

forgotten letters:

an anthology of literature by dyslexic writers

EDITED BY NAOMI FOLB



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FOREWORD

There are many puzzles and paradoxes linked to dyslexia. One of the most strange of these is that some of the best writers are dyslexic.

How can this be so? How can those who struggle so with words become such masters of words? Well, good writing is different from good spelling, reading out loud or rapid recall of memorized texts.

Good writing often requires an ear for the sound of language. Good writing often requires a strong visual imagination with powerful images and metaphors communicated through the words. Often the best writing is very plain, using well the most simple language. Also, good writing requires fresh language – not the usual string of conventional terms and syntax. Good writing is thoughtful and sometimes surprising in its content and form.

Oddly, the difficulties experienced by dyslexics sometimes can lead directly to becoming advantages in service of the best writing.

Dyslexics are a heterogeneous group. They are unlike non-dyslexics. They are unlike each other. But there are many common elements.

They often, almost by definition, learn to read late and very slowly (after a long and difficult struggle). This is partly the reason that many never lose the sound of language in their head – as sometimes happens with rapid and efficient readers.

They often have powerful visual imaginations – seeing pictures in their minds as they read or speak. Some of the best storytellers say they never remember the words of a story. Rather, they have a movie running in their head and they simply talk about what they see. You don't have to be dyslexic to do this. But dyslexics seem inclined to do this – whether they want to or not. But as one can readily see, if you cannot remember texts as texts – but only see images – then the words are likely to be different each time. Sometimes fresh. Sometimes surprising. Sometimes shockingly apt.

Often I have heard the phrase, “they see what others don’t see or cannot see.” I have heard the phrase a thousand times, in a thousand different settings. It is not only having strong powers of observation. There is something going on that yields perceptions and insights often denied to non-dyslexics – who may see the unexpected connection when shown. But they would never see it on their own.

Some say dyslexics are prone to ponder. Non-dyslexics may have a look, see what they have been taught to see, say the expected words and quickly move on – scoring high on conventional tests of conventional observations. (This drives artists crazy. So many of the clever students learn the words to say about a painting and then they think they understand it. But they never learn to really see it.)

Many dyslexics see the big picture. Those who ponder hold on to an idea or problem or puzzle for a long time, turning it over and over. In literature, sometimes they come up with a fresh and deep insight. (In science or technology, sometimes they come up with a remarkable and unexpected discovery.)

It is a commonplace that the best artist or writer is an outsider, observing human events at the edge. Again, many non-dyslexics can take on this role. But many dyslexics, because of their deep humiliations from the earliest days, seem to assume the role of distant observer. The truth-talking commentator who is not caught up in the race. They have felt the otherness from the start.

In my own research on talents among highly successful dyslexics, my literary friends were shocked and disbelieving when I told them that the most severely dyslexic historical person I came across was the Irish poet William Butler Yeats. It teaches us. Even in times unfriendly to formal poetry, his lines show up in songs and commentaries and book titles. He said that he often started with a rhythm, a pulse, and the sense then followed. He never lost the feeling of the sound of the language.

And everywhere you look there are vivid metaphors and images. About his early life, Yeats says: "I was unfitted for school work... My thoughts were a great excitement, but when I tried to do anything with them, it was like trying to pack a balloon in a shed in a high wind." A few years before his death, he observed: "It was a curious experience... to have an infirm body and an intellect more alive than it had ever been, one poem leading to another as if... lighting one cigarette from another."

I am honored to introduce this volume of the work of dyslexic writers – sometimes harsh and angry, sometimes as beautiful as a song, sometimes so short and powerful that you feel you have been punched with a boxer blow. But always fresh, truth telling, full of vivid and unexpected sounds and images.

THOMAS WEST

August 2011

INTRODUCTION

Many books are written about dyslexia, often by non-dyslexic experts. These point out how dyslexia looks; its advantages, disadvantages, or cause. All too common is the perception that dyslexics would be better off in a world without books, without reading. Here, they say, in this other world, where there is no writing, no books, dyslexics would be equal.

Maybe you picked up this book because you are dyslexic, or you have a dyslexic friend, or child. You are looking for some answers, understanding; some meaning. You are searching for some kind, soft words about dyslexia. Confirmation that they, or you, are unique, and that dyslexia is precious; a gift. You read 'anthology' on the cover but you wanted a book of promises. A book of tricks. Some magic, wrapped up in poems, and prose.

This anthology of dyslexic writers comes from a similar place. It illustrates what I found in my own pursuit of knowledge about dyslexia. Through this exploration in literature, there is a move towards understanding and sharing knowledge of how dyslexics experience language. In this, it concerns speaking back to Otherness. Not as a deviation from 'the norm' (whatever that is), or as some kind of linguistic trace that represents an obscurity or strangeness of mind, but that which exists somewhere between the page and the 'life lived'.

As Thomas West describes in the Foreword to this edition, dyslexia yields novel and interesting ways of connecting words and ideas. Only sometimes are words, letters and punctuation missing, they appear to be forgotten. As if in writing, the author had become swept up by other thoughts, preoccupied, distracted by something elsewhere, outside the text. In reading the prose contained within this anthology, it would be kind to reflect on how you interpret this absence. Observe whether you regard it to be a sign, or symptom of lack of effort, or ability. If you feel differently to towards those writers that keep their semi-colons in check.

I urge you further, rather than focus on the absence of commas and full stops, to ask yourself: can you see the images that these inscriptions conjure? Allow yourself, for just a short while, to distance yourself from those conventions that assist us in reading. Notice a different kind of flow. Attend, not to the deviation from tradition, but to the observations that they make: the lone figures, the sense of abandonment, the curiosity

towards light, determination, persistence, dreams and discovery. Note the authors' fascination and praise of language, of words, and the way in which they are framed as an obstacle to truth.

This anthology is about more than the forgetting of letters. It is a testimony to the value of writing to dyslexics. It brings to the fore notions of authorship, and authority. It asks: who gets to be an author? Who authorises it? And how they get to have that authority? So it is not about standards, it is not about literacy, it is concerned with the telling of stories and that thing we call 'voice'. Whose voices are acceptable, and in what context?

In the first section, you will find poems and in the second, short stories, and other writing. Writers established and emerging sit together to reveal that the enigma of dyslexia is a fantasy. Although neither uniform nor simple, and with many facets, details, not all of which can be brought to the level of language, these works show that there is not one key, answer or solution to dyslexia. Nor is it a curse, or disorder, but a way of thinking, and knowing characterised by a constant jabbing in mind of new ideas, possible connections, interpretations and interplay. Sometimes the authors allow them into words, to enable that duality, that otherness to be part of the text, to give it a voice. To accept that Otherness is not Otherness at all, but part of 'we'. This shows us that dyslexia does not prevent dyslexics from writing. Dyslexia turns out to be much less a destiny than what you, the reader, might wish to change, shape, corral or improve upon. As such, there is something a bit 'different' about the prose contained here, within this writing by dyslexic writers, as there is in all of us. It is in this, that we are the same.

NAOMI FOLB

Aahus, October 2011

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We have to look forward to the surprising, difficult pleasures that come upon us when we least expect them, the strange rewards abruptly bestowed for opting against easy ways of living

PHILIP SCHULTZ

part 1

PAUL ROSS

What was that

Grasping one raindrop in a shower
Can be easier

Than holding a thought
While finding a pen

PAUL ROSS

Tiptoe on leaves

The anger has long gone
with tears returned to earth
feelings of being apart, hollow
never overflowing just half full
inadequate, stupid, thick as two short planks
apart from life apart from you
no more

You see I now tiptoe through books
Like you tiptoe through the rain
You will always get some on you
for me it's the same
But my mind can get by
with just the smallest of drops
within the forest of fallen trees

The Dyslexic Poet

You said it sir, but I forget it
My concentration went and quit
I read it miss but I didn't get it
Now there'll be more red crosses than red ticks

But no sir, I'm not no twit
You've got it wrong if you think I'm thick
You say I'm lazy, you say I'm crazy
You say I'm pathetic but you just don't get it miss

There's a word, sir, you should check it
There's a word, miss, you must've read it
And there are kids who get no credit
Who you write off in your edit
Who are not "dum" but dyslexic

I don't think about it like you think about it
But I don't see how that makes me thick
I'm dyslexic, though I can't even spell it
Which is really stupid isn't it?

But no, sir, I'm not so thick
I get by on my sheer wit
And I don't regret it
I'm a dyslexic poet
So miss give us a big red tick.

REENA JAISIAH

Alchemy of Scribbles

My scribbles scramble on a tatty bit of paper
 I vomit ideas vastly
Just before they vapour
 They appear like inedible mountains of mess
So I churn the illegible into words that truly bless
 Being a dyslexic poet
My words often appear inverse
 So I smile
Smile at my lucrative curse

BILLY CHILDISH

A sad donky and a fat man smiling

speaking as
a man who doesnt eat cheese

and who
paddled into 2nd place in the

kent
skools under-18s slalom 1975

(three
entrants only)

speaking
as a man who doesnt own a television set

doesnt
read daily papers

and the
radio remains clicked to off

speaking
as a man with twelve fillings

four
verucas

and one
o'level (art grade A) walderslade secondry

skool
for boys 1976

speaking
as an artist of dubious merit

and the
writer of lewd verses

speaking
as a man who caught paul wellers plectrum

thrown
into the audience at battersea town hall

jubilee
week 1977 (support group the boys)

speaking
as a man who carved the reclining admiral

and van
gogh without a moustache

apprentice
stone mason

her
majestys dockyard chatham 1976

speaking
as a man who wore second hand shoes

up
untill he was 33

speaking
as a man who tried to run down johnny rotten

on the
pavement outside the roebuck public house kings rd

london
1978 (drunk in charge of a push bike)

speaking
as a man with eyes the shape of little fishies

the
hands of my father and somebody elses legs

i see
that truth only comes staggering up the mountain side

like a
sad donky teetering under the weight of a fat man smiling

BILLY CHILDISH

the billy childish

ex
drunk

and
compulsive masturbator

late
nite vomiter of good liquor

kisser
of purple lipped women

riter
of poems celebrating the

emptiness
of my love

poems
hungering for the moment

of my
passion

wishing
it could always be so

to
never let my cock fall

i am
billy childish

ex
strongman

and
2-bit lover

late
nite namer of names

corrupter
of the literate

riter
of poems that dare

to
dream to pass down

the
centurys

and
touch the harts of the

the
yet-to-be-born

wishing
to hold them

to my
arms

and
kiss them all

i am
billy childish

ex-poet

and
failed suicide

late
nite vomiter of truth and lies

kisser
of the arses of girls
like
the stars of god

riter
of poems to lick

the
thighs of the dead

for ex-
lovers to denounce

and teachers
to hate

wishing
to paint my life

and to never let my
voice quieten

Derelict

He bought a shooter from someone who knew someone with the wrong connections.

Smoked a whole packet of cigarettes' drank the best part of a bottle gin while trying to write his last note but he gave up,
Got into his car half crazy half drunk and drove.

