THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FINE ARTS AND THE POETRY OF ROMAN KISSIOV AS SUPPLEMENT TO THE PERCEPTION OF BROADER CREATIVITY

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Abstract
This article is dedicated to the connection between poetry and visual art through the creative example of Bulgarian painter and poet Roman Kissiov. The aim of this paper is to give new information about art searches of the significant artist for Bulgarian art scene and to enrich the wide open subject about links between different arts. The stance of this painter and poet can be considered as representative for wide artistic circle because it stresses some of the present disorders of the contemporary art in general.

Key words: *image and poetry, painting, painter, poet, visual arts, mysticism, mystic poetry, art ethics, inspiration, spiritual, time in art, space in art*

In my previous article published in the „Journal of International Scientific Publications: Language, Individual & Society“, concerning the creative work of Macedonian artist Perica Georgiev, I reached certain conclusions about the need of creating a connection between separate arts. The synthesis between the arts in the example of this wakeful creator emerges as a natural process, which all the possible means for expressing creative inspiration are sought in. This connection allows for the perception of the creative work by means of more senses and makes us experience more fully the esthetics of the work and the idea of the creator. This interpretation led us to the conclusion that a part of the creators seeking the connection between the separate kinds of arts create work which may be of mystic nature. Said in a different way, the awareness of the existence of a comprehensive absolute brings forth inspiration for the “creation” of the numerous manifestations of the single truth, through a synthesis amongst the various kinds of art.

Along the way of giving a new meaning to the genuine creative problems accompanying life in our modern times, it is worth turning to the example of the creators who do not aim at fashionable trends and tendencies and who remain true to their revelations and feel art as their destiny and duty for themselves and for the society. Let us turn our attention to the Art created with love and faith to serve human beings for their spiritual growth – that kind of Art which is not custom-made and whose creation is not the consequence of desire for material enrichment. The Free Art – the pure manifestation of the Spirit.

In year of 2013, in the Macedonian Cultural and Information Center I had the honor of getting acquainted with Roman Kissiov – a poet and an artist, whose noteworthy demonstration of creativity predetermined my decision to write this article. It may be accepted as testification of one creator’s truth.

Fine Arts and poetry, in his event, are mutually intertwined, connected and supplemented. He gradually and conscientiously makes this connection, starting with painting initially, after his first contact with paper. Later on, when he was a student in the National Academy of Art in Sofia, he started to write his first poetic works. In spite of being the son of a renowned poet, he was not tempted untimely to set out along the poetic roads and did this only when he himself became aware of his powerful inclination. His first book of poetry “The Doors of Paradise” was published when he was at Christ’s age, in 1995. “The Shadow of Flight” followed up in year 2000, followed by “Pilgrim of Light” in 2003, “Cryptus” in 2004 and 2007 and “Voices” in 2009. He actively participates in cultural events in Bulgaria and abroad and his poetic works are translated into nearly 20 languages in various countries. He himself takes an active participation in the translation activities having translated significant Macedonian, Serbian and Russian poets into Bulgarian. He presented his works of fine arts

at independent exhibitions held in Sofia, Vienna and Berlin, and his participation in group exhibitions and art colonies has been noticed in more states – Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Italy and the USA. The open and unlimited understanding of art and the world created prerequisites for close friendship with well-known people of art, not only in Bulgaria, but also in the remaining Balkan countries.

Each creator passes the way of his own development by himself. This is a process of getting awareness of his creative personality. The road of each creative individual is different, the obstructions and the keys opening own personal creative spaces are different. Some creative characters find their originality earlier. Others pass along a longer road which will lead them to their creative essence. Others again are lost or swept by the harsh existential struggle of our tough contemporary times.

Along the way of creator's flourishing he encounters values, on which he builds up steps to new revelations. These values should be genuine to withstand the time, the doubt, the criticism and most of all the weight of the discoverer who has stepped upon them. Whether the creator will soar to his real essence, remains a question. Only the overcoming of the personal barriers may lead him to the core and then he will share the acquired gift through his deeds which those who see, hear, feel, think will accept or reject.

