



Transcription of Dr Maureen O'Hara's Lecture
Tuesday 17th May 2005

Minding the Future: Can an age of anxiety be transformed into an age of enlightenment?

Andrew Lyon

Good evening everybody and thank you very much for coming to the Lighthouse for what is the final lecture in the Glasgow Centre for Population Health's first seminar series. There will be another series later this year and on your seat you can find this form [*holds up form*] and if you want to be on the mailing list for next year then just fill in the form and we'll make sure you know about what's going on in the Series.

It is my very, very great pleasure to introduce my friend and colleague Maureen O'Hara to do this afternoon's lecture. I've known Maureen for about five years now and she is a member of the International Futures Forum, which many of you might know that I work on. My first recollection of Maureen was in a hotel in St Andrews at an august international gathering and Maureen's voice was the only voice in the room that was saying: "Let's not pretend that we know what's going on: let's try to sit in this mess for a while and work out what it is we need to work on". And I liked that because it resonated really quite well with what my difficulties were and Maureen's been a beacon for me ever since in that regard.

When I asked Maureen what I should say by way of introduction (because her CV is lengthy and illustrious) she said: "Well, just say to people why you invited me to come and speak". And the reason why I invited Maureen to come and speak (it seems to me) was that we have a really intractable challenge in Glasgow around the improvement of the city's health and reduction of its health inequalities, both in the city as a whole but also in the city in relation to other places. Whenever I've got an intractable challenge that I need to work on I usually take a look at what Maureen's doing because she is probably there ten years before I'm working on this stuff. Whenever Maureen talks about intractable challenges she always comes up with some really interesting ways to look at problems that you think cannot be resolved. So that's why I asked Maureen to come and speak.

If you look at her CV what it will say is that she has been the President of Saybrook Graduate School and Research Centre in San Francisco. It's a psychology postgraduate centre which has got a very innovative programme of research. She worked for many years with Carl Rogers who some of you will know was at the forefront of the development of the humanist school of psychology. Her research interests are manifold and they will become apparent to you as she goes through her talk this afternoon. She is going to speak to us about 'minding the future' and the sub titles she has is: 'Can an age of anxiety be transformed into an age of enlightenment?'.

Maureen O'Hara

Thank you. What Andrew didn't tell you is that despite the fact that I've lived in the United States for some 34 years I was actually born in Yorkshire. I've just come back from three days with my family just outside Leeds, so you're getting more of my Yorkshire accent than usual although I still have quite a strong American accent at this point. But it is wonderful to be here and to be continuing to talk in a dialogue with Andrew about some of the issues that I think are bewildering all of us but maybe we don't quite go deep enough to really understand what might be going on.

I was reading this little document that was put out by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health [*holds up GCPH introductory booklet*] and I said to Andrew that I've never seen an official document that begins with words like: "Glasgow is located at the epicentre of the unhealthiest region of one of the unhealthiest countries in Europe". Now, you've got to like somebody that writes that kind of straight, frank, right-in-your-face statement about what we are dealing with. That made me feel really encouraged because I think we have to be that frank. Most government documents, most academic documents - any kind of document - starts out by telling you "Glasgow is a town of many contrasts" and then goes on to completely ignore what it is that all of us who are involved in health care, or in mental health care, deal with every day. So I feel that maybe I can... I hope that what I'm going to say is going to give you some way, if not of solving of these dilemmas, at least of framing them in ways that maybe you haven't framed them before.

In some ways it may be that Glasgow (and cities like Glasgow) are really like 'miners canaries' who are recognising what is going on in the world as being pretty unhealthy and pretty toxic, in advance of other societies. You may be sounding the warning bell for the rest of the industrialised world about things we need to be paying attention to at a very deep level and that is what I'm going to be sharing with you today.

