



The Language of English Literature

How English Sounds

**Through literature we remember;
Through us language engenders.**

by

John Wulsin

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Sponsored by the

Waldorf High School Research Project

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HOW ENGLISH SOUNDS

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Preface

This research project is two-fold. Part One explores the language of poetry in English, as it unfolds, from 800 to the 1800s AD. What do changes in the language reflect or suggest about changing consciousness in English-speaking peoples? As a teacher of teenagers, I conclude this research, in Part Two, with reflections on the relationship between the evolving stages of the English language and the developmental stages of adolescents. How might the evolution of English poetry both reflect, and especially affect, the development of a teenager? Or, in other words, how can the Spirit of the English language best help adolescents in their development in the context of a Waldorf Education?

Part One should stand on its own; Part Two refers often to Part One. As “research,” this project includes little of the disciplines of much contemporary, quantitative, statistical research. Hence it offers little in the way of conclusions. Rather, this project proceeds in the spirit of inviting anyone interested to continue such “re-search,” searching, again and again and again.

PART ONE

I INTRODUCTION

Most of us remember the thrill of pretending to write, probably while playing school at home. We pretended that these scribbles, these signs, actually meant something, actually had meaning, actually were important.

The next stage is savored above all in Waldorf First Grades, as children experience revelations through attention to each letter of the alphabet, to its shape, its story, its character, its flavor. Typically, mountains become M, a fish becomes F, a king becomes K, a bear B. While children experience consonants as distillations of the outer world, the teacher helps them to experience the vowels as reflections, not of the outer world, but of moods, of soul attitudes. A story evoking protectiveness may lead to the O. A story of open-hearted wonder may foster A. A little fir tree, reaching for the heavens, but needing to root itself as deeply in the earth, may evoke the ee sound of E. For the child at this stage, the whole alphabet resonates with multi-dimensional connotations, echoing the forms of the outer world, the feelings of the inner world.

However, the more fluently we learn to read, the more we read through the signs themselves, the letters, to the content suggested by the letter-group, the words. Increasingly, we read through the words on the page, to the meaning. Increasingly, we hear through the sounds in our ear, to the meaning. The more conscious we become of the content of the stories, the more unconscious we become of the language itself, of the medium in which the stories live.

Literature expands our consciousness of the human condition. However, we can lose ourselves in literature. In a certain way, self-awareness is only possible through attention to language itself. We have to pull back some of our focus on the message, and give a kind of slant-glance to the medium itself. Language is the medium of our story, of literature.

This project is an exploration, not in the spirit of recent scholarly deconstruction, in which meaning, story, are often disregarded as unknowable, hence irrelevant, and all attention focuses simply on interrelationship within the language itself. The Deconstructionist seems to apply the light of consciousness to the fluids of the eye, leaving it dry, unable to reflect/radiate any more between outer and inner worlds.

Thoreau said one has to look at nature, a woodchuck for example, out of the side of one's eyes, to be able to know it. Part One of this project is essentially an attempt to understand the Spirit of the English Language. To do so, we will look at stages of the story of English Literature, with a slant-glance, or a "slant-listen" at the language itself, as the evolving nature of the language itself may suggest the evolving consciousness of the English-speaking peoples.

II BACKGROUND

As we consider the origins of English language and literature, we want to remember Ralph Waldo Emerson's statement, "The English language is the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven." At the same time we must begin by remembering one of the primary sources, or springs, for many of those tributaries, Sanskrit. The Sanskrit word *pitar* is a source for the Latin *Pater*, the German *vater*, and thence the English *father*. The Sanskrit *bhratar* is the source not only of the Greek *phrater* and the Latin *frater*, but also of the Dutch *braeder*, the German *bruder*, the Russian *brat*, and the Irish *brathair*, as well as our English *brother*.

The particular language which most permeated the British Isles during the centuries B.C. was the Celtic tongue, what we now call "Gaelic." Through waves of successive invaders the Celtic peoples were driven south to Cornwall and Brittany, West to Wales, and north to Scotland, with Ireland remaining intact. The Celtic language virtually evaporated from the new languages of the land, unlike the cloudy mists, which didn't. Several of the twelve remaining Celtic words in Old English are *crag* and *tor* (high rock), *combe* (deep valley, as in Wycombe) and *puca* (evil spirit, as in Puck). Major writers in English, of Celtic background, include Jonathon Swift, Robert Burns, Sir Edmund Burke, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, John Synge, Dylan Thomas, Seamus Heaney, and Eavan Boland.

When Julius Caesar arrived on the shores off Britain, in 55B.C., he was so unfamiliar with the higher tides compared to the bathtub of the Mediterranean, that his troops pulled their boats up high on shore and proceeded to forage inland. When they returned, a high tide had taken his fleet out to sea. Fortunately for Caesar, the Celts did not know and did not attack. Reinforcements in Normandy soon restored his force, and the Latin-speaking Romans were able to proceed, building roads and *-castra* (camps) in places such as Chester, Manchester, Winchester, Cirencester. After centuries, the collapsing Roman Empire withdrew its forces from England's native shores, around 410 A.D.

As the Roman tide receded, a new tide arrived. The Angles (from the German/Danish peninsula) settled in the East. The Saxons (from the North Sea Coast) settled in the South and West. The Jutes (from Denmark) settled in the Southeast, what is now Kent. In spite of the leadership of the historic King Arthur, the Celtic Britons were driven north into Scotland, west into Wales, south into Cornwall and Brittany. "The English language arrived on point of sword." [Philpott] The mighty new inhabitants began to call themselves *Angelcynn* (Angle-kin). Their land they began to call *Englaland* (Land of the Angles), and their language they called *Englisc*.

Towards the end of the sixth century A.D. "Christianity met Anglo-Saxon on the waves of Latin." In 597A.D. Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine with fifty monks to Englaland. King Athellbert gave them a place in Canterbury, which has remained the center of English Christendom ever since. While the Anglo-Saxon warriors had words such as *God*, *Heaven*, and *hell*, new concepts needed new words, Greek, Latin, even Hebrew words, such as *angel*, *devil*, *priest*, *apostle*. In 635 A.D. Aidan from Ireland began to convert northern England to Christianity. By the end of the eighth century, Englaland was permeated by a Christian, Anglo-Saxon culture.

It is good to remember that, in contrast to the sun-lit world of Greco-Roman culture, of epic, dramatic, and lyric poetry, of philosophical treatises, of historical works, even of law, the people of the misty world lived still in a world of song, of story, and of action, but not yet a world of written literature. The bards sang both of the movements of the heavens and of the deeds of men; Druid priests had read the shadows of the standing stones, but on the whole, the people of the Northern Isles were held back from externalizing a reflective consciousness through written language.

There was certainly, in the Norse/Teutonic streams, a tradition of reading signs. Although remaining essentially an oral culture until about 800 AD, a central imagination for these Norse peoples consisted of the god Odin reading the runes.

“The Speech of the High One”

I know I hung on that windswept tree,
Swung there for nine long nights,
Wounded by my own blade
Bloodied for Odin,
Myself an offering to myself:
Bound to the tree
That no man knows
Whither the roots of it run.

None gave me bread,
None gave me drink.
Down to the deepest depths I peered
Until I spied the Runes.
With a roaring cry I seized them up,
Then dizzy and fainting, I fell.

Well-being I won
And wisdom too.
I grew and took joy in my growth:
From a word to a word
I was led to a word,
From a deed to another deed.

[From the Old Norse-The Poetic Edda (c.1200 AD)]

As early as 98 A.D., Tacitus describes of the Germanic tribes,

To divination and casting of lots they pay attention beyond any other people. Their method of casting lots is a simple one: they cut a branch from a fruit-bearing tree and divide it into small pieces which they mark with certain distinctive signs (notae) and scatter at random onto a white cloth. Then, the priest of the community, if the lots are consulted publicly, of the gatherer of the family, if it is done privately, after invoking the gods and with eyes raised to heaven, picks up three pieces, one at a

time, and interprets them according to the signs previously marked upon them. (Germania, Ch. X)

So, a rune, carved on an individual stone or a piece of wood, and picked up with two other runes, could be interpreted, like the I Ching, as a fluid, mobile, kinetic reflection of the will of the gods, the will of the worlds.

In the village of Tonsberg, on the southeast coast of Norway, lie three Viking ships in a mound, each almost weightless, like the wind. Apparently the earliest inscriptions/carvings of the angular runes were for the dead, on a stone lowered into the burial mound. Later then, an upright stone would bear runes for the living. In Tonsberg, the earliest standing stone with runes has been dated around the third century A.D., using the traditional twenty-four runastafr. The staves of the runes were also known as the “futhark,” for the first six staves/stones: f u the a r k. As early as c. 450 A.D., I appears, carved in stone: “ I by the name of Vive made the rune after Rovary the giver of Bread.” Rune, from gothic runa, means “ a secret thing, a mystery.”

III OLD ANGLO-SAXON

In this misty, cold-warm world of action, song, and boast, imagine, in the seventh century A.D., men gathered around a fire on a hillside, taking their turns offering a story or song. One modest soul, dreading his turn, slips away into the dark, and falls asleep in the crofter’s hay. In his sleep he is visited by someone who asks him the same, to sing. But he protests, having not a clue of what he would sing. The visiting presence urges him to sing then of the creation of the world.

The next day the young man, Caedmon, goes to the Abbess of Busby, and tells her his story. When she asks him to sing, he does, of the creation of our world. He becomes one of the noted singers of the time and area, although only about sacred subjects. Fortunately, someone wrote down, on paper, the following fragment, the oldest Anglo-Saxon literature on record.

Caedmon’s Hymn

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices weard,
Metodes meahte and his modgethanc,
Weorc wuldorfaeder, swa he wundra gehwaes,
Ece drihten, or onstealde.
He aereost sceop eorþan bearnum
Heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;
Tha middangeard monocynnes weard,
Ece drihten, aefter teode
Firum foldan, frea aelmehtig.

Now must we praise of heaven’s kingdom the Keeper
Of the Lord the power and his Wisdom
The work of the Glory-Father, as he of marvels each,
The eternal Lord, the beginning established.
He first created of earth for the sons,

Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator.
Then the middle-enclosure of mankind the Protector
The eternal Lord, thereafter made
For men, earth the Lord almighty.

By the ninth Century A.D. King Alfred the Great had so united the Anglo-Saxon kingdom that when a new wave of Danish Norse Vikings invaded, Alfred was able to defeat them in 878 at the battle of Ethandune, commemorated by a white horse carved in the hillside. From then on the Norse stayed north of Danelow, although their language strayed south of the border, permeating the Anglo-Saxon with over 900 words of Norse origin, such as *get*, *hit*, *leg*, *low*, *root*, *same*, *want*, *wrong*, and many words beginning with *sk*, such as *sky*, *skein*, *skin*, *scope* and *scoop*.

King Alfred, through his individual will, used English, not Latin, to unite his various peoples as he rebuilt monasteries and schools. Alfred translated Bede's History of the English Church into English. The institutor of a chronicle of English history, Alfred the Great can justly be considered the "Savior of the English Language," "the founder of English Prose."

In the context of Alfred's relatively secure England, with the living language of the people of the land becoming the written language of the lands, emerges the first epic of the English language, composed by an unknown storyteller, told by many, written down by an unknown scribe.

Beowulf, written down about 800 A.D., is the story of a hero who rescues a besieged land. Hygelac, the king of the Danes, suffers because nightly a monster named Grendel plucks a sleeping warrior from Hrothgar, Hygelac's great mead hall. Beowulf, prime vassal of the king of the Geats (southern Sweden), receives permission to sail with twelve companions to help the Danes.

After Beowulf is welcomed with a festive night of meat, drinking, and boasting tales, Grendel visits the sleeping warriors, starting his feast, until Beowulf grips the arm of this beast impervious to sword, axe, or arrow. The pure strength of Beowulf prevails, as he rips the arm from its socket, and hangs it high in the hall.

Grendel's dam, however, avenges the fatal blow to her son, and Beowulf chases her across the fens and moors, down to her lair beneath the sea. Beowulf dives below the depths of the sea, is being overcome by her, when his eye and then his hand grasp a sword in her treasure hoard. His long resigned soldiers on the shore are distressed to see the waters turn red, and then surprised to see Beowulf surface in the blood-red sea, with the head of Grendel's dam in his hand.

Not long after Beowulf returns to the land of the Geats, he becomes their king. Toward the end of his life, he has a third, mighty, and final encounter, this time with a dragon. Abandoned by all except one young warrior, Beowulf is wounded mortally, yet allows the young warrior to deal the death blow to the dragon.

Da com of more	under mist-hleothum
Grendel gongan,	Godes yrre baer:
mynte se man-scatha	manna cynnes
sumne besyrwan	in sels tham hean. (ll. 710-714)

From the stretching moors, Grendel came creeping, A murderous ravager Spoil of heroes	from the misty hollows, accursed of God, minded to snare in high-built hall. (tr. Kennedy)
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Listening to lines of Beowulf, one probably first hears the four strong beats per line. Next, one probably realizes that in almost all lines of this old Anglo-Saxon verse, the first three strong beats coincide with the same consonant sound: m in the first line, g in the second, m in the third, se in the fourth. The fourth beat in each line sounds openly, flexibly on any other consonant.

The four-beat alliterative line can sound outwardly almost as though the singer/speaker is banging his sword on his shield, at each strong beat. Inwardly, it sounds like the heart-beat, the pulsing of the blood. The number of weakly stressed syllables before and after the strong beats is flexible, variable, irregular.

“Dr. Steiner portrays for us how in alliteration the longing lives for the innocent primeval condition of the soul of man, a longing for the time when the language itself had not yet suffered the fall into the intellect, the time when one still spoke for the sake of the wisdom which lived in the sounds themselves and not for the sake of the content; so that we may say that all that was spoken was in fact poetry at the time when Odin still lived in the speech.” (The Art of Poetry in the Light of Anthroposophy, Johanna Knottenbelt, 1973)

The Old Anglo-Saxon of Beowulf: A Possible Sequence of Exercises :

[The series of exercises offered here have been conceived with a large space in mind, allowing substantial movement. If space does not allow a group to move so fully, it is possible to have a micro-version of the experiences, using fingers on desktops, instead of legs on floors.]

First, read aloud four to six lines of the original Beowulf. Have everyone speak together two-to-four lines of the old Anglo-Saxon. Then, speaking the lines again, have the students take a step, on each of the (four) strong beats in a line. What do they experience?

Second, then perhaps the teacher speaks the lines, tapping with a ruler or pencil the weak, unstressed syllables, as the students step the strong beats. What do they experience? The students start to become aware of the regularity of the strong beats, and the varying, flexible irregularity of the weak beats. Then they can try stepping the weak beats lightly, and the strong beats heavily.

Third, as the teacher speaks the line, the students, stepping, call out the repeated consonant sound on each of three of the four strong beats. Then, the students can do the same, this time banging their sword hand over onto their shield hand on each of the three repeated consonants. What is their experience?

Fourth, no longer speaking the old Anglo-Saxon, have the students walk a straight line in any direction, stepping four strong beats, varying weak beats however they choose; however, each student calls out some consonant, repeating it on three of the four strong beats, then changes direction, and does the same, walking a four beat line, varying weak beats, repeating a new consonant sound for three of the four strong beats. And again, and again. What is their experience?