Roman Kisiov shares the following about the changes in his development and characteristic direction: „In the Fine Arts (painting, drawing, illustration and book design) the changes with me are connected to the gradual passing from the more realistic to the more expressed by signs, symbolic image... But I never get to the abstraction with this symbolism, I still remain with the figurative, though more associative and cleared up imagery. The direction is as follows: in plastic plan I seek combination of grandeur, by means of more summarized forms and structure of the material, lyricism, intimacy, through nuanced monochromaticity or emotional expressivity; and semantically speaking, the main challenge for me is sacredness... Passing through a clearly expressed metaphysical time period in painting from the last years of my studies in the Academy and a little after that, my aspiration for years on end has been that my pictures and my paintings should exert impact as modern icons, which on the one hand should forward to ancient iconographic traditions, and on the other hand – that they should have their own plastic language which is contemporary and adequate to today's day, without being commercial. (Ill. 1)

The changes in my poetry were made into the direction from the existential to the spiritual, from the dramatic-paradoxical to the contemplative and the sacral."

These understandings and changes are kept in parallel a watch over in his creative work as a poet and an artist. Roman Kissiov answered a question asked at an interview given by Zhasmina Tacheva, referring to the fact that his verses (for instance "No One Has Asked Me…") provoke an association with Heidegger's "abandonment" in the world – the impossibility of people to choose by themselves where to be born and the unfair situation of the human being in this world as follows: "Many years ago I considered that this situation is really unfair, which originated riot in me as well as a lava of difficult, crucial questions… The poem „No One Has Asked Me", which you mentioned, is an obvious illustration of that but it was written 22 years ago, and a lot of things have happened since then and in the meantime I have already discovered (or was made to find out) the answers to many crucial questions of my youth, (which answers, however, naturally originated new questions, but they are already others, of another kind)..." (Ill. 2)

Strong existentialism is encountered in his early poems, from the end of the eighties and nineties – at times reaching paradoxicality and even absurdity. "They are a painful expression of the state of deadlock and limitation, of the absence of true freedom (in any sense, but predominantly in existential and spiritual layout)". And later on he came to another standpoint – „There are existential marks present in my later poems as well, but they are existential insofar as they concern existential issues about human being at all and the way of life and this has already nothing to do with Sartre's type of existentialism (or that of Camus) and a world view of deadlock and fatalism, (which is atheistic in essence)…"

He is of the opinion about himself that he started to write poetry quite late – at the age of about 25, when he was already a student in the Academy of Art although he was in direct contact with the poetry

of his father, and was totally immersed in this environment. When he started to write, he had his own built up criterion of poetry – „I stood up for my positions as I had preliminary training and accumulations..." He started to write poetry when the language of fine arts was not sufficient for him to express what he had and wanted to say. „Those were parallel worlds for me then – when I dealt with poetry, painting fell back in total and vice versa... Only several years later these „worlds" appeased and got together, started mutually to supplement each other in their capacity of various manifestations of a Whole".

It is still impossible for him to explain to the end how the connection between the fine art and the poetry was or is being exactly implemented. „Creative work and the act of creation is mystery... Evidently both of them were input in me but to get to poetry I had to go along a longer way. And the connection between these two kinds of art in my case is me myself... and – naturally – the One who Hands Out the Talents and Inspires". (Ill. 3)

He wrote in another publication about his creative work: „I seek the Word in everything. Not only because I write poetry – I seek the Word also in the images regardless of the means. Painting is also Poetry for me – Poetry in images, and the picture is a virtual metaphor. But this metaphor is different from the metaphor in the poetic text and this is why the picture is not an illustration. The picture is a window to invisible worlds and realities (from the inner life of the human being or from transcendent and metaphysical dimensions), which become perceivable… I do not paint pictures, I paint my reveries, prayers, dreams, visions, revelations... These are states and contemplations... These are mystic Signs, containing the archetypes of Life – Painting Life...

