

## SECTION 3:

Dyslexic and non dyslexic writers explore creativity across science, art, dyslexia, education



# Inclusional Perspectives – Making Space For Creativity in Science

An illustrated talk by Alan Rayner for 'Cascade' conference, June 2001

Most fundamentally what this talk is about, in the context of this conference, is why patterns of thought that go beyond the limitations of rationality are so very important to us, particularly as we face a growing environmental crisis of our own making.

Over 25 years ago, I painted two pictures whose meaning wasn't fully clear to me at the time.

**Figure 1.** 'Tropical involvement' (oil painting on board, by Alan Rayner, 1972).



This painting, made in the exuberance following the completing of my final undergraduate examinations in natural sciences, depicts the dynamic complexity of living systems. A turbulent river rushes between rock-lined banks from fiery, tiger-striped sunset towards unexpected tranquility where it allows a daffodil to emerge from its shallows. A night-bird follows the stream past intricately interwoven forest towards darkness. A dragonfly luxuriates below a fruit-laden tree, bereft of leaves. Life is wild, wet and full of surprises.

**Figure 2.** 'Arid Confrontation' (oil painting on board by Alan Rayner, 1973).



This painting depicts the limitations of unempathic, analytical methodology. At the end of a long pilgrimage, access to life is barred from the objective stare by the rigidity of artificial boundaries. A sun composed of semicircle and triangles is caught between Euclidean straight lines and weeps sundrops into a canalized watercourse. Moonlight, transformed into penetrating shafts of fear, encroaches across the night sky above a plain of desolation. Life is withdrawn behind closed doors.

Evidently **something** was different between the way I *experienced* and responded to life as an *involved participant*, and the way I was *analytically enquiring* about life as a *detached observer*. And this difference affected both my understanding and my feelings, as expressed in these two paintings.

I must have felt unconsciously that there was **something** about purely analytical modes of enquiry that leaves us as *observer subjects*, strangely *abstracted* from what we *observe* as *objects*. This something somehow denies the very *possibility of creative relationship*, and so is capable of inflicting profound psychological, social and environmental damage. And I believe this **something** is still very much with us all today, contributing in no small way to the conflicts and divisions that continue to afflict our human qualities of life.

But, what was this **something**? Was it an *absence* or a *presence*? Was it **something** or **nothing**? Was something missing, or was I missing something because something else, some artificially imposed, unnatural barrier was present, getting in the way of my vision?

Today I would respond to these questions by suggesting that this **something** is deeply embedded in the process of *rationalistic abstraction* through which we separate ourselves and other things from the containing space or *context* that lies both within and beyond us. This process unrealistically asserts the **presence** of *fixed boundaries* or *reference frames* to demarcate the beginnings and endings of explicit substance and actions, whilst thereby treating *space* as an **absence**, outside these boundaries and so making no contribution to the way the world and universe work. All movement is reduced to the pure kinetics of explicit, independent things whose boundaries are treated as co-extensive with their material centres.

This rationalistic *abstraction*, upon which we have become so increasingly dependent in building our science and technology, not to mention our social and political philosophy, correspondingly causes us to *exclude* from consideration everything outside our immediate focus. Consequently, we are prone to ignore context, leaving us out of touch and undernourished in an intellectual and emotional desert of our own making. We regard life and the universe like a box of Lego blocks that can be sorted, assembled and disassembled at will. This box is a fixed Euclidian reference frame, set in empty Cartesian space and absolute time, in which independent objects collide, compete and stick together, but can't **truly** *relate* because their insides are *spatially isolated* within their outsides.

It all seems such an alluringly simple and logical story – the only uncertainties lie in the randomness of independent events, but we think that statistics and risk analyses based on probability theory, itself a derivation from rationalistic logic, can help us to account for those. Moreover, this alluring simplicity fits in extremely well with our predatory and discriminatory predisposition to single things out from their context. Analytical left brain hemisphere at the ready, eyes facing forward on the front of our faces, giving us binocular vision and depth of field but little or no view to side or rear, we are great *sorter-outers*. Herein lies our devotion to *quantification*, embedded in the *discreteness* of our number system and *units* of measurement as well as in *seemingly* great ideas like natural selection and genetic determinism.

But the story is a fiction, the simplicity an illusion because, as is obvious to everybody (even if many prefer to turn a blind eye to it) in reality no thing occurs in complete isolation. The discrete boundaries assumed or imposed by rational inquiry to keep things 'pure and simple', free from contaminating subjectivity and environmental noise, are artefacts. And these artefacts may actually complicate and ration our understanding by starving us of what we need to know. Real 'boundaries' are in fact dynamic interfaces, places of opportunity for reciprocal transformation between inter-communicating insides and outsides over nested scales from sub-atomic to universal. They are not fully discrete limits. Features arise dynamically, through the inductive coupling of explicit contents with their larger implicit context, which, like a hologram, can only be seen partially and in unique aspect from any one fixed viewpoint.

By the same token, we humans are as immersed in and inseparable from our living space as a whirlpool in a water flow: our every explicit action implicitly depends upon and reciprocally induces transformation of our environment. When I unfold my fingers, space-time reciprocally invaginates. Our environment becomes us as we become it – as much our inheritance as our genes. By taking self-centred action, regardless of context, we put that inheritance at risk and ultimately come into conflict with ourselves, driven on by the rationalism that continues to underpin much purely analytical science and legalistic thinking.

This brings me to the nub of my presentation: the need for a fundamental *re-orientation* in our thinking about the *nature* of space and its *vital participation* in all *creative, evolutionary processes*, from local to global and universal scales. Indeed, I think this re-orientation can give *real meaning* to the notion of *living space* and bring us, perhaps even return us, to more empathic relationships with one another, other life forms and our surroundings. It can be brought about by combining the scientist's analytical on *explicit* actualities with the artist's imaginative vision of *implicit possibilities* and the dyslexic's creative *facility* for *transposition*. In other words, it is what I think this conference is fundamentally all about. By *keeping a grip* at the same time as *loosening up*, we can *make dreams real* without either *getting stuck* or *becoming unhinged*.

So, what is space? Is it something or nothing, a presence or an absence? Does it *exist*?

Herein lies, for me, the tremendous potential latent in bringing art into science and science into art: that we can appreciate the reciprocal interdependence and consequent inseparability of implicit *contextual* space and the explicit *information* that gives heterogeneous expression to that space *in the form* of features. This is the aim of the philosophy of '*inclusionality*', currently being worked on by myself and others, whereby all things, our selves included, are viewed as dynamic contextual inclusions, no more separable from their containing space than are whirlpools from a water flow. In this view, insides are not sealed forever within the boundaries of outsides. Things are not physically discrete *bodies*, isolated by space, nor even are their outsides all interconnected by some explicit external web of material presence. Rather, they are *embodiments* of that implicit space which is not the physical absence that separates them, but rather the *labyrinth* of immaterial, non-resistive, inductive, super-conductive presence that intra-connects them by uniting their insides *through* gaps in their boundaries to their outsides.

To try to get some feel for what this means, try to imagine a world or universe with no space. Is there any *possibility* for movement or distinctiveness? Now try to imagine a world or universe of pure space. Is there *anything* there? For me, the conclusions from such imaginings are inescapable. Space is pure, implicit, insubstantial possibility, but for that possibility to be realized – expressed in distinctive, heterogeneous features – it has to be given shape, that is *in-formed*, by something explicit. Gregory Bateson alluded to this explicit something as 'the difference that makes a difference', *information*. But, by the same token, this information without contextual space is meaningless, makes no difference, has no possibility for independent expression.

Explicit information and implicit space are therefore both inseparable and dynamically co-creative. They make and are shaped by the other in the same way that the water in a river system,

makes, shapes and is shaped by the space through which it flows, as it erodes rock and deposits sediment. And the making of space makes possible a flow that makes more space – an ‘autocatalytic flow’ – as when people walking across a meadow create and consolidate an inductive path by following their leader.

This inclusional view of information as content in relation to spatial context contrasts with the discretely packaged informational units of rationalistic, binary (either/or) logic and digital computers. Inclusional information, far from being broken up into transmissible bits and pieces of pure machine code that need to be protected from contamination by ‘outside interference’ or ‘noise’, produces vibrant, flexible *language*. It *folds* into and around the space it relates to as a dynamic matter-energy-containing boundary that nests inner spaces within outer spaces across all scales from sub-atomic to universal. This boundary is not the fixed limit of particulate things – it does not *define* – but rather provides the *mediating surface* or *interface* through which inner and outer spaces reciprocally and simultaneously transform one another.