Fifth, then have the students sit down and write, in an alliterative, four-beat line, repeating the same consonant three of the four strong beats, varying weak beats however they choose. The subject matter might be a battle or a journey, emphasizing the elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and the things of the physical world as vividly as possible. Writing four-to-six lines in class, they might take it further at night, to ten to fifteen lines, or more.]

Sixth, what was it like writing in that form? What was the experience, what were the effects?

Before we turn our attention from the old English of the Anglo-Saxon mind of the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., we must focus on a characteristic trait which is less music- or sound-oriented, and more image-oriented, a characteristic of the activity of the Anglo-Saxon imagination. A distinguishing trait of the early Greek imagination, active in the Homeric epics, was the simile, in which one understands one thing or event better, by comparing it consciously, through the word “like,” “as,” or “just so,” with another thing or event. Homer describes how Odysseus put out the eye of the *Kyklops* with burning pole.

“ ...In a smithy
one sees a white-hot axehead of an adze
plunged and wrung in a cold tub, screeching steam—
the way they make soft iron hale and hard—
just so that eyeball hissed around the spike.
The *Kyklops* bellowed and the rock roared around him,
And we fell back in fear.

(*The Odyssey*, Book IX, ll.424-430)

This conscious linguistic form of comparison, occurring in Greece at the beginning of the whole Rational Soul stage of development, was not a capacity or activity of the Anglo-Saxon mind 1600 years later, in the early stages of its literature.

However, there is an Anglo-Saxon activity of yoking together two normally dissimilar images. Both the mode and the purpose differ from the Greek simile. The Anglo-Saxon manner is not rational, reflective, but rather active, a deed in itself. The Anglo-Saxon purpose is not for better understanding, but actually to name. The form of this Anglo-Saxon activity of imagination was called a **kenning**. In the kenning two images are yoked together to create a new word-name. Examples of kennings include:

Whale-path
Bone-house
Mirth-wood
World-Candle
Gold-friend
Hawks-land
Arm-fire
Hawks-land-flame

Whale-path was the name for the sea. Bone-house was a name for a person's chest. Mirth-wood was a harp. One can imagine the others. Through these kennings the Anglo-Saxon mind intuitively connects things of the sense-world, creating new language reflecting such interconnectedness. Through the kennings, the speaker recognizes and wills reunion, reintegrating the creation.

IV NORMAN CONQUEST

By spring of 1066, the last Saxon King, Harald, was well aware that William of Normandy was gathering forces on the shores of Normandy for an invasion of southern England. Harald mustered men all along the coast, from Dover to Cornwall, both to stand watch for any signs of invasion, and to be ready as a standing militia to resist the outsiders. Across the English Channel William gathered hundreds of ships, with infantry and horsemen. However, because of their square-sailed ships which could hardly point high into the wind, the wind had to be just right to take them to the shores of England. The winds were not just right.

After six weeks of militia duty, Harald's men returned to their neglected farms to bring in the first hay crop. Harald called them out again, then again. Still not the right wind for William's fleet. Still no sight of the supposed invaders. Morale yielded to skepticism among the defenders. By September most of the English felt the summer, the opportunity, the danger, had pretty well passed.

On the 19th day of September, King Harald received word from an exhausted messenger that a large Viking fleet led by the notorious Norse king, Harald Hardrada, had arrived on the northeastern shores of England, outside of York. England's Harald called together his army immediately, led a forced march from London to York in four days and nights, did battle with the Vikings, and overcame them. A week after Harald conducted the formal ceremony of the Viking surrender, an exhausted messenger arrived from London to say that William of Normandy had arrived with his fleet on the southern shores.

So Harald led his army, victorious but bloody, weakened, exhausted, on another forced march back down to London in four days and nights. William meanwhile had had ample time to unload his ships, unobstructed, and to deploy his troops. Harald's army met William's on October 14, 1066, at Hastings. The battle was fierce, an arrow pierced Harald's eye, and he fell. Due to unusual winds for months, and due to the extraordinary timing of the Viking invasion just days before the Norman, the tide of destiny turned irrevocably, in spite of the almost superhuman efforts of the army of the last Saxon king Harald.

For the next several centuries the people of England lived in three different languages, at three different levels. The Anglo-Saxons, working the land, continued to speak Anglo-Saxon. The scholars, the practitioners of law (clerks), and the clergy worked and communicated in Latin. The nobility, both at home and in court, spoke French. Imagine the parallel coexistence and activity of the spirits of these three languages, Anglo-Saxon English, Latin, and French.

During the Hundred Years' War between England and France, roughly from 1337 to 1454, the impetus grew for all English to speak English, not French. In 1340 (considered to be the year of Chaucer's birth) the Parliamentary Act of the Abolition of Englishry abolished any distinction between Norman English and Saxon English. English men were Englishmen.

Hence ensues a progressive banishment of the French language—in 1349, from the schools; in 1356, from the Law Courts; in 1362, from Parliamentary debates. By 1381, at the time of the Black Death, English grammar was taught in the schools. What English remained was itself four strands, four vigorous regional dialects, with differing sources, and virtually unintelligible to each other. The Angles' English of Northumbria and Mercia, colored by Norse, produced the Chester, York, and Townley Miracle Plays. The Saxons' English of the West, faintly tinted with Celtic, generated Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Pearl, Winner, Wastour, and Piers Plowman. The Jutes' English permeated southeastern Kent, whereas London and the East-Midlands absorbed more Danish and more Norman-French than the other regions. Chaucer was able to give birth to a national language and literature through his London/East Midlands English.

By 1399, at the coronation of Henry IV, an English king claimed his crown in the "Englische Tunge" for the first time in history. Chaucer died one year later. By 1417 Henry V became the first king to use English in documents. While he fought the French in France, he dictated letters in English. By 1422 the London brewers resolved to write in English. The Spirit of the English Language had virtually fully permeated the people of the land.

How can we imagine the evolving activity of, influence, and even interfluence of the spirits of the Anglo-Saxon, the Latin, and the French languages, in the process of evolving English? One way may be through the people's relationship to their patron saint. Initially, the Saxons, chafing under Norman rule, hearkened back to their last holy king, Edward the Confessor. The Normans themselves, from the land of Mont St. Michel, had brought with them the guidance of the Archangel St. Michael. In 1099 those who reclaimed Jerusalem for Christianity had found in the East St. George, whom Richard the Lion-Hearted brought back whole-heartedly from his crusade almost a century later in 1194. St. George, the earthly counterpart of St. Michael, appealed to the Norman-English soldiery.

Almost two centuries later, a moment of fusion occurred. In 1349, Edward III, besieging Calais, "drew his sword, and cried with ardour, 'Ha, St. Edward! Ha, St. George!' and fell with vigour on the French, and so defeated them." (Thomas of Walsingham) It is as though, nine years after both the Abolition of Englishry and the birth of Jeffrey Chaucer, the Anglo-Saxon patron Saint Edward passed the sword of the Word to St. George, who was emerging as the Patron Saint of an England, of an English people who thought, felt, and acted (even fought) in one language.

As we shall see, by the time of Chaucer's death in the year 1400, the three strands of Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and French have coalesced, have been internalized into a new, unified, multidimensional, threefold braid of English, as though the guiding spirits of those three languages had prepared, contributed, and then given up a significant stream of their own language, handing over tutelage to a new guide of a new, hybrid language. This fusion occurs right at the culmination of the whole Intellectual Soul stage of Humanity's development, right at the dawning, around the year 1413 (according to Rudolf Steiner), of the whole Consciousness Soul stage of development.

It is as if Edward, the patron of the earth-working Anglo-Saxons, and St. Michael, the heavenly patron of the Normans, made the way, or gave way, to St. George, patron of those people and of that language which would best enable new attention to the earth through new consciousness.

V CHAUCER—MIDDLE ENGLISH

Listening to lines of Beowulf,

“Tha com of more, unter mist hleothum
Grendel gongan, Godes yrre baer,”

and lines of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, about five hundred years later,

Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote
And bathed every veyne in swich liqueur
Of which vertu engendred is the fleur,

one can hear a number of differences. First, the rhythm and length of the lines differ. Beowulf’s four-beat line has expanded to Chaucer’s five-beat pentameter. Instead of the weakly emphasized syllable falling in any (varying) number among the strong beats, as in the northern, Anglo-Saxon verse, Chaucer’s line includes a regular alternation between short and long syllables, more duration than stress, and rhythmical, regular, iambic (short-long) pentameter. (The opening line could be read as trochaic pentameter, with the long syllable before the short. Yet the regular pattern of lines is iambic pentameter.)

However, anyone familiar with the old English of Beowulf’s time can read Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales with a second ear.

Whan that April with his shores soote
The drought of March hath perced to the roote

Not far below the even-tempered five-beat line brought up through the southern, Greco-Latin-French stream, especially through the gradually emerging Norman influence, not far below still pulses the Northern, Anglo-Saxon counter-rhythm of the blood-pulsing four-beat line.

Not only the rhythms, but the sounds themselves yield different experiences in the Old English and the Middle English. In the Old English, the consonantal sounds of the three beats of alliteration dominate the (experience of the) line,

Tha com of more unter mist hleothum
Grendel gongan Godes irre baer.

In a culture only on the verge of literacy, the soul experience was primarily external, out in the elements of wind, water, rock, and terrain, out in the actions of battle. Hence the sound experience of the language predominantly reflects, through the emphasized consonant sounds, the forms of the external, physical world.

The modern soul, moving from Old English to Chaucer’s Middle English, can experience quite a relief, as the alliterative consonants surrender their domination of the line, receding into more proportional, balanced relationship with the vowel sounds. It is almost as though a storm abates, the battle is over, and the new language allows for more light, for the quieter interplay of more

varying soul experience, more interplay between outer and inner, between consonant and vowel. A new consciousness is emerging, in a language which allows more time to breathe, time to reflect.

However, as the language in one earlier stage of humanity's soul development surrenders a certain formal security, what remains? Consider, in the old English, the certainty of soul reinforced in every line, as the first strong beat sounds a certain consonant, and the speaker and the listeners (readers) know that the next two strong beats will reaffirm that same sound, no matter what. (Remember that Rudolf Steiner spoke of the northern, alliterative verse as a Sentient Soul recollection, even as a hearkening back to Mankind's original state of being.) The fourth strong beat was open, variable, in terms of which consonant sounded.

On the one hand, in the language of Chaucer, the interior of the line opens up, almost as though three standing stones had been removed from the stream. However, the Chaucer's line is certainly not completely variable. We have seen that it sustains a musical rhythm of iambic pentameter. And now, whereas the final beat of the Old English was open, the final beat of the Middle English assumes a new importance.

As the first line completes its statement, with the word-sounds "soote," the listening reader discovers that the next line concludes with a similar sound-set, "rote." Although the third line ends in "liqueur," we are not surprised to hear the fourth line end in something like "fleur." And, in fact, as we proceed through the ensuing pairs of lines, throughout the whole Canterbury Tales, we proceed with an absolute confidence, a knowing certainty, that the end-sound of one line will also include the end of the next line, in rhyming couplets. One experiences a combination of surprise, of delight, of reassurance, of enhancing certainty. There is a delighted, knowing confidence in the mind of the writer and reader, to find the rhyme come to closure.

Remember that in the beginning of western literature, around 600 BC, there was no end-rhyme, in the Greek epics, the Greek dramas, or the Greek lyrics. The old English has no end-rhyme. Latin and Italian poets had been playing with kinds of rhyme, as translating Chaucer well knew. The rhyming couplet, per se, essentially emerges at the culmination of what Rudolf Steiner refers to as the Intellectual Soul, or Rational Soul Stage of the development of humanity, occurring approximately from around 700 BC to around 1400 AD. In fact, Rudolf Steiner says of the experience of end-rhyme, "The final rhyme is closely connected with the remarkable soul condition which, after man has entered the present evolution, is expressed through the culture of the Intellectual Soul, or Mind Soul. Taken fundamentally, the time in which the Intellectual Soul arose in men, in the fourth Post-Atlantean period of civilization, is also the time when, in poetry, the memory dawned of the experiences of the olden time, which extended into the ancient Imaginative World. This remembrance is expressed in the end-rhyme." ("Symbolism and Phantasy in Relation to the Mystery Play, 'The Soul's Probation.' ")

In form Chaucer's language bears within it almost unhearable echoes of the Anglo-Saxon (and Sentient Soul) four-beat line. At the crest of the wave of the development of the Mind Soul, his Rhyming couplets have a vital, sustaining, intellectual beauty. Stretching the English consciousness beyond the Anglo-Saxon four-beat line, Chaucer virtually created, engendered, the iambic pentameter in English himself. This iambic pentameter line becomes the medium

in the English Language for the imminent articulation of, and development of, what Rudolf Steiner refers to as the Consciousness Soul, at least for six hundred years.

During the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer introduces each of the twenty-nine pilgrims who will travel together to Canterbury. The description of the Miller proceeds predictably, according to type.

“The Miller was a stout carl for the nones.
Full big he was of brawn and eek of bones...
He was short-shouldred, brood—a thicke knarre.
There was no door that he nold heve off harre.”

So far, so good. We're on familiar terrain, although the next line might catch us slightly by surprise,

“Or breke it at a renning with his head.”

This miller is starting to distinguish himself a bit from any other millers we have met, at least in literature, and at least in terms of his behavior.

“His beard as any sow or fox was red,” well, like any other choleric miller,

“And thereto brood, as though it were a spade.” Fresh simile. But now, watch out.

“Upon the cop right of his nose he hadde
A wert, and thereon stood a tuft of heeres,
Red as the bristles of a sowes eres.
His nosethirles blacke were and wide.” (ll 545-557)

Yes, some scholars of Old Anglo-Saxon might hear subtle undertone echoes of the “Sentient Soul” four-beat line pulsing under Chaucer’s iambic pentameter. Yes, Chaucer’s rhyming couplets freshly sustain a Rational Soul sound-framework which most of us, in our third millennium English, would now find confining, even deadening. But one could say that these several lines of the word-portrait of the Miller serve as an early signal of a Consciousness Soul capacity of the English language. I am not aware of a medieval description in literature, certainly in English literature, as dependent on sense-perceived particular features as Chaucer’s miller. Most of his description is inherited out of type, out of the categories of the medieval mind. But that wert, and that tuft of heeres, red as the bristles of a sowes eres, were only perceived by a consciousness capable of emancipating itself from either feeling or notion, free to perceive physical particulars in their own right, revealing therefore signs of a more individualized miller than ever rendered before. Such a sketch, written probably in the 1380s or 1390s, anticipates the emergence of the Consciousness Soul, a long unfolding lasting over 2000 years, and not even beginning generally until the early 1400s, according to Rudolf Steiner.

Not only did Chaucer fashion iambic pentameter, the sound-vessel for our first Consciousness Soul explorations in English poetry, but he also drew brush strokes of content, leading to emerging attention characteristic of the Consciousness Soul.

Chaucer's Middle English; Possible Exercises:

First, have everybody speak, as a reminder, two-to-four lines of Beowulf.

Second, the teacher speaks four to six lines of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Have students speak two and then at least four lines. What do they notice, as qualities, in relation to the old Anglo-Saxon?

Third, speak the lines, asking the students to step the strong beats. Speak the lines, asking them to step the strong beats and clap the weak beats. What is the difference in quality between a four-beat and a five-beat line? What is the effect of the regular, short-long, (iambic) foot, in which the "weak" sound is generally as regular as the strong sound? What is it like not to have the three-fold alliteration of each line? And, what is the effect of having the end-sound of line two rhyme with the end-sound of line one? What does it mean, what is it like, to know, with certainty, that the next line will rhyme with the previous?