I think you all recognise that most of us live in this kind of predicament or, as Andrew calls it, mess. This is everybody's daily reality. One of the commonest words you'll hear anywhere in my world is 'overwhelmed'. People feel overwhelmed no matter where there are: whether they are in the boardroom, whether they are on the shop floor, whether they are out of work, whether they are taking care of kids at home, they feel overwhelmed. Every time they turn on the radio or the television or open up a newspaper they become even more overwhelmed because there's so much happening and so much that we are dealing with and no answers in sight. What's often not recognised is the relationship between this sense of overwhelm and this [*points to slide*] - what is going on globally. I'm going to read some of these out for you because you won't be able to see them from where you are but we have over population, pollution, global media, world trade, human migration - and on it goes. There are a thousand different problems all over the planet and there's nowhere to escape from it. There is no place to go where all of these factors somehow or another don't come down on ordinary individuals' shoulders. This [*referring to slide*] is just, for example, the kind of impact on any individual worker in the developed world. They are expected to work in self-managing teams; there is down-sizing; they are partnering with suppliers; they are re-engineering; they are developing more organisational visions and strategic plans; they are doing total quality management, benchmarking, partnering with customers, outsourcing and on, and on it goes. It doesn't matter where in the company that you work, you are dealing all the time with this kind of stuff.

A graphic way to put this is that, with all of these different kinds of pressures that are impinging on everybody, we're in a kind of massive anxiety crisis where all the anchors of mental stability are up for grabs. The things that people have counted on for generations (or even just for years in their own life) are up for grabs and many of the givens of psychological life and ordinary daily life are completely unravelling. One of the things we know as psychologists is in this kind of moment (whether it is an individual or whether it is an organisation) there's three kinds of response to these kinds of very high anxiety periods. One is a neurotic response: that's when you shore up your defences ; you try to struggle against the impinging change forces; you try to simplify the world; you try to make sure all of these change forces are not actually coming into your consciousness or coming into your organisation; you strengthen boundaries; you strengthen rigidities; you make sure there's clearer definitions between "them" and "us" - all of the things that we do that somehow or another rigidify the status quo and try to keep the world simple. I would refer to that (whether it's as an individual or as a society) as a neurotic response. It's trying desperately to keep things going as they always were despite the fact that everything is changing.

Another pathologic response is what I would call the psychotic response. This is when things disintegrate totally – such as breaking down into violence and even genocide. This is the Rwanda situation. This is what happened in Yugoslavia when the Yugoslavian federation broke up - where you can't even hold it together at all and there's disintegration and this disintegration is utterly destructive and has no redeeming features. I mean, essentially it is a catastrophic destruction.

But in that same cauldron of anxiety there are also the seeds of transformation. Again, whether you're working with individuals or whether you're working with groups, whether you're working with whole societies, it is often in these very turbulent times when all the old boundaries are unravelling and all the old certainties are dissolving, where there is a possibility for creative transformation. So let's begin with that thought: that perhaps we're in one of those periods in human history where a lot of the givens that kept us all understanding our life are under siege.... [*tannoy announcement interrupts lecture*] See what I mean? The information comes in at us from everywhere! [*Laughter*]

Ok. Let's go a little deeper with the psychology. Members of any society, whether it's a small society like the Girl Guides or whether it's a whole society, like a nation, or a whole culture, share what would we would refer to as a 'modal psychology'. They share a way of thinking and a way of behaving psychologically that is more or less recognisable by other members of that group. That psychology is maintained through what we call 'culture' and the 'culture' is expressed and constructed via all the civic routines, the educational practices, the social customs, the group boundaries and norms that people participate in. This whole cultural package both *creates* the psychology people have and it *maintains* it. So, in a stable culture people's basic psychology is more or less similar. There are individual differences of course, but clearly there is something recognisable as a Japanese character, and there is clearly a German character, and there is clearly a Scottish character even though there are massive individual differences among them. Over history, societies develop their own modal psychology. They are also held together by stories. Any stable society has a story that it tells itself: about where they came from; about how things should be organised; what's valued; what should be resisted. And children are inducted into that story when they are born. We've all been inducted into some story. If we are natives we were inducted into native story, and if we are an immigrant we were first inducted in to another story and now we're being inducted into a new story.