So, the Big Story of Life and the Universe is the ‘Hole Story’, not the ‘Whole Story’. To be dynamic, things are necessarily *incomplete*: they consist of informational holes – lined spaces – not wholes and parts complete, and so static, within themselves. These holes are inductive, attractive – they have pulling power: the beauty of a cathedral is in the space that its walls line, not in these walls alone. And the holes puncture the rationalist’s box that has held us like Schrödinger’s Cat in secure paradoxical bondage, longing to escape into the real world where inner space connects with outer. And, as I have hinted several times, if there is anything on earth that can find these holes and show them to us for what they are, we need not look for anything rare. We need only to regard that overlooked, taken for granted *commonplace* – water, the dynamic contextual medium without which the genetic code of DNA could not be translated into the informational surface that co-creates the diversity of life itself.

I recently tried to express these thoughts in a painting entitled ‘Future Present’ and a painting-poem, ‘The Hole in the Mole’.

The gift of life lies in the creative infancy of the present, whence its message from past to future is relayed through watery channels that spill out and recombine outside the box, re-iterating and amplifying patterns over scales from microscopic to universal.



**Figure 4.** 'The hole in the Mole' (oil painting on canvas and poem by Alan Rayner, 2001)

I **AM** the hole  
That **lives** in a mole  
That induces the mole  
To dig the hole  
That moves the mole  
Through the **earth**  
That forms a **hill**  
That becomes a **mountain**  
That reaches to **sky**  
That connects with **stars**  
And brings the **rain**  
That the **mountain** **collects**  
Into **streams** and **rivers**  
That **moisten** the **earth**  
That grows the **grass**  
That freshens the **air**  
That condenses to **rain**  
That carries the **water**  
That brings the mole  
To **Life**

To resume, we are not complete and separate but become our living space as it becomes us. By taking care of this space, and 'others' within it, we care for ourselves; ignore it, and we neglect and ultimately conflict with our selves. Informed by science, made imaginatively aware by art, perhaps we can learn to care more, attune to our nature and realize the true creative possibilities of human kind.

In this spirit, I'd like to end with an opening, a painting I made in the last months of 1999, entitled 'Opening Endings'.

Figure 5. 'Opening Endings' (oil painting on canvas by Alan Rayner)

An elm tree's demise, its wing-barked boundaries opened by ravages of bark beetle and fungus, makes way for new life to fill its space. Maple leaves take over the canopy between earth and sky, but their coverage is only partial, leaving openings for arriving and departing flights of woodpeckers. Fungal decay softens the wood to allow the tunnelling of long-horn beetle larvae and probing and chiselling of beak-endings. A nest cavity provides a feeding station between egg and air.



# Imagination

Paper presented to Cascade conference,  
University of Bath, 1st July 2001.

Dr Guy Saunders, University of the West of England

Note: An overhead of Howard Hodgkin's painting *Rain* (1984-89) in Tate Modern collection was shown at the beginning of the presentation. The talk included video and image which are described within this paper.

The background for this paper is certainly the work I did for my PhD here at Bath that was completed in 1999. I looked at the experience of different kinds of confinement as a way of working on the use of imagination. This meant reading from the 'genre' of captivity – writings by former political prisoners and hostages – and conducting a series of interviews. The interest stemmed from training in the arts – I started a fine art degree in sculpture at St. Martin's School of Art in the 1970s. Art was the only thing I could do – at least according to the authorities at my school. It was much later, and without a direct route, that I got interested in science and particularly psychology. And this is what caused the first disjunction: why were the arts and humanities so absent from a psychology curriculum? From that, why were the so-called Two Cultures still so called? Where imagination was concerned, what was so different about artists and scientists going about their business? I could only dabble with these during that time; since then, I'm still dabbling, but the questions and issues are getting clearer. Many academics seem to baulk at the idea of a resemblance regarding what constitutes creativity. As words mean what I choose them to mean, neither more nor less, I take creativity to mean 'bringing into existence'. I use imagining to stand for both the moves we make and the moment of apprehension. So we talk about coming up with something with no idea how the coming up with something comes; this is true for artists as well as scientists. Let's have a look:

Firstly, this is Andrew Wiles, a mathematician, who spent seven years solving Fermat's Last Theorem. It isn't important what that is; I don't understand it either. Rather, listen to his comments and watch the way the scenario is put together.

Description of film clip:

**[House exterior. Zoom in on attic window]**

**Narrator:** *Andrew abandoned his other research. He cut himself off from the rest of the world and for the next seven years he concentrated solely on his childhood passion.*

**[Interior. Andrew Wiles at his desk in attic study room. He is writing mathematics with pen on paper]**

**Wiles [voiceover]:** *I never use a computer. I sometimes might scribble. I do doodles. I start trying to find patterns really. So I'm doing calculations which try to explain*

*some little piece of mathematics. And I'm trying to fit it in with some previous broad conceptual understanding of some branch of mathematics. [to camera] Sometimes that will involve going and looking up in a book to see how it's done there. Sometimes it's a question of modifying things a bit. Sometimes doing a little extra calculation and sometimes you realise that nothing that's ever been done before is any use at all. You just have to find something completely new. And it's a mystery where it comes from.*

*[End of clip]*

*(Singh 1987)*

Now the second clip is of Howard Hodgkin, a painter, who often spends many years working on a piece (the one I put up on the overhead at the beginning took from 1984 to 1989). Again listen to his comments.

Description of film clip:

*[Talking heads – Two Shot – Howard Hodgkin left screen cuts to Melvyn Bragg right screen and back]*

**BRAGG:** *When you're doing a painting, what do you think when you're looking at that board? Are you doing something that you want to make this thing last?*

**HODGKIN:** *Yes. I'm often taking an emotion, perhaps .. My reply would be surrounded by .. Have to be very careful here. I'm wanting really to make something that will last as long as possible, but I'm trying to take a very transient emotion very often – a split second even – and turn it into something that will stay there.*

**BRAGG:** *Is what it starts as a sort of pulse in your mind or a picture inside your mind or a feeling inside (next utterance overlaps here)*

**HODGKIN:** *Oh, if only it was a picture inside my mind. No. It starts as a feeling. It starts as something and then it gradually accretes and things get stuck to it.*

**BRAGG:** *I find it extraordinary to try to imagine someone having a sensation, a feeling, and then turning it into painting. It is easy for people educated like I was to attempt to turn it into words, but this transferring of sensation into paint which is a process which, which .. I can understand your words 'lonely' and I can understand your words 'isolated'. I think the strain of trying to get there. You must always be feeling how do I do it?*

**HODGKIN:** *I'm always feeling that and of course I don't know how. And when I finish a painting I'm absolutely astonished. And that increases with age. I'm more surprised by my work now than I used to be.*

*[End of clip]*

*(Bragg 1991)*

So, Point 1:

We press ink to paper (key text onto a screen) in much the same way as a painter applies paint to canvas to make paintings. What is being flagged up here is the notion that texts are as much created as paintings. There are different languages, yes, but they are languages. And this is one of the problems. We treat scientific written language as if it is a ready-made allowing correspondences and representations with a real world, when, I would argue, written language is

always under construction. And this is one of the problems. Being conventional is only given high status in this particular, science-reporting linguistic form. Why? Andrew Wiles has to come up with original mathematics to come up with something that will solve his theorem. Howard Hodgkin has to come up with original use of colour to come up with something in his linguistic media. It is quite conceivable to have a perfectly constructed use of English, yet have nothing to say. In neither case does it make sense to have an over-concentration on what is going on in the head of the individual. Wiles is crafting on paper or blackboard; Hodgkin on board. Neither can say how they came up with their ideas. Each has offered, because asked, an alternative linguistic account – in spoken form – which is a further and different linguistic production. The two kinds do not ‘say’ the same thing. We are always doing more than copying. A representation doesn’t exist in the head of an individual. If only it were that easy. Nor does this entail that the process is mysterious – it may be mysterious – the idea here is to highlight that texts are not of a different status from other works. All science that is communicated is artisanship. Note: this is not saying that scientific principles aren’t at play in the universe; rather, that as soon as they are articulated, they belong with all other productions that come about because of the human condition.

*Point 2:*

The emphasis is on usage not on outcome. We use ourselves that is what we do. The sociologist Julie Ford suggested that ‘it is only because we use our bodies and brains the way we do that the world appears to us the way it does’ (Ford, undated). Here usage is often about play, playing and being playful. Some people doodle, some sketch, some like the author Boris Pasternak write their diary as a way of what he described as ‘limbering up’ before engaging with his latest novel. [Aside: There is a paradox here of course – a creative act is always supposed to be something that has no preparation; yet everyone seems to have their ritual, superstition or, as I would prefer, what Charles Sanders Peirce referred to as Pure Play. He described it as ‘a communion between self and self’ with ‘no rules except this very law of liberty’ (Eco and Sebeok 1988: 27, 26). He hoped to educe an ‘*esperable uberty*’ (1) – a drawing out of a hoped for fruitfulness from the play of musement. End of aside.] This is what Hodgkin refers to as a moment or feeling or sensation, transient, momentary – perhaps only a split second. Hodgkin, because he is a painter, paints – ‘It’s the only thing I could do.’ The ‘accretion’ of what he does may eventually stand as a painting, in its own right, and in some way stand (in) for that moment in painterly terms.