Fourth, have students cluster in the center of the room, each facing out toward the perimeter. As the teacher calls out, perhaps "short-long, short-long...", each student walks a straight line, in any direction, stepping five iambs, short-long; on the fifth iamb, each person calls out a sound, of his or her choosing. Then each person turns in any direction, stepping the iambic pentameter, as long as she returns, curving back to the exact same end-spot on the fifth foot (iamb), calling out the same sound on that last foot. Then walk an iambic pentameter line in a new direction, calling out a new end-sound, curving out a next line, ending at the same new end-spot, calling out that same "new" end-sound. Perhaps do this for ten lines, five rhyming couplets. What is the effect? How do students experience such lines?

Fifth, now have the students write some lines in iambic pentameter, with rhyming couplets. The subject could vary; recommendations could include a character sketch, a love passage/poem, or the beginnings of a tale. Students could continue at home, writing at least twelve lines, reworking them, improving them.

Sixth, what was it like to write in that form? What was the experience, the effect?

VI THE GREAT VOWEL SHIFT

During the 1400's and 1500's in England occurs one of the greatest, and quickest, from a large perspective, changes in the known history of languages. Essentially, "English" in its various waves of influence, from the Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, down through the Normans to Chaucer, shared with common continental languages certain vowel sounds. Mysteriously, new sounds enter the English language during the 1400's and 1500's.

There are two major developments, and two minor developments. The first major development consists of changes in four long vowels. The *ah* of Chaucer's name becomes the *a* of our name. The *uh* of Chaucer's *ston* becomes the *u* of our *stone*. The *ue* (as in our *hoof*) of Chaucer's *roote* becomes the *u* of our *root*. In a slightly slower process, the *ae* of Chaucer's *clene* becomes by Shakespeare's time *clean* (as in our *lane*) before it becomes the *ee* sound of our *clean*.

<u>Middle English</u>		<u>Modern English</u>
Name (ah) [na:mea]	becomes	name (a){[ne:m]}
Ston (uh)[st ;:n]	becomes	stone (?)[sto:n]
Roote (ue)(our hoof)[ro:t]	“	root (u)[ru:t]
Clene (ae)[kle:n]	clen(our lane), then clean (I)[kli:n]	

(A History of the English Language, Baugh, p. 288)

The short vowels, a e i o u, remained essentially the same, although catte (ah) shifted slightly to cat (ae). But bedd remained bed, scip remained ship, folc remained folk, and full remained full.

Notice that, whereas the short vowels remain essentially the same, the shift in the long vowel sound occurs primarily as a shift from sounding back, deep in the mouth, deep in the throat, to sounding farther forward, more out through the mouth, closer to the tongue and lips, the threshold in relation to the outer world.

In the second major shift, something most unusual occurs with two of Chaucer's classic, continental vowel sounds, I and u, as in five[fi:f] and down[du:n]. These two vowels sound already far forward into the mouth, toward the teeth and lips. Those other vowel sounds moved forward and out, during the great vowel shift. But, "those that could not [move forward] without becoming consonantal (i, u) became diphthongs." (Baugh, p. 288)

The u of Chaucer's down (doon)[du:n] reaches back, gathers the ah, and becomes our down [daun]. The u becomes au, or, listening especially sensitively, one can even hear, ah, o, u, a threefold diphthong. It's almost as though the sound experience had to reach back through, to regather its vowel character, fashioning the new hybrid vowel experience, ai. So, five (feeve)[fi:f] becomes, by Shakespeare's time, five[faiv], as we say it today, with the diphthong, ai. .Speaking the "I" slowly enough to bend it, as a prism bends light revealing color, we can hear ah...ee. Listening carefully, one might can even hear a threefold blend, ah, a, ee = I. I , of course, becomes the quintessential experience for the new expression of one's individuality, the name no one else can speak for us, unencumbered even by the consonantal ch of the German ich. What soul experience does the new diphthong reflect, affect, the possibility of? These two new sound experiences reflect neither a contraction, nor perhaps even further incarnation of the original vowel sounds. The diphthongs reflect rather a freshly combined expansion of soul experience, as though new colors had been created.

Three minor shifts accompany these major vowel shifts. One is that the e at the end of a word becomes silent, surrendering its syllabicity. Nam-e to name. A second minor change is that certain consonants become silent. Knight [knight] becomes knight [nite]. Through becomes through[thru]. Droughte [drawchte] becomes drought [draut] The third minor change is that the vowel sound in unaccented syllables tends to become virtually indistinguishable, as in ago, upon, opinion, drama, kingdom...

How can one understand these extraordinary metamorphoses of the language during a literary silent night. It is as though the language goes to sleep as Chaucer and wakes up, like Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream, translated, into a language usable by Shakespeare and others. How might one understand the changes in consciousness enabled, implied by these new sounds?

The most striking general observation is that a number of vowel experiences, a, o, u, formerly sounded back, deep in the throat, move forward, outward, toward the outer world. The teeth and lips form, after all, the vocal doorway, the threshold between the inner and the outer world. Two vowel sounds which had already sounded relatively far forward, u, i, combine with other vowel sounds, creating a newly expansive, reaching sound/soul experience.

While on the one hand, vowels reach out toward the world in a new manner, some sounds sacrifice themselves and go silent. One might think of the e on the end of a word, as in name, becoming silent, giving up its sound and its right to be a syllable in its own right, to intensify the main vowel sound of the word, in this case, a in name.

While, on the one hand, vowels reach out toward the world in a new manner (as the great maritime explorers were on the verge of doing), some consonant sounds also sacrifice themselves and go silent, as in knight. Since consonant sounds represent direct experience of the things, the elements of the physical world, one might consider the silencing of certain consonants as a reflection of weaning us to a degree from direct experience of the physical world, allowing perhaps, in turn more consciousness available to reflect about the physical world.

For the newly evolving English language to be inhabited, by silent e's and silent k's, g's and h's, seems to be analogous to the Anglo-Saxon-Norman English still being imbued with the spirit of the Celtic language of the original inhabitants of "Great Britain," even though few Celtic words actually survive in the English language. One might even say, our "dead," silent letters give our living words extra dimension, as unaware of them as we usually are.

The question of course is, "Where did these new sounds come from?" These are not the words that arrived in various waves from various lands at times in the earlier stages of the growth of the English language. Major external influences had already occurred. The greatest change in the history of language was not external; it was internal. English literature went to sleep in the 1400's and early 1500's. Chaucer had finished The Canterbury Tales. Yes, Malory wrote The Morte d'Arthur in that the tower, yet his prose version is no great work of art, dear as it is to many hearts. In terms of literature, this time is definitely an ebb, a prelaya, an interlude of silence.

However, mysteriously, the genius of the English language, the Spirit of the language, was profoundly at work. Let us remind ourselves that the period which Rudolf Steiner spoke of as the development of the Rational Soul, or the Intellectual Soul, began approximately with Homer, c.700 BC, and culminated approximately with Chaucer, who died in 1400 AD. Rudolf Steiner speaks of the early 1400's as the dawning of a new stage of human development, what he refers to as the Consciousness Soul, extending for a similar period of over 2000 years. Steiner also speaks of the English people, and hence the English language, as particularly capable of bearing the new capacity, this new orientation of the Consciousness Soul, particularly with its capacity for objective beholding of the physical world.

In such a context, we can at least consider that the Spirit of the English language is at work during these "sleeping centuries," fashioning these new vowel sounds and these new diphthongs, making the English language a suitable vessel, a suitable medium, through which the new consciousness could explore and express in relation to the new world.

For years I wondered why Rudolf Steiner associated the diphthong *au*, as in *house*, with the sun, whereas he associated the diphthong *ai*, as in *fire*, with the moon. Recent reflections on the riddle of the ego have led me for the first time to some understanding.

What was the problem? While the sounds of the *au* diphthong have had for me a certain sun-like quality (think of *round*, *found*, *sound*, a kind of arching reach), I have thought that on some level the diphthong *ai* really ought to be associated with the sun. Think of our English pronoun, *I*, in relation to the “*I AM*,” to Christ, to the Son of God, to the sun of our universe.

However, what is the mysterious nature of the *I*, of the ego? One of the most mysterious riddles of our time. The Western world tends to think of the ego as the self, who one is in this world, how people know me. When we are young and insecure, we want to fill our hollow space, with achievements, roles, honors, even stereotypes, forming a collage to create an identity. The Eastern world tends to think of such a sense of self as *maia*, illusion, to be transcended, or to be let go. Some westerners may distinguish between one’s *persona* (mask to the world) of personality, and one’s true individuality. Others may speak of Higher Self and Lower Self. How does one become one’s true individuality, that part of each of us, which is eternal, universal, and yet particular to me? What is the nature of the “*I AM*?” My *I* is not how people know me; no one calls me “*I*.” My *I* is not just what distinguishes me from others.

Rudolf Steiner speaks of the sense of the ego as having essential to its nature an experience of a certain hollowness, a certain emptiness. One can’t strengthen the ego directly, fill the ego as an object, in a reflexive manner. In fact, the mystery is that one’s *I*, one’s sense of ego, only grows through the activity of knowing the ego of, the *I* of another. In a certain way, we might say that the mystery of the *I* is less like the sun, shining its light out on everything, and in fact also less like the full moon, glowing so fully, but more like the new moon, especially the *grail moon*, the slenderest sliver of “*self*,” yet mostly evoking the glow, not of itself but of the other, of the sun. In this context, I finally experience the appropriateness of Rudolf Steiner’s associating the diphthong *ai*, *I*, with the influence of the moon.

With an understanding of the great changes occurring to the sounds of the English language during the “*night*” of the 1400s and early 1500s, when little literature was written, we can now better appreciate the great awakening, the “*Renaissance*,” of Elizabethan Literature in the late 1500s and early 1600s. Rarely in the history of languages and literatures has the spirit of a language fostered so fertile a birth.

VII ELIZABETHAN ENGLISH—SHAKESPEARE

Elizabethan English—New Sounds

In William Shakespeare's comedy, A Midsummer Night's Dream (III.ii, l. 101...), Oberon, alone, sees sleeping Demetrius and sets about to set straight Puck's mistake, since Puck put the love potion in Lysander's eyes, not Demetrius'.

Oberon. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's Archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter Puck

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
And the youth, mistook by me,
Helena is here at hand;
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

Notice that Oberon's rhyme scheme undulates between two sounds, I of dye, and ee of archery. Young servant Puck's entering speech begins with a couplet, hands and band, followed by a four-line sequence, ending in me, fee, see, be.

When Lysander appears, in hot pursuit of scornful Helena, each one of these mortals speaks in regularly alternating rhyme, followed by a couplet.

Lysander. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.
How can these things in me seem scorn to you?
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

Helena. You do advance your cunning more and more.
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
Those vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows, to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

The alternating rhyme in each speech suggests a tension in each speaker, Lysander trying to convince Helena of his passion for her, Helena weighing his

words and finding them lacking. The third rhyme sound, in the closing couplet of each speech, suggests on the one hand the conclusion to which each has come. On the other hand, the third rhyme sound also suggests, in contrast to the two-rime-sound speeches of the fairy folk, Oberon and Puck, an extra dimension of soul experience in these struggling, foolish mortals, these denizens of three-dimensional space.

Demetrius then awakes, love-potion struck, first beholding Helena, the previous object of his disdain.

Demetrius.[Awaking] O Helen! Goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne!
Crystal is muddy. O! how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow;
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O! let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss.

Demetrius' speech begins with a naming conclusion, in the form of a rhyming couplet (divine, eyne). Demetrius then proceeds in a four-line rhyme (show, grow, snow, crow) to expound his passionate adoration, culminating with a couplet of will, or wish (kiss, bliss).

The final sentence of Demetrius' speech is a good example of new vowel sounds in the English language, an evolution from the classic sounds of Chaucer's 14th century English. "O! Let me kiss / This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss." The content of this line, culminating Demetrius' new potion-powered passion, funnels narrowly into the object of his desire, with the familiar short i reflecting the obsessive focus of his wish, in the sequence, "kiss....this,....princess, this,...bliss." The center of the line, in the word white, is the new vowel sound, I, the almost painfully expansive diphthong, the ultimate quality of this "other" for whom he now yearns, for whom she has always been striving.

In fact, as an imaginative exercise, think that you have gone to sleep, having lived in the sound-scape of Chaucer's Middle English. You wake up in Shakespeare's Elizabethan English. Forgetting all that your 20th/21st century ears have heard, try to imagine the effect on your soul of hearing the many "dawn-fresh" sounds in just this simple eight-line speech of Demetrius'. "O.....divine!/ To...my...I...thine eyne?/ O! how ripe ...show/ Thy...those,,,grow/...pure congealed white, high...snow/...eastern ...to ...crow/ ...thou hold'st...thy...O...me.../...white...seal..."

All these sounds are essentially new experiences for the English-speaking soul. Of course, the change did not just happen overnight, on one date. The people of Shakespeare's time grew up hearing these sounds, which had evolved into the language during the preceding 150 years. Nevertheless, stepping back for a large perspective on the evolving English folk-soul, one can imagine that in terms of dramatic literature's capacity to generate consciousness, audiences hearing these sounds at work in the Elizabethan theatre may have in fact been inwardly experiencing the aural equivalent of fireworks, as they heard these "new" sound-sequences at work.

Shakespeare—Rhyme and Rhythm

Helena, suddenly hearing love from the object of her own love, who has always spurned her, does not believe her ears, quickly concluding that both Lysander and Demetrius mock her.

Helena: O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.

In contrast to the preceding speeches of Oberon and Puck, but also of pleasing Lysander, of weighing Helena herself, and of passionate Demetrius, Helena here emphatically asserts her conclusion in rhyming couplets. What is the effect of hearing lines of verse in rhyming couplets? We hear the end sound of the first line, *bent*. During the second line we anticipate the culmination in a similar sound, *merriment*. There is an aesthetic excitement, eagerness, even curiosity as to what form it may take. And yet, as couplet after couplet rhymes, *courtesy-injury*, *do-too*, *show-so*, the curiosity about what word will rhyme is yoked with a knowing certainty of what sound will conclude the two-line thought. Helena hammers home the decisiveness of the conclusion about the two mocking lovers, in reinforcing rhyming couplets.

In fact, many of Shakespeare's early comedies, tingling with the witty exploration of resolving love problems with the eventual conclusion of marriage, usually flow in rhyming couplets. One can almost experience Shakespeare the playwright mastering his wit, like a fencer in a fencing school mastering his strokes.

By the end of A Midsummer Night's Dream, after Oberon and Puck have helped the lovers fall into right relationship, have restored Bottom to himself, and have even healed the rift between Oberon and Titania, the kingdom is ready for its ruler Theseus to unite in marriage with Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. In Act V, Scene 1, Theseus speaks.

Theseus: More strange than true: I never may believe
Thee antick fables, not these fairy toys,
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the pet,
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

The ruler, the determiner of order in civilized society, has changed his former decree, acquiescing to the resolved unions of Hermia and Lysander, of Helena and Demetrius, acknowledging a human rightness made possible not in his lawful city but in the wild woods, "...that apprehend more than cool reason e'er apprehends," where more mysterious forces can be at play in human destiny.