He drove on past the place where he was born now derelict

His childhood home the old neighbourhood

Derelict.

The school where he failed miserably

Derelict

The park where he kissed his first girl and found manhood

now overgrown the factory his first and last job torn down

Everything he once cherished

Now derelict

He drove on past the nice houses he could never afford the expensive cars and felt the twisting turning knife of envy deep inside his guts

Somehow he'd missed out

He drove his rusting heap out into the country parked in a quiet lane took the shooter from an old shoe box which also contained photos of happier times he paused ran his eyes quickly over the snaps and he blew his brains out.

Six Inch Nails

I should have been a contender but all I could do was fight
I should have been a contender but its hard when you
leave school and you can hardly read and write,
The great white hope who never was
But I can lie and cheat and play the great pretender
And blame my lost shot at the glittering prize on my school and society
who only taught kids like me woodwork and treated me like the fool when
in fact I thirsted to know what magical words laid in wait for the likes of me
in the out of bounds school library,
I didn't know it then but I wanted literature poetry.
But it's a pigeon hole for me
Let down at school
Ignored by society
Do woodwork or pottery
Use your hands it's what your kinds bred for
Make a really useful foot stool or fruit bowl on the lathe
Put literature and poetry out your mind sit down now and behave.
So you see I should have been a contender
But I aint
But im fucking good at woodwork making fruit bowls and foot stools and
banging six inch nails into the bonnets of the cars of the bastard teachers
who couldn't take the time to teach me
Yeah I should have been a contender
But I aint.

Dream

Check this scene an island in the sky
Of which my papa is the queen
Juiciest fruits grow on the trees
So much green yea the sky is lilac
my daddy loves me

Home re occurring needs
Check this creed I crave to believe
That I stem from a real family
Noble by deed they fought to be free
Their fight for the truth
Lost you and they lost me

Home the people one people
Think word and feel thought
Logic means honesty peace, truth
Love, I surely was born there
They often connect
In the dark in my fears
In my tears they send me strength

They send me comfort and hope
Patience and dope
When I'm lonely when I'm scared
I reach up and feel a rope
I climb up voices fade
Hate creates the rope breaks

But I know where I'm from
I'm going home
Re occurring vibes check this hype
We die to survive that's how we fight
Fight to stay alive island in the sky
I'm going to the plight of the lost child

BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

Wot a Pair

I waz walking down Wyefront street
When me trousers ran away,
I waz feeling incomplete
But still me trousers would not stay,
When I found where they had gone
De pair addressed me rather blunt,
And they told me they were sick of being put on
Back to front.

I told dem I would treat dem good
And wear dem back to back,
I promised dem protection
From a friend who is a mac,
Me trousers did not believe a single word I had to say,
And me underpants were laughing
When me trousers ran away.

Dis poetry

Dis poetry is like a riddim dat drops
De tongue fires a riddim dat shoots like shots
Dis poetry is designed fe rantin
Dance hall style, big mouth chanting,
Dis poetry nar put yu to sleep
Preaching follow me
Like yu is blind sheep,
Dis poetry is not Party Political
Not designed fe dose who are critical.
Dis poetry is wid me when I gu to me bed
It gets into me dreadlocks
It lingers around me head
Dis poetry goes wid me as I pedal me bike
I've tried Shakespeare, respect due dere
But did is de stuff I like.

Dis poetry is not afraid of going ina book
Still dis poetry need ears fe hear an eyes fe hav a look
Dis poetry is Verbal Riddim, no big words involved
An if I hav a problem de riddim gets it solved,
I've tried to be more romantic, it does nu good for me
So I tek a Reggae Riddim an build me poetry,
I could try be more personal
But you've heard it all before,
Pages of written words not needed
Brain has many words in store,
Yu could call dis poetry Dub Ranting
De tongue plays a beat
De body starts skanking,
Dis poetry is quick an childish
Dis poetry is fe de wise an foolish,
Anybody can do it fe free,
Dis poetry is fe yu an me,
Don't stretch yu imagination

Dis poetry is fe de good of de Nation,
Chant,
In de morning
I chant
In de night
I chant
In de darkness
An under de spotlight,
I pass thru University
I pass thru Sociology
An den I got a dread degree
In Dreadfull Ghattology.

Dis poetry stays wid me when I run or walk
An when I am talking to meself in poetry I talk,
Dis poetry is wid me,
Below me an above,
Dis poetry's from inside me
It goes to yu
WID LUV.

JOSEPH AQUILINA

Where Ya Comin' From

The year is 1976
The year it was the heat wave
The year was of the Dragon
The that I was born
The Water bearer
The untimely ripped from his mother's womb
The Fridays' child is loving and giving
The unlucky for some 13

My parents came from Malta
In the 1960s, looking for a place to stay
But Blacks, Irish and foreigners
Were mostly turned away
But unlike the holy parents
With no manger full of hay
This Lambeth town of clay blocks
Was where they came to stay.

My sister, she was the first born,
I was fourth best.
My brothers before their first breath
Were born to lay to rest.
One was to play with light
The other to play with sound
But neither played with light nor sound
Nor played with me and growth,
For neither had played at all
But I still play with both.

Jek in Kelmek b'malti
Inti ma'tifemnish
Ash jena iridek tifemni
In kelmek bil englis

"Oi you darky
Fucking go back home!"
Is once what I heard
When I walked the street alone
"Oi you fucking Paki!"
Is what someone else did shout
But I just shrugged it off
And continued to go out.
Wop Wog Nigger Paki Darky Spik
These are some of the words
Which make us victims sick

All my friends are rich in colours
So to was what I paint
But black, white or yellow
Was sure as hell I ain't
Listening to black Music
Having my black friends
Talking like a "black bwoy"
Made my father tense
It was I who couldn't find
This hole for my key
Looking for this kind
That I was supposed to be
This frustration of my father
Soon became to be a bore
By I soon found I'd rather
Have me key fit any door

Jek in Kelmek b'malti
Inti ma'tifemnish
Ash jena iridek tifemni
In kelmek bil englis

Rude Bwoy 1: Wah ya say now rude bwoy,
Where ya come from?

Rude Bwoy 2: I come from Brixton

Rude Bwoy 1: Na man, where ya mudda from
She black?

Rude Bwoy 2: Nah!

Rude Bwoy 1: Ya Farda Black, Ya Mudda white?
Yis a half breed man!

Rude Bwoy 2: I'm not what you might call a "half breed"
I'm not a cross bred dog you know!
Even if I had parents, each of a different race,
I would be mixed race,
But I'm not mixed race
I'm Maltese

Rude Bwoy 1: So what, your white?
Don't talk to me if your white?

Rude Bwoy 2: I'm not black or white, I don't think it matters!

Rude Bwoy 1: You's a "half breed" man!

Rude Bwoy 2: More like you, is what is half!

Since I've grown my hair long,
People I meet where I go,
Ask me the same questions,
Where I come from they wish to know
A Rastafarian, thinks I am a lion
And gives me love from Jah

For I am from Babylon
The same as Saint Aquilina
For June the 13th is her day
She too came from Phoenicia

My father always told me
The meaning of my name
Aquilina means "Eagle"
Which I carry with no shame
For I wish I was my namesake
So I could fly away
Then I could return
When all is fine one day
But life it is to struggle
And to struggle is to live
I say this as no wise man
As no wisdom I have to give
Colour fades away
In the light that meets our eye
So to does our lives
And brings us fourth to die.
So again I wish my name
For me to turn into true
When name and I are same
Then will I fly too.

The sWord

According to the book
It was here right from the start
Defining who we are, but not what's in our heart
Not in front of my eyes, but everywhere I look
Every promise, every lie, every contract, every book

It's the thing that makes many a sound
Brings many an ego down to the ground
The weapon the pen holds much power,
Makes the loud mouth boy cry and cower
Not lacking bravery or not being bold

But finds weapon strange to hold
It's the things that's in our mind
Being loving, being truthful and being unkind
Of much wisdom and much beauty
Of much kindness and much cruelty

Words, thoughts that can be twisted
Saying is no contract, words are insisted
An image as words that co-exist
Can't stop to be part, can't to help to resist
Not free in the way we live, turns into a cell
Bright star that shone, in a four walled hell
A dove that's forced to where two ton shoes
And still deliver us some good news
The beautiful feathers can't be denied
But words strings
Can keep those wings all tied

STEVE PASFIELD

Hibernation

As i lie here as a ball under my sheets
waiting for the siren to dull and to fade
and pain to leave me here alone and numb
the light to slowly to cease to burn to shine
waiting for the pain to increase my torture
the strings of sorrow and sadness and heartbreak
losing mobility and freedom of life
while lying here curled up crying of sorrow
thinking of the pain of loved ones who scream
irritation of kindness and tenderness
just to live companionless and unaided
my world crushed for many years now
there is not more pity in my eyes for others
tearful no more just, drunk with existence.

Colours

I don't mean black as the colour
or as the berry
not even sun burn skin
i mean black as the mind
different shadows of black
from grey to violet
running through the veins of life
in the shell of my inner dark fallows
carving the sky sunless,dark
inky,starless
the curtains always close
and for ever in the dark side of the moons
silhouette
no more light shining through
i can not make my mind shine
so no more colour stains to dye the heart
just shapeless and dull
standing on the edge of darkness
looking for the rainbows arch
with close eyes
trying to touch the light.

Clicks

In crazy world of
the instant
click this fast keyed
virtual
language
moving the mind so
Fast comes the
melancholy and the
inner winters
time is drifting through
our seasons
the rich glow of
leafy sunsets
in the shortening days
a stack of self-help
books can-not
explain the
criss-crossing clouds
the falling light
the reflective mind
observing the natural
splendor
of clear air/ the senses
and the soul
walking through
paradoxical
Beauty when only
humans are so
Wasteful nature knows its
urgency in
the activity and stillness
in the evening stars
in a harvest of
many kinds.

NEIL FRANCIS BROOKS

Preferring not to talk

You where swindled by the words,
as the words sit talking amongst
themselves in the cosmopolitan cafe
forming sonnets throwing together
tight busho haikus
the words where playing tennis
back and forth
you where swindled by the nouns
and the fruadulent similies
adverbs in the elastic of sentences
you where bamboozled by the prose
and cons of words
in the future try to keep the words in your
mind
they run riot when they
are released
to the freedom of the
un-lined page.

NEIL FRANCIS BROOKS

The moth

temperate seas the flowering breeze
thoughts less than dust.

Moth-light dances
the scent of your wings is
love in a flowery meadow
you feed on stinging nettles
in a band of silver scales
the dance of electric fishes
a hinged hymn
Valezina the sheen of your
caress
hatches me
from the night
Spins the shell of air
petals at dusk
you find my light
drift apperition
to fuse half-light at dusk
in fissures of the brain
you exude the soul of summer
from flimsy stems
in the dusting of constellations
and garden spheres
you risk the dream flying
between earthly greens.

ROD DUNCAN

The Cutting Table

Before any mind was,
an endless weave of seamless time
spread pristine and unlit
over all that is.

