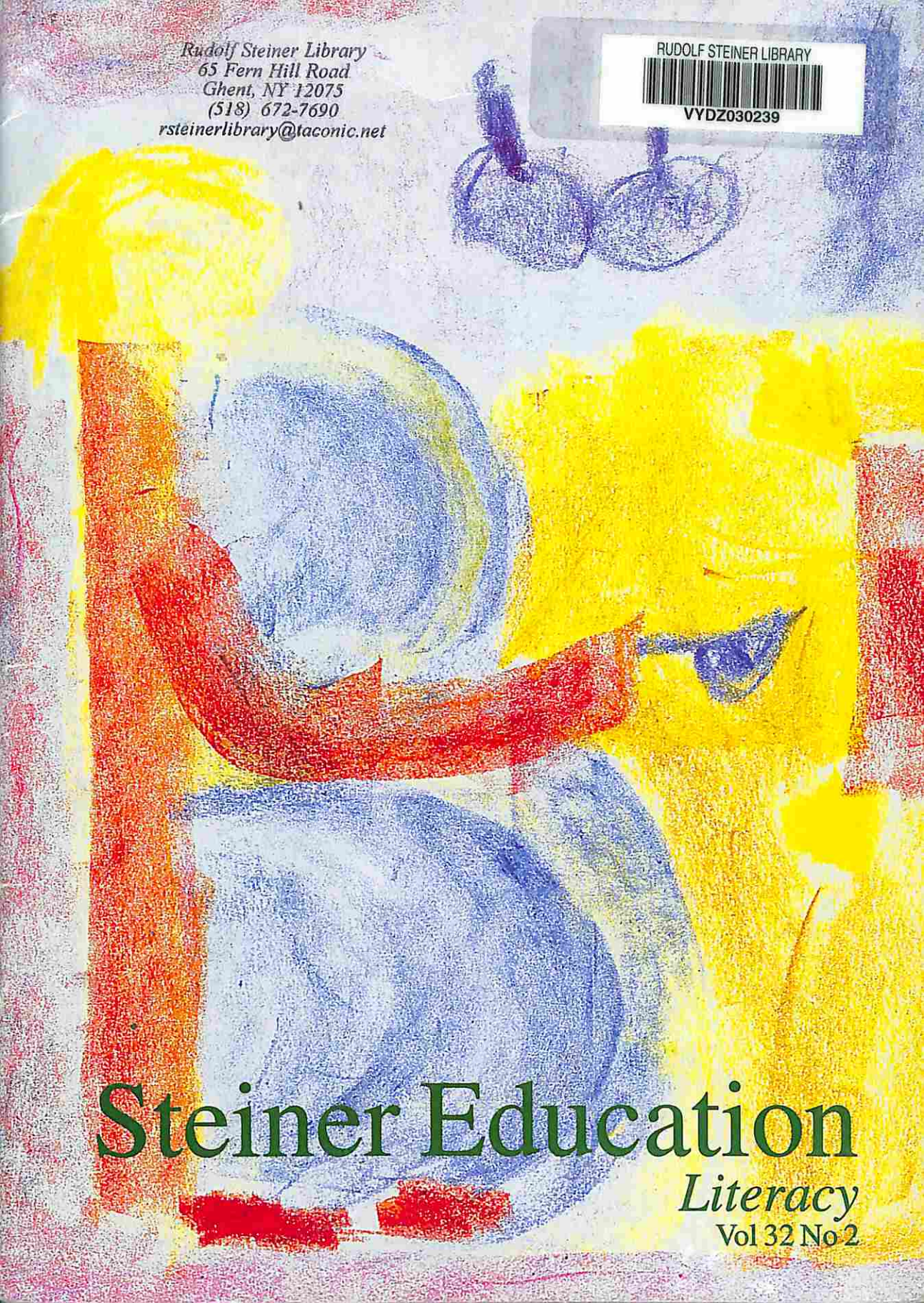


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Steiner Education

Literacy
Vol 32 No 2



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ISSUE THEME:
Literacy

"It has a decidedly good effect on a person's efficiency if things like the reading and writing of our modern script, that have no connection with the human being's true nature, are not learnt too early."

Rudolf Steiner, 16 January 1921.

Editorial Group:
Dr. Brien Masters (Editor and Art)
Peter Ramm (Chairman of the Board, Advertising
and Art Consultant)
Sarah Wakefield (Secretary and Subscriptions)
Daniel Bryan (Treasurer).

Subscriptions and all correspondence to:
The Secretary, Steiner Education,
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**Journal for Rudolf Steiner Waldorf
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July 1998 Vol. 32 No. 2**

Steiner Education is a focus for ideas, insights and
achievements in Waldorf, Steiner and all truly human
education throughout the world.

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Front Cover: *The Baker. The Letter 'B' emerges from the 6
year-old's drawing, following the 'letter story' invented and
told by the teacher (see article on pp.18-23)*

Inside Front Cover: *Through their Waldorf Kindergarten,
with its structured yet non-formal learning program, these
5 year-olds are still strongly supported in affirming the inner
strength of their 'original' orality. Photo: Alik Sapountzi.*

*Opinions expressed in this journal attach to the respective
authors and are not necessarily those of the Editor.*

Editorial

That there is mounting concern for children and childhood as the top half of the 20th century sand-glass runs out is more than understandable. But that one of the vortices of this concern has taken to whirling around *literacy*, comes as something of a surprise. A welcome surprise, if looked at not only from the Waldorf perspective, but from that of humanity as a whole, its vigour, its spirituality, its social well-being and its sense of responsibility for the future.

But in order to change the all too readily heated air of rhetoric into firm educational ground it is necessary to be prepared to dip into detail. That is what this issue of *Steiner Education* purports to do: both the detail to be found in the breadth of our anthropological past, as well as the pin-pointed detail of what is going on in the heart, hand and head of the six year-old writing his α , β , χ , δ . . . Here, starting externally from the point where Caroline Ritchie, from her wealth of classroom experience, very usefully places two approaches to the teaching of writing/reading side by side, we are concerned with literacy in its widest possible context.

Permit me to start at a distance - albeit neither up in the air of rhetoric nor, as yet, down on firm ground.

In January earlier this year, I was sitting within a stone's throw of the Gulf of Finland (or should I say a snowball's throw?). Finnish colleagues were somewhat devastated by the fact that a "heat-wave" had boosted the local temperature up to -1°C! If I am honest, I cannot claim to have shared in their devastation. My feelings lay elsewhere. An ice-bound expanse of salt water for an Englishman would be no small wonder at any time; but just when waves of 50' high were threshing the Cornish coast (which was the wild greeting with which the Atlantic was heralding in the New Year), the contrast was hardly to be circumscribed by the average mind. Phrases like 'seeing is believing' simply shrivelled into negligibility.

Anyone who has had a near-drowning

experience will never be the same again when listening to the BBC reporting a ship on the high seas in distress. Without such experience, it would take an act of "supreme imagination" (to refer to a state of mind that Norman Skillen describes in his article published here) to fully empathise with the dire situation that those aboard are in. Perhaps it would take a commensurate effort of imagination to grasp what the mind of man, woman and child was like in *pre-literate* societies. However thorough an interrogation of our anthropological past might be (see Martyn Rawson's illuminating article), that feat of imagination, as far as we literates are concerned, cannot be short-circuited if we are to *experience* (not just observe, understand and think about) what their condition was—i.e. that which we term *orality*.

But in the context of Waldorf pedagogy, it is not so much the man and woman of pre-literate societies that is the point of focus, philogenetically significant as that may be: it is the *child*. Herein lies the remarkable nature of childhood. For it seems reasonable to assume that the amniotic sac that enwrapped an ancient Sumerian's foetus, or the crawling reflexes of a little ten month-old Pharaoh-to-be, or the increase in the iron content of the blood in the nine year-old Julius Caesar... all find their echo in each *bambino* today as s/he recapitulates the past. Moreover, the argument that current research strongly suggests (as it moves from the physical into the metaphysical) is: curtail that recapitulation—by prematurely thrusting the child from its native state of orality headlong into literacy - and you not only guillotine orality but also risk maiming that very desirable state of literacy you are seeking to establish. The growing interest in *emergent* writing is an aspect of that recapitulation that relates specifically to our theme of literacy (see Andrew Duncan's article.)

But surely, one might argue, with the child in its 'virgin' oral state of mind before him, the

teacher doesn't need to achieve such supreme acts of imagination in order to appreciate *orality*. Doesn't orality 'sit' in the desk, personified right under the teacher's nose - perhaps even with not all that much sitting, if we think of the spirit-stirred vibrancy of the soul of a six year-old? Notwithstanding, having the orality-imbued child simply present—whether sitting, hopping or merely a bit fidgety—does not guarantee that the teacher is equal to understanding the child and leading it aright towards literacy. The 50' waves of spirituality do, of course, need to subside if we are to navigate through life without an unduly bumpy ride—not to mention the fact that we would need an ocean-going liner of a body-and-soul to cope with them. But prematurely encase those waves of spirit-orality beneath a thick ice-cap of literacy, and culture itself subsides into smooth, soul-frozen, God-forsaken measurability. (Elizabeth Henderson describes in her article how some of that abundant energy of the growing child can be bridled and led towards the acquisition of literacy skills.)

Thus, devising a method of introducing literacy that would adequately serve the incarnating ego, who is preparing to navigate through literacy-driven modern life, was what Steiner clearly set out to do in August 1919 (see Brien Masters' article which sets forth an analysis of the Waldorf approach). That 'firm educational ground' of the Waldorf curriculum and the pedagogy by which it is taught has remained untoppled and un-tremored throughout the tectonic shifts of 20th century educational theory, even if those practitioners who built on its foundations may have felt somewhat alone and, at times (judging from the secondary literature—or lack of it), in the dark.

Now, however, through the research that is spiralling into the vortex of literacy both elaborated and referred to in this issue of *Steiner Education*, research within and without the Waldorf movement, it seems timely both to recognise and celebrate the light that is being shed on this crucial aspect of education *and act on it*—for the sake of all children, for the sake of childhood itself, for the sake of contemporary society and, not least, for the sake of future generations.

B.M.

Alan Howard: An Appreciation¹

by ROSEMARY BLOM

Alan Howard, who died just over a year ago, was for many years a teacher at Michael House, Ilkeston, Derbyshire. He came there after serving as a sergeant-major during the war in North Africa in the Education Corps. Alan's wife, Mary, had already come to the school with their two young children, Roger and Julian, and a fellow scholar recalls the boys' joy at regularly receiving from their father an amusingly illustrated letter giving descriptions of life in such a different culture and clime. For above all, Alan was a teacher and it was his claim that so much of education could be given through stories—geography, history, botany and even science—stories which involved the child enthusiastically, encouraging him to think creatively and logically and firing him to remember.

Alan grew up in Bristol in a working class family and was very aware of the wish and determination of many of his contemporaries to 'better themselves'. He and Mary had both been to Bristol University and then become teachers and Alan, both in Bristol and later in Nottingham, taught in the evenings in the Workers' Educational movement. One of his students—a well-known heckler of hapless speakers on the old Nottingham Square—was once heard to say, "He's a really sound chap, that Alan Howard, a bit of a mystic but you can't have everything."

For Alan had met Hans Heitler at Bristol University who was both a scientist and an anthroposophist, and he and Mary had become keen students of Dr Steiner's *The Philosophy of Freedom*. Alan was above all a thinker, and the 'Philosophy' was a book he studied for the rest of his life, indeed it formed the basis of his life.

Michael House was one of the first Steiner Schools in this country and Alan Howard was one of the first teachers in the 1940s. Steiner—or Waldorf—schools had been closed by Hitler in Germany (as were later the schools in Eastern Germany by the communists) and Alan once said how very little written material by experienced teachers there was at that time. Each teacher had

to go back to the source of the education, to Dr Steiner's own work, his lectures giving the background to the curriculum, and realising his great insight, work from that. Then the annual Easter Teachers' Conferences were a very important event where teachers could meet and exchange ideas. Another important venture was the beginning of the school magazines and the setting up of *Child and Man*, the magazine for all Steiner schools. Alan was a keen supporter of these and a regular contributor, even acting as the Canadian representative in his later years.

Alan was a class teacher and took several classes through their eight years in the Middle School. He was also a Religion Teacher and is remembered by many former pupils for his wonderful story-telling. The 'Curdie' stories by George MacDonald were among his favourites for the younger children for he found great wisdom in them. Alan is remembered, too, for his Advent stories. At Michael House it has long been the custom on the first and subsequent Advent Mondays for the whole school to meet in the Hall seated round a suspended sphere, decorated in fir with apples and signs of the Zodiac and candles, and to sing the first Christmas carols and to hear a Christmas story. For many years it was Alan who told a story, one of his own creation, and many years later when he lived in Canada these stories were brought together in a book that other children might also appreciate them.

Children were often in awe of Alan, and when once a group of children, hoping for some fun, hid in a cupboard while awaiting the coming of a

more easy-going teacher, a shock spread through the class when Alan appeared in the doorway instead. He realised that something was amiss but said nothing and proceeded to take his lesson as planned while the boys huddled uncomfortably and anxiously in their confined space. At the end of the lesson, Alan pulled open the doors of the cupboard, helped them out onto their feet, and just looked at them. They still remember!

Alan made the school wood-work shop a very special place. He did a lot of his own carvings there, both in wood and stone, and a lot of thinking and contemplation so that the boys and girls coming into the room, came into an atmosphere of industry and creation and themselves did some very good work there.

Alan and Mary were sadly missed when they at last left Michael House to join their sons in Canada. Alan worked to create the first Steiner School in Toronto—now called the Alan Howard Steiner School—and then later moved to be near his elder son, Roger, in Vancouver.

Our picture is of a tall man with a thinker's forehead and dark eyes often twinkling with amusement or quickly flashing fire, or deep in thoughtfulness. I am sure those who were fortunate enough to be taught by him will never forget him and are left with a feeling of deep respect.

FOOTNOTE

¹ Alan Howard was a member of the editorial team of *Steiner Education* (then published under the title *Child and Man* from 1954–1967). His contributions to the magazine both as editor and as author were pithy, perceptive, contemporary and original (See page 39 below).

The text is from a verse
spoken by heart in
the morning:
"The sun says, 'I glow,'/
The stream says, 'I flow,'/
The plant says, 'I grow,'/
The cow says, 'I low,'/
And 'Man' says, 'I know.'"

AND MAN
SAYS I KNOW

The Uses of Orality

by NORMAN SKILLEN

Last August in Cape Town I had the good fortune to be given a class of 16 year-olds to 'experiment with'. This was at Michael Oak Waldorf School. Ostensibly my task was to take Class 10 through the first part of a two-part main-lesson which at this school carries the title of *The Word*. For me it was a golden opportunity to try out various accumulated insights into the nature of poetry. A chief one among these is the fact that poetry began long before the advent of writing. Indeed Emerson, in a moment of supreme insight, goes so far as to assert that "language . . . is fossil poetry", a statement which implicates poetry in the very genesis and early development of language itself. How was I to convey something of the nature of this pre-alphabetic poetry to these young people?

Well, we learnt a short poem in Old Irish, one that through very simple means creates a strong elemental atmosphere. Through this the pupils were able to experience something of the primal impact of pure sound, but we also noticed that the whole feel of this poem seemed to place it in a totally different 'mind-set' (I did not use this term) from our own. Getting to grips with oral poetry obviously implied developing a feel for the oral mind.

This was approached in various ways. The Uzbekistanian peasants studied by S. E. Luria in 1931/2 were a great help to me here. He worked with groups of peasants who had not been exposed to writing. In a typical example of what he did, subjects were presented with simple drawings of four objects and asked to find the odd one out. Confronted with drawings of the objects hammer, saw, log, hatchet, a typical reply was: "They're all alike. The saw will saw the log and the hatchet will chop it into small pieces. If one of these has to go I'd throw out the hatchet. It doesn't do as good a job as the saw." No coaxing on Luria's part could bring these people to think in what for us literates are elementary logical

categories. Their thinking was absolutely situational and concrete, and this extended to all areas of life—even the sense of self. Awareness in these people seemed to be so bound into communal and natural processes that Luria could not induce them to talk in terms of what is second nature to the literate mind: the private self. For instance, asked, "What do you think of yourself?" one man replied: "We behave well—if we were bad people, no-one would respect us." Another, when asked what sort of a person he was, replied: "What can I say about my own heart? Ask others; they can tell you about me. I myself can't say anything".¹

The class had great fun listening to the replies of Luria's peasants, and it was a revelation to them to realise that not being able to handle 'normal' logic did not imply stupidity, but a radically different turn of mind. With an effort of imagination, we were able to transpose this back into the past and get some idea of the direct, participatory awareness and the concrete meanings that went into the making of ancient, oral poetry.