Theseus' speech about imagination does not rhyme. It is not prose. The lines are usually iambic pentameter, five "feet" with a short-long, u - , rhythm. What is the effect of this non-rhyming iambic pentameter, of what is called "blank verse?"

When we listen to rhyming couplets, as in Helena's earlier speech, after Demetrius awoke, we establish the final sound of the first line, (bent) at the end of the five feet. Then we successfully anticipated the recurrence of the same essential sound (merriment) at the end of the next five feet, the next line closure. The thoughts expressed in the couplet tend to conclude with the second rhyme sound. Therefore the form of the thinking remains limited. Since sense is reflected by sound, and the rhyme dictates the sound, the rhyme, in a certain sense, "dictates," or at least strongly requires, the sense. Certainly, the weaker the writer, the more the rhyme seems to determine, to affect, rather than to reflect, the content, even the direction of the poem.

Such crisp, lucid, artfully wrought statements in rhyming couplets were in a way the culmination of, and the celebration of, what Rudolf Steiner calls the Intellectual Soul stage of development in humanity at large. The capacity for thinking generated by the Greek philosophers, externalized in Roman law, and Christianized by the Medieval scholastics, took great joy eventually in the succinct, diamond-like articulations of the rhyming couplets. Rudolf Steiner spoke of the end-rime of the rhyming couplets as evoking in the Rational Soul or Intellectual Soul a memory of the Human Imagination before the Fall. Chaucer, living at the culmination of humanity's Intellectual Soul stage of development (c. 750 BC to 1400 AD), writes his Canterbury Tales in rhyming couplets. It is not surprising that later, after Shakespeare and Milton, in the neo-classical, "Augustan" Age of Reason, Alexander Pope and John Dryden turn back to rhyming couplets, with dazzling technical virtuosity, in a kind of ebb-tide, a return to an Intellectual Soul orientation.

Shakespeare—Blank Verse

However, William Shakespeare, already in the end of Midsummer Night's Dream, finds himself reaching beyond the confines of rhyme, to express Theseus' reflection on the nature of imagination. For his thoughts to range, "...from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, " Theseus' speech needs to stretch beyond the sound /sense confines of rhyme.

Indeed, by the time Shakespeare is exploring the larger dimensions of riddles, in the tragedies, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and Lear, not only does he virtually leave behind the rhyming couplets of the earlier comedies, but he resumes the rhythm and meter of his earlier iambic pentameter lines, finding the non-rhyming, yet rhythmic blank verse to be the suitable vessel for explorations of such scope.

“To be or not to be,—that is the question:—
Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?—To die,—to sleep,—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, ‘tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wisht. To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! Perchance to dream: ay, there’s the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause:...” (Hamlet, III, 1, ll.56-67)

Read, or listen to, Hamlet’s, indeed Shakespeare’s, best-known speech with the question, “what is the effect of not hearing the end-rime?” In the silence at the end of the line, all sounds are possible, and hence all thought-words are possible, in terms of where the next line will go. We, listening, wondering, anticipating, are more actively open to the scope of possibilities than if we know the culminating end-sound, and hence the sound-contour (limit) of the thought. Since our thought is freed from anticipating the (regulated) sound contour of the thought content, as shaped by end-rhyme, the thought-terrain becomes unpredictably limitless in scope. The English language in blank verse becomes freer than any language before, to explore “things undreamt of in your philosophy...,” much less in rhyming verse. Blank verse gives its writer a literary license and capacity comparable to the possibilities of the explorers of the New World.

As Faulkner Jones clearly articulates, the Spirit of the English language sacrifices some of its musicality, to allow greater independence of thinking. Figuratively, English sacrifices some of its color, to allow greater translucency. One might almost say that the English Language surrenders some of its substance, to allow the writer, and hence the reader, the freedom to generate the equivalent of that sacrificed substance through the activity of their own thinking.

Such a withdrawing of the spirit from the “music-body” of the language is just what allows a Consciousness Soul experience of the world. Rather than imposing our own presupposed rhyme patterns on the world, we need our language to become transparent, or actually trans-listening, or per-listening, or per-phonetic, enough, to allow the world/thoughts to speak, (no longer to sing, but to speak/think) through it.

Having considered the English language’s sacrifice of musicality, particularly through blank verse, we should then ask the following question. If Shakespeare, English master of dramatic verse, went so far, after A Midsummer Night’s Dream,

as to essentially abandon not only rhyming but in fact dramatic verse altogether in favor of prose in Much Ado About Nothing, then why does he nevertheless reassume the rhythm and meter of blank verse for the explorations of the great tragedies and the later plays? Or, simply, what is the difference between blank verse and prose?

Shakespeare-Prose

Prose, one might say, surrenders itself to the world. The sounds come out as the thought allows, spilling over even to the edge, the limit, of the physical page on which they are written, contained simply by those limits. The words fit the page.

By contrast, in poetry, or verse, the words fit, not the page, the outer world, but rather the breath and the pulse of the poet himself, of the speaker, the singer. The two-breath line of Homer's dactylic hexameter, the Northern alliterative tetrameter, the four-beat/three-beat alternation of the ballad, with the singer breathing in at the end of the three-beat line, all are related, variously to the rhythms of heart and lung. What begins to emerge, in the 1300's with Dante, Petrarch, and Chaucer is a five-beat line.

It is as though the Greek, Southern hexameter and the Norse, Northern tetrameter somehow meet and merge in the middle in the English of Chaucer, with a new five-beat line, a pentameter, emerging as the breath-pace bearing a new consciousness. It is as though the ancient Greek consciousness of the Epic contracts from the hexameter to the pentameter, with the help of Dante and Petrarch. (Chaucer visited Petrarch.) However, the iambic trimeter of the Ancient Greek Tragedy expands into the pentameter of Chaucerian and Elizabethan English. [Iambic pentameter sustains both Shakespeare's dramas and Milton's epic.] The Old Anglo-Saxon tetrameter of the Norse also expands, into Chaucer's pentameter.

The early epics, guiding souls into life in the extent of the known world, were sung in an incarnating rhythm, the __uu of the dactyl, or the __u of the trochee. The early dramas, guiding souls into the mysteries of soul and spirit, were sung in an exarnating rhythm, the u_ of iambic. We have seen how Shakespeare wrote his early dramas in iambic pentameter, in varieties of rhyme.

Along the way, about midway between Midsummer Night's Dream and Hamlet, Shakespeare tries an experiment, of abandoning rhyme and indeed of almost abandoning meter, the pace and form of dramatic verse, altogether. Much Ado About Nothing is written, spoken, mostly in prose, by most characters, whatever their levels of society, in most situations. Indeed, the main character, Benedick, finally inwardly free to express his love for Beatrice, tries verse and then delivers what one could call Shakespeare's adieu epitaph to rime.

“Marry I cannot show it in rime. I have tried: I can find out no rime to “lady” but “baby,” an innocent rime; for ‘scorn,’ ‘horn,’ a hard rime; for ‘school,’ ‘fool,’ a babbling rime; very ominous endings: no, I was not born under a riming planet, nor I cannot woo in festival terms.” (V, 2)

What of course the audience hears as Benedick's confession of his own limitations as a rhyming poet, we scholars of Shakespeare can hear as

representative of the limitations of rhyming verse itself. Shakespeare, rime-master, has exhausted the form, abandoning it almost completely for the less confining medium of prose.

However, by the time he is exploring the tragic dimensions of the measureless mysteries of the modern soul, Shakespeare, having abandoned the confines of rime, abandons the confinelessness of prose, and resumes the open, exorcising rhythm, the iambic pentameter of blank verse, as the breath of, the suitable medium for, his explorations, his articulations of the human being's Spiritual Soul in its development, as we saw in Hamlet. Indeed, ripest Shakespeare even chooses, needs, the medium of blank verse to accomplish the ultimate renunciation, the ultimate sacrifice, as Prospero articulates in his final speech in the The Tempest.

Prospero: Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make.
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrumps, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid
(weak masters though ye be) I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green seas and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure; and when I have required
Some heavenly music (which even now I do)
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

(V, 1, ll 33-57)

In the final statement of Prospero/Shakespeare the final word-deed works of course in multiple manner. First one hears **plummet** as noun and **sound** as verb, for a plummet is dropped to sound the fathoms of the bottom of a channel. But the clause works far more deeply on another level as **plummet** becomes verb and **sound** becomes noun. The greatest artist of the English language, perhaps of any language, chooses to use not prose but words in blank verse, the instrument of his art, to reach beyond sound itself, for his ultimate book of meaning.

The Sonnet...From Petrarchan to Shakespearean

In the 1200s Pier delle Vigne, Chancellor of Frederic II, fashioned the form of the sonnet. In the late 1200s and 1300s in Italy, Dante and Petrarch each wrote a series of sonnets, inspired by their platonic love of a lady. Petrarch wrote 365 sonnets in honor of Laura, a married woman to whom he may never have spoken. Dante wrote his sonnets especially in the autobiographical La Vita Nuova, as part of reflecting on his experiences of love in relation to Beatrice, first seeing her at age nine, second, being spoken to by her at age eighteen, suffering her rejection of him...and marriage of another, culminating in her death at the age of twenty-five. Beatrice's most greatly inspired, of course, Dante's epic, The Divine Comedy.

But Petrarch's form of sonnet remains the primary form, structure, even today. For example, in the early 1800s John Keats wrote:

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I traveled in realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse have I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesene;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout /Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

While most sonnets share the common structure of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter, the Petrarchan sonnet has a particular dynamic within the fourteen lines. The first eight lines usually have a rhyme scheme of *abba, abba*. Two quatrains with the same rhyme pattern articulate a certain "terrain" of content. In fact, the opening eight lines of a Petrarchan sonnet typically pose a problem, or a question. For example, in Keats' sonnet, the "problem" of the first octave might be articulated as, "With all my readings in the worlds of imagination, I have never been able to experience directly Homer's worlds." (partially because he did not read ancient Greek)

The final six lines of a Petrarchan sonnet usually have one of three variations in terms of rhyme scheme: *cdcdcd*, *cdecde*, or perhaps *cdcede*. Somehow, in terms of content, the final six lines, or the second half of the sonnet, offers a solution to the problem, an answer to the question. In this case the "solution" is Keats' experience reading aloud Chapman's English translations of Homer's epics that night with a friend.

The Petrarchan sonnet is clearly essentially two-fold, in form and in content. Generated in the 1300s, in the final, twilight culmination of the Intellectual Soul era, the form of the Petrarchan sonnet reflects a thinking oriented toward problem

and solution, toward question and answer, characteristic of the Rational Soul frame of mind.

In the late 1500s and early 1600s dramatist William Shakespeare, usually inspired, one might say, by the muses, Melpomene (Tragedy), Thalia (Comedy), and even Clio (History), found himself frequently moved as well by, inspired by Euterpe, the muse of Lyric poetry. The 154 sonnets he wrote, however, took a different form different from Petrarch's classical form. For example, the much loved #116:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Notice that the fourteen lines are not arranged in a two-fold structure. *Abab cdcd efef gg*. There are three different quatrains, of alternating, or evolving, lines, rather than the enclosing *abba*. Not only do the lines evolve, *abab*, but each quatrain evolves into new sounds, *cdcd*, *efef*. Rather than a two-fold dialectic, as in the Petrarchan sonnet, the Shakespearean sonnet is essentially three-fold in structure, engendering a dynamic evolution, rather than a problem and its solution. [Spenser and other Elizabethan poets enjoyed a similar structure, however, without the three quatrains remaining as distinct from each other: *abab bcbc cdcd ee*.]

This essentially three-fold structure actually culminates in a fourth element, a final, concluding couplet. Typically less substantial and less dynamic than the other three parts of the sonnet, the closing couplet nevertheless brings some kind of closure to the exploration.

Keeping in mind that the critic Harold Bloom speaks of Shakespeare as the creator of the modern personality, and that Rudolf Steiner speaks of Shakespeare as, more than any other writer, the generator of Consciousness Soul, it might be appropriate to wonder if this three/four-fold structure of Shakespeare's sonnets in fact reflects, on some level, Humanity's three soul faculties, thinking, feeling and willing, while the concluding couplet acts as an equivalent of the human being's spirit-ego activity, integrating the three soul activities.

Shakespeare's Blank Verse: Possible Exercises:

First, give the historical background of The Great Vowel Shift of 15th and 16th Century English. (see pp 17-20)

Second, let students again hear and then speak some lines of Beowulf, the old Anglo-Saxon. (p 8) Then let them again hear and speak some lines of Chaucer's Middle English. (p 13)

Third, let students hear and then speak some of Shakespeare's rhyming couplets, from a play (perhaps Demetrius' speech in A Midsummer Night's Dream, III ii). Can the students hear the new sounds? Speak a Chaucerian couplet, then a Shakespearean couplet. Identify the new sounds.

Fourth, imagine never having heard, and never having voiced these sounds before. What can one feel, experience, even articulate, through sounding a...o..., u , ee...? What about the diphthongs, ow, and ai? What can the soul experience, through sounding them, that the English-speaking soul had never been able to experience before? Can the students hear any other differences between Chaucer's couplets and Shakespeare's couplets, in terms of sound?

Fifth, speak to the students a good number (10-15) of lines of Shakespearean blank verse. (Hamlet's famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be..." [III i ll.56-67] would be good.) Any impressions? Have the students speak the first two lines of it, then the first four lines of it. What do they notice, in terms of the activity of their ear, in terms of sound-possibilities? In addition to whatever qualitative observations they have, they should certainly become conscious of the fact that, on the one hand, the metrical line continues to be iambic pentameter, while on the other hand, the end-rime of couplets has evaporated, disappeared.

Sixth, have the students cluster in the center of the room, facing out to the perimeter. As the teacher calls out the rhythm of the iambic pentameter, "short-long, short-long..." the students walk it, step it, with a pause at the end of the line. Then each student may shift direction, in any direction he or she chooses, to walk the next line of iambic pentameter, and then he or she may shift anew in whatever new direction of choice, and so on, for at least five or six lines. What is the experience? What are the effects of rhymelessness? What is lost? What is gained? What are the effects of the sustained rhythm of the iambic pentameter within the lack of rhyme?

Seventh, ask students to write in blank verse, eventually at least ten lines. The recommended subject could vary. It might be autobiographical, philosophical, or epic, evoking some great journey or struggle. The next day, ask what it was like to write in blank verse. Hear the pieces. Share impressions of them. Have in mind as a teacher the question: what consciousness, or frame of mind, does the blank verse make possible, or even engender?

[What is important is the process, not the results, of this research.

In describing these exercises, I'm using the word "students" for any of us who may be engaging in this research of trying to waken to how the language we utter affects our consciousness. The degree to which we would ask the accompanying questions would vary according to the age of the teenage students, or according to the nature of the particular adult group.]

[In the context of this research project, our attention will jump from Shakespeare's blank verse to the poetry of Walt Whitman. Yes, we could pay attention to the language of Milton, the Metaphysical Poets, and the Romantic Poets. Yet, in relation to Part Two of this research project, the essential development, as we will see, is both initiated and embodied in the language of Walt Whitman.]

VIII AMERICAN ENGLISH — WHITMAN

In the context of the evolving language of English literature, why did it take so long for the new, English-speaking nation of the "United States of America" to give forth its own poets, centuries after settling, a lifetime after the Declaration of Independence? What are the traits of the poetry of the childless Father of American poetry, in the 1850s, 1860s?