The picture is sacral space for me. I fully share the ancient Thracian Orphic Concept about the creator and the creative work – the painter is both the author of the work and its spiritual creation – by means of the Creative Spirt and in-SPIR-ation, transforming and ennobling the creator himself... The Spirit is perfect but the artist is not... A real artist is the one who strives after the perfection of the Spirit and who namely because of this reason, as the great poetess Gabriela Mistral writes, comes ashamed out of each his creative work because it resulted to be more inferior than his reveries…"

The artist and the poet represent a whole for Roman Kissiov or "various manifestations of an essence which are closely related and are mutually supplemented without being an obstruction to one another or competing with each other… The Word – pictorial and phonetic – is the connecting element and the base… It is not by chance that the most ancient script of humanity (millenniums before Christ) was pictorial and ideographic, and it was holy, completely sacral." (Ill. 4)

A lot of examples of renowned or well-known artists who wrote poetry and poets who expressed themselves through painting prove the natural connection between the elegant fine art and the exquisite literature. But it is as if the history of art attests a stronger connection between the arts in the earlier stages of human civilization when the human being lived with the real feeling and idea of divine presence. Roman Kissiov shares about this connection that it has enriched and expanded his personal horizon – in a personal and creative plan. „The effect of the two kinds of arts is also more powerful... The phenomenon „art for art's sake" and the fragmentation, the division is the result of „modern" times, from a little more than a century ago... All the kinds of arts constituted One Whole in the ancient highly developed civilizations and historically this natural for the nature of Art tradition of the Spirit was resurrected and the creators did not limit themselves within one sphere only. There are lots of examples for that (it is enough to recall the Renaissance)." (Ill. 5)

The famous Macedonian poet Eftim Kletnikov states the following about this outlook on life and esthetic orientation of his creative work: „...dedicated to the mystical and the holy, the poetry of Roman Kissiov is in conflict, in discord with today's anti-poetic times, in which technology has fully suppressed theology. Time, in which the marks from the souls of human beings left by the cruel twentieth century have not disappeared yet, a century during which the European poetry was anti-utopian and full of catastrophic feelings in its greater part. This contributed to the development in it of the ironic discourse, as a vision of a world in the absence of God, as Nietzsche and Dostoevsky would have said. And this tendency of disillusionment and anti-sacredness is still present in it as one of its dominants. But opposite to that, deciding to swim against the stream, Roman Kissiov announced

himself to be for the sacral nature of poetry, for its return, as in the early epochs of human magic culture, at the source of Mystery and the religious feeling of the language and the world.“ (Ill. 6)

The thus placed outlook on life and the place of the personality in the world presumes aesthetic orientation, which everything gathers within an overall completeness – God. The Spirit is the source of inspiration, which gets down at God’s providence and constitutes a gift for the creator and for the world through him.

It is not by chance that Roman Kissiov frequently repeats that it is not the poet who chooses the poetry, it is the poetry which chooses the poet and that the poetry is a divine gift. „The poetry, the real, the higher Poetry is an alive and mysterious bridge between the invisible and the visible, which the Spirit passes along. It is the Road to that reality and that mystic language, which are the source of the eternal and the ecstasy. “This is the reason because of which he reached his personal conviction that the Poetry he calls mystical stands on the top of the poetic hierarchy. In spite of our speaking about poetry, these understandings refer to creative work in principle, because painting is also poetry for it – poetry in images.

„If a person, who looks at my pictures, knows my poetry, it, naturally, will help him a lot, there will be another “key” for opening the door to my spirirual world and to the interpretation of my pictures. And yet, everyone „sees” things in a different manner, according to what he carries within himself... If a person reading my poetry also knows my fine art, it, of course will help him a lot, there will be another “key” for opening the door to my spiritual world and to the interpretation of my poems. But everyone „sees / reads” in a different manner depending on what he carries within himself.“

The main imperative in his creative work, which further to being mystical is also religious, is to „transcend the world and thus find out the Holy in it“. Eftim Kletnikov writes about the book of poems “Voices”: „...the purely mystical line is personified in Orpheus and Arion, as its archetypes, and the religious one – in Jesus and the Word, through their Biblical and Christian parabolic versions. In fact, Orpheus, his disciple Arion and Jesus are alter-egos of this poet, who combine within his inner Ego. They are his sources of secret knowledge, which is expanded in the person of Jesus also by the ethical measurement of existence, well known in the classical, but a little forgotten in modern poetry.“

Respectively with the stated hereinabove, as an exceptional connoisseur of theology, mythology, history (especially the Bulgarian one), literature and the history of fine arts, Roman Kissiov develops themes and plots, through which he can reach the strongest and simplest expression of his ideas. With this brevity of expression he strives after the poetic ideal – to say a lot in a few words.

