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Who is the Author of my Poems?: Art Practice Based PhD Exploring Knowledge Gained in the Process of Creativity

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Abstract: It is a prevailing assumption that poetry is closely linked to the times in which it is created, and that the poet is influenced by his surroundings. For example, the English Romantic poetry is seen as a direct result of the French and American revolutions. (Ackroyd, 2006). However, this assumption does not explain the observation that poetry is being written in ancient times as well as in modern times; in times of great wars as well as times of tranquillity; in crowded cities or in remote unpopulated countryside. Since poets have been writing within varied historical times, societies and even contradictory situations, it could be argued that these factors influence and shape the content of the poem, but do not bring about the impetuous to create, as Ellrodt (2000: v) notes. Creativity, I would argue, is not 'sparked' by any of the above factors, but rather by a different mode of activity coming from a mysterious source of knowledge that arguably cannot be seen or measured, thus requires an exploration. In this paper I would like to approach the source of creativity using a reflective account, in the hope to contribute some insights regarding the work of an artist within academic context. I will focus on my artistic output as a visionary poet, exemplified through poetry in video arts that are created as part of my PhD research. The paper will approach there element in the poetic creative process: Word, Writing, and Poet.

Keywords: Visionary Poetry, Knowledge, Inspiration, Insight, Observation, Experience, Balance, Reflection, Critic

Chapter 1 - Writing

THIS CHAPTER WILL discuss the relation of words and the act of writing.

Words are carefully chosen by the poet to have an adequate description of the richness

of emotions and inner imagery that are perceived by the poet. The layering of sounds and feelings through words can create an image that can stay with the reader after one finishes reading. It creates a continuous experience beyond mere momentous voicing of a word into an empty space.



Image 1: A Poetic Experiment of Continuous Experience. Still Image from the Film *Quantum Words*, 2006. www.youtube.com/gldek

Visionary poetry is largely seen by critics as the creation of a subjective or imaginative poetic mind (Professor Geoffrey Hartman, a lecture in The British Academy 3rd October, 2007). However, alongside

imagination the poet's mind seems to follow a technical process of obtaining objective information, much before poetic words are put on paper. The visionary poet seems to 'stop' and detach himself



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from pre-concepts, and instead move towards a mode of open observation.

Instead of 'judging' and eliminating information the poet 'experiences' information, allowing for new points of references to be formulated. This enables

reflection and evaluation, which produce balance and harmony between the 'judgmental' mind and the 'emotional' heart, giving way to a creative and authorial knowledge.



Image 2: An Experiment in 'Stopping' and Detaching from Pre-Concepts. Production Image from the Film *What is Love?*, 2007. www.youtube.com/gldek

Writing visionary poetry does not involve only writing highly inspired messages, but rather being aware of who you are. The poet seems to strive to acknowledge his personality and emotions, as well as the way his hand holds the pen and the choice of paper on which the words are written. The choice of so-called insignificant and physical aspects of writing poetry has a direct influence on the flow of inspiration and the sense of comfort with which the message come through. Visionary poetry seems to follow a precise way of thinking.

Poetic thinking arises by means of images, which allow the poet to organise ideas in his mind into groups. The message which is contained in the visionary poem can be said to be inspired by the strength of the poet's feelings and experiences that are burning with great intensity (Iqbal, 1983: 133). The recognition of such intensity allows the poet to listen to the beliefs and emotions and verbalise them.

Listening to a poetic message requires the poet to empty his mind from previous assumptions and judgement and simply observe the events and experiences as they occur in front of him. Prescott (1922: 217) explains that the poet is satisfied with a mere recognition of an event, without the need to make sense of it. Hence, the poet seems to recognize the subtle voice that lies within each object and event, while using the poetic language performatively. He lives the language that he uses so that every word breaths his emotions and experiences. The poem then becomes a kind of a verbal embodied consciousness of the poet.

To be able to decipher the poetic message one needs to learn to listen to the voice within the poem. It could be said that the message in the poem is the personality of the author, his choice of channelling the poetic wisdom, his ability to listen to the knowledge within and without him and being able to share this information with the reader.



Image 3: Poetic Listening to a Universal Knowledge. Still Image from the Short Presentation Film *Petals of Trust*, 2007. www.youtube.com/gldek

Poetic message has an underlying principle of sharing the basic emotions and experiences with the reader. That is what motivates the poet to write publicly. In order to share the poet seems to take great care in making the work clear, simple and exact to his own experiences. Hence many poets spend time going over the words again and again in a search for the precise description of a feeling or transcription of events. Through this desire for clarity the poetic message seem to fuse the natural and the supernatural. The poet's desire is to unify the inner reality of his experience with the outer reality of understanding, in order to establish communication.