As former journalist/carpenter Walt Whitman begins his song, in the meter of the times, the meter of the age, he reaches, expands, extends beyond it, towards and even beyond the classic hexameter of Homer's original epics' verse. Homer's dactylic hexameter had rested in the balanced relationship between blood and breath, three pulse-beats within one breath, the new breath being taken on the fourth pulse, during the caesura (pause).

Andra moi ennepe, Musa polutropon hos malla pola
Plankthe epei Troyes, hieron ptolietron eperse

(Sing in me O Muse, of the man of many turns, who many ways
Wandered when he had sacked Troy's holy citadel)

Homer's line, spoken, consisted of two trimeters, a hexameter. Actually, including the breathing pauses, Homer's line was an octameter, two tetrameters. Homer's line rests on the universal 4:1 relationship between blood and breath. Such is the character of the meter which had guided western humanity into incarnation, during the previous 2,500 years.

Walt Whitman endeavored in his poetry to "construct the great Bible the 365 the democratic....." Right away, he consciously connects with his own respiration, his breathing.

Song of Myself, Section 2

...The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the
passing of blood and air through my lungs,...

Yet, by this time in evolution, the form he finds is not the general, universal form of the dactylic hexameter, which Homer had sustained through 48 books of the Iliad and the Odyssey. He finds an individual form, according to the ebbing and flowing of his particular breathing and heartbeat, in response to the particular situation of the poetry, varying not only poem by poem, not only section by section, not only stanza by stanza, but varying line by line.

As a boy, Walt Whitman used to run on the beach, declaiming Homer to the wind. In his thirties, while working with his father as a carpenter, he used to have The Iliad (or Shakespeare or Emerson) in his lunch pail. He liked to ride the bus all day, right behind the driver, declaiming Homer down Broadway.

In March, 1850, when Walt was thirty-one, external events galvanized an internal reorientation, revolution. Trying to save the union, Henry Clay had introduced in January a compromise program, including a strong fugitive slave act. Calhoun wanted a country with two presidents, two vetoes. On March 2 Walt Whitman wrote his last rhymed poem (of his youth), "the Dough Face Song," attacking southern politicians. "We are all docile dough-faces/ they knead us with the fist..." On March 7 Daniel Webster, also trying to save the union, decided to support the fugitive slave law. On March 22 democratic journalist Walt Whitman, boiling at what he considered to be Webster's betrayal of the ideals of freedom for all, abandoned all the propriety and pattern of rhyming, regularly metrical verse, and passionately penned America's first poem in free verse, the literary equivalent of what Emerson had called "the shot heard round the world." This little poem, although of course no one realized it at the time, sounded the beginning of modern poetry, a revolution as profound literarily as the American revolution had been politically. The poem, "Blood Money," appeared in the New York Herald Tribune," casting Daniel Webster as Judas.

Of olden time, when it came to pass
That the beautiful god Jesus, should finish his work on earth
Then went Judas and sold the divine youth
And took pay for his body.

When the rare, English island poet of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare, increasingly throughout his plays, and Milton, consistently in Paradise Lost, wrote in blank verse, each had stood, at the end of each line, somewhat like Satan himself in Paradise Lost, on the border of hell, of Pandemonium, having to embark into the "palpable obscure," into the oblivion, free (and this is the almost unbearable agony), free to move in almost any direction with the thought of the line, because unfettered by, undirected by, the sounds of the end-rime. Such awe-ful freedom in the seventeenth century Shakespeare and Milton were great enough poets, brave enough souls, to dare to embrace, to need to embrace, in order to express the vast or deep scope of their subject matter. However, such a new courageous freedom, such a latitude of possibility of thinking, was nevertheless sustained by the iambic pentameter, by regular meter and rhythm, u u u u u, whatever direction the thought content might take.

...so eagerly the fiend
O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies:
(Paradise Lost, John Milton, book II, ll. 945-950)

By the middle of the 19th Century in the raw, uncultured, independent New World of the United States of America, one poet was ready to take a step even further. Walt Whitman's poem, "A Song of Myself," begins, for example with the lines,

I celebrate myself, and sing myself
And what I assume you shall assume

The first line is classic iambic pentameter, the familiar standard of English poetry. The second is iambic pentameter (unrhyming) as well, with several variations. Off we go, in blank verse? The third line, however,

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you
expands beyond to a line of seven feet. The next recedes to three feet,

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

Then its sequel expands out to seven feet (or strong beats) again. Extending or reaching a line length beyond the contemporary pentameter toward and even beyond Homer's original hexameter, may be a reach toward Homer's epic pace, sustained regularly by its connection to the human blood and breath. However, Whitman flows beyond that hexameter to heptameter, in a sequence of three seven-foot lines, ebbing then in the next line to trimeter.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this
soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same,
and their parents the same,
I now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Whitman may expand out to nine feet three lines later. The lines change in length not according to any predetermined patterns from the past.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

Whereas Shakespeare and Milton stood alone at the end of each line of blank verse, free to proceed in their thinking, Walt stands alone at the end of each line, free to proceed not only in his thinking, but also in his feeling, in the rhythm of breath and blood which not only accompanies, but in fact, bears the thinking.

Although Coleridge had wanted the poetic mind to be able to find its course "organically," as a river or tree might, adapting as it proceeded, he valued regular meter as the restraint on emotion, engendering power in the poem. Even in "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" and "Frost at Midnight," in 1797-98, as the

subject matter shifts and flows, the meter, the blank verse, steadily sustains the experience.

American Walt, in the 1850s, so frees himself, not only of anticipated rime, but also of metrical length of line, that not only does no pattern sustain him from line to line, but, for the first time in the history of Western Poetry, the poet is free to find the words, the rhythm, and the length of the line which fit the experience as it is in that moment, independent of both the previous and the next moments. For the first time, the verse can meet the moment as it is. What potential for vibrantly fresh verse; how difficult, as poet, to remain attentive in verse to what the vibrantly fresh moment actually calls for. The poet Galway Kinnell has said of this almost existential freshness of Whitman's language, "It is as if each word had been pressed while still wet upon a part of reality, and then taken into the poem bearing its contours." (Poetry Speaks, p. 17)

Remember how blank verse has served as a vessel beyond what the alliterative verse of the Sentient Soul could bear, beyond what the rhyming couplets of the Rational Soul could bear, serving as the ultimate vessel for the greatest poetic explorations of the Consciousness Soul in the English language. As the spirit of the English language has progressively withdrawn from the body of the language itself, those living in the language have been allowed increasing freedom to think independently through the English language. Across the Atlantic Ocean from the original island of England, in the New World, the American "Walt Whitman, a cosmos, of Manhattan the son," takes all those living in the English language, hence all those in the vanguard of exploring the experience of the Consciousness Soul, a mighty step forward into further freedom, and hence into further responsibility, to express experience in appropriately accurate language in "free verse."

I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard
Nature without check with original energy.

Whitman's "Free Verse": Possible Exercises:

First, let students hear and then speak some rhyming couplets (Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Pope). Then let them hear and then speak some blank verse, (Shakespeare, Milton, or even Wordsworth or Coleridge).

Second, speak five to eight lines of Whitman's "A Song of Myself." Have them repeat after, line by line. What do they hear, notice? What are impressions?

Third, have them try to walk each line, stepping according to the strong and weak beats.

Fourth, have the students spread out, stop and close their eyes; each should think of some, any, particular experience, picturing it and feeling it. Eyes open, each student should walk a line, silently, any direction, with whatever number and any combination of short and long measures, (weak and strong), pausing at the end of the line. Then, picturing a next aspect of the experience, walk the next line, in whatever direction, whatever rhythm and length seems appropriate for evoking that stage of the experience, and again..., for at least four or five lines. What is the effect of having this wide latitude, virtually 360 degrees of possibility, and any length for each line, and any rhythm for each line, at the same time as having the varying lines be part of a unified whole?

Fifth, have the students write about that original experience, now putting words on paper, for each line, according to what the evolving nature of the experience seems to call for. Work on them further at night. The next day, share the experience of writing that way. Hear the pieces. Share observations, impressions. What are the possibilities, the opportunities, of writing in this “free verse?” What are the burdens, the responsibilities, perhaps even the cost, of writing in this apparently limitless, super-free way? What kind of consciousness is possible, in fact, what kind of consciousness is required to write in such a manner?

PART TWO

EVOLVING ENGLISH AND EVOLVING ADOLESCENTS

IX INTRODUCTION

How do developments in the language of English literature reflect developments in adolescence? How, if we understand appropriately, can developments in the language of English literature affect, quicken, or at least enhance, reinforce, developmental stages in adolescence? There is no simple, categorical answer. But looking at the four years of high school as qualitatively as possible may yield helpful clues.

One might say that reading literature can offer windows into many realms of human experience, beyond our daily sense experience. But understanding literature, as rich as it can be, is in a certain way at best a window. Working directly with the language of literature itself, particularly of poetry, can open the door, ushering one directly into the medium itself, one might even say the living “soul-flesh,” of that recreated experience. Or, to take the metaphor further, direct work with the language of poetry itself can work as a key, unlocking otherwise dormant, unconscious layers of soul-experience in the adolescent. The language of Humanity’s particular Age-stage can quicken, awaken the consciousness of the individual’s corresponding age-stage.

X NINTH GRADE

Since the Waldorf Curriculum in ninth grade focuses primarily on modern history, (American Revolution through Twentieth Century) on the one hand, and particularly on observation of the physical world on the other hand, it may be fair to say that the effect of language on consciousness is less conscious in ninth grade than in the other three years of high school. The main emphasis is to use language clearly, reflecting accurately the actual appearances of the physical world, using language as correctly as possible, and as well using language as playfully, as enjoyably as possible. Students certainly are affected by living in the English of Shakespeare (A Midsummer Night’s Dream), Melville (Moby Dick), Twain (short pieces), Paton (Cry, the Beloved Country), Lee (To Kill a Mockingbird), Carter (The Education of Little Tree), Hansberry (A Raisin in the Sun), and other “outside” books.

XI TENTH GRADE

In the context of the Waldorf Curriculum, tenth grade is the year when language needs to really get to work, quickening the student, vitally (etheric), artfully (astral), and consciously (spirit/ego). Historically, the curriculum reaches back, to the origins of ancient cultures such as India, Persia, Babylon/Sumeria,

Egypt, coming all the way forward to Ancient Greece. How do cultures, civilizations form, evolve? Scientifically, students look at physiology, the activities of the nervous, circulatory, and metabolic systems. How do the processes work? How do the processes of the whole earth work?

If one looks at the third seven-year period as the time primarily of the development of the student's astral body (soul body), it is possible, and wise, to consider the ninth grade year as a recapitulation of the physical development of the first seven years, so that the newly emerging soul-body can orient well in the physical world. In a similar way, as we educators work to help the students develop as healthily as possible, one can work with the developing soul body, astral body, in the tenth grade, in a manner which recapitulates, reinforces, some of the characteristics of the child's life-body (etheric) as it developed in the second seven-year period. With the activity of the formative forces in mind, how can one become aware, work with language, in a way that quickens, activates, generates, articulates the emerging astral body, artfully, vitally, healthily helping it to interweave with the maturer forces of the more developed life-body? In a number of ways, in a number of courses.

The primary way is through two courses which Rudolf Steiner recommended in the curriculum for the tenth grade. One he referred to as *The Evolution of the Language* (i.e. mother tongue). The other can be called *The Elements of Poetry*, or "The Art of Poetry." A number of schools have, in recent years, combined these two subjects, so that students become conscious of certain elements of poetry, in the medium of the evolving poetry, hence the evolving language, and hence the evolving consciousness. One can introduce elements of poetry as the poetry of the language evolves historically.

The ultimate way for tenth grade students to begin thinking about their own language, or language in general, is through the creation myth, particularly the Judeo-Christian story of the origin of the world, occurring through the saying activity of "The Creator." The first human being, made in the image of the Creator, was given the task, opportunity, activity, of naming the other creatures. Hence, Man, being made in the image of the Creator, imitated that Creator's creative power, through the activity of naming. The Tower of Babel is, of course, a picture of the differentiating of one original language into many, as a consequence of Humanity's "Luciferic" attempt to build the tower to God, to be too much like the Creator. Both Naming, and speaking "I AM" remain important deeds or activities throughout the stories of the Bible.

Students can learn some of the language and rhythms of the earliest Western written verse, the Ancient Greek of the early epics, lyrics, and dramas. In doing so, they can experience, not only how the content of the epic (Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) guides a whole culture into being, but how the very rhythms, formed as they were of the pace of the breathing lungs in relation to the beating heart, in fact helped the people listening to the stories to be able to breathe the long tales into their very beings. On such a basis, students can well imagine that the early Greek rhythms even helped to form constitutionally the breathing and blood organisms of the people themselves within a lifetime, and of the folk as a whole over generations.

Not only does the *The Art of Poetry* need to help students to imagine back to the origin of our world, and to the origins of Western literature, but it needs to take them back to the origins of our own language as well. Tenth graders

need to become aware of the ebbs and flows, the interweavings, over time, of Celtic, Roman Latin, Angle, Saxon, Jute, Norse, and church Latin, by the time Alfraed (raed =counseled by the Alf=elfs) consolidated not only a kingdom but a language, by translating Bede's history of the Church into English and by instituting a Chronicle of English History. As tenth grade students read some of ninth century Beowulf and learn some of the lines by heart, speaking them day after day, and writing in imitation of the four-beat alliterative verse, they begin to experience:

- 1) The living sounds of our great-grandfather tongue, of our earliest English.
- 2) Sounds which are more immediately, primally, freshly rooted in connection with the elements themselves, water, earth, air, fire, than is the case in any of our English language ever since. Especially the thick texture of emphasis on consonants helps students to incarnate into the physical world, helps unfolding astral bodies to be well grounded in relation to the physical world.
- 3) Rhythms (four-beat alliteration) which not only echo but reinforce, generate, strengthen the heart-beat itself and hence the health of the whole circulatory system (at a time when the etheric heart is forming independently).
- 4) Sounds and rhythm, as well as imagery, which appeal to the will, which emanate from the will, which quicken the will, which strengthen the will. In our contemporary era of information overload and weakness of will, a hunger for action and power is reflected often in adolescent and street lingo full of (Anglo-Saxon) "four-letter" words. Teenagers find an unparalleled fresh power in the fountain-force of the old Anglo-Saxon language.
- 5) Through kennings (see p 8) the activity of first seeing the connection between two different images, whale and path, as in a simile performing a marriage between two normally separate parts of the creation. At the same time the kenning-crafter is creating a new word, "whale-path," for sea, thereby generating new language, giving the language fresh vitality.
- 6) Through riddles quickening the tenth graders' souls to ponder, with practical wisdom, riddles of life on earth. Such a pondering quickens, generates imagination, the activity of gleaning an activity's essence.
- 7) Unconscious recapitulation of what Rudolf Steiner refers to as Sentient Soul experience. In an individual's life, the astral body, developed especially between puberty and "becoming an adult," around age 21, becomes transformed by the individual's I into the Sentient Soul, especially during one's twenties. Historically, Humanity evolved through a Sentient Soul stage of development roughly during the two millenia between 3000 BC and 1000BC, while Egyptian culture was ripest. Humanity's next stage of development, the Intellectual Soul stage, began around the time of the origins of Western literature in ancient Greece, c 800 BC. Nevertheless, not all cultures developed simultaneously. The northern Norse peoples, remaining illiterate longer in an oral culture, sustained far later a Sentient Soul relationship to life. Tenth graders, as their own individual astral bodies are emerging, developing, have the opportunity, through the old Anglo-Saxon language, to experience a vital, potent, homeopathic dose of Sentient Soul life, which

nourishes the tenth graders with a certain raw distillation of a vast, rich cultural sustenance. They love the mysterious, atmospheric power of the sounds; they feel empowered, charged, reconnected with the elemental forces of the world; they feel made mighty, artfully.

