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The Book of Hours; a new poetics: Finding a model for spoken word in poetry films.

https://thebookofhours.org/

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The Book of Hours; a new poetics: Finding a model for spoken word in poetry films

https://thebookofhours.org/

CONTENTS

For the attention of the Examiners:

The Book of Hours **is an online project of 48 poetry films which represents the main body of my Phd, equivalent to 80% of the work.**
For *The Book of Hours* **I directed the project and the filmmakers, curated the poetry films, and provided text, in the form of poetry, for the films.**

The critical paper in support of this project represents 20%.

There is a full list of all collaborators and films at the end of this thesis.

The practise based work is archived at   https://thebookofhours.org/
Please visit this site to experience fully all the poetry films which are a combination of text, sound and moving image.

Abstract

The Book of Hours is an online poetry film project which contains 48 poetry films made in collaboration with 27 filmmakers. Through the process of creation I have explored how to bring the immediacy and vibrancy of spoken word into the poetry film form. My project is experimental in its use of spoken word in poetry film, and innovative in its approach to creating a themed collection of poetry films. This critical paper contextualises this research. My methodology for this has been to examine theories of poetry film, analyse historic and current poetry film projects and approaches to writing about contemplative poetry, and to trace my creative journey in the creation of *The Book of Hours*.

Introduction.

The Book of Hours is an online poetry film project which contains 48 poetry films. Through the process of creation I have explored how to bring the immediacy and vibrancy of spoken word into the delicate poetry film form, which is a growing but niche area of poetry. I have created a project which is experimental in its use of spoken word in poetry film, and also innovative in its approach to creating a themed collection of poetry films. The critical paper contextualises this research. My key research questions are: How can I develop a themed collection of poetry films using spoken word poetry? How can I explore contemplative writing using the medium of poetry film, and what insights can I gain about the nature of such a wide ranging collaboration and its distribution? My methodology for this has been to examine theories of poetry film, analyse historic and current poetry film projects and approaches to writing about contemplative poetry, and to trace my creative journey in the creation of *The Book of Hours.*

When I tell people I have created a poetry film project they make the assumption that I have made films of myself reading or performing poetry. This is a natural response as I am a spoken word poet and, typically, my work is delivered live to an audience. My desire to create poetry films has made me re-evaluate the type of poetry I write, what word choices to use and in what form I should present them. As I developed *The Book of Hours* I experimented with the placement of spoken poetry in poetry film and formulated definitions of how 'poetry film' differs from other filmic interpretations of poetry such as films of poets reading their work or short artistic films, 'filmpoems', which contain poetical sequences of images and sound but no words. The poetry I have written for this project is leaner and more focused than my previous spoken word poetry. There is more 'space' within the words for the moving images to interact and more silence.

Spoken word poetry is often perceived to be the public delivery of noisy crowd-pleasing material, which is certainly the case with poetry slams, but, for me, the lasting

appeal of performing spoken word is its ability to create an emotional connection with a live audience. Spoken word can be intimate and deeply personal. This is also the experience many people have of reading poetry on the page but in spoken word the poet is right there in front of the audience and the connection can be immediate and cathartic. I have had twenty years experience of delivering spoken word poetry and on countless occasions audience members have approached me after the performance to say how much they were moved, how the poem made them cry, or that they have personally experienced something I have referred to in the poem. In *The Book of Hours* I have striven to find a suitable model which can replicate this intimate and personal experience.

I have chosen to adapt the structure of a medieval Book of Hours as a suitable form to display a collection of reflective poetry. Medieval Books of Hours were collections of texts and images which represented the times of the day and months of the year. Inspired by these I wanted to create a contemporary compendium of images and text, which evokes contemplation. In our modern world we may not believe in God's constant rewarding and punishing of our behaviour but we still have a need for quiet moments, reflection and emotional awareness. Poetry continues to be a medium through which we can experience this, so the text in *The Book of Hours* is in poetic form, rather than prose. My usual manner of delivering poetry is through spoken word, so many of the poems in *The Book of Hours* are spoken rather than written.

Much contemporary spoken word practice is now distributed online so I have created a web-based project which can be accessed via browser on either a smartphone or a personal computer. We tend to use our electronic devices in a practical fashion, such as searching for information or communicating with friends and family or for distraction, such as gaming (McCullough, 2013) but I want to further explore the notion that our electronic devices can also be used for reflection and mindfulness. The desire to combine technology with a space for reflection is echoed by Malcolm McCullough in *Ambient Commons* 'A quieter life takes more notice of the world and uses technology more for curiosity and less for conquest' (McCullough, 2013, p. 292). I created *The Book of Hours* as a medium for artistic exploration and experiment.

The Book of Hours contains layers of experience for the reader, through sound, visual image and text experienced as a series of poetry films. These poetry films on present a constantly changing commentary on the passage of time. This is a loose replication of the original Books of Hours which provided readers with religious texts in sections connected to the times of the day and religious festivals. The reader of the original book could choose which texts to read and when. In *The Book of Hours* the first film displayed represents the current month and the time of day the viewer has accessed the site, such as 'May, afternoon', or 'November, night', but the viewer can also browse through the complete collection. *The Book of Hours* is therefore a calendar of poetry films and contains 48 films in twelve sets of four; four for each month of the year.

In Chapter One I investigate the use of spoken poetry in poetry films. I examine what is meant by 'poetry film' and how this differs from other filmic interpretations of poetry. The term 'poetry film' is itself problematic. Tom Konyves describes it as 'videopoetry' 'Videopoetry is a genre of poetry displayed on a screen, distinguished by its time-based, poetic juxtaposition of images with text and sound. In the measured blending of these three elements, it produces in the viewer the realization of a poetic experience' (Konyves, 2012). However, 'video' is now a term more connected to gaming or redundant technology so I have chosen to use the term 'poetry film' and show how this can be applied to my creative practice, rather than 'short film', 'moving poems' or 'film poetry'.

At present there is no established canon of poetry films so I have constructed my own historical timeline of influences starting with the Dadaists. I explore the 'poetic mode', in terms of moving image, (Nichols, 2010), and how this can be traced through the early experiments in film from its inception in the nineteen century and through the work of experimental film makers in the twentieth century , such as Germaine Dulac, Dziga Vertov and Maya Deren. UK based filmmaker John Grierson's work is also relevant. The seminal poetry film *The Night Mail* (1936) was a collaboration between directors Harry Watt and Basil Wright, poet W.H Auden and narrators John Grierson and Stuart Legg. Auden edited the pace of the text to meld with the moving image. The final film was a dialogue between poet and film makers; 'Words, music and images were integrated into a totality' (Aitken, 1992, p. 143).

I have investigated how these early experiments have influenced the current creation of poetry films and how *The Book of Hours* is furthering this practice. At present poetry film has a fervent but select audience mostly at short film festivals and on sites such as Movingpoems.com (Bonta, 2018) where individual poetry films or collections of poetry films can be viewed. Much poetry film content is time specific, in that it is shown only at a public screenings or kept in archive form, on Vimeo or YouTube.   My aim is to attempt to provide a more lasting themed poetry film collection which can be viewed by a wider public, especially those who already access spoken word and poetry film online.

I examine two examples of current poetry film projects that have created a series of linked or themed poetry films rather than individual examples. *Flow and Frame*, a collaboration inspired by a river, between poet Philip Gross and filmmaker Wyn Mason (Gross & Mason, 2013) and Adam Steiner's *Disappear Here* set around the Coventry ring road (Steiner, 2017).

Chapter Two examines the use of the contemplative in the creation of this project and the influence of the original Books of Hours. Other writers have attempted to re-imagine the Book of Hours structure, such as *Book of Hours* (Rilke, 1941), a three-volume collection of poetry which addresses a Christian God from the point of view of a religious searcher. Rilke's poetry is lyrical and wistful and the organisation of his *Book of Hours* into three volumes pays some reference to the medieval form, but ultimately his book is a printed text and contains no images. Katherine Swift's much-loved *The Morville Hours* (Swift, 2008) is primarily her account of developing a garden in Shropshire but it is also a lyrical reflection on the seasons and the changing patterns of her life. Each chapter pays reference to the medieval format in its titles.

 My main challenge has been to find a form of contemplative poetry that can be adapted to the medium of film. My usual style of writing has previously been spoken word poetry, which, for me has been narrative and lyrical.   Many poems in *The Book of Hours* feature nature and landscape, both urban and rural and this has led me to question what sort of language I am using, and to pay more attention to the lyricism of the words rather than the 'story' in the poem. The so-called 'Radical landscape poets' such as Carol Watts and Harriet Tarlo have been my inspiration here (Tarlo, 2011).

Chapter Three traces the development of *The Book of Hours* and the collaborative process. As the *Book of Hours* is a collaborative project my involvement with that of my filmmakers and the outcomes are summarized in this chapter. This is akin to Philip Gross's exploration of his collaborative process with Wyn Mason for *Flow and Frame,* which is one of the contemporary projects I analyse in Chapter One. He describes his experience; 'in order for integrative collaboration to emerge both collaborators needed to move beyond their modi operandi' (Gross & Mason, 2013). I have discovered that my own modus operandi has been challenged in the creation of *The Book of Hours* and this too is analysed further in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER ONE   THE USE OF SPOKEN WORD IN POETRY FILMS.

In this chapter I investigate the use of spoken poetry in poetry films. I examine what is meant by 'poetry film' and how this differs from other filmic interpretations of poetry, and I explore approaches to creating a themed collection of poetry films using spoken word poetry.

<u>What is a poetry film? A discussion of some definitions.</u>

With the rise of YouTube and Vimeo many filmed versions of spoken word poets reading or performing poetry are now available. The Poetry Society's *Page Fright*   (The Poetry Society, 2018) has films of UK spoken word poets, such Holly McNish and Dizraeli, reading their work. These are professionally filmed with good sound quality and lighting. In the spoken word community, poetry sharing through online platforms is endemic. The success of the US slam poetry scene has created hugely popular sites such as Button Poetry (Poetry, 2011) which holds a vast archive of spoken word, and Def Poetry Jam, a TV show which ran until 2007 (Jam, 2002). Individual poems can clock up millions of viewers. For example, by 2018, Neil Hilborn's 'OCD' (Hilborn, 2013) had a staggering eleven million viewers. Even one-off spoken word poems recorded at live events can have a large audience. Taylor Mali's acclaimed 'What Teachers Make,' recorded in Providence Rhode Island in 1998 had, by 2018, a viewership of five million (Mali, 1998). Spoken word poets are aware of the power of online sharing. Luke Wright has his own YouTube channel and Kate Tempest and Hollie McNish have considerable online presences. This type of film, a poet reading or performing a poem, represents most people's understanding of the term 'poetry film'.

For the purposes of *The Book of Hours,* I am going to define the term 'poetry film,' and to show that this form exists as distinct from films of poets reading their work, and poetic films (sometimes called film poems), which are short films, influenced by the experimental filmmakers of the early twentieth century, akin to moving visual art. A 'poetry film' is an emerging form of poetry where the filmic content and the words have been created to exist as one entity.

Poetry film not a completely new form. Its existence was recognised and defined in the 1980's. William Wees, Emeritus Professor of English at McGill, Montreal, in his influential essay, *The Poetry Film,* attempted to define a distinct category of film which contained both poetry and film, but was different from the film poems of the early twentieth century created by artists such as Man Ray and Dulac, which contained poetically conceived moving images but no language.

> 'A number of avant garde film and video makers have created a synthesis of poetry and film that generates associations, connections and metaphors, neither the verbal nor the visual text would produce on its own' (Wees, 1984, p. 106)

His definition of poetry film points to a tradition that has received less attention, and where the emphasis is on poetry, a form of art where the poem and the moving image are intrinsically connected to each other, unlike a film of a poet where the film is incidental, or a poetic film, which relies solely on visual effects. He was careful to use a hyphen between the words, 'poetry' and 'film' to emphasise their connectivity. He saw the potential for expansion of this art form which:

> '..expands upon the specific dentations of words and the limited iconic references to images to produce a much broader range of connotations, associations, metaphors' (Wees, 1984, p. 109).

He described this further in his *Film Poetry Notes* for the 1999 Film Poetry screenings curated by Peter Todd at the National Film Theatre: 'Poetry-films are a kind of hybrid art form and therefore seen as less 'pure', less essentially cinematic, in the high modernist sense' (Wees, 1999).

In 2002 Fil Ieropulous, of the University College for the Creative Arts, further attempted to define film poems and poetry films. He stated that the current scene 'showcases how chaotic the notion of the film poem has been in the last eighty years and how difficult it is to talk about a specific definition of its characteristics' (Ieropulous, 2002). These definitions are further confused in that current creators of and writers about poetry films,

where the poem and the moving image are intrinsically linked, often call the art form 'filmpoem' or 'video poetry' (Cook, 2010) (Konyves, 2012).

Canadian Tom Konyves, a pioneer of what he calls 'video poems', comes close to forming useful terminology, although the term 'video' seems misleading, now more commonly connected with gaming rather than the moving image. He started creating 'video poems' in the late 1970's, and he has tried to create a framework for the understanding and creation of this art form. In his *Video poetry; A manifesto*, he identifies what he sees as 'problematic trends':

> 'the movement of poetry to the "big screen" has exposed two conflicting positions – one demystifying the poem by complementary "visuals", the other augmenting the suggestive power of poetry by unexpected juxtapositions' (Konyves, 2012).

He sees these trends as merely tricks and he claims that neither of these approaches created the blended nature of a true video poem: 'In the measured blending of these three elements (visual, text and sound) it produces in the viewer the realisation of a 'poetic experience' (Konyves, 2012).

For Konyves a video poem must contain the following elements; text, either on screen or voiced; a narration to propel the viewer; poetic juxtaposition, which he defines as the placement of words and images which create different 'meanings' or interpretations; and a 'poetic experience', which he further defines as 'fragmented expressions of the artist's imagination, suggestive of meaning, yet denying clarification of the purported meaning.' A video poem should produce in the viewer 'unprecedented and unlimited associations between image, text and sound' (Konyves, 2012). It must also include rhythm, illustration, collaboration and have a duration of 'not longer than 300 seconds'.