His style in the fine arts and the selection of the art material, which could provide the possible most adequate expression of this ideal, originates from here as well. The paper turns out to be the connecting unit between the two kinds of arts – paper for painting and paper for writing. Evidently the contact with paper from his earliest childhood up to now predetermines and summarizes his creative work – this is the structural material, which he could build it up upon. If he makes a distinction between the two kinds of art in his earlier period (he characterizes this period by his more realistic searches in painting), at the later stage he in practice has the intention to merge them into one. This is the reason because of which it is a depiction and written words in one, joined within the framework of a work. The image approaches poetry through clearing up everything needless and gets to the essence of the idea – to the symbol.

Poetry on its part is playfully expressed in some artworks and turns into a visual element and a part of his works of art. This is an illustrative example about the materialization of a conceived idea and the manner in which the creator leaves his impression onto the material which should reflect or reproduce this same idea for the spectator. (Ill. 7)

After he has already determined his main material – paper, he uses it also for collages and the creation of various textures. He uses drawing ink with a pen or a paintbrush as well as various chalks or pencils and another material aimed at the attainment of the desired effect. Further to that, he frequently uses oil paints and other painting techniques, but the technology mentioned hereinabove has a stronger unification feature with poetry.

According to Roman Kissiov the mission not only of fine art but of art in general is: „to reflect and to contain the Beautiful, because we have to understand as Beautiful that the matter is not only about external descriptiveness, but most of all about moral and spiritual category, which is related to the Truth and the Sublime, to Harmony in possession of divine properties and elements contained to a certain degree in Human Being and Creation… Beauty for me is a synonym of Truth… If a work is authentic, then it is also beautiful (genuine)... Obviously this is also the idea that Dostoevsky put into his well-known phrase „Beauty will save the world!". External beauty is transitional and the internal beauty is eternal and non-transitional... And if the external (bodily, physical) beauty is not reflection of the internal (mental and spiritual), then it is not genuine, but deceitful and artificial, because of the impaired harmony. And vice versa – inner beauty also illuminates the external appearance, even if it is not beautiful in conformity with the widely held views."

He wrote the following in his text „About Poetry or the Secret Hierarchy of the Words":

„...It is also within this meaning that the Art reflects various measurements of reality, and it is most of all the reflection of the world of the creator, or more precisely – of the measurement, which the separate author is in, the reality, which his Spirit dwells in and which he knows and which exerts influence over him... My personal conviction is that the Poetry I call mystical stands on the top of poetic hierarchy.

If Poetry by itself is great mystery, then the mystic poetry is mystery within the Mystery, of the secret of the Secret called Poetry. It is secret, because the majority does not have the relevant inner senses to comprehend and perceive it. But this does not mean that this poetry affects few people - in spite of its inexplicability (but not obscurity), it still exerts influence and namely over the unconscious in the human beings - not so much over the mind, the ratio, as over the heart.

This is the Poetry which uses Words of Strength - those hidden Words which have the capacity to create new worlds, to transform essences and beginnings, to introduce and take away the souls where they would never have got to by themselves, to open and close invisible doors... This poetry has a sacred effect and the poets-hierophants serving through it are few in number, but in reality and for sure these are the greatest poets of Mankind...

It turns into Revelation not only for the poet, but also for the connoiseur of poetry when he is enlightened by this secret and his inner, spiritual senses for the hidden higher reality which becomes tangible and much more real than the visible one wake up – the reality which is usually deemed by many as being solely real, but in fact it is transitional and slipping away as time is."

For Roman Kissiov poetry as any kind of Art was called upon to be a bearer of the Truth and which should lead to the Truth.

And although any time has its fashionable art, real art was never in fashion. It is beyond any fashion and it is namely this art which is really avant-garde - leaving time behind, because it is beyond time, it is still designated for those hungry and thirsty for "Light", for real values. Its place is not in the streets and in the squares, amongst the crowd, but in the „Temple of the Soul".

