

The Democratic English Language

Numberless wars have been waged for control of popular language and opinion—the tools of the continuous construction of past and future. The potential of the properly combined word and phrase is what the prudent writer strives for, the politician campaigns for and the clergyman prays for. History is recorded in word and the future planned by it; in short, mankind's words are his world, and these are powers well worth contending for.

As we streamline our little planet, the social ramifications of our economic tendencies shape the world's languages, discarding those deemed unfit, and molding and shaping the rest into a form able to perpetuate the capitalist way. The battles then for power among men become an subconscious skirmish for their greatest form of capital—their tongues, for whoso directs the words of a man's mind and mouth shapes his past and his expectations for his present and future.

Our world's democracies and the American Dream will disappear in word first, before the material institutions that defend them—the troops, the schools, the banks—come tumbling down. Looking to the resurgence of democratic thought and practice in the 1700s, I would argue that the origins of modern democracy rested on potent words and discourse, and tumbles when that freedom language is lost.

Today, however, that freedom language, systematically found, is, in fact, being systematically lost. It is simple really, how modern capitalism found the key to profit in the rationalization of men's lives. Goodwill and charity became the role of governments, medical authority shifted to the doctors and science and popular opinion found its new home in the machine called mass media. These profitable institutions, concerned above all with their capital's sustainment, effectively hushed the fervent cry for personal freedom and enlightenment by sifting out the personal

experience of freedom, leading the mass of us by the hand. The freedom language, born in bulk and purpose, dies in bulk.

Imagine there existed a mountain in whose tunnels miners worked day and night extracting coal, a third generation of workmen and women born inside of the mountain and having never left it for any purpose. They worked inside of the mountain, slept there, ate there, worshipped and traded there; the mountain was their world. The rulers of the workers, when not imploring them to work harder, praised constantly the dim light of the bulbs that guided them through the mountain, reminding them of how dangerous the tunnels would be without them. They spoke to them of a distant memory, something called the Sun, a great light that warmed and illuminated the world in the past just as the lighting of the tunnels did. But the isolated workers, confined inside the cold and dark mountain lit dimly by bulbs and warmed by fire only, would know cold and darkness and dangers only, and the connotation of 'light' and 'warmth' will have long lost their original savor and the imagination conjured by the terms would be lost as well. The same is the case with today's man, reminded constantly of the brilliance of freedom and democracy and the mad world that existed before, ideals worth dying for, but able to witness only the faint shadows of the equality of man and the original heroic struggle to protect it.

Freedom language dies in that manner every day. Of all the terms fit for galvanizing troops and effort and pride—freedom, liberty, hope—the term 'equality', hallowed in our Declaration and expounded upon by men and women every century since, remains a staple of the free man's and woman's lexicon. It gains its power from its meaning and function in a given society. In democracies such as 18th century America, personal equality could daily be seen at work in the sentiments and conversations of the public as a promise worth praying for, fighting for or dying for—whichever means were deemed fit. However, we, the children of the

Founding Fathers have since beheld the withering away of human social equality, despite our record of the promise. Daily we behold the hollowing out of the term, equality, Though the term still sounds the same, its meaning is belied by a growing inequality; a growth in the number of millionaires but the demise of the middle classes; bleak numbers for Main Street but increased comfort on Wall Street. Even the powers-that-be legitimize the paradox of the American dream, clearly illustrated during the Occupy Wall-Street protests of 2012, when the nation chose to protect the proprietors of the inequalities rather than the American public seeking its alteration.

One need only to remove the free, living language from a people's heart to maintain his rule over them. In this so-called modernistic society, despair cloaked as progression abounds with no end in sight while the understudied decline of the democratic English language extinguishes the once inevitable evolution of our democratic society into one of an unprecedented equality; but freedom became, when its language disappeared, little more than a flame robbed of its oxygen, a heap of dead coals. That captured language was, and remains, the prize, and they that hold it wield the future.



These conclusions, but hopes and fears, compel my simple, foolish storytelling. For my children's sake, I write in hopes of leaving an inheritance of hope and expectation that their disparaging world can be altered if they take heed of the past. For the future of English speaking men and women I write, that they recapture the promises of freedom and prosperity in conversation, so that when our lands contend again for the world economy and its future, they will engage with pride the tyranny that our Fathers surrendered to long ago.

A story, long after its reader laughs and cries, leaves the mind with an image worthy to be pondered if the writer shunned common and overused terms for fresh words and phrases. Thus, the writer becomes the vanguard of thought, safeguarding the ark

Coastlines

of humanity—the language—and keeping it powerful and swift and capable whether for good or for bad. By word were heaven and earth created and through elegant discourse did men and women

dream of democracy; by word came I to behold the cloaked potential of the rude capitalism I was fleshed into. As long as the free tongue remains, rid of dead letters, then hope for the populations live. Long live the word, long after I am gone.

Now, humankind must retake its hope at the direction of carefully chosen words. As empires past settled on the banks of rivers and coastlines to thrive, peoples will be drawn to where prudent policies and testaments—clear, running waters—are found. Since childhood I have been drawn toward that clarity, and by pen I record the things I see along the way. While composing, I strain to see through the fray and into future of humankind and the various forms it can take. This is why I write, that I may see.

--by Mario Spann