Before the naming of things,
was a shoreless sea
of billowing silk
without longitude or light.

At the cusp of dawn
was a perfect smoothness
an endless kiss
of unmarked saffron.

Then was the waking,
the first now,
the first splash of indigo.
spilled and indelible.

Parallels projected.
Then were fixed
the limits of each span.
Then were patterns
ruled and marked.
Then were thoughts
sharp enough to shear,
and the bolt unrolled
on the cutting table.

But once was time
and no mind to know it.

Tap Dancing on Cream

Waltzing on a pin head,
or skip lightly and free,
on feet made of lead.
Tap dancing on cream,
whilst you slumber and dream.

Writing incomprehensible,
letters inconsequential,
intellectual dyslexics,
a contradiction it seems.
Delusions of intelligence,
ambitions a bloody nuisance,
still this dyslexic dreamed.

Three degrees later;
the impossible becomes possible.
Alpha? Gamma? Beta?
Words cast in lead,
soar in my head,
like birds in the air,
letters inconsequential
come together like angry bears.

Second class citizen no longer,
scholar now I tap dance on cream,
with feet made of lead
and waltz on a pin head,
whilst you slumber and dream.

TAKARA PARK

The Path

Searching forever
Looking and Never
Finding a place to go
Lost in the somewhere
Out in the Nowhere
Till I find a place of my own

JOSIE WILLIAMS

Life in a list

I organise my life in a list.
I capture ideas in words and pictures.
Words trigger other words
And ideas fly into my head
A shower cap full of electric probes.
Help! I can't write as fast as they come!
Another idea hits the landing pad
And in rapid fire a rain of bullet points
Ricochet onto the page.

BENEDICT PHILLIPS

Chainging the werld

Ever sins I woz A small boy
I hav been chainjing the werld

wot I wud do is go to a speshull place
A feild, A small wood
OR A space behind a shed

Thair with a small shuvell
I WUD DIG

wen the howell In the Erth is made
I put some Trejer in thair
And replace the Terf or stone

And hope their are otherz like me
So I can descuver Trejerz To

BENEDICT PHILLIPS

Benedikshonery Or Benedictionary!

A list of the shifting
langwidg of werdz
wich fined it hard
to be nayelled downen
A word list, of the sculpited
voyuss of instickt
The lexsick for the dilecksick
a fernetick fernetick
The Benedict's dickshonery
blessid werds wich gide
the fo-ren mined
to the things communkated
thorts made and now not fogot
Arkived but not dead

DEBRA BEHR

Rain

I listen to the rain
Stories of drops passing
In the darkest light
Hitting plaster and concrete
Collected in the cracks
Overfilled
With narratives
And wonder I never knew

CAROLINE GARDNER

Hot Dust

hot dust,
black shadows.

later,
an old man
sweeps the street
taps his straw broom against the wall
stoops
to clean the underside of his shoes.

the sound of a workman
tapping away
is a pigeon
at some bread
on corrugated iron.

another street seller
walks around the alleys
calls out to the buildings
to buy and sell
bits of metal,
anything,
he can find.

Lost in the colours
of the carpet

the night city,
a circuit board
from a plane.

CHARLOTTE BRERETON

When we were young

Running through the fields across the hills, towards the house where we
were born,
you hold my hand, I hold your hand, we stand together now as one,
You are myself, I am myself, you are myself always, I am myself.
It's alright, it's ok, i'm just moving in a different way,
there's so much i don't understand, i'm just doing the best I can.
Running through the town across the streams we scream and shout like we
were young,
you hold my hand, I hold your hand, we stand together now as one.
You are myself, I am myself, you are myself always, I am myself.
It's alright, it's ok, i'm just moving in a different way,
there's so much I don't understand i'm just doing the best i can,
time stands still but stretches far through the fields into the dark,
to the place where we were born, through the night into the dawn.

Shingle

The shingle has sprouted strange white bushes that smell of sea and roses.
From their loneliness, they move closer together.

In their brave, laced whiteness lies a surrender flag blooming, tempted by
the purple paths that tease from the edge of green pathways, tip their roots
onto the salty ground of the impossible.

I never thought that pebbles could support such fabulous flowers, or that
bull-rushes would grow where only ten days ago green paths of England's
coastline spread in varicose veins of walks.

The ducks swim in pools left in the cracked earth, its age revealed by the
lack of rain. We are but toe-prints in the sand made over millions of years
of worn-out pebbles of worries, dried-up dreams, the endless thirst for
fleeting eternity.

In all this shingle, you are the only pebble on my shore, and these are the
bouquets you sent me.

Pictures Flicker

Brief naps beneath a towering tree
are the obvious key to wonderland.
And thunder's bland you understand
but grand ventures are banned here.

Clearly lost in books; he is hooked.

Pictures flicker.
Fade in and out of being,
fleeing eventuality.
You must just wait to see
what emerges from the warm debris;
from the flaming tree.
Lucid dreams haunt consciousness.
Flaunt subtle imagery,
plucking twisted nightmares.
Chasing little white hares down rabbit holes.
Break from habit's hold.
Unfolding hidden maps
strapped into the controls.
This is his adventure.
This is his reality:
Chronic smudging into fantasy.

Curiously he searches their faces.
Red hearts hold the cards,
leaving behind tortured scars.
Taking cautious bites followed by
nauseous heights – he changes shape.
Everyone's a winner – he forgets to learn the rules.
Haunted by that grinning cat
and the crazy man who wore a hat,
our Alex is at a loss.
Lost in fields of dandelions
stroking handy lions singing songs.

Mushrooms in his room
consuming hookah fumes
and the turtle who's just pretend
ascending through the mist and smoke.

Our Alex is completely soaked
pacing circles - to get dry.
The Caucus-Race is over and
he can't fly away.
Can't pick a different delusion.
Illusions compete for his attention
but it's out of his control.
Cards cover his face
replaced with Autumn leaves...

Clearly lost in books; he is hooked.

MADDIE SNYDER

Jade Covered Palace

Red rims the vision
Words fly
Darkness and despair distend
Escape is a must

A jade covered palace
Rich earthy browns
The sound of water
Smell of damp earth
A cool wind blowing
Endless ladders to the sky
Golden rays shining through
Animals scurrying around
Leaves dancing on the ground

But soon it will start to fade
All together disappear
We know that it is time to go
For this place of wonder,
Peace, and serenity
Will come again
When words fly

Words

i am just a word sister
don't be fooled.

The corner of my mind

Just out of the corner of my mind
Another line comes to me
I feel the words of a song as they escape me
Entering the paper like a baby into the world
Soon creating a symphony of chords and words
All accounted for as I raise my pencil like a baton
Writing with a storm of emotion and purpose
That is seen in only the best acting
Hoping the words don't catch a different feeling

Then comes the instrument work
Which isn't without newly wet feet
But still excited to step in and try the water
Each instrument working as a new breath
Holding the life of the song together
As silence tries to tear it away
Fingers trembling as they pull strings
Gathering courage to jump
From twenty-five feet into the sea
Continuing to strain the guitar to play
Encourage the piano to sing
Keeping the whole feeling on course

Intuitively creating sound with past songs
As reflection for present passion for quality
History as the only marker, each song
Weaving into an album blankets
To a bed to comfort the person enjoying them
One on top of the other to make
The perfect echo of emotion
Completion of this is true soul
It is the heart of what I do
What I must learn to accomplish.

A Reversible Situation

The letter 'b', the letter 'b',
a very confusing letter to me.
Sometimes it comes out to be a 'd',
or unexpectedly it turns into a 'p'. That letter 'b'.

The letter 'd', the letter 'd',
is also a painful letter to me.
When I spell the word 'dad', it comes out to be 'bad',
Or sometimes its even 'pad'.
That letter 'd'.

The letter 'p', the letter 'p',
another embarrassing letter to me.
It's just like the 'b' and the letter 'd'!
The darn thing keeps changing on me.
That letter 'p'.

Now that I have learned about my disability.
I thought I could stop them from changing on me!
Put boctor Nash and I doth apree.
I will have to live with the reversible 'b', 'd', 'p' and 'g'!

EMMA JEFFERIES

I write

I used to write to conform to society's linear codes
To write in prose made me shiver in my toes

Each word a challenge, each sentence a heavy load
The time taken to trek this journey showed

Meaning was lost, with no recollection of the seed sowed
Some who followed thought it was morse code

Now I write to see and synthesize the overflow
To capture thoughts before they reload or at worse erode

I write using non-linear code

I draw my thought around a ring road
Following this course enables new ideas to unfold

In my critical mode I structure and take to writing the prose
I forget about details, and concentrate on the encode

Finally I reload
Then I listen back and rethink how it flowed

Although still a struggle, the reward comes from seeing new code
I write to reflect and decode

Heavy

Jealous of the teddy bear you bought me
Back in '93 when I was still thirteen
Coz it got to sleep with me before you did
At my PJ party
Where all my girlfriends were laughing at me
For passing out on Sandy
With that fur ball between my legs
Making off key sounds
Pretending I was having/
- Then Jen butts in with:
"Err, you're nasty"
Ten years later you're still here
Still throwing tantrums and your weight around
And I take it coz it's kind of sexy the way you act like such a prick
Until you cross the line and I've had enough and I tell you to leave
And that's exactly when you start crying
Shouting: "You're over reacting"
Now I'm feeling guilty, so I forget you're manipulating
And start making out with your arm - coz it's big
Oh and by the way, I love that tattoo of Christ on your bicep
It helps me to forgive you, and for a day or two it's all good
And I'm completely satisfied with that old fashioned line of:
"Sorry babe, you know I love you, Right?"
And if you believe that love is better than indifference and indifference is
worse than pride
You would say, "Right" too - right?
Coz who can tell the difference between the real thing and the fucking lie?
And as you put your heavy arms around my waist
I notice that you have changed my paste - I've slowed down
Coz you're too scared I'll run away.

LENNIE VARVARIDES

Fishing

Under the sheets
But still shivering
Shaking
Feeling the cramp in my belly
Swallowing the truth and choking
Covering my face with a dress that changes into a black veil

I'm walking into a club and sitting alone
Then begin eating around a table with your ex's
Hoping for something
I've got nothing left to lose
So I take a trip, this trip
I watch myself flying
Landing on a church steeple
I feel like Peter Pan catching fish under the eclipse

I lose my shoe while running
A bare-footed Cinderella running with a map in her hand
Trying to find a familiar landmark
Losing my bearings in this maze
Following half eaten bread crumbs
Looking for that fucking staircase again
Waste-coat
Pocket watch
Rabbit foot
Dandelion-wish I wasted

I can't leave you alone.
I can't
Everything hurts
I'm not angry
I'm not
Just come back home
Before it's too late
Before the sunsets
We never go to bed angry

I bought some new underwear
I can't wait to wear it for you
To see your face, your eyes light up
Go on, say it, say I'm hot, the way you used to say it
I want to hear it
Please baby, you're the best I've ever had
Tell me I'm passionate
I want to hear it; I want you to tell me

What difference will it make to you?