Luria also discovered—and this has been corroborated by many other investigators—that even a small amount of literacy radically changed this oral turn of mind. This was a question I faced with Class 10 as well. Having looked at the state of mind before writing,² how then to demonstrate the change?

An experiment suggested itself. It seemed worth trying. Next morning I began by telling them a story, in as free and lively a way as I could. This done, I handed out some photocopied sheets of the beginning of the story and asked them to read it. Before, there had been bright eyes, laughter: now there were rows of bowed heads, concentrated silence. When they had finished there came two simple, but unexpected questions: with the telling, *where* was the story; with the reading, *where* was the story? In answer

to the first question a girl (Helena) said, "Everywhere!" and to the second question another girl (Emma), pointing to her forehead, said, "In here." Emma and Helena did not know it but they were corroborating something which, although it is one of the cardinal facts of human culture, has had to wait until this century to be fully recognised. The dawning of this key insight goes right back to the work of Millman Parry,³ and building on his insights, there is now a broad consensus around the principle that *writing* (i.e. alphabetic writing) *re-structures consciousness*.

In the light of this principle, orality—in the sense of everything that belongs to a culture without writing—and literacy appear as a major polarity in human history (albeit history proper only begins with the advent of literacy). Indeed, since the invention of the alphabet, and the associated technology of writing, history has in many respects been the battleground between these two poles, the civilised literates against the 'illiterate' barbarian hordes. We must be clear that the invention of the alphabet itself was a unique, macro-historic event, which took place in the eastern Mediterranean between 1000 and 800 BC, and was associated with a change in consciousness which ushered in the rise of Greek culture. In other words, the invention itself was the product of a change in consciousness, a change that heralded the decline of mythic sensibility and began to move towards abstract thinking.⁴ In the words of Walter J. Ong, writing "initiated . . . the reduction of dynamic sound to quiescent space, the separation of the word from the living present, where alone spoken words can exist".⁵ Once this technology was at large in the world, it had the power to effect the change of consciousness that originally produced it in any culture it subsequently touched. At the hand of the Greeks and then the Romans, many oral peoples felt the painful touch of chirographic culture. The Roman Empire can be seen as the 'alphabetisation', and with it the re-structuring of the mind of Europe, while European colonialism then took the same process world-wide.

So far we have two main points. Firstly, that writing re-structures consciousness, and secondly that in the struggle between orality and literacy, the former always loses, since the style

of consciousness it represents is what is re-structured by literacy. The touch of literacy, reducing "dynamic sound to quiescent space", ultimately affects all areas of mental and cultural life. To give some idea of the changes involved, space only permits me to offer the following (incomplete) comparative catalogue, though much could be said about each category in it.

<u>the oral mind</u>	<u>the literate mind</u>
mythic sensibility	rational/historic sensibility
situational thinking (the riddle)	logical thinking (the syllogism)
concreteness	abstraction
communal/rhythmic memory	internalised/individual memory
language as deed	language as mirror of thought
compulsive tribal/class ties	democracy
self experienced through others	self experienced through self

The battles between these two states of mind have been hard fought over the millennia. In Britain the formation of the English language is a story of such struggles. The civilising, alphabetising Romans were ousted by the oral Saxons (an unusual reversal), who brought their 'word-hoard' with them and built their culture around it. But they were soon alphabetised by the return of Christianity. The word-hoard then re-asserted itself in a more northern guise with the invasion of the Vikings. Once again, however, the pen proved mightier than the sword, and, with the coming of the Normans, literacy was finally established in the British Isles with absolute ruthlessness. Notwithstanding, the Saxon/Viking word-hoard still forms the core and the basic life of the English language, in spite of the literary accretions it has accumulated over the years.

The battle lines between orality and literacy may no longer be drawn upon battlefields (at least in Europe—in Indonesia, Brazil or Africa the situation is likely to be different), but they still exist. They have moved inside our minds, and into the classroom. This, indeed, is part of the

general re-structuring that has taken place, but it does not apply to infants. Every child is born into a state of radical orality, not only in regard to the fact that it can only learn language as a *deed* i.e. through hearing and speaking it, but also in regard to all the other mental attributes of orality. In terms of memory, cognitive ability and basic sensibility, young children definitely belong to the oral side of the polarity.⁶ They are in a state of primary orality, and very soon they are to be subjected to 'primary' schooling. How soon should this happen? If we have due respect for the value and function of orality in our culture and in the life of each individual, it is only sensible to allow its influence to persist in a suitable form for as long as possible.⁷ It is by oral means—the learning of its mother tongue—that the cerebral pathways a child will use for creative thinking later in life are first laid down. It is clearly unwise to disturb this process—one of the chief uses of orality—by confronting the child too soon with letters, the tools that reduce dynamic sound to quiescent space. In Steiner schools, of course, we know this all very well, so that once the child is in school, great care is taken to make its passage into the world of literacy a gentle, harmonious and imaginative one. But what happens after that? Learning the alphabet is not the end of orality, either in the life or the individual or in the educational process. Literacy may always win; it may totally re-structure everything, but it does not obliterate orality.

It lies in the nature of a polarity—of which orality-literacy is a prime example—that the poles radically complement each other in their opposition. Now, it is clear that in school, literacy has the upper hand. School is the product and traditional servant of literacy. Its whole ethos—from its typical architecture to its organisational structure and patterns of required behaviour (sitting still, keeping quiet etc.)—is determined by literacy. But if orality is not given its rightful place, the school will not be a wholesome environment for children, and literacy will ultimately suffer. In what way, then, can orality complement literacy and thereby enliven schooling?

The three-fold structure of the typical main-lesson immediately comes to mind. In the middle

is the section usually involving writing. It is flanked by oral activities: the section involving rhythmic recitation, singing etc. at the start, and the story section at the end. This sounds as if orality takes up two thirds of a normal lesson; but the question is: how *oral* is it? Are the children simply learning and repeating texts, or are they working on and with living language? Are we reciting (please note the literate metaphor concealed in this word!) because "this is what we do in a Waldorf school", thus merely mirroring a thought enshrined in the curriculum, or are we actively in it, moving the children in body and soul, thus using language as a deed? The same goes for the story section at the end of a lesson. Are we really telling a story, or are we speaking a text? Anyone who has been in a play knows that there is a world of difference between simply obeying stage directions and really being in the play. If the story is spoken but still "in here", then we will simply be obeying Waldorf stage directions; whereas if the story manages to be "everywhere", then we will be "re-integrating the origins" into the lives of our pupils. The narrative curriculum, whereby the developing child can regularly re-encounter the primary orality of its own infancy and of earlier phases of mankind, and is thus one of the main means by which this primary orality, can be gradually transformed into . . . what? I would like to look at a few more of the uses of orality before coming to that.

Within what I have here been calling the literate part of the main-lesson, the inner battle lines are felt most keenly. How much this tension affects the children will depend on how well the teacher copes with the inner struggle. An example? Recently I have had the privilege of taking part in the practical assessment of students in the final year of their training at Witten-Annan. This involves observing lessons prepared for the occasion by the student. At a recent one in Class 3, the main-lesson was on trades, and the topic for the morning, the tailor and how he measures things. The student-teacher in question took great trouble to convey the concrete problem of how the tailor measures cloth. Suggestions immediately came from the children involving various measuring devices. "No," they were told, "I only have my own limbs." (The teacher was

playing tailor.) This concrete fact was impressed upon the children very dramatically. Eventually they hit upon the *ell* as a unit of measurement. The *ells* of various children were marked on the board. They were all different. Then came the question: how does the tailor cope if he wants to hand a job over to an apprentice who has a different-sized *ell* from himself? Then it started. The children, completely absorbed by the concrete (oral) situation, began suggesting all sorts of practical solutions. Some of them were very ingenious, and they all accepted the situation as it was in true oral style. It quickly became clear, however, that the teacher was after something else. All the questions she asked from this point on related to some way of solving the problem other than the concrete suggestions offered by the children. She was looking for some generalising concept, having taken great trouble to block this out at the beginning! After some minutes of frustration, she finally came out with the word 'metre' herself. This was a head-on collision between orality and literacy. The university-trained literate mind (as yet only slightly re-structured in Waldorf terms) was unable to cope with the radical concreteness of situation thinking and rushed for the security of an abstract concept (in this case, the metre). The lesson had actually been planned like this. The student-teacher confessed afterwards to experiencing extreme tension at this point in the lesson—and small wonder. For her it also turned out to be a very valuable learning experience. It was a pity literacy had flattened orality quite so drastically, for otherwise the text that eventually emerged out of this process would have been much more lively and interesting (and there would still have been matter there for several more similar lessons).

Another lesson I observed was in Class 8. The main-lesson was physics, the topic, hydrodynamics. Apparatus was wheeled in: a glass tank, a retort stand, a long rubber tube. The tube was connected to a tap and then fixed over the tank by means of a clamp on the stand. The tank was one third filled with water. Then the tap was manipulated until one drop of water slowly formed at the end of the tube, expanded to its full extent, and then fell. The pupils were asked to come forward and observe this. But what were

they supposed to perceive with eyes still at the mercy of the everyday concept of a water-drop? There was great potential for wonder here, if the teacher had somehow managed to get the class to see a drop of water as if for the first time. This is the moment when orality enters the science lesson. The everyday attitude to water needed to be overcome by a piece of strongly evocative, concrete description which would set the phenomenon off to its best advantage: the dramatic tension around the phenomenon needed to be heightened (this, of course, is all much more easily said than done, but the more at home the teacher is in the world of orality, the easier it will be).

In the event, this experiential side of things did not figure much, as the teacher was intent upon arriving at the concepts of the three different *Strömungsformen* found in the movement of water. He got his observations, and asked questions that elicited the concepts, but the pupils were then confronted with conceptual definitions with little in the way of experience to back them up (and make them interesting and personally relevant!) because literacy had once more triumphed over orality. This is not meant as a criticism of the student-teacher, who was doing his best, but simply to show just how strong the spell of literacy is that it often works automatically, even when we are trying hard to make teaching experiential.

Thus it appears that the great paradigm set at the beginning of the class teacher period, when the children are first eased out of the world of orality towards the alphabet, must be repeated 'in little' again and again in many different ways through the whole course of school life.

The examples I have just given are two such micro-events. They demonstrate how crucial it is to be sensitive to the oral side of the great polarity, if the concepts, which are the goal of literate schooling, are to be embedded in a background of concrete experience, without which they will have no life. If due attention is paid to this in school, orality and literacy can be brought into proper relation to each other, and the primary orality of early childhood can gradually come to form a living source of creativity in the young individual. This *transformed orality* is nothing

other than the power of imagination itself. Thus orality comes to be contained within the very core of literacy, and its uses, as we know are manifold. Anywhere the young person is asked to step into the realm of the unknown—in art, in craft-work, in sensory perception, in drama, in movement—this transformed orality will be at work. But if literacy is permitted to impede the process of transformation too much along the way, it will never attain its own full development.

Norman Skillen, born in Belfast, studied ecology. He is presently teaching English and drama at the Witten-Annan Institute for Waldorf Education.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Quotations from *Orality and Literacy - the Technologizing of the Word* by Walter J. Ong, Routledge 1982.
- 2 Here is meant alphabetic writing. I realise, of course, that there was writing before the alphabet, and associated with different cultures with different places

in the history of consciousness, but it is the major change that came with the alphabet that I am concerned with in this article.

- 3 In the 30s he worked on Homer and discovered that the Iliad and Odyssey are formulaic in structure, and that this is a key element of all oral poetry.
- 4 It seems to be assumed by writers on this subject that this change was somehow an effect of literacy; but it seems improbable that the abstractive power that went into the making of the alphabet in the first place can have been caused by the (non-existent) culture of writing.
- 5 Ong, op. cit. p.82.
- 6 I realise here that by implication I am comparing the mentality of oral cultures with that of a young child. That may be true, but the point is not how childish or child-like they are: the point is rather that they have, or had, a style of consciousness which in some can be designated as *participatory*. This our children still have; what adult participatory consciousness must have been like is only accessible to us (if at all) through a supreme act of imagination. We do know, however, that various versions of it created some very high and refined cultures. If the world still has fertile soils and viable ecosystems, this is due in a high degree to the fact that they were husbanded by participatory consciousness for generations.
- 7 In this respect, the 9th/10th year is considered a pivotal point in Steiner's view.



A seventeen year-old, now for some time traversing the road of literacy accessing again, via peoples rich in a primal state of orality, her memories of the past and brings to birth new imaginative forces that will give buoyancy to the future.

Reading and Literacy:

Comparing the Steiner and the State Sector Approaches

by CAROLINE RITCHIE

When I qualified as a Primary school teacher in the early seventies and took my first teaching job in an inner city school, I was immersed in a liberal, child centred educational ethos. In the eighties I experienced the key change of approach which was triggered by the introduction of the National Curriculum. My current task is that of class teaching in a Steiner school, a role which requires a different form of engagement with teaching and learning.

This article draws on this experience of three contrasting approaches to education in order to focus on the teaching of reading and literacy. The aspects to be considered are as follows: when to start a child reading and how to prepare the ground, the relationship between learning to read and learning to write and, finally, what the reading material should be.

In Primary schools in the early seventies pupils' 'reading readiness' was a familiar concept. Teachers were persuaded by the research of the day to wait for individual children to show signs of interest in reading, development of the spoken language and other specific skills before encouraging them to embark on the activity of interpreting and decoding print. It had been observed that if started too early, reading tended to become tedious and demoralising for some children who then experienced failure at a very early age: behaviour difficulties often followed. Thus children were encouraged to develop skills at their own speed and this was consistent with the prevailing approach of individualised learning.

In the eighties, with the introduction of the National Curriculum, great changes took place; teachers were now obliged to produce as many readers and writers as possible, performing at level 2 in Key Stage 1 (age 6 plus). The

popularity, reputation and success of schools depended on good results since these were published in school league tables. Thus teachers felt that they could no longer afford to wait for individuals to be 'ready' before starting reading.

Steiner/Waldorf schools, unlike those in the State sector are blessed with a stable curriculum. The step towards literacy begin at the age of 6 plus when the child enters Class 1. At this age the children begin to lose their milk teeth, though this is only one of the physical manifestations which reflect deep inner changes in the being of the child. To begin with more intellectual challenges such as learning to read before these changes would be harmful.

"If we force intellectual powers in the child we arrest growth. . . certain organic processes that tend outwardly to harden the body are brought into play."¹

If we look at the structure of the areas of study in the English National Curriculum we find that the subject is divided into four areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking. These are all taught in parallel.

"Pupils abilities should be developed within an integrated programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils should be given opportunities that interrelate the requirements of the Range, Key Skills, and English and Language Study sections."²

In the pre National Curriculum days it was generally felt that language development needed to precede reading and writing, but no specific order was prescribed. In contrast, in the Steiner/Waldorf approach, the order of events is very specific. Speaking and listening are fundamental to life in the Kindergarten, where the children listen to the narrative of their teachers' fairytales and develop their spoken

language through the drama of their own imaginative play, through the rhymes and poetry of ring time and through all the myriad of activities that make up a Kindergarten day. Then they come to Class 1 (at 6 plus) and learn to write, and from that writing comes reading.

'Physical activity should precede intellectual. When the child learns to write. . . he is living more in the element of will, of movement, than in that of the intellect, and this accords with his nature.'³

Before the National Curriculum 'pre reading skills' were considered to be very important in the education of 4 to 6 year-olds.

"Pre reading comprises all the many activities used to develop the attitudes and skills that the children will need before the reading process can begin . . . For those who have difficulty through early confrontation with books, progress through the Infant school is a constant war of attrition with the printed word."⁴

Pre reading included activities such as sorting, classifying and matching by size, shape, colour or texture (developing visual discrimination), listening to stories (knowing that books contain stories and that print conveys meaning), reciting nursery rhymes (developing auditory discrimination) and playing finger games (developing manual dexterity).

In a Steiner Kindergarten children also spend their time engaging in 'pre-literacy skills practice'. They sort and match shells and stones, they experience the texture of an infinite variety of natural materials, they experience narrative daily in the deepest, most significant way through stories told, they develop their spoken language through puppets, they draw, they paint, they develop fine motor control through sewing, baking and finger rhymes. . . the list is endless.

With the National Curriculum such activities were still considered to be important but were firmly given to the Nursery schools and reception classes to carry out with the under fives, so that the Primary schools could get on with the 'important' work of "getting them reading as soon as possible".

