

**THE HARMONY OF POETRY AND VISUAL ART IN ADRIAN HENRI'S  
CREATIVE WORK****Khakimova Maksadkhon Dilshodbekovna**

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**Abstract:** *The article explores the life and work of Adrian Henri, a renowned poet, artist, and musician, known for his unique ability to blend various art forms. It examines how Henri's poetry, characterized by its wordplay, and autobiographical elements, delves into themes of love, the passage of time, and human emotions. The article highlights his contributions to the Liverpool Poets movement and his impact on both the literary and artistic worlds. Through his innovative approach to poetry, Henri invites readers to reflect on life's fleeting nature and the enduring power of love and creativity.*

**Key words:** *Liverpool poets, art, poetry, poem, artist, paint.*

Adrian Henri, one of the Liverpool poets who introduced a distinctive satirical and performative poetic style to English poetry, was not only a talented poet and playwright but also a skilled artist, educator, sensitive musician, and performer. His creative work seamlessly blends artistic expression and social analysis, portraying urban life, the simple yet significant aspects of existence, social injustices, and human emotions. Through his artistic expression, Henri uses imagery and metaphors to highlight social and political issues, encouraging readers to think critically, analyze deeply, and reflect on the world around them.

Although his family relied on seafaring for their livelihood, Adrian Henri's grandfather, who had a deep appreciation for creativity, ensured that he studied at Newcastle College of Art. After completing his higher education, Henri initially taught fine art at Preston Catholic College and later lectured at the Manchester and Liverpool Colleges of Art. In 1986, he was elected the first president of the National Acrylic Painters Association, a position he held until 1991. He remained an honorary fellow and patron of the organization until his death. Henri's artwork was exhibited in numerous galleries and exhibitions. In 1972, his painting "Meat Painting II – In Memoriam René Magritte" won the top prize at the John Moores Painting Prize competition. During the 1970s, Henri also served as the president of the Merseyside Arts Association and the Liverpool Academy

of Arts. He was honored as an honorary professor at John Moores University and awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Liverpool. For his contributions to Liverpool's cultural life, Adrian Henri was granted the prestigious "Freedom of the City" title.

Painting and poetry are the two wings of the artist, allowing him to express emotions that colors cannot capture with words and feelings that words cannot contain with paint. "*I want to paint*" says the poet.

*I want to paint*

...

*The Entry of Christ*

*into Liverpool in 1966*

*The installation of Roger McGough*

*in the Chair of Poetry at Oxford*

The poet believes that what he wishes to draw cannot be depicted through sketches or paint. Can the *arrival* of the New Year or Roger McGough's *appointment* as head of the Oxford Poetry Department be expressed with a paintbrush? The poet also wants to draw images of *real-life* water nymphs, the giant portraits of *every stone* in the alleys of Kane's Street, a new *anthem* written by The Beatles, the illustration of a *poem* written by Brian Patten with a fire extinguisher, images of places where homeless people might *live*, and a *full-scale map of the world* with his beloved at its center.

*I want to paint*

...

*Pictures worth*

*their weight in money*

...

*I want to paint*

*pictures*

When the painter wants to draw things beyond the capabilities of oil paints and watercolors, the poet's pen comes to the rescue: poems, more valuable than their weight, are transferred onto paper and, with the rhythm of music, resonate, finding their way into people's hearts. Brian Patten explains this unique quality as follows: "Whether it is sheep eating yellow roses, ghostly ferries manned by skeleton crews [...] I've always delighted in Adrian's visual imagination. The poet in him wrote poems containing images that the painter in him wanted to paint, and the painter in him painted images that the poet wanted to write. But really it did not matter which part of his spirit

received the images first - Adrian would rush off with them to wherever it is Imagination cooks up its feasts, and, generous as ever, would return to share them with us all.”<sup>1</sup>

