

**Can the Poet Be a Language Planner?  
A Personal Salute to Richard Ruiz**

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The idea of writing this article began when I found out the sad news of our friend's passing. The most obvious reason is that I expected Richard to live a long and rich life. The second reason is that I had no idea how to publicly express my love and admiration for him until I was asked to co-edit this commemorative issue of the Bilingual Review with Mary Carol Combs and Howard L. Smith, fellow students of Richard.

I salute Richard Ruiz for several personal reasons. In the late '80s I signed up for a course taught by him at the University of Arizona's College of Education. It was an introduction to bilingual education in which he introduced several concepts that up to that time were totally new to me. One concept that captivated my imagination was the idea of language planning. Richard was part of the Department of Language, Reading and Culture and I decided, mostly through his influence, to apply for its doctoral program with an emphasis on sociolinguistics (another term Richard had introduced me to) mostly because of Richard's gentle persuasion. Very quietly Richard had been guiding my decisions but was also very instrumental in my making long-lasting associations with two great friends and collaborators: Howard L. Smith and Mary Carol Combs (now two highly respected scholars in the field made fertile by Richard Ruiz). Another debt proudly to owe to Richard is that he was my advisor in the doctoral program and directed my dissertation (a case study on ideology in the language maintenance efforts of a Spanish-language church in Southern Arizona). Amigo Richard, you are much missed.

**Abstract**

This paper addresses one principal and several corollary questions. The main question is: Can the poet be a language planner? The paper explores the work of two poets. One lived several thousand years ago and was able to affect through her poetry, in a very profound way, the language planning needs of those times. The second is living today and potentially, through his work, can also affect his world in a profound way. The paper reaches two important conclusions: 1) The poet can be a productive and humanistic language planner, and 2) Life can be better if we use both types of language planning.

Key words: Authority, Bilingual Education, Enheduanna, Language-as-Resource, Language Planning, Poetry, Power, Religion

## Introduction

During the three years that it took to write my doctoral dissertation under Richard Ruiz's guidance, I met with him at his office in the College of Education to have a discussions. This article is the result of several of those conversations we shared. I asked him one morning: 'Can a poet be a language planner?' He thought about it for a moment and then replied 'A poet can surely be a language planner. He or she really is, but may not be conscious of that fact. Richard urged me to write an article on the topic, but it has taken many years for me to finally listen to him and embark upon writing it.

I was surprised that Richard's answer came across to me very directly and without hesitation. He reminded me that when he recruited me into the doctoral program he had told me that one of my strengths was that my background was literature. He further explained that the field of language planning needed ties with minds trained in different areas of study. He convinced me that preparation in any area of language study was a natural connection to language planning and language policy. Today, I understand clearly what he meant.

As a way of guiding my ideas he asked me to formulate several key questions about which we needed to have ample clarity before we could move on to other regions of understanding the main question: Can the poet be a language planner? My response was that I had two fundamental questions to offer. The first one was: 'What is the nature of language planning?' It followed that the second question had to be: 'What is the nature of the poet?' Before formulating those two questions I kept in mind that one of Richard's specializations in his own university preparation had been the Foundations of Education. He asked me to go think deeply about these two questions and about what the two had in common.

## What Is the Nature of Language Planning?

The best way to determine the nature of language planning is to ask language planners what they do, why they do it, where they do it, with whom they do it, and who benefits from what they do? In the language planning literature one finds many definitions. So many, in fact, that it is possible to say that a 'true' definition lies somewhere in the middle of a continuum of definitions (Cobarrubias; Eastman, 1983; Fishman, 1983; Rubin 1981; Weinstein, 1983). At the most liberal pole is Peter Trudgill's definition. In his *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society* (2000) he states that the activities of governments having to do with language can be described as instances of language planning. At the most conservative side of the continuum we find Joshua Fishman's definition in his *Ideology, Society and Language: The Odyssey of Nathan Birnbaum* (1987). He reasoned that language planning is the authoritative allocation of resources to the attainment of language status and corpus goals, whether in connection with new functions that are aspired to, or in connection with old functions that need to be discharged more adequately. Between these two definitions there is room for many others offering a variety of functions, goals, and orientations for language planning (Nahir, 2003; Ruiz, 1984).

I learned about language planning within an educational context in my doctoral program and the four major areas of activities: 1) status planning or the ranking given to a language in a given geographical setting (Coronel-Molina, 1999); 2) corpus planning or the work done to the

structure of a language as required (Hornberger & King, 1998); 3) language in education planning or the pedagogical aspects of (LP) (Mansor, 2005); and 4) prestige learning (Edwards, 1996). As a scholar, I would eventually develop an interest in pedagogical language planning in the United States.