For a creator of poetry films these definitions are a good starting point whether or not one agrees with them. Why 300 seconds, for example, and what has he based this number on? He does not elaborate on this. However, what Konyves describes here, and what I have striven to achieve, is a blended art form, which offers a more complex viewer experience than a film of a poet reading or performing their work.

Konyves also identifies five major 'categories' of 'video poems': Kinetic text, where the text on the screen is animated; sound text, where the poetry is spoken, either by the poet or through a voice-over; visual text, where the text is featured on the film like a sub-title; performance, which includes the human body; and cine(e) poetry, which uses recognisable film sequences as well as animation (Konyves, 2012).

I write poetry to be performed or heard. I want the sound of the language and the emotional response of the audience to be an important part of the experience. My poetry could be described as lyrical. 'Lyric (or lyrical poetry) is subjective in its approach, expressing the feelings, thoughts and visions of the poet directly and often very personally' (Stillman, 1966, p. xii). Although I experimented with several forms in *The Book of Hours*, as outlined by Konyves above, those which I were most drawn to were the ones where the lyrical poetry could be best appreciated: 'sound text', as it uses the human voice and 'visual text' which 'displays the text on screen, superimposed over images captured or found'. A few of the poetry films for *The Book of Hours* are also cine (e) poetry in that they have been created by a filmmaker using storyboards, actors, soundtracks and all the elements used in cinema films.

As with all forms of art there are factions, and allegiances. For my exploration of *The Book of Hours* I will use the term 'poetry film', with no hyphen, throughout. This emphasises that for this project I have understood a poetry film to be a blended entity of both poetry and film, and in my case, these elements have been created separately but in collaboration between a poet and a filmmaker. In the next section I will trace the historical background to the current state of poetry film practice and attempt to discover my own lines of influence for *The Book of Hours* as I experiment with the creation of lyrical spoken word poetry film.

A brief history of poetry films.

There are several significant poetry film festivals and new ones appear, it seems, annually. (Bonta, 2018) *Zebra*, the largest, based in Berlin, attracts internationally recognised short filmmakers and award winning poets. *Backup*, in conjunction with Bauhaus University, Weimar, produces *Poetryfilm Magazin* the leading academic journal for poetry film. (Helmcke & Nachert, 2016) *Video Bardo*, in Argentina, showcases the experimental

developments from the South American continent. *Visible Verse* in Canada, which had its last screening in 2015, featured many female practitioners, and in the US *Juteback* is the leading festival for poetry film since the closure of *Rabbit Heart*. The work of Indian and Asian poets is recognised in *Sadho. O'Bheal* , based in Ireland, and *Cyclops* in Ukraine also run small poetry film screenings. The *Athens International Poetry Film Festival* had its seventh annual screening in 2018. In the UK *FilmPoem* founded by film maker Alastair Cook has created its own grainy aesthetic, and the *Newlyn Film Festival* now has a poetry film screening. *Poetry Film Live*, which runs poetry filmmaking workshops and an online journal, will have its first festival in 2019. *Liberated Words*, was formed by myself and Sarah Tremlett in 2012, and has connections with *Visible Verse* and *Video Bardo* (English & Tremlett, 2014).

In order to understand the growing popularity of poetry film I will attempt to trace the history of the form from the early experimentations in film to the blended use of poetry and moving image. I am aware that this is not a comprehensive history, as I have not the space here to examine a more detailed overview of film makers who experiment with the relationship between word and image, but I have chosen to focus on those works which have influenced my decision making in the creation of *The Book of Hours.*

The very first films or moving images were created in the late nineteenth century. These were clips of everyday life and featured topics such as popular events and festivals. The curiosity of seeing 'real' people moving and inhabiting a recognised world was an object of fascination for early film audiences. By the dawn of the twentieth century filmmakers had discovered that this was an exciting medium for storytelling. Actors, sets and scripts started to feature in films. Film became drama and narrative:

> 'Cinema became a new means of expression for novelists of dramatic literature, and since cinema was movement, it was confused with the interrelating of actors, of situations, it was put in the service of 'story to tell'' (McCreacy, 1976).

In the aftermath of The First World War the focus of film making moved from Europe to America which had already started to dominate the production of films (Williams, 2014). The rise of Hollywood and the film industry is well documented but by the early 1920's

many European filmmakers wanted to claim their status as 'artists' and rejected the development of film as a means to tell a story. French film maker Germaine Dulac was one of these and she challenged the call by Charles Pathee for her fellow film makers to follow the US example. She saw a possibility to create a uniquely French style of film, which paid respect to the country's cultural heritage where, 'every cinematic drama must be visual and not literary' and 'a real film can't be able to be told, since it must draw its active and emotive principle from images formed of unique visual tones' (Dulac, 1917, pp. 7-9). She defended the phrase 'cinema pur', coined in the 1920's, to distinguish this art form from narrative cinema and she published and wrote in the journal *Schemas*, a forum for the discussion of pure cinema (Dulac, 1927).

Dulac created a series of 'rules' (Dulac, 1917) on how cinema works by stressing the way the moving image must become a separate art form from narrative with an emphasis on movement, visual rhythm and emotional content. She established the filmmaker as 'artist creator'. She also stated that 'the cinematic action must not be limited to the human person but must extend beyond it into the realm of nature and dream.' She was of course writing this during the rise of theories of the subconscious and the formation of the surrealist movement (Dulac, 1917). She set up the Cine-Club movement in France to promote French cinema (Williams, 2014, p. 87).

In Dulac's feminist classic film *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (La Souriante Madame Beudet, 1923) the creatively frustrated heroine is driven to depression by the uncomprehending attitude of her husband. Her internal struggle is suggested by sequences of fantasy and dream-like imagery. Sunlight falls across the floor and she imagines a romantic lover. These 'poetic' sequences depicting inner consciousness are as important as the main story line.

Other early filmmakers, like Dulac, further developed the ideas of the surrealists. Man Ray made four films in seven years but gave up film making to concentrate on photography. Writing about his surrealist film *Emak Bakia* he described what he called a 'cinepoem', a 'series of fragments, a cinepoem with a certain optical sequence which makes up a whole but still remains a fragment' (Ray, 1927, p. 40). This is an early account where poetry is directly linked to film making. In his short film *L'Etoile De Mer* (The Star Fish) he used adaptations of a poem by Robert Desnos (who makes brief appearance in the film as 'the other man').

The images in the film do not portray the words of the poem but draw on the enigmatic nature of love, sexuality and obsession (L'Etoile De Mer, 1928). Much of the filming is done through blurred glass giving it a dreamy quality but also a sinister one. There are elements of this film that are still used today in poetry films; the blurring, the short sections of seemingly unrelated images, and the way that the words of the poem are not directly illustrated by the film.

Russia, post-revolution, became a place where experimentation in art was encouraged and formalist writers Boris Eikenbaum and Viktor Shklovsky tried to define a language of film and analyse the poetics of cinema. Eikenbaum used the term 'cine-phrase' which is akin to the long shot, or the slow take. The connection between the phrases he called the 'cine-period', the linking passages between shots. Putting these two elements together creates an illusion of continuity. Poetic films contain cine-phrases but no cine-periods so the viewer has to create their own continuity. He called this 'internal speech', the way in which a viewer will create links between the images viewed. (Eikenbaum, 1922, p. 13). In the Liberated Words poetry film making workshop run by Marc Neys, I saw this theory in practice when he showed us a seemingly random collection of moving images and asked us to create a poem which connected them (English & Tremlett, 2014).

Shklovsky also tried to define what is poetic and what is prosaic in cinema. He claimed that poetry contains 'arbitary semantic resolutions'. Any film may contain both poetic and prosaic elements but the prevalence of poetic sequences will create a 'poetic film' (Shklovsky, 1922, p. 46). This can be seen in the work of more modern film-makers such as Tarkovsky who developed the scope of poetic cinema. (Bird, 2008, pp. 13-16)

The Russian film maker Dzigo Vertov created films using these principles and further stressed the link between poetry and the moving image. He said, 'I am a writer of the cinema. I am a film poet, but instead of writing on paper I write the film script' (Vertov, 1992, pp. 182-187). Vertov wrote his film scripts in the form of poetry. He was also a pianist, and his approach to film making is akin to that of a musician, creating linked sequences of sound. The introductory title sequence to his seminal work *Man With a Movie Camera*, states;

'The film presents an experiment in the cinematic communication of visible events without the aid of intertitles... without the aid of a scenario...without the aid of theatre. This experimental work aims at creating a truly international absolute language of

cinema based on its total separation from the language of theatre and literature (Man with a Movie Camera, 1929).

Man With a Movie Camera, is a stunning piece of cinema. Representing a day in the cities of Moscow, Kiev, Kartov and Odessa, Vertov takes the viewer through a dazzling series of tableaux and moving sequences. It is a virtuoso demonstration of all the different types of film techniques then available such as freeze frames, split screens and stop motion. There is no 'story' as such but a celebration of the many aspects of urban life and mechanisation (Man With a Movie Camera, 1929).

These early theories of poetic cinema are still influential and current poetry filmmakers such as Alastair Cook and Marc Neys create poetry films which use cine-phrases and internal speech to create collages of images which the viewer responds to emotionally. Alastair Cook calls himself a 'Film poet', stressing his links to these early film-makers although his films are not purely visual but contain adaptations of poetry (Cook, 2010).

The films of Dulac and Vertov, revealed to me the unified blending of poetry and moving image and this informed me about the visual and lyrical quality of the poetry films I wanted for *The Book of Hours*. I was keen to explore 'the realm of nature and dream' (Dulac, 1917), especially as I intended the collection to invoke some sort of reflective experience.

There is one film-maker whose writings on 'Cinema as an art form' (Deren, 2016) and other essays on the artistic potential of film can be seen to have had a lasting influence on contemporary poetic film. Although she completed only 76 minutes of film, Maya Deren's desire to evolve film as a fusion of other art forms - visual art, dance, music, poetry and story- is her most potent legacy and her writings are inspirational for those who want film to be other than moving narrative. Film theorist Bill Nichols sees her as vitally inspirational for the American Avant-Garde (Nichols, 2001) and a leading documentary about her was created in 2001 (In the Mirror of Maya Deren, 2001). There was a recent screening of her films at The Barbican, London (Davies, 2017).

Deren was aware of the poetic possibilities of film:

'The potentialities of cinema are rich and unexplored. It can relate two unrelated geographies by the continuous unity of an un-interrupted movement begun in one and concluded in the other. It can project as simultaneous, chronologically distant events. Slow motion, and the agony of its analysis, reveals in the most casual incident a cosmic constellation. Yet no verbal description can convey the sense of a medium which is basically visual' (Deren, 2016, p. 32).

Her two best known films, *Meshes of the Afternoon* and *At Land,* combine enigmatic sequencing akin to Dulac with subtler acting. Shot in black and white and with no sound Deren is the actor and director of both films. Her visual appearance is striking: a face full of expression, wild hair, and bohemian clothes. Her early death and obsessive desire to follow an individual creative path also mark her out as singular. It can be difficult to separate the work from the person but her films are interesting in that they are both playful and serious, informed by theory but not enslaved by it. In *Meshes of the Afternoon* we experience different layers of reality. Are we witnessing a dream, or a dream within a dream or the place between sleep and waking? There is no overall 'meaning' here but images we can respond to emotionally like the way we respond to a poem.

In *At Land* a woman is washed up on a beach and wakes to see the waves breaking in reverse. Reality is again distorted. She climbs up a dead tree on the beach and emerges on a table at a dinner party, but at the same time in a garden, and simultaneously crawls across both. In a later sequence she walks across wet rocks to follow a fallen chess piece. Both films reveal the vulnerability of bare feet in a landscape, which becomes a visual metaphor of the vulnerability of a woman in unfamiliar situations. In Deren's films she portrays herself running up stairs, opening doors, climbing into ruined buildings and passing in and out of different locations and scenarios with a scrambled dream logic. We wait for a conclusion, a meaning, an answer, but there isn't one. I like this approach. I want the films in *The Book of Hours* to be viewed not just once but again and again. I want my viewers to find something enigmatic about the films, something new they didn't experience before, perhaps the quality of a particular colour or the juxtaposition of words and images. I find Maya Deren inspiring, not just in her pursuit of a creative idea even if it wasn't fashionable or even achievable, as in her final film project in Haiti (Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti, 1977), but in her attitude towards the camera. For her a camera was indeed a functional tool but it was also a medium to create art: 'Your camera then, is not only a means it is also a muse, and can lead you like a siren into creative ventures in your medium' (Deren, 2016, p. 185).

I am aware that in *The Book of Hours* I am not the holder of the camera but in conversations with the film-maker I hope I have conveyed the essence of Deren's message.

What happens when the poem itself becomes the main feature of the film? *At Land* and *Meshes of the Afternoon* contain no words and although the experiments of the early filmmakers such as Dulac and Vertov are 'poetic', they rarely feature poetry. John Grierson's 1936 film *The Night Mail* ends with a poetic sequence written by the poet W. H. Auden and this passage is what is most remembered about this film. John Grierson was informed by the Russian film makers and elements of *Man With a Movie Camera* can be seen in this film including the unsentimental depiction of everyday life and the heroic nature of the working man. *The Night Mail* is the most well known example of the documentary film movement, founded by Grierson, and was funded by the General Post Office film unit (Aitken, 1992, p. 143). It follows the progress of a mail train over the course of one night on its journey from London to Scotland. It is 24 minutes long and was screened in cinemas as a short 'informative' film before the main feature event. Filmed in black and white it is grainy, gritty, realistic but also, undeniably 'poetic' (The Night Mail, 1936). W.H Auden wrote the final poem after watching the film sequence and Benjamin Britten created the score. It is an interesting collaborative piece of work as much of it was created using trial and error and the final poetic sequence can be seen as a true poetry film, as the poem itself is the focus (Sweet, 2017). The poem opens with the well known lines:

'This is the Night Mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door.'