Numbers and Pictures

1. The illiterate
2. Attempting to communicate
3. Uses visual imagery
4. Pulling up his sleeve
5. Reveal a trace of the past
6. She looks away
7. He smiles
8. The game begins
9. He is winning

1. The shirt comes off
2. The buttons melt
3. The room heats up
4. She sits
5. Watching
6. Hoping for something
7. But her farther isn't coming
8. Squeezes the pillow

1. "I, I didn't mean to..."
2. Silence
3. He does not finish
4. She does not reply
5. The sound of the zipper
6. The wood burning
7. Something is braking

1. She looks
2. She cant help it
3. He knows
4. He lets her
5. She stands up
6. "Run" She says, "Run.

-
1. To excited to move
 2. To scared
 3. To late
 4. They stare at the fork
 5. He picks it up

1. It turns red
2. Turns soft
3. Too soft to do any damage
4. He waits

1. Another one added
2. It joins them up
3. He cant feel it

1. "Let me help you"
2. Repeats, "Please, I can help you"

1. But he deserves it and wants to be marked.

JON ADAMS

Stairwell Bluebell

On the stairwell
I dare to tell
everyone but you, Blue - bell

Your name
roughed in capitals,
chalked over another's indistinct heart
guilty quick with parallel points of deliberate movement
Preordained to met underneath.
the word
an unremitting treasure
falling
falling into my lap Blue - bell

eyes closed
I remember you looking away
lips parted
unable to answer
I watch regrets swimming in your eyes
my words burning
while we wait for your coffee to cool

behind me
the sea
creeps
soundless through
the warm
ultramarine tide pool
an easy swim to shore
between the sullen tides
twice changed direction
while silently
within the cliffs
sleep echinocorys
self- contained
a thousand millennium stories

transgressions willingly concealed
their sins revealed on closer inspection
to finger tip
rough grit
within the smoothness of our soul

later on the harbor wall
I chalk again
Your name
Hidden in the pale pink reflection
of her neon
whispering
'I never stopped loving you'
A charm working against the dark matters
Who ask us to choose
ascend or decline
ascend or decline

left
On the stairwell
I dare you to tell blue – bell

PHOEBE CAMPBELL

The Word Eater

He sits at the tip of your tongue,
licking his lips and waiting,
anticipating, the next big word,
the punch line, the ...
And you're left,
with the thing-a-ma-jig or a
watch-a-ma-call-it?
While he claws at and devours,
That Word.
The one you needed.
It's hours before you finally find it.
After a day of searching it appears
when you no longer want it,
it's redundancy rings -
"Malevolent, malevolent."

Belly full, he laughs, satisfied.



I imagined the words and their sounds being a kind of key with which I would open an invisible door to a world previously denied me.

ANDREW SOLOMON

part 2

Language Exists

Language exists, love exists, losses exist. Losers exit the bar shrugging under another night brambled with “no”s. I’ve lost my way inside exits, doors like windows, the way the word love inside a mouth sounds like dove and feels like oval. Everyone backs away. I saw your back twice, tattoo of an angry sun spreading its beams like tendrils along your shoulder blade.

::

Language exists in the night, in the day, in what falls between night and day, when the whole world, seemingly, falls away. Language is the in-seam, the balance beam, the visqueen. Once I saw a sheep with eight legs, then she moved, revealing another behind her. Language hides like that, behind itself, what it represents. I once found an e hiding within “hop,” and suddenly I had “hope.” Just as the letters l, v, i, r and o once hid within a “living room,” and I was left with “mignon,” which means small, which means pretty, which was in fact much smaller and prettier than any “living room.” And what was left over? Not quite “live,” not quite “viral.” But “roil” – yes roil was left over. The way language exists as a small pretty thing that disturbs.

::

Language exists in the room I step into, which will become the room I step out of. It exists in the courtyard where, between bricks, weeds grow like small trees. Language exists in the wind that tousles the weeds, the sun on my face, the loose shingle on the roof which, last night, freed itself from the tar and landed in the grass by the side of the house, where it now looks strange and lonely. Language exists inside the black cat who cleans herself on my welcome mat, then looks at me as if I should have something important to say. I don’t, but I tell her something anyway. She meows back at me with a sound that could only be mistaken for language.

::

Language exists as a letter inside an envelope slipped inside another envelope for safe-keeping, or anonymity, or both. We can never access language unless we unseal the first envelope, then the second, preferably while we listen to music that makes us feel lonely, the way the broken shingle in the side yard speaks to the grass of its own loneliness, and the grass spreads like a fine hand-woven rug, laboring to thrive under the watchful eye of its dictators: sidewalk and property line. Language exists as we loosen the last seal and bring the letter to eye level, just as it exists as we turn to look out the window.

from Diagnostic Impressions

II

That's when I realized I was two people.
I belonged to myself, and not to myself.

Not just to her, to him – **the two** who
brought me into the world – but to another,

some interior thing, to which I had no
conscious access. This part of me,

which I learned to call other, call
diseased, learned **to** ignore, to betray,

had no context, no birth, no origin
which I could trace the way I might

the path of a bird across **the shore**.
No discernible start point, end point.

no moment of presumed landing or flight.
Ultimately, I was owned by parts

of **my brain** that I would never know,
never name, tame or console.

I had **inside me** an existence, an ugly
life form, **a twin** born in darkness,

without parents, without comfort,
without anyone who could attend

to its cry, not even me, though
I heard it cry – **almost** a yowl, animal.

I was the **one** who cried, **and**
the **one** who ignored the cries.

They were both, in the end, **within**,
though **I** would have **pushed** one away.

Without hesitation, I would have pushed
one to its **death, to** save that other **life**.

IV

That's when I realized I was two people.
I belonged to myself, and not to myself.

Not just to her, to him – the two who
brought me into **the world** – but to another,

some interior thing, to which I **had** no
conscious access. This **part of me**,

which I **learned** to call other, call
diseased, learned to ignore, to betray,

had no **context**, no birth, no origin
which I could trace **the** way I might

the path of a bird across the **shore**.
No **discernible** start point, end point.

no moment of presumed landing or **flight**.
Ultimately, I was **owned** by parts

of my brain that I would never know,
never name, tame or console.

I had inside me an existence, an ugly
life form, a twin born in **darkness**,

without parents, without comfort,
without anyone who could attend

to its cry, not even me, though
I heard it cry – **almost** a yowl, animal.

I **was the one** who cried, and
the one who ignored the cries.

They were **both**, **in** the **end**, within,
though I would have pushed one away.

Without **hesitation**, I would have pushed
one to its death, to save that other life.

VI

That's when I realized I was two people.
I belonged to myself, and not to myself.

Not just to her, to him – the two who
brought me into the world – but to another,

some interior thing, to which I had no
conscious access. This part of me,

which I learned to call other, call
diseased, learned to ignore, to betray,

had no context, no birth, no origin
which I could trace the way I might

the path of **a bird** across the shore.
No discernible start point, end point.

No moment of presumed landing or **flight**.
Ultimately, I **was** owned by parts

of my brain that I would never know,
never name, tame or console.

I had **inside me** an existence, an ugly
life form, a **twin** born in **darkness**,

without parents, without comfort,
without anyone who could attend

to its cry, not even me, though
I heard it cry – almost a yowl, animal.

I **was** the one who **cried**, and
the one who ignored the cries.

They were both, in the end, **within**,
though I would have pushed one away.

Without **hesitation**, I would **have** pushed
one to its death, to save that other life.

DANA GUTHRIE MARTIN

Controlled Text*

What do I risk? What milk,
what tusk, what kiln, what mask?

I ask what fact falls at dusk.
I ask this silk, this husk.

I was of risk, the risk.
I was this risk.

From the elk, a pact.
From the sun, a disk.

** I wrote this poem by limiting myself to the controlled text used in a reading method for those with dyslexia.*

Blunt

I hate the idea of being asked
to bow down before
something in whose name
millions have been sacrificed.
I want nothing to do
with a soul. I hate
its crenulated edges
and bottomless pockets,
its guileless, eyeless stare.
I hate the idea of paradise,
where the souls of Socrates
and Machiavelli are made
to live side by side. If
I have to believe in something,
I believe in despair. In its
antique teeth and sour breath
and long memory. To it
I bequeath the masterpiece
of my conscience, the most
useless government of all.
The truth gets the table scraps
of my dignity. It can do
what it likes with the madman
of my desire and the conjurer
of my impotence. I prefer
to see myself as an anomaly
involuntarily joined to
an already obsolete
and transitory consciousness
that must constantly save
itself from itself,
as a peculiar instinct
for happiness that
sustained me for a brief
but interesting time.

PHILIP SCHULTZ

The Silence

for RJ

You always called late and drunk,
your voice luxurious with pain,
I, tightly wrapped in dreaming,
listening as if to a ghost.

Tonight a friend called to say your body
was found in your apartment, where
it had lain for days. You'd lost your job,
stopped writing, saw nobody for weeks.
Your heart, he said. Drink had destroyed you.

We met in a college town, first teaching jobs,
poems flowing from a grief we enshrined
with myth and alcohol. I envied the way
women looked at you, a bear blunt with rage,
tearing through an ever-darkening wood.

Once we traded poems like photos of women
whose beauty tested God's faith. 'Read this one
about how friendship among the young can't last,
it will rip your heart out of your chest!'

Once you called to say J was leaving,
the pain stuck in your throat like a razor blade.
A woman was calling me back to bed
so I said I'd call back. But I never did.

The deep forlorn smell of moss and pine
behind your stone house, you strumming
and singing Lorca, Vallejo, De Andrade,
as if each syllable tasted of blood,
as if you had all the time in the world...

You knew your angels loved you
but you also knew they would leave
someone they could not save.

REBECCA LONCRAINE

Forgotten Letters

You find a letter you wrote many years
ago but forgot to send, written to a friend
you are no longer in touch with,
forgiving them for an unkind thing
they did to you.

Details

I can describe the thing in real detail, all the
smallest, most important bits of it. But I can't
name it, can't tell you who made it.
And you're not allowed to describe something,
no matter how rich the detail,
unless you can name it first. That's the door in.
I try to find the name, the title, but I can't.
Ummyng and ahhyng and flapping my hand
like an idiot. It's no good. I can't find it,
so I don't say anything at all.
And I look like a fool with no memory,
with no real grip on the world.

Tangents

Tangents tunnel and weave through my thinking,
their pointed ends stick out at odd angles,
puncturing, perforating, the edges of smooth
rounded thoughts. These spikes poke and jab at
ideas during conversations, demand to be noticed,
to be taken into consideration. They take me
off in strange directions, but usually, in time,
they arc back, boomerang back to where we
had started out from, bringing with them a
shimmering trail of new ideas,
unsuspected and unasked for.

What saves you

After seeing the colourful graphs and
complex data we begin to dismember ourselves.
Our minds are chopped up into good and bad.
I can't do this but I might be able to do that.
It's a mental dissection, where a scalpel is carefully,
lovingly, drawn along the innards of the mind,
slicing the brain, separating it into
clear, transparent, distinct sections.
What you're good at and what you're not so good at
can't be connected; what hurts you, gives you pain,
can't be a part of what saves you.
It's a rule, a law.
To see the two as one is out of the question.