Adrian Henri was a creative individual who combined several art forms that are not usually closely related. He expresses his philosophy as follows: “If you think you can do something and want to do it, then you can do it.”<sup>2</sup> A poet who also engaged in music professionally, he was the founder and lead singer of the Liverpool Scene, a poetic rock group that was active from 1967 to 1970 and gained great popularity among Liverpool youth. Along with reading his and many other contemporary poets’ poems to music, he also played the washboard. When fans attending Adrian Henri’s concerts asked the usual question, “Are you a poet first, or a painter?” he would respond, “I sing for you in the first, second, and third place.” However, such a question, according to his contemporary — poet, playwright, and composer Willy Russell — was really irrelevant, as poet Adrian Henri and artist Adrian Henri were one and the same person. In him, the poet’s sharp tongue and the artist’s discerning eyes were embodied. As he said: *“Was Adrian a poet first and painter second or vice versa? I heard him asked the question a number of times and on each occasion deftly sidestep it with the assertion that first, second and third he was the front man in a rock band. That question is, anyway, misguided and to raise it surely misses the point. As many of the poems in this and other sections vividly testify, Adrian Henri the poet and Adrian Henri the painter were one and the same, the painter’s eye and the poet’s tongue a bonded, inseparable harmony whether turned upon the dreich of a northern afternoon, the shimmering African plains or the dull unlovely street suddenly kissed and made fine by the step of a smiling girl.”*<sup>3</sup>

Although the poet initially started his creative career as an artist and later explored other areas of art, he acknowledged that poetry remained his main focus: *“I think of myself as a maker, and presenter, of images of various media. Pop poets is, I think, the most common label.”*<sup>4</sup> The artist says, *I want to paint pictures*, and the poet says, *I write poems*. His poetry is full of the breath of life; when a reader reads his poems, they see the beauty of the world. If their heart is filled with sorrow and they can’t find any sympathy for their grief, the poet’s words comfort them: *“Don’t worry. Everything is going to be all right.”* If something is wrong in life,

*Come with me*

*And every poem I write*

*will have your name in it*

<sup>1</sup> Henri, A. *Selected and Unpublished Poems 1965-2000*. Liverpool University Press. 2007. p – 8.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor A. *A poetry of place: the flâneur and Adrian Henri*. Lancaster University (United Kingdom), ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2008. U506514.

<sup>3</sup> Henri, A. *Selected and Unpublished Poems 1965-2000*. Liverpool University Press. 2007. p 148.

<sup>4</sup> Henri, A. *Contemporary Poets*. Third Edition. St. James Press London., St. Martin’s Press New York. 1988. p 411.

he says. Although you may be going through a tough time right now, continue living, because someone needs you, and humanity must live for others as well as for itself. *Everything's going to be all right*, he reassures.

*Your face will be in every art gallery,*

*Your name in every book of poetry*

*So*

*Don't worry*

*Everything's going to be all right.*

***(Don't worry/Everything is going to be all right)***

Although Adrian Henri wrote "*Don't worry. Everything is going to be all right*," he himself did not believe it, says Roger McGough. "*The Adrian I knew was not a tortured soul, for he considered himself a lucky man to have earned a living as a poet and an artist, but what gives his poems their distinctive character is not only painter's eye and the jazz enthusiast's ear, but the feeling that when he wrote "Don't worry, everything's going to be all right" he didn't really believe it.*"<sup>5</sup>

In Roger McGough's words, the complex nature of Adrian Henri's personality and career is reflected. He emphasizes that while Adrian Henri was happy in life – grateful for having lived as both a poet and an artist – there was a certain ambiguity in his work. When Roger McGough says that Adrian Henri had "*the eyes of an artist and the ears of a jazz enthusiast*", he acknowledges the poet's artistic sensitivity, his ability to perceive and express the world with vivid imagery and rhythm. However, when Henri wrote "*Don't worry, everything is going to be all right*," McGough notes that Henri did not believe it himself. These words point to a hidden aspect of Henri's nature. That is, even though everything might appear fine from the outside, the skepticism, uncertainty, doubt, or hesitation in the poet's nature shows that, despite his efforts to reassure others, he could not fully accept this belief himself. In fact, Roger McGough suggests that Adrian Henri's poetry stands out not only because of his deep artistic talent but also due to the delicate balance between optimism and skepticism in his spirit.

Indeed, the poet comforts the reader, but he himself is also in sorrow, trying to convince himself that everything is fine when, in reality, it is not. He suffers from the loss of his love, even though... "*... the birds were singing...*", "*... dinner was fine...*", "*... I pulled those crackers with a laughing face...*", "*... it's 1 2 o'clock and I'm feeling fine ...*" – yet after describing the beauty of every scene and every place, he is reminded that he is alone.