But coherence and psychological stability is maintained both by the civic routines - the habits and patterns of life - as well as by the narratives - the stories that we tell ourselves and each other about what matters.

This goes very deep. This is the point I want to make sure we get, is that it goes far deeper than simply: "Oh well, I had a Yorkshire story before I went to America and now I have an American story". Uh, uh. I have a Yorkshire story which is all the time in conflict with an American story because the Yorkshire story is my native story - this is my home base, this is my default position, this is where I go without thinking. The American story (despite the fact that I've been there 30-some years) is still grafted onto the original story. The cultural psychology that one has influences what you pay attention to, what you see, what you think is worth working for, what kind of meaning you make out of situations; it even influences brain development and emotional responses to certain things. For example, there is some (actually pretty chilling) research looking at the brain connections in Romanian orphans who were not engaged with the world until they were three or four years old and comparing the brain connections with Romanian children who were raised in families. The children raised in the orphanages have a tenth of the brain development of the children that were raised in intact families. There are lots of neuropsychological examples like that where, by the time a child is four or five, the basic architecture of how all the neurological and neuropsychological connections are made in their brain are already established. After that, things get built on top but it's like the difference between the wiring that you build into the house when you build the house, or re-wiring later and stringing extension cords up all around the place to sort of do modifications, but the basic wiring structure is already there.

It also influences what we learn. Let me do an example. I'm going to ask a question and I just want you to say the first word that comes into your head. "What do cows drink?" [*Laughter*] What came into your head? Milk, right? Well you see we know that they don't. Why does that happen? It's because when you were growing up, if you grew up as a native English speaker in this society, you learned 'cow' and you learned 'milk' and you learned 'drink'. Those are all intimately connected in your mind. Now, if I'd have asked you that question in Portuguese or some other language, you wouldn't have come up with milk because you wouldn't have had those connections. These are automatic routines but now if somebody else is going to try to teach you something they have to build on those automatic routines that you already have. If you don't already have that automatic routine, if you're not a native speaker, it's going to be a lot more difficult to teach you that new routine than if you were a native speaker. So what I'm really trying to say in a very quick and... how was it a friend or mine put it - 'cheap and cheerful' way - I'm trying to give you the psychological frame for what I'm talking about. What my thesis is, is that we have come to a point in human history where all the native narratives - native psychologies - that all of us developed growing up no longer map on to the world that we're trying to live in. That we are, in a sense... that the psychological and cultural coherence that was based on living in a world with a single world view, (whether that single world view was a European enlightenment world view or that single world view was an Arab world view or a Buddhist world view) the world today can no longer be sustained at all levels by any one of our single world views. Whether it's at the individual psychology level, the interpersonal level, the group level or the societal level - all of the givens that are part of our basic architecture are unravelling, challenged by globalisation, by our encounter with new realities, and so on. And our cognitive equipment is out of step with the world that we have to navigate. And, as I say here, even the enlightenment world view (which all of us who have been to a University in the west have) is part of our native language but doesn't even fit on to the European world let along the rest of the world.

So, in a sense there is cognitive dissonance on a massive scale. There's a massive dissonance between what we're having to cope with in the world and the psychological patterns - our native psychological patterns - that we've all been raised with... Let's go a little deeper for an example.