World in parallel

There's a version of the world that exists in parallel to this one, which appears sometimes during car journeys. As I fly past words out there in the world, the speed allows me to misread them. I didn't know there used to be such a thing as a 'sugary' as well as bakeries and butchers. I imagine people in ye olden days queuing up to buy sugar carved in ounces from huge sugar loafs. Rough and crumbly. Bumpy, random shaped lumps of sweetness, and not orderly cubes. I discover later that what I had seen was a surgery. My momentary insight into that other place recedes, and the world of accuracy and precision, of medicines and cures, reasserts itself.

Exams

I remember way back in the sixties sitting in my 6th grade class at school and my teacher Mr Ignatious was giving us a test, oh and the school was called Esplanade and it was right next to a garden center who we learned later on that year was growing marijuana to a twelve year old it was like the devil had come – all the way from hell and set up shop right at the end of our p.e field once this was known parents started yanking their kids out of Esplanade and sticking them into McPherson finally the police raided the joint and all was well later on in life I became well acquainted with the devil but that's another story so we're sitting in class taking a test just before lunch on a Friday I think yes it was a Friday because Friday was test day and the test we were taking was on geography which I was really good at which was lucky for me cause with all the marijuana smoking I'd be doing in the future if I was to set off for Pennsylvania I'd have wound up in Transylvania so we're well into the exam when the principle comes in and whispers something in Mr. Ignatius' ear and our teacher starts to cry which really shocked me because Mr. Ignatius was a real tough old fart that fought in the south pacific in the second world war and talked about cutting off dead Japanese soldiers heads and boiling them in a pot until the flesh came off and selling the skulls to med schools in the states then the lunch bell rang and we put down our pencils and went off to lunch sitting on the benches on the playground to eat feeling rather sad and confused at our teacher crying wondering what had happened when this one kid which was an idiot and a liar arrived on the scene and shall remain nameless shout out Kennedy's just been shot and we all said bullshit and he said "look" pointing to the flag and it was at half mast I don't remember much after that other than for once Duncan was telling the truth

Shocking pink

Its around 1957/58 I'm about six and my brother is about seven we're at home hanging out I don't know and the old man gets a call on the phone and goes all quiet and is looking real serious like the Commies just fucking invaded America or something and he puts the phone down and says Michael Leonard get in the car so we're riding along in the car a 1949 Hudson Hornet we sort of know enough not to say anything daft like are we going to Thrifty's for ice cream? So we are sitting there perfectly still and all of a sudden we pull up in front of my elderly great aunt Celia's house and she has this elevated front lawn like the bottom half of a pyramid and on top of the lawn are a bunch of dogs fucking each other there is one lady dog and about seven men dogs there's one man dog doing it to the one lady dog and the other dogs are all hopping about as if it was the first day of carnival so we pull up and start to open the door and they all do the same thing at the same time and that is turnaround and look at us but still doing it and I'm just standing there standing rooted to the ground mouth wide open nothing in my life had prepared me for this I mean no wise older relative had taken me aside and said Michael one day you might be confronted with a whole herd of dogs fucking so beware! anyway my great aunt is inside cowering behind the curtain peeking out and at this point my brother completely loses it and like a mad man goes screaming into the house still I can't move it was like someone put fucking plutonium in my shoes all I can do is stare at the strangest thing I have ever seen I don't remember what happened next but later on that day I realised that life was just one big journey and I was on it

O Great Mouth of The Heart

O great mouth of the heart, oh great sac of teeth and rattles, sea of shards, bad gateway, gasping fist – the libel with which we tax you! The heart grows fonder, the heart must go on, the heart wants what the heart wants, the heart is at its heart absurd. Oh great and flaccid, yellow and waxen, wasted and earnest slut (especially in winter when aroused by stillness), oh heart forced to dream in color, heart that drags its sluglump body over vine-choked paths, heart, suspended between the veil, heart, ignorant of its untimely death, heart my falconer, my cloaked watcher, my blackest lonely, my famous oratory, my wishing-rock. Oh demon of the lightest things, wasp-eyed and purely instinctual, insatiable termite, invisible saint, clown-shoed paranoid, vainglorious jock. Heart, orchard of heirloom teacups, heart, antonym of galaxy, heart, loud talker. Heart, perpetual and whipped, heart, idiot timepeice, heart, shrewd fish waddling towards paradise.

KRISTEN MCHENRY

Box

Box	for observational
purposes	
Box	to notate,
to deconstruct.	
Insert Tab A.	It's hypnotic the motion
of tuck and fold.	
Imagine:	flaps as wings
I have kept my life	
small, the way you asked me to.	
Box:	Imagine it flattened, a throwing star,
how much more hands	
are capable of than this.	
Box	upturned carelessly on a slipshod lawn, unwitting
shelter for that which tumbles into it.	
Box	we will not breathe a word
of containment.	Box, a holding place. In a way, a heart. Miraculous
origami.	Enjoy, especially the
violent	surgery
of splitting	tape with razors
of looking	and removing.
Then	the breaking down,
A weakened	structure, lolling
against others	similarly collapsed.
Gone soft,	we think in our power.
Broken down.	I have always
sagged in your honor.	
Refused	to hold, or
hold up.	

To-Do List After An Hour of Writing in
The Ballard Library, 1-29-11

1. A bad bird poem from Sadie's dream of crows. Reference: Great, black beating wings/molting as a metaphor.
2. Look up the Latin name for "pig". Write about the difficulty of skinning after slaughter; the incessant need for patience and blowtorching.
3. Ponder: Depression as preponderance of passion; too much energy, nowhere to go. Include these words: Light's edge, gobsmacked, implacable, mourning.
4. List the ways that pigs and birds are different. Who gets to leave the body. Which is a thing released, which is a thing bound to inexorably to flesh. Make it unpredictable.
5. Think of skin as bald, like ice cream. Think of it melting, as alkaline. It's too early to consider what emerges.
6. Best form for all this a villanelle, as contains in within it's very rhythm a haunting repetition, etc.
7. But not a bird emerging after all. Rather something red and wild, all hair and feathers, screaming, perhaps. Don't say "perhaps".
8. Something about skipping off down the sidewalk, the body slithered out of like a cheap coat. (Don't say "cheap coat.")
9. Include this clip: Outside the window as you a write, a homeless man picks up a bright purple bag left in the bushes. He shakes it upside down, but it's empty. He leaves it; continues on.

Middlemost

Then there's that stage
between Mother and Crone
when the maidens, clean as dryer sheets
are unbearable to fathom,
and all your chickadees, real or
proverbial, have flown the coop
and you find
yourself blissfully alone
with your attitude problem and your
ungodly imagination, and to top it
all off, your pretty certain you've developed
the power of invisibility, having sat
still and silent for so long
on a trunkful of vignettes and jittery,
unsettled wisdom—having found yourself
again, and at such an age, as unformed and
uninhabited
as the body of a Maiden.

Penny the Pig

Penny's favorite sucker, her ever-lasting gobstopper, was a plastic Fun Family Collection boy-teenager figurine in a red striped t-shirt and khakis, with a stiff curlicue of yellow hair, and black slash eyebrows. His shoes were lumpy white globs of resin like something had gone wrong on the assembly line.

She dug him up behind the barn the night Cecily left him there during the hailstorm.

Penny kept him safe from the other pigs; dragged him off and buried him each night, sat jealously near his dirt hole, until she dug him up again, rolled him with her overheated tongue, and shook him in her mouth as though to snap his rigid little neck. After a week he was a pockmarked mess, his brows mottled with teeth pricks and his blob-shoes dull with grime.

Penny had made him his own. Broken him in.

Penny screamed and grunted the night Cecily figured where he was and stole him back. She smacked Penny with a split-off fence panel and ran into the house sobbing, clutching the boy by his dented chest. She spent all night scouring his body with a potato scrubber, and painting his shoes with Great Grape nail polish. She filled in his brows with magic marker and put him back on her bed stand with the dad, the Grandpa, the Mom, the prim sister, and the squinty aunt with a feather hat.

Penny forgot about him after a few days, but Cecily never found forgiveness in her heart. When Andy ran off junior year for a job in Akron, daddy moved up north for good, and momma sold the property for less than it was worth, Cecily made it a point to throw rotted crabapples at Penny until the station wagon was packed, and we couldn't wait for her any more. Penny was lumbering off toward the barn with her ass pointed at us as we drove off towards Indiana. I don't think she even saw us leave. Cecily carried her family in a ziplock bag all the way to Fort Wayne until she forgot it one morning in a Motel Six. Momma said we weren't going back. We weren't made of gas money, and anyway Cece needed to learn there were consequences for carelessness.

KRISTEN MCHENRY

Teaching Peaches

I dreamed
I taught a workshop
on how to eat a peach,
despite what little
I know
of peaches, what little I know
of bright and sweet.
Still, I dished them out
fat slices.

You have to go
slow to really know it,
I said with all sincerity.
I ate the pit before they noticed it.
I wanted them
to comprehend
only the lavish, the most
abundant slice.

voices

the voices get louder when the guests are ready to leave promising better hearing next time addresses baking blueberry pie memories rain outside is like god shaking fine sugar on a cake clumsy rocking chair grand piano glass table decoration if you would like to nearly fell into one old lady who says the next time I meet you I will be able to hear what you say hearing aid and the second has brilliant blue eyes and earrings to match and talks about 1949 and poetry and living in New York you know silent unspoken the whisper of ghosts who prowl the dining room dining rooms are so important and my mother used to admire that chest so much the next time I meet you we'll be in heaven you know you remind me of the times I used to lie in bed at the top of the wooden stairs with holes and listen to my grandfather's voice rising and falling and when he died I lost his voice and I never really had it at all in a brown glass bottle you know she kept 33 1/3 rpm vinyl records in that cabinet have you read Tennyson do you know about the quest and there was a Chilean captain came to our church and my parents were Methodist missionaries and my grandfather's voice rose and fell like a prayer I couldn't hear what he said just his voice undulating deep water thank you so much you are such a wonderful host and I want to say how wonderful it was to meet you how close the railroad station was to the hotel yes we went to Scotland

Excerpt from *My Name Is Brain Brian*

Scholastic Inc. 1993. Chapter 7, Pages 71-75.