There are places where the National Curriculum and the Steiner/Waldorf curriculum are not so divergent. One of the first attainment

targets in the teaching of reading Key Stage 1 level 1 is "reading from known texts"; the first reading of the child in the Steiner/Waldorf school is of a known text that they have written for themselves.

"Reading should initially be a conscious affirmation of what they know."⁵

The difference is in the timing, *when* do they do it? At the age of 5 or at the age of 7?

The next question to be addressed is *what* do the children learn to read? In the seventies most schools worked from graded reading schemes. In the eighties 'real' books were used far more. The criteria for choice would include the children's interest (as perceived by the adult), fiction and information books, books with cartoon illustrations, classics, simplified classics as well as beautiful books by good authors and illustrators. The message was 'it doesn't matter what they read as long as they read'.

In the Steiner/Waldorf school the approach is different. Writing comes before reading. Thus reading is taught from the children's own writing and this writing is beautiful, the letters are well formed because the child is old enough to do this. The task is age appropriate. The first words that the child reads are known to the child, they will be significant and can be read with reverence, for example: *GOD MADE THE SUN*. The child can read these words with confidence.

For the first year reading and writing are intertwined. The child writes, and reads what he/she writes. The writing is done initially using block capital letters, the letters having been taught individually using archetypal pictures drawn, say, from fairytales. This use of capitals is an area where the Steiner/Waldorf teacher stands alone. The view of the State sector is that the children should begin with lower case letters as these are the ones that they will mainly come across in their reading of books. The Primary school teacher is often exasperated with the parent who has unwittingly taught the child to write his/her own name in block capitals.

"Reading is *taught* from the children's writing. This does not limit what they might read. The children learn to read whole sentences before focusing on individual letters and words."⁶

In the Steiner/Waldorf school, Class 2 (age 7 plus) is the time when the children will begin to read from printed books, both graded readers and 'real' books. Now the Steiner/Waldorf teacher has the task of finding books with beauty and significance and to steer away from the banal and the inappropriate which floods the educational and commercial market, many teachers make their own books.

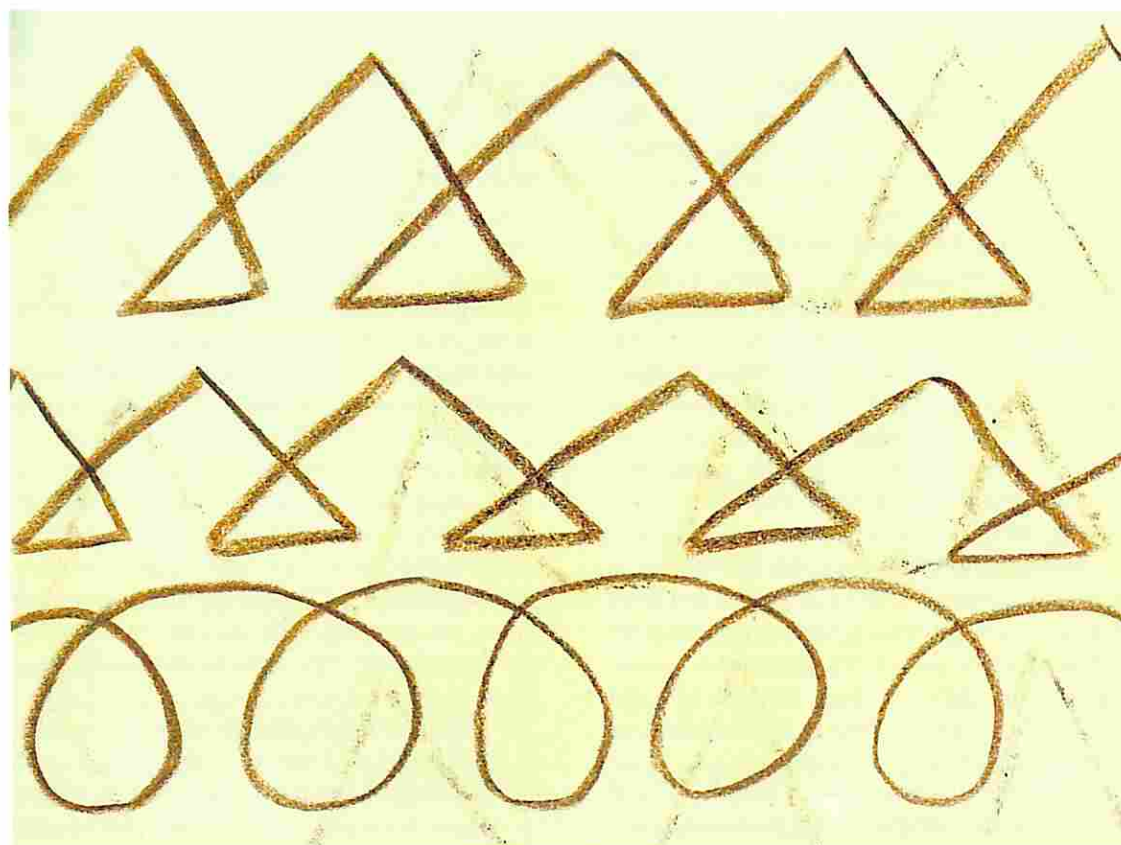
In conclusion, we can see that what differentiates the Steiner approach is the understanding of child development which precludes the teaching of literacy skills before the change of teeth and insists on the engagement of the will activity of writing before the more 'passive activity' of reading. When, as a Steiner class teacher, I look at my class in our fifth year together (ages 10/11) and reflect on the journey towards literacy that we have shared, I see a group of children who love books and reading. They share their pleasure, discuss books, read silently

to themselves and aloud to each other. They embarked on the journey together when, as a group, they were ready in their whole being. And the journey continues. . .

Caroline Ritchie is class teacher of Class 5 at Michael Hall, a Rudolf Steiner School in Sussex, England.

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Form Drawing: a subject begun already in the first term at school (see article on pp.14-17)



An episode drawn, and written about, from a story in Class 1 (6/7 year-olds), showing that the scene is experienced at least as strongly by the child in terms of 'picture'—the child's lingering oral powers—as by its emerging faculty of literacy.

At last she cried out, "Whoever gives me back my swanskin can have whatever wish they want."

Move Along Please!

The Need for Movement in the Teaching of Literacy

by ELIZABETH HENDERSON

Within the space of two months, I recently read two very contradictory articles on literacy in our newspapers. The first was an article on the implementation of *le graphisme*, a French method of teaching literacy which had been researched by a Kent State-school teacher.¹ This very successful method involves the extensive use of physical education and music to encourage young children to move rhythmically while running and walking shape patterns. Once this has been established, children are taught cursive handwriting which the French believes frees the child to develop creative written expression. The Kent school involved has had such great success with *le graphisme* that they are inundated with visitors desperate to experience the method for themselves. This method bears resemblance to that used in Steiner/Waldorf schools.

The second article referred to reported on the British Government's latest attempt to attain its literacy and numeracy targets by allowing State school teachers to "focus on delivering a core curriculum of English, maths, science and information technology" by "reducing to a bare minimum such *minor* subjects as history, geography, art, music and physical education"² (The italics are mine.)

I simply couldn't believe my eyes: literacy and numeracy targets to be achieved with minimal physical education and music. The Government obviously doesn't know that music and maths are inextricably linked, as maths is music for the mind, and music is maths for the soul. They also don't know that speaking arises out of walking, and that thinking develops out of speaking. That is, that movement is essential.

I related my frustrated thoughts to a friend some days later, and she replied: "If your methods are so good and successful why is it that an English teacher had to go all the way to France to discover *le graphisme*, and why is it that hundreds of teachers are queuing up at the door of the Kent State-school and not yours?" Ooh la la!

What's the best time?

As teachers in Steiner/Waldorf schools, we have many indications given to us by Rudolf Steiner about when and how to introduce reading and writing. Repeatedly one reads of the need to wait until the child is in her seventh year before beginning formal schooling, especially such things as literacy and numeracy. We are given strong cautions too about beginning such things too early as the child needs her formative forces in those early years to establish a sound, physical body. Making too many demands on the young child could simply rob her of these vital forces and, later, in her middle years, this would manifest as a sclerosis in the body.³ With these thoughts resonating in our soul we class teachers turn to methodology. The key to this lies in movement. The most important thing is to bring the whole being into movement and, only afterwards, proceeding to the single parts.⁴

Today, current theories in neurology and occupational therapy affirm what Steiner indicated in the 1920's. Namely, that the more dextrous the child is with fingers, hands and feet, the better the cognitive centre in the brain develops and the child's ability to learn is strengthened.

A young baby goes through a whole process of movement development, which begins in the womb and doesn't end until approximately the ninth year. This process is often referred to as *ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny*: meaning that each individual's development *repeats* that of the whole species. This principle is clearly outlined by Joan Salter when she describes the plant, fish, bird, reptile and quadruped phases which precede the young child's ability to stand and attain mastery of space.⁵ Through exploration, the young child develops a sense for space or spatial orientation, and attempts to master it. Movement development does not end here, however, and

much has to be established before we can expect a child to sit down and write.

Before a child can walk, she goes through a phase of reciprocal crawling. This means the left hand and right leg move together, and *vice versa*. This criss-cross movement helps the two sides of the body to become co-ordinated, and crosses the midline which separates right from left. After this, a child begins to establish a preference for using one side of the body over the other. The majority of people use their right hand, foot, ear and eye in preference to their left. A small minority (about 4%) prefer to use their left side.⁷ Establishing a dominant side is an important step in a child's development, and a very human step. The whole principle of dominance is an aspect of the development of the human ego.

"Every time we are involved in sense perception, we perceive the world from two sides, from left and from right. And to the fact that we have these two directions of perception, left and right, and bring them together - to this fact we owe our Ego nature as human beings. Throughout the whole realm of human perception, there is always this crossing of right and left in the middle. The whole art of life consists in finding a true balance between left and right."⁶

Our sense of balance and our sense of self-movement (proprioception) are also developed over this time until finally the child can sit still and think.⁸ The brain is no longer needed to monitor the body, and the cortex to the brain is freed for thinking and learning.

But what of the cautions about beginning too early? Neurologists tell us today that the myelination, or insulating, of the nerve fibres is not complete until the child is in her fifth year. Perhaps this helps us to understand the possibility for sclerosis if we interfere and rob the child of her vital forces during this very important time.

Steiner attributes all this development to the work of the etheric forces, and this, he tells us, is freed from its tasks on the physical body at the time of the change of teeth, and can be used later pedagogically. We utilise the forces of our etheric or time body when we use movement in our lessons and lay the foundation for literacy and numeracy.

The path to writing

Writing, through its very nature, is a task which is more active than reading. It engages the whole body. However, before writing can be introduced, the child has to first develop a living relationship to patterns. This can be brought about through imaginative pictures but has to be moved as well in order to anchor the patterns in the child's memory through rhythmically repetitive movement.

In Steiner's Ilkley course on education⁹, we are given three golden rules for the development of memory:

1. Concepts burden the memory
2. An artistic and imaginative presentation builds up the memory
3. Active involvement anchors the memory

Children can walk patterns in the playground, trace them through the sand in the sand-pit, draw them in the air, paint them and finally draw them on large sheets of paper. A relationship to the straight line and the curve is developed through the child's kinaesthetic sense.

Eurythmy can be used effectively in developing a relationship to form and pattern as it is inextricably linked to form drawing. When we look at a book of form drawing, we see as picture of eurythmy come to rest. Conversely, when we move forms in eurythmy, form drawing has been enlivened and freed from its page in the book.

The introduction of block capitals flows easily from the new living relationship to dynamic forms born of the straight line and the curve. Cursive script has to wait a little longer until the child's spatial sense is more refined and her fine motor movements more controlled.

Cursive script gives the child an experience of beauty. Even the child who has mild learning difficulties can produce a beautiful page of writing. Cursive script also gives the child a relationship to the whole word, and this is an important key to spelling. Children at this stage take enormous pleasure in writing carefully, just like the monks who long ago devoted their lives to scribing and illuminating the Word of God. "The pen is the tongue of the hand — and a fine hand is as eloquent as a beautiful voice."¹⁰



The Tower of Babel (above), painted by an 8 year-old. When Nimrod descended from the mighty tower that he had had constructed, the arrow that he had sent heavenwards also descended—smirched with blood. Henceforth, universal speech no longer united people with common understanding.

Times Past

Sadly today the class teacher experiences more and more children entering school with their movement development incomplete. The perceptual system is tuned to the dynamics of movement, and cognitive abilities are reflected in movement; consequently, these children are not ready for learning. The 'ripeness for learning' once taken for granted is diminishing and we can see why when we look at how we lead our lives today.

Traditional street games such as skipping, bounce ball and hopscotch, which all aided a child's movement development have been usurped by the TV and computer games. Traditional household tasks which helped integrate both sides of the body, such as kneading the bread, sweeping, wringing out clothes, stirring the pot, are all dying out as technology and ready-made meals take over. Children are surrounded by signs which inhibit their attempts to move: 'No Ball Games', 'No Cycling', 'Do Not Climb the Trees'. The pale faces and flaccid limbs of today's children are testament to this drive towards inertia and in our visually-orientated society, the couch-potato begins to reign supreme.

How can we open the door to learning?

It is imperative that we help children to come to their senses and their ability to move. In Steiner/Waldorf education we have the possibility of working with twelve senses.¹¹ (See diagram on p.22.)

Our senses enable us to know the world. Senses 1 to 6 help us to know our body, and provide us with certainty. Senses 7 to 12 help us to explore beyond ourselves. The movement involved in dynamic form-drawing employs many of our senses; vestibular (monitoring our balance), hearing (listening to teacher's instructions), proprioception (monitoring and regulating our sense of self-movement), touch (feeling contact with the floor, sand, playground), thinking (where do I go next), ego (I am doing this well).

Utilising as many senses as possible gives every child, but especially the ones with learning difficulties, the chance to develop a living

relationship to form and patterns. We can help those with difficulties further by trying to ensure they spend some time in a small group, or in a one-to-one setting working with eurythmy therapy, extra lesson exercises,¹² horse-riding therapy and spatial dynamics exercises.

Read on

If form-drawing can be viewed as eurythmy come to rest then the written word itself can be similarly viewed as language and thought come to rest. Whole books, then, are pages containing dead thoughts printed in black ink on white paper - dead, that is, until the reader, using her will and imagination brings them back to life. Then they are free once again to live dynamically.

If we want children to have access to culture in the form of the written word, and to be able to express themselves creatively, then we had better move, move, move along please!

I ponder on these two newspaper articles again. I guess it will take more than a ride through the Channel tunnel to impress on the Government the need for movement, but maybe a short journey to their Steiner/Waldorf School would help.

Having studied education at the University of Edinburgh, Elizabeth Henderson started teaching in a State school in 1979, moving into Waldorf education in 1983. She now teaches Class 3 in the Aberdeen Waldorf School. Her special interests are in music and remedial education.

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What's the Problem?

Steiner Educational Theory and the Teaching of Literacy

by BRIEN MASTERS

It all sounds so simple: teach the letters via a picture. For instance, take the oft-quoted example: from the scene in the fairy story in which the king strides out to battle against evil, with one arm raised and sword in hand - from this 'picture' of the upright king striding out, derive the letter 'K'. And so on. This, in brief, is what Steiner's advice regarding the introduction to literacy boils down to.

'Boils down' is about it. The thimbleful of liquid left in the pan in which the boiling debate on literacy is taking place is on a par—though inverted—with the 'tip of the iceberg' concept. But the huge clouds of controversial steam let off over the teaching of literacy, as 1998 exploded into educational history, reached not only Titanic proportions but would seem in some educational quarters as similarly treacherous. Disastrous if one takes seriously some of the statements reported in the press.¹

A shopping list of the points at issue might be a useful starting point to the enquiry.

- When should literacy be taught?
- Is it purely arbitrary whether we talk about 'reading and writing' or 'writing and reading'?
- In the English language (and in other written languages that use Roman script) what pedagogical weight should be given to upper and lower case letters?
- Where does *orality* fit into the picture?
- Can consonants and vowels simply be lumped together?
- What is the psychology involved in the whole process?

And there are no doubt other questions that would add fuel to the fire that is keeping the literacy controversy at boiling point.²

In his consideration of such questions, Steiner comes across as emphatic, more emphatic, in fact, than the average literate Westerner would

probably consider warranted. For initially, such a Westerner regards the acquisition of literacy as mere child's play—a minor educational matter that is soon dispensed with in the first years—year, even—at school. It is therefore all the more interesting that such a taken-for-granted matter as literacy was given—and has retained—such a high profile in the Waldorf 'method'.