Think of the changes that have gone on in organisations in the last decade. Organisational structures have changed greatly... their hierarchies have flattened. We don't have this long chain of command that we used to do that we were all raised to work in. Corporate cultures have gone from being paternalistic to entrepreneurial. A completely different kind of psychology is needed in an entrepreneurial setting from what is needed in an industrial production line setting. The mind set of the workforce has changed. Now it's no longer the case that the worker feels, "if I'm loyal to the company, the company will be loyal to me" - that's completely gone. Loyalty now, which used to give meaning, no longer does: it actually may make people feel really foolish if, after 35 years they've been loyal to a company and then suddenly they get a pink slip... There's a shift in the economy from 'making things' to 'knowing things', so what's valued is no longer your craft, but what's valued is what level your knowledge development is at. The employee / employer relationships have shifted. My parents' generation, and even in my own early work life in England, it was very much a parent-child relationship between the supervisors and the workers. No more. It's the empowered workforce. It is the adult / adult relationship. But think about it - if you've been raised so that your basic psychological pattern is obedience to authority, or waiting for the boss to tell you what to do, or waiting for somebody else to tell you that was a good job, and now you're in a world when none of that is coming at you, and instead you have to give yourself that direction or affirmation or find other ways to get it, you are in a situation where the work setting that you're operating in is not the one you were raised to succeed in. You are off your own map. So you're trying to deal with a world that has never existed before with a whole cognitive-emotional preparation for a different era. That's just another way to say the same thing. The European educational process is a process that encourages us to think in terms of theory, in terms of truth, certainty, predictability, order, linear thinking - all of that. We're very good at that. That has created the technological world that we live in. Unfortunately that same mind cannot handle the kind of complexities that people are dealing with every day. The kinds of choices that a mother might have to make, for instance, about whether she take the kids to school before she goes to work, or does she go to work and then get somebody else to take the kids to school? And what does she do with the ex-husband, his new wife and their kids? And, so on and so forth. She is negotiating complexities of human relationships that are far beyond what the educational programme she has participated in has prepared her for.

[Referring to slide.] This is a list of core competencies for managers and line supervisors. I put them together from about ten different multi-national corporations. These are not executives; these are not even their middle managers. Creative leadership, networking, self-management, team work, effectiveness, leadership, vision and spiritual centred-ness (that's the one I wasn't prepared for), follower-ship, perspective, presentation, organisational savvy. The point I'm making at the bottom here is that not ten years ago these were the characteristics that you looked for in top executives, and you were lucky to find them even in executives. Now companies believe that they are going to find these people at age 25 just coming out of a degree programme to work as middle managers and supervisors. It doesn't say 'ability to walk on water preferred' but they may as well because this is a level of psychological development and sophistication that you don't develop probably until you're in your 30s or 40s and then only if you've been in a context where you're being encouraged and coached and given the opportunity to learn and develop all these very sophisticated skills.

So the point I'm making so far is that, in a sense, the world that we're all trying to inhabit is a brand new world. The image that I use a lot is that, in a very real sense, wherever we were born, we're all immigrants and we just don't know it. A part of the "dis-ease" or symptoms of illness and suffering that people are feeling shows up in lots of different ways in terms of public health and public mental health, and are really the predictable and understandable consequences of life in these times. Most of us exist in settings where we are out of our depth psychologically and where we are being asked to cope with a world in pretty much the same way an immigrant must which is without the easy answers, without the automatic routines. Like all immigrants everything is a challenge, where everything is new, where you never quite feel that you're working from your strongest suit, where you always feel a little off-centre, where you always feel that somebody else is doing it better than you do, where you always feel as if you're something of a fake. This kind of chronic sense of inadequacy often doesn't surface to a conscious level but surfaces in somatic illnesses; it surfaces in various kinds of public health issues.

The 1999 NIOSH report (the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) reported that job stress is a serious threat to mental health of all workers. A 2000 United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO) report concluded that one in ten workers worldwide suffered depression, anxiety and burn-out and they reported that they felt the figures were "alarming." After the 9/11 attacks in New York and in Washington DC, American statistics are even worse: close to 25 per cent of New Yorkers are currently suffering from a diagnosable depression and anxiety disorder. The United States loses 200million work days annually to depression and spends 30 to 40 billion dollars on depression treatment. Violence at work is a rising problem: in 1998 there were 6 million threats of violence reported in the workplace in the US and now, in the bad economy, it's going up. Now that doesn't translate necessarily into acts of violence, but if you're living in a context where threats of violence are at that level, clearly that has effects not just on the person who is feeling like hitting somebody, but it also has an effect on people who wonder if they are going to get hit if they say something that they shouldn't to one of their colleagues.