<sup>5</sup> Henri, A. *Selected and Unpublished Poems 1965-2000*. Liverpool University Press. 2007. p – 98.

*.../ there was/ apples/ oranges/ chocolates/ ... aftershave/ but no you.*

*.../ there was/ mincepies/ brandy/ nuts and raisins/ ... mashed potato/ but no you.*

On the eve of the New Year, everywhere the air is filled with festive excitement, but none of it holds any real significance. So insignificant that they don't even merit being written in capital letters. At the end of the poem, the poet says this:

*there'll be/ Autumn/ Summer/ Spring/ ...and Winter/ all of them without you.*

*(Adrian Henri's Talking After Christmas Blues)*

The seasons of the year are started with capital letters, like the famous steeds of the year, because for the poet, spring, spent with his beloved, and the summer and autumn hold great value. However, the lover counts the seasons in reverse: Autumn, Summer, Spring... Winter. He looks back at his past life, mentally revisiting the spring of youth, starting from yesterday – measuring time by his life – and now he is left alone, facing Winter. No matter how many times the seasons change, he says, *everything is without you.*

### ***Spring Poem***

*Spring doing 100*

For the poet, winter seems like a country with its own highways. Spring is coming down that road at a speed of 100 km/h. Despite the cold breath of winter, which makes nature fall into a deep sleep, no matter how long it lasts, one day a person, looking around, will notice that spring has arrived unnoticed, scattering its vibrant colors around. The long-awaited spring comes unexpectedly. For someone waiting eagerly, time seems to stop or slow down, while for someone in a hurry, time seems to be rushing ahead. This is why the poem does not use grammatical tense; the poet prefers to leave the concept of time up to the reader's interpretation.

At the same time, both spring and the years of youth pass so quickly that they seem like a car speeding down a road descending into a valley. When spring and youth pass unnoticed, summer – the period when a person reaches a certain level of wisdom – remains in memory. In middle age, people are consumed by the worries of life, sometimes feeling as though they are walking on sand: they become entangled in the daily hustle and bustle without leaving a trace, wasting away the most productive years of their life. The winds erase the footprints left in the sand. A person walking on a smooth, even path moves forward more quickly. But someone walking on sand, as stated in the law of friction in physics, finds it difficult to speed up no matter how hard they try. Furthermore, walking on sand during the summer is a pleasant activity: the warm sand heats and burns the feet, and with every step, the sensation of sand flowing between the toes and along the sides of the feet feels delightful to the body.

*Summer Poem**Remember**Walking in the sand*

When a person realizes that their life is passing by, a pain referred to in psychology as “age-related stress” emerges, which flows like tears, falling like autumn leaves.

*Autumn Poem**Her**tears**fell**Like autumn*

The image of a man crying creates a somewhat distant scene in the mind, while we easily and naturally accept the tears of a woman. This is why the poet uses the third-person possessive form *her*. Her tears wash down her cheeks, falling in a cascade, symbolizing the passage of life, with the years falling like autumn's withered leaves. However, neither autumn nor the harshness of winter can extinguish the joy of a person who is with their beloved.

*Winter Poem**When I'm with you**I'm as happy as the day is short**(Four Sason Poems)*

Adrian Henri plays with the phrase “*happy as the day is long*,” which means extremely happy, by transforming it into “*as happy as the day is short*”. Through this wordplay, he shifts from *long* (meaning long in duration) to *short* (meaning brief), implying that no matter how fleeting life may be, or how cold winter is, there is always a reason to be joyful: the days may be short, but for someone who has lived through the trials of years and awaits something dear, happiness is always within reach. Henri's poems, especially those about love, are life-affirming – they sing of happiness and celebrate existence. His love poems enchant readers, drawing them back again and again into the spell of his words. In Henri's work, the poet and the lyrical protagonist are often one and the same, contradicting the theory that the poet and the character in their work are separate. For Henri, they are united – he is both. He openly identifies as an autobiographical poet, saying, “*I am an autobiographical poet: my poems are extensions of my own life, some fact, some fantasy. For this reason, I write perhaps more love poems than anything else.*”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p 411.

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