Rather than simply going down the above points in check-list fashion, I shall begin by outlining the first steps of the Waldorf 'method', continuing with a commentary in which I shall attempt to characterise the psychology behind the learning process—both of teacher and pupil.³

- (i) The teacher, embarking on the first main-lesson on literacy, *organises* schedule, preparation, lesson plans and classroom management for the coming day/days;
- (ii) the teacher selects first a handful of *consonants*⁴ that she is going to teach, and determines the sequence in which this is to happen;
- (iii) the teacher fathoms what she considers to be the essential quality of the *sound* represented by each consonant;
- (iv) the teacher formulates an image, the inner *gesture* of which is in harmony with that sound quality;
- (v) the teacher creates a story in which the *image* that she has formulated—perhaps the sound is personified in some way - plays a central part;
- (vi) the teacher *tells the story* to the class;
- (vii) the children *re-tell* the story the next day in class;
- (viii) teacher followed by children draw a *picture*, probably starting with the 'personified' element fairly well prescribed;
- (ix) the teacher extracts from the picture the *letter* gesture which teacher and children then 'draw';⁵

- (x) the children, guided once more by the teacher, *familiarise* themselves with the letter by moving (walking, hopping, skipping...) the form; or by recognising it in script as used for instance on the label beside each of the children's coat pegs; or by coming up with words which contain the sound in question e.g. B > *bird*, S & T > *star*, K > *kangaroo*, R > *run*, *red*, *ramp*, *Rapunzel* (they have just heard the Grimms' story), *irascibility* (the googly bowled by the precocious child who learnt to read well before entering the Waldorf Kindergarten!) etc.;
- (xi) the children 'discover' the sound/letter—and any new letters—while *writing* poetry or passages of literature that (in

the first place) they have learnt to recite in chorus;

- (xii) the children *read* what they have written.

From the above initial steps (a descending flight?), it is clear that not only is the starting point the teacher (i)–(vi), but that much has to happen before the children even become dimly aware that they may be on the road to literacy—essentially (ix) though the penny is likely to drop sooner, after the first consonant has been taught in this way. Moreover, it is clear that the teacher's powers of creativity are brought into full play: fathoming the essential quality of a sound, *formulating* an image, *creating* a story, *narrating* it, *drawing* a picture (iii)–(vi) & (vii)–(viii).

Here are a) outwardly active skills—(vi)–(viii) drawing and story-telling—which are part of the



An 18 year-old's painting of peers in the school library, revealing something of the underlying temperament (see also article on pp.32/33): Red is already 'stuck in' with an ambitious pile of books waiting to be 'devoured'; Yellow, after only the first sentence, is already prompted to relate an anecdote; Green, unperturbed, is intent on systematically checking every detail, as listed in the table of contents; and Blue, ill at ease, hesitates lest there be a better volume for his purposes, still to be discovered on the shelf!

Waldorf teacher's bread and butter; and b) skills that call on more inward, 'higher' creative faculties (iii)–(v). These deserve further comment.

The ability to convey such images from teacher-story-teller to pupil-story-hearer needs practising already during teacher training, as Lafree asserted long ago, in order that the student teacher comes further than "relating things in a dry, nondescript fashion. They have to learn to use picture language and figures of speech. The statement, 'the giant was terribly tall' does not convey much to a small child... [whereas] 'the giant was so tall that his head touched the clouds,' [enables the child to paint a picture in his mind's eye]."⁶

Thus the story-teller is inspired by an image (e.g. *swan*) the word for which is, in turn, inspired by the initial sound 'S'. This means that, in the telling of the story the *sound* (the 'musical' side of the art) and *image* will have an even more intricate relationship than usual, echoing something of the process that has had to take place at the point where the teacher moved from the consonantal sound to the 'thing' (from 'S' to *swan* (ii) & (iv). The teacher of the parallel class on the opposite side of the corridor may, of course, have moved from the sound 'S' to *snake* or *sand* or (in France) *salut*. (These examples are chosen, partly at random, of course, but also partly with the idea in mind to derive form from movement: the snake slithering through grass, the stream left by the receding tide in the sand, the waving arm of friend to friend as the two of them meet in the Gard du Nord in Paris.)

Further, with the above at the back of her mind, the way she pronounces the initial letter of *swan* whenever it occurs during the story will assist the child in connecting his picture-making faculty with the realm of the inspiring sound.

This fusing of the image which the story invokes in the child's mind with the sound of the word (*SSSnake*) is made firmer by the drawing that follows (vii) & (ix). Despite the fact that the drawing will probably first be done using a soft wax crayon, the form of the letter will be rigid compared with the living image of the picture created first in the mind's eye and the movement

of the two curves (anticlockwise and clockwise yet continuous) of the 'S'.

Nor is the intervening stage—between (vi) and (viii)—a mere Waldorf formality. For it is self-evident, though not nearly sufficiently acknowledged with all its pedagogical implications, that the child's verbal/oral attainment precedes that of writing and reading by a long chalk. In this connection, as a significant element in the acquisition of language, a key point in the Waldorf 'method' is the so-called *recapitulation*. This consists of the pupils' verbal response on 'day two' to the teachers exposé on 'day one'. I.e. in an oral-aural-oral way the gaining of a fluent means of expression in the mother tongue is part of the foundation upon which literacy is built. This process already begins with the first oral communication of teacher to class on the first day of school (in the Kindergarten orality taking a slightly different course) and is continued throughout the pupils' twelve years, in a sequence of narratives of many genres that are rich in themselves and which offer the story-teller—and, through the Waldorf practice of recapitulation, the story-re-teller—a wealth of literary opportunities.

Nor is the wealth of linguistic experience only to be found in the above process of story-telling. The common Waldorf practice of the whole class speaking poetry in choral recitation (xi) is, perhaps, even more pertinent—insofar as it could be said that a poet's use of language is even more potent than most class teachers would claim their story-telling skill to be. Some may find this point debatable. It need not, however, become a stumbling block: both oral activities are invaluable in the context of the child's acquisition of literacy, irrespective of which may be considered superior.

Thus, every recapitulation by pupils of the episode narrated by the teacher the previous day, and every choral recitation, may be said to top up the reservoir of verbal skill to overflowing so that the more arid activities of writing and reading—arid in the early stages, at any rate—can be irrigated more adequately.

The above notwithstanding, stages (i) to (vii) are not the only stream that flows into

drawing/writing the letter—stage (ix). In broad Steinerian terms they principally involve the child's 'soul and spirit' nature. Another vital stream involves a different member of the child's constitution: this is what Steiner termed the organisation of formative forces (and similar expressions: life forces, ether 'body'...). He saw this member of the human constitution as having a close link with *form*. We now, therefore, turn to the form element in writing and reading which is what Steiner considered furthest removed - more so with lower than with upper case letters - from those creative realms with which we have so far predominantly been concerned.

To nurture the child's connection with form we find in the curriculum a subject which is as innovative, pedagogically speaking, as eurythmy: form-drawing. With this, introduced right at the beginning of Class One, Steiner intended the pupils to experience as strongly as possible *form for form's sake*. But although it begins as form for form's sake, it doesn't end there: one branch, growing from the main stem of form-drawing, is precisely that shaping of the letters with which we are concerned. Here we find another dimension to script. The graphic expression for the sign varies from script to script (e.g. the Greek π and the Roman P... are both signs for the same sound; or, as a corollary, the written letter P sounds as 'P' in Roman script (as in 'poppy') and as 'R' in Russian script (as in the Russian word 'rouble'). Here is clearly some diversity regarding the perception of *sound* and *imagery*.

A feeling for the *dynamic* of language, on the other hand, can be traced back to cultures such as are represented by the ancient Babylonians with their arrow-head script. Eileen Hutchins, who was founder of Elmfield School, Stourbridge, takes up the contrast between this and the Egyptian hieroglyph in her account of an Upper School main-lesson in Class 10. "To [the Babylonian] the world was not a picture but a power. They conceived of the word as a winged messenger who was able to bless or curse, to inspire or condemn. From this time onward, we can trace the contrast between those forms in literature which call upon visual experience and those which express movement and the activity of the will."⁷

When Steiner encouraged the first group of Waldorf teachers to go out into public life and speak about the Waldorf 'method'⁸ of teaching writing and reading (n.b. the more *active* followed by the more *passive*), and when we take into account all the above intricately woven web of support for the learning of the first letters, we can only assume that Steiner must have felt a lot was at stake. Whatever the stakes must have been can perhaps best be characterised by the contrast between life and death. All that preceded reading—here represented by the first eleven stages—was imbued with colour, movement, life, imagination, inspiration, dynamic form, vibrant orality...

In general, the child's nature is one that sparkles with life at all levels. In the above pre-reading activities in which the child participates, whether actively or passively, it seems as though Steiner is suggesting a 'method' that provides something of a psychological immunisation against that which is absolutely opposite to the sparkle of childhood: the dance of death - in this case, the death of the word, frozen into print. Moreover, the forces preserved by that immunisation are the very forces needed when—all in good time—the child will 'resurrect' the lifeless word, through *active* reading. Without that, not only will the libraries be in danger of becoming empty—or browsing on the Internet start to pall—the meaning of life may suffer the same fate.

With a background of many years in Steiner education, Brien Masters is Director of the London Waldorf Teacher Training Seminar and a Senior Research Fellow at the Roehampton Institute of the University of Surrey.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 see Judd, Judith, 'Children sent to formal schooling too early, says minister,' in *The Independent* 9 December 1997, in which she quotes a speaker at a Fabian Society seminar, who remarked: "...there is a growing body of evidence that we have got it badly wrong;" and then went on to pose: "Is there a link between poor literacy and forcing kids to start too young?"
- 2 The two-year research project, carried out by Professor Josef Nagy, a Hungarian educationist, which perhaps did more than anything else to spark off the present controversy, was broadcast on BBC Channel 4's *Dispatches* on 29 January 1998.
- 3 In the main, I shall try and do this—at the risk of being

cumbersome or even 'wordy'—without recourse to technical terms (phonemes, graphemes...), in order to make the argument more accessible to the non-specialist. By this, my hope is also that the psychology that I am attempting to delineate and evaluate will stand out in bolder relief.

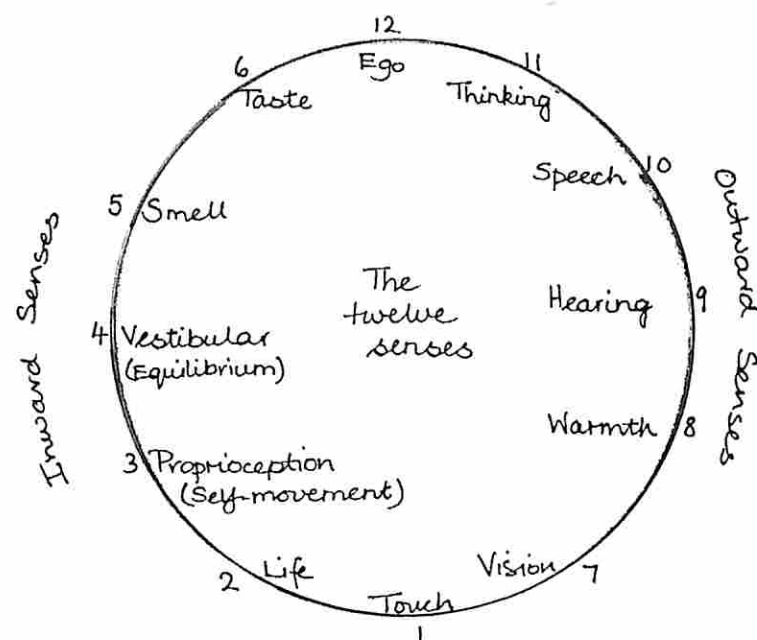
- 4 Though the Waldorf 'method' of teaching vowels may resemble that of teaching consonants, in essence it is distinct. It will suffice, however, if the present article confines itself to consonants.
- 5 C.f. Rudolf Steiner on drawing-painting the letters in

Lecture 5 'Writing and Reading' in *Practical Course for Teachers* (Stuttgart 26/8/19).

- 6 Lafree, M.B.A., 'On learning how to tell stories' in *Child and Man* June 1949 pp.23-25.
- 7 Hutchins, E.M., 'Language and Literature for the Adolescent' in *Child and Man* vol.4 (new series) no.7 1955 pp.9-14.
- 8 I am sticking like a limpet to retain 'method' in single quotes in order to help defend against any feeling of non-creativity or unyielding prescriptiveness at the chalk-face, that might otherwise be attached to the term.



The Hebrew letter aleph (written from right to left—see article on pp.34/39), at the point where the 6/7 year-old child becomes acquainted with the 'abstract' form of the letter—less abstract, it could be argued, in ancient Hebrew script—partly through repetition.



Above: 'the goose that laid the golden egg' may have been the story introducing this letter 'G', drawn by a 6 year-old. Below: in Class 5 (10/11 year-olds) a vast sweep of ancient history forms one or more of the main-lessons. In this drawing, an upper border of hieroglyphs has been included. See also p.30 for a sample of cuneiform writing.



Writing and Cultural Memory

by MARTYN RAWSON

The development of writing has rightly been termed one of the hallmarks of civilisation. Writing provides human beings with a medium of thought and communication which transcends the limitations of time, space and complexity. It enables such socially crucial activities as record keeping, preserving knowledge, communicating over distance, accounting and various other aspects of efficient administration as well that most treasured gift, literature. With the development of writing, the nature of human society changed in fundamental ways. These changes heralded and indeed brought about a major shift in human consciousness.

One of the significant characteristics of what has traditionally been called civilisation, is an increasing tendency for people to experience nature as something outside and separate from human society. Pre-literate societies, on the other hand, tend to have a mythopoeic consciousness which experiences the world and human society as an integrated whole. As societies became larger, more centrally organised and more dependent on technology, they increasingly found the balance with nature difficult to maintain. This also often led to competition and conflict with other societies over the issue of resources. Such societies came more and more under pressure and the need to maintain themselves called for ever stronger bonds of social cohesion. Establishing and maintaining cultural identity became a major preoccupation for early civilisations. Usually this identity was an expression of how the people in question experienced their origins and how they related to their environment. Such world views were formulated in mythic form and incorporated into the religious activities associated with them. The origin of writing did not mean the end of myth but it did mean that myth gained a different value once it was written down and became literature; and new means had to be found to retain the socially cohesive functions that myths had for a given people.

The fundamental difference between literate and pre-literate societies in their attitude to their surrounding environment can be formulated as follows: for literate peoples, the phenomenal world is primarily experienced as 'It'; in pre-literate peoples and most ancient societies, the world was experienced as 'Thou', it was experienced as *being*. Literacy, and the cultural forms that stem from the use of complex written language, brings with it an intellectualisation of experience, a distancing which enables generalisation and a conceptualisation which is potentially objective and dispassionate. The relationship to 'Thou' is essentially personal and therefore unique. The experience of the world is a *participatory* one. It is a relationship, a dynamic reciprocal relationship. The consciousness of pre-literate peoples has been aptly described by the pre-historian Prof. Henri Frankfort as follows:

"The world appears to primitive man neither as inanimate nor empty, but redundant with life; and life has individuality, in man and beast and plant, and in every phenomenon which confronts man - the thunderclap, the sudden shadow, the eerie and unknown clearing in the woods, the stone which suddenly hurts him when he stumbles while on a hunting trip. Any phenomenon may at any time face him, not as 'It' but 'Thou'. In this confrontation, 'Thou' reveals its individuality, its qualities, its will. 'Thou' is not contemplated with intellectual detachment; it is experienced as life confronting life, involving every faculty of man in a reciprocal relationship."¹

Mythopoeic consciousness may not stimulate philosophical speculation but it does call for reassurance about fundamental human concerns such as procreation, life and death. Where we have come from and what becomes of us beyond the threshold of death, have been human concerns

since Palaeolithic times, as evidence of burial rites clearly demonstrates. People in pre-literate cultures sought to retain stability and security in the reciprocal relationship with the powers they encountered in the world around them. And these powers that manifest themselves in nature were also experienced as forces active within the human being and the community. For prehistoric, and for most historic societies for that matter, the life of the individual is existentially bound to that of the wider group. Therefore the stability of the group needs to be continuously renewed and individual identity is to a greater or lesser extent a function of the self-image of the group. So life is experienced as a dynamic between the stability of the group and the group's healthy relationship to its environment both human and natural.