There was a British study in 2000 that looked at 900 global companies and they concluded that a new psychology was needed that's adapted to the new cultures and the new workplaces: that the companies were demanding new minds - as we just pointed out - but they offered very little in the way of training that's aimed at producing them. Thirty three per cent of companies report that their workforce lack the relevant skills for the new culture and a US study finds that anywhere in the population there are very few people with this level of skills and that there's a growing talent crisis. I talk to CEO's and talk to people who are trying to hire people for these management jobs and particularly in smaller companies where it really matters that you have the right person, they just can't find them. It's not that there's not the jobs for them; they just aren't the people for the jobs. So they put people into these jobs who are not ready and then they don't give them the right kind of training which then means that they're stressed to the max and then their stress gets carried down the line to everybody within earshot. So we are creating once again this chronic sense of being behind the eight ball; chronic sense of being just not quite able to cut it.

In the last 15 years - these are American statistics - there's been a 67 per cent rise in new cases of alcoholism; there's been a 450 per cent rise in migraine headaches; a 400 per cent rise in ulcers; a 900% rise in chronic use of non-prescription pain killers; the suicide and violence rates are up all over the world (particularly in the developing nations but not only there); female suicide is up in under-developed nations incredibly as women begin to recognise the advantages that women have in other societies, they are no longer able to tolerate what normal life is for their society; divorce rates are up everywhere; the number of children in single parent homes is up; etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. I mean, you know the statistics as well as I do but I'm putting them together, I hope, into a story that really sees it not in terms of individuals getting sick, but really trying to understand the bigger context.

We're educating our youth for a world that's ceased to exist so they hate school - they find school irrelevant. They will say to you over and over again: "Why bother? It's stupid. There's nothing going on that's interesting." They're right because they understand very well that the education that they are getting is not going to be that relevant to the world that they expect to have to succeed in. They live in a world that is actually already beyond the habits of mind established in the Enlightenment: their connected internet world, their cyber world, their worlds of their own networks and so on, is already a world that has moved on from the Enlightenment thinking and is in to what people like Andrew [Lyon] would refer to as 'second enlightenment thinking' that is more holistic, more connected, more lateral, more networked. More intuitive and less characterised by linear thinking and formal logic - they are already in a new world. They will be evaluated in school by the standards of the old world but they are living in the new world.

So, the question that we raised is: "Can an age of anxiety be transformed into an age of enlightenment?"

I think the answer is “yes”; the question is ‘how?’. This is a quote from a friend of mine (a senator in California). We respond to the shift in eras “by providing hospice workers for the world that is dying and midwives for the one that is being born”. So what does that mean? I would like to propose that if you’re really serious about looking at population health, we really have to get the diagnosis right. A lot of the diagnosis that I see when I look around is a very 19th century or even a 20th century diagnosis. It’s an industrial age diagnosis that talks in terms of dislocation of workers and poverty and so on and so forth. There is absolutely no necessary relationship between poverty and mental illness. There are lots of people in this world who are very poor and are very healthy and very happy. That connection between poverty and mental illness is an old, 1930s industrial era idea. We’ve got to get rid of those old diagnostic ideas and take a look at what is really... and I don’t have the answers to what is really... but certainly we’ve got to let go of our old, 19th century diagnoses of what it is that makes us sick.

We urgently need to develop new socialising institutions because the social institutions through which we socialise children (whether it’s schools, or whether it’s church, or whether it’s other religious groups, or boy scouts, or girl scouts) were designed with a different world in mind. If we want to produce children and adults who are at home in the 21st century we have to give them an education and give them formational experiences that will prepare them cognitively, emotionally and culturally for that world.