*Point 3:*

There is one other insight here and that is the importance of an audience. The painting is only a painting when it is viewed, firstly it is viewed as finished by the artist and then it can continue, without the artist, to be viewed by others. Science as public domain, as crafted public work in an article or a paper, becomes an artefact that can be read or heard by others. Whether what is read or viewed is acknowledged is less important than the fact of the presence of allusions in all artefacts. Hodgkin remarks that it would be impossible to think of Rothko’s work without that of Turner. He suggests that Rothko may never have seen Turner, but in some way all artists are part of the continuum of art and draw from it. Wiles remarks on the importance to his solution of the serendipitous ‘casual’ reading of an article that happened to be open on his desk. Dialogue or joint action or articulation (which means ‘to form joint with’) works because it takes place between

people. The audience does not have to be present; they can be imagined. Jimmy McGovern (the writer/creator of the television programme 'Cracker') was asked what he wanted as a luxury to take to a desert island and he requested paper and pen. Why, asked the interviewer, when nobody will be able to read it? He commented that all writers write with an audience in mind even if there is no possibility of an actual audience in fact. The research I did with former hostages and political prisoners very strongly attests to this. Many writers get locked up, partly because they are writers, yet they continue to write even though they have no idea if, when or how their captivity will end. They often become their own audience becoming polyphonic rather than dissociated. Neither art, nor science nor literature is separate from society no matter what kind of isolation or confinement.

#### *Concluding Cadenza:*

It was only after looking again at *Ulysses* that I read the notes on Joyce's use of *nacheinander* and *nebeneinander*. The two German words are apparently an allusion to the work of Gotthold Lessing and give the sense of something allotropic, meaning that of two things going on simultaneously. *Nacheinander* translates as 'one after another' and for Lessing refers to the sense of a linear narrative prevalent in writing that uses the before, during and after construction of time. *Nebeneinander* means 'one next to another' and refers to the sense of construction found in painting and sculpture where aspects are juxtaposed in spatial relation to one another (Joyce 1922: 37 & 784). Both are always at play; it's just the emphases that change. Sometimes the juxtapositioning creates surprises.

Magritte was preoccupied by the taken-for-granted real. He made a series of paintings designed to sabotage our sense of the familiar. The painting *L'Usage de Parole 1* (The Use of Words 1) is well known and highlights the problem of the really real and the conventionally real. The realist image of the pipe, painted using all the tricks that fool the eye into seeing a three dimensional image, is placed with the painted words 'This is not a pipe'. We would expect the word 'Pipe' to be written, just as learning cards are used in schools that show a picture of an apple and the word 'apple'. In overthrowing our sense of the familiar, Magritte drew attention to the way conventions in painting make the work appear as it does. The idea of a faithful copy is disputed; art became an exercise not in copying the world but rather in constructing it. By making our seeing habits obvious, classically seen world is imagined and how it could be imagined differently.

Apprehension seems to require collapsing this paradox or ambiguity; improvisation, imagination, creativity seem to call for being moved and not blocking the movement.

As Einstein, a dyslexic I believe, said, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world ...'.

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# Towards a Rapprochement between Artists and Educators

Ketaki Kushari Dyson

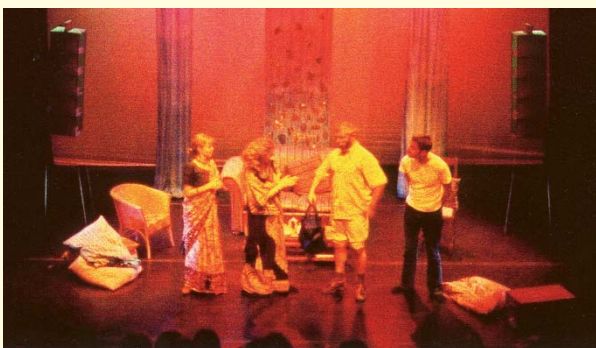
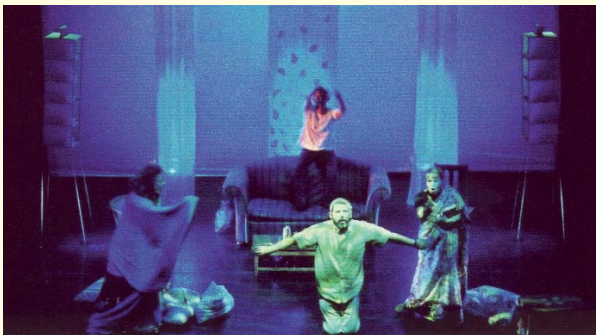
I am delighted that I have been asked to contribute a short piece on my play *Night's Sunlight* to this collection of papers. Written originally in Bengali in 1990, this play was premièred at Manchester City of Drama 1994 by a visiting theatre group from Calcutta, with a 'simultaneous interpretation' in English relayed through headphones to those who wanted it. In 1997 I made a proper translation of the play into English, and in 2000 this English version was produced under the auspices of the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia as a Millennium Festival project, with an Arts Council grant from lottery money. Considering the constraints presented by a small budget, a long and complex cross-cultural play, and limited rehearsal time, it was a splendid and spirited production, directed by Gail Rosier of Henley-on-Thames. The English production itself was cross-cultural, as a white cast acted the Bengali roles. Bath was not one of the cities and towns we were able to visit in 2000, and I regretted this, as I had a friend there who had shown interest in the idea.

That friend was Morag Kiziewicz, who already knew me as a poet and translator. After the play's Millennium tour was over, we met again at a poetry festival, where she bought the English version of the play. Morag was the prime mover in bringing *Night's Sunlight* to the Cascade Conference at Bath University in the summer of 2001.

The presentation at this conference was a 'rehearsed reading', with lighting, props, music, and costumes as in the original production, with as much physical movement as possible, but allowing the cast to retain their scripts, inasmuch as actors cannot remember the lines of a long play after a gap. To re-memorize their lines, they would have needed a longer period of rehearsal, which would have needed more funding. We had trepidations as to how it would go, but as it turned out, it went very well. The only pity was that more conference delegates did not turn up at the performance – why didn't they? – and that it being outside of term-time, the students of Bath University were absent.

Morag told me that the 'rehearsed reading' mode was in a way more interesting for the conference because it was more educative: it revealed the 'internal works' of the performing process, making it abundantly clear how much effort actors actually have to pack into the enactment of a lengthy word-rich dramatic work. For a full performance they have to learn their lines *and* their gestures, expressions, movements, and work together as a team, inclusive of the music and lighting assistants. Actors usually have to work for a pittance, and very few can make a proper living out of acting in serious plays. All the more reason why, when they are making a heroic effort on the





stage to make things come alive, they deserve the rewarding presence of more viewers. Those in the paid employment of institutions could perhaps show an awareness of this?

The attempt to make one of my Bengali works accessible in the country where I have made my permanent home since the sixties, and of which I am a fully paid up citizen, was the outcome of an urge which I believe is natural to creative artists. When we create a work of art, we want to share it with others. The creation itself is not a solipsistic act. I may be sitting alone, pen in hand, or fingers poised over a tap-tapping typewriter, or facing a computer screen, but what I write will be shaped as much by me as by a host of other agents, visible and invisible. I am myself a child of the world I inhabit, but not a passive child, for to some extent I create my world too. For instance, in my case, the moment I decided that I would carry on some of my writing in Bengali even though I was settling in England, I created a special world for myself, in which, in addition to everything else all writers must do to keep developing, I had to maintain extra filaments of connections and communications across thousands of miles in order to remain a publishable and published writer in my mother tongue. I have to keep pace with my language's changes, for nothing stays still. The social and cultural universe of the language is evolving all the time. I am myself contributing to those changes by my own writings. I have to maintain contact with distant audiences, be able to say something meaningful to them, bring to them some of my experiences garnered in this country. All this is in addition to persuading native English-speakers that I could be an interesting writer, that given suitable opportunities, I could make a contribution to the cultural life of this country too. This process usually

involves overcoming prejudices, because generally speaking, over here writing in an Asian language tends to lower an author's status, even if that person also writes in English.<sup>1</sup>

The product which I call my work – in either of my two writing languages – and over which I strive to exercise copyright, comes into being as an offspring of myself and my world with all its dazzling complexities and maddening inconsistencies, as a result of the dynamic interaction between the two. My daily Western world goes into my Bengali writing, and my 'submerged' Indian world swims into my English writing. Having conjured this new thing up, on which I fancy I have stamped a seal of myself, I immediately long to share it with others, to give it back to where it really belongs: the world which had played its own part in this generative act.