### **What is the Nature of the Poet?**

Poets have been around since before literacy existed. According to Chrisomalis (2009) literacy has been around for some ten thousand years. Before the emergence of literacy as we understand it today, poets and their poetry existed in the oral tradition. Given this astounding fact about the age of the poet – not surprisingly, there is a large body of literature addressing the nature of the poet (Arnold, 1865; Ciardi & Williams, 1975; Culler, 2015; Feslski, 2008; Forché, 1993; Haney, 1989; Raffel, 1984; Scholes, 1970). Long before Horace wrote his *Ars Poetica* (Howatson, 2013) a few years before the birth of Christ and all the way to the present, poets have been writing their own philosophies of poetry. I believe that if we were able to collect and study all the *Ars Poeticas* that poets have written over thousands of years, we would have a much more precise account of the essence of what the poet does. However, for the purposes of this article more practicality is needed.

It seems that by approaching the functions of the poet – how poetry affects the world – we will have a fairly good picture of the essence of what a poet does. The following are some of the most cited functions or purposes of the poet. The first one, and the most cited characteristic of poetry, is that it gives pleasure to the reader. Not the common pleasure that people speak about on a daily basis, but a pleasure that comes from receiving enlightenment; pleasure from a process that cleanses the emotions, that results from the realization of moral truth (Hall, 1971).

A second function the poet brings to humanity is that of consolation and strength. Poetry comes to the reader as a rock of defense of human nature. When human nature appears to be slipping, as it seems to be in present day politics all over the world, poets lift us and remind us of our humanity and that we should aspire to be better. This the poet does universally around the world across all times and all cultures. A third important function of the poet's work is knowledge and truth. The poet is not interested in knowledge as in details or facts found in an encyclopedia.

The knowledge of poets is found in the depths of their unconscious minds. The most important of these is truth, as it can be found in beauty and in the more sublime concepts known to humanity (Winters, 1969). The fourth and last purpose of the work of the poet is perhaps the one that is most appropriate for a language planner. This is not to say that the other three functions cannot or should not apply to the language planner. This last function is poetry as a force for good. To console the afflicted, to teach empathy, to teach virtue and the enjoyment of beauty – these are goals of the poet's work as a force for good.

In *The Excursion* (2007) William Wordsworth tells us that poetry has its highest value and meaning in framing models. He adds: “to improve the scheme of man's existence and re-cast the world” (p. xi). Wordsworth's thought could be easily applied to language planning. What a powerful force the union of these two enterprises could make for humanity!

## **The Poet as Planner**

When speakers of different languages and dialects share a space or task, they must agree upon which language to use in a given context. According to Diallo and Lidicoat (2014, p. 111) “Language planning is a process of future-oriented decision-making to change some aspect of language practice in order to address a perceived linguistic problem.” Such deliberations influence the maintenance, status, and social spaces in which languages are accepted or disparaged. While the process of language planning can be explicit, resulting in written policies at the state or local levels, it may be implicit, manifesting its presence through language preferences or social exclusion.

Having backgrounds as both language planner and poet, I intend in this paper to bring about a fusion between these two enterprises. The challenge at this point, is to persuade the reader that, despite the unconventionality of the concept of the poet, there is ample evidence that poets practice language planning before the existence of literature/literacy and continue with this practice to this very day. I now offer an example from four thousand years ago of a woman poet who had a great impact on the laws (including language) of her nation through her poetry and a second example of poetry written three years ago whose intention was to affect political-linguistic change in the State of Arizona.

I hold that language planning needs to be practiced outside the officialdom in which it has been practiced for the last century. By demonstrating that the poet is a popular type of language planner, this fact implies that there are other possible popular ways for language planning to manifest itself. This is exactly the point that Richard Ruiz had in mind when he encouraged me to use my literary training as part of my practice as a language planner. Now, we move back in history four thousand years to demonstrate the variability of the poet as a very effective language planner long before the concept of language planner existed.

## **The Past**

Enheduanna was a high priestess and daughter of King Sargon of Akkad in the Sumerian city state of Ur. She was born circa 2285 BCE and is probably the earliest known woman in history. To get a sense of how long ago Enheduanna lived it should be mentioned that Abraham, the first of three biblical patriarchs of Judaism, is believed to have been born circa 1813 BCE. This means that Enheduanna lived some 500 years before the beginning of Judaism.