For dinner we have spaghetti with sauce from a jar, cold chicken, and string beans left over from last night. We don't talk too much when we eat because you never know when you'll say something that'll make my father angry. My mother says he's grumpy at dinner because he works so hard to support us and because he has a bad back. We're almost finished eating when she tells my dad, "We got a postcard from you father today." "Why'd you wait so long to tell me?" my father asks. That's what I mean about being grumpy. "Lemme see it," Hilary says. My mother hands me the postcard to hand to Hilary. It's a picture of an alligator wearing sunglasses. I turn the card over. Hilary grabs it from me. "I asked first," she says. "I'll read it out loud." "How's he doing?" my father asks my mother. "Has he hooked up with a rich Florida widow yet?" "Listen to the card," my mother answers. I love my grandpa Albert. I like him better than my father, his own son. After my grandma died last year, Grandpa Al didn't tell so many jokes or do the neat things I like to do with him, like fishing. Now he's in Florida visiting his brother and "checking it out." "Brian," he told me before he left, "a change of scene is what I need. I'll see the sea and then we'll see." He put his arm around me and gave me a hug. "Your grandma wouldn't want me to be feeling so sad. I just can't help it." His eyes filled up with tears. I miss Grandma, too, but I don't think about her all the time the way he does. I don't believe he's even looking for any kind of widow to hook up with, even a rich Florida one. "So read it," I tell Hilary. She reads, "'Dear Family.'" She stops to laugh. "Look," she says, showing my father the card. "He spelled dear like the animal, d-e-e-r." "You know what he means," my father says. "Just read it." "Dear Family," Hilary begins again. "'Here I am in sunny Florida.'" She looks up again. "He spelled sunny with only one 'n.' And here's a word I can't even read. Doesn't he know how to spell?" "Would you shut up and read the card," my father scolds. "How can I shut up and read?" Hilary asks. My father reaches over and grabs the card from Hilary. He reads it to himself then looks up at us. "He's fine," he says. "No rich widows yet." "Can I have it back, Dad?" Hilary asks. "Not if you're going to make fun of your grandfather." "I'm sorry," Hilary says. "I wasn't making fun. It's just that he spells like Brian. I didn't know that." My mother tells my father. "You're not such a great speller yourself, Roy Toomey. In fact, you spell just

like your father." She smiles at me. "And they both make the same kind of mistakes you make, Brian. I remember the first Valentine's Day card your father sent me, above the printed verse he wrote, 'Deer Ellen.' D-e-e-r. The same mistake!" "Would you all just knock it off about people's mistake?" my father growls. He pushes his chair away from the table and gets up. "I've got some calls to make. Hilary, you'll do the dishes alone tonight." "No fair," Hilary protests to my mother as soon my father is out of earshot. "He's mad at me because everyone in this family but you and me are lousy spellers. It's not fair."

My mother sighs. "Hilary," she says, "drop it. Brian, give Tyson his bath." I peel spaghetti off Tyson's face and bib and pull him out of his high chair. "Want to take a bath, Tyson?" I ask. "Swim, swim," Tyson says. I hold him out so he can pretend he's swimming through the air. As I pass my father's place, I grab the postcard. That night, before I start my homework, I stare at the postcard. The handwriting looks just like mine. I read.

Deer Family, Cheers from sunny Floraid. Whether is great. Floraid is an incredible place. Josie would have loved it. Hows my wonderful grand children? Be home soon. Uncle Joe sends love to. Grandpa Al

I wonder, is grandpa dyslexic? Does he have the same learning difference I have? Maybe my dad is dyslexic, too. Maybe I inherited it the way I inherited my mom's blue eyes and my dad's long legs. Has Tyson inherited dyslexia? I decide that if he has, I'll be sure he doesn't have to wait until sixth grade to get special help like I did.

Left Is Right And Right Is Left. Right?

It is one of the high points of my week. I am in my weekly tap class. We have completed our warm up steps and are doing short combinations. I smile at my mirrored reflection as I note that I am wearing my red Gap T shirt with "Inspi(red)" printed across its front. I have been inspired, I think, as I've made my living as a fiction writer with an arts practice on the side. Writing, drawing, painting. And continuing to tap. I read the word again and think, so what if I am dyslexic. I lose my place in the sequence of cramp rolls. Something is wrong with that reflection. Should I be able to read what the T-shirt says when I am looking in a mirror? The letters and word should be reversed. Right? I am not sure. I am dyslexic and have trouble keeping such distinctions straight. The word, so easily read in the mirror, mocks me, reminding me of all the other times I am not sure what goes from left to right or right to left. Which way is north or south. Reminding me of the times I have been lost driving or walking, how I have trouble remembering how to spell words, do multiplication, learn a language other than the one I absorbed as a child. Mocking me for hearing every word in my head as I silently read. I am distracted by these thoughts and having trouble with a simple combination of riffs. As we start a new tap sequence I feel for the shoulder seam of my shirt. It confirms that my shirt is on inside out. I cannot keep tapping. I am not doing a very good job of it any way. I leave the tap line to put my shirt on right side out. When I am back in the line I check myself in the mirror. "Inspir(red)" is now reversed. I regain my composure and complete the class.

You might wonder that I can tap dance with dancing's continual need to keep right foot / left foot functions distinct. It was a big problem for me when I first started tapping as a six-year-old. Fortunately, my teacher, - Miss Irene - noticed I was having trouble and put a ribbon on my right tap shoe. It helped tremendously. In 2010 I added printmaking to my practice of the visual arts. I have been learning to do monotype, linocut, etching, and aquatint. All these processes require that I reverse images. If the drawing of a person is looking to the left in the etched lines of a copper plate, the person will be looking to the right in the print. A tree on the right side of the plate will print on the left side of the paper. Left is right and right is left. And as if that is not enough of a challenge for a

dyslexic, printmaking involves a lot of organized, procedural thinking. Each technique has a long list of to do's before you pull your artist's proof of a print. Aquatint, for example, has several procedural steps involving a rosin box, a heated surface, pages of an old phone book, protective gloves, a tray of chemicals, running water, and the all important timer. For a dyslexic, printmaking presents a lot of challenges. But I love doing it. Why? I've wondered. Why do I like it so much when it is so challenging and there are other art processes that are procedurally so much easier and that I already know better? Recently, going to the print shop to do aquatint on an etched copper plate, I had a light bulb moment. I love printmaking precisely because I am dyslexic. The printmaking processes with all of their detailed directions, materials, and procedures keep the deficient left side of my brain busily pre-occupied and out of the way leaving my more highly functional creative right side free to function in all its right braininess glory. And leaving me open to be inspired.

To write this essay I had to check that I assigned the correct qualities to the left and right sides of the brain. I had not. But now it's right. Right?

Nick

The first night I slept with Nick, we talked until dawn. He presented his past as though this were part of a monologue he had memorized long ago, acquitting himself admirably with tears where tears were required, or with laughter where it was appropriate to laugh. It was as though these were all things he had heard about someone else, and was now duly reporting, as though his own life were something he had observed, and not something he had lived. 'And where were you?' I wanted to ask more than once but perhaps it would have been better to wonder, 'And where are you?' since to that question some immediate answer might more reasonably have been expected. He and I were the same age exactly, but he made me feel wizened. It was as though he had found, with his detachment, the secret of eternal youth and though in my mind I was ahead of him at every turning, mistrusting his distance, I in fact envied him his innocence, an innocence not of the fruit of experience, but of experience itself, which left him full of restlessness, I gladly conflated his lust for me and his lust for life. I talked to him all night, night after night and my own confessional monologues were given not so much from an urge to communicate anything (I seemed not to care about myself then), but from a hunger to draw him out, a belief that if you tell difficult things with strong emotion, you can extract their authentic equivalent. I wanted to give him the gift of his own sophistication.

To Die

The verb 'to die' is one of the few that is only readily usable in the past and future tenses. We accept, he died last year, and we can easily accept, we will all die someday. But the present tense, I die, you die, he dies that should be cancelled right out of the language. And to have to use the verb in that tense not for a single moment but for weeks and months and then years: that is altogether intolerable. We tend to think, furthermore, that 'to die' is a verb of the instant, like 'to dive'. It is a thing that takes almost no measurable time. One second you are on the board, looking at the water, and the next second you have left the board behind you and taken the plunge. So with many deaths: one second you are alive, and the next second you are dead. Science defines death in this way, and on your death certificate indicates a particular moment as the moment of death. But sometimes the verb 'to die' is more like the verb 'to age', and is a thing that happens by terrible and slow and imperceptible degrees. My mother was not given a chance to age in that manner, and was, by way of inadequate compensation, given an experience of death as gradual as a life span.

The Inspiration of Dyslexia

You will read of so many people who are or were dyslexic, yet during their lifetime have done amazing things, or became huge successes. In fact so many stories abound nowadays, that you would be forgiven for thinking that being dyslexic is a "must" to have any chance of getting anywhere! Well it's not! It is my belief that these people would have been great whether they were dyslexic or not, but what being dyslexic did contribute to their lives was that it forced them to learn in a different way. And when you start from an early age learning in a different way, it becomes habit. You go on in your life looking at everything in a "different" way. In America they coined a phrase for this "Thinking outside the box". There are many stories about "thinking outside the box", and to be honest I read as many of them as I can. I find them inspirational. My favorite was not one that I read but one that was told to me and if you don't mind I'd like to share it with you.

It's about a man who lived alone in a small basement apartment in Boston. Let's say his name was Johnny. The apartment was tiny, but it was cheap. Johnny was a Domestic refuse control operative, or as we say in Ireland, a "Bin Man".

During the 60's there was a huge move in Boston to cut back on government spending and Johnny lost his job. He had no income and his rent was getting seriously into arrears. His Landlady was a kind woman but could only go so far, and when after two months Johnny still hadn't got a job she called down to the basement. Johnny told her he was trying, but wasn't getting anywhere. The landlady produced a clipping from the jobs section of the Boston Globe and gave it to him. One of the university's had advertised for a Janitor for the administration building. Johnny was delighted and called to the university that day where he got an interview with one of the Junior managers, let's say his name was Dave. The interview went well and Johnny all but had the job, when Dave said "right then, just fill out this form and we'll look at when you can start". Johnny now had a problem. He couldn't read, he told Dave this and as Much as Dave regretted it, he couldn't hire him. He explained that the College's insurance would not allow him to.

JOHNNY left the office feeling terrible. However as he made his way through the campus he notice that the littler bin's were overflowing, mostly with empty "soda" can's. The next Day Johnny arrived and began collecting the can's and... yes you guessed it, he went every day and ten years later Johnny became the largest scrap metal dealer in the North East of America. In an amazing twist of fate, and as recognition of his success, Johnny was offered an honorary business degree by the SAME college that had rejected him ten years earlier. A big dinner was held to confer it upon him, and ironically it was Dave, now a senior administrator, who handed Johnny over his scroll. After the ceremony Dave and Johnny found themselves sitting alone at the table for a moment and Johnny recounted to Dave the interview he had had with Dave ten years earlier. Dave hadn't remembered up to that point but then, maybe to be polite he at least said, he remembered! They toasted and Dave took a sip of his drink. He eyed Johnny and remarked, "My word Johnny, look at what you have done with yourself, all this success and you couldn't even read. Can you imagine how far you could have come if you COULD read?" Johnny smiled and said, "Dave If I could read... I'd be your Janitor!"

I tell this story to myself when I feel at a low ebb, or when I think that things are not working out for me.