It is an urge to extend the frontiers of a limited self, and can probably be subsumed under a broad band of spiritual urges which prompt us to confront our mortality and do what we can to balance it. We create children; we make peace with this world, which brought us forth and will reclaim us in death, or with the concept of a deity. 'Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's self and beauty's giver' – wrote an English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins in 1882.<sup>2</sup> In 1937, a Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, wrote lines to his past which I have myself translated thus:

Companion at my back, tear the bindings of dreams;  
and those treasures of suffering, tinted futilities of desires,  
which you have snatched and guarded from death's grasp –  
give them back to death.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier in his career, in 1892, Tagore had written a wonderful poem set in riverine East Bengal, which has become a classic in Bengali. In it a golden harvest of rice, stacked up on the brink of a rain-swollen river, is carried away by a mysterious stranger who comes singing a song, sailing in a boat, which has room for the rice but not for the peasant who had produced it. A kaleidoscope of interpretations has been bestowed on the poem; my favourite is the one that sees the story as a metaphor for an artist's fate. In some ways an artist is like such a tiller of the soil, who offers his work, produced in conjunction with nature, to an unknown recipient, knowing that this way at least his work will be safe, though he himself will perish. Standing, as it were, on the edge of a monsoon-swollen oceanic river, we artists scan the horizon for the appearance of mysterious, ambiguous strangers who might be persuaded to take our harvest on board, even though we ourselves might be left stranded on an unsteady ground, surrounded by swirling waters.<sup>4</sup>

Well, it is especially lonely to be an author in diaspora, not knowing how to share one's work with the immediate community in which one's lot is cast, uncertain of the welcome one will receive. The recent successes of Indian authors in this country have been mainly in the field of the novel, and only for those writing in English. The 'Indian English novel' has been made into something of a cult genre, disjointed from the rest of contemporary writing in the Indian languages, given an identity and claimed on behalf of Western readers by the media and the academia, and packaged as a saleable commodity by the West's publishing industry. Poets and dramatists of Indian origin,

even if writing in English, have not been brought into the British mainstream in the same way. And generating intelligent interest in Indian-language writing remains a difficult task, notwithstanding the slight advances in multiculturalism that have taken place in very recent years. The reluctance of people to take seriously a play translated from Bengali was quite noticeable. Wherever we went, we had small audiences only, and schools were regrettably the worst in persuading pupils and teachers to attend. As all our shows had to be one-off events in the venues concerned, there was no way we could lure the absentees back to the next show, as it were.

One of my main aims in translating *Night's Sunlight* into English was to show that this play set in a British Bengali living-room was born of twin cultural matrices and could be claimed as much by speakers of English as by speakers of Bengali. Those who were persuaded that it could be interesting in spite of its origins in another language, or *especially interesting* because of it, did, I think, see my point. Because the immediate setting was familiar enough, and yet the language in which the vision originated was different, they could view the world through a somewhat different window, and found it rewarding. Reviews and other feedback which we pasted on the play's website testify to that. Released into English, the play could touch speakers of other languages too: amongst them were individuals with roots in Slovakia, Hungary, Iran, Pakistan, Brazil, Germany, and Belgium. They all felt that the play had pertinent messages for us and our times, across national frontiers.

In our times of mass culture, artists are facing an uphill struggle in fulfilling their roles as educators. I myself believe that artists do have a role to play in society as educators and am always looking for opportunities to break down the barriers between the academic/pedagogic and artistic/creative domains. In the first half of the twentieth century a poet like Rabindranath Tagore could found his own school, university, and institute of rural reconstruction to fulfil his dreams in this respect, and his example inspired Leonard Elmhirst's experiments at Dartington. As the twentieth century progressed, however, the scenario changed substantially. The concept of authorship was declared untrustworthy if not outright dead. Unwilling to grant status to creative writers, critics dug trenches where they carried on their post-mortem of works of art. With this 'trahison des clercs', the business of culture became an adjunct to a vast, globalized entertainment industry serviced by modern technology. Serious drama fell into the same predicament as poetry, because it could not be readily converted into market-driven mass entertainment.

Pick up any theatre brochure and start to scan its pages. You will soon find that the buzz-word in theatrical publicity is 'funny'. It is as if every play must be sold as 'funny', or it will not sell at all. One of these days I may chance upon a brochure which advertises *King Lear* or *Oedipus Rex* as 'funny' too.

Certain sectors of the commercial film and television industry have cast their long shadows on the entire world of dramatic art. Audiences fed continuously on sit-coms, soaps, and movies portraying violent crimes and scenes of war and torture, policemen and detectives, robbers and gangsters, soon lose their ability to appreciate the nuances of serious drama. And now that Bollywood is extending its long arms to this country, in future any drama that pretends to have Indian roots may be expected to show some family resemblance to entertainment stemming from



that gigantic industry! A play like *Night's Sunlight* came into being because its first birth was in Bengali, and it could be staged by actors from Calcutta's non-commercial 'group theatre' movement, who keep experimental theatre alive. It could later happen in English because the Director of a key institution like the British Centre for Literary Translation took an interest in the translated text and

was able to obtain Arts Council funding for its production. It is this chain of events which opened for it the possibility of becoming an educational tool in this country.

If we wish to steer ourselves away from the highway where culture is an adjunct of commerce, those who believe in the educative value of art have to come together. I believe we could shape things better with more adroit co-operation. It is individuals with vision who can kick-start new cultural and pedagogic processes. *Night's Sunlight* is already being taught at the University of Wales Swansea, where the English production had been premièred in the campus theatre as a part of the Writing Diasporas Conference. The play had such an impact on one teacher from the English Department, Ann Heilmann, that she sat up all night incorporating it into a course on 'post-colonial feminist' writers which she taught. In November 2002 I went to meet the students who were studying it that year, and met others too, teachers and research students. I was given a warm welcome. I talked about my background, my other work, my struggles as a diasporic writer, why I translated the play. I read some of my poetry. I answered questions. It was a valuable exchange of ideas. One student who had studied the play in 2000 and is now doing her MA at Cardiff came to Swansea to hear me. A research student of Mexican-American origin claims to have become my fan and has sent a copy of the play to her mother.

So this is a cascading effect springing from a) the original decision of the Director of the British Centre for Literary Translation to push for the production of the translated play, b) the decision of the convenors of the Writing Diasporas Conference to stage the play at the campus theatre in Swansea, and c) the subsequent decision of one individual in the English Department there to go ahead and teach the text. Guided by a discerning teacher, thanks to her infectious enthusiasm, students had come to appreciate the slightly different cultural provenance of the text and had become receptive to my other work. Suddenly I had come alive to them as a real contemporary author living and working in Britain. I was no longer a marginal and muted figure: they could hear my voice!

The interest and active participation of the teacher is a crucial factor. If a few more teachers were to adopt the play in courses they taught, the news about the existence of such a play might spread,

the interest generated by the play could then be used as an entry-point to introduce some of my other work, and thus I might be able to reach a wider audience in this country. That would lessen my sense of isolation in Britain. I might begin to feel that after all these years I did have a community in Britain to which I belonged!

As is evident from the events outlined above, certain academics are helping: without their help I would not have even got to this point. I was interviewed by another academic, Gabriele Griffin – now at Hull University – who saw the play at Swansea, and a reference to it may turn up in her next book! There is already a reaction amongst teachers against the trends that consigned authors to the rubbish heap. Some of them are interested in making the teaching of literature lively and down-to-earth once more, freed from the burden of excessive jargon. The task now is to build on these new beginnings.

As those who have copies of *Night's Sunlight* know, I wrote a long Preface to it, calling it the Translator's Prologue, in which I covered, amongst other things, issues such as diasporic authorship, bilingual writing, the role of translation as a tool of inter-cultural communication, the comparative receptions of Indian writing in English and of Indian writing translated from the indigenous Indian languages, the quarrel between those who value drama as literature and those who value it only as performance. The few who have read this Preface swear by it and say that it should be compulsory reading for all academics teaching 'post-colonial literature'. I would say an 'Amen' to that, but when one is outside institutions, it is hard work persuading people within them, so I need more allies from within the citadels!

The rich irony in all this is that I was trained for an academic career myself, but discrimination on grounds of race, gender, and marital status in the Britain of the sixties, seventies, and eighties saw to it that I could not put my foot in the door. If I was within the edifice, as it were, I could have worked towards the rapprochement of art and education from within, but as things are, I must struggle valiantly from without!

The Cascade performance enabled me to reach a new set of people. Those who watched it witnessed the power that words can have on the stage. This power can be harnessed for education. A handful of people at Bath University appreciated the play's educational potential at once. Alan Rayner saw in it the spirit of 'Inclusionality' and brought me into his e-mail sharing-circle. He has been keen that the play should be adopted as a teaching text and has commented on the importance of its messages in the current world. Jack Whitehead recommended a production which could lead to the making of a DVD, which would enhance the play's value as an educational tool and widen its audience. We still have copies of the play-text that were printed to accompany the Millennium production, but our limited funding did not enable us to make a high-quality video recording. It would be a boon to redress this so that the text and a DVD could together become a compact teaching kit for classrooms and workshops.