It is widely believed that King Sargon used his daughter’s talents and ingenuity to place her as high priestess (“En-priestess”) of Nanna at Ur as a political strategy. Enheduanna’s father had the idea that he could build a Sumerian empire such as had never been seen (Hallo, W.W. & Van Dijk, J. J.A. Trans. 1968; Sjöberg, A. & Bermann, E. Trans. 1969; Crawford, H. Trans. 1991). While his political influence was felt for five hundred years, it is also widely accepted by historians that Sargon would not have been able to succeed without the prowess of Enheduanna’s literary genius. Her poetry united Akkad and Ur, (in northern Sumer and southern Sumer, respectively) the two largest city-states in Sumer. Enheduanna’s influence is believed to have been more lasting than her father’s today (Barnstone, A. & Barnstone, W. 1992; Thorkild, J. 1976, Thorkild, J. 1987).

With only three major works, Princess Enheduanna managed her enormous feat of language planning. Of course, her feat was both ideologic and linguistic planning, to be sure. When ideas are put in the minds of people and they assimilate them as part of their own identity, memorize the words that represent the ideas--linguaging (as well as ideological planning) is taking place. The genius was that embedded in Enheduanna's words was the intention of bringing people together ideologically to form a larger and more powerful political, cultural, linguistic, religious and military unit. I would like to concentrate now on the type of concepts her writings dealt with by going into one of the three major pieces.

The three works she wrote are known as 1) *The Exaltation of Inanna*, 2) *In-nin sa-gur-ra*, and 3) *The Temple Hymns*. The first two were dedicated to the goddess Inanna and the third is addressed to the temples and the goddess or god that occupied them. I will concentrate my discussion on the first of these three documents. My analysis will be as much sociolinguistic as it will be literary. In Enheduanna's work it is impossible to separate the two.

The literary importance of the three pieces is not in question. On the contrary, the opposite view is predominantly held by literary authorities who have examined them. Furthermore, I will not pass judgment on her devotion and dedication as a priestess to the gods and temples of her time. However, it is difficult to ignore her awareness of power and how people's ideologies could be for the sole purpose of her father's political gains (Westenholtz, A. 1979). One of her works is more revealing to me than are the other two and it is for this reason I have chosen to focus my attention on *The Exaltation of Inanna*. (Winter, I. J. 1975, Wolkstein, D. & Kramer, S. N. 1983).

### *The Exaltation of Inanna*

Of the three works this is the most discussed by researchers from various fields. Hallo and van Dijk (1968) translated it from the cuneiform. The complete translation is a total of 153 lines. My reading of Enheduanna's hymn (poem) *The Exaltation of Inanna* yielded the following important points:

*Characteristics of Inanna.* Inanna was also known as the Queen of Heaven and her domains were love, wisdom, war, fertility and lust – among others. That's a lot of territory to cover in the human experience. Inanna was the goddess of Uruk. At the time that Enheduanna was sent there as priestess of Inanna, Uruk was the largest city in the world with 60,000 inhabitants. There was much at stake from King Sargon's perspective. When Enheduanna was writing *The Exaltation*, she knew exactly what she wanted to say in those 153 lines that constituted the hymn. She wanted to give a fuller description, to elevate and praise Inanna in such a way the people could sing praises in order to re-appropriate such majestic entity. Enheduanna described the characteristics of the goddess in a way never before heard or seen. Her verses portrayed the goddess and her activities with in a way never before experienced by her audience. The poet's work would have more imagery captivated their minds and their hearts (Wolkstein, D. & Kramer, S. N. 1983).

*Inanna's equality with the god An.* An was the most important god in the pantheon of Sumer. By lifting Inanna's to the apex of the Sumerian pantheon, Enheduanna would win over to her (her father's) side a large number of new worshippers. The people of Uruk were ecstatic with Enheduanna's hymn ensuring that the south of Sumer came on board with King Sargon as their

leader. The point of importance was that Enheduanna had now insured that the people of Uruk had become believers of the new regime adhering to Sumerian beliefs and customs.

*A more war-like Goddess Inanna.* Enheduanna uses a powerful metaphor for Inanna-comes down from the heavens and chases all the lesser gods to let them know she is now an aggressive and war-like goddess. Enheduanna, carrying out her father's wishes to form a huge army, used her abilities as a poet to get the people on a martial attitude.