In pre-literate societies *ritual* plays a crucial role in maintaining that stability. Ritual involves a series of conscious activities (each imbued with the deepest of meaning) that re-enact the deeds and gestures necessary to reinforce that reciprocal relationship with the world real. The essence of ritual is deed done consciously and invariably. What makes ritual such a factor in forging the cultural identity of a people, are the stories that are told in accompaniment. Their central experiences are retold in the form of liturgy or myth. It is the ceremonial retelling of such stories, whether factual or not, that goes a long way to creating and maintaining the cultural identity of a tribe or nation. In particular it is the stories which relate the present condition to an origin, that fulfil the needs of cultural memory. The function of poets, bards, shamans, medicine men and their ilk, was to guard and preserve the people's cultural memory. In a non-literate society this role is crucial. As Ben Okri puts it: "A people are as healthy and confident as the stories they tell themselves."²

The collective memory of a culture goes beyond what individuals can recall of their own personal experiences or learn from the memories of relatives and friends, and may reach back at best three generations. Cultural memory goes beyond personal or organic memory and needs to be retained through a range of mnemonic techniques. Stories recall and perpetuate cultural memory. They are often told within the context of certain ritual activities, including the use of

ceremonial objects. Such rites are often performed in specific places at given times. Time, place and object are all bearers of memory. The example of the Australian Aborigine songlines is eloquent of this. By making the dreamtime journey through the physical landscape, the participant recreates his or her people's biography in that each tree, outcrop of rock, spring or hollow is associated with some aspect of the story of the ancestors. In this sense the landscape, the collective memory and the biography are aspects of one and the same phenomenon. The spiritual landscape is explicit in the actual geography of the place.

There is considerable evidence that earlier cultures, such as the European Megalithic culture, also had a similar experience of place. In fact the simple act of erecting a menhir at a specific place, or marking a rock by engraving concentric circles, are both deeds which state that a significant experience was associated with that place, no doubt at very specific times. The building of henges and chamber, or passage graves orientated towards cosmic events, be they lunar, solar or stellar, is an elaboration of this principle. We can be fairly certain that all prehistoric peoples shared a heightened sense for the spirituality of time and place. At the hunter-gatherer level people feel themselves an integral part of the world they live. Once humans began to be sedentary, to become herders and farmers, build villages and then cities, the natural rhythms of nature had to be internalised, localised in special places, altars were erected, and ultimately temples. The spiritual forces had to be attracted to the place itself or at least the places had to be established where the spiritual forces were at their strongest. This explains the locations of many temples—at Delphi or Ephesus, for example. Who knows why the location of Stonehenge was chosen? The more one becomes familiar with the location of Stonehenge and sees how it was placed in the heart of Neolithic England, the more one can see that all roads led to and from the sacred circle and that they did so even before the stones were erected. The great stone circle only amplified the (fading?) forces present.

So we can see that cultural identity was sustained by myth, ritual and often the

combination of place and time. Such cultural identity always assumes something of a sacred character, a fact which partly accounts for the vehemence with which some ethnic groups fight to retain their identity even in modern multi-cultural situations. In pre-literate societies, however, cultural memory is only partly carried by the oral tradition. The spoken word is only an integrated part of a much wider range of expressive media, including dance, music, costume, ornamentation, tattooing, games, masks, pictures, implements of all kinds, food and drink, architecture and so on, all of which can be used in ritualistic ceremonial ways to express and reinforce cultural identity. Even in our times, ceremonial objects such as thrones, sceptres, emblems and robes still perform these mnemonic functions in certain cultural and often religious contexts.³

The bearers of cultural memory have always been specialists.⁴ Even in largely egalitarian societies, such as those of hunter-gatherer groups, such people have to be specialists for the simple reason that specialist

skills are called upon to maintain knowledge that goes beyond what is commonly known and passed on, as an individual learns their native tongue and acquires the skills of daily life. The keepers of the correct sequences of ritual activities and their accompanying spoken texts have to be specially trained, or initiated into not only the rituals but their meanings. In many societies, including recent pre-literate peoples, such specialists belonged to a particular caste, clan, family, or were in other ways identified as different from the rest of the population. In more centralised and complex societies, access to such groups of specialists was often governed by strict rules, including the passing of rigorous examinations, as for example to become a Mandarin in classical China, entry to the Society of Jesuits or the higher echelons of the British Civil Service. Such ritual may even have its own linguistic forms which differ from everyday spoken language.



Ba was be mæste norebræda sun,
 seah sale fæst; sundum þu pured;
 no þær wegflotan wind fer yðum
 siðes getwæfde; sægenga for
 fleat feringheals forð ofer yðe,
 kundenstefna fer brimstreamas,
 þæt hie Geata lifu engitan meanton
 afe næssas. - translated as...

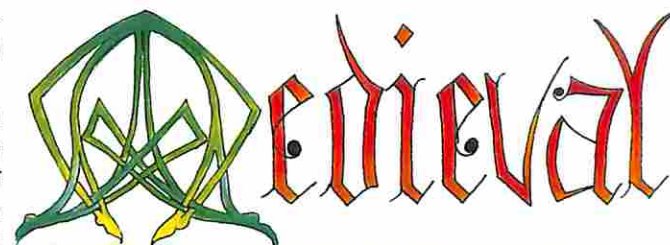


The Origin of Writing

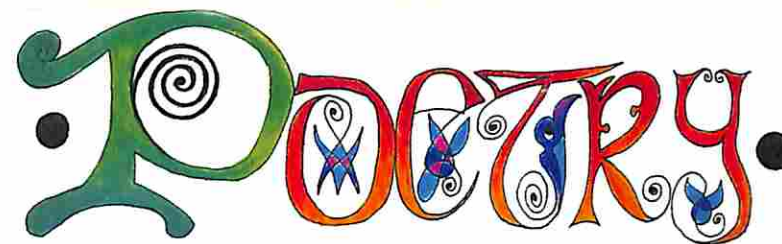
The emergence of the art of writing fundamentally altered the pre-eminent role of the oral tradition as the main bearer of cultural tradition. The written word came to be the ultimate authority; laws were written in tablets of stone - both literally and later metaphorically. A signature carried more weight than a man's spoken word and literacy became the empowering possession of the people. But this did not happen overnight.

It has long been puzzled whether writing arose in one place as a single genial invention, and was then subsequently adopted by other regions through cultural transmission. Most scholars, however, now agree that writing was invented independently at least three times and probably more often than that. It is certain that writing systems appeared in Sumer, China and Mesoamerica. Whether Egyptian hieroglyphics were an independent invention or were influenced by Sumer is uncertain. The appearance of a fully developed writing system in Egypt, with no known formative stages, has led to the assumption that the genial idea of writing must have been copied from elsewhere, presumably Sumer which is only some 800 miles away, with trading contacts being known to have existed. Had Egypt had a formative stage, surely some traces would have survived in Egypt's dry and therefore ideal archaeological environment.

What makes the invention of writing so difficult is the innate complexity of language itself. Spoken language has to be stopped in its flow, as it were and frozen into symbols that can then subsequently be



In Class 10 (ages 15/16) a comprehensive study of 'the word' is often pursued as a Waldorf main-lesson, from its 'mythological' origins onwards. Here (and opposite) the student catches moments from the Middle Ages in which an orality-imbued consciousness still enlivens the literary outcome of the epoch in question.



released to flow again in the mind of the reader. The stream of articulated sounds has to be broken down into meaningful units that can still be recognised despite the idiosyncrasies of individual articulation, emphasis, speed of speech, volume and so on. Huge sums of money are being spent at present on research into devising machines that can hear and comprehend human speech and translate it into text. By all accounts, it is an immense challenge even for the big computer software companies with all the resources, human and electrical at their disposal. Sumerian scribes seem to have solved most of the core problems but it did take them hundreds, if not over a thousand years.

Writing uses three basic techniques, and most languages use all three to some extent whilst having a bias towards one or the other. In all known scripts, symbols are used to denote either a single sound, a whole syllable or a whole word. The most common system today is the alphabetical one in which a sign represents a *phoneme*, an individual sound. The English language uses 26 letters to represent about 40 phonemes. Other languages have between 11 (Polynesian) and 141 (Khoisan) phonemes, and so must either increase the number of letters or the same sign must represent several sounds. In fact this is the case with all languages. Alphabetical systems are always approximate and do not represent sound units that could be measured on an oscilloscope. In English, for example, the sound a letter represents varies depending on the surrounding letters or the vagaries of emphasis or sometimes plain illogic, as this piece of doggerel demonstrates:

"Beware of heard, a dreadful word/That looks like beard and sounds like bird./And dead: it's said like bed, not like bead—/For goodness' sake don't call it 'deed'!/Watch out for meat and great and threat/(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt)."

George Bernard Shaw found the English system so contrived that he campaigned to rationalise English spelling by pointing to such peculiarities as the possibility of spelling fish as 'ghoti'—*gh* as in tough, *o* as in women, *ti* as in nation.⁵

The other writing systems use signs representing *morphemes* or *logograms* which are

whole words and concepts. This appears to have been used by the oldest languages and forms the basis for Sumerian, Egyptian, Chinese and Japanese and Maya. Less familiar are scripts that represent individual syllables, usually a consonant followed by a vowel. Such syllabaries include Linear B writing of ancient Mycenae and the Kana system used by modern Japanese for business communications. No language exclusively uses one system or another. English, for example, though basically alphabetic, uses many logograms that have no phonetic value but are purely symbolic in character, such as £, \$, %, &, #, = (all taken from the top row of the keyboard).

La Geste et la Parole

When one approaches the question of the emergence of art and writing from a psychological point of view, one can discover a number of interesting aspects. In pre-historic art there are essentially two dynamic processes at work; a linear, graphic, often rhythmical activity and a plastic, moulding, shaping activity. The illustrations show examples in which the moving line is the essential element, leading in fact to outline images of identifiable figures. Other images show sculptures, exquisite carvings, modelled clay and whole self-contained forms. Furthermore, as Andre Leroi-Gourhan showed in his epoch making work, *La Geste et la Parole* (1964), these two opposite qualities reflect the two functional spheres of human activity, namely the hand-tool pole and brain-language pole. What distinguishes man from animal is, on the one hand, technical development to compensate for loss of physical specialisation and on the other, the corresponding expansion of cognitive complexity and language. The one stream expresses itself in linear processes and problem solving through technology which uses combinatory thinking which links facts and processes together in causal chains. The other stream expresses itself in the grasping of whole concepts and of creating images to express those holistic experiences.⁶ We see both of these fields of human activity at work in pre-historic art and, later, at a higher, more specialised level, in the creation of writing systems. In writing we bring what Leroi-Gourhan called *graphism*, together

with the conceptualising and symbolic process implicit in linguistic symbols. In other words writing meets reading; doing meets comprehending and grasping unites hand and brain.

The principle that an image can represent something else has long been established by the time that writing systems develop. Egyptian hieroglyphics are a classic case. An image of a goose may represent the concept goose but may also represent a sound or a linguistic rule. An example from the grave of Cheriuf in Western Thebes demonstrates this (see illustration).

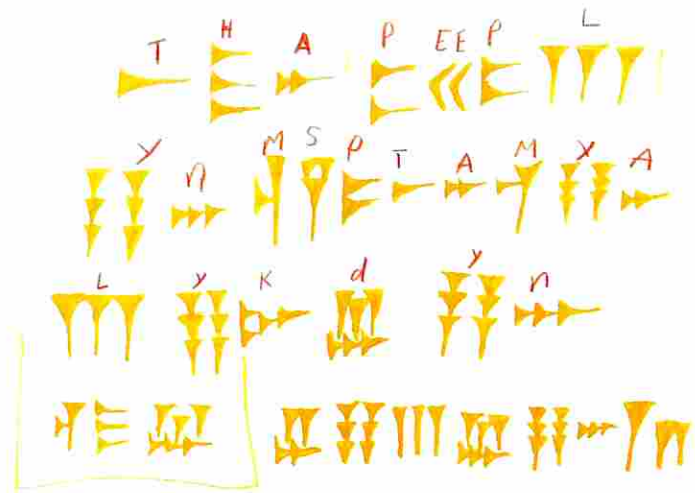
Egyptian hieroglyphs are not a pictorial script but rather a script in pictures. This means that we don't read what the picture shows us but what it tells us once we have learned to read the code. The illustration shows us an image of a loaf of bread which represents the sound *t*. Next there is a goose which stands for *sa*. *Sa. t* means daughter and has no connection with geese. The snake = *f*. This is a suffix which indicates the possessive form of the 3rd person singular. Thus *Sa.t. f* means his daughter. The next group of pictograms represent an instruction about how the preceding pictograms are to be read, what is known as a determinative function. They also spell out, however, *Maat*, which is the name of the Goddess portrayed. The sounds are = *maa*, = *ma*, = *t* and = *a*. Thus far we can read: *his daughter Maat*. The 'he' referred to in 'his' is implicit and not stated. The 'he' in this case is Ra or Re (Egyptian had no vowel symbols and so pronunciation remains vague), the sun god and father of Maat. On top of this, the entire hieroglyph represents the form of Maat which means, harmony, law, justice, order. At the bottom is a zigzag representing the primeval waters and basis for all life. Across the top is a symbol representing the sky or heaven. The sides are supported by measuring staffs, as indeed are all Egyptian images. In fact the Egyptian temple itself is a gigantic hieroglyph, from the pylons at the entrance to the mastaba tomb at its heart. The temple itself is a script to be read.

This example alone demonstrates the levels of complexity inherent in writing systems. Sumerian cuneiform began by recording the names of visible objects, sheep, units of corn,

quantities of beer and numerals (see illustration). These humble items may seem an inappropriate content for a sacred script but that is only our own prejudiced perspective. The fruits of the fields, their quantities, storage and distribution at the temple were deeply important matters, intrinsically bound up with divine grace and political power. These accounting systems built on a variety of tally systems using various clay tokens which had been in use for several thousand years. Initially simplified pictures were impressed with pointed tools into wet clay tablets which were then left to dry (see illustration). A number of impressions indicated the quantity. Later, reed styluses were used and the pictures became increasingly stylised until they became entirely abstract collocations of wedge-shaped impressions. Very few examples of the original proto-literate picture writing exist and by the time fragments of writing turn up they were already abstract. Certain other conventions of writing needed to be established before full versatility could be established, such as the necessity for signs to be arranged in horizontal or vertical rows and whether the page is read from top to bottom or from the bottom up. Once established, other neighbouring cultures, like the Akkadians, borrowed Sumerian techniques and 'translated' them for use with their own very different language.

The Alphabet

The next major innovation was the alphabetical or phonetic alphabet. The first known alphabet probably originated in Phoenicia around 1000 BC. The Greeks, by their own admission borrowed many Phoenician letters in constructing their own alphabet. In fact Egyptian scribes had been forced to develop a pseudo-alphabet of 24 consonantal signs to complement the increasingly obscure nature of hieroglyphs and in order to spell foreign words for which there were no hieroglyphs. The system remained incomplete, lacking vowels and was only really used as a technical aid to scribes. But it was an important invention, widely assumed to have influenced Phoenician, probably via the Egyptian mines in Sinai where a precursor to Phoenician evolved. Once alphabetic writing became widespread, it became much more accessible and



See caption on p.23

no longer the exclusive province of specially trained scribes. It also became a vehicle for more than lists, registers and mantras: it became a means of expressing narrative, both sacred and profane, literature, both tragic and comic, graffiti and love letters.

Writing and remembering

Writing came to fulfil a crucial role in the maintenance of cultural memory and social coherence. Texts recording the central myths and rituals became canonised in the sense that they preserved a standard by which the life of the community and its relationship to the world and to the Gods could be sustained. The guardians of these sacred texts, the scribes and priests, assumed a central role in society since they alone could read the script. However, the committal of sacred texts to writing brought about a subtle and profound change. One might think that an oral tradition, passed on by word of mouth, would be a less certain way of preserving essential ideas. In fact the oral and ritual tradition is far more suited to resisting change because its change is imperceptible. Being tied to spoken language it changes at the same rate as the language itself evolves and undergoes change. No-one listening would notice. Oral traditions are extraordinarily conservative in content even though the linguistic form goes on evolving. This has also to do with the cyclical nature of the world view implicit within its myths. Such myths portray a Creation that brings the present world into a kind of

permanent and unchanging existence. The world as it is now, here where we live, has been like this since the Beginning and so it will remain. The principle of change or evolution is not the central motor of life.