This is a play in which ideas are important, a play to make people sit up and think. Many core issues of our times are aired and thrashed in it. It asks us to see that there are no hard boundaries

between our Self and the Other. The scope of inter-disciplinary discussion around the play is substantial. In 2000 our best workshop was at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford. A few friends who have not seen a performance, but have only read the play, have noted its power as a text. Among them is the poet and critic Anne Stevenson. To read a play-text and see it in the head requires some training: in the past we used to be trained to do that in our literature courses. A sterile quarrel between 'page and stage' has set in since those days. A word-rich play is automatically literature, but when enacted on the stage, with all the razzle-dazzle of theatre, the discourses release passionate, powerful energies which audiences can take home with them and which can feed their thoughts and emotions. This is what does happen when people see my play. I have been assured by quite a few people that watching it has been a transformative and educative experience for them. They have gone home and talked late into the night about the issues raised by it.

I therefore hope that working through education, it might be possible to bring this play to the attention of a wider audience. The play was actually given a very positive review in the journal *Writing In Education*, but there has been no query in the nature of a follow-up from that, because, I suspect, where so many people are chasing their dreams, an individual has to take a personal interest for anything to happen. A DVD would undoubtedly be an asset in a teaching situation, and – if a project to make it – in the spirit of a partnership between art and education – could indeed come about. I would be thrilled.

<sup>1</sup> See my paper 'Forging a Bilingual Identity: A Writer's Testimony', in Burton, Ardener, and Dyson, editors, *Bilingual Women: Anthropological Approaches to Second-Language Use*, Berg, Oxford and Providence, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkins, 'The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo', quoted from *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by W. H. Gardner, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1961 reprint.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from *I Won't Let You Go: Selected Poems* of Rabindranath Tagore, translated by Dyson, Bloodaxe Books, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> An English version of this poem, 'The Golden Boat', may be found in the *Selected Poems* of Rabindranath Tagore, translated by William Radice, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1985.

# Poetry, Language, Dyslexia

Morag Kiziewicz

## Introduction

This chapter draws on the workshop of the same title that was held at the Cascade conference and suggests that we may be doing dyslexic people an injustice by focusing on dyslexic difficulties rather than strengths. Dyslexia is often seen as primarily an issue of having a difficulty with words. Is “difficulty with words” (the meaning of the word “dys-lexia” ) an accurate description for dyslexia? Many dyslexic people are highly able verbally. Although it may take a dyslexic person a long time to reply to a question the answer will often be comprehensive and insightful, and they may come up with remarkable spoken summation that if asked they are unable to instantly recall or repeat.

Dyslexic children in schools often self select or are guided away from subject areas that are primarily of a written and reading focus. This is due to the perceived difficulty with words and the feedback they receive on their written work, and the result is dyslexic career choices that do not reflect the individual’s true nature and ability. Our education system, even our computer spell and grammar checkers, in being predicated on spelling and linear structures, are marginalizing the true literacy and poetry of our language and of our dyslexic students.

In 2001 a group of winners in a National Poetry competition were announced, and it was subsequently discovered that all of them were dyslexic. Could this be an accident, coincidence or possibly even related to a specific dyslexic ability with words? If so, what is the nature of this ability and how can we ensure we foster creative writing skills in the same way that we seek to foster other abilities?

## Poetry and Dyslexia

The relationship between dyslexia and poetry is relatively well documented. Among the best known dyslexic poets W.B.Yeats stands tall. William Butler Yeats (1865 - 1939) described being “banished by the world and banishing the world”. His poem “Among School-children” written with himself in the role of elderly Irish School inspector, is an indictment on the school system of the day and enlighteningly suggestive of the dyslexic school experience as described by so many dyslexic adults now

*"I dream of a Ledaen body, bent  
Above a sinking fire. A tale that she  
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event  
That changed some childish day to tragedy - "*

"W.B Yeats is a world-renowned poet. He wrote many famous poems such as 'Among School-children' and 'No Second Try'. He also won the Nobel Prize in poetry. He is highly respected among the poets of today. He is world famous in all eyes. However, Yeats was actually dyslexic. When he was a child, he did so poorly in school that his father decided to teach him at home." (Good Schools Guide). Perhaps his father's choice is what enabled William Butler to rise above the difficulties he encountered and to find words to describe the indistinguishable boundaries associated with joy at the end of the same poem:

*Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul.  
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil  
O Chestnut tree great rooted blossomer,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?*

Critics describe the period that Yeats was writing in as one of transformation, Arnold Toynbee talks of poetry addressing "the schism in the soul". Yeats, founder member of "the Rhyming Club" said he aimed to "articulate emotion which had no relation to any public intent".

In the poem, Lapis Lazuli, he associates war with negative cynicism and identifies the need to have a positive approach to life with the resulting ability to recover and take the long view. He describes the decimation of cultures and in this poem he engages with the image carved in lapis lazuli by a chinese craftsman from an ancient civilisation. In the final stanza he takes us into the carving and beyond to the mountain view where it was made and brings the characters to life, we can feel we are moving through the space time boundaries into a continuum, a time shift.

*Every discoloration of the storm,  
Every accidental crack or dent,  
Seems a water course or an avalanche  
Or lofty slope where it still snows  
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch  
Sweetens the little half-way house  
There three men climb towards, and I  
Delight to imagine them seated there,*

*There, on the mountain and the sky  
On all the tragic scenes they stare  
One asks for mournful melodies  
Accomplished fingers begin to play.  
Their eyes mind many worlds, their eyes,  
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.*

Son of a painter and poet, home educated after his difficult school experiences, W.B. clearly had the kind of visual mind and holistic imagination that we tend to expect from dyslexic people and in his poems there seems to be no difficulty with words.

### Spoken versus written language

The debate between the spoken and written language is older even than Plato and Socrates, yet it is curiously pertinent to our understanding of dyslexia today. This dyslexic ability with words in poetry describes an undertow, yet the written structure that achieves this is one that would probably be covered in red and green lines in a computer grammar check or by the marking of a handwritten essay. The structure of writing words in our expected styles, such as an essay, appears to be a linear aptitude. However this only describes the ABC of spelling and not the whole richness of vocabulary and literature that Yeats and Shakespeare display and that is evident in story telling rather than reading. The way we hear sound, rhythm and cadence is vital. Poetry only comes truly alive when it is spoken, for example throughout W.S.Graham's *The Nightfishing* the sound and rhythm are hypnotic and we can hear the gulls, the waves, the bell, and sense the movement of the sea and the impact on the mind. In stanza 7 for example:

*Far out, faintly rocked,  
Struck the sea bell.*

*Home becomes this place,  
A bitter night, ill  
To labour at dead of.  
Within all the dead of  
All my life I hear  
My name spoken out  
On the break of the surf.  
I, in Time's grace,  
The grace of change, am  
Cast into memory.  
What a restless grace  
To trace stillness on.*

The deeper rhythms and layers and elements of the poem become both clearer and more profound when the rhythm of the poem is heard rather than read, and the flow of the stanzas describe the elements of the changing sea and emotions,

*O my love, keep the day  
Leaned at rest, leaned at rest.*

*What one place remains  
Home as darkness quickens?*

## Language structure and neurology

Holistic vision and strange or unusual juxtaposition of words are acceptable in written poetry if not in grammar, and often bring a third dimension to the meaning. The structure of language can be linear or holistic, however we do not teach the holistic aspects, preferring to concentrate on spelling, grammar and 'literacy' in the most linear meaning of the term. Melanie Phillips took a teacher to task in her book 'All Must Have Prizes', describing in very negative terms how the teacher had marked a child correct for writing 'medfords' and 'smiles' when the correct answer was metaphors and similes. The accuracy of this assessment depends on the assessment criteria, if the criteria was solely spelling, then yes this answer was incorrect. However if the criteria was understanding, then clearly the child understood the answer to which the question referred and to mark her wrong in such a case is "a harsh reproof" and does not improve the child's understanding - she will not know where she went "wrong".

The development of the English language has many of its roots in Latin. It is interesting to note the root of the word right, comes from the Sanskrit 'rta' meaning whole, complete. This has generally been taken to refer to the right hand, however given our contemporary understanding of neurology we can now understand rta, right to mean right brain, whole. Complete. Right brain, left hand is a fluid holistic three dimensional understanding, and many dyslexic people are right brain dominant. There is a traditional fear of the left with its apparent chaos, random, serendipitous connections, "my right hand doesn't know what my left is doing". This is a fear of the breaking down of barriers, control mechanisms, and boundaries, and is interestingly applied to the left hand (right brain holistic abilities) rather than to the right hand (left brain linear function). We understood that the left brain gave us strengths such as organizational, linear and martial skills which led to global dominance. We have relatively recently allowed people to write with their left hand, and this is still sometimes regarded with suspicion, one (erroneous) study even suggesting that left handed people die younger! Many dyslexic people, but by no means all, are left handed.