The poem 'mirrors' the steady beat of the train on the tracks and towards the ending verses, as the train gains speeds, the narration speeds up too. Auden used the rhythm of the music to inform his poem and the blending of word, sound and image does indeed create Konyves' 'more complex viewing experience' (Konyves, 2016). It is a much-loved piece of work possibly due to our enduring love of steam trains but also because of its accessible nature.

'The chatty, the catty, the boring, adoring,

The cold and official and the heart's outpouring,

Clever, stupid, short and long,

The typed and the printed and the spelt all wrong.'

It is unashamedly populist, easily understood, and, to use a modern word, 'relatable'. Grierson himself narrated the final lines which hint at the wider message of the poem:

'And none will hear the postman's knock without a quickening of the heart, for who can bear to feel himself forgotten?'

The Night Mail is a poem about inclusivity, loneliness and the heroic hard working nature of those who provide our daily services.

This gritty documentary approach to poetry film creation was taken up by Tony Harrison in his film '*V*; broadcast on Channel 4 after the Miners' Strike. His poem is delivered against black and white images of northern urban industrial landscapes, starting with the cemetery where his family are buried. '*V*' uses archive clips of victory after the Second World War and Churchill's famous 'V' salute, later adopted by Margaret Thatcher, placed within the context of the anger and disappointment felt during the destruction of Britain's industrial heartlands in the 1980's. The gravestones are defaced with graffiti of obscene words 'Cunt. Shit and Piss'. This was the first time that the 'C' word was heard on British television and the content of the poem was considered so abrasive that the BBC did not broadcast the poem in full until 18 Feb 2013. For many of this era, including myself, it was a revelation that poetry could contain such direct language. The BBC Radio Four documentary *Crossing the Border* described this unforgiving poem as a seminal point in British poetry's journey away from the establishment and into the wider community and recognised the film as a notable experiment in combining poetry with moving image. (Sweet, 2017)

In our modern world which is bombarded with moving visual images, the work of the early experimental film makers can be hard to appreciate. The quality of the acting in Dulac's

films, is by today's standards, melodramatic, and the hymn to mechanisation sung by Vertov does not align with our concerns about the environmental impacts of industrialisation. *The Night Mail* appears quaint and nostalgic with its posh man's voiceover telling us we need to respect the working man's achievements and although there are filmic passages '*V*' is basically a film of a reading of a poem.

The influence of the cin(e)poem (Konyves, 2012) form of film making can be seen in the work of other contemporary film makers such as Andrei Tarkovsky, working in the eighties, whose films such as *Mirror, Nostalgia* and *Sacrifice* are revered for their enigmatic quality and attention to visual detail and textures. His films contain poetic narrations both visually and verbally: *Stalker* ends with a reading of a poem. More recently David Lynch holds the baton for the avant garde. *Mullholland Drive*, like the films of Dulac and Ray, explores the tension between the real and the imagined world and the viewer is not certain whether something has happened, or is the alternative version of reality that plays out in dreams.

There are some poetry film creators who are aware of this historic background to poetic film. For instance, Fil Ieropulos' creative practice draws inspiration from Vertov and Deren and he has developed an immersive poetry film experience which is viewed in an installation (Ieropulous, 2010). However, many contemporary poetry film creators are not steeped in the history of film and may not even have a background in film at all. There is another route which draws creatives to make poetry films, and that is one of experimentation with technology. Zata Banks claims that new art forms become 'necessary' when we experience an information overload just as new language arises when the existing language cannot find words for new experiences (Banks, 2016). With the current ease of access to digital technology, practitioners and poets are 'discovering' the art form on their lap tops. Dave Bonta, who now runs Movingpoems.com, the largest poetry film archive and forum, explains that his introduction to poetry films was accidental 'Someone had give me a digital camera with video capability, and I'd started shooting random footage of cool things to share on my blog' (Bonta, 2016, p. 10).

He began to experiment with placing the words of his poetry alongside film footage and started to search out other people who were doing the same. He sees the creation of a poetry film a chance for the poet to 'reconnect with the roots of his or her craft: to experience

poetry not just as a fixed, received text, but as an expression of poiesis, a transformative bringing forth made possible by the cultivation of a broader, synaesthesic awareness' (Bonta, 2016, p. 10) .

I find this statement particularly interesting as I too, want to lift the poem away from the printed text. Spoken word does this through performance, voice and gesture and the poetry film form now appears to offer me an opportunity to do this via the medium of moving image. My introduction to poetry film was initially via social media sharing and it seems that this is now becoming the chief source of visibility for poetry filmmakers to share their work. In his article in *Poetryfilm Magazin* Thomas Zandegiacomo acknowledges that although there are a number of current poetry film festivals, including Zebra, the one he curates, it is through social media sharing that poetry films have become widely distributed and people are drawn to the art form because they have seen it on YouTube (Zandegiacomo, 2016).

It was certainly my intention that *The Book of Hours* was created in a form which can be accessible and easily shared. I approached the project from a poet's point of view. Tom Konyves outlines the dilemma of poetry film from this perspective:

'If the written poem was originally perfect it would not need to be completed with images. Yet videos are made to promote these written poems and are most worthwhile, otherwise these poems would not reach a wider public' (Konyves, 2016, p. 9).

He talks about the 'new meaning' that can arise when there is a true blending of text, either voiced or displayed, with image. My challenge is to use the spoken word form of poetry to do this. As I mentioned earlier, the poetry I created for *The Book of Hours* is largely spoken rather than text based and in my research for this project I was keen to examine other poetry films which use the spoken word. *The Night Mail* contains spoken poetry as does Harrison's '*V'* but I decided to focus on more recent projects which have been created under the title of 'poetry film'. For my curation of the Liberated Words screenings and those at the MIX conference, and also for my research into *The Book of Hours* I have investigated hundreds of poetry films, but I have been particularly interested in finding projects which contain sequences of poems, either in an overall style or with an overall theme. Some high profile recent projects have been created such as the Poetry Society's commission of films for the winners of the National Poetry Prize (Cook, 2013), and Apples

and Snakes pairing up of film makers with poets for *Architects of Our Republic*, where poets were commissioned to respond to Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech (Apples and Snakes, 2013). In these projects the poet did not write with the film in mind, these are 'filmic responses' to existing poems. I have focused instead on projects where the creation of a series of films has been the starting point and there has been some sort of creative dialogue between poet and film-maker.

An analysis of two contemporary poetry film projects.

The projects I have chosen to examine contain sequences or collections of poetry films. *The Book of Hours* is a sequence of poetry; there are overall themes which connect the poems: the passage of time, contemplation of nature and landscape, and the act of 'stepping back' from everyday life and observing it. In the projects I have examined for this thesis the poetry is also spoken and the poetry film has been created as a collaboration between poet and filmmaker.

Flow and Frame was the 2013 collaboration between poet Philip Gross and film maker Wyn Mason. *Flow and Frame* started as an interfaculty research project at the University of South Wales between the Creative Writing department and the School of Creative and Cultural Industries. Such a project was, by its nature, subject to analysis and scrutiny from its inception to conclusion. From my point of view, this was an excellent project to examine as both Gross and Mason documented their process and wrote about the final outcome in *New Writing: The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing* (Gross & Mason, 2013). A short documentary film about the collaboration *The Land of Hinter* was also produced (Gross & Mason, 2012).

Flow and Frame contains thirteen films and thirteen poems and from the outset both participants were determined to advance towards a more fully evolved collaborative process. In their co-authored article they outline one of the initial 'tensions' about the project.

> 'Philip and Wynn knew they were going to collaborate and were aiming to do so as fully as possible, and the end product would be a poetry film, but at the outset they did not know what their subject matter would be' (Gross & Mason, 2013, p. 3).

This seems to me to be a very difficult place to start. Their article is open about the 'impasse' they reached because neither of them could find a suitable starting point for this project. Curiously it was one of their observers, Kevin Mills (who appears as the brooding onlooker in *The Land of Hinter*) who presented the solution. His statement 'It is impossible to make a film about a river' was a reference to the quote attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, 'You can never step in the same river twice', and because Kevin Mills is also a poet he wrote this as a poem, 'you cannot speak your mind/about the film/about the poet/thinking about the river/ if you cannot/capture the flow'. Academics love a challenge, particularly if they are told that they can't do something, and Kevin's poem triggered a vigorous poetic response from Philip. This response set up the momentum to drive the project forward.

Philip then wrote twelve more poems. The completed sequence is a reflection on Heraclitus' statement, the nature of time and reality and the river itself, presented as a conversation between each poem just as Philip's poem was a conversation with Kevin's. It seems at this point that the possibilities of the project surged forward and they had bold ambitions.

> 'Once there were thirteen films with thirteen matching poems the next logical step....was to explore the surprising effects that could be obtained by randomising the connection between poems and film' (Gross & Mason, 2013, p. 9).

This didn't happen and due to funding and technical issues the project does not now exist as an interactive website although the films are available on Wyn's Vimeo channel. There is something to be learned here about the fragility of online material, even if the creators have departmental backing from a university, and also something about the complexity of web-based projects.

For me, this was a useful project to investigate as both Gross and Mason were honest about some of the difficulties of collaboration. A project needs a focus and a definite starting point before both parties can move forward. *Flow and Frame* is also an early poetry film project. Much has happened in the world of poetry film since 2013.

Gross acknowledges that he would now approach a similar project differently:

'I'd talk a lot more at the start about ways we could both be present in the work together, in the same timescale, and passing the work more fluidly to and fro. Somehow I'd like the work to move back and forth in smaller 'units of invention'... even while I respect the fact that film can't be as various as a sequence of poems, and really what it 'is' is very much what it is as a whole' (English, 2018b).

Flow and Frame remains as an exercise in how a poet and a film-maker can collaborate and what they can or could create. The sequences of film contain poetic variations on the response to the Heraclitus quote, spoken sometimes by Philip and also by other narrators, and filmic material of the path by the river Taff. An androgynous figure limbers up before exercising along the path. There are close-ups of bark, plants, the androgynous figure's face and the ever-present river water. I found it was best watched as a complete sequence as the poems do indeed 'converse' with each other. The poetry is complex and cerebral and the argument isn't easy to follow but I found moments of delight in the poems: 'the dry spit of the first drop hitting it with a hiss.'

What I learned from an investigation of *Flow and Frame* is that a project needs a direction: at least one of the collaborators needs to come up with a 'vision statement' to create the drive for it to go forward. I also learned that difficulties and problems don't mean that a project should be abandoned and solutions can present themselves if one keeps an open mind.

Adam Steiner's *Disappear Here* (Steiner, 2017) was an ambitious project to bring together nine writers and nine film-makers to make 27 poetry films set in, or around, the Coventry Ring Road. Its intention was to 'celebrate the modernist Brutalist structure'. The project was a reaction to the placement of public art in public spaces, where the words of well known poets are written on public buildings, but there was also a desire to evoke powers of observation and imagination: 'poetry can make what appears to be an ugly space rich and full of new meaning' (Steiner, 2017).

Rather than commission well known poets with no connection to the city Adam offered the project to practitioners who had connections with Coventry or the West Midlands. His final collection of poets and filmmakers include award winning poets such as Mab Jones and Leanne Bridgewater but also recent college leavers and artists. There was an open call

where filmmakers and poets were invited to submit interest by June 2016 and the winners were announced in July. All the poems and films were to be completed by the end of January 2017 and the entire film sequence was shown in a series of public screenings during 2017. The final collection is now on YouTube (Steiner, 2017).

There were many elements of this project which appealed to me and seemed similar to some of my aims for *The Book of Hours*: the desire for the project to evoke powers of observation, and the opportunity for a variety of approaches in the creation of the films. I also liked the intention to bring the project to the people of Coventry and offer some sort of involvement to local artists/poets. Unlike *Flow and Frame* which was created out of a university research team, *Disappear Here* was created by non-academic collaborators.

In an interview on the online magazine *Poetry Film Live* Adam describes the urban landscape of Coventry as the inspiration for the structure of the project: 'I thought that as there are nine junctions on the ring road I could get nine poets and nine film-makers and mix and match, or I could shake names in a hat – they would each shoot three films of five minutes each tops' (Cameron & Dewbery, 2017). Interestingly, five minutes is a similar length to Tom Konyves '300 seconds'.

He paired poets with filmmakers based on similar interests and preferences and his role as 'director' of the project was key here. He wanted to create interesting partnerships:

'In some cases, people had applied with an intention to work with a particular collaborator – when a really strong case was made, I went with this, in other cases not. What was great for the project was combining people who came from different angles and experience of artistic media. Some of this process was relatively perverse – it was good to put together unique combinations of artists' (English, 2018a).

I love this 'can do' attitude towards a project and his optimism that by putting poets and filmmakers together something would happen. For me this is the strength but also outlines some of the challenges of this project.

He describes their process of collaboration.

'The idea was very much that each writer would give their poems to the film-maker and talk ideas and approach – this was of course different for each pair of collaborators. With some pairs the process was more about writing and sharing and shooting films together, I think the slightly different takes on the processes reveal the extent to which the range of artists produced such a wide range of films' (English, 2018a).

I applaud his intentions and the variety of responses. Some of the films, such as *The Dreamer of Samuel Vale House*, are films of poets reciting their work, while others, like the collaboration between poet Leanne Bridgewater and film maker Emilia Moniszko, *Alice in Coveland*, have the visual quality of a music video, with the face and body of the performer as the main attraction. Adam acknowledges the artistic challenges of creating a poetry film.

'I think one of the hardest things about poetry film is not to just show on the screen what the words say, because of the function poetry fulfils in telling us about the meaning, experiences and stories behind people and things, the films should carry this through, and this means you have two forms working alongside one another, in and out of opposition' (English, 2018a).

Poet Sarah Leavesly describes her experience of working with her filmmaker and how she felt confident of their ability in the medium of film.

'...I was happy to leave filmmaking control in the filmmaker's hands - inputting in whatever ways I could where invited but leaving film decisions to the filmmaker' (English, 2018c).