*Enheduanna's self-deification.* In the "Magnificat" (lines 122 through 131) Enheduanna accomplishes an incredible feat. Her persona makes its appearance in her own poem as the narrator switches from third person to first person. From a literary standpoint, this is a most aggressive technique. She does this with the purpose of describing her own qualities as Great Priestess of the Temple of Inanna. She reveals to her newly-gained people how she received her inspiration directly from Inanna and ascribes to herself divine attributes. Enheduanna is now looking for and obtaining her own divination. Before long Sumerians throughout the land called her princess, priestess and goddess. Enheduanna goes to the extent of saying that her act of creativity (the writing of the *The Exaltation*) was a conception in the same way that Goddess Inanna is who gives birth to her people. Enheduanna, the poet adds, had given birth to *The Exaltation*. At the end of the poem Enheduanna emerges victorious, side by side with Inanna. The contents of "The Magnificat" may not seem much more than just the words of a poet accompanied with a little hubris and not much else. However, it is much more than that. She is legitimizing her father's rule and her own as a goddess for the Sumerian people to revere and idolize. She thus gives birth to a new and stronger form of authority.

There have been poets in the history of literature who are said to have achieved immortality through the success of their works. Homer comes to mind immediately. But for a poet to achieve self-deification during the time they are alive, that's quite an achievement. In *The Exaltation* that is precisely what she does. Enheduanna must have had an incredibly large ego. She manages to do this amazing trick by coming out of the shadows of third person narration into a very proactive first person narration. She usurps divinity out of thin air and in two lines divinizes herself. She stands side-by-side with Inanna, a secondary goddess (whom Enheduanna had turned into a major one in the very same poem) in the Sumerian pantheon to bring her up to become equal with An (the preeminent god in Sumer). Is this the power of poetry? Or is this the power that poetry can have in the hands of a royal personage like Enheduanna? Or is this the power of religion (Martin, D. 2014)?

## **The Present**

Enheduanna gave us a very good idea of how the poet can act as a language planner from four thousand years ago. Today, the language planning capabilities of the poet have not diminished, in fact, after four thousand years of poetic development the poet is more capable of being an effective language planner than ever. For one thing, there are plenty more poets today than there were in Enheduanna's time. To prove this I will use a few poems from the work of a minor poet living today. By using the work not of a great contemporary poet but one whom I regard as a third rate poet - that is, I, myself - it will become even more apparent that the poet can be a language planner.

I will be citing poetry from a book that was published only three years ago, *María Bonita: Poems/Poemas* (de la Viña, 2012), a bilingual poetry collection. I have selected three poems from *María Bonita* (the complete poems can be found in the Addenda at the end of this article) and will make comparative commentary with Enheduanna's *The Exaltation*. The three poems are *Ars Poetica: The Last Supper*, *Sunset Stanza*, and *Compadre, This Ain't No Crabgrass*.

*Ars Poetica: The Last Supper.* As most religious poets, Enheduanna tells us that her inspiration comes from a deity-the goddess Inanna. Our poet from the present time doesn't hesitate to tell us that his verses emanate directly from the labor that comes from his "brain's marrow;" that the paper where he will put down his words is his "flesh" and "blood." He will "eat" and "drink" from the paper that is the substance which nourishes and sustains his "poetness," his state of being a poet. His communion with Nature (one of three essential elements in his *Ars Poetica*), is personified by "the monsoon rainbow" outside the window. Both the blank page which creates "terror" in him (Enheduanna doesn't show any fears because she has to show the type of strength and confidence of a person who is in the process of achieving deification) and which is proof of his humanity, #2 pencils are his companions. His hand trembles while he waits for his creation to emerge from the depths of his unconscious.

There is a religious symbolism in his *Ars Poetica*. The subtitle is "The Last Supper," and the words of Christ (bread=flesh) and (wine=blood) are plainly there. Christ asks the disciples to eat and drink. The eating and drinking of Christ's blood and flesh is symbolically inherent in the teachings of Christianity. The modern poet uses this very same vehicle to say that his religion is the act of poetry. He eats and drinks from the holy fountain of poetry.

The Christian symbolism continues with the term "word." The poet is waiting for the "word's" birth. In this context it is impossible not to think of the opening words of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The logically natural deduction is that the poet is in the beginning of his writing process waiting for his Word to come out through "the birth canal" and that the Word is with the Poet (just as a mother is with her child at the moment of birth) and that the Word is the Poet; there is a oneness between child and mother or Word with Poet. In actual births one witnesses very little patience, the mother is screaming and undergoing great stress. The poet, in this case shows "the patience of a lamb." Here we find one last Christian symbol.

Jesus was known also as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist gave this name to him upon seeing Jesus the first time. John qualified the name he gave Jesus as he who takes away sins from humanity. Others have attributed this sacrificial characteristic to Christ because "he died for the sins of humanity." In *Ars Poetica: The Last Supper*, the poet gives himself the qualification of "patience," and the concept of sacrifice is alluded to since this poet has to speak bravely about injustices in public life. This fact puts him in harm's way, at least theoretically.