One of my arguments would be that **we cannot just let this happen because it won’t just happen**. If we don’t actually take up the task of saying we have to have new minds for new times, and that these new minds must be cultivated through new institutions and learning programmes both formal and informal and be quite conscious and deliberate about it, the best we can hope for is what I have called the “neurotic response” which is to keep on doing the same thing over and over again, hoping that we will get a different result. In my field as a psychotherapist, that’s called neurosis. I see it all over the United States and I see it all over the UK. We keep on doing the same stuff over and over again and we expect a different result and when we see innovation, we either say “that won’t work here “ or we take a look at the innovation and say, “wow, that’s great - now let’s find out the five factors that make this successful”. We then try and replicate it and standardise it somewhere else but by the time we’ve done so we’ve gone back to the default position which is the industrial model. We’re still not recognising that real innovation requires people being willing to get out there on the edge of certainty, to let things happen that we can’t control and that we can’t predict and we can’t necessarily guarantee.

I believe - and I would like to urge us all to think about this - that we really are at a choice point. There are historical examples of cultures getting to this point and collapsing. It certainly happened in Europe in the 12th and 13th century. Everyone talks about the Renaissance as being this great flowering but they don't talk about the 300 years of warfare, mayhem, chaos, violence, of disease. It took us three hundred years to work our way through that one! I don't think we've got 300 years to work our way through this one because our capacity for destruction of our environment, our capacity for destruction of each other, and our capacity for destruction of hope in our youngsters is so much greater now than it was in the 13th century. I think we need to have the courage to say we need to emerge a new consciousness and we need to assume responsibility for it as a society. Nothing short of that will get us into the world that we have created. We've created a world of unprecedented riches and technological power, and we have done so out of the various forms of consciousness past and present that have emerged within human societies. But the journey from here will require us to evolve our minds in adaptation to the new world. Consciousness has to change on individual and community levels.

The seven paths to cultural health [*referring to slide*]. This is a very American thing to say: 'the seven paths to...' or 'the seven habits of...' or 'the eight steps to...'. I thought it might be a good book title but I don't think it's going to be a book. [*Laughter*] So you are getting the seven paths but probably by the time I do this again it might be six paths or eight paths... but anyway.

Obviously, one of the things we have to do is treat the wounded, because there are a lot of wounded. We can't just say we need a new consciousness, to hell with the people who are sick and suffering. So there has to be a focus on healing and attending to the people who are suffering. We've got to – obviously - do whatever prevention we can and, for me, that has to do early childhood education; it has to do with parenting skills; it has to do with recognising that we need from the beginning, to be putting children in settings which are going to prepare them for the world that is emerging, and not trying to create little models of ourselves or our parents... I was just at a gymkhana yesterday - that most English of events. I've got a nephew who rides and he was at this little gymkhana and I swear that I thought I was back in the 19th century with all these little "colonials" sitting around on their horses! I thought: "Hello? Take a look around you". There was something very quaint about it but there was also something very disturbing about it.

Transformational education [*referring to slide*]. I think that the kind of education that's about facts is irrelevant because the doubling time of new facts is so short that by the time a child has gone from one class to the next, most of what he learned in last years' classes is already obsolete. So spending a lot of time for children on teaching them facts and content in a world where the amount of information is doubling every 18 months, is probably not a good use of their time. Rather they should be being taught how to manage information, how to process information - sort of meta-skills. How do you actually manage living in a world that is so overwhelmingly full of information? The smart people will not remember the information; they'll just know how to process it. These are skills that you get in graduate school now but we're going to have to put those kinds of skills into the elementary schools and have the kids working at that level from the beginning.

Also education that develops them emotionally, that develops their emotional intelligence; that develops their capacity to deal with difference; with people who are different; with complex interpersonal situations will all be necessary. This is all going to be not just a pretty frill, but it's actually going to be essential for children to work in the rapid pace, complex, diverse, pluralistic, multi-ethnic world that we now have. As I say, it's got to be education that is not only about what we know, but it's about how we know. It's not just about facts and content. It's about who we are as human beings. It's our values, it's our character, our capacity to handle complexity and ambiguity.