Amazing Shortcomings, Amazing Gifts

Note: The following is based on an excerpt from the Epilogue to In the Mind's Eye – Creative Visual Thinkers, Gifted Dyslexics and the Rise of Visual Technologies, by Thomas G. West, Prometheus Books, 2009 (Second Edition, with Foreword by Oliver Sacks, MD). Here a dyslexic author tells the story of a dyslexic grandfather and his dyslexic grandson.

"I knew I was different in the way that I thought, but I didn't realize why I was so dumb at spelling... and rote memory and arithmetic... The first time I realized how different... brains could be... was when I bumped into Jim Olds at a dinner party back in the late sixties. Jim... was a professor here [at Caltech]... famous for his pleasure center work... A speaker talked about the way we think and compared it to holography. Jim was across the table from me. I said, 'Oh, yes. When I'm inventing an instrument or whatever, I see it in my head and I rotate it and try it out and move the gears. If it doesn't work, I rebuild it in my head.' And he looked at me and said, 'I don't see a thing in my head with my eyes closed.' We spent the rest of the evening... trying to figure out how two professors – both obviously gifted people at Caltech in the Biology Division – could possibly think at all, because we were so different. So then I took this up with Roger Sperry [Nobel Laureate and near lab neighbor] and I realized that I had some amazing shortcomings as well as some amazing gifts."

The above passage is excerpted from the oral history project at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena.¹ The speaker is the late William J. Dreyer, Ph.D., who is increasingly recognized as one of the major innovators in the early days of the biotech revolution that is now washing over all of us. In September 2007, one of his inventions was placed in the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, D.C. – the first gas-phase automated protein sequencer, which he patented in 1977. The sign over the machine on exhibit reads: "The Automated Gas-Phase Protein Sequencer: William J. Dreyer and the Creation of a New Technology."

A strong visual thinker, and in many ways a classic dyslexic, Dreyer developed new ways of thinking about molecular biology. With his powerful dyslexic visual imagination, he could somehow see the molecules interacting with each other. He (with his colleague J. Claude Bennett) advanced new ideas based on new data about how genes recombine themselves to create the immune system. Sometimes he

was almost entirely alone. His ideas turned out to be 12 years ahead of their time. Most did not like this new theory because it conflicted with the conventional beliefs held by most experts in the field at the time. "It was so counter to the dogma of the time that nobody believed it," his widow, Janet Dreyer, explained to me. Dreyer's approach also used a form of scientific investigation ("peptide mapping") with which most immunologists were then unfamiliar. "Knowing what we know now pretty much any biologist would look at Bill's data and say that is what it has to mean. But few could understand it then," she noted. However, gradually, they all learned to think the way Dreyer thought. Then, it was obvious that Dreyer (and Bennett) had to be right.

TO SEE WHAT OTHERS CANNOT SEE

In his earlier school days, Dreyer had the usual reading, writing, memory and other academic difficulties experienced by most dyslexics. Throughout his career, he avoided reading and writing when ever possible. But in time, he was able to make it to college and even graduate school – where he developed his own ways of learning and began to find roles that made use of his strengths while he learned to get help in his areas of weakness. He joined a study group. The others in the group all took careful notes in the lectures. He took no notes. He just sat there while he listened and observed carefully. Then after the lecture, they provided him with the detailed data, and he told them what it all meant. "He was giving the big picture and all the major concepts...," explained Janet Dreyer. Eventually, surviving a major life-threatening illness made him realize it was time to refocus his life – and then his fascination with laboratory work began to draw him in.

Soon, with his remarkable ability to visualize (with his dyslexic imagination) the molecular interactions, the young Bill Dreyer became a star in the laboratory. While in graduate school in Seattle, Washington state, USA, and while working at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland, he could tell his professors and colleagues which were the best experiments to do. Somehow he knew how to proceed and where to go in this brand new field of study that came to be known as protein chemistry.

Dreyer was seeing patterns and connections the others were not seeing. Like many highly successful dyslexics, he could thrive at the leading edge of a new field. Like so many dyslexics, Dreyer seemed far better suited to

creating new knowledge than he was in memorizing old knowledge. This pattern is frequently observed – but little understood, especially among conventional educators – at all levels.

At this time, Dreyer's professors and section heads would write the grant proposals, get the funding and write the research papers – with him and for him – based on his ideas and observations. "The money just came. Because he was doing good work, grants would just be there for him," observed Janet Dreyer. He was happy at NIH but eventually (after a previous Caltech offer had been refused) in 1963, Caltech persuaded Dreyer to come to Pasadena as a full professor at the age of 33. Clearly, the value of his pioneering work had been recognized.

However, later, because of the further development of his new – and increasingly heretical – ideas, William Dreyer could not get funding from academic or foundation sources for inventing his new instruments. His department head would get irate phone calls from professors from other institutions complaining about Dreyer's publications and talks. He gave many talks at the time, making many attendees angry, although some could see the importance of his innovative observations. "He was on the lecture circuit then and he [gave these talks] a lot." Of course, these were not really unproven theories, explained his widow Janet. She pointed out that Dreyer was sure of his ground because he had the data to prove the veracity of his ideas. "It was not merely a hypothesis in that paper, it was real data." However, it was data in a form so new and so alien that almost everyone in the field could not understand what he was talking about. In time, these professors, and all their students, came to see, much later, that William Dreyer had been right all along.

Because he could not get funding from the usual sources, Dreyer went to private companies to manufacture the innovative instruments he had designed and built himself – something quite unusual and discouraged at the time but now wildly popular among universities hoping for a share of large royalty payments. Seeing the potential for his inventions (and their scientific impact) but having a hatred of administration and corporate politics, Dreyer came to be, as he told me, the "idea man" for seven new biotech companies (including Applied Biosystems) and bought himself a high-altitude, pressurized, small airplane with some of the proceeds. Years later, when Susumu Tonegawa was awarded a Nobel Prize (Physiology or Medicine, 1987) for work he had done in Switzerland, his innovative

sequencing work proved (through experiments that were illegal in the US at the time) that Dreyer and his colleague had been correct in their predictions many years earlier.²

LEARNING BY DOING

Somewhat later, Dreyer taught molecular biology to his dyslexic grandson who was clever with computers but was having a very hard time in high school. The grandson went to live with his grandfather. Employing the grandson as a kind of apprentice and assistant, Dreyer would start each work day (using a form of applied just-in-time learning) saying something like: "I want you to write this little search program for me today [for genetic data on the internet] but first let me explain the biology you need to know to do this task." In time, working daily with Dreyer, the grandson skipped the latter part of high school, most of college, all of graduate school and began doing advanced "post-doc" level work – writing computer programs, doing advanced programming while developing databases, graphic user interfaces (GUIs), and other tools.

The grandson also learned to use sophisticated scientific information visualization techniques to help link various human traits to sections of the genetic code. In doing this work, he noted that he used his "visual thinking ability to design the architecture of the programs... visualizing the components in [his] head, trying it out and fixing what doesn't work, before I write the code – much like [his] grandfather..." He is not only doing high level work; some argue that the grandson has in fact been working at the leading edge – in recent years co-authoring peer-reviewed journal articles.³ Indeed, one of the grandson's work colleagues only got his own Ph.D. degree (and a required publication) because the grandson was able to write a tutorial and GUI that helped a the member of the colleague's required publication review committee better understand the significance of the advanced work done by the colleague.⁴

Bill Dreyer, never one to read many books, did read *In the Mind's Eye* and telephoned me to explain: "Your book describes the way I think. This is my life. The next time you come to LA area, let's talk. I want to tell you my story."⁵ This contact led to many visits, many discussions, some recorded conversations and a long-term friendship. Dreyer died of cancer in the spring of 2004. One of the enduring passions of his later work had been to try to understand the relationship between his dyslexia, his visual thinking

and the high levels of creativity he had experienced in his own life and work.

Several years before his death, Dreyer had participated in a small conference on visualization technologies and dyslexia held at the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland, flying east with his wife Janet in his own airplane.⁶ Years afterward, as his health declined, Janet eventually sent out news to friends that he had stopped eating and was nearing the end. I read the email at an internet cafe in Dublin, Ireland, where I had been giving talks for the Irish Dyslexia Association. (The Chinese students playing games and emailing at the internet cafe wondered why this visitor suddenly started to weep as he read emails from his computer screen.) I immediately phoned Bill from our hotel and to my surprise we had a long conversation, our last.

Shortly afterward, I traveled back home to Washington, DC, and then on to Pasadena, California, arriving the day before he died. He was then unable to talk, but I assured him that I would continue the work on the talents of dyslexics that he thought so important and so fascinating. My second book, *Thinking Like Einstein*, is dedicated to: "William J. Dreyer, 1928-2004, molecular biologist, strong visual thinker, prescient inventor, instrument maker, who loved to fly high to see what others could not see, frequently alone."

MAGNIFICENTLY ILL-ADAPTED ENGINES OF DISCOVERY

The story of the life of William Dreyer and his grandson, Brandon King, brings into sharp focus the considerable advantages, in the right setting, of the dyslexic kind of brain – at least of certain variations within the great diversity of dyslexic brains. (Of course, this story also strongly suggests what sometimes might be possible employing nontraditional educational approaches such as apprenticeship or home schooling.) We can see that this kind of brain – seemingly so magnificently ill-adapted to conventional education – can (sometimes, perhaps often) be a powerful engine of insight, innovation and discovery.

This kind of brain may cause many problems in early conventional schooling but it may also, sometimes, raise some individuals rapidly to the top of a new field of knowledge – pushing forward way beyond the many who are conventionally successful students but who find it hard to conceive of anything really new or really important.

Perhaps they cannot see through to the novel, unexpected solution because they have learned too well exactly what the teacher wanted them to learn, what was expected on the conventional test. Perhaps they cannot easily unlearn what they have been taught. (One high-achieving researcher at NIH, with three professional degrees, in law, medicine and pharmacology, once admitted to me – to my amazement – that he was aware of his own limitations, constrained beneath a kind of glass ceiling. He was aware that in spite of all his own success and academic accomplishments, he “was not dyslexic enough” to do really original, creative and important work – as he had often seen in his dyslexic colleagues.)⁷

With stories such as these, we can begin to understand that these visual-thinking dyslexics do indeed see the world differently. They think differently. They are not like non-dyslexics. They are not like each other. Often, they seem to “see things that others do not see.” (I have been surprised at how this same phrase – with almost exactly the same words – reoccurs with striking frequency in many different and unconnected settings.) Yet these same individuals have great difficulty with things that are easy for almost everyone else – especially at the lower levels of education. In schools, they are constantly tested and drilled on what they are not good at – almost by default.

Why are they never tested, we should ask, in the areas where (some and perhaps many) have enormous talent and can make major contributions in their later life and work?

Can teachers and school psychologists believe that this is possible? I hope that some of the stories offered here have created – and will continue to create – a new vision of what is possible. But this new vision may also require the development of new tests and measures – ones quite different from conventional academic measures – but perhaps ones that are better suited to the new realities of life and work, better suited for the visual-thinking dyslexics but also better suited for many non-dyslexics as well.