Some of the films, for me, have the true nature of what Tom Konyves describes as a, 'poetic experience with 'unprecedented and unlimited associations between image, text and sound' (Konyves, 2012). *Remember* by poet Mab Jones and film maker Alex Taylor is a visually beautiful aerial sweep of the city, like the opening sequence to Wim Wenders *Wings of Desire.* The films that appealed to me most were the ones where there had been some experimentation with form or content. Brian Harley and Zoe Palmer's film *Constituents* was a sound poem of collected noises and clips of conversations with a simple animation.

The Book of Hours represents a step forward in the creation of spoken word poetry film. I have outlined a model for what can be described as a lyrical spoken word poetry film, one which does not merely record and film the poet reading or performing but one which explores the enigmatic qualities of the visuals when combined with the lyrical nature of the spoken poetry.

My insights into creating a themed collection of poetry films also add to the knowledge in this field. My guidelines are to have a clear vision about the outcomes of the project and, if the project is a collaborative one, to engage with the collaborators about this vision. *Flow and Frame* had commitment but no clear direction. *Disappear Here* was a project that had a vision statement and a clear intention to bring together poets and filmmakers but, unlike *Flow and Frame*, the collection of films had overarching themes but no overall sequence. This stressed for me the need also to have a more focussed approach with collaborators on how to create a sense of continuity across the 'collection'. I realised that I needed to have more discussion with my film-makers about what I perceive to be a poetry film and the lyrical experience I wanted to create. I also needed to examine what sort of poetry I could write to achieve this.

In the next chapter I explore various approaches to creating contemplative spoken word poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

POETRY FILM AND DAILY LIFE: AN EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPLATIVE WRITING.

Before charting the development of the project and the collaborative process here I examine what has informed my journey into spoken word and the writing of contemplative poetry for *The Book of Hours* and what sources I have looked to for guidance. I examine the structure of the medieval Books of Hours and how contemporary writers have developed this. I investigate some approaches to writing about landscape and I reflect on how audiences for spoken word poetry have changed.

The Structure of a Book of Hours and how contemporary writers have developed this.

My background in poetry is through spoken word, and particularly through poetry slam, the energetic, competitive form of poetry begun by Marc Smith in Chicago in the 1980's (Smith, 2011). I started performing poetry in 1996 after I won The Bristol Poetry Slam, the first poetry slam I had ever entered. The Bristol slams in those days attracted audiences of over 200 people and were raucous, lively events. To stand out in a slam you had to be memorable. Most of my competitors were young, male and loud and the dominant style was comedy or social comment. The poetry was performed to have instant impact on the audience, with noise, and plenty of animated gestures. I entered the slam because I wanted to show that a woman could stand up and do a quieter type of poetry and retrospectively I can see why I won. I wrote three poems which were crowd-pleasing, and well-crafted. I didn't need to yell, or moan because I could tease and entertain with words. I didn't, and still don't, think that my style was 'better' than the energetic slam poets, but it was different.

In those early slam years I continued to stand out. At that time many people took up spoken word (or performance poetry as it was called then) because they wanted to express their feelings or political views and this expression was more important than the craft of writing. Spoken word performers came from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures and

some emerged through recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, or were influenced by rap or comic performers. I had studied English Literature and had a good understanding of poetic techniques. My poetry is essentially lyrical in that it expresses a feeling, or thoughts about a situation, and I want the quality of the words to stand out. (Stillman, 1966)

For example, in 'Take me To the City', a poem I performed many times in slams, there is plenty of description:

'…I walked to Tescos where the motorway meets the river

Above my head, one stream flowing on concrete pillars.

The other, beneath my feet,

black and weed logged like a sewer. (English, 2014, p. 17).

Since those heady days of slam the spoken word scene has developed considerably. It is not enough now to shout out loud to your audience. The quality and the subtlety of writing has increased and quieter more reflective voices inhabit the scene, such as, in North America Buddy Wakefield, Shane Koyczen, and Warsan Shire, and in the UK, Joelle Taylor, Raymond Antrobus and Hollie McNish The poetry I write too is no longer constrained by the slam format. I do not have to keep to three minutes, or think about immediate impact, or choose a topic that will instantly appeal to my audience. My practice has now evolved in several new directions: I co-write theatre length shows which may contain stand-alone pieces, but also have multi-voiced poems. The poetry in *Flash,* which toured the UK in 2010-11, is reflective and charts my family's relationship to my Downs Syndrome sister (Carmichael, 2010). In *Count Me In* (2014-15), I created the character of Maureen, my polar opposite, shy and needy, a home bird who dreads the day she will no longer look after her granddaughter.

My main challenge in the writing of the poetry for *The Book of Hours* has been to find a contemplative form of spoken word that can be translated to poetry film. My usual way of writing poetry is to choose a narrative structure, to develop a story within the poem/s, and to use lyrical language to enhance meaning. I found early on in the project that any narrative structure had to be more condensed in a poetry film, or even abandoned. Detailed descriptions, explanations and dialogue, the bedrock of much of my previous spoken word poetry, proved to be too long and complicated. A poetry film does not need so many words since the images, and indeed the sound, also carry meaning; much of the text has to be

sacrificed to the image. A current approach, when combining spoken word poetry with film, is to create a film of the poet reading or performing the poem (Apples and Snakes, 2019). Spoken word films, like music videos, tend to rely on the physical presence of the performer. The UK bank Nationwide recently commissioned spoken word poets in an advertising campaign, *Voice of the People.* Here, spoken word poets perform poems based on situations where they have needed financial support, and the poet sits or stands and addresses the camera (Nationwide, 2016). This is a notable example of the accessibility of spoken word poetry as Nationwide chose spoken word, rather than page poets, to feature in this campaign. The *Voice of the People* poems, although much shorter than the artists' usual spoken word pieces, are personal and confessional. For my project I felt that such an approach was limiting. *The Book of Hours* isn't confessional. It isn't about 'me'; it is designed to convey mood, or a reflection on place. I needed to examine the original Books of Hours, discover what they offered their readers, and how I could translate this into the writing of the poetry. I then explored how more contemporary writers had developed or evolved the Books of Hours format.

A medieval Book of Hours was a collection of religious readings and accompanying images (Fay-Sallois, 2005). By the fourteenth century these had become highly decorative works of art and many were produced by craftsmen for wealthy patrons. They were created so that those outside of the religious orders could follow the patterns and rituals of monastic life. The book began with a calendar illustrated by images of activities connected to each month, such as sowing crops, harvest and feasting. The subsequent texts were divided into sections and one of these sections was the 'Hours', a series of prayers and readings spanning a complete day and night and changing with the religious season. This reflected the Hours of the Divine Office a code of religious behaviour adopted by St. Benedict in his sixth-century guide to monastic life. Each 'hour' was roughly three hours apart, and was the time for prayer and reflection. The first was Vigil, at midnight, followed by Lauds, then Prime, first thing in the morning, then Terce, then Sext at approximately lunchtime. After this was None followed by Vespers and finally Compline, after which the monks went to bed. The 'Hours' were therefore a template for religious devotion, spirituality, reflection and connection to God.

There were variations in the format of a Book of Hours but a typical collection contained: a calendar and The Hours, (as described above); a selection of penitential psalms, expressing sorrow for the committing of sins; The Office for the Dead, (a prayer cycle for the

repose of the soul of a deceased person); and the Litany of Saints, which were prayers for the intercession of the Virgin Mary and the martyrs and saints. Books of Hours represented a layperson's handbook to Christian devotion and were created in a portable format so they could be carried by the owner and referred to on a daily basis. They reveal a glimpse into the medieval relationship between humanity and God and are important compendiums of religious reflection.

In the modern secular society of the UK we can underestimate the importance of the Christian calendar in medieval times. This was an unwavering structure in an uncertain world and the progression from Christmas to Easter to Ascension was embedded in the minds and habits of everyone. The monastic life was seen as the epitome of social behaviour and for an ordinary person to possess access to the religious life, in book form, was highly desirable. It was common in medieval art, and also in the pages of the Books of Hours, for the patrons who had commissioned them to be depicted in religious scenes, such as witnessing the birth of Christ or worshipping at the feet of the Virgin, thus placing themselves directly into the holy narrative. In the medieval mind saints could be 'talked to' through prayer and requests to God, Jesus and Mary were as common as our 'wish lists' of shopping needs.

Katherine Swift, in *The Morville Hours*, a contemporary version of a Book of Hours, acknowledged the desirability and influence of the medieval texts: 'They are at once the most visible and the most intimate of medieval books, very widely disseminated yet used in an intensely private manner by individuals, often women, in the privacy of their own chambers' (Swift, 2008, p. viii). She also calls them 'The 'best sellers' of their day.'

The most noted example of a Book of Hours created for a wealthy patron is the *Tres Riches Heures* commissioned by John the Duke of Berry between 1412-1416 and illustrated by the brothers Limbourg. This is currently held in the Musee Conde in Chantilly, France (Limbourg, 2011). The Duke of Berry was a passionate collector of books and his library contained more than fifteen Books of Hours. The *Tres Riches Heures* is a supreme example. The illuminated pages are exquisitely illustrated; they depict a calendar of the month, the signs of the Zodiac and scenes from life, according to the seasons. In the page for October a white-clad horse pulls a harrow and a farmer sows seeds over which crows and magpies are already fighting. In the background is a magnificent white castle. The pages of this book offer a detailed insight into the lives of the various strata of medieval society, from aristocratic

hunters to peasants in rags. This keen depiction of everyday detail is a feature of other Books of Hours, where scenes from the Bible are set against a backdrop of recognisable scenes of medieval life. A Book of Hours can also be seen as an interactive text as these books were not intended to be read chronologically. The reader chose which readings to refer to according to time of day, season and spiritual mood.

What I gained from my understanding of the medieval Books of Hours and what I felt I could translate into my project were the following aspects: the text, the structure, the visual qualities and the portability. The text, (in my case the poems) would be an embarking point for reflection. This reflection would not be a religious one but a contemplative one, offering responses to the modern world. It would be presented in a calendar format akin to the original Books of Hours, following the months of the year, times of day and the seasons. It would contain a linear structure (a calendar year) but the reader/viewer could choose when and where they accessed the films. I wanted to somehow replicate the everydayness of the medieval Books of Hours, and to depict the 'illustrations in the margins' and by creating a digital project which utilizes our accessibility to screens and downloads, I could also replicate the portability of the medieval books.

The first modern Book of Hours I investigated was Rilke's *Book of Hours*, (*Das Studenbuch)* (Rilke & Deutsch, 1941) which was written, in German, in three parts between 1899 and 1903. It is a philosophical as well as a religious text, for Rilke was not a conventional Christian and the God he addresses is a human-facing God rather than a remote entity. His manner of addressing God is personal and direct. Rilke is looking for answers, for meaning in life, but he is also conflicted about what he sees as the visceral link between man and deity:

'Put out my eyes, and I can see you still;
slam my ears to, and I can hear you yet;
and without any feet can go to you;
and tongueless, I can conjure you at will' (Rilke & Deutsch, 1941, p. 37).

Rilke challenges not that a god exists but that God needs mankind in order to exist. The link between man and God is inescapable:

'What will you do, God, when I die?...you lose your meaning, losing me' (Rilke & Deutsch, 1941, p. 31).

Rilke's impassioned search is not one that I share but I did appreciate his direct and simple language, and the way he addresses an unseen person, 'Put out my eyes, and I can see you still; slam my ears to, and I can hear you yet.' (Rilke & Deutsch, 1941, p. 37) I was particularly interested in his use of questions, sometimes rhetorical or sometimes as an opening gambit for further dialogue. 'What will you do, God when I die? When I your broken pitcher lie?' (Rilke & Deutsch, 1941, p. 31) I use plenty of questions in my own poetry, 'Wild girl where are you now?' 'Did they know that they were dying?' 'Will you find a mountain top with a silver palace?' (English, 2018) The poems most informed by my reading of Rilke are *Drive Through the Night* (English, 2018, p. 42) and *Now is the Time* (English, 2018, p. 23). The first is addressed to my dying brother as he contemplates a death with no belief in an afterlife and the second reflects how one memory can link one event to another, but the overall feeling is still of loneliness: 'I throw bread to the ducks but they do not come.'

What I did not find in Rilke's poetry was richness of description and a specificity of location. His fields, clouds and seas are generalised rather than particular. Much of the poetry for *The Book of Hours* was written in various locations in the Welsh Marches. This was unintentional. I wanted to go away and write and in July 2015 I booked a cottage within two hours' drive of my home. However, the surrounding landscape, the apparent remoteness of the location, the lushness of the hedgerows and a pervading sense of history crept into the poetry and on subsequent writing breaks I have chosen to be near or in The Golden Valley in Herefordshire. I do not live here but it feels like this stretch of country is my spiritual heartland. To convey this sense of connectedness to the landscape, I looked to the prose of nature writers.

Some current approaches to writing about landscape.

There has been a resurgence recently in writing about the British countryside, not writing it as a history or as a reference guide but writing about the experience of it, akin to the work of the nineteenth century writer Richard Jefferies who explored emotional connection to place. Most well known is Robert MacFarlane who has walked through many remote places

in the UK and reflected on his experience of being there (Emmanuel College Cambridge, 2007). This type of writing contains detailed and knowledgeable observations about wildlife and flora, descriptions of weather patterns, and plenty of historical and biographical reflection. Other writers have contributed to this body of work such as poet Kathleen Jamie, who writes about the Scottish coast; Anna Pavord, the garden writer; Stephen Moss who writes about wildlife; and Katherine Swift whose *The Morville Hours*, is the story of the creation of a garden (Swift, 2008).

Swift acknowledges the influence of the early Books of Hours on her initial plans for her garden and also in the structure of her account. The chapters are divided into sections with the names of the original 'hours' and each chapter represents the changing seasons. Her previous work as keeper of early manuscripts at Trinity College, Dublin gave her an intimate knowledge of these manuscripts and she, like me, is fascinated by the detail:

'In the world of the Books of Hours, tiny emblematic figures dig, prune, sow, chop wood, mow grass, reap grain, tread grapes, each in their allotted month' (Swift, 2008, p. 9).