We also need to create new stories. If what we've done over the past few decades is move on from the local stories that we all were born into and we're now in the middle of the process of creating a global story, we need our artists, we need our story-tellers, we need our myth-makers, we need our journalists, we need our writers, and we need each other to craft a new shared story - a narrative for a new time. I'm very fond of the fact that I can tell you that the Normans invaded England the last time in 1066: however, it's not really relevant to a global era. We need to get our kids into a new story that can see us as part of an emerging humanity which is global, multiple and individual all at the same time. I'm not an artist, I'm not a writer, I'm not going to be one of the people that writes those new stories but we've got to give the scientists and intellectuals some help in providing us with the new stories that are psychologically compelling, and that can help us feel that we are a part of a 'we' instead of a series of disconnected and competing 'I's'. Science, no matter how advanced, cannot do that for us. It is left to our artists and our writers and other story tellers to pull together the narratives that can give meaning in an emerging context that is both global and at the same time intensely local.

I would like to finish by saying that to make any headway on the health of a society there has to be a national commitment to and responsibility for the cultivation of new minds. Take a look at the Singaporean case as an illustrative example. Singapore recognised almost 12 years ago that Singapore needed to develop a new cultural identity, and a new individual identity within their new pluralistic culture. In Singapore this was done very much 'top-down' with mandates from government. Here in Scotland you may not want that to be your cultural story but what the Singaporeans recognised was they couldn't just leave it to chance because 'chance' is going to be dominated by the dynamics of the marketplace. If you leave the creation of your culture to the people who are making video games or the television shows or the movies, and they are only driven by a commercial interests, then you're leaving it to people whose interests are not the creation of a new noble vision for a global society. If we are not to decay further into a society dominated by crass materialism, I think that this is something that people in government, people in education, and people in the arts really need to become conscious about and not just leave it to happenstance.

I would want to see conferences where people get together and try to understand the emerging stories. I know that you do engage in this kind of work, Andrew [*Lyon*], so I'm not suggesting that it isn't already going on. I'm trying here only to put a spotlight on it and emphasise that this is culturally crucial work. It is also public health work because if a society believes, as your brochure states, that part of its story is it's the "unhealthiest city in the unhealthiest country" that's part of your cultural story. If it's part of your cultural story then it's going to be part of your cultural psychology and if it is part of you cultural psychology then it's going to be part of your physical health as well. It's no good just giving people Prozac and leaving them in the same situation. To develop a healthy community, you need a health promoting culture - not just slick slogans but changes in deep patterns of life - you have to engage in the creative work to re-story the whole culture with respect to its capacity to thrive in the emerging new contexts.

[Applause]

Carol Tannahill

Maureen, thank you very much indeed for a fantastic session this evening. I have to confess that I'm the author of "the unhealthiest city, in the unhealthiest..."

Maureen O'Hara

Good for you!

Carol Tannahill

I feel a bit like George Bush because it's hardly the most nuanced set of expressions, is it? Anyway, it's interesting... I've had a couple of different reactions to that piece of texts and the first set of reactions are positive and sort of: "Well done, it's great actually that someone is confronting us with the reality of the health situation in this part of the world and we have to stop pretending that this isn't the case and really face up to the enormity of the challenge that we face". So that's one set of reactions. But the other set of reactions have been quite different and they've been ones about: "We must stop being so negative; we must stop harking back to history; we must be much more forward looking; we must create a different sort of story about our city". I think personally I probably hold both of these responses and I suspect from looking around the room a number of people here do as well. It's certainly part of the task of the Glasgow Centre to work to create that new story about Glasgow: one which doesn't deny our history. I think Anne's [*Scoular*] point is absolutely right - we would be doing the citizens of Glasgow and Scotland damage and disrespect if we didn't recognise the reality of the history and the circumstances that people are coming from, but we do have a role in trying to move on and create a different story and a different reality for the future.