Writing poetry involves not only the high aspiration of a poet's mind that recognized high ideas but also the poet's memory and sense of recalling events that he might not perhaps experience directly while writing. The writing of visionary poems may occur immediately after the poet had an experience or after some time. Yet in both cases it seems that there is a need for the use of the faculty of memory. The poet

re-visions events, thoughts and emotions in order to recall and write them on the paper (Jay, 1984: 53). Using memory the poet does not only recall events but also tap to the essence of events thus shifts every experience into a universal mode that turns poetic words into philosophy.

The poet seems to observe reality through a 'magnifying glasses' where every minute detail receives significance and is being acknowledged. Details are important as they turn the poetic experience into an unfamiliar territory of events that most people ignore, such as the mundane so-called banal events that pass unnoticed by many. William Blake suggested to see through the banal, and find through it what most people cannot see (Ugnow, 2007). It is precisely because poets bring the banal and mundane up into focus that reality of poetic events turn magical. Moreover, Taylor (1989: 369) argues that such magical events are actually the natural state of sublime within which all people operate, yet do not seem to acknowledge.



Image 4: Audiences are Invited to Test Water with Embedded Words as an Experiment in Becoming Aware to the Mundane in Everyday Life. Images from Art Installation *Waterised Words*, January 2007, held at Eldon Gallery, Portsmouth University, UK See overview: <http://blackboard.lincoln.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/users/dmeyerdinkgrafe/archive/gildekel.html>

The act of recognition of all events seems to hold a potential of transformative energy that provides the poet with a certain mode of knowledge. The poet senses the knowledge that surrounds him from which he can speak of any type of experiences whether daily ones, philosophical or perceptual. The writing of visionary poetry begins with an almost automatic sense of writing all that comes to the mind without logical or intellectual deciphering. This transforms the language which is usually ignored or considered to be trivial.

Chapter 2 - Poet

This chapter will discuss the relation of the poet's inner emotions and the external reality.

Being a poet means to be able to express oneself as fully as possible. Not applying 'decorative' language but pure passion and belief. Poetic words allow the poet to choose symbols that transgresses the limits of a visible object and link with memory, thus expanding the possibility of expression. Melvyn (2007) explains that William Wordsworth applied memories not for the purpose of nostalgia, but as a way to impact on feelings in the present moment. The important act in the poetic activity is the passion expressed in the present moment. What makes a few lines of symbols a poem is the poet's passion and a sense of love behind the description of events. When I mention love, I mean the force that motivates people to live rather than a temporary emotion that people sense in certain circumstances.

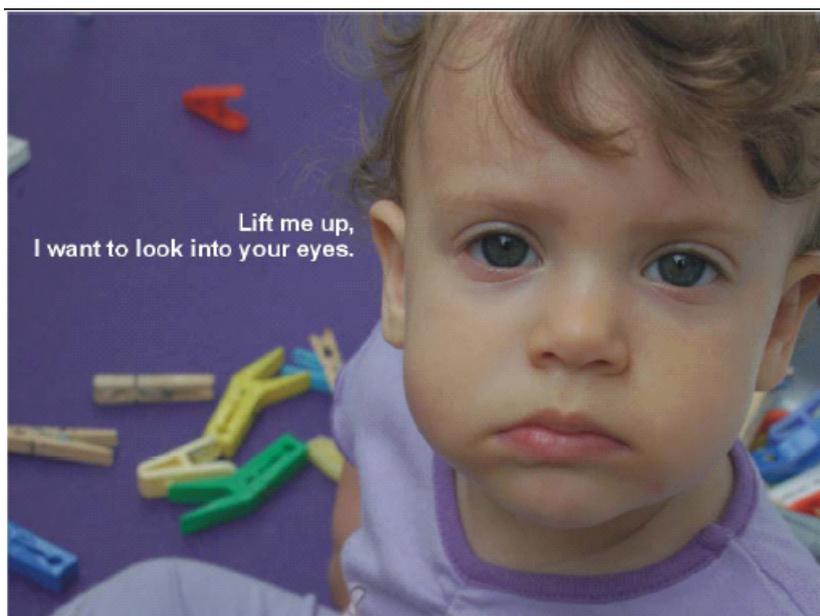


Image 5: Love of the Present Moment. Still Image from the Film *Princess Louise (Work in Progress)*

This love is a force that empowers the poet to see in every single object and act what creates the human existence. Federico Lorca (Gibson, 1989: 23) acknowledged that this force works through a simple method: looking and listening. The poet does not dwell on emotional moments but raise them up for all to see. The poet brings the public attention to these special empowered moments of reality, and then he moves on. In such way the poet acts as a guide rather than a debator. It takes great courage on the part of the poet to raise issues that are often ignored or passed unnoticed by others. The poet embodies emotions thus laying his soul bare before the readers and yet moves on, leaving oneself open to criticism and discussion.