*Sunset Stanza.* It was described earlier how Enheduanna got her power as a poet. As a human being she was born with power. She was a princess, daughter of one of the most powerful kings of her time. Her father was counting on her to amass immense power for him through her astuteness and talents. She was strategically placed in the position of priestess of the Sumerian city-state of Ur. Enheduanna was very aware of the power that words have and she wrote lyrics

that were sung by a choir of women as hymns for worshippers to hear. Her words would transform her world for hundreds of years into the future.

Our modern poet tells us the source of his power in a very short poem. The poem "Sunset Stanza" is only 19 lines long but it is enough to tell us the source of the poet's power. Let's look at it carefully. The entire poem is framed by two lines: "The sunset never ends" (twice) and "The sunrise never ends" (once). In the very first line the poet declares that his power comes from Nature. The poet is not the inheritor of power by means of a powerful mother or father in the way Enheduanna is. The sun is his most direct source of power. In his world there is no end of sunsets or of sunrises. To him, this means that his source of power is available to him at all times.

The poet does not look for a god or goddess for additional power. He does mention the great Thunderbird, a Native American legendary entity, but here the great Thunderbird is just another name for the sun. Running lines 3 and 4 together, we see that the sun and the Thunderbird are one and same thing. When the sun is done with its work he looks for its "solitary nest." The idea of resting is only figurative for the poet states several times that the sun never rests. This could be an allusion to the idea that the poet has to be ever vigilant since the scent of the Desert Dragon is ubiquitous. In Enheduanna's case, she doesn't have an enemy - a representative of evil. She does her work completely unopposed. The ritual of "his loves" ("sus amores") is to be connected to the poet's source of power day in and day out and to be vigilant about the activities of the Desert Dragon.

One important point of difference between the two poets, ancient and modern, is connected to the difference in the quality of their powers. The modern poet comes from a background of low socio-economic status. He is self-made. Enheduanna had a lot of help in achieving her success, while the modern poet had only himself to achieve his poetry goals. Enheduanna is an example of a Top-down variety of language planning. The modern poet is an example of Bottom-up type language planning. This topic of power will return in a section below.

*Compadre, This Ain't No Crabgrass!* This is a strongly ideological poem. The poet's objective is to put across one very important idea about a group of people that he conceives as the enemy of his community, the Hispanic community. The objective of this people's poet is not much different from Enheduanna's objective. His idea works as a tool to educate his community about an evil characteristic that he thinks his community needs to understand about its oppressor. Let's look at what each of the seven parts of this poem has to say and how the poet develops the concept of importance to him.

Stanza 1. We see the poet-character as an old man, tired, looking at himself in the mirror and finding an image of stress contemplating his wrinkles. Suddenly he remembers today is gardening day. For the time-being let's just say that gardening is a symbol of his work as a poet-character. It's important not to neglect an important contrast between Enheduanna and our modern poet. There is a clear humanity visible in his description as an aging person plagued by stress. We don't know yet what this stress is due to. On the other hand, Enheduanna is a princess, daughter of the most powerful man in the land. She is a high priestess devoting her life to a very important goddess. Enheduanna gives herself the gift of ascending to the level of a goddess and a



promoter of the enhancement of her father's power over the masses. Said differently, Enheduanna works on behalf of the oppression of her people and those people in the future her father will conquer and dominate.

Stanza 2. In this section the poet-character feels the heat of the sun (his "little brother") and talks to it affectionately. He pleads with the sun to not work so arduously. The sun ignores him. The poet-character acknowledges the sun as supreme above all things. His intuition comes into play in the form of the taste in his saliva. His saliva tells him that it won't be a good day. Then he notices that his toolshed's been broken into. He goes on as if these break-ins are routine in his life and gets ready to go to work. The feeling of perpetually being robbed goes beyond the instance at the tool shed. It's also a reference to the series of robberies perpetrated by the dominant culture on his own subaltern community. This robbery is manifested in endless ways. A line at the end of each stanza tells us that the poet-character is experiencing a severe headache. The migraine is a chronic symptom of his life of sacrifice. This reflects a large contrast between the poet-character of this poem and the way Enheduanna lives her life.

Stanza 3. In this section the poet-character becomes aware of a big problem he didn't know he had until his "*compadre*" and next-door-neighbor (mutual godfathers) points it out. The poet-character believed his beautiful garden only had a little crabgrass, but his "*compadre*" lets him know the situation is much worse, he's got Bermuda grass and that's "some really bad shit." The "*compadre*" will let the poet-character know just how bad "this shit" really is in the section that follows.