At a recent conference in California, I met a child and adolescent psychiatrist who said he had been using *In the Mind's Eye* as a diagnostic tool for years. He explained that he had given his clients something like 40 or 50 copies so far. He asked them to highlight in yellow all those traits that were like themselves and cross out all those that were unlike themselves. I

said, "Oh you mean the list at the end of the book." He said, "Oh no, I use the whole book – it is much more useful than the usual tests and measures. They are all devised by linear thinkers for linear thinkers."

Afterward, it occurred to me that the whole book indeed could readily serve as a rambling catalogue of traits – but that it also would not hurt that these clients would be forced to see in themselves traits shared by important persons who accomplished a great deal, sometimes in spite of their difficulties but more often because of their difficulties and their very different ways of thinking.⁸

To succeed with such extremely mixed abilities, as these individuals often do, one needs to have a deep reservoir of confidence and fortitude to carry on in spite of the judgments of others that you are, in fact, really slow and lazy and stupid.

To maintain the required drive, determination and sense of mission in the face of almost constant early failure and humiliation is often nothing short of miraculous.

It would appear that only a comparatively small number survive these early days with enough confidence and drive to press on, against all odds, to find success in some area of special knowledge, deep understanding and passionate interest. As we have seen, much of *In the Mind's Eye* has been an attempt to understand the nature of this kind of success and the remarkable individuals who seem able to find their way around so many obstacles, seeking an area where they are at home with their work, often performing at very high levels of proficiency and productivity.

I have come to believe that those of us who are trying to understand and to help dyslexics (along with others more or less like them) must come to see that conventional academic remediation is only part of the job – and not the most interesting or important part.

We need to seek ways to help dyslexics find and develop their own talents, large or small, so that they cannot be beaten down – hiding their distinctive talents along with their disabilities. I, for one, believe that one of the best ways – perhaps the only really effective way – to do this is to study the lives and work of highly successful dyslexics (in some detail and in all their great diversity) – to allow other dyslexics to see what can be done as well as showing how it can be done.

PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

I wanted to begin this Epilogue with Bill Dreyer and his grandson because their story shows so clearly the mixed problems and great potential of dyslexic individuals and dyslexic families in a most modern, scientifically-sophisticated and technologically-advanced context. However, as noted previously, I also want to use this Epilogue to give briefly a sense of the broad range of developments and accomplishments since *In the Mind's Eye* was first published years ago. There are very good books that deal with understanding weaknesses and ways to remediate various difficulties – and many of these are listed in my bibliography. But this is not my purpose.

I want, rather, to show how the talents that many dyslexics exhibit are powerful and valuable assets (frequently hidden and misunderstood) in a rapidly changing world. These individuals may appear to be slow and backward, but in many cases they are way ahead of nearly everyone around them – especially those who are mostly blind to what visual thinking dyslexics can do and what they can contribute.

Accordingly, I have put together here [in this Epilogue] a selection of brief snapshots to suggest what we have been learning from individual stories as well as from a few more systematic studies – what has been going right and what has been going wrong. I want to convey the impression that much has been learned but there is much work still to be done.

Over the years, more and more dyslexic individuals have become aware of their own special talents as they confront their long-hidden weaknesses and humiliations. Many are finally coming to understand the positive aspects of their own mixed abilities well enough to give themselves permission to talk about and think about things they no longer need to see as only failures and weaknesses to be hidden and denied. They have discovered that it does not go away just because you pretend it is not there.

Fathers are realizing that they cannot drive it out of their sons by ever more rigid discipline and punishment. Rather, they are learning that it is best to confront it, face on, with the new realization that there are hidden talents to be acknowledged (and used) as well as fears that will increasingly fade away in the clear light of day.

(To my surprise, I have often found that only one hour of my lecturing about talented dyslexics and new powerful information visualization

technologies can free these fathers, and others like them, to see themselves and their families in very different ways, allowing themselves to think and say things never possible before. They come up to me after a talk and say: "I'm not really dyslexic but let me tell you... I've never told this to anyone before...")

Learning to see the positive side can be powerful indeed. Of course, there is still a great deal of work to be done, but it is focused on increasing strengths rather than decreasing weaknesses. Consequently, I think it is urgent at this time to reconsider the kinds of things that need to be done – to take seriously, at long last, the varied talents and considerable strengths of dyslexics. The time is right. The time is late. The time is long overdue.

Those on the front lines – the teachers, tutors, parents, advocates and school psychologists – those who have cared the most, those who have been able to understand when no one else did. Unfortunately, these same people have often done less than they could have done because they have attended to only half of the job. They have too often focused mainly on fixing the problems – and almost totally ignored developing the talents. This should change – and I hope that it will change soon.

¹ California Institute of Technology, Oral History Project, session one, tape 1, side 1, interview of February 18, 1999 with Shirley K. Cohen, published by Caltech Archives 2005. (Available as PDF at <http://oralhistories.library.caltech.edu/108/>.) Dreyer's high interest in his own visual thinking is evident in his first introductory remarks at the beginning of the five days of interviews: "I was just at UCLA two days ago with people studying brain imaging... They tended to want a uniform brain, with everyone having the same anatomy and thinking the same way. That isn't at all true; it's amazing how different people can be. And in particular the book that I loaned to you – *In the Mind's Eye* by Thomas G. West – is about the only one I've ever seen that deals with the subject of people who have extreme visual imagery in the way they think. I wanted to preface all of this [set of interviews] with this little story, because... it has a profound implication." The story that is quoted at the beginning of this Epilogue immediately follows Dreyer's introductory statement. (It happens that the Jim Olds mentioned here is the father of another Jim Olds who is the current director of the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. Roger Sperry, also mentioned in this quotation, was Caltech Hixon Professor of Psychobiology 1954-1984. Sperry was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1981.)

² Albert I. Tauber and Scott H. Podolsky, *Generation of Diversity: Clonal Selection Theory and the Rise of Molecular Immunology*, Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 207. In the words of Tauber and Podolsky, this page: "This experiment marked the point of no return for the domination of the antibody diversity question by nucleotide studies: it was Susumu Tonegawa's final proof of the Dreyer-Bennett V-C translocation hypothesis through the use of restriction enzymes."

³ Brandon King's two papers: "Mining gene expression data by interpreting principal components." By Roden JC, King BW, Trout D, Mortazavi A, Wold BJ, Hart CE. *BMC Bioinformatics*. 2006 Apr 7, vol. 7, p. 194. "A mathematical and computational framework for quantitative comparison and integration of large-scale gene expression data." By Hart CE, Sharenbroich L, Bornstein BJ, Trout D, King B, Mjolsness E, Wold BJ. *Nucleic Acids Research*. 2005 May 10, vol. 33 (8). pp. 2580-94. Print 2005. At this writing, in June of 2011, Brandon has

completed two semesters at the University of California, Berkeley – which is well known for its high-quality support of students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties.

⁴ Multiple conversations with William Dreyer, Janet Dreyer and Brandon King, 2001-2004. Additional clarifications and further details provided by Brandon King via email, March 23, 2009, are provided below. This additional material, supporting the summary descriptions provided in the main text, is provided here in full, with some light editing of the informal email text. This email clearly shows the value of the highly visual approach (so common among dyslexics) used by the grandson in a manner similar to the use of the visual approach by the grandfather in molecular biology research. “Hi Tom, Thank you for forwarding to this to me. I did get a chance to review part of it and wanted to mention a few clarifications. One minor one is that while I have done visualization software, it is less than 20 percent, maybe even 10 percent of the work that I do and have done. I am [mostly] doing advanced programming developing databases/GUIs/tools [for] solving leading edge problems ([in] all of which I use my visual thinking ability to design the architecture of the programs), but many programs do not involve advanced visualization techniques. Handling the massive amount of data and tracking information about the data (meta data), requires a lot of software infrastructure that does not yet exist. Building the visualization tools that I would like to see requires this software infrastructure to be built in order to be able to pull all the right pieces together. While advanced visualization is one of my goals, like my grandfather, I’ve discovered the need to develop new infrastructure (tools/software) before building more advanced visualization techniques. So to summarize: I’m working on leading edge stuff, much of which has been the non-visual software infrastructure (which I build by visualizing the components in my head, trying it out and fixing what doesn’t work, before I write the code – much like my grandfather), but instead of turning gears in my head to build a new physical machine, I am designing, building and tweaking software infrastructure in my head. Also, when it comes to the story of the Ph.D student, I feel it’s important to correct this one... What happened is that each Ph.D. student needs to [have a] publication in a scientific journal in order to receive their Ph.D. When he submitted his paper to the journal for review it was rejected because the reviewers couldn’t understand the significance of the software (visualization + infrastructure) and how it was leading to some pretty amazing conclusions. What I did next was [that] I wrote a GUI (Graphical User Interface) that combined the infrastructure and visualization – which previously required that: (1) you know how to program in the Python programming language and (2) could understand and use the clustering and visualization tools [provided] within Python – into a simple tool. This tool allows the user to load the data, do the clustering of the data, and visualize and compare the data using the advanced visualization tools the Ph.D. student had written (all from an easy to use interface with no programming experience needed). I then took the data from the Ph.D. student’s paper and wrote a tutorial showing how to use the GUI to load and analyze the data much like the Ph.D. student had done. The paper was resubmitted for a second review – this time with my name on it as well – which mentioned the GUI and tutorial in the paper. Upon [the second] review, one of the reviewers... changed their mind and said yes. [The reviewer] mentioned... [that] using the GUI and the tutorial gave [them] a better understanding of what the Ph.D. student had accomplished. [It]... was hard to understand the significance without being able to use the tools. Since I was able to bridge that gap for the reviewers, the paper was accepted and published. I got my first publication, and the Ph.D. student (who did amazingly advanced work, by the way, which is why the reviewers had trouble with it) got the publication he needed in order to meet the publication requirement for getting his Ph.D. That’s pretty much it for clarification. Thanks again, Tom, for sending this along.”

⁵ Personal communication, William J. Dreyer, August 1995. Quotation given is actually a paraphrase of the initial contact.

⁶ “Visualization Research Agenda Meeting” held February 15-16, 2000. This meeting, organized by the National Library of Medicine was intended to develop a research agenda on the impact of visualization technologies and possible implications for visual thinkers and dyslexics. New computer graphic and information visualization technologies are seen as an emerging force in redefining the abilities required to do high level work in many fields – and as a unifying force across the traditional boundaries between science, medicine, art, history, geography and culture. Participants included: Donald Lindberg, Director of the National Library of Medicine; Alvy Ray Smith, Pixar and Microsoft; Jock Mackinlay, Xerox PARC; Gordon Sherman, Harvard Medical School; Guinevere Eden, Georgetown University; James Olds, Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study, George Mason University; and William J. Dreyer, California Institute of Technology, among others from NIH institutes, commercial and academic institutions.

⁷ Personal communication, R. S., March 2000.

⁸ Personal communication, S. M., Santa Barbara DARC conference, January 31, 2009. (Quotations are in paraphrase.)

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NAOMI FOLB

Aahus, October 2011