She mourns the loss of the agricultural and religious calendar in modern life:

'In a world of electric light and central heating, where one month is much like another, and vegetables are flown from Kenya…' (Swift, 2008, p. 9).

Not only have we lost the our connection with the seasons we have lost our connection with the 'great story' of the Christian calendar, the story of birth, growth, death and rebirth. *The Morville Hours* is an attempt to draw our attention back to the wonder and beauty of the growing world as seen through the eyes of a passionate gardener. At the heart of the narrative is the construction of her garden and her emotional progress as she develops it. Gardens, she realises only exist because somebody gardens them, and her time on earth is limited:

'As I grow older, the wild roses press against the outside of the yew hedges; the long grass whispers to me. A garden is a process, not a product' (Swift, 2008, p. 332).

She connects to her reader by placing her descriptions of her garden in the present tense, even though we learn that she started working on it in 1988. We are drawn into her sense of wonder as she addresses us directly:

'Don't blink. Beneath the wall the bearded irises are in bloom, the tall uppermost petals so gauzy, so delicate, that each bloom, once opened, lasts hardly longer than a day. Look, you can almost see through them' (Swift, 2008, p. 168).

This is a clever strategy and is probably one of the reasons why so many people, including myself, love this book. Her prose is intoxicating and her use of detailed descriptions and sense of timelessness do indeed create for me a similar response to reading an illuminated manuscript.

As a critical reader, although I enjoy the way she writes about irises, or roses, or lavender I am aware that her account has airbrushed out much of her life. We only learn via a few sentences that she took on work for the National Trust and David Austin Roses, that she became ill with ME; that she possibly is bi-polar and certainly an obsessive:

'He (her husband) understood, and continues to understand why I can't bear to come in until long after dark, why I spend all my money and then borrow more, why I am always exhausted, always late for everything, never want to go on holiday' (Swift, 2008, p. 332).

In my Book of Hours I want to shine more light onto the complicated areas of human experience. I am aware that my relationship with the natural world is not straightforward. I love being in a stone cottage, and writing about landscape, but I live in a city. I am far too used to the trappings of urban living, coffee shops, fast internet, circle of friends, to give these up and live in a remote location. I can recognise some wildflowers and birds but I do not have the deep knowledge of a nature writer such as Stephen Moss:

'On either side of the path, I hear the echoing song of eight different species of warbler. Chiffchaffs constantly call out their name...' (Moss, 2017, p. 265).

Eight species of warblers! I am aware when I am in the countryside how uninformed I am. I want to explore the tension between appreciating landscape and not knowing how to interpret it. In my poems such as *Aubade, Sheltering From the Rain in a Country Church,* and *Can't Sleep* (English, 2018), my narrator is displaced, dislocated and alone. For a city dweller the British countryside can be disturbing. Cottages are dark and dingy and cold. A day of rain can make walking impossible and more rain can interrupt driving. Roads get blocked by fallen trees, strayed cattle and slurries of mud. And the wifi is slow. Our countryside is not benign. According to the Health and Safety Executive 74 people were killed by cows between 2001-15 (Health and Safety Executive, 2015).

I have created the project on the premise that many viewers of *The Book of Hours* will be city dwellers like myself and because it is an transnational project many of the viewers will not be British. It is a common mistake for visitors to look at a map of the UK and think that one can visit London, Bath, Edinburgh, Cambridge and Oxford in two days because they seem so close together in terms of distance. I want to explore the reality of modern Britain and how our countryside is at odds with our urban lifestyle. In *Night Walk* (English, 2018, p. 30) my narrator is confused by the unexpected darkness of a country lane at night, and *Things I Found in the Hedge* (English, 2018, p. 65) include a used tampon and a Kit Kat wrapper.

Inspired by *The Morville Hours* I also want to bring my readers into the writing and create a sense of contemplation by using specific descriptions, direct speech and the present tense:

'The rain has stopped. I like the feel of empty quiet. I have too often chosen this instead of company. I wonder how much I have missed? I go outside and goldfinches skim across a wildflower meadow of blue campanulas and purple knapweed' (English, 2018, p. 40).

I am, however, writing poetry for *The Book of Hours*, not prose. Poetry about landscape has a long history in the UK and many poets both classic and modern have turned to their immediate locality for inspiration.

In my research for this project I revisited many poets from Wordsworth to Alice Oswald, and I have noted how Edward Thomas leaves his poems on a melancholy note,

how Ted Hughes turns to the Anglo-Saxon for impact and is not afraid to tackle the blood and guts of the countryside. How R. S. Thomas writes with care about rural characters and how Philip Larkin reminds us of the constant interruption of the modern world. My *Sheltering from the Rain in a Country Church* (English, 2018, p. 40) is a creative response to his poem *Church Going.* Alice Oswald gives us the multiplicity of voices, historic and imagined, contained in landscape, and her keen eye takes in the details of plants and trees. Paul Farley writes without sentimentality about the past and uses humour to draw us into his poems. Other poets whose work I found useful include; Basil Bunting, Michael Horovitz, Peter Riley and Pauline Stainer.

Poetry about landscape has become the place for an experimental approach. Poets such as Basil Bunting used dialect words and words from older vocabularies, such as Norse, to describe the subtleties of the countryside. Harriet Tarlo, in her introduction to *The Ground Aslant*, says

'Language is the form in which landscape can come alive' (Tarlo, 2011, p. 10).

She is one of a group of contemporary poets who produce what she calls, 'Radical landscape poetry' and although the poets in her edited anthology write about different locations she sees them as having similar aims:

'There is a recognition that this process of shift and adaption occurs in a world in which natural and cultural, wild and urban or industrial elements exist in all those places where we exist.' (Tarlo, 2011, p. 12)

I certainly feel close to this statement. I am aware that my urban trappings come with me wherever I go. I cannot escape my need to find petrol or the sounds of the transatlantic planes in the sky above me, or my worry about burglars if I leave the windows open.

The poets in *The Ground Aslant* write about the experience of being in landscape, often walking through it, witnessing what they see and feel, and it can read like field notes, intense, fragmented and breathless. The poets I was most drawn to in this collection were Zoe Sloulding, Helen Macdonald, Harriet Tarlo and Carol Watts, who writes about mid Wales. They are also all women. How can women write about

landscape without drifting into a pagan/goddess/ancient religion narrative? One way is through close observation. Here are the opening lines from Zoe Skoulding's 'In the forest where they fell':

'Everything's here at once, the green relieved

by streaks and veins of lighter tints and black. Purplish

glaucous berries. Time spirals out of seed/pushed inside its grave:' (Tarlo, 2011, p. 130).

I like that she doesn't tell us what the berries are (remember those eight types of warblers?); maybe she doesn't know. We experience the scene as she experiences it.

These poets also stretch language and form. Carol Watt's 'Zeta Landscape' poetry cycle has little punctuation and uses spaces in the sentences to suggest a pause for breath. Harriet Tarlo places words and phrases all over the page to suggest the way the eye travels across a scene and where our attention lands. Helen Macdonald uses dialect and archaic words to give a vocabulary to actions and things that are not modern, 'spreketh', ' cuttle' 'falln.'

I certainly have been encouraged by this approach to be more experimental and to play more with form and language. In 'Night Walk' and 'Can't Sleep' (English, 2018) I have broken up the sentences to replicate the train of thought and the interaction with the immediate environment. Both poems are set in darkness and I have tried to explore the dislocating experience of realising that 'dark' in the countryside can mean that there is no light at all. For a habitual city dweller this can be terrifying.

'Stop. Remember something about long it takes for eyes to adjust.
Close my eyes. Count to twenty…sixty.

My other senses jolt.
I can smell the hedge. Greeny wet, and the grass, fresh sweeter.
A small rustle. A field mouse? Shrew?' (English, 2018, p. 30).

As a spoken word poet I am also concerned about the sound of words. The work of Basil Bunting was useful here. Bunting made up words, used forgotten words, created words

to convey his emotional connection to landscape. There are a few spoken word poets in the UK who use this experimental approach to language and Hannah Silva is the most noted (Silva, 2013). Her performances rely on the control of her voice and her movements to convey meaning. Her 2015 performance *Schlock* uses British Sign Language and she remarks in her blog how she had to focus on her body for this show:

> 'Where my spoken language might skip details of character, place and attitude, this is an intrinsic part of sign language. The materiality of the body and face took the role that in my work is usually played by the materiality of the voice' (Silva, 2015).

I am aware that my viewer will experience the poetry in *The Book of Hours* through sound rather than through gestures or body movements. I have been told that I am a 'good reader' of my work. I use pauses and emphasis of certain words to bring out the meaning and emotions. I hope that my viewer can hear the sadness of the mother whose grown up daughter has not stayed long enough in 'River Girl':

> 'When she's gone I wash the plates. Do the laundry.
> Her dress is on the floor. Crumpled in a corner.
> A thrush on the steps breaks open a snail' (English, 2018, p. 33).

To discover more about the sound of words, I investigated the work of spoken word poets, Joelle Taylor, Salena Godden and Malaika Kedgode, both the written and filmed versions of their poetry. From Joelle I learned how to be more confident to write in a voice that was not my own but without appropriation, as from the point of view of a refugee in my poem *Numbers* and a mother in war-torn Syria in *The Last Days* (English, 2018). From Salena I learned how to tell it straight and to not hold back from detail, and from Malaika how to write about the personal in a lyrical way and utilise the beauty of a soft voice.

Although I enjoyed the experimental approach of *The Ground Aslant* and the notion that poems can benefit from being read and read again, even when I read some of them aloud I felt I was no closer to understanding them. I do not want to put off my viewers by being obscure. So I have made the decision not to go fully down the experimental path for *The Book of Hours*. I may tease my audiences with word and sound play but I want them to find

something they can relate to in each poem and want to revisit it. In the next section I will examine the changing nature of the audiences for spoken word poetry.

The Changing Audience for Spoken Word poetry.

The audience for spoken word is larger (in terms of numbers), more diverse, and possibly less poetically aware than the audience for the radical landscape poets. (Bearder, 2019, p. 14) When I first started performing poetry back in the mid nineties most spoken word was dismissed by the page poet gatekeepers as irrelevant. In an essay published online, poet Kwame Dawes describes this attitude towards what he calls 'street poetry': 'At the heart of this relegation is an emphasis on its 'otherness', its peripheral position in relation to the mainstream' (Dawes, 1996, p. 18).

Performance poetry was seen as the noisy, scruffy little sister of the great big brother of 'proper poetry'. It was seen as artless, unstructured, too emotional and messy, and this attitude still persists (Watts, 2018) The reaction to this by the spoken word community was to say 'So what?' and the scene developed its own heroes and champions who were not on the lists of Carcanet, Faber and Bloodaxe. Katie Ailes describes how irrelevant the whole issue of publication was for many performance poets:

'This singular focus on "Are you published?" is inherently insulting to performance poets for whom print publication is beside the point of their creative practice' (Ailes, 2015).

There are some key players from those early days, such as Francesca Beard, who have received accolades and awards but who are still not in print (Beard, 2012). This lack of printed material led the spoken word poets to be more creative with how they distributed their work. The live performance was the bedrock of this type of poetry but spoken word poets recorded themselves and sold CDs, filmed themselves and put the clips on YouTube and on their websites. Their work could now be accessed outside of the live performance and by anybody who wanted to access it. It could be argued that the rise of interest in spoken word is solely down to YouTube sharing (Bel, 2016). Current 'stars' of the spoken word scene, such

as Kate Tempest, Hollie McNish, Buddy Wakefield and Shane Koyczen did not invent this phenomenon but they have benefitted from it. The current explosion of spoken word is largely a result of this democratisation of reproduction and distribution.

The situation is now more complex. Indie publishers started to publish spoken word poets, such as Burning Eye Books whose first publication was in 2012 (Birnie, 2012). There was a hunger by people who had witnessed spoken word poetry, either as a live performance or as a YouTube clip, to read it. The availability of spoken word poetry in print form has been a game-changer, certainly in the UK. Major publishers have also woken up to the presence of new audiences. Donald Futers, Commissioning Editor at Penguin Press states;

> 'There's a strong case for our finding ourselves right now in a golden age for poetry. creative writing programmes, an abundance of new publications, the ever-growing popularity of spoken word and performance poetry' (Futers, 2017).

When spoken word appeared in printed form the quality of the writing and the craft was made more visible. A live performance can seem artless: the poet talks and we listen, we become involved in the performance and we do not notice how the poet has used repetition, or alliteration, or metaphor or many of the devices that we ascribe to excellent poetry. In print the 'artlessness' of spoken word poetry can be challenged. It is evident how the poet has used words in a deliberate and crafted fashion even if they do not have a traditional poetic background.

There is not the space here to investigate how this new accessibility of printed spoken word is changing the UK poetry scene, but the work of Kate Tempest is now discussed on BBC Radio Four and in newspapers such as The Guardian and The Telegraph, and three spoken poets were shortlisted for the 2017 Ted Hughes award which favours 'excellence' in poetry and 'outstanding' contributions to 'cultural life': Salena Godden, Jay Barnard and Hollie McNish (The Poetry Society, 2009). The 2017 winner was Hollie McNish with *Nobody Told Me,* a collection of spoken word pieces and reflections on being a new mother. The 2012, 2017 and 2018 winners, Kate Tempest, Jay Bernard and Raymond Antrobus, have strong spoken word connections. Previous winners of this award have included established published poets such as Alice Osward, Lavinia Greenlaw and the former Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion, so spoken word poetry has now truly grown up.

However, this growth of printed spoken word and its phenomenal popularity has received criticism. Now that spoken word is available in a printed form it can be critiqued more readily by those more used to reading poetry. The argument whether spoken word is poetry is similar to the one levelled at songwriters, such as Bob Dylan, who have received awards for their writing. (Orr, 2017)**.**

David Orr writing in The New York Times says that, 'poets have often benefited from the blurred edge of their discipline' (Orr, 2017). Following from this argument, if a song lyric can be a poem, why can't a piece of spoken word be considered as poetry?