We seek control and the ordered structure that the left brain and right hand give us. We call this objective, although all our so-called "objective" discourse is informed by the subjective and by our

lived experience. In so doing we lose an escape route for the inner quiet unheard voice. Rage, and joy, fear and love are expressed through poetry, the subjective is heard through poetry, but not usually in academic writing. This is why dyslexic people find academic writing such a trial.

The objective outer voice was until recently the only voice heard in academic writing, for example my Masters Degree required that any sentence with “I” in it be changed to the objective by using instead the term “one”. Academic writing requires an organised structure : a beginning, a middle, an end. Compare this to poetry, starting in the middle, going who knows where, looping back on itself. Strange punctuation too, line breaks, commas in unexpected places, drawing breath.

Andrew Shelley’s review of John James’ *A Tongue Not Distanced From the Feeling Brain* describes this:

*“James’ language is such a skin or sail that both resists yet gives in order to steer a course, draw a line, that of the ‘level trace’. This may be true of all poetic language, yet it is especially true of James’ ‘wet skin’ ‘skin as damp as steam’.*

Perhaps now we are beginning to understand the essential aspects of emotional intelligence and the importance of the subjective in the lived experience, we will begin to encourage the holistic to flourish once more.

## Living Language and Whole Writing

Language is live and vibrant and changing all the time. Mobile phone technology has changed our “text language” and there have been poetry competitions in this abbreviated word form. There is evidence for new languages in computer speak:

*“I also used speak fluent Z80, 68000 and x86 assembly, but I’ve been out of practise for a while. I got out of x86 before I learned about GDTs and LDTs and that sort of stuff - I come from the era of fitting it all into a 64K block and LIKING it that way”.*

*“There is no “Word version” of these texts. Really. You can grab the HTML version and load it into Word if you want the fancy-shmancy headers, but it’s exactly the same content.”*  
Waider

Charles Bernstein suggests:

*“The reinvention, the making of a poetry for our time, is the only thing that makes poetry matter. And that means, literally, making poetry matter, that is making poetry that intensifies the matter or materiality of poetry—acoustic, visual, syntactic, semantic. Poetry is very much alive when it finds ways of doing things in a media-saturated environment that only poetry can do, but very much dead when it just retreads the same old same old.”*

Editing of dyslexic work becomes a process of knitting, a continuum of threads. How every dyslexic hates the editor or learning support tutor who in making suggestions for restructuring their writing appears to “attack” their garment, a thread pulled here a word cut there and the whole thing unravels before their eyes! Dyslexic people often enjoy the physicality of writing and will have many drafts which are written on and pasted up and physically sculpted before reaching the final work.

There is academic discussion in Higher Education, particularly in the art world regarding alternative format to written material, particularly the dissertation, to give access to dyslexic and disabled people. And projects exploring ways of assessment, such as choice for several assessment methods.

There is certainly hope that in the future we will embrace dyslexic literacy skills by avoiding making too quick assumptions about the nature of “difficulty with words”. There is also concern that while most of the research and intervention currently still focuses on how to make right brain dominant dyslexic people fit a left brain world. There is the potential that we will lose the abilities that being right brain dominant can bring unless a true social model of disability is applied for dyslexia, particularly within the literacy curriculum.

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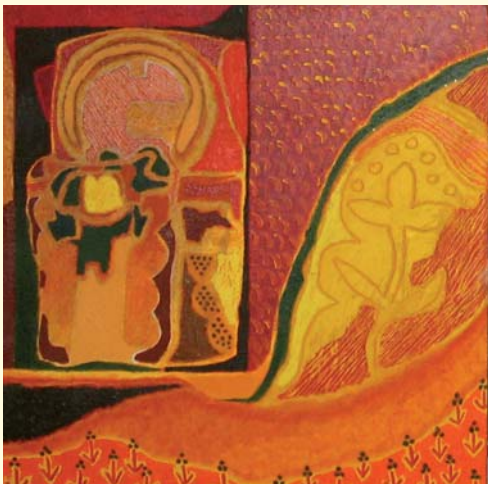
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# Art, Dyslexia and Creativity

Dr Iain Biggs



Twelve years ago, in the middle of a tutorial, I was diagnosed as dyslexic by one of my own students. I didn't believe her but she was the dyslexic mother of a dyslexic daughter who she had just coached into University so, by the time she'd finished talking to me, I did believe her. Probably the most significant outcome of that conversation is that as an academic I stopped feeling like an illegal immigrant on a fake passport and began simply to feel like another of the resident aliens. This is not a laughing matter. I think it's difficult for people who are comfortable in the academic culture to understand just how repressive the shadow of academia can be and it's one of the things I want to talk about.

As a child I wanted to be a poet. I could improvise and tell stories for hours on end. Unfortunately I couldn't spell, but I could draw, so like an awful lot of dyslexics before and after me, I got shunted off to the art world and a long time later I ended up as a principal lecturer running a Fine Art degree course. This is the first time I have been asked to speak about my discipline as a private individual and I think this personal background has a bearing on what I am going to say. I want to talk about the essential cultural ambiguity that should stay with us when we talk about art, creativity, and dyslexia. For painters ambiguity is one of those things we have to live with. What I have to say here is a very personal point of view.

There are now good bodies of well-researched evidence that tell us that there are links between visual spatial ability associated with dyslexia and the forms of thinking that aid creative work in the arts. It has even become possible to identify differences in orientation between what is called design minds and sign minds through the work of Dr Beverly Steffert. This is very important in the struggle to get dyslexia taken seriously in the education world and the last thing I would want is to detract from that important task. However it is vital that we keep asking questions about the connections between dyslexia, creativity, and art.

About 1993 I heard an argument for art schools as specialist education centers for dyslexia put forward by the artist Susan Hiller, and Professor Gosling hints at something similar in his paper. I would want to resist any move in that direction. The reason is complicated but has to do with the fact that I would be very concerned if we were to isolate the type of creative thinking associated with dyslexia, to put it in a special educational context. I think that would fix a set of relationships that we need to see as fluid and changing. I would argue that we should be very wary of arguments that claim that there is a clear-cut link between art, dyslexia and creativity and that the link is always positive. This view stems from my belief that, firstly, imagination is prior to and more important than any single area of human activity and development and, even more important, than art.

Secondly, we should never take for granted that creativity is a positive human attribute. Torturers, I am told, are often highly creative people.

Thirdly if we slip into assuming that dyslexics have some innate tendency to be visually artistic this may turn out to be another way of ignoring their real potential as, say, archaeologists, poets, or computer scientists. These beliefs run parallel to my sense that what creativity and the arts and the thinking of dyslexics may have in common is the potential to work imaginatively between and across categories. However that potential can only be realised if we have an appropriate model of the imagination.

The realization of our creative potential always depends on how we understand and use our creativity. Creativity has no innate value in itself and is a highly ambiguous attribute. Imagination is more fundamental than what we call creativity. The imagination's ability to dissolve the rigidity of categories by working between and across them is vitally important because of the paradoxical nature of categories. On the one hand, categories give vital structure and help us make sense of the flood of our experience. On the other hand they constantly threaten to fix our

understanding, to blind us to the fluidity of that experience. I happen to believe that the imagination is one of those fundamental tools by which we negotiate and work with the paradox of categories. Art is of course only one version of that tool, although I would argue an extremely important one.

Thinking about the relationship between art, dyslexia and creativity is made more complex both by their ambiguous values and their constantly changing relationship to the wider social context. When I was a student I thought imagination and innovation were more or less synonymous and took it for granted they were both of equal value. In this respect I was a product of a particular type of art education. Only when I tried to understand changes in both art and society did I see that imaginative creation requires adaptation based on an understanding of existing models and traditions as well as the ability to extend, modify, or exceed those models or traditions. Today I see innovation as one of three fundamental aspects of imaginative work, but only one.

I would also want to question the art world's current obsession with innovation, particularly given the fact that it is very closely linked to an obsession with novelty and the function that novelty plays in our consumer culture. This is why I want to keep in question how we link art, creativity, dyslexia and imagination. Another reason is that the best contemporary thinking on imagination that I know stresses the importance of our imaginative relationship to what remains potent in the past. It even argues that imaginative re-interpretation or re-evaluation of the past now may be more critical to our survival than innovation. Historically this reverses the priorities of many modern assumptions about imagination and creativity. However, while ecologists might find this more conservationist view persuasive, students with dyslexia or other artists may well find this harder to accept, largely because they are conditioned to identify creativity with innovation.