Stanza 4. There is a huge difference between crabgrass and Bermuda grass. The former dies every year, the latter never dies. Crabgrass has roots three to four inches deep; Bermuda grass' are three feet deep. Crabgrass has trailers on top of the soil, Bermuda grass has trailer on top and under the soil and most insidious of all is that the Bermuda grass underground network is enormous and invisible. The "*compadre*" is teaching his poet friend a lesson on what seems to be two types of grasses, but they are talking about power politics. A subtext that needs to be taken into consideration is that according to the "*compadre*" the political party that lately has been passing racist laws (2011-2013) especially designed to suppress the education and civil rights of the Arizona Hispanic population, is the Republican Party. A deeper part of the subtext is that certain Republican politicians are like Crabgrass and others are like the very dangerous Bermuda grass. Of course, the poet's headache keeps intensifying with every word he hears from his "*compadre*."

Stanza 5. The "*compadre*" continues to expand on his metaphor. He seems to say that some of the Republican political thinking can be eliminated. He doesn't go as far as saying how that is to be done, but he says that the worst Republican thinking, that being represented by the Bermuda grass, cannot ever be eliminated. It can only be controlled, but never killed. The other interesting point the "*compadre*" makes is that the evil thinking comes from outside of Arizona in the same way that Bermuda grass is not a native plant of the Sonora Desert. By extension, he may be saying that the evil thinking originates outside the entire American mainland.

Stanza 6. The "*compadre*" brings the terror of Bermuda grass home to the poet. One can remove all the dirt three feet down from one's backyard and bring fresh soil only to find out six months

later that the Bermuda grass that was growing all around one's backyard (in the neighbor's backyard) and growing three feet down under one's house has already moved back into one's backyard. One literally has to convert the entire world into one big hole with steam shovels to get rid of it. This, of course, is a great exaggeration but a funny one that brings home the message: "There's no getting rid of the stuff. One can only keep cutting it back to keep it at bay." This is another way of saying that we, human beings, cannot get rid of evil. We can only keep it in check. The "*compadre*" may be right with his assessment of the human condition, however sad that it may be.

Stanza 7. The last part of the poem ends in a comedic note enumerating the different kinds of evil grasses that infest the State of Arizona and the two "*compadres*" vow to fight evil in their state. One may safely extend this analogy to the rest of the country.

### **Language-as-resource and the Poet as Language Planner**

In this segment I discuss the concept of the poet as language planner within the context of one of Richard Ruiz's orientations (1984): language-as-resource. Thomas Ricento's (2005) article is one example of several researchers that seem to be saying that even this most promising of Richard's orientations doesn't appear to be doing well. Ricento examines the problems that are extant when we talk about language-as-resource in the wide spectrum of environments in which found or could potentially be found. Those of us who have been actively working in a language-as-resource mode, particularly in the United States, know full well that problems related to language-as-resource remain strong. A nagging feeling persists that ground has actually been lost in the last generation of potential bilingual children (Valenzuela, 2016). I have worked more on projects related to bilingual education and cannot deny that one of the biggest problems to be resolved has to do with attitudes toward language particularly in the United States.

Back in 1984, Richard noted that the 'resource orientation' was not without its problems. He admitted that he was hoping to see in the years ahead an expansion of the resources approach to language planning. His hope was that the resource orientation would solve many of the conflicts of society, particularly those conflicts related to the use of the Spanish language in the schools and in the general society (Ruiz, 1984). From 1984 to the present it seems that the language-as-resource orientation has remained stagnant. Today, as in 1984 the opportunities to open more avenues of development remain wide open, unfortunately it's possible that ground has been lost in the last 32 years in the area of language-as-resource. This article is but one small road leading to Rome. This writer is a poet and a language planner. Poets as a whole don't recognize that language planning is one of the many things he or she actually does when writing certain types of poetry and if that fact would be recognized, a new army of language planners with the sensitivity of poets can be added to the cause.

### **Top-down Versus Bottom-Up Language Planning**

The question why there is a need for the poet to be a language planner can be raised with justification. As it stands today in the United States most language planning efforts are being carried out by persons with a doctorate, holding a professorial position at a major university and

working as consultants for organizations representing governments at the international level or they work in agencies and organizations either public or private at national levels.