Well-being I won
And wisdom too.
I grew and took joy in my growth:
From a word to a word
I was led to a word,
From a deed to another deed.

Odin-from the Old Norse-The Poetic Edda (c.1200 AD)

[What does it mean that in 2001 eleventh graders in American Waldorf Schools, attempting to write Chaucer's Middle English in iambic pentameter, tend to fall into a four-beat line? Why does the contemporary poetry of the streets, both Rap songs and "spoken word poetry," tend to be uttered in a four-beat line (also heavily alliterative and rhymed, also with a heavy preponderance of Anglo-Saxon words)? Are we falling back into a Sentient Soul experience? Are the adolescents rising toward their own Sentient Soul experience in their twenties? Is most of the rap music created by people in their twenties? Is this contemporary, four-beat, alliterative phenomenon a larger ebbing, instinctively attempting to rejuvenate the western world's first wave of "barren" Consciousness Soul experience?]

Also in the Art of Poetry the tenth graders should learn of the linguistic developments after the Norman Invasion (see pp 9-11), leading up to the time of Chaucer. The students should experience some of Chaucer's iambic pentameter rhyming couplets (see pp 11-13). They should learn something of the vowel changes in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (see pp 15-18) They should work with a Shakespearean sonnet (see pp 25-27) and try to write one. They should experience blank verse through either Shakespeare (see pp 22,23) or Milton. They can also experience later Romantic poetry and Whitman's free verse.

It is fortunate for several reasons for tenth graders to be able to have a Main Lesson on The Bible as Source of Literature. The mytho-historic development in the Old Testament complements the history curriculum of Ancient Cultures. The Old and New Testaments together are one of the primary sources of imagery and patterns for the whole Western imagination, and hence for Western culture. The King James translation, generated also in the time of Shakespeare, is the other wonder-work of the Spirit of the English language, fashioning phrasings which have continued to shape the minds of English-speakers ever since.

To complement the Judaeo-Christian stream, Homer's Odyssey offers the other major source of the Western imagination. In addition to the shape of the narrative and the wealth of the imagery, the Homeric similes specifically school the tenth graders' minds in imaginative activity with rational discipline. Elaborating the details of a comparison generates, strengthens, imaginative capacity. Both the language (like, as) and the lawful accuracy require logical clarity.

The study of the short story in tenth grade is an excellent opportunity for students to become more conscious of the craft of forming a narrative, considering especially plot, symbol, theme, and character. Although the modernness of this form makes it an exception to the general Ancient/Greek context of tenth grade, its accessibility makes it prime material for tenth graders to further develop their thinking by applying consciousness to form.

XII ELEVENTH GRADE

In terms of research of the relationship between language development and child development, eleventh grade is the key year in a Waldorf Curriculum. Think of this emerging, maturing soul body/astral body, having recapitulated in ninth and tenth grades the physical and “etheric “ stages of development as a basis for healthy soul development. Now, in eleventh grade the unfolding soul is ripening, coming into its own. The soul is finally ready in a way to live, and to act, in its own substance, in its own medium.

Historically, the eleventh grade usually moves from Rome, through the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance at least. Especially when eleventh grades tend to spend valuable time with both Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival and Dante’s Divine Comedy, each in translation, it is fortunate and indeed crucial for students to be able to spend not days but weeks with Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, in Middle English. First, let the students remember the experience of speaking /living in the four-beat, alliterative Old Anglo-Saxon verse of Beowulf (see pp 6,7). What does it mean for them to then expand to Chaucer’s iambic pentameter, in rhyming couplets, freed of the consonantal repetition? They can, as eleventh graders, be even more conscious of differences in qualities than they could be in tenth grade. What does it mean for them though, for weeks, maybe even six, to be speaking, to be hearing, to be reading aloud in the day in school, silently at home at night, the language of Chaucer’s Middle English? They write character sketches or dialogues in Middle English; they perform scenes for classmates in Middle English.

The Drownyng Tale

WHYLOM, there was a vagrante and a thief
Cleped Noah who maketh much mischief
And known through all the regne for scoundrelrye.
He slepen only with women who be
y-wedded or abide in nunnerye,
none other wold he goine with to lye.
He hadde blonde curls and slender handes,
But with them he had killed many mannes,
And stolen many rynges and gilded stitche
If he hadde not alle lose, he wolde be riche.
Once in the sprynge as alle camme to be,
As smalle brooken firste flowen free
As people love and laugh and are happye,
Noah was restynge high up in a tree.

Nexte the port where shippes come to lande,
 Where drunken sailors know not how to stande,
 He saw with his eyen a ladye faire,
 So prettye that he coulde not brake his staire,
 So that he soon forgotten where he be,
 And fallen heedlong from that highe tree.
 He thought, "It matter not upon my heed,
 If she a nonne be, or if y-wedde!
 Alas!" thoght he, "this longynge that I feel!
 I wol hir thak about the lendes weel."
 He follow'd 'til she cometh to a shippe
 That sailed to the sandes of Egypte.

Right then he thoght he wolde a sailor bee.
 He wolde floghten the seven sees, pardee.
 The master of the shippe with redde face,
 Tolde Noeah that he hadde a place,
 To swepen decks above and down baylow,
 And kaypen shippe taydye evermo.
 The ladye dere, his lemmin and his lyf,
 That he woude surely make as his wyf,
 Cam on the shippe and goed into hir room;
 Our Noah shiver'd and he almost swoon'd.

They sailed out the very nexte dayye,
 The swete dere did in hir cabin staye,
 And ther she wolden stay for three day mo
 And Noah did hir love mo than bifo.
 He often cryed, "Alack, my cursidnesse!"
 For she cam not out to be his own mistresse.
 After three dayes out of hir romme she came,
 He played his loote, and tryed to synge a songge,
 But for his happynesse he coude nocht speke,
 And out cam only pips and little squeke.
 His face turned red, he grabb'd hir hand,
 "Alack my der, make me an happy man!"
 "My love I graunt, but on one condicioun,
 that we are wed in proper tradicioun..."
 Right at this time ther cam a thonder-dent
 And stronge wind that maketh mastes bent.
 It threwe Noah right out of the shippe
 The shippe falter'd too and floght no more,
 And sinked to the sandye ocean floore.
 As Noah sank, his bodye on hirs felle;
 One coude say this waye was just as welle,
 As they together sank unto their dome,
 y-wedded they wer withoutte tradicioun.
 Forever they woude together lye dead
 As theire flesh becayme fishes' bread.
 Alive, short tyme together did they spende,
 But dead they lye together to no ende.

— Seth Wulsin GMWS 2000

Eleventh graders immersing themselves substantially in Chaucer's Middle English experience:

1) What linguists acknowledge and what any of us can recognize as our grandfather or grandmother tongue (see pp 11-15).

2) An extended, expanded consciousness made possible by the five-beat line (as opposed to the four-beat Old Anglo-Saxon). This iambic pentameter has been the primary vessel in English poetry, for seven centuries now, 1360s through 1960s, of the early stages of what Rudolf Steiner refers to as the Consciousness Soul.

3) Still a grounding, active sounding of consonant sounds, for example, **Knicht**, as opposed to the modern **knight** (nite). These pronounced consonants, some of which will go silent later in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, continue to ground the twenty-first century eleventh grader, the speaker and the hearers, in the sounds of (and hence the soul-experience of) the physical world.

4) Nevertheless, a released, liberated consciousness, no longer hammered or chained down to the relentless repetition of the consonantal alliteration. Not only does the line include a whole extra "foot," (rhythmic sound-unit) but the words themselves, with a higher proportion of Latin and French origins, are allowed to sound a richer variety of vowel sounds, with more range and freedom. Richer vowel range both allows and generates an interiorizing of the language, or of the consciousness of the language user: joys and sorrows, love and hate, lust and chastity, pride and humility, etc. Chaucer's language in fact guides its users from a more physical/vital language (consciousness reflecting the outer world) to a growingly soul-conscious language (reflecting a more inner world) The proportion of Latinate/French-based words in Chaucer's Middle English language makes abstraction, makes conception, more naturally possible than did the Old Anglo-Saxon.

5) A quickening, wakening, wondering, yet ordering attention to sound and sense, as the ear works with the rhyming couplets (see pp 11-13). The growing minds of the students experience the narrative unfold in neatly ordered pairs of lines. The musicality of the language in general, reinforced by the recurring end-rhymes, reinforces the experience of a world universe which resounds with harmony, with order, echoing the lingering medieval experience of dwelling within the Ptolemaic universe of concentric planetary spheres, with earth at the center, and all in its proper places, in proper relation. The modern, third millennial eleventh grader can benefit from a certain intellectual certainty, a firm fiber of mind, at this stage of development. The texture of the language is reliable, dependable. One line ends with a certain sound; the next line is bound to conclude with a similar sound, hence in some manner "concluding" that thought development, even when the narrative continues in the ensuing lines. The pace of development is predictable, dependable, reassuring, and hence strengthening, steadily exercising, steadily developing, not only the story, but in fact the minds of those reading, speaking, listening, or even writing in these rhyming couplets.

6) From a larger, macrocosmic point of view, context, eleventh graders immersing themselves substantially in Chaucer's Middle English experience not only an underlying echo of the Old Anglo-Saxon Sentient Soul qualities (see p 12), but they experience more primally, in their own English language tongue, recapitulation of an Intellectual Soul relationship to the world, through their

language/thinking. Chaucer was living and writing right at the culmination of what Rudolf Steiner characterized as the Intellectual Soul stage of humanity's development, having begun c. 700BC with ancient Greek literature and philosophy, maturing through the Romans, and culminating in the Medieval Scholastic philosopher/theologians, both Nominalists and Realists. Linguistically, literarily, Chaucer's iambic pentameter, with rhyming couplets, offers the modern teenager direct access to, experience of, a frame of mind, a medium of mind, of ways of thinking which confidently aim to understand the world, rationally discerning between right and wrong, good and evil, true and false. The form, the manner, the tissue of Chaucer's literary language bears, even engenders, an Intellectual Soul relationship to the world. Some of the content, especially of particular distinction of character (see pp 13-14) already invites, quickens some of what Rudolf Steiner refers to as Spiritual Soul or Consciousness Soul experience.

Modern teenagers will emerge in their third millennial lives with both more confidence and more inner freedom if, by living through their own language's development, they have been able to live in an Intellectual Soul frame of mind, and make that substance part of the substance of their own developing minds. Then the study of the Renaissance later in the eleventh grade year will be better prepared and actually even accomplished by new mind-qualities being born through the work with Chaucer's language.

Any literary scholar familiar with Waldorf Education and child development, is likely to come to comparable connections between tenth graders and Old Anglo-Saxon, as well as between eleventh graders and Chaucer's Middle English. The next stage of linguistic development, however, is less known in general, and raises particular questions in terms of trying to understand child development. During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, little literature was written in English, while the language itself underwent some of the most dramatic changes in the history of languages (see pp 15-18). What might such a "slumber" and substantial change, macrocosmically, in terms of the development of English language and literature, suggest about possible corresponding soul-development in the sixteen-seventeen-year-old eleventh grader?

Remember, four vowel sounds moved forward when they were spoken. *Nahme* to *name*, *ston* to *stone*, *ruf* to *roof*,.....*swet* to *sweet*. What does it suggest that a vowel, formerly sounded deep within the chamber of the mouth, sounds now further out, closer to the lips, closer to the threshold in fact between and the inner world and the outer world?

What does it suggest that certain consonants, formerly sounded, go silent, inaudible within the spoken word, yet remain visible within the spoken word, a kind of ghost of consciousness? (*knicht*, *knight*)

What does it suggest that the formerly previously sounded final *e* goes silent, sacrificing its sound into the rest of the word, allowing the primary vowel sound in the word to become long,.. *rote* instead of *rot*, *pole* instead of *pol*?

What does it suggest that two formerly distinct vowel sounds, *ahh* and *uu*, combine to create a new multi-textured soul experience in the diphthong, *au*, as in *round*,.. *bound* , even *sound*. What does it mean for a soul to be able to sustain two soul experiences simultaneously, in a blend? Some people even hear three sounds, including *ahh*, *oh*, *uu*. (see pp. 17,18)

Similarly, what does it mean for a soul to be able to sustain a comparable blend, creating the sound absolutely new to the English language and hence to the English-speaking consciousness, ai, from ahh and ee? (Again, some can even hear three sounds in the diphthong, ahh, ay, ee.) [fiv to five]

Stepping back for a moment, to a large perspective, let us imagine the genius, or the spirit, or even the Archangel, of the English Language, laboring during this outwardly silent interlude, altering, transforming fundamental vowel sounds for the speakers of the English language. This transformation of the language was occurring during the late Middle Ages /early Renaissance, a time which Rudolf Steiner characterizes as the beginnings of the whole stage of Humanity's evolution devoted to the development of the Spiritual or Consciousness Soul, a development extending from c. 1400 A.D. to c. 3500A.D.

Why were these new sounds emerging in the English language, just before the splendid awakening of, renaissance, rebirth, of Elizabethan Literature, most essentially of course, the plays of Shakespeare, whom Harold Bloom speaks of as having created the personality/character of modern humanity, whom Rudolf Steiner speaks of as having primarily charted the course for humanity's development of the Consciousness Soul?

Correspondingly, what might be going on in an eleventh grade teenager's developing soul? What stage of apparent slumber does an inarticulate junior suffer, endure, as soul-substance alters, to allow a new relationship to certain language sounds, and hence to enable new kinds of consciousness? The typical journeys explored in eleventh grade, whether those of Parzival, Dante, or Hamlet, include the hero leaving the familiar world (i.e. old consciousness) and journeying out into some kind of death-threatening wasteland, undergoing trials of initiation, in which one's former identity hardly matters. It is as though the shift of vowel sounds from deep in the throat forward, out toward the outer world, prepares the English-speaking folk both for the outer explorations of the New World and the globe at large, as well as, more importantly, for such huge questions as "To be or not to be." Does such language development suggest such inner transformations occurring subtly in the eleventh grader, orienting him or her anew toward being able to venture further into the world at large, to be able to voyage more daringly, more knowingly into the uncharted waters of the human soul?

Everyone experienced teaching teenagers knows that what is almost inescapable for every junior is some dark night of the soul, some experience of being lost, in relation to one's former sense of self, of feeling often more alone than ever before, even of dancing with death. Dante goes into and through the world of the dead. More than ever before or after, thoughts of suicide, in fact of whether "to be or not to be," have to be taken seriously, and met with help immediately.

Imagine what it might mean to the solo-voyaging junior if some mysterious inner transformation allowed, fostered, a new experience of these same vowel sounds, in a way that the newly charged language gave the student new capacity to move inwardly toward the outer world, and to move more consciously into the many, often mysterious realms of the inner world. Even more specifically, is there a mysterious gelling, a new resonating, a clearer sounding than ever before in the student's life, as though a note were finally really sounding for the first time, so that the student has a new connection to the sound, ai, the sound,

unlike French *je* or German *Ich*, the sound through which the English speaker utters, voices, the mysterious name of his or her individuality, *I*. While our understanding of child development points to age 21 as the usual time of experiencing one's individuality in a more enduring manner, the growing, immanent, emerging, activity of the slowly surfacing, activating individuality, the ego, the *I am*, profoundly affects the way the student's emerging, unfolding astral body is harmonised, is helped to be shaped in harmony with the individual's whole being.