Now on to my second reflection on Maureen's presentation, which was her call to us all to be proactive and to be prepared to take some risks and engage together in creating a different sort of future. This won't happen by chance but it will happen if we are prepared to have these sorts of conversations and think about new ways forward. Thank you for calling on us to show that proactively and it's been a real pleasure for me in the first year of the Centre to see the amount of interest and willingness there's been across the city to engage in helping to create a different sort of future.

The third point I'd like to pick up on is the point about not keeping on doing the same sorts of things and just hoping that they will create a different sort of outcome in the future. I think, you know, hands up I've done that and I suspect that most of us have and we think maybe if we do it a bit more intensively or perhaps a bit more targetedly or for a bit longer we'll get a different sort of outcome. May be for some things that is the case, but I think that we do need to recognise that if we are going to try create a healthier future for Glasgow and for Scotland we will need to do some different things. By and large these things are yet undefined but we've had a number of pointers - both very helpfully today from Maureen and throughout other earlier sessions in this seminar series - I think to help us consider some of these new activities might be in the future. I think many of you will have received an invitation our Healthier Future Forum which meets for the first time in the middle of June. At that event we'll be reflecting on a number of the pointers we've been given or we've developed ourselves throughout the year that we believe show potential for creating a healthier future for Glasgow and we will be engaging in (to reflect back to Anthony Grayling, which is where we started this seminar series) civic conversation, and conversation amongst ourselves, about the sort of future we want for Glasgow. Professor Grayling reminded us that back in Roman and Greek times it was the elders of the city who sat down together and discussed what sort of city they wanted to live in and what the ethos of that city would be. We don't seem to have a place in Glasgow or Scotland where we can sit down really and have that conversation and one of my glimmers of hope is that the Centre for Population Health can help to create that space and the opportunities for those sorts of conversations.

Going back finally to one of the traditional stories about Glasgow and it's the story about, of course, the man who walks into the pub (as all Glasgow men do!) and leaned across the bar and said: "I'd like a pie, a pint and a few good words". The barmaid pulled him his pint and handed it over and went into the kitchen and brought out the pie and handed it over, and he waited and he said: "What about the few kind words, hen?" and she said: "Don't eat the pie!". *[Laughter]* Well it's a good health education story and it's also a story about Glasgow... but I'm now going to hand you over to Andrew to say the few final kind words to Maureen, but thanks very much.

[Applause]

Andrew Lyon

Thanks for that Carol. Well, just before I close out, I should say that those of you who haven't had a chance to join in the conversation actively and now would like to talk, we're going next door for a glass of wine and something to eat and you're very welcome to join us if you have time to do that. We will be able to stay until about seven so we can continue the conversation next door.

The first thing that amazed me is about Maureen's talk was that there was no questions of clarification - nobody called clarification - which makes me think that we all kind of know the kind of world that she's describing and you recognise it. I'm away home to think about, do I want to be a hospice worker for the old world or do I want to be a midwife for the new world, and how do I bring those balances about?

Another thing that Maureen has done, again, is reminded me that (and she always does this, every time I meet her) “Andrew, if you can’t imagine it then you can’t have it”. What she is inviting us to do now is imagine the kind of city we want to have, because if we can’t imagine those changes then we can’t have them. So we need to have that conversation and imagine those changes where we can have resilience and we can work with people below the radar and we can, you know, begin to work on that kind of consciousness and learn for ourselves what that might actually be, because there are people away ahead of us, doing it already.

So all that remains for me to do is to thank Maureen for coming all the way from San Francisco to talk with us and I’m really delighted that she could come. I know that she’s extraordinary busy and there are people in San Francisco who are having anxiety attacks because she is not in calling right now. So, just to say thank you very much to Maureen and please come and join us next door for a glass of wine if you can. Thanks very much.

[Applause]

Transcript prepared by Ms Fiona Boyce.