One consequence is that if we encourage dyslexics to see themselves as artistic or creative rather than people capable of being imaginative in the broader sense, we may devalue the real potential of their visual spatial imagination. Creativity is an instinct without any intrinsic value. To evaluate any creative act, for example what is called 'creative accounting', we need to locate creativity in a wider context. If we accept that dyslexics have a propensity to higher than average creativity we still need to keep asking in what context is that creativity used?

I know of two specific locations where the incidence of dyslexia is higher than average. One is in art and design education. The other is in the prison population. I would want to argue that where dyslexics end up depends on whether they are helped by their education to find opportunities to develop as imaginative people, not just creative people. Years of working with art students confirms my sense that many dyslexics arrive on art and design courses because these offer the only form of Higher Education they can access. The students certainly have some visual talent, but first and foremost they are bright survivors of the secondary education system who miraculously are still hungry to learn. Some of them can benefit from art education, others leave angry and resentful. In my view there are far too many frustrated former art students in the world hooked on a very limited notion of creativity and trapped by their self identification as artists. There are also, I suspect, far too few imaginative educated dyslexics at the cutting edge of other disciplines and professions.

The case of Tracey Emin, probably the best known dyslexic artist in Britain today, may help to illustrate why I think we need to keep asking questions about how and why we link art, creativity and dyslexia. As a dyslexic and famous contemporary artist, Emin might appear to reinforce the idea that the visual spatial abilities of the design mind are central to success. However to establish that point we would need to be sure that her success is due to her outstanding spatial ability. Or is it due to a reversal of the gender role, where once it was only male artists that were able to cash in on the role of a bohemian lifestyle? Just what are the real relationships between her success and dyslexia. This is a question worth asking.

My point is that being a successful artist in today's overcrowded and media driven art world can involve many different types of creativity. The function and nature of art has been undergoing regular and radical changes for well over 100 years and continues to do so. Is visual spatial ability equally relevant to all art manifestations? If not where does that leave the dyslexics who have been told "being a dyslexic may be hell, but at least you are going to be good at art."

I implied earlier that the potential ability of the design mind to work imaginatively with the paradox of categories might be its most fundamental value. If we work in education and also happen to be concerned with imagination or dyslexia, it is vital that we keep alive commitment to the variety of ways in which people make sense of the world. In this context for institutions to require art, creativity, or dyslexia to make sense only in terms of dominant or fashionable categories is always to diminish the potential for both the individuals and society.

Education needs to keep in mind the philosopher Geraldine Finn's observation:

"We are always both more and less than the categories which name and divide us", and there have been times when some of the things that have been said about myself as an object of study by those who study dyslexia have made me feel profoundly angry. However difficult and demanding the implication of what Geraldine Finn has to say may be, I think this observation is central because when we take for granted fixed categories, including those of art, dyslexia, and creativity, we start to deny the fluidity of our lived experience. If, as one contemporary philosopher has suggested, the future of Europe depends on our imagination, we have all the more reason to take Finn's observation to heart.

Reinforcing the importance of Imagination from another perspective, Barbara Stafford argues that "the imagination itself is analogous to biology in that its evolution requires the unpredictable generation of a rich diversity of alternatives and conjectures". Diversity means in the arts dissolving the current fixation that creativity has to do with exclusively on what is new, what is coming next. The work of the German artist Anselm Kiefer is an excellent example of an imagination oriented by re-thinking the past. He is to my knowledge the only contemporary artist cited by a philosopher, an eminent historian and an eminent psychologist as making a genuine contribution to our understanding of the world.

Having stressed the importance of imagination and fluidity in education I want to briefly comment on the findings of a report written by the Advisory Committee on Creative Culture in Education.

Their view is that creativity is possible in all areas of human activity and that all people are creative while demonstrating their creative ability differently. If so, why all this fuss about art? They also claim when individuals find their strengths this can have an enormous effect on their self esteem and overall achievement. I would agree absolutely, while remembering that as a schoolboy my finding creative ways to steal cigarettes for my classmates did far more for my battered self-esteem as an undiagnosed dyslexic than anything anyone said to me about my art work. When they argue that creativity is imagination fashioned to produce activity of originality and value I obviously can't fault them, but I still worry that they are side stepping the question of who is going to define originality and value.

At present there are two institutional answers to that question. One answer is the National Curriculum that in practice tends to see creativity as something that happens in the arts rather than as a core element in all good teaching. The second answer is within the art world that becomes ever more entangled with media so that provocative, media-friendly novelty or provocative transgression have become favored forms of originality and value.

So I think it is vital that we keep asking what really causes value and originality and also for whose benefit are those criteria being established. The answers to these questions help us to reflect on how we understand ambiguous relationships between creativity and dyslexia, stressing the importance of having an appropriate model of imagination for a responsible creative education.

Richard Kearney has argued for a three part model of imagination. He rethinks what's usually called adaption as the testimonial function for imagination and he rethinks innovation as its Utopian function, but critically he then adds what he calls the empathetic function of imagination – that function which opens us up to empathise with other peoples' difference and hopefully helps stop schoolboys finding creative ways of stealing hard-earned cigarettes from school cleaners through understanding another's point of view. It is this empathetic imagination which informs Geraldine Finn's statement about categories and which gives ethical orientation to the simple adaptive innovative model of creativity.

I believe passionately that for creativity to be genuinely original and valuable it needs to be in touch with each of these three different aspects of imagination. I would end by speculating that given the design mind's tendency to be a more intuitive, pattern searching and holistic form of thinking, it might relish Kearney's non binary, less linear, model of imagination. If this is the case it suggests that this educational approach which would be of benefit to design minds should also be used to develop the imaginative ability of all those in all disciplines, not just those currently designated as creative. If that were to happen there would be no such thing as dyslexia, only a rich variety and diversity of ways of thinking about the world.

To conclude Iain showed slides from *Art Works*, a collection edited by Iain Biggs, made with colleagues from the Arts Dyslexia Trust and designed and printed by Jonathon Ward and a team of staff at the print centre of the University of the West of England.

*Prints in the book were made by established professionals and by recent art Graduates, many of whom are dyslexic, to remind us of richness and diversity of skills and concerns of the people who make them. These included a drawing by John Gunter, theatre designer which demonstrated using imaginative visualisation to aid the practical construction of artifacts; work by Sally Morgan, a key figure in developing community and public art; a print by Robert Rauschenberg, internationally renown painter who is also dyslexic; installation by Daphne Wright, a sculptor and installation artist who combines traditional materials with intrusions such as sound, and is interested in issues of feminism and identity; Work by Anthony Gormley, the 1994 Turner prize winner who has been credited with revitalising the use of the human figure in contemporary sculpture; a drawing by Lord Richard Rogers, an exemplary dyslexic architect who has stressed the importance of the relationships between architecture, the environment and society and who, like Gunter, uses his energized drawing as a practical tool; Ruth Solomon whose work reflects responses to music and Hilary Wells, MA RCA, who now deals with metaphors for complex and apparently disconnected states of mind. Which, as Iain said, was a good place to end.*

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# The Visual Arts, Visual and Sculptural Communication

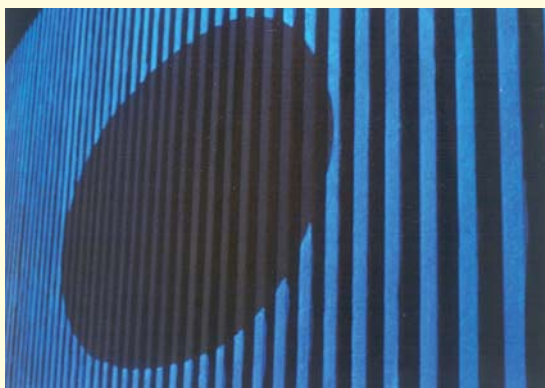
Andrew Henon

During the 'Cascade' conference the arts were represented in a number of ways. Together with performance pieces by Ketaki Kushari Dyson with her play 'Night's Sunlight' and Duncan McLeod's Music installation, there was an exhibition of invited artists and the installation of a number of site and event specific works presented at key venues during the conference.

This paper focuses on the works installed at the key venues at the conference and the works by the same artists included in the exhibition. It relates to the importance of a visual and experiential form of communication, the content and conceptual elements of the pieces the context and connections with issues covered in the conference. It looks at the importance of a visual language and how we respond with an inner dialogue on encountering visual art. These works provided a number of different functions during the event. They were opportunities for artists to contribute towards the conference with a presence other than verbal or text based communication. The artworks themselves provided visual and experiential orientation points for delegates at the conference as well as additional connected conversation pieces.

The artworks that are reviewed and described here can't be explained, analysed or described fully in text form. We live in a complex social culture and visual artwork produced by artists in our culture has to be viewed in that context. It is the collective experience of artists, viewers and the work itself that creates the dialogue. The dialogue is present during the production of the work; this becomes integral to the work as it precedes to completion and it remains once the work is finished. The dialogue is then continued as the work interfaces with another viewer. It is an immediate dialogue that builds on encountering the work itself. In many cases the dialogue is multi faceted, and begins at many points of access. Access can be through the materials in the first instance for example a touch, the tactile material qualities that can connect immediately with memory. Our lived experience may also produce an immediate interaction and reaction in some way with the work. The intensity of the interaction will depend on our own individual perceptions and lived experience.