It is as though the student, lost for a time as a nobody in the immeasurable, often apparently lawless realms of the astral wasteland, hears the call of *ai*, the name of one's eternal universal individuality, which has the effect of beckoning, summoning, ushering the nascent individuality into harmonizing the astral forces with the physical and life/etheric bodies, refertilizing the former wasteland, allowing the apparent inferno to become purgatorio in its process toward an eventual paradiso.

As the student works with Shakespeare's language, after immersion in Chaucer's Middle English, these historically new vowels sound in the soul with dawn-fresh potency, though the student in 2001 may hardly be conscious of it, until the teacher helps the students to be (see pp 18-20). Imagine the students' confidence growing while becoming aware of the whole new array of soul/sounds available historically (and now renewed developmentally) for Humanity, Shakespeare in particular, (and the student even more particularly) as tools for exploring the mysteries of heart and mind. Imagine, as the seventeen-year-old wonders, in often silent agony, "When will I ever feel I'm pulling my life together, ever feel I'm making sense of life?", how quickening, how charging, how encouraging it must be to hear this new sound, sounding anew, almost as though never before in his or her life, *I, ai, I...I.*, like the ultimate tuning fork, enabling one increasingly to harmonize the various members of one's being.

Imagine what it's like for the eleventh grader to enjoy the artful play of Shakespeare's rhyming couplets (p 20), and then, with Shakespeare, to step, stretch, beyond their limits, shedding the rhythmic lawfulness, the absolute certainties, yet the absolutely demanding confines of that second repeated end-rhyme. What does the soul of the junior experience as, for the first time, historically, the horizon of the next line opens up completely, in terms of sound possibilities? As the musicality of the English line surrenders, recedes, sacrifices itself progressively, from the alliteration of the Old Anglo-Saxon, to the rhyming couplets of the Middle English, now to the blank verse of Shakespeare (and soon after, Milton,) what does the teenager experience? In a certain way, it is as though the spirit of the language is sacrificing some of its own astrality (musical substance) to allow greater freedom for the individuality to think, to explore realms of consciousness. Hence the eleventh grader often finds himself, herself, by this time later in the eleventh grade year, with new courage to venture into terrains such as "the bourne from which no traveler returns." (*Hamlet*, III,2, ...)

The texture of the language may seem paler, less substantial than in earlier centuries, than in earlier stages of soul development (although the variations of vowel coloring, while subtler, are actually far more extensive). The student may feel less held up, less buoyed by the language, yet at the same time, more liberated, released from the language, through its self-sacrificing gesture, to grope toward those notions, those concepts whose essence lives beyond the

limits of language. The eleventh grade student may experience his or her own role in the family, class, or school as less familiar, less clear, may feel less buoyed up by community definitions or images of him or her, yet, these very sounds of the English language, newly sounding in Elizabethan England, newly resounding in the eleventh grader's maturing astral body, may be enabling that student to better listen to another's language, to better think one's way into another's way of thinking, to better imagine into another's world, ultimately to better identify with, recognize, the I AM of another, whatever that person's role, culture, context.

Whereas in the tenth grade the students had experienced the different stages of the language's development, in the eleventh grade, reviewing that and immersing themselves more fully in the languages themselves, the students can begin thinkingly to become more conscious of the implications of the language developments. The very act of becoming conscious, in the eleventh grade, of the altering character of the English language itself means that the student, through thinking about his or her language, is taking the first step toward becoming able to think about his or her thinking, the crucial activity for becoming independently and freely self-aware.

Even the Shakespearean sonnet (see pp 25-27) in its very form implies to the eleventh graders a development from the two-fold, dialectical form of the Petrarchan sonnet, which appeared at the culmination of the Rational Soul stage of Humanity's development, to a three-fold, and in fact even four-fold character of the explorations in a Shakespearean sonnet. The students can experience, recognize, that the culminating couplet, in contrast to Chaucer's continuous, relentless couplets, coming as it does after three quatrains, each with different end-sounds, serves in fact as a way to conclude the altering, wandering exploration of the whole sonnet, very much in the way that the ego, the I AM, can pull together, can make sense of, can integrate the three apparently different quatrains, which are in fact harmonious parts of the whole sonnet. The form of the Shakespearean sonnet is an external confirmation or reinforcement of the quickening activity of the English language's new diphthong, ai, or I. What the eleventh grader is of course not directly conscious of is that the Shakespearean sonnet embodies, mirrors the way in which the students' own egos, own I AMs are increasingly wakefully, actively working to harmonize, to integrate the three members of the student's being, the physical, etheric, and astral bodies.

#116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

—William Shakespeare

Death of a Dove

A mourning dove lay on a frozen stone.
Her body jolted with fiery singeing pain;
Her frail grey wing was broken to the bone;
Down tender breast there ran dark crimson stain.
Her tiny bright black eye was brimmed with fright;
In quivering body thumped heart loud and wild;
The jagged, ripping arrow snatched her flight
And struck her down, a thin, weak, helpless child.
Lo!...Deep white warmth caressed the thrashing heart...
Cool wing-tips brushed burned breast with crystal dew...
And to her sobbing silence, fresh wind blew...
As broken heart and soul did gently part...
Lo! Shining star, leave wings of grey and sigh;
Take wings of light, and to sweet heaven fly!

— Hilary Pharr GMWS '98

Literarily, the students' year should not end with Shakespeare. Yes, the Elizabethan language has awakened soul-faculties and ego activity anew, yes the language has enabled the literature to explore far afield, outwardly and inwardly, but let us not forget that Hamlet has been left in his tragedy, in certain ways still "a quintessence of dust" in "a sterile promontory." Historically, the alienation between subject and object in the early stages of the Consciousness Soul era was reinforced by the mechanization of the universe through Newton's theory of gravity, through the pervasive attitudes in the Age of Reason in the 1700's.

The eleventh graders need the help of the Romantic poets to reunite with the world, to heal the rift between subject and object. Reading, analyzing, and writing in imitation of the Romantic Poets can all help the eleventh graders to:

- 1) Incarnate into the contemporary present, through active eye, through paying attention to particulars in nature.

...and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

"This Lime-tree Bower My Prison," Coleridge

- 2) Incarnate into the contemporary present, through the ear, through listening to the human voice, the living speech around us for rhythms and phrases to inform our poetry.

“What, you are stepping westward?”—“Yea.”
...The voice was soft, and she who spake
was walking by her native lake:
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy:
Its power was felt;...
“Stepping Westward,” Wordsworth

- 3) Imitate in one’s imagination, the ways of the life forces in nature, in terms of allowing one’s poetry to proceed “organically,” as in Coleridge’s conversation poem, “Frost at Midnight.”
- 4) Be aware that the subject of a long, epic poem can, for the first time in human history, take as its subject, not an outer journey or battle, but rather, as in “The Prelude,” the inner journey of the subject writing the poem, the poet himself— how Wordsworth became a poet. Consciousness of self in becoming.
- 5) Likewise, in shorter lyrics, the subject of the poem can be the poet’s own memory of an experience in nature, becoming conscious of how that experience in nature at one time has continued to affect one’s being, on various levels, over time, as in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey.” The student, having largely turned attention outward in high school writing assignments, is now ready to regard one’s own soul experience as subject, objectively.

Stolen Season

Sitting under a dead orchid tree,
I try not to take a deep breath.
Spring is announcing herself
In the blustery but greyish-warm early evening.
I smell her warmth, her wet richness,
Her new green dress.
Here, my thoughts describe
Her. They think they know her.
They think she’ll be like she always was:
In like a lyin’ son-of-a warm breeze...
I don’t give a damn what my thoughts think.
I knew Spring, but she’s been taken from me,
Along with everything else I never thought about losing.
I planted the orchid tree on the grave last year,
As if in dreaming, I thought somehow
It would be cherished.
But whatever favor that orchid owed to
Lifeless Spring was returned,
And the tree was never to grow or blossom.
My life, like my love, dried up and disintegrated, into

Dust under the ground.
Foolish,
I thought it would be fertile enough to support a tree.
Evidently I have grown bitter in these silences,
Talking only to myself,
In the unclaimed hours of dusk.
Again my thoughts, thoughts,
Trying to convince me that spring is coming,
But I want to disappoint them,
For Spring, if anything,
Is already gone forever...

I am not that trite cliché
That keeps bobbing up to the surface of shitty poetry,
Like a dead fish in a turbulent sea,
That broken-hearted middle-aged man who
Lost his wife
A few years back in some vague accident,
And whose only wish is to have her back.
No, I've had her back for a thousand years or more,
I'm sure of it.
So what's the question?
Who stole eternal beauty and rebirth
From eternity?
Who in their mind would think
This could be right?
This life must not, cannot be a wish.
I am not hopeful, not hopeless,
Not even in between, really.
I do not need a prayer...
So when I come back here next time.
If it just so
Happens that a shotgun comes along for the
Ride, it won't be because
I need her and I miss her.
It'll be because I'm already with her.
The stolen season will return to
Rightful owner.
The cat (her favorite) asleep in the chair (my favorite),
Who, once upon a time, was eager to be curious,
Just to see if he'd really have 8 lives left after,
Would wake up to the
Sound of a gunshot.

Sarah Witri GMWS 2000

- 6) Help students become conscious of, and practice, what Keats called the poet's gift of "negative capability," the ability to become independent of one's own soul disposition, in order to experience the "other" as truly as possible, in order to let the "other" speak for itself, through one, the poet.

...To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

“To Autumn,” John Keats

Through the work with the language of the Romantic poets, the eleventh grader has healed the rift, accomplished the reunion between Man and Nature, between Subject and Object, between Spirit and Matter. The real birth, in the New World, will now become possible.

XIII TWELFTH GRADE

By twelfth grade the senior, who has grown up in a contemporary, generally formless anarchy in terms of societal artistic environment, has, by recapitulating the formal stages of development of English poetry, Old Anglo-Saxon four-beat alliterative verse, Chaucer's Middle English in iambic pentameter with rhyming couplets, Shakespeare's blank verse, and the Romantic poets' organically evolving blank verse, has earned a newly constituted readiness to take a fresh new step in consciousness, one of the most courageous, lonely adventures in the history of human culture.

As difficult as it was for the settlers of the New World to earn, to develop stages of independence, beyond even geographic, religious, legal, political, economic, and religious independence to a true artistic independence, so difficult is it for our teenagers to honestly earn an inner independence artistically. From painting in red, yellow, and blue, in first grade, through copying essays from teachers through fourth grade, from under-emphasizing “creative” writing in 5th-8th grades, to schooling the ninth graders' observation of the physical world, to helping tenth and eleventh graders to write in various forms appropriate to the corresponding stages of consciousness of the historical period they were studying, our whole education has been oriented toward not prematurely demanding or exposing our Waldorf students to exercise individuality before other members of the child's being (physical, etheric and astral bodies) have healthily matured in relation to each other.

The twelfth grader embarks on perhaps the most mysterious and challenging year of his or her whole Waldorf education. From one perspective the senior arrives at the culminating year of the whole twelve-, or even fourteen-year sequence in a great crescendo. Many experiences over the years in nursery/kindergarden and each of the grades ring both familiarly and anew, as the seniors start, like Janus, to reflect back more consciously than ever before on what has come before. The senior feels a great swelling momentum, like a wave, which he or she rides with a new poise not previously known.

From another perspective the senior, also like Janus, looks ahead, farther and further than ever before. In terms of space, the senior looks out at the many possibilities for yet higher education, for further life experience. In the midst of those immense terrains of the world, the senior is looking for signs, listening

for possible callings, “what might my work in the world be?” But even more important, more subtle and elusive, and here is the real heart of the mystery of twelfth grade, the senior is looking out for, listening in for, the growing experience of the emerging I, the more clearly sounding individuality.

As full as the senior feels, he or she is only halfway through the third seven-year stage of development on his or her own soul [astral] body. Much remains to develop in the next several years. And yet, in our Waldorf curriculum, we try to work pedagogically in ways which will artistically quicken, enhance, the ego-faculties, the I-capabilities, even though that experience will only really come into its own the next time she is a senior, in college or university, usually around the age of twenty-one or twenty-two.

How can we educators work to serve a healthy awakening, a gentle exercising of this immanent ego-capacity? First, the fact that the student has been strengthening both life-patterns and soul forces through practicing the previous forms of poetry, acknowledges the soul body’s continuing development, as opposed to thrusting the ninth and tenth graders into the modern world of formlessness to navigate however they could, with whatever toll that might take on their undeveloped selves, sucking the forces from the development of the soul substance, into premature ego-activity.

Nevertheless, on the basis of that momentum, having trained them well to navigate the seas of imagination and consciousness according to certain rhythms and laws, we can ask the help of one of the pioneers of Western consciousness, to guide them into the next step. In the context of the twelfth grade English main lesson, The Birth of American Literature, the students hear Ralph Waldo Emerson, in 1837, ask for a truly American Scholar, and in 1842, ask for a truly American Poet, not just someone imitating Old World patterns. Walt Whitman outwardly spent his teens, twenties, and early thirties writing unremarkable journalistic prose. However, inwardly, Emerson’s words were taking root. In a moment of undeliberate passion (see p 30), Walt Whitman wrote what was essentially America’s first “free verse.” In the ensuing years, in fact through the rest of his life, he continued, yielding nine growing editions of Leaves of Grass. What does it mean for Walt Whitman to arrive at the end of a line of poetry without any formal guide dictating, suggesting, ordering him in terms of what the form of the next line should be? Of course most of the people reading his poetry in 1855, with the rare exception of Ralph Waldo Emerson, could not follow him from line to unpredictable line, precisely because they did not know how they were supposed to proceed, and hence they could not follow, with open, fully engaged consciousness; they were not innerly free enough to follow into such unordered waters of consciousness. They experienced only anarchy. Emerson, on the other hand, was flexibly awake enough to recognize the appropriate vitality of each line, as it adapted itself formally to whatever the particular nuance of that line’s experience required, treating each line with equal democratic importance, giving it its form according to its individual character, so that, in Galway Kinnel’s image, each line emerges dripping wet with the experience.

What does it mean for humanity to arrive at a moment when no outward form dictates the next step?

Twelfth graders can recognize, experience, that Whitman’s verse is not just anarchy, is not just “free” verse, in the sense that anything that the poet

writes is fair and equally vital. The students can experience when one of Whitman's lines is weak, does not fit artistically. The students can experience that the perhaps frightening "freedom" from the dictates of outer form, is accompanied by the perhaps frightening, but eternally exciting, responsibility to listen so openly, without preconception or prejudice, not only to the experience itself which is the subject of the poem, but to each moment of the recreation of that experience. That selfless openness to the changing, unpredictable essence of the other, whatever its character may be, is the essence of the mystery of the capacity of the I. "Free" verse, the form for a revolution of consciousness, generated in America, turns out to be the form of poetry most inwardly demanding, most strict, most challenging to, and hence most generating of, the inwardly free consciousness of I-activity.