His position about the role of the creator in the society is expressed in the following manner:

„The creator is the bearer of more acute sensitivity and another, higher, developed sensitiveness... This is why for centuries creators were the "eyes" and the "soul" of the society... The great poets were not only perceived by society as the prophets of the world but in most events they actually resulted to be such... Any time has its prophets and great creators, but today's material and profane age lacking in spirituality has eliminated this role of the creator having undervalued and belittled it to the impersonal merchantability of the so called "market", to the level of entertainment (in music) and decoration (in fine arts), as well as to full indifference to poetry, which is as if turning more and more into an activity for girls students, lonely housewives and graphomaniacs, has also „shoved in" and isolated the creator into the „ghetto" of the guild narrow, limited environment and (in the best event) in the museum – gallery – concert space, somehow aside from living life... Unfortunately I have to note down with bitterness that the creators themselves have great contribution for this attitude (or for the absence of such) of the society as well… My observations and impressions are that there are great creators in each

sphere of the Art even nowadays, but they are few in number, they are isolated, misunderstood and very lonely... And the poets are the most lonely amongst them."

We can read his statement in the already mentioned hereinabove interview of Zhasmina Tacheva: „To our greatest regret, the place and the role of the poet in our moden times, nowadays, is very remote in meaning and contents, as well as with regard to influence, from the poets of ancient times…"

The subject-matter of the role of the creator in the society has excited Roman Kisiov and this was noted down by poetess Valentina Radinska on the opening night of his book "Cryptus" in 2004 in the Crypt of the Saint Alexander Nevski Cathedral:

„...There is another main subject-matter in this fourth book of the poet: a topic which deeply and sincerely excites him – this is the theme about the creative work and about the destiny of those who dare to create spirituality in a society which is not only unspiritual but also sermonizes destruction, violence, hatred and revenge..."

Time is not the most significant category for the real creator because it changes and is inconstant. Perhaps, from the distance of time, we could sight the real qualities of individual creators – regardless of the fact whether in this case we will confirm the phrase that the dead poet is the best poet (and respectively the same refers to any other great creator). (Ill. 8)

The fact that time is not the determining factor is also demonstrated by the great number of creators, who are inspiring according to him. There are contemporaries and creators from various epochs amongst them, but with one kind of characteristics connecting them all – the freshness and the topicality of their art, which were and will be a fact as long as the Mankind exists:

„Various creators inspired me in the different stages of my development, who corresponded with my momentary searches and my momentary level then... Still I will mention some, who left durable traces in me and who are of significance for my development...

From the poets: Ancestor Orpheus, the Biblical Patriarchs David and Solomon, the Old Testament Prophets, the New Testament Apostle and Evangelist Saint John Theologian, John Donne, Andreas Gryphius, Hölderlin, Apollinaire, Saint-John Perse, Kahlil Gibran, Lucian Blaga, Emily Dickinson, William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Carl Sandburg, Dylan Thomas, Rilke, Kavafis, Seferis, Elitis, Yavorov, Liliev, Raztsvetnikov, Atanas Dalchev, Jimenez, Lorca, César Valliejo, Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Tadeusz Ruzhevich, Zbigniew Herbert, Nikita Stanescu, Vasko Popa, Vladimir Burich, Alec Razanov, Mihail Rendzhov, Eftim Kletnikov, Krastyo Stanishev, Konstantin Pavlov, Hristo Fotev, Mihail Berberov, Nikolay Kanchev, Zdravko Kisiov, Boris Hristov, Ivan Tsanev, Ivan Metodiev, Dobromir Tonev and so on.

From the artists: the anonymous authors from ancient Thrace, ancient Egypt, the Medieval Christian (iconographic and fresco) painting, Rublev, Rembrandt, Hieronymus Bosch, El Greco, Daumier, Carriere, Van Gogh, Modigliani, Matisse, Picasso, Georges Braque, Chagall, Derain, Klimt, Chaim Soutine, Georges Rouault, Margriet, De Chirico, Morandi, Malevich, Nicholas de Stael, Ben Nicholson, Tapies, Corneliu Baba, Ion Georgiou, Kristo, George Papazov, Vladimir Dimitrov – the Master, Zlatyu Boyadzhiev, Beshkov, Ivan Milev, Dechko Uzunov, Ivan Nenov, Nayden Petkov, Vera Nedkova, Sultana Surudzhon, Svetlin Rusev, Ivan Vukadinov, Genko Genkov, Emil Stoychev, Dimiter Kazakov-Neron, Georgi Bozhilov-Slona (the Elephant), Petar Popov-Popeto, Nikifor Tsonev and so on.