Rebecca Watts' inflammatory 2018 article in *Poetry Review* reveals the disdain that some members of the poetic community still have towards the spoken word community. She claims that the popularity of spoken word poetry is not a measure of its worth and its followers can be likened to Trump supporters:

'Like the new president, the new poets are products of a cult of personality, which demands from its heroes only that they be 'honest' and 'accessible', where honesty is defined as the constant expression of what one feels, and accessibility means the complete rejection of complexity, subtlety, eloquence and the aspiration to do anything well.' (Watts, 2018)

According to Ms Watts, Hollie McNish does not warrant applause and her writing can barely be called 'poetry':

'her usual style of garbled literal statements with the odd approximate rhyme thrown in' (Watts, 2018).

She also believes that editors such as Don Paterson from Carcanet, and reviewers who give space to the 'new poets' in the broadsheets only do so out of fear:

'The middle-aged, middle-class reviewing sector is terrified of being seen to disparage the output of young, self-styled 'working-class' artists' (Watts, 2018).

These are incendiary statements and the spoken word community roared back with complaint. (Bearder, 2019, p. 21)Why did Ms Watts focus her critique on young female poets? Why didn't she examine a wider cohort of talent? Why didn't she even try to understand the differences in craft between a poem written for the page and one written for performance?

Peter Bearder, a spoken word poet and theorist, has, since the publication of the Watts article, been keen to explore a more positive critique of the craft of spoken word and to start to define benchmarks of excellence both in performance and writing. His collection of essays establishes the spoken word poet as an innovator with language and form. (Bearder, 2019)

Spoken word poets can now develop their craft further and see the wider possibilities of combining words with moving image. Spoken word poets, due to their previous status as poetic outsiders, have always been innovators. They championed the quality of live readings and audiences now complain about the unwillingness of some 'famous' page poets to engage with them at live events. Spoken word poets have learned to adapt their work to print, to question their use of language and to find out what layout on the page best suits, and this has been a huge learning curve, helped by editors of small publishers. What I hope to do with *The Book of Hours* is to show how spoken word poetry can adapt further and flourish in poetry film form. A 'film' can be more than a visual recording of me performing a poem, just as a 'reading' is more than me reading words from a book.

In the next chapter I will trace my collaborations with the filmmakers as I attempt to find a suitable form for a lyrical spoken word poetry film.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF *THE BOOK OF HOURS* AND THE COLLABORATIVE EXPERIENCE.

In this chapter I discuss the creative impulses behind the project and the collaborative experience with the filmmakers. Not all poetry film creation is collaborative and indeed many poetry films are created by the poets themselves (Cameron & Dewbery, 2017), but for *The Book of Hours* I wanted to work with those who were already skilled in the moving image. The early experience of collaboration laid down some useful insights into the further development of *The Book of Hours* and the nature of the poetry I wanted to write for it. It was in these early collaborations that I began to realise that my usual style of poetry would have to be significantly altered to adapt to the poetry film form. I explore some of the later collaborations and investigate the challenges and discoveries of working with practitioners whose artistic medium is the moving image. I evaluate the differing approaches by the filmmakers, and I reflect on my experiences of creating lyrical spoken word poetry films.

In August 2013 I visited the Dunbar Filmpoem festival organized by Alastair Cook and Marc Neys. Inspired by the festival I created a poetry film, *The Perseids*, written in response to a sound track made by Marc. Whilst working on this film I developed the idea of creating a 'poetic sequence' of poetry films using spoken word poetry. How could I integrate the immediacy of spoken word with the contemplative nature of poetry films? I already had a long-term fascination with illuminated manuscripts and I wanted to create poetry films which contained the intense visual and textual experience of the medieval Books of Hours. This potential for poetry film to be a 'moving illuminated manuscript' was noted by Canadian poet Gerard Wozek in describing his artistic collaboration with the film maker Mary Russell (Russell & Wozek, 2016).

Through my research into the poetry film form I gained an understanding of what sort of films I wanted *The Book of Hours* to contain. I wanted poetry films that were thought-provoking, unexpected and visually stunning. I attended a poetry filmmaking workshop run by Marc Neys for *Liberated Words* 2014 (English & Tremlett, 2014). We were encouraged to provide words for a variety of short films with the instruction to not let the images 'illustrate the poem' (English & Tremlett, 2014). He showed us a selection of acclaimed poetry films so we could understand this concept. We discussed how the words complemented the images

and how the film gave another layer of meaning to the words. It was my first lesson in collaborative poetry filmmaking. The poetry film we created was grainy and unedited but it taught me how unexpected juxtapositions can provide a coherent result. It was in this workshop that I learned some of the most fundamental aspects of poetry within a poetry film; the poetry should be part of the film, not dominate it, not be obscured by it.

Marc expressed a strong interest in creating material for *The Book of Hours*. Marc Neys is a Belgium based poetry film creator (Neys, 2013). He uses texts written by poets, both in English and his native language, Flemish. Since 2013 he has immersed himself in the poetry film experience and is regarded as one of the leading practitioners in this field. He is passionately interested in collaboration and until 2015 ran *The Poetry Storehouse*, an online site for poets and film makers to share work. He describes himself as a 'videopoet and sound-scapes addict' (Neys, 2013) and has a huge personal archive of 'sound-scapes'; not music exactly but tracks of collected and curated sounds. His presence would give *The Book of Hours* an established and well regarded collaborator as its first film-maker.

We started working in November 2014. My instructions to him were simple:

'The principle behind *The Book of Hours* is that when the user accesses the site they will be 'given' a poetry film to represent the month and time of day. The tone will generally be meditative/thoughtful/disturbing. I don't just want 'nice' pictures and poems' (English, 2015).

We decided to adopt the method we used for *The Perseids*; he would send me a selection of sound-scapes and I would create words for them. He would then create visual material for the combined words and sounds. He sent me a selection of sound-scapes in December 2014. When I listened to them I realised that he had picked up on the word disturbing, rather than meditative or thoughtful. Many of the tracks were cacophonic, discordant and contained what sounded like metal grating, crunching noises or pots and pans falling out of a cupboard. I felt a sense of panic. How could I write poetry inspired by these noises?

In their co-authored article, 'Surface Tensions: Framing the Flow of a Poetry-Film Collaboration' (Gross & Mason, 2013) poet Philip Gross and filmmaker Wyn Mason explore

the challenges and tensions of the collaborative experience. Inspired by their statement, 'opting to tread familiar paths of practice revealed an inner resistance to full collaboration' (Gross & Mason, 2013, p. 4), I decided to address my 'inner resistance' and start with the tracks I found most difficult to interpret. I produced five poems: *Weird Weather, My Mother's Garden May Queen, Remember* and *Postcards from my Future Self*. Before I recorded the poems I wanted critical feedback and I submitted them to the PhD forum in Feb 2015 led by poet and critic Tim Clare (Clare, 2010). The observations were that I should be more specific in the use of images; the title of the poem should be more arresting, and that events and sequences in the poems should contain no ambiguity (Clare, March 2015). By March 2015 I had versions that I felt were stronger and more vivid. I recorded these and submitted them to Marc. We had earlier agreed that these poems would contain my voice speaking them rather than the text. I wanted the first poems for *The Book of Hours* to reflect my strengths as a reader of my own work.

In an interview with Dave Bonta for Movingpoems.com, Marc Neys describes his attitude towards the creation of poetry films. He doesn't use storyboards or a pre-conceived 'script'; his approach is intuitive and immersive. For him the process of creation is experimental and involves editing and re-editing (Bonta, 2014).

'So, it's like a writer, you wrote a sentence, and you're fairly happy with it but you feel like, what if I change this word...I try to do the same when I'm shooting' (Bonta, 2014).

He describes how he treats a poetry film, 'like writing another poem next to the existing poem, but it's like a poem written in images' (Bonta, 2014).

It's interesting that he sees his craft as poetry rather than narrative, which places him alongside the avant garde film makers such as Dulac and Vertov. He says he 'likes to jump into an idea and follow it through' (Bonta, 2014).

With this first collaboration I wanted to learn something about how the mind of a filmmaker works and how he would respond to my interpretation of his sound-scapes. Just as I had trusted that I could indeed write poetry inspired by strange noises, I trusted that he had the expertise and vision to create engaging moving images to exist alongside the words, and

the soundtrack of my voice. Like many writers I would describe myself as a control freak, so I was again battling with my 'inner resistance'; my desire to take over and be 'director'.

I received the first versions on 24 April 2015. Marc's comments to me in an e-mail were 'I'll let these rest for a few weeks now. Final tweaking is still possible after that, but the main concept will stay the same for all of them. Hope you can find yourself in these' (Neys, 2015). This was a strong message that he felt confident with the results. On a first viewing I wanted to keep an open mind. I had no idea what type of images he would use or how he would imagine the poems to be visualised.

I found the results unexpected. I felt he had indeed followed my desire to create 'meditative/thoughtful/disturbing' poetry films. *Weird Weather* is probably the most challenging. The split-screen film of a young blind man stumbling across an Italianate landscape is contrasted with a speeded up supermarket dash. This, combined with the sound-scape of one note rising in crescendo against a background of white noise, creates a feeling of unease.

The poem itself is an anxious one. An observation of an unseasonably warm spring and a puddle full of dying tadpoles connects with a dream about climate catastrophe.

'I dreamt that the Ice Age was coming.
Snow fields reached to the edge of the city.'
In the poem the narrator has two dream children they cannot 'save'.

'My daughter was a fish girl
with pink gills like feathered seaweed.
I wrapped her in cellophane and put her in my pocket.
But I couldn't carry water in my pocket.

My son was four years old and was with his father.
The phones were down so I couldn't reach them.
I hoped his dad had wrapped him in an army blanket.
I hoped his dad had listened to the warnings' (English, 2018, p. 22).

It's not an easy poem to listen to and it is not an easy film to watch. When I shared this film at Christine Wilks' 'Creative Writing and Digital Media' undergraduate class at Bath Spa University the feedback was 'It gave me a headache' and 'there is too much going on' (Wilks, 2015). This is no fault of Marc's; I gave him a poem that was very 'busy'.

In *May Queen* and *My Mother's Garden* the poems are simpler and more lyrical. There is plenty of space within the words for the visuals to carry them to another layer of meaning. I found these interpretations surprising and engaging. In *May Queen* the young girl strides across wet rocks in a repeated sequence with echoes of Maya Deren's *At Land*. The sound track of water is complemented by the visuals of a river in torrent over huge rocks. There is plenty of water in poetry films, to the extent that it is almost a cliché, but Marc's attraction to the darker places in life gives this poetry film an edge. The May Queen in my poem is not a young girl in a pretty dress, she is careless, deranged and also vulnerable:

'...your pissy smell

and the mud splashed up your thighs

and your hair all anyhow' (English, 2018, p. 26).

She represents the burgeoning energy of Spring but also its chaos. I feel that Marc has interpreted this eloquently.

In *My Mother's Garden* the images create tension and mystery. Is the young woman the younger self of the older woman or the narrator? There is no young woman mentioned in the poem. The colour of the film, sepia, mirrors the words, 'the last flowers on the climbing rose are brown' and 'my mother's hands with skin like tea stained silk' (English, 2018, p. 26). The film is elegiac and meditative and the bell-like sound track reminds us of the passage of time.

The original Books of Hours were inspirations for spiritual practice but also calendars for the Christian year. It seemed appropriate that the poetry in this Book of Hours was going to contain references to memory and time. I envisaged that the time of day and month would trigger memories and the connections between the past and the present would be subjects for reflection. This was the case in *Remember;* a memory of being with my child on an October afternoon contrasts with my realisation that he will not remember this because he was too young. This poem explores a memory not connected to anything but the memory of the event

itself, and it cannot be shared with the person who also experienced it, because they don't remember it (English, 2018, p. 54). Marc's interpretation doesn't feature the park, child or 'orange trews' in the poem but takes us into the lake of memory. Filmed underwater it is life 'under the surface'. Only at the end of the film do we rise out of the water and see the grass on the river bank. Again his additions of elements that are not in the poem create mystery, in this case a boat and a quick glimpse of a hand. The sound track is quiet and sombre.

The last poem in this collaboration had, for me, the hardest sound track to decipher: clangs, clashes and a metallic throb. I was pulled out my comfort zone and into a path that was not 'familiar'. Something in this poem, I decided, had to convey a shock, a revelation. What could be a shocking thing to receive? The idea of a message from a future self came to mind. As *The Book of Hours* reflects on the passage of time, why not subvert this order and play around with our linear expectations of time? It would also be more shocking if the 'message' didn't make any sense or we couldn't properly understand it. Postcards, now an almost redundant form of communication, offer an example of a short, often imperfect narrative. This has been explored in poetry before in Craig Raine's *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home* (Oxford 1979). The sound-track to me also sounded comic, like a sound track in a cartoon. In my poem the 'message' is incomplete and also ridiculous:

'Don't buy that shiny blue dress. It makes you look fat.
I found out later'
but there is also a hint that the postcard comes from a future dystopia.
'Don't vote Labour. Because of the war
which you don't know about yet' (English, 2018, p. 61).

Marc has used retro images from found family films; a girl's birthday party and other clips of children . These images are innocent and charming but he has spliced and re-mixed them. The little girl blows out her birthday cake candles again and again. Her mother, or aunt, glugs a glass of wine again. A tortoise creeps across the screen. The sound track bangs and clashes and I remind the listener, 'It gets worse. I have to tell you this.' It is a splendid piece of black comedy and reveals Marc's skill as a curator of images. This poetry film was selected for *Visible Verse* (Visible Verse Festival , 2015) one of the leading poetry film festivals for North America.

What I learned from this collaboration with Marc Neys was the following: I need to create poetry that contains more 'space' for the images to form a relationship with the words and I must trust the visual expertise of my film maker and give them the artistic 'space' to create an interpretation which contains their vision as well as mine.

This concept of 'space' in poetry is described by Philip Gross:
'White space is a powerful tool. Few words, however well chosen, work as hard as it does. And like the words well-weighted in a poem, there are layers and nuances in that space that's not a word' (Gross, Spring 2018).

Although I use plenty of pauses and 'space' in the oral delivery of my poems I had not fully understood the significance of this until I started to create poetry films.