Had I the Choice

Had I the choice to tally greatest bards,
To limn their portraits, stately, beautiful, and emulate at will
Homer with all his wars and warriors—Hector, Achilles, Ajax
Or Shakespeare's woe-entangled Hamlet, Lear, Othello—
Tennyson's fair ladies
Metre or wit, the best, or choice conceit to wield in perfect rhyme,
delight of singers;
Therese, these, O sea, all these I'd gladly barter,
Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me transfer,
Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,
And leave its odor there.

—Walt Whitman

Song of Myself

...Water is all color, it is life.
Its endless forms and patterns have affected all of the creation,
More perhaps than any other single thing.
I have grown through the waters.
It is the vessel of my memories, it is the substance of my body
and mind.
My soul would be like water.

The air is laden with water, it is tired of it.
At night, when no one is looking, the air throws water
carelessly all over the ground.
But the sun, judge of all creation,
sentences the air to carry it through every day.
So every morning, it must painfully gather up every drop once
more.

To be warm and cozy, with smoke curling silently into the air,
talking of love and lust, solitude and friendship,
paper plates and candles...

Or utterly alone, content as a stone.
The soothing sound of rain
like nothing else
sings me into complete contentment.
And if it fails, I know I must
seek it out, and learn from it,
and plead endlessly with it; for anything cannot we be one?
I embrace it to the fullest, strip all restraints from my body,
And twirl, soaked through the skin,
until my plea is acknowledged.

Snow is the happiness of rain,
we understand her far less than her brother,
she is too removed from our interests.
But for me she possesses a greater slice of heaven
than I find elsewhere,
I love her just as well as the coolest stream bed
imbued with all of the ripples,
nipples, waves and falls of the world.

Ocean, fullest of all habitats, overwhelms me with its life,
No, fresh water is more my cup of tea.

— Nicholas Alexandra, GMWS, '97

Just as the ninth grader lives naturally in the contemporary language of “the Times,” so the twelfth grader re-enters the present, through the curriculum, but now having been consciously re-oriented in the context of Humanity’s evolution, from Ancient Cultures through Greek, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance eras, into the immediacy of the modern world. Hence, in addition to the Main Lesson on the Birth of American Literature, it is fortunate for seniors to have the opportunity to explore contemporary consciousness through electives such as Modern Poetry, Afro-American Literature, and Native American Literature. Modern Poetry might include such poets as Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Frost, Stevens, and Williams, then Bishop, Cummins, Jeffers, Roethke, Plath, Wilbur, then Ginsberg, Snyder, Kinnell, Oliver, etc. Afro-American Literature might include fables, Blues, Song of Solomon, by Toni Morrison, and poetry by Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lucille Clifton, Rita Dove, Maya Angelou. Native American Literature may include books such as Black Elk Speaks (John Neihardt), Ceremony, by Leslie Marmon Silko, Fool’s Crow, by James Welch, and poetry by Joy Harjo and Sherman Alexie.

XIV HIGH SCHOOL—SPEECH AND DRAMA

One could not conclude a study of the affect of the English language on stages of adolescent development without stating the obvious: what is especially crucial to the developing teenager is how the mother tongue, English, lives in daily use. Each student, entering each classroom, should experience, usually unconsciously, that the very air in the room, the very atmosphere, has been

permeated by, even formed by, carefully spoken sounds. Students should experience that the sentences have been formed meaningfully, that the phrases have been crafted carefully, that the words have been chosen thoughtfully, that the sounds have been uttered artfully.

How distinctly one articulates consonant sounds affects how vitally one incarnates in relation to the things and elements of the outer, physical world. How clearly and fully one voices vowel sounds affects how artfully one's inner, soul-life can be articulated consciously. The artful combing of these two, consonants and vowels, to form each word, is an "ego"-activity, strengthening, exercising one's I AM, and in the process actually weaving life-body and astral body together healthily through wakeful, artful speech.

Ideally, all teachers would be doing some speech exercises and some recitation at the beginning of every Main Lesson, every day, whatever the subject, throughout the four years. Most "run-through" English classes can include some recitation.

A potential Speech and Drama Curriculum, on the basis of the above-stated constant activity and attention of all teachers and students, might include the following:

Ninth Grade:

Reading/enacting scenes in class in The Story of Drama

One-minute impromptu speeches

One-minute prepared speeches

Two-minute prepared speeches

Individual recitations

Group recitations

Oral book reports

Class meeting discussion protocol

Individual offerings in High School Poetry Evening

Class offerings in all-school assemblies

Tenth Grade:

Tenth grade play

Individual recitations

Group recitations

Oral book reports

Debating Club?

Drama Club?

Class meeting discussion protocol

Individual offerings in High School Poetry Evening

Class offerings in all-school assemblies

Eleventh Grade:

Presentation of monologues, dialogues in Chaucerian Middle English

Writing and enacting dramatic monologues

Oral Reports on Foreign Exchange experience

Individual recitations

Group recitations

Oral book reports
Debating Club?
Drama Club?
Class meeting discussion protocol
Individual offerings in High School Poetry Evening
Class offerings in all-school assemblies
Final assembly skit on Senior Class

Twelfth Grade:
Individual recitations
Group recitations
Debating Club?
Drama Club?
Class meeting discussion protocol
Class offerings in all-school assemblies
Individual offerings in High School Poetry Evening
Five-minute Senior Speech to whole high School
Discussion group guides in High School Week
Twenty-thirty minute presentation to whole high school community of
Independent Senior Project.
Twelfth Grade Play
Two student speakers at graduation

XV SUMMARY OF EXERCISES:

The Old Anglo-Saxon of Beowulf: A Possible Sequence of Exercises :

[What is important is the process, not the results, of this research.

In describing these exercises, I'm using the word "students" for any of us who may be engaging in this research of trying to waken to how the language we utter affects our consciousness. The degree to which we would ask the accompanying questions would vary according to the age of the teenage students, or according to the nature of the particular adult group.

The series of exercises offered here have been conceived with a large space in mind, allowing substantial movement. If space does not allow a group to move so fully, it is possible to have a micro-version of the experiences, using fingers on desktops, instead of legs on floors.]

First, read aloud four to six lines of the original Beowulf. Have everyone speak together two-to-four lines of the old Anglo-Saxon. Then, speaking the lines again, have the students take a step, on each of the (four) strong beats in a line. What do they experience?

Second, then perhaps the teacher speaks the lines, tapping with a ruler or pencil the weak, unstressed syllables, as the students step the strong beats. What do they experience? The students start to become aware of the regularity of the strong beats, and the varying, flexible irregularity of the weak beats. Then they can try stepping the weak beats lightly, and the strong beats heavily.

Third, as the teacher speaks the line, the students, stepping, call out the repeated consonant sound on each of three of the four strong beats. Then, the students can do the same, this time banging their sword hand over onto their shield hand on each of the three repeated consonants. What is their experience?

Fourth, no longer speaking the old Anglo-Saxon, have the students walk a straight line in any direction, stepping four strong beats, varying weak beats however they choose; however, each student calls out some consonant, repeating it on three of the four strong beats, then changes direction, and does the same, walking a four beat line, varying weak beats, repeating a new consonant sound for three of the four strong beats. And again, and again. What is their experience?

Fifth, then have the students sit down and write, in an alliterative, four-beat line, repeating the same consonant three of the four strong beats, varying weak beats however they choose. The subject matter might be a battle or a journey, emphasizing the elements (earth, water, air, and fire) and the things of the physical world as vividly as possible. Writing four-to-six lines in class, they might take it further at night, to ten to fifteen lines, or more.]

Sixth, what was it like writing in that form? What was the experience, what were the effects?

Chaucer's Middle English; Possible Exercises:

First, have everybody speak, as a reminder, two-to-four lines of Beowulf.

Second, the teacher speaks four to six lines of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Have students speak two and then at least four lines. What do they notice, as qualities, in relation to the old Anglo-Saxon?

Third, speak the lines, asking the students to step the strong beats. Speak the lines, asking them to step the strong beats and clap the weak beats. What is the difference in quality between a four-beat and a five-beat line? What is the effect of the regular, short-long, (iambic) foot, in which the "weak" sound is generally as regular as the strong sound? What is it like not to have the three-fold alliteration of each line? And, what is the effect of having the end-sound of line two rhyme with the end-sound of line one? What does it mean, what is it like, to know, with certainty, that the next line will rhyme with the previous?

Fourth, have students cluster in the center of the room, each facing out toward the perimeter. As the teacher calls out, perhaps "short-long, short-long...", each student walks a straight line, in any direction, stepping five iambs, short-long; on the fifth iamb, each person calls out a sound, of his or her choosing. Then each person turns in any direction, stepping the iambic pentameter, as long as she returns, curving back to the exact same end-spot on the fifth foot (iamb), calling out the same sound on that last foot. Then walk an iambic pentameter line in a new direction, calling out a new end-sound, curving out a next line, ending at the same new end-spot, calling out that same "new" end-sound. Perhaps do this for ten lines, five rhyming couplets. What is the effect? How do students experience such lines?

Fifth, now have the students write some lines in iambic pentameter, with rhyming couplets. The subject could vary; recommendations could include a character sketch, a love passage/poem, or the beginnings of a tale. Students could continue at home, writing at least twelve lines, reworking them, improving them.

Sixth, what was it like to write in that form? What was the experience, the effect?

Shakespeare's Blank Verse: Possible Exercises:

First, give the historical background of The Great Vowel Shift of 15th and 16th Century English.

Second, let students again hear and then speak some lines of Beowulf, the old Anglo-Saxon. Then let them again hear and speak some lines of Chaucer's Middle English.

Third, let students hear and then speak some of Shakespeare's rhyming couplets, from a play (perhaps Demetrius' speech in A Midsummer Night's Dream, III ii). Can the students hear the new sounds? Speak a Chaucerian couplet, then a Shakespearean couplet. Identify the new sounds.

Fourth, imagine never having heard, and never having voiced these sounds before. What can one feel, experience, even articulate, through sounding a, . . . o . . . , u , ee . . . ? What about the diphthongs, ow, and ai? What can the soul experience, through sounding them, that the English-speaking soul had never been able to experience before? Can the students hear any other differences between Chaucer's couplets and Shakespeare's couplets, in terms of sound?

Fifth, speak to the students a good number (10-15) of lines of Shakespearean blank verse. (Hamlet's famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be, . . ." [III i ll.56-67] would be good.) Any impressions? Have the students speak the first two lines of it, then the first four lines of it. What do they notice, in terms of the activity of their ear, in terms of sound-possibilities? In addition to whatever qualitative observations they have, they should certainly become conscious of the fact that, on the one hand, the metrical line continues to be iambic pentameter, while on the other hand, the end-rime of couplets has evaporated, disappeared.

Sixth, have the students cluster in the center of the room, facing out to the perimeter. As the teacher calls out the rhythm of the iambic pentameter, " short-long, short-long . . .," the students walk it, step it, with a pause at the end of the line. Then each student may shift direction, in any direction he or she chooses, to walk the next line of iambic pentameter, and then he or she may shift anew in whatever new direction of choice, and so on, for at least five or six lines. What is the experience? What are the effects of rhymelessness? What is lost? What is gained? What are the effects of the sustained rhythm of the iambic pentameter within the lack of rhyme?

Seventh, ask students to write in blank verse, eventually at least ten lines. The recommended subject could vary. It might be autobiographical, philosophical, or epic, evoking some great journey or struggle. The next day, ask what it was like to write in blank verse. Hear the pieces. Share impressions of them. Have in mind as a teacher the question: what consciousness, or frame of mind, does the blank verse make possible, or even engender?

Whitman's "Free Verse": Possible Exercises:

First, let students hear and then speak some rhyming couplets (Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Pope). Then let them hear and then speak some blank verse, (Shakespeare, Milton, or even Wordsworth or Coleridge).

Second, speak five to eight lines of Whitman's "A Song of Myself." Have them repeat after, line by line. What do they hear, notice? What are impressions?

Third, have them try to walk each line, stepping according to the strong and weak beats.

Fourth, have the students spread out, stop and close their eyes; each

should think of some, any, particular experience, picturing it and feeling it. Eyes open, each student should walk a line, silently, any direction, with whatever number and any combination of short and long measures, (weak and strong), pausing at the end of the line. Then, picturing a next aspect of the experience, walk the next line, in whatever direction, whatever rhythm and length seems appropriate for evoking that stage of the experience, and again..., for at least four or five lines. What is the effect of having this wide latitude, virtually 360 degrees of possibility, and any length for each line, and any rhythm for each line, at the same time as having the varying lines be part of a unified whole?

Fifth, have the students write about that original experience, now putting words on paper, for each line, according to what the evolving nature of the experience seems to call for. Work on them further at night. The next day, share the experience of writing that way. Hear the pieces. Share observations, impressions. What are the possibilities, the opportunities, of writing in this “free verse?” What are the burdens, the responsibilities, perhaps even the cost, of writing in this apparently limitless, super-free way? What kind of consciousness is possible, in fact, what kind of consciousness is required to write in such a manner?

XVI CONCLUSION

Human development is mysterious, complex. Through attention over the years, we scholars can become more aware of nuances, whether subtle or clear, qualitative differentiations in evolving stages of the English language in poetry. Such differences become ever clearer signals of altering consciousness in those people living in, “speaking,” that particular form of the English language. Poetry, as the most artful form of language, may be the vessel for the fullest striving of consciousness of a given people at a given time.

Through attention over the years, we educators can become more aware of nuances, whether subtle or clear, qualitative differentiations in ways the growing adolescents can learn. One of Rudolf Steiner’s many gifts to those of us working in Waldorf Education is a quite fully developed picture of natural stages of development in an individual life. Simplistically, the generalized picture includes the following large brush strokes:

Ages 1-7: primary development of Physical Body

“ 7-14:	“	“	“ Life-(Ethereic) Body
“ 14-21:	“	“	“ Soul-(Astral) Body
	“	emergence	“ I AM (Ego)
“ 21-28:	“	development	“ Sentient Soul
“ 28-35:	“	“	“ Intellectual (Rational) Soul
“ 35-42:	“	“	“ Consciousness (Spirit) Soul

and so on...

We are aware that the growing individual’s development is naturally a microcosmic recapitulation of stages of development which all of Humanity has experienced over large periods of time.

Part of the art of Waldorf Education is to work as harmoniously as possible with those natural developmental stages. Part of the art of Waldorf Education is to work more than naturally with those stages, to work artfully. God creates Nature. Man, through Art, recreates, and transforms, Nature.

As Waldorf English teachers, we can help our students emerge, in their twenties, into the world, as healthily composed individuals, with a rich “remembrance” of much of English literature and all it reveals of the mysteries of human experience.

Our students will be naturally ready to embark upon their next stage of development, that of the Sentient Soul, in their twenties.

However, the implications of this research project are that the degree to which we can guide our students through vitally conscious experience of the altering stages of the English language itself, as embodied in poetry, strongly affects the degree to which our students will be able to:

- 1) develop the soul substance of the astral body itself in lawful accord with the evolving stages of humanity,
- 2) by being “conscious” of these language changes, quicken the maturing activity of the I AM (ego) itself,
- 3) by creating soul substance, through language reflecting Humanity’s major stages of development, forming already a living, conscious basis, in the astral body, for each of the ensuing soul members, Sentient Soul, Intellectual Soul, and Consciousness Soul. This means the emerging individual will meet those stages of his or her development not only naturally but with a conscious, vital “head start,” through the “seed-like” soul-substance which the language engendered in adolescence.

Through literature, we remember;
through us, language engenders.