Written text is by definition frozen in time (and in many cases in place, especially where texts are solely preserved in or on temples, tablet houses or libraries). Within a few generations, a sacred text will no longer be in the vernacular. The method of handing on text and its complex rules from one generation of copiers to the next automatically brings about the need sooner or later for interpretation, translation, exegesis. Sacred text is supposed to remain unalterable, hence the often repeated formulas in ancient texts along the lines of "I swear not to add one word or take away one letter of this tablet", or "This is the source of righteousness... no-one can add nor subtract from this text."⁷ Sacred text assumes the character of a legal contract. Ultimately this character becomes mere formalism. Right up into the Middle Ages, copyists were swearing on the bones of saints that the contents of the book were a true and faithful record, whereas in reality they were the copy of the copy of the mistranslation of the fragmentary codex of the lost book of....!

Creative copying

With the need for interpretation came the desire for originality. Nobody expects originality from a bard or storyteller; indeed it would be

inappropriate. The artistry lies in the faithful recreation of the myth. Writing has an implicit tendency to invention, to self-expression, to creativity. It is also a very individual activity. We have come to expect not repetition but originality in writing. This urge was even felt by an Egyptian scribe by the name of Chacheppreseneb, a scribe during the Middle Kingdom, who complained:

Oh that I had unknown sentences, unusual sayings,/new speech, which has never been spoken before,/free of all repetitions,/no handed-down sayings that the ancestors said./I ring my body and what is in it out/and free it of all my words./Here does not speak one who has already spoken, but will/only now speak, so that another can find what he will say./Not a speech of which one will later say:/“That is what they did earlier”,/Oh if I only knew what the others don't know,/what is no repetition.⁸

The novelist, Italo Calvino described Chacheppreseneb as the first 'scrittore tormentato' in the history of literature. His appeal (to his own heart) was that of many authors since then, to assert their own thoughts against those of the existing tradition, to be able to say something original, new and personal. But this scribe's outburst is all the more remarkable for being so untypical of his culture. In Egypt writing remained representative of the spiritual wisdom whose function was to retain absolute stability. The text was extended into all art forms including architecture. Art was 'read' in Ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, text remained secondary to ritual.

Among the Hebrew people, during the diaspora and especially after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, text assumed ascendance over ritual. The canonisation and exegesis of sacred texts among the Hebrew peoples assumed significant proportions. The texts themselves became the central element within the cult. The reading, carrying and exposition of the texts became the focus for religious and cultural life and thus became the essential vehicle for the maintenance of cultural identity. As such, holy texts became a magnificent medium for intellectual debate and literary expression. One need only think of the

multiple forms this takes in the *Old Testament* which contains, books of laws, revelations, lists of kings, genealogies, history books, love poems, epics describing the deeds of heroes, laments, proverbs, ethical code books, hymns of praise, prayers, wisdom literature, prophecies, fairy tales, sermons, myths, letters, biographies, school textbooks and so on. What is more, once the temple had been physically destroyed, the holy texts, in the form of the Covenant, borne in golden scroll cases, was carried in procession wherever the people found themselves. They became transportable. The 'temple' became mobile.

In Hellenistic culture, text extended its function. From the art form of epic poetry and its performance, developed a literary culture that integrated and developed oral traditions rather than merely superseding them. In the tradition of *hypolepsis* we can see a tendency that revolutionised intellectual exchange. During rhapsodic contests in Ancient Greece, the rule was that the Rhapsode or singer should continue the Homeric text exactly at the point where his competitor stopped without breaking the metre. Later, in the art of Rhetoric, *hypolepsis* came to mean that the speaker had to make a direct contextual link to the theme of the previous speaker. In both cases the principle involved not merely repeating a text from the beginning but evolving a text through dialogue. This became a central feature of Greek discourse and philosophy. Eventually it went beyond speaker reacting to speaker to become text and textual authority relating to text which ultimately provides us with the mode for scientific discourse and rational, objective thought forms, what we described at the beginning as an 'It' relationship to the world. The reader can relate to, draw inspiration from, refute, extend or re-interpret the thoughts expressed in texts written far away in time and space. On the way to giving expression to this new subject-object form of consciousness, new forms of cultural identity and continuity are created. As Jan Assmann, the cultural historian puts it, the binding forces of cultural identity are no longer imitation and preservation, but interpretation and remembering. This subtle transformation is recapitulated in the developing

(continued on page 42)

Striding out in Style

Some First Steps Towards What Lies Beyond the Mere Acquisition of Literacy

by NATASHA KUTZNETZOVA

A person's temperament could be described as a gesture through which the incarnating individual establishes connection with the *Current of Life*. It manifests itself, therefore, most dramatically in the most human of all attributes: speech and gait—though certain preferences can be traced in music, art, musical movement, the way of dressing and others.

The study of temperament helps students to recognise peculiarities in others and themselves, and is but another step in self-study and study of others which is a most fascinating thing at this age. Our eighth-graders were first introduced to the study of the temperaments during a main-lesson on literature: 'The four temperaments and their influence on the style of a text'.

We started with giving the students Hippocrates' description of the four temperaments as connected with the four 'humours' in our body; character sketches for each can be taken from Kant.

Students easily visualised an energetic, impulsive choleric or an open, lively, easily distracted sanguine; a melancholic with his deep, acute feeling or a slow, unruffled phlegmatic. Then we asked the students to think of a typical mode of behaviour, the way of speaking, idiomatic expressions, gait, gestures, characteristic manner of clothing. . . for each temperament.

Students were then asked to write a story about a person who found himself in an extraordinary situation: 1) Lost in a strange city abroad, not knowing the language. 2) Late for the plane. It was fascinating to listen to the stories and to observe the way they were presented. Yet we can give here only a few of the students' discoveries. This is what they came up with. The gait: the determined step, from the heel, of the choleric;

the tiptoeing, almost hopping gait of the sanguine; the non-hurried, balanced step of the phlegmatic; and the tentative, self-aware step of the melancholic. All this brought us to a discussion of the kind of dance in which each of the temperaments could enjoy itself to the full.

When searching for a phlegmatic dance, the students opted for the Russian *khoro vod* with its regular repetitions and serenity. Breathing is easy and deep. One can use it in therapy. Then we took the opposite—a dance for survival: the Italian *tarentella*. There was a common belief that a person bitten by that huge wolf spider, the tarantula, was to move as fast as he could in order to survive, falling down in the end, exhausted, yet alive. The students also suggested *The Dance of the Swords* by Khachaturian. (Those of our readers who haven't heard it can imagine the scene from the ballet.) The *polka* dance with its love of movement, sheer joy of life and manifestation of good health was termed as sanguine. The *menuette* with its particularly precise beginning of pointed toes and raised arms, lived out in minute, intricate, very intellectual movements—one needs to strain all one's memory to remember them, almost forgetting about the partner!—was classified as melancholic.

By the eighth grade, students know enough of eurythmy to try to see the letter gestures temperament-wise. They unanimously named *M* as phlegmatic, *R* as sanguine, *N*, suggested for the melancholic, was considered possible because of its rather active beginning and sudden retreat to ponder on the refining effect. Several sounds were considered for their choleric impact, *H*, *F*, *S* among them. Being short of time we just pondered a little on minor and major thirds as being melancholic and sanguine; the interval of

the fourth was suggested as being choleric. As for colours, the students were unanimous in their characteristics (a good schooling was telling).

Of course, we would have loved to discuss styles of clothing, impressionism and expressionism in art, to look for parallels in the realm of plants (from a melancholic cypress to a light-hearted daisy, from a dog-rose to a birch)—yet we had to just pose the questions and proceed to our main topic—the temperament of the text.

This may seem baffling at first hearing. The temperament of the *text*? Yes, of the text. Haven't you ever experienced the influence of a text—either pressing, urging, attacking or flowing freely and peacefully, almost lullabying you in the end? Style is not what the text is *about*, but what it is *like*.

For guide-lines, one can be referred to the book by E. Dunfort *Grammatical structure of a language as a work of art*. As the author rightly points out, the most difficult thing for us was to find texts that could undoubtedly be classified as representing a certain temperament. Within the frame-work of a short article I can't quote all the texts that we examined, 'combing' them with great eagerness and anticipation for indications of style — conveyed by parallel forms, paradoxes, accents, compressed sentences, abounding dashes, exclamation marks, commas and semi-colons.

On one occasion the key word in a sentence came only at the very

end—we found this in a text describing car races on the ice! What a contrast it presented with a sixteen line-long sentence describing a peaceful, rural landscape! Parallel forms and enumerations there did not step up tension; they just little by little spread the scope of things coming in sight. No dashes. Eighteen commas. What temperament can create a text like that? Phlegmatic no doubt. The principle of additivity is clearly traced. Here are the drawings the students made to represent the flow of the two texts on paper. (See drawings on p.43)

We also compared poems that our students had been learning for the rhythmic part of their English class: *If* by Rudyard Kipling; *November* by Thomas Hood. Where would you place those?

On the whole we might say that a study of temperament as an aspect of looking at oneself and others became part of growing and our students got very involved in those discussions; even the silentest of them would speak up.

Natasha Kuznetzova teaches English in the Free Waldorf School, Moscow. She team-taught this innovative main-lesson in Class 8 with a colleague.



See caption on p.40

Emergent Writing

by ANDREW DUNCAN

There has been a spate of publicity concerning the Steiner Schools and their attempts to get funding. I have chosen one small aspect of the curriculum to illustrate that perhaps a future government might do worse than invest a little money in an alternative curriculum.

As any good teacher would, we start from the known. Some ten years ago it was discovered that children know a lot about writing. A three year-old child has no problem with writing shopping lists, letters and the like. From this it was discovered that there was a *sequential invariant* that children would undergo in their learning to write. This idea of *Emergent Writing* was thoroughly researched and was so convincing that it became the core of the English National Curriculum for writing, spelling and handwriting. The stages were (in brief):

- (i) The young child imitates adult role models by scrawling 'writing' that is not pictures. The pictures that a child will draw mean something different to the writing, will be more elaborate and fulfil a different purpose.
- (ii) The child will be able to write some letters to add text to drawings. Very few emergent writers would write without a picture to create a context and inform their 'reading'. They will be able to 'use pictures, symbols or isolated letters to communicate meaning.'
- (iii) The child will then use a letter to write to communicate more than an initial sound (entire words or syllables). Texts like the following are familiar to all teachers of emergent writing.
I W T S W M D (I went to the Zoo with my Daddy)
- (iv) As the emergent writing develops it changes from a syllabic script to an alphabetic one. We then have texts like:
I wnt to the zw on snda wv mi dde and we swa frs lin htt jh thw.

(I went the to zoo on Sunday with my daddy and we saw a ferocious lion with huge teeth)

The type of writing that is shown is what is known as a *Boutrophedon*. This comes from the Greek and means that the direction goes from one side or end to the other. In emergent writing children have been known to exhibit every variation of directionality that has been used in the various epochs of man's development. Thus we have our system:

ABCDEF G

HIJLKMN

but Semitic scripts work differently:

GFEDCBA

NMLKJIH

Hittite children were beaten for not writing like this:

ABCDEF G

NMLKJIH

while ancient Brahmi scholars had to write like this:

GFEDCBA

HIJLKMN

and the writers of the Phaistos disk wrote in a spiral:

		G		
	F			A
	J			H
E		I		B
D		C		

We could continue with all the possibilities of vertical scripts, circular and 'shark-toothed' where the writing is turned upside down at the end of each line. The young child who wrote the last sample of writing could only be considered 'wrong' because the Western tradition now uses one way of writing texts (left to right and top to bottom). Most ancient scripts were developed because of the constraints of writing materials. A question for me is whether something in the emergent writer 'remembers' these constraints.

Please note that the vowels that do appear in the sample (such as the 'e' in 'the') are still serving as part of syllabic system of writing. Teachers will be familiar with the hard task of moving children from the writing of high frequency words (the, at, they, Mummy) to the construction of CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words (mat, cat, rat).

(v) Next the vowels appear. Children use a combination of known words and invented spellings. It becomes possible for the layman to recognise what the child is writing.

Dabby * and * me * in * the * rain *
I * am * splashing

The writer has got to the point where she is able to use and apply rules. Many teachers find that the concern to 'get it right' can slow down the spontaneity of many children's writing. However, if we can get the child through this phase successfully, many children go on to a period of glorious creativity:

"In the hollerdays of scool on the last saterday I went to pleshurwoodhills and I went in the ball pool and there was a pool of balls a you can go under the balls and the next thing that I went on was the rollercoaster and thust theing that you do is go up this tunul then you go zooming dawne the hill then you go strat up a hill and in a tunul....." (Nicholls et al (1989) *On becoming a Writer*)

Of the above, it can be said:

"His hand and mind went together... we have scarce received from him a blot in his paper." (Shakespeare's publisher of Shakespeare)

We are almost at the end of the emergent writing process. The average child, who has been encouraged to write creatively, will be encouraged to use dictionaries, write in different styles and for different purposes and to enjoy the act of creation. The mark of education is whether the child goes on to continue to be creative in her meeting with the world. To paraphrase Skinner:

Education is what's left when you've forgotten all the rubbish you learned at school.

So far, I have assumed that I am 'teaching my Granny to suck eggs'. I hope that we are broadly in agreement about the model of emergent writing. There appears to be a pattern, as with the learning of speech, that children start with a universal 'babble' which is then modified to reflect what they learn from *their* part of the world. The model we have seen is the one that we in Britain use, but the common scrawl of the three year-old will differentiate into different alphabetic, pictographic and syllabic writings to reflect what children are *taught*. Much of this will include copying models (poems, notices, stories) which are presented to children.

From this point onwards (though we *all* continue to learn how to write) the child will produce work that is recognisably 'standard' in its format and spelling. The emergent model of writing lays great emphasis on developing 'traditional' writing skills but is based upon the prediction that an excessive concern for accuracy in spelling, grammar or format may inhibit a child's creativity and her ability to demonstrate what she *already knows* about the process of writing.

The Emergence of Writing

Before the 'development' of civilisation, nobody had very much use for writing. The transmission of information was accomplished through example and orally. Songs, myths and poetry were as important as the British Library. These were enough for the stone age Internet. We, in Steiner schools, place a great deal of emphasis on these skills. We are not teaching the virtues of *illiteracy* but of intelligent *protoliteracy*.

Writing first became important as a concept when specialised hunter-gatherers began to trade. Most authorities suggest that the tally stick was the most important precursor of writing. Just as the human race needed a solid grounding in story and fable before it could begin to establish civilisation, so does the individual. Most importantly, the most literate people on earth will be those who have *retained* these skills. This is how the examination system works. In addition I am much happier booking my car service with a mechanic who can retell that good old

yarn known as the Otto Cycle (Induction, compression, ignition and exhaust). Literacy, as every teacher knows, is best when it *augments* existing skills.

For a long time the first writers used iconic (picture based) systems of writing for a limited range of purposes. The first writers were accountants and priests rather than storytellers and were very anxious to keep their trade secrets to themselves. I am old enough to remember the sort of business or legal letter, drawn up by

insiders for insiders, that required translation by another insider to make sense. This is not a new phenomenon.