My second collaborator was Helen Dewbery. I first met Helen at the *Liberated Words* screening in 2013 (English & Tremlett, 2014). She is a photographer, an associate member of the Royal Photographic Society, and is currently developing the poetry film genre in collaboration with poet Chaucer Cameron (Cameron & Dewbery, 2017). Helen also attended the Marc Neys workshop in 2014, where she too expressed an interest in producing work for *The Book of Hours*. In April 2015 I attended the screening of her project with poet Chaucer Cameron '*Nothing in The Garden'* (Dewberry, 2014). This was a poetry film sequence exploring a fractured mother/daughter relationship, 'maternal ambivalence, loss and trauma rendered through earthquakes, flooding and nature' (Dewberry, 2014). I was impressed by Helen's use of colour and her slow takes in the film. One section contained a slow close up of a child's dress on a washing line: 'There is nothing in this garden and the hem has come unravelled.' (Dewberry, 2014) The whole experience was emotional and moving.

In my initial conversation with Helen about *The Book of Hours* I realised that this collaboration would be different from the one with Marc. She wanted more discussion and feedback than Marc as she felt she was still learning about the possibilities of the genre. We analysed the concept of *The Book of Hours*, and its intention to create some sort of reflective experience in the viewer. What sorts of places does one have reflective moments in contemporary life, we asked, and strangely we both came up with the same location, a motorway service station! We both felt that there was artistic possibility in the anonymous quality of a service station and its existence as a place 'out of time'; a place where time can get lost.

We decided to use the Gordano services outside Bristol as the backdrop for the films. This time we would start with the images. Helen would send me film clips or static images and I would construct the poems out of these.

We tackled each film individually so we could have plenty of time for reflection and to make changes if necessary. As with Marc I wanted to deal first with the aspects I found most difficult, and in this case it would be the interpretation of the visual. Helen's initial submission was a collection of static images of ordinary people taken at the service station. People going to work. Going on holiday. Coming back from holiday. I was intrigued. Who were they and why were they at Gordano? I couldn't find a common theme to connect them. I went back to the structure of the original Books of Hours. One of the final sequences is the Litany of Saints, which in the Catholic Church is read during the Easter vigil. It calls on a long list of saints and martyrs, who represent a whole variety of human problems and difficulties, to intercede with the faithful. It seemed that I could connect this idea with the images of humanity at Gordano. Whether we have faith or not we still experience problems and challenges. I wanted to place the words of the actual prayer next to the experience of secular life.

'From a sudden and unprovided death, O Lord, deliver us.
From tailbacks, and junction closures, O Lord, deliver us.
From lightning and tempest, O Lord, deliver us.
From supermarket queues and lack of small change, O Lord, deliver us.' (English, 2018, p. 18)

Helen's film juxtaposes the words of the poem with the images. This is a text-based poetry film. We wanted it to be read as there is a sense of wrong-footing the reader here for at first the poem seems serious. It is only when we read 'St Stephen, the patron saint of bricklayers' that we wonder if we are responding correctly.

The final result is quietly comic. Helen's skill has been placing the words next to the images. The line 'Mary Magdalene, who knew about passion, pray for us to love wiser' is placed next to a picture of a jaunty middle aged man in motorbike leathers. He smiles at the viewer with a cunning grin. Helen showed this film at the Swindon poetry festival, (Swindon

Poetry Festival, 2015) and she witnessed the audience beginning to smile as they realised that the poem is a parody. Our intention for the film to be revealed as comic was successful. It did not need any further edits.

The second film *Do Nothing* features slow sequences of a woman sitting at a window. For me, Helen's films are strongest when she uses these sequences rather than the 'quick cut' technique often used by Marc Neys. The woman sits with her back to us and looks out of a window at an uninspiring landscape of urban dullness. The slow takes are interposed with a few sudden flashes which represent the thought processes of the woman.

> 'Under the covers.
> I'm thinking of you. I'm not fifty four.
> I'm seventeen and my tummy's flat.
> But it's not you. It's my first love.
> I stroked his hand and he pulled my panties down.
> We did it on the floor. In the car. Behind the shed.
> In the garden. On the floor.
> But seventeen means too much crying' (English, 2018, p. 12).

Helen does not 'illustrate' any of this in a literal way; the 'flash' mentioned above that accompanies these words contains an image of a field of daises, and what looks like an office room. It is the words of the poem which sing out here, rather than the intricacy of the visuals. This seems an effective way to create a spoken word poetry film. We are drawn into the words of the woman, and are not seduced by her appearance. Helen has certainly understood the meaning of the poem; what we think about on the inside isn't what is visible on the surface.

Helen's third film was a sequence of a car journey at night. I used this to write *Drive Through the Night*, which became a last message to my dying brother, telling him not to be afraid, even if he believed there was no afterlife. It was a difficult poem to write; what message of comfort could I give to somebody who I remembered as not brave? The poem uses a memory my brother told me in the last days of his life. We do not know what is beyond death. All we can do is face it with our eyes open.

'Will you find a mountain top with a silver palace?

An orchard of pink blossom and a unicorn?

A warehouse of rare and dusty books? I think you'd like that.

Or our front room back in Brickwall Lane

with you, not scared, but wide wide awake,

watching the shadows in case they move' (English, 2018, p. 42).

Helen's film uses the repeating sequence of the car at night and a fleeting image of a wolf.

What I learned during my collaboration with Helen was how to be bolder in commenting on the visual content of the films. We discussed what sections needed to be expanded and what needed to be cut: for example, we decided to keep the image of the wolf in *Drive Through the Night* as he seems to represent both the uneasiness about facing death, but also a sort of spirit guide to the after world.

As a poet I am passionately concerned that *The Book of Hours* contains writing of a high literary standard which can be critiqued as 'poetry'. My spoken word poetry tends to be narrative, often improvised, and although it contains lyrical writing the 'story' predominates. The poetry for *The Book of Hours* conveys a mood, thought or emotion. Stories began to appear, as it seems that I cannot leave story behind, but they are more within the body of the work rather than the individual poem. My 'chatty' spoken word voice still needed to be pared down even more. What I learned in these early collaborations was that I needed to take the poem to a place 'outside' of itself where it can blend more effectively with the sound and the images. I took these discoveries into the subsequent collaborations with the other film-makers.

In previous creative projects, such as *Flash* and *Count Me In* I shared news and information on social media in the early stages to encourage more people to be involved. I wanted the same experience for *The Book of Hours*. I shared the emerging project through various Facebook groups, forums and through Movingpoems.com. The website became active in September 2015. There was a flurry of interest following this and twelve new film-makers expressed interest in collaborating.

There is not space within this paper to discuss in detail my experiences with all my collaborators but I will focus on some aspects of the collaborative experience which I believe have stretched me further as a poet and a co-creator of poetry films. I will also investigate some of the difficulties and challenges of working with visual practitioners and how, if at all, we have managed to find an artistic compromise which we both find satisfactory.

One of the film makers who responded to the project in September 2015 was Eduardo Yague (Yague, 2017). He is Spanish and like many poetry filmmakers had a complex route into filmmaking. He studied Drama and has had a career as an actor, a teacher of drama and a writer. He started making poetry films in 2012. He currently lives in Stockholm. I wanted *The Book of Hours* to be a transnational project so I was keen to find filmmakers whose first language was not English. His approach to poetry film creation is very different to the intuitive, immersive approach favoured by Marc Neys. He storyboards the films, creates narratives and uses actors and locations, much like a traditional concept of 'film':

> 'I am interested in exploring the limits of poetic and cinematographic languages. I love working with the actors in my videos, leaving them exposed and giving pure emotions, I love suggested stories with an open reading, all with the base of touching and intense poems' (Yague, 2017).

I was familiar with his work through Moving poems.com. In October 2015 I send him *High Summer.* I wasn't sure what he would make of this poem written during a hot day in August and which conveys a particularly British summer:

> 'Full bosomed and bellied, heavy and slow.
> A bus shelter covered in ivy
> by a crossroads where the road dips
> to a brown sludge of stream.
> The sticky smell of meadowsweet.
> Honeysuckle hair and eyes like brown moths.' (English, 2018, p. 44)

He said he would 'deeply study it' before he responded with ideas. He decided to have it translated into Spanish so he could fully understand it. In November the idea he suggested to me was this:

‘ I would like to make a contrast between the light of the words of the poem with that go from the field to the tough city where we will find a woman (or a man, I am not already sure), who is imagining the poem’. He also suggested that he would approach it like a ‘haiku’.

By December he had made the film. He had placed the words on the screen rather than having me speak them and we intended to add a voiceover later, either in Spanish or in English. In *High Summer* he has used a ‘story’ of a woman writing a poem about a British summer in a winter urban Spanish environment. His skill is in the placement of the words with the images. We read ‘honeysuckle hair’ and we look at an image of dead plants in a drain pipe. We have to re-evaluate our attitude towards the urban environment, wet and dreary and filmed in black and white, whilst we read words about heat, meadows and ditches. There is a mystery about the film: why is it a poem about summer in the middle of winter? When we first see the woman we are not sure who she is and why she is so deep in thought. We only realise that she is the writer towards the end when we see her in her kitchen, looking for inspiration and finding it in the figure of a cow fridge magnet. It’s a tender evocation of the act of creation and the power of imagination. We both decided that this film didn’t need a voiceover.

For our second collaboration it seemed fitting to try a Spanish language film. I also wanted to try using a poem that was more narrative as Eduardo was an excellent visual storyteller. I chose the poem *What is Love*? It’s a snapshot of a relationship between a man and woman who meet in romantic circumstances but, as their lives progress, they have to navigate more ordinary challenges:

‘What is love? I think it is a new house.
Piling up fast with stuff in every room.
How can she have so many dresses, shoes, cooking pots?
How can he have so many retro computer games?’ (English, 2018, p. 38)

By the time they are old ‘with icing sugar hair’ they no longer remember the circumstances of when they first met but they are still together. It’s a gentle poem and

unusually for me has no caustic note or cynicism! I felt that there was plenty in the poem for Eduardo to storyboard.

The poetry film he created, *Que es el amor* has become one of the most widely screened films in *The Book of Hours*. It was awarded 'Video poem of the week' on the online poetry film journal *Versograma*s (Montero, 2015), second prize in the Atticus Review competition (Atticus Review, 2019), and has been screened at many other festivals. What Eduardo has done is to find a story within the story of the poem. Instead of focusing on the simple boy meets girl narrative he places his film in the future.

'The contrast between the poem and the video is absolutely devastating, thus effective. A parallel history emerges in our minds: one of the protagonists of the poem, now an old man, alone in a big empty house, tries to spend time while remembering, in absolute solitude and sadness, when "they never felt alone"' (Montero, 2016).

Filmed in black in white and with a Spanish voiceover it has the power of a full-length drama and seems much longer than three and half minutes because it is so full of emotional impact. It conveys all the emptiness and longing of grief.

Dave Bonta comments further on Movingpoem.com,

'The geographic/linguistic distance and change in the expected sex of the narrator create additional resonances. And actor Steffan Carlson's silence is so eloquent as to supply almost a third voice to the mix. *Qué es el amor?* is a brilliant demonstration of how to use the narrative style of filmmaking to comment upon and transform a lyric poem' (Bonta, 2016).

Marie Craven as the judge of the *Atticus Review* videopoetry competition mentions why it was awarded a prize.

'Masterfully directed and profoundly moving, the film is a meditation on a near-universal experience as we approach end of life (Craven, 2018).

My experience of working with Eduardo was that collaboration is a shared space but it is also a space where individual talent can thrive and be celebrated. In his hands the poetry film has become more than the poem, it has enhanced and expanded it. I also learned that the final outcome, the final artwork, has to leave space for the audience's interpretation. I cannot control what you think the poetry film 'means' or how it should be interpreted.

Lee Miller, writing about the relationship between audience and artist, stresses this essential connection. 'We rely on each other to fill the gaps, to draw out the experience into a form that can be communicated' (Miller & Whalley, 2017, p. xv).

This was particularly true of my last collaboration with Eduardo, *Daisy Chain*. In the poem the daisies on a lawn lead to a reflection on the fragile beauty of youth, 'Too soon shrivelled. Too soon spoiled' (English, 2018, p. 32). Eduardo places the poem in a snowy landscape. The images are of deserted benches and people bundled up against the cold rather than 'teenage girls doing backflips'. It's a strange disconnect and lends a sense of deep unease. Is this a reflection on the transience of nature? The enigmatic woman at the end of the film smiles in a knowing way. She is no longer young but she is still beautiful. I love what Eduardo does with his poetry films; he presents them to us with our usual expectation of film, with characters, locations and story-boarded sequences. We respond to them looking for 'the story'. We create a narrative even if there isn't one.

It was after these early experiences that I began to formulate a method of working. As I sifted through offers to create films for *The Book of Hours* I realised that some potential collaborators did not want to engage fully with the aims of the project, or just wanted to make a film to add to their own body of work. I let these slip by. In my first connections with a filmmaker I tried to find more about their creative practice, their knowledge of the poetry film genre, and what they had already seen about *The Book of Hours.* Even if they had not made many films or only had vague knowledge of what a poetry film was I felt that a strong bond could be formed if they expressed enthusiasm about the project. I approached each collaborator individually and rather than giving them a list of requirements I tried to find a way of working that would suit us both. Did they want to chose from a selection of poems, or want to start with sound, or with images, or with an idea? This was a slow way of working as most communication was via e-mails or Messenger and it could take several months or even

years between initial contact and first draft of film. When we had the first draft of the film there were more questions. Did we like it? What about the sound? Did it need further editing?

The collaborators include many experienced filmmakers/poetry film creators. They have won awards, been screened at prestigious festivals and are internationally acclaimed. I have tried to respect their individual talents and experiences and to learn from their unique approaches. For example, Lori Ersolmaz created a version of *What is Love* as I wanted to have an English language version as well as a Spanish one. Her interpretation is a comment on the way we fill our lives with 'stuff'. Rather than being a wistful film about lost love and longing, it features refuse dumps in America and the discarded flotsam of life. Pamela Falkenberg and Jack Cochran's films reveal the stunning and unexpected beauty of rural America but also how hard it can be to emotionally connect to another country's landscape: 'It was not my country. I didn't know the names of the trees' (English, 2018, p. 29). Some of my collaborators kept process notes and these, as well as our written exchanges, have been useful in building my understanding of the creative decisions faced by film-makers when interpreting a poem. The concern for the visual quality was a dominant one.