Language planners are asked to put together programs that affect millions of children and their parents in school districts. A language planner, for instance, may be asked to work in collaboration with school district personnel to implement a bilingual education program. Such programs are usually designed by language planners and approved by education authorities or by state assemblies or any other number of ways that are possible in bringing about said programs, at the end of the process what needs to happen is the actual implementation of the program (Wright, 2005). Parents and their children are placed in the new programs' classes and the program is ready. This is what one could call a "Top-down" type of language planning effort. Community members and parents are asked to participate when all the major decisions have already been made.

I'm not proposing that all "Top-down" language planning efforts need to be immediately abolished. Like Bermuda grass, that is not likely to happen, in any case. What I'm proposing is that there should be more programs of language planning that originate in the community. Any such language planning undertaking would be a "Bottom-up" program. The poet as a language planner is one of many concepts that this article is promoting. It would be one example among many possible ideas of the "Bottom-up" type of LP program. The reader may find amusing that the word hierarchy originates from the Greek for "rule of a high priest" and for "leader for rites." This ancient meaning appears to be exemplified by the high priestess Enheduanna.

## Conclusions

My initial question "Can a poet be a language planner?" has been answered satisfactorily in this writer's view. The course this article has taken, almost to the letter, are the same paths and conclusions that were established during my conversations with Richard Ruiz over a period of several months almost twenty years ago. We were both in agreement regarding issues dealing with the nature of language planning. Regardless of all the functions in goals in language planning, which were enumerated earlier, most of them are performed by official agencies and institutions. This state of affairs has created a situation I have called "Top-down language planning." From a perspective of critical theory a very good argument can be made that top-down social conditions usually don't lead to healthy states for the grassroots levels of societies and communities. In fact, the leading reason for my discussions with Richard Ruiz and the eventual writing of this article is to offer one among many possible solutions to the "Top-down language planning" problem.

The moment the author-poet is brought into the equation it becomes necessary to review the nature of the author-poet in specific and in general vis-à-vis language planning. For this article the choice of Enheduanna (the poet, the priestess, and the deity from a period of some four thousand years ago) was not an accident - quite the contrary. In Enheduanna's time leaders' knowledge and their use or abuse of the structure of hierarchy for the control of their subjects was already quite sophisticated. The field of language planning has much to learn from research on how hierarchies (Dawkins, 1976) since time immemorial have affected the sociolinguistics of today. Many doors of further research for future students of language planning will open by

looking deeply into terms like authority (Raz, 1990); oppression (Cudd, 2006); asymmetrical economic and political relationships (Freire, 2003; subordination and superiority (Simmel, 1896); and the relationship of all these concepts with the notion of power (Galbraith, 1983) vis-à-vis language planning.

William Wordsworth (2007) tells us something about the poet that appears to be absent in the functions and goals of the language planner: “to improve the scheme of man’s existence and recast the world.” It turns out that the poet brings to the field of language planning a humanistic, quasi-spiritual quality that is, often, very much needed among decision-makers who effect sociolinguistic laws that affect the masses in countries around the world. Once I saw a very moving statement found on the painter Jackson Pollocks’ headstone that is appropriate to cite here. The anonymous writer of the now famous epitaph read: “Artists and poets are the raw nerve ends of humanity. By themselves they can do little to save humanity. Without them there would be little worth saving.”

This paper had the need to offer vital examples of actual poets seen doing the work of language planning through their poetry just to show that there has been, through the years, a close relationship between language planning and poetry writing. It was also necessary to show that poets have been practicing language planning for a long time. As a representative of the distant past Enheduanna in her poem “The Exaltation of Inanna” allowed us to see a clear picture of how a poem can have the power to effect ideological planning, which includes language planning in a very important society of the human past, Sumer.

That a poet can be a language planner brings up even larger questions for the researchers of tomorrow: Can any writer be a language planner or can other types of professionals be language planners? These are questions that are best left to future generations.

## ADDENDA

From *María Bonita: Poems/Poemas*

### ***Ars Poetica: The Last Supper***

The paper I hold before me is my flesh  
the sound-symbols from my brain’s marrow are my blood  
I will eat and I will drink from them.

Through my window I see the monsoon rainbow  
daring me to emit my next verse while  
in timorous hand I hold a #2 pencil,  
which has shared with me the yellow fever,  
the terror of the ghostly blank page.  
it also trembles abiding with the patience of a lamb  
for the first word to show up through the birth canal.

Abruptly we all sense the incipient seconds of hope's birth...  
we have all now gathered here... again: flesh, blood, terror  
to bring forth our next verse,  
the perfume we know so well.

### ***Sunset Stanza***

The poet gets his power from nature;  
The sunset never ends.

