were planted long ago. But with our expanding technologies and the progression of global capitalism, coupled with the climate and environmental crises, . . . well, the consequences seem much clearer now, and are looming much closer.

Susan:

Yes, the seeds sewn seem to be growing into Audrey II, the bloodthirsty plant from *The Little Shop of Horrors*. There is something more that I want to add here about language. Toni Morrison delivered her Nobel address for literature in 1993. When I read it now it is hard for me to hold the fact that it is fifteen years old. What she said then was certainly true then, but its relevance for today surely marks her as prescient. I want to share some of that now. She writes:

A For her a dead language . . . is [rather than one that has simply gone out of use] unyielding language content to admire its own paralysis. Like statist languages, censored and censoring. Ruthless in its policing duties, it has no desire or purpose other than to maintain the free range of its own narcotic narcissism, its own exclusivity and dominance.

However, moribund, it is not without effect, for it actively thwarts the intellect, stalls conscience, suppresses human potential. Unreceptive to interrogation, it cannot form or tolerate new ideas, shape other thoughts, tell another story, fill baffling silences. Official language smothered to sanction ignorance and preserve privilege is a suit of armor polished to a shocking glitter, a husk from which the knight departed long ago. Yet there it is, dumb, predatory, sentimental. Exciting reverence in schoolchildren, providing shelter for despots, summoning false memories of stability, harmony among the public. (pp. 13-14).

Patrick:

Toni Morrison continues: AThere is and will be rousing language to keep citizens armed and arming; slaughtered and slaughtering in the malls, courthouses, post offices, playgrounds, bedrooms and boulevards; stirring, memorializing language to mask the pity and waste of needless death. There will be more diplomatic language to countenance rape, torture, assassination. There is and will be more seductive, mutant language designed to throttle women, to pack their throats like pate-producing geese with their own unsayable, transgressive words; there will be more of the language of surveillance disguised as research; of politics and history calculated to render the suffering of millions mute; language glamorized to thrill the dissatisfied and bereft into assaulting their neighbors; arrogant pseudo-empirical language crafted to lock creative people into cages of inferiority and hopelessness (pp. 17-18).

Susan:

Our charge is to challenge the language of audit, of endless war, of endless growth, and of endless violence to our environment and ourselves. And this is where we are, and this is the place where we have come from...

Patrick:

And this is who we are and the place where we search for wisdom and understanding ...

Susan:

We have learned from our place, and we are our place...

Patrick:

With T. S. Eliot (1971) in his poem A Little Gidding we conclude:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Susan:

Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.

Patrick:

Quick now, here, now, always
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one. (p. 145)

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