There is however a deeper level of communication that at times is so intense that it becomes almost universal. It is this level of communication that many visual artists strive towards attaining. It is the direct universal visual and experiential language of communication that text can't fully attain. That is not to say that text is not a strong medium of communication and that the written word can't create a powerful response and the dialogue be of equal intensity on the imagination. It is more that this point of access is not as immediate or as direct. Even in this attempt to put the essence of a visual language into words it is rightly beyond me.



With the included images I ask you the reader to look at them first before reading my interpretation. The reader's interpretation may be different from mine and is of equal validity.

### Karen Browning

Karen Browning installed an artwork entitled 'Cascade Wall' (fig 1, 1a, 1b) see left.

This particular part of the University has a ribbed concrete wall opposite the main lecture hall used during Cascade. It is a wall that although many thousands of people pass by year in year out, it is neither considered important, beautiful or interesting. However Karen painted the entrenched back surface of the ribs with Clear Ultra Violet reactive paint leaving an oval area of unpainted surface. The piece was then lit with an Ultra Violet Light source.

It relates to exposing that which already exists in literally a different light. In daylight the shape is invisible yet under certain conditions something is revealed, the revelation is still an area of unpainted concrete however we now see this area as significant being delineated and formed by the painted strips. The wall itself is a barrier yet we begin to perceive that there is an opening an area that although not illuminated itself becomes evident because it's surroundings have been.

There is also an element of public interaction with the piece that is experiential as seen in the photograph, on close interaction with the piece the viewer interferes with the image, a shadow is cast on the wall and a silhouette appears. Not only does the viewer experience a change in the installation on a personal level but other viewers also experience another element of the installation. A light reactive painted concrete wall becomes an experiential event. This is in stark contrast to the use of the space on a daily basis and uses the ordinary in an extraordinary way.

## Jeff Body

Jeff Body installed an artwork entitled 'World Herd' and exhibited 'New Fossils.com'

'World Herd' was produced in response to the BSE and Foot & Mouth Crisis experienced in the year prior to the Cascade conference. It was installed in the foyer of the conference reception and meeting area of workshop venues. The piece was produced in reconstructed stone moulded from a set of Water Buffalo Horns. World Herd is an installation of progressively smaller stone horns stacked on top of each other into a conical interlocked piece.



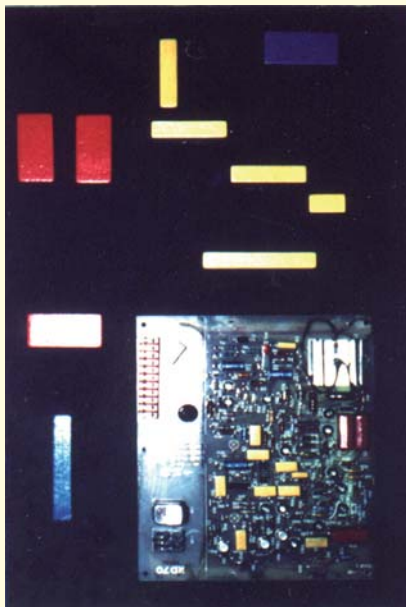
World Herd both relates to issues current at the time and to larger issues of sustainability and timeless history. The piece is communicating on a number of levels as a memorial and as a statement of loss a sense of countless ageless disaster. The viewer is invited to encounter this piece both as a visual and tactile experience. With the stone there is a sense of fossilisation, a turning to stone. In isolation the piece resonates with the issues of mortality, the mortality of our natural world, our own mortality and mass consumer culture. It also refers to the consumer culture of our time, apparently bereft of moral humanity, consumption at any cost, mass production applied to the food chain and the industrialisation of animal welfare. The piece speaks to us of mass animal genocide and forces us to confront our inner emotions and feelings. At the height of the foot and mouth crisis it became evident that the systems employed in the industrialisation of animal agriculture, the structures and processes in place had failed, localised issues could not be contained, the cull spread rapidly to a national and international level.

We have also been subjected to a conveyor belt educational system and to the industrial processing of individuals. This piece offers us the opportunity to pause and reflect on the larger cultural issues we face.

New Fossils.com was exhibited in the library main exhibition. It is a piece that brings issues of access to the front of our consciousness. The computer age is one in which the most access is open to those that can afford it financially and or are technologically informed. The advances in computer science and the access to new technologies have still to reach a significant number of our population. We tend to forget as we upgrade our machines to broadband or increase our memory capacity and install the latest software that many people have never used a PC. The moulded computer mice, in resin held in stone, are as accessible and usable as they are to many people. The piece also relates to the mortality of this technology, again driven by a consumer culture, a choice of style or colour does not make it immortal. It may be that in the future the fossilised remains of computers will be discovered as unusable now as they may be in the future. When our e-mail crashes do our lives still continue? How important have our PC's become? New Fossils.com provides us with a salient reminder to all of us who have embraced the new technology into our lives that there are still many who have not.

### Andrew Henon

Andrew Henon installed an artwork entitled 'Blocks'



The piece was installed on the Wall of the main lecture theatre used during the conference. It is a sculptural relief that uses children's primary painted wooden building blocks and a back lit computer circuit board, within a widow frame. The primary colours used to identify components used on the circuit board echo the primary colours of the blocks. As we access our own memories of playing with building blocks either as children or as parents we are prevented from accessing the memory stored in the circuit board. The visual message communicates the relationship between the two synthetic building elements both the blocks and the circuit are toys, what we build in our own imagination is based on our memories, connections that we may be consciously unaware of.

The building blocks of both elements adhere to strict guidelines and rules of use, their shape and form and the possible relationships between them define the parameters of use. Both elements are not flexible they require the employment of a sequential method in order to create something new. Both elements combine in a piece that itself becomes a 'block'; the viewer can neither play with the building blocks nor use the computer circuit. The viewer is however prompted to access their own memory or wonder at the complexity of the structures. Through the exposure of the circuit, something that is not usually visible, the relationship between the building blocks can clearly be seen. Often the frustration with computer use is that in order to use them we have to conform to a strict sequential method. The same as when a child meets the restrictions of using the blocks, a tower is fun to knock over but can be frustrating to build.



Andrew Henon Exhibited two paintings in the Cascade Exhibition, entitled 'Report' and 'New Growth'

Report seen here is very dark piece and was produced in response to a revisiting of previous school reports and school experiences. The surface is pitted and ripped the ink smudged and blurred. The dark horizontal vertical grey oppressive form confines the centre of the painting. The centre painting is confined further by the use of red and dark black out towards and including the frame. The inference is that however much the interior of the painting changes it will always be constrained by the black and red. In much the same way as whatever is written in blue ink the red pen will always contain it. Small areas of light appear these are still held by the oppressive overriding dark red and are produced by the process of scraping in to the work or bleeding out along the frame.

The piece has been produced in a violent process and represents this process to the viewer; a lot of energy has been exhausted in the making of the image. The materials have been degraded, moulded and contorted on the surface. The frame of the painting is an integral part of it and painting is a tactile and visual response to reports and the memory of school.



New Growth was a single painting from a series of nine of the same name. The piece portrays the fragility and strength of organic growth. The complexity made from simplicity and the highly complex forms in nature. It is a visual feast of movement and organic growth, layers and depth.

The full set of nine works, were produced with the concept of change in mind each work develops and changes overtime. Some of these works were produced on paper impregnated with carbon the pigment used will react over a period of time and begin a process of degradation. Some of the works contain fluorescent pigment becoming more vibrant under different conditions.

Change is an important part of this body of work and in terms of a visual language emphasizes the possibilities of an ongoing form of communication, one that is not static.

The Cascade conference offered Karen Browning, Jeff Body and myself the opportunity to make a contribution from a position outside of the established academic institutional environment. As I mentioned in the introduction direct contact with visual art can't be fully expressed in text form. Only contact with the work, that encompasses the emotional aspects, the immediate time and place of encounter and the individual responses, the consequent dialogues developed at the time, together with the individual circumstances, awareness and current issues at the time of the encounter communicates effectively between the artwork and the viewer.

During the Cascade conference there were many contributions from the visual arts. Of the artists exhibiting in the exhibition Alan Rayner, Iain Biggs and Mike Juggins have contributed papers that refer to their own works and practice. John Harlow stoneware potter and then Director of Bath University Computing Services and Alan Rayner both amply demonstrated interdisciplinary ability. I have not referred to these works in this paper other than to say that I have the greatest respect for their work and the contribution that they have made both in the field of dyslexia, science, education and the visual arts.