When the great Thunderbird has done its work  
The sun finds his new solitary nest  
And sets it on such blessed fire  
-Oh holy ritual *de mis amores!*-  
That fills the Arizona sky  
With ethereal illumination.  
The poet walks home full of power  
Finds his mate in their nest  
And the room glows 'til morning.

The nature of poetry is power;  
The sunrise never ends.

The poet walks down the trail  
He smells the scent of the Desert Dragon  
Where is yesterday's fear?  
Only the great Thunderbird knows.  
The power of nature is poetry;  
The sunset never ends.

### ***Compadre, This Ain't No Crabgrass***

No.1.  
El poeta despertó cansado.  
In the bathroom he looked  
At his face with concern.  
*Es este pinche estrés,*  
he said outloud  
feeling his *arrugas*.  
Then remembering *de repente*:  
*Carajo*, today is garden day!

He squeezed his head with both hands.

No. 2.  
... outside, *el Hermano Sol* was working overtime.  
Why don't you take a little break, *hermanito*?

The sun paid no attention to the poet.  
*Ya sabemos que tú eres el mero, merito, mero.*  
The taste in the poet's saliva told him  
that today would not be a good day.  
The tool shed was open. I knew it!  
*Ya se me robaron toditito.*  
He felt foolish not having heard  
a single sound overnight.  
He grabbed a few tools and faced the garden  
Looking afflicted.

He squeezed his head with both hands.

No. 3.  
*Hola, compadre*, came the familiar  
Voice of his next-door neighbor.  
Doesn't the garden look nice and green, compadrito?  
Asked the poet.  
*Sí, pues, compadre*, replied Don Nicho.  
But it looks to me like you have a *chingo de trabajo aquí*,  
Oh, you mean the crabgrass I got? asked the poet.  
Ay, compadre! A poco you can't tell the difference?  
The poet scratched his head and said:  
The difference, compadre?  
*Pues, sí, compadre*, this ain't no stinkin' crabgrass,  
This is Bermuda grass.  
This is some real bad shit, compadre.  
Said Don Nicho

The poet squeezed his head with both hands.

No. 4.  
Here's the difference, compadre:  
Crabgrass dies every year,  
Bermuda grass practically never dies.  
Crabgrass is much easier to kill  
Having roots only about 3 to 4 inches deep.  
Bermuda grass has roots going up to 3 feet deep.  
Crabgrass has trailers on top of the soil,  
Bermuda grass has trailers both over  
And under the soil.  
The Bermuda grass underground network  
Is huge and invisible,  
Said Don Nicho.  
Holy vaca de oro, compadre,  
How do you know so much

About crabgrass and Bermudagrass?  
Asked the poet.  
Compadrito, I've been fighting  
This shit for years and  
I know what I'm telling you.  
Said Don Nicho drying his forehead.

The poet squeezed his head with both hands.

No. 5.  
Crabgrass you can kill. It's a little  
Tricky, but you can kill it.  
Bermuda grass. I think you can  
Control it by cutting it back  
But it grows right back.  
So you have to be right on top of it  
All year long.  
Then Don Nicho added:  
You know, compadre, most of the  
Bad shit we have in Arizona came  
From outside.  
Bermuda grass didn't come  
From Bermuda, but it's not  
Native.

The poet squeezed his head with both hands.

No. 6.  
Mire, compadre, you can bring  
A steam shovel into your garden  
And remove all your dirt up  
To three feet deep. Bring several  
Truckloads of fresh soil and  
Start your garden from scratch.  
In six months you'll have Bermuda grass  
All over your garden again.  
*¿Por qué?*  
Because all around your house  
You have Bermuda grass growing  
Under the ground, that's why.  
So, you have to take your steam shovel  
All over creation to get rid of this shit,  
Said Don Nicho moving to the shade.

The poet squeezed his head with both hands.

7.

¡*No me deprima así, compadrito!*

I think I'm going to have to get a gardener.

This is too much for me.

I also have a political garden to tend

Here in Arizona and that will have

To take priority.

We have some real bad political Bermuda grass

In Arizona.

We have Brewer grass,

McCain grass,

Horne grass,

Pearce grass,

Arpaio grass,

Pearce grass,

Hayworth grass,

And the list goes on and on.

The whole *pinche* State is infested with the shit.

I'm getting on my steam shovel

And go after the Brewer grass first.

I need volunteers to help me form

The 'Get Rid of Brewer grass Brigade.

You wanna join me, compadrito?

Ay, ay, ay, compadre. This is tall order,

Pero ni modo, I'll join you,

Said Don Nicho squeezing his head with both hands.

Let's go get our steam shovels!



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