"Put writing into your heart that you may protect yourself from hard labour of any kind. The scribe is released from manual tasks; it is he who commands." (Ancient Egyptian scribe, quoted in Gaur, A., (1984) *A History of Writing*)

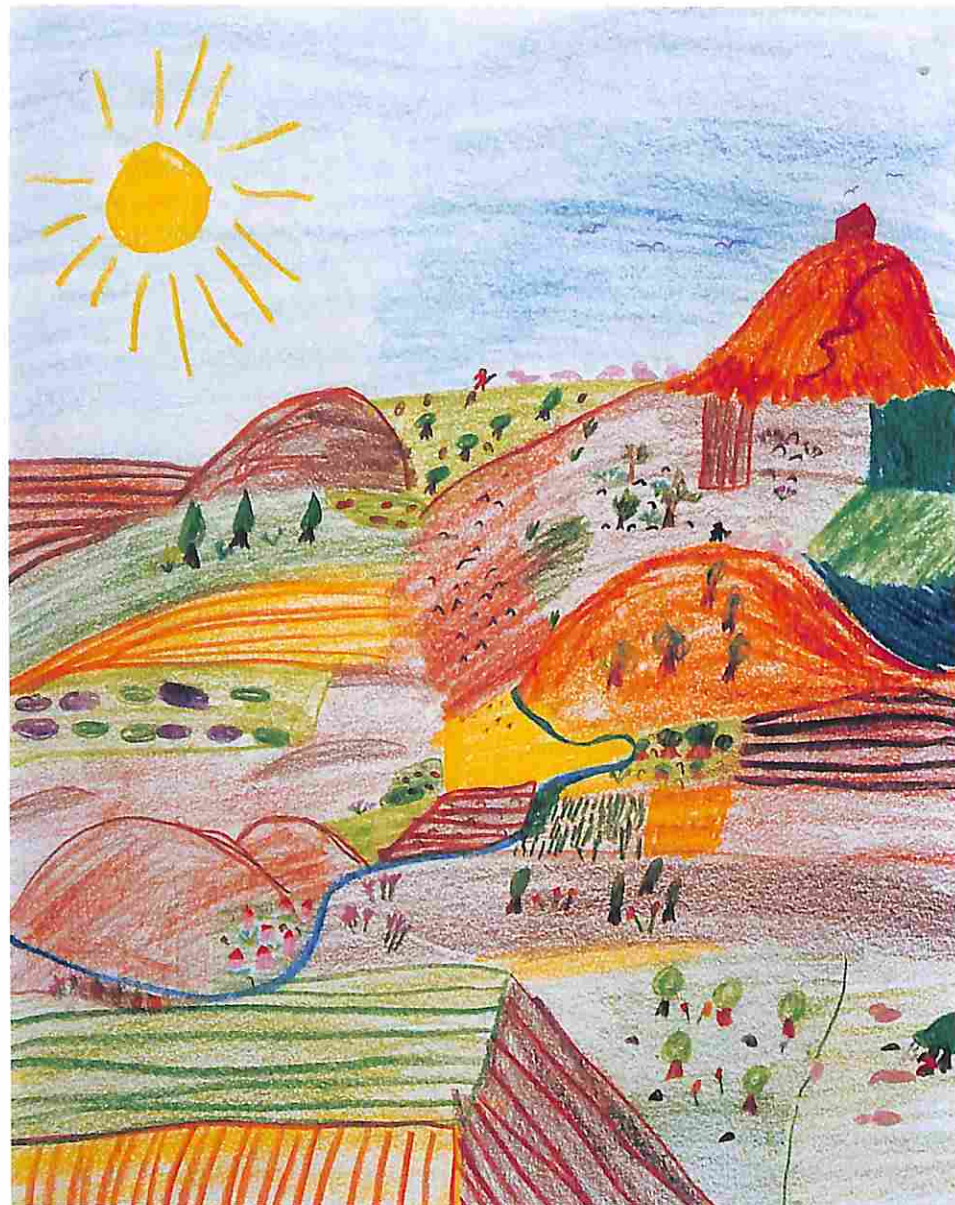
Writing was a tool that served a limited range of functions and required a lot of training. The early

scripts of the first civilisations were not for the masses but to serve *State* or *religious* functions. The writers revealed their meanings when they needed to. Some societies never needed to go further. The Inca built a civilisation with a development of the knotted handkerchief known as the *quipa*; and he *remembered* what the knots meant.

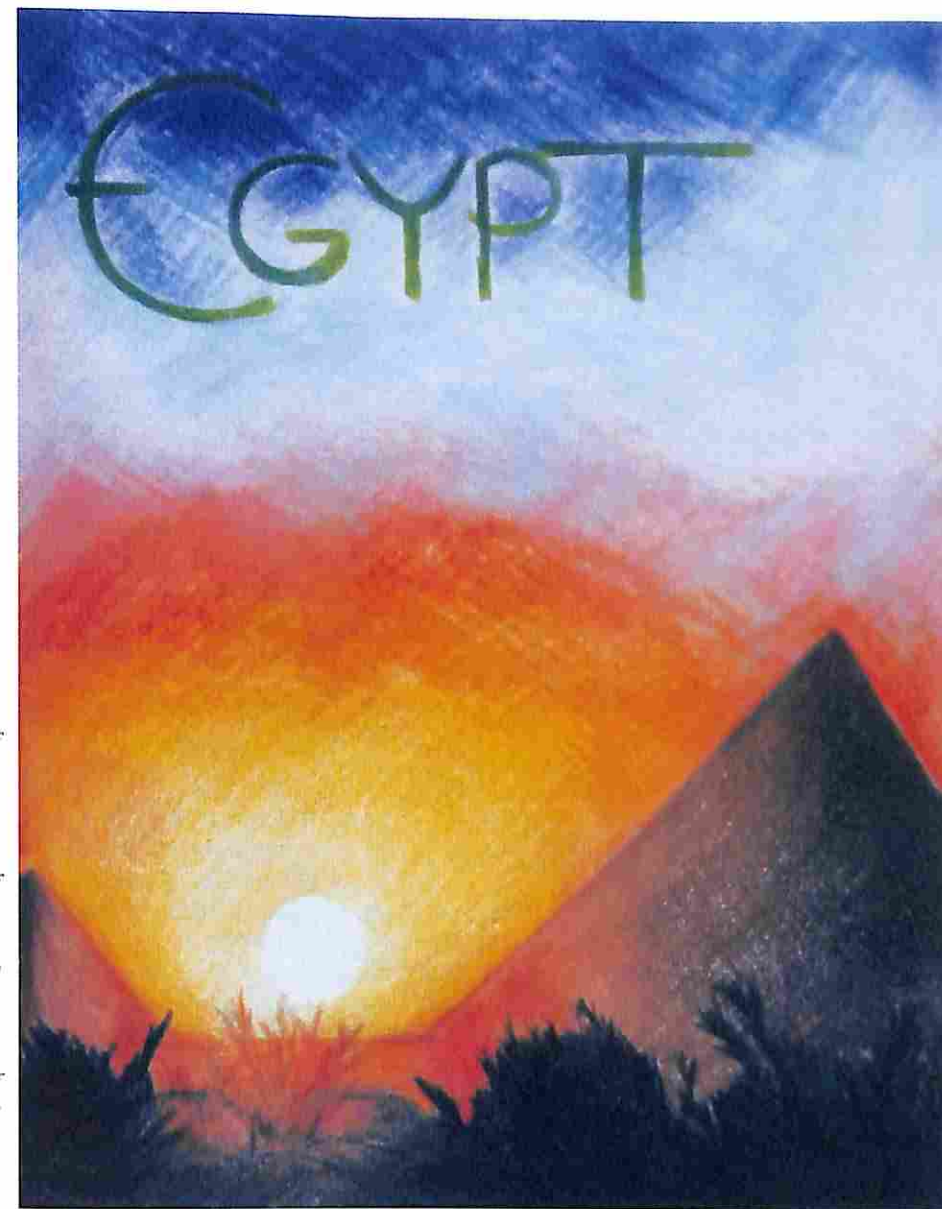
In the early civilisations writing developed through simplification. It was possible to use the imagination to extend the meanings of the

original words to include ideas. For example; if the sign χ means *cross*, as in *cross-roads* it becomes possible to write: "I am very χ about this," and the beginnings of a literature become possible. Signs become syllables. This is very apparent in the development of the Mesopotamian scripts which became very abstract in execution and turned from pictures into a syllabic script, much as China has today.

It was the nomadic peoples of the Middle East who began to develop simple alphabetic scripts.



At age 9/10 there is a significant inner movement from orality-consciousness towards literacy-consciousness. Drawings at this time (here of a local scene) often reveal fine, intermediate stages in this developmental process.



Echoes of orality-consciousness are often to be seen in the titles of main-lesson books as the pupil's fantasy (here that of a 16-year-old) roves freely in anticipation of what is to be experienced in forthcoming lessons.

The Libyan and Hebrew alphabets contained no vowels and writing alphabetically doesn't require them to this day (as we saw in the first examples of emergent writing). The first 'modern' alphabet was produced by the Phoenicians and it is this alphabet, modified by the Greeks and Romans, which has come down to us as the Roman alphabet that we use to this day. Within a monoglot culture the alphabet makes mass literacy possible but this didn't happen for over a thousand years. For centuries literacy was the preserve of a caste. The names Clarke, Clark, Clarkson etc. are a legacy of this time.

The introduction of the printing press and the religious reformations in Europe, where people dared suggest that the layman should have access to religious works, were the great impetus towards mass literacy. Three hundred years before the introduction of compulsory education, first Protestant countries and then Catholic ones were establishing schools for more and more children to become literate. The mercantile society of the 17th century was only possible because of the spread of education. From the Renaissance through the Reformation there was an explosion of creative writing. The great plays of this period, Shakespeare's among them, are an exuberant celebration of new language. The creation was more important than the spelling and it is a feature of written language that it followed phonetic, rather than prescribed, spellings. This, rather than cleverness, is the reason why Wordsworth rhymes *matter* and *water*. It took the industrial revolution and the need for universal education to produce a standard spelling and a standard grammar. This, which is a very recent development, is now taken for granted.

Emergent Writing and the Waldorf Curriculum

I came to the Waldorf curriculum through mainstream education. When I first heard of Rudolf Steiner I studied him as a footnote, a curiosity. As I read further, I found little bells sounding in my head as I read about Steiner's idea that children recapitulate the development of consciousness; and I began to relate this to the work I was doing with children on emergent writing within the National Curriculum. I still do

a lot of work out of this. A sample of unaided writing from a child, allied with the National Curriculum programmes of study for English, is a good way of generating an individual education programme for *that* child. This is because if we know *where* a child is in the process of emergent writing we will know what he needs to learn *next*.

I was very sceptical about the idea of emergent writing until I had had it brought home to me that nearly every child is at some point on the continuum that I have sketched out. I feel that we in the Waldorf schools movement are uniquely able to relate this to a whole range of experiences that we offer to children, based on our insights about consciousness. I have come to believe that this is a challenge to the practice of both mainstream and Waldorf schools. I have laid out my observations in a table.

Dream time, story, picture, pictogram, syllable, consonant, vowel, experiment, rule, exuberance, creativity, standardisation. Are we describing the emergence of society, the emergence of literacy or the development of the child?

I put the above forward as a basis for discussion and as work in progress work. My tentative thesis is as follows:

- As children grow up they recapitulate the history of consciousness in some fashion.
- As children learn to write they recapitulate the history of writing in some ways. If the emergent writing model is used the teacher loses none of her authority but the children are able to show what come from them independently.
- A curriculum that can appreciate the idea that emergent writing is part of the child's *incarnation* has the opportunity to speak to children in a unique way. The Waldorf school has the possibility of doing this.

The hesitation I feel is that my work so far has raised a number of questions which I do not feel competent to answer as yet. These are as follows:

- Are children encouraged to write too early in mainstream schools; and what is the advantage of the later start in Waldorf schools?
- Is there really some parity of outcome at the ages of 11 and 16?

- Is either type of school prepared to change their practice if my ideas are borne out by further research?
- Do children need to follow the stages of civilisation in writing *before* they meet them in the curriculum in other forms? There is an emergent model emerging for several aspects of the school curriculum.
- Should Waldorf schools be studying emergent writing as a diagnostic tool for teachers? Do we really have all the answers already?
- As a teacher in a Special school, I am also concerned that many of my pupils have failed in the mainstream system and that their emergent writing is a long way behind

the stage of consciousness that I am supposed to be taking into consideration as part of their education. Work can be differentiated and the emphasis in Classes I–VIII is the development of *feeling* rather than intellect. Does emergent writing give us the opportunity to deliver the curriculum to the whole class while also enabling us to find the appropriate response to each individual child?

Andrew Duncan is a class teacher at Philpots Manor Rudolf Steiner (Special) School for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. He would welcome correspondence about this subject.

Comment from America

by Alan Howard

[This was the author's penultimate contribution to our journal, written in 1984. Following the *Appreciation* on pp.3/4 by Rosemary Blom, this piece demonstrates Howard's ability to perfection—as well as the remarkably durable contemporary note that he so often struck. Ed]

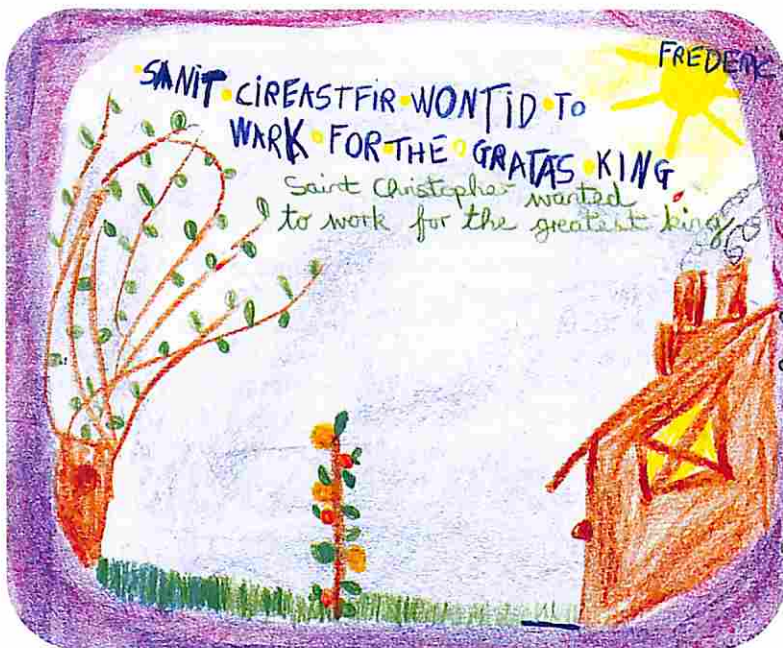
It is sometimes said of Waldorf education that it does not prepare children for life. It is too protective. 'Life', it is said, is tough, competitive, a rat race; and anybody who is going to 'make it' in the modern world needs to be tougher, more competitive and a better runner in the race than the -er next 'rat'. And from what one sometimes sees and hears of things that could be true.

Nonetheless you cannot shape an educational philosophy on the worst aspects of human nature, otherwise it would not be long before you were doing nothing else but training a generation of potential thugs. You can only educate on the assumption that human beings are far better creatures than they often show themselves to be; and by giving them a conception of themselves that they can step out into life with, courageously and confidently.

The business of education is knowledge, and human beings can only acquire knowledge because they are thinking beings. And because we are thinking beings the gods gave us brains to think *with*, just as they gave us eyes to see with. The brain does not think any more than the eyes see. *We* think, *we* see; the brain and the eye give us the material on which to exercise our thinking and seeing. Therefore if we are only given a chance to *think about thinking* (which, incidentally, is the only way to get knowledge of ourselves, and it) we would be able to see that *we* are spiritual beings, who stepped into life when we were born in the *body* our parents gave us. But we are not our body; *we* are the spirit indwelling it.

All this could be put to any High School student who has been educated to think at all; and from there it would not be difficult to show that the capacities we bring with us are gifts of the spirit, not the body. The body is only the instrument through which the spirit acts. If, therefore, those capacities show—as they undoubtedly do—the means of coping with this life, then they could only have been acquired in circumstances similar to this one. That is, in a previous life. Therefore, whatever this life turns out to be, we have the means of coping with it. We are part of it. We are not the side effect of some indifferent evolutionary process; we are evolution itself working itself out in us.

But wouldn't that be indoctrination? No: no more than it is indoctrination to teach Goethe's Theory of Colour alongside Newton's. Pupils need other lines of thought than the one that *is being indoctrinated* far and wide today—that we are nothing more than higher animals or pieces of computer software. Then, at least they will have the chance of meeting life with something of the spirit of Henley's memorable words: *Out of the night that covers me/ Black as the pit from pole to pole,/ I thank whatever gods there be/ For my unconquerable soul./ It matters not how strait the gate,/ How charged with punishments the scroll,/ I am the master of my fate,/ I am the captain of my soul.*



(Above): The story drawn here by an 8 year-old was also used for the transition from upper case to cursive writing. Thus: first in (familiar) capital letters, 'THEY COUNTED THE HORNS'; and then repeated in cursive writing, 'They counted the horns'.

(Below): The emergent writing from one of a class of 7/8 year-olds—of value to the pupil's self-esteem and also of value to the teacher who is assessing progress diagnostically. (See p.33 for another sample from the same class.)

ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Spoken language serving all functions of communication.

Bardic declamation, systematising the storage of knowledge through mnemonics, verse and rhythm.

a) Tally sticks, Quipu, early pictographs as an auxiliary to memory.

b) Pictograms: early Sumerian and Egyptian writing.

a) Syllabic scripts: Cuneiform and (in a developed form) Chinese, Japanese.

b) Early alphabetic scripts: Libyan, Hebrew etc.

c) Later alphabetic scripts: Phoenician, Greek, Roman.

a) The Middle Ages: a range of writing styles. Tension between a desire for a "standard" form and difficulties of geography. Copying corrupts work and a range of alphabets emerge to meet local needs.

b) The Renaissance: a flowering of vernacular literature with new words pouring forth. New forms of writing. Spelling is fairly idiosyncratic, reflecting a range of dialects. The invention of the printing press has led to a pressure for a more standardised spelling. The first modern dictionaries are produced.

c) The emergence of the modern world. Mass education requires a standard spelling and a minimum standard 'product'. Different social classes have different literatures and aspirations.