> 'I wanted that swirling versus that poky/twiggy rigidity so the voice could flow over it. I also wanted those abrupt shocks of bristly clarity when the spinning stops and the prickliness is laid bare, only to diminish when the swirling fades back in' (Mullins, 2017).

There was interest in the possibilities of technology. Pamela Falkenberg was excited by the use of heat-sensitive imaging which created the curious dream-like sequences in *The Names of Trees.*

> 'We've chosen a camera, sent it out to be modified for infrared photography, and we have it in hand! We've started out by shooting some test photos, to learn the camera and the lens, and to find out how subjects and lighting look in infrared' (Falkenberg, 2017).

The soundtrack was also an area for deliberation. Marie Craven approached our second collaboration *Quiet Sounds* by creating the soundtrack first.

'I carefully built up the soundtrack piece by piece until I had a complete first draft. Then I looked for images that might add further to the audiovisual experience of the poem. The poem describes a moment of solitude, a hush when a woman becomes aware of the little sounds in her environment' (Craven, 2017).

These comments illustrated to me how much time and effort my collaborators were putting into these films, which in most cases, are not more than three minutes long. A poetry film is not merely a set of images to accompany words, it is a crafted visual and sound journey with the audience's experience very much in mind, what Marie Craven refers to as 'audiovisual' and what Tom Konyves called 'blended'.

What happens when the collaboration doesn't work or is problematic? As I mentioned earlier a few of the potential films were never made. Sometimes this was a creative disconnect and sometimes it was purely an issue of time. For some of collaborations, however, the solution was finally achieved through effort. Marie Craven and I exchanged many e-mails about the sound levels for *Quiet Sounds* as we didn't want the background noises to drown out the voice of the speaker. I wasn't keen on the music track on *Night Walk* so asked a Bristol-based DJ to create one, and the filmmaker and I were delighted with the outcome (English, 2015). An interesting collaboration happened between myself and Jutta Pryor, an Australian experimental film maker and visual artist. She describes her experience in *Conversations in the Book Trade*:

'We spoke about the contemplative nature of this collection of poetry films, focussing on the theme of reflection. I was flying a lot at that time and suggested that looking out at the world from the window of an airplane may be a suitable concept. Lucy liked the idea. I shared this with Bruno Gussoni, a sound artist/improviser with an extraordinary talent for playing the flute.' (Pryor, 2017)

What we had was an idea to start with images of clouds and a sound track. I wrote a poem responding to this, *Clouds from an Aeroplane.* As Jutta says, 'We were collaborating across continents and time zones, corresponding via 'Messenger''. It was a long collaboration and Jutta found that the repeated lines and tight structure of the poem fought

against her intuitive way of working. She explains how she tried to find a solution by looking at the original intention for the poem:

'To try and find words to express that borderline between sleep and waking, and there is a cyclic nature in that, moving between the recognised and the unfamiliar' (Pryor, 2017).

It is to her credit as an artist that she found her way through. She said she had to find 'her own visual language'. She only used some of the words of the poem the rest are suggested by the images or whispered. This seemed to me a remarkable step of freedom and has expanded my approach towards poetry film creation. Why indeed use all the words of the poem? I don't feel precious about my words; I am willing to let the words go for the success of the collaboration. I learnt much from Jutta about the bravery of moving forwards in a project when you don't know what the outcome will be and letting a collaboration find its own narrative.

Chris Goode, writing about creative practice in *The Creative Critic*, reminds us of the risk of collaboration but also the trust.

'I have a friend, a performer I collaborate with a lot, who likes to remind me in moments of crisis or distress or confusion within the process, Well, you invited it all in' And this is always true. We press play on the remote. We let in the risk' (Goude, 2018, p. 192).

This loosening of my ownership of the words of the poem led to a greater fluidity as it meant that my collaborators could add or remove words, or change the sequence. Lucia Sellers edited a longer version of *Kandahar* (English, 2018, p. 50), and I as a result I realised that the poetry film did indeed not need all of the details of who I was with and when, because the visuals were 'carrying' this information. She added single words such as 'inhale' and 'exhale' to convey the emotions of encountering an Afghani man with a Kalashnikov. She developed this further in *The Sundial* (English, 2018, p. 35)*, where the phrase 'Do not talk to me today' is repeated like a phrase of bird song. Sarah Tremlett wrote a verse for the winter *Solstice,* spoken by Helmi Stil, and Sarah also co-speaks some of the words. (English, 2015) The three voices combine towards the end in a choral crescendo. Jane Glennie has also written a verse and spoken the words on *Glitter* (English, 2018, p. 64)*.

Not all filmmakers feel comfortable about creating words, their language is visual, but I introduced this option as a possible way of collaborating. On Janet Lee's film *The Last Flowers* (English, 2015), she created the poem using words from three early poems from *The Book of Hours*: *Weird Weather*, *My Mother's Garden* and *Remember*. Her poetry film is in keeping with the general mood of *The Book of Hours* with themes of memory, longing and the passage of time so I included it in the final collection.

As the project progressed I made further decisions about its final outcome. I decided not to repeat any more poems. There are two versions of *What is Love* and two versions of *High Summer*. Early in the project I experimented with having different versions of the same poem as I was not confident I would be able to write 48 to make up the full collection, but the more poems I wrote the more I felt inspired to write. There are mini collections, stories and themes within the full collection and now there are more poems than there are poetry films to accompany them.

I also decided to keep my own voice as narrator. This decision was more complex than any concerns about the quality of delivery of the poems by other readers. My readers have added a multiplicity of voices with a range of ages, genders and nationalities but, and especially since the Rebecca Watts article appeared, I want to establish that I am a spoken word poet and my craft is in the writing and speaking of my work. Spoken word is not confined to the young, urban, and apparently artless. I am 62 years old and have over twenty years experience as a poet. I craft my work with care. I have spent hours crafting these poems, to choose appropriate words, to make them accessible without sacrificing content, to allow the sound of the words to ring through, to allow space for the images to interact with the language, and I have also spent hours thinking how they should be read. What words to emphasise. What pauses to create. I want people to hear the sadness in 'Go to sleep little boy. /Tonight there will be no gas attacks or bombs (English, 2018, p. 45) and the wonder in 'You, in your best gold and aubergine; silk and satin with a new tie of sunrise' (English, 2018, p. 10).

For me, the strengths of spoken word in poetry film are the choice of words and the way they are spoken. The physical presence of the poet is unnecessary. Spoken word poets do not always realise how good they are at the verbal delivery of their work. To them it is second nature. They have to connect to their audiences with their voice. To an audience, the

poet's voice has all the casual cadences of natural speech, so it can be overlooked. It is this entire aspect of spoken word poetry that Rebecca Watts chose to ignore. It is not just the words of Hollie McNish that need to be assessed; 'I am giving her milk, but not in a bottle,' it is her quiet fury that makes us pay attention to her poem about the challenges of breast feeding in public. In the film of this poem we may have images of Hollie's face, or the location or babies, but it is her voice that we respond to. (McNish, 2017)

I wonder if filmmakers of spoken word poetry have felt too much the need to 'show' the face of the poet, as if trying to replicate the live performance, rather than focusing on the quality of the delivery of the words? The 2018 Zebra Poetry Film Festival contained a separate screening of spoken word poetry films, *Fokus Spoken Word*. The programme notes describe a clear relationship between these films and music videos:

'In the music industry video clips have been an established medium for the transfer of onto the screen for more than 30 years. Spoken Word artists use this format as well in order to performatively (sic) present eloquent texts (Zandegiacomo Del Bel, 2018, p. 50).

In Germany there is a growing audience for these spoken word 'clips', and the ones I viewed at this screening did indeed have the energy and impact of a live performance, but most of the impact was through the sound of the words. In the *Disappear* collection it was the poetry films that didn't 'show' the poet that I found most engaging and in *Flow and Frame* I was drawn in by the quality of Gross's voice. There are many opportunities for exploring spoken word in poetry film and I hope that now festivals such as Zebra are creating separate spoken word screenings that this sub-genre will develop further. I would propose a collaborative process where both film-maker and poet are prepared to actively put aside their usual ways of working and find new ways of representing spoken word on screen. If you are going to put a poet in front of a camera at least make it visually engaging, such as Salena Godden's anarchic *Red* where she gets red paint chucked at her as she performs a poem about menstruation (Godden, 2016).

I only 'appear' once in *The Book of Hours* in Sarah Tremlett's summer *Solstice* (English, 2015). The poem is about a memory of being a twenty something running down a

beach but the film has lumpen me running across the screen. As in *Do Nothing* the tension here is about what we feel inside and what people see on the outside.

Spoken poets must move away from what Watts calls, 'the cult of the personality' and remember that their art is about craft, not appearance. They are not music stars, they don't need to sell their work by how they look on screen. The big players in spoken word, Shane Koyczen, Buddy Wakefield and Kate Tempest, are not cute or manufactured. Their power is in their ability to connect with people through their words and voices. Their physical presence can be developed for the live performances. I would suggest the development of a new sub-genre, the lyrical spoken word poetry film. In a lyrical spoken word poetry film, the poet's other skills, such as the use of language, and delivery of the words, can be enhanced. For the placement of spoken word in poetry film I would propose this: a lyrical spoken word poetry film does not contain the same poetry as a live performance since the type of poetry needs to be leaner, and more concise to give necessary space for the visual material; a lyrical spoken word poetry film can explore language as well as narrative content, but the quality of the language should be a high consideration; a lyrical spoken word poetry film can convey emotion as much as a live performance does but it may be conveyed in a more subtle way; a lyrical spoken word poetry film should give opportunities for the viewer to revisit it to find further detail and nuance.

There is much scope for spoken word poets to have more detailed and engaged conversations with collaborators on how to create spoken word poetry films which best combine aspects of poetry, sound and moving image.

CONCLUSION.

The aims of *The Book of Hours* were to create a themed collection of poetry films which combined spoken word poetry with moving image and to examine further the placement of spoken word poetry in poetry film; I wanted to explore contemplative writing using the medium of poetry film and gain insights about the nature of collaboration. I also wanted present this collection as a project which can be viewed online or on a smart-phone.

I approached the creation of a collection of poetry films as a poet approaches a collection of poetry. *The Book of Hours* contains overall themes, and a dialogue and interplay between the poetry films. The films 'talk' to each other, and elements are repeated, such as the sound of the bell in *My Mother's Garden* and *The Sundial* or the use of a grid in *Mr Sky*, *Stone Life* and *Numbers*. These are not random associations as the film makers viewed the existing films before they embarked on their own. This presentation of poetry films as a curated sequence has already led to further experimentations by other artists. Dave Bonta recognises the impact: '*The Book of Hours* is a hugely ambitious and important experiment in collaborative poetry filmmaking, raising the bar for other poets interested in moving beyond the page and the stage, and demonstrating the unique appeal of film series and video anthologies in a lyrical, non-narrative mode' (Bonta, 2018). Inspired by *The Book of Hours* his most recent projects, such as Winter Trees, have been series of poetry films (Craven, 2019).

I have examined how spoken word can be developed in the context of a poetry film and developed a model for a lyrical spoken word poetry film, one where the quality of the words, and the voice of the poet are given more consideration than in a usual presentation of poet reading a poem. In a lyrical poetry film the visuals and the words create a 'crafted visual and sound journey' and the voice of the poet plays an important role in the delivery of the poem. I have discovered that a poem written with the intention to be used in a poetry film has to create more space for the visuals and the sound track to interact with the words, and more space for the film maker to enter into the poem. I have explored how contemplative writing can express a moment of reflection and how nature and landscape, either urban or rural can be the starting point for this reflection.

I have outlined some of the challenges of collaboration in such a wide ranging project and the need for respect and dialogue between collaborators. A shared vision of the project's aims and a willingness to try new methods of working are desirable for all parties. There needs to be space too for collaborators to develop their creative practice and this can take time. I also experimented with sharing news of the developing project in its early stages via social media and I would recommend this approach for other complex, multi-faceted projects. There was an energy and excitement about *The Book of Hours* which was maintained over its four years of completion. Each time I shared a batch of new films on social media I gained more potential collaborators. I encouraged my collaborators to send individual films to festivals and screenings.

In terms of its distribution and visibility *The Book of Hours* has received much attention. The online poetry film project for *The Book of Hours* was completed in October 2018 and in the same month the poetry was published by Burning Eye Books. I have written 54 poems, 48 of these have been made into poetry films and I have collaborated with 27 collaborators from three continents. By September 2020 individual films from this project have been screened at more than thirty poetry film and short film festivals, and my collaborators are continuing to submit films for screenings and awards. Kathryn Darnell's beautiful and subtle animation of *Things I Found in the Hedge* won first prize in the 2019 *Atticus Review* video poetry competition and Eduardo Yague's *What is Love* came second. The whole project has been twice long-listed for the Sabotage Awards in 2017 and 2018, received a special mention in 2019, and was shortlisted for The New Media Writing Prize in 2019. I have been invited to talk about the project at the Zebra Poetry Film Festival and at O'Bheal poetry film festival in Cork, and been asked to write about the project for Movingpoems.com, Poetry Film Live and PoetryFilm Magazin in Weimar. I will be presenting 45 minutes worth of films from the project at the REEL poetry film festival in Houston, Texas, in February 2020. The project is now held on the British Library database of digital work. Films from the project are still being shared through social media and there are more articles and screenings still to happen

All creative projects go through moments of doubt, and at several stages of *The Book of Hours* it was sometimes hard to see a way forward. What was I trying to achieve and what was the best way to do this? I found theories of film challenging and baffling and I had to

open myself to new ways of appreciating the visual language of film and to learn how to distinguish between a documentary and a poetic approach. The technical requirements of creating an interactive website were also demanding