The poet thus seems to me a kind of a contemporary leader of emotions. The poet brings high dimension to banal subjects by expressing and celebrating the joy of living. As a medium for celebrating the relationship that each person has with the world, poetry raises the individual voice and leads the way for others to notice, to feel and to observe. Visionary poetry does not pretend to be an isolated branch of selected talented poets, but rather a form of words that collaborate with imagery and is widely accessible.

Since the age of the Romanticism, poets tried to reflect the change in thought that was brought with the Enlightenment. Poets concentrated on emotional experience and on a new way of a spiritual, non religious, experience. The new view had no longer the stern religious beliefs of the past, but embraced the power of existence through nature. The poets were, and I believe still are, interested in expressing individualism, imagination and life experience. This, I would argue, is evident from interviews with poets

that I conduct as part of the research (see example, Interview with poet Sylvia Paskin on [http://www .poeticmind.co.uk](http://www.poeticmind.co.uk)).

Wordsworth argued that a poem displays the working of a solitude soul in nature (Melvyn, 2007). In his 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', he imagines himself a cloud drifting over the land, observing, learning and then writing. The strength of poets lies in the power of their individual imagining (Bowra, 1976: 3). Indeed, imagination and the way it is described in one's poem, especially when the subject is everyday life, is what makes poetry memorable. Each poet has the ability to portray remarkable images and visions, although differing to a certain degree in their intensity and presentation. Nature, sensations and emotions are of great importance, and in a way they are used to explore the feelings of the poet himself. The individuality of each poet's creativity, one's personality, is unequal by anyone else. Understanding such individualism requires continual critical and self reflection – only by being aware of who you are can you receive messages from that realm which is beyond the personality and can provide a connection to the flow of poetry.

Imagination can be argued to require trust, since it is not enough to experience vivid images and turbulent emotions in order to write poetry but rather one needs to trust that what has been given to him can lead him to creative experiences. Poetic trust, Iqbal (1983: 186-187) argues, is a mode of acceptance that opposes 'understanding' which limits an event by subjecting it to the limited reasoning faculty of the mind. The poet seems to act as a humble servant of his role in carrying a message from the creative source and sharing with others.



Image 6: Trust as a Source of Creative Knowledge. Still Image from the Short Presentation Film *Petals of Trust*, 2007. www.youtube.com/gldek

It seems that poetic imagination encompasses not only the principles of vision but also compassion. The poet's imagination moves from his love of nature and observations on human behaviour into a deep compassion for humanity. The Poet John Keats gave voice to the spirit of compassion in poetry when he famously wrote, "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the heart's affections, and the truth of imagination." Using the poetic imagination to get an insight into one's experience with sympathy and compassion elevates the poet from 'just' writing about experiences, into a responsible and ethical member of public life that contributes to society in large. The poet invites the readers to place themselves in the event and the emotion as described in the poem.

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Conclusion

The process of writing visionary poetry involves stages of creative source being noticed, evaluated and transformed into words.

The source of poetic creativity comes to the poet through abstract ideas created once the poet moulds his memories, thoughts and emotions. These ideas are evaluated through the poet's observation of his inner and outer experiences, resulting in a transformation of ideas to words.

This process allows the poet to see the world as if from the point of its creation as a full participant in that creative process. He is remarking on the world, for he is trying to see it as it IS.

About the Author

Gil Dekel

Gil Dekel was born and raised in Israel, and lived in Greece and The Caribbean, before embarking on a research at Portsmouth University, UK, exploring the creative process of poetry-making. Gil is a Reiki Master, visionary poet, graphic designer and filmmaker. His films and visual poetry are shown around the world (watch online [youtube.com/gldek](https://www.youtube.com/gldek)), and aim at exploring the correlation between artistic creativity and scientific/psychology understandings. Gil describes his field as “psychopoetry” [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychopoetry>]. Gil’s experiments in automatic-speech, together with wife and researcher Natalie, seek to inquire the stages of poetic creativity where an Idea is seemingly noticed through a Feeling, turns to meaning through Reflection, and then undergoes Choice of Words, which become a poem.



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