The modern world: written language takes a range of forms. Mass literacy and a mass market creates a range of writing, unprecedented in history.

STEINER'S MODEL

Learning language in the home (orally) by imitation.

Development of imitation in the Kindergarten with emphasis on supporting the rhythmic system and the memory.

Class I: Introduction of letters and numbers. Work with stories and movement around these. Building a firm *spoken* repertoire.

There could be some opportunities for emergent writing as part of play and for real purposes.

Class II: Group writing and work generated from fables. Learning to read through a mixture of group and individual reading from a strong base of story and poetry. Children learning reading from their own writing.

Class III: Children face a "rubicon" during the next couple of years when they have to confront the fact that they are individuals. Much work is based on the Old Testament.

Class IV: Children are now writing about their work often from models.

Class V/VI: the Greeks and Romans. The children will be learning the last stages of basic grammar, dictionary skills and phonic rules.

Class VII: The Renaissance and the Age of Discovery are studied. Children are required to be more critical in their work.

Class VIII: the time of the great revolutions. The pupils are encouraged to become very critically aware about *everything*.

In the Waldorf Upper School (and in the mainstream), the requirements of GCSE are reflected in the curriculum. The Waldorf *Main-lessons* are taught in addition to this.

EMERGENT WRITING

Confident scrawls in imitation of adult models. ("I'm writing a shopping list too!")

Building up a stock of story and rhyme material. The more this happens the easier it will be to become literate later.

Iconic writing where the child can read back his ideas. New things learned will emerge within this writing.

Emergent writing is part of the everyday curriculum. Children are praised for the things they get right and each child's needs are able to be identified.

Work is differentiated by both input and outcome. The emergent writing model enables the setting of *open tasks* where children are to respond to challenge *at their own level*. At this point there will be a mixture of pictographic, syllabic and alphabetic scripts. Much explicit teaching of letter formation, sight vocabulary, initial and final sounds and letter patterns.

Children are writing independently, using sentences correctly demarcated in most cases. Common words are spelled correctly; invented spellings follow rules. Most children would be expected to start doing this by the age of eight, correcting and redrafting their work soon after. This is an average expectation and there will be a wide range of ability.

Write in a wide variety of forms, organising and presenting material for specified audiences. Match writing to audience. Write fluently and legibly.

(continued from page 31)

child in the transition from the first seven-year phase through to adolescence.

And that is the paradox of the relationship between writing and cultural memory. Text, and its modern extensions into other media, leads to the invention of history. Myth is no longer cyclical. Stories refer to an original state which has undergone progressive change, indeed goes on changing. In the Hebrew tradition, myth projects a future goal onto cultural 'memory', the concept of a Day of Judgement, at the End of Time. History not only becomes progressive, it acquires an objective. Nor was this a smooth transition. Roman literary tradition produced Ovid whose *Metamorphoses* begin with a Greek Creation myth that changes into a cycle of ages from the Golden to the terrible Iron Age. In Ovid's vision, present society can be measured, to its shame, against earlier, higher Golden times when all was sweetness and light. Progress was experienced as a descent into matter and dissolution. Ovid could only have been the product of a literate culture. He used his sources with an historian's eye and a poet's (or prophet's) imagination.

It took the emergence of scientific thinking stimulated by the Renaissance and the revival of Classical learning through Humanism to create historical thinking. The creation of time and space in Renaissance art made this new perspective visible. This occurred through observing the phenomenal world and, crucially through the critical evaluation of texts, especially those passed down from classical times, often via the Arab world. It also manifested itself in the emergence of autobiography as an art form. The science of history has itself undergone many revisions through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, progressing and evolving through mere recording of chronology, to the history of great men and battles, through economics, to social history and recently to history from 'below'. History as symptomatology of the underlying spiritual forces at work in human life is a new and challenging approach, one which may offer some middle way between the

infinite detail of the individual life and the broad epochal trends that generalise to the point of worthlessness.

Cultures continuously remember and reinvent themselves by rewriting history, usually from the top down. Almost from the beginning of literate societies (or literate groups within larger social contexts, since literacy is rarely shared by 100% of the adult population). Text has been used for propaganda purposes since the earliest times. The power of the *Bible* and the *Koran* throughout history are proof enough of the power of the written word in the hands of powerful people. But text, especially since the invention of printing, is also democratic and can thus also be subversive. In the age of the *internet* the question is what forms of cultural identity will now emerge. Once script enters cyberspace, even linear history will disappear into a three-dimensionality and with it a new kind of consciousness. Perhaps the invention of machines that transcribe our speaking (and perhaps ultimately our thinking) will revive oral skills is one option. Writing itself will become history.

Martyn Rawson was co-founder of the York Steiner School. After taking a class through eight years there, he has taught in several places, including Michael Hall, England and the 'original' Waldorf School, Stuttgart. His specialities include a wide range of Upper School subjects and the teaching of Modern Languages.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Henri Frankfort, 1963, *Before Philosophy*, p.14.
- 2 Ben Okri, 1996, *Birds of Heaven*, p.21.
- 3 This fact has been cynically used in modern times to lend credibility to pseudo-sacred occasions such as royal weddings and investitures. The artificial creation of national identities in modern times also calls for the creative invention of tradition ritual, 'pomp and circumstance'. See *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1983.
- 4 The exception is children who pass on games, rhymes, chants, sayings without any official training.
- 5 Both examples taken from Steven Pinker, 1994, *The Language Instinct*, p.188.
- 6 These two streams are similar to what Steiner termed the formative-structural and the musical-lingual (Lecture, 16 September 1920 Stuttgart).
- 7 Hittite and Greek texts quoted in Jan Assmann, 1992, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp.102-104.
- 8 Ibid p.99.

CORRESPONDENCE

Winterbach-Engelberg

Dear Editor,

The picture of an American Indian chief at prayer, which you include on p.4 of *Steiner Education* vol.32 no.1, prompts me to make some explanatory comments.

The kind acknowledgement should rather be to the memory of my sister, Elizabeth Catherine Van Vliet who, as Betty Raab, taught in Michael Hall when it was still at Streatham, London; and who, after the war, when she went to the USA, became more and more absorbed in a study of the character and destiny of the native North American peoples. The climax of these pursuits was the compilation and production of an "Indian Program" designed for recitation and eurythmy (she was a trained eurythmist and a class teacher), which was being performed in New York State at the moment she was dying in a clinic in Switzerland, August 1970.

She liked sharing the always interesting results of her research—books, pictures, anecdotes—reflecting her keen admiration for the more spiritual Indian achievements, particularly for the Confederation of the Five Iroquois Nations, c. 1400 AD, which established a lasting peace among hitherto warring tribes.

She also liked to tell of the Indian corn (maize) stalks that achieved, through the Indians' special methods, a height of 5 metres, whereas the prevalent height is under 3 metres.

I received the picture of the chief from her.

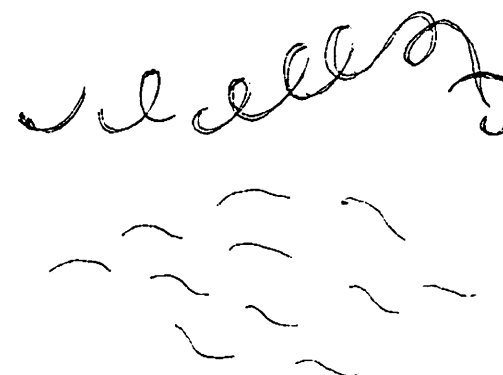
Yours sincerely,
Rex Raab

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*A form-drawing in preparation for a capital letter
(See articles on pp.14-17 and pp.18-23).*



BOOK REVIEWS

Courage and Love for Children in South Africa by *Truus Geraets*, Schaumburg Publications Inc. sb150pp.

"The gift from the African people to the world is their strong social conscience." In this book, published shortly before the change of government and the end of constitutional apartheid in South Africa, Truus Geraets describes the development of a number of initiatives bringing *Lesedi* (Light) in the form of Waldorf Steiner Education to the black children of the townships and remote, poverty-stricken, rural areas.

It is common in our age to feel overwhelmed by the daily obstacles and challenges in our personal lives, and paralysed by the tidal wave of destructive forces active in the world. Yet what obstacles would be too great for someone who, as a teenager, had a four hour walk over the mountains at the beginning and end of each day, barefoot, cold and hungry, in order to pass her final school exams. Emily Moabelo succeeded in bringing a new educational impulse into a community, where traditional values and authority are seldom questioned and in 1992 was chosen 'Woman of the Year' by a Sowetan newspaper.

This book is richly informative on aspects of life not mentioned in the daily press, and, through the author's eyes, we witness the immense courage, strong-willed determination and unswerving sense of purpose of many inspired individuals.

Lesley Smollan

The Waldorf Approach to Arithmetic by *Hermann Von Baravalle*, New York: Parker Courney Press sb 175pp \$15.75.

This publication reveals two sides of Baravalle's nature. Pages 1-127 present his genius for mathematics (arithmetic/algebra), about which Steiner thought so highly. Pages 128-164 are *notes*—as the editor is at pains to emphasise—of lectures he gave on the teaching of the subject within the setting of Waldorf education.

It doesn't take much arithmetic to see that Baravalle as teacher trainer is given less than a third of the space than Baravalle as mathematician. This is reflected also in the quality of the respective parts of the book. Though there are good ideas here and there in the second section, with fascinating pedagogical implications (e.g. re long division: "... the longer the better; let the paper go under the board and across the floor.") they give, at best, a very second hand impression: especially when compared with the first section entitled *The Theory of Numbers*. However, at least to this reviewer, the term theory comes across not as something 'abstract'—the dead skeleton of number. It has the flavour more of 'pure' as opposed to 'applied' mathematics—yet bursting with pure arithmetical life.

To move around in this section is similar to wandering in an ancient city—the city being one of number—each street corner bringing new marvels. Some of my favourite 'sights' were the author's comparison of the formulas for Pythagoras, the neat logic presented in the Diophantine problems, the

sweeping vista he opens up on the number π and finding the HCF or GCD via Euclid's Algorithm. All in all, one needs no further illustration of Baravalle the "magician" (the impression that Baravalle is more than once described as making on his audience) than supplied by this text.

Perhaps one might plead that future volumes be thoroughly proof-read—a touch of mathematical precision perhaps!—and that the maiden name of the author's wife be corrected (she was *Erica Smith*)—a remarkable 'equation' the two of them seem to have made.

Towards the end of the book (p.161) Baravalle warns against the danger - not easy to avoid - of the arithmetic lesson becoming "dry" and of losing "vitality":

"When a new unit is begun, we do not repeat but present what is new. The spirit is: 'We climb on, we conquer.' The child should think [feel]: 'I never loved it so much.'"

Any teacher who recalls moments of sagging in comparison to this ideal, has not far to turn for real inspiration: the first section of the present work.

Brien Masters

The Imagery of the Zodiac by *Frits H. Julius*, Floris Books sb 176pp £10.99.

Although the term phenomenology has been given several twists, in the context of Waldorf education its meaning and value have remained constant and have direct bearing on the whole of science teaching (including 'natural history'), as well as indirect bearing on all aspects of the curriculum where the teacher is concerned with the pupil's relationship to the external world.

Julius cultivated a) his eye for the phenomenon to such an extent that form, gesture, the diet of animals, their colour and movement all begin to reveal their inner nature; b) his inner ear to hear the language of that inner nature; and c) a literary style that not only expresses that language but also opens the eye of the reader so that the phenomenon being described can be viewed from the same perspective as achieved by the author. Thus, not only is his meaning immediately transparent; it is as though, while reading, you 'see' for yourself.

Moreover, the seeing is not a reversion to original 'participation'. It appears as a first stirring towards the awakening of that which Owen Barfield argues in his *Saving the Appearances* as those degrees of higher consciousness that the term 'final participation' implies. Philosophically, this may seem somewhat lofty; yet in this book Julius has evolved a style that is accessibility itself.

He takes his (and the reader's) start from naked eye astronomy coupled with an unquestioning acceptance of the traditional names of the zodiac—though including the sometimes ignored 'eagle' aspect of Scorpio. From this seemingly unadventurous start we are soon travelling at a pace, sure-footedly along the path of the author's Milky Way clusters of phenomenological observations. The readability of the book and its content are enough to commend it. For teacher education, Julius' maturely disciplined faculty of observation is a bonus.

World List of Rudolf Steiner Waldorf School Associations

The full list of schools, Kindergartens and training courses is available from each Association, containing addresses and other information for communication, such as phone, fax and e-mail where available. *Steiner Education* would be grateful to know of any changes to the addresses appearing below so that such changes can be incorporated into future issues, in which case, please inform the Secretary. We would also be grateful to know of the founding of new Associations. The Secretary's address is on the Inside Front Cover. Currently, there are more than 720 schools and 1200 Kindergartens worldwide.

Information in countries not listed below may be obtained direct from the Pedagogical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, Goetheanum, CH-4143 Dornach, Switzerland. Countries at present listed as having Waldorf schools but no Association are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Uruguay.

AUSTRALIA Association of Rudolf Steiner Schools in Australia, 213 Wonga Road, Waranwood, Victoria, Australia, 3134.

AUSTRIA Österreichische Vereinigung freier Bildungsstätten auf anthroposophischer Grundlage, Endresstrasse 100, A-1230 Wien.

BELGIUM Federatie van Rudolf Steinerscholen in Vlaanderen, Kasteellaan 54, B-9000 Gent.

CANADA Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, c/o David Alsop, 3911 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628, USA.

ONTARIO Waldorf School Association of Ontario, 9100 Bathurst Street, Thornhill, Ontario L4J 8CF, Canada.

DENMARK Sammenslutningen af Rudolf Steiner Skoler i Danmark, Strandvejen 102, DK-8000 Århus.

ESTONIA Eesti Waldorfkoolide Ühendus, 14 Koidula Tänav, EE2100, Rakvere, Estonia.

FINLAND Steinerpedagogiikan seura ry-Föreningen för Steinerpedagogik rf, c/o Lea Blafeld, Jyväskylän Rudolf Steiner-koulu, Honkaharjuntti 6, FIN 40600 Jyväskylä

FRANCE Fédération des Écoles Rudolf Steiner en France, 11 rue de Villaines, F-91370 Verrieres-le-Buisson.

GERMANY Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen e.V., D-70184 Stuttgart, Heidehofstrasse 32.

IRELAND Irish Steiner Waldorf Education Association, Raheen Rd., Tuamgraney, Co. Clare.

ITALY Associazione Amici Scuola, via Clerici 12, I-22030 Camnago Volta(COMO).

LATVIA Lettische Assoziation für Waldorfpädagogik, Pirmas iela 26a, Rīgas rajons, LV 2164.

LUXEMBOURG Veräin fir Waldorfpädagogik Lëtzebuerg, 45 Rue de l'Avenir, L 1147 Luxembourg.

NETHERLANDS Bond van Vrije Scholen, Hoofdstraat 20, NL-3972 LA Driebergen.

NEW ZEALAND Federation of Rudolf Steiner School, PO Box 888, Hastings, Hawke's Bay.

NORWAY Steinerskolene i Norge, Prof. Dahlsgt. 30, N-0260 Oslo.

ROMANIA Federatia Waldorf din Romania, Bd.Marasti nr.59, sector 1, RO-71331 Bucuresti.

SLOVENIA Drustvo prijateljev, waldorfke sole, Rodiceva 2, 61000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

SOUTH AFRICA Southern African Federation of Waldorf Schools, PO Box 67587, Bryanston, Transvaal, 2021 Johannesburg.

SWEDEN Waldorfskolefederationen, Fridhemsgata 17, S-12240 Stockholm, Sweden.

SWITZERLAND Koordinationstelle der Rudolf Steiner Schulen in der Schweiz, Robert Thomas, Carmenstrasse 49, CH-8032 Zürich.

UNITED KINGDOM Steiner Schools Fellowship, Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row, East Sussex RH18 5JA, GB.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, Chairman, 3911 Bannister Road, Fair Oaks, CA 95628.



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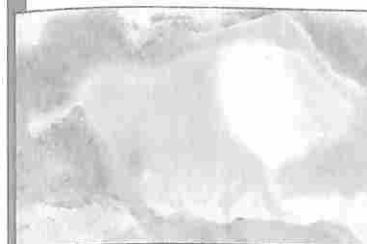
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