I used quotations from the interview with Roman Kissiov held at the end of year 2013 as well as other sources treating the subject-matter considered herein. I do not claim thoroughness of the facts and with the new facts stated in it, I consider that I provide for contribution herein to the investigation of the art of a unique creator, worth of being paid attention to.



Ill. 1 – Requiem, oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm



Ill. 2 – Head of Christ, oil on canvas 60.5 x 60.5 cm



Ill.3 - Mystery, oil on canvas 100x 81cm



Ill.4 - Reflections I, mix. techn., paper



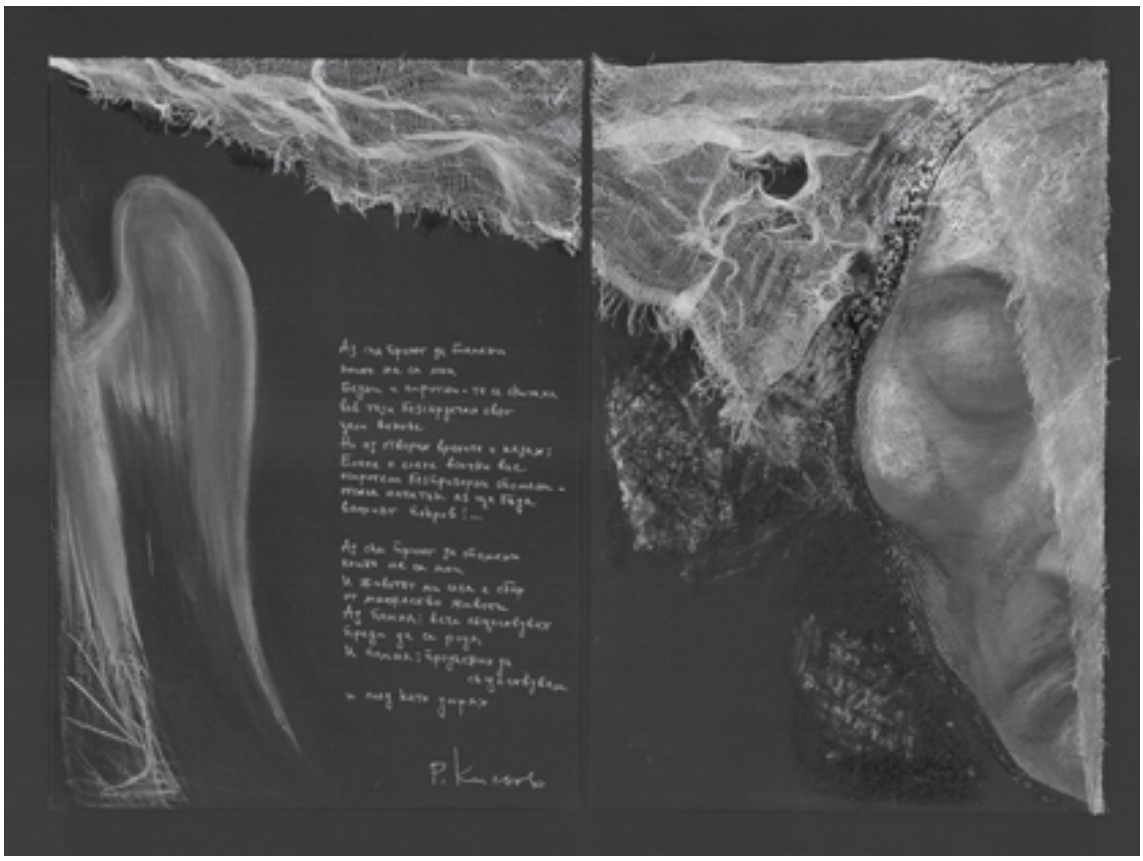
Ill. 5 – The Last Supper, mix. techn. on cardboard, 70 x 100 cm



Ill. 6 – Jacob's Well, oil on canvas, 70 x 58 cm



Ill. 8 – Morning, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm



Ill. 7 – To author's book „Cryptus", painting and verse, mix. techn., cardboard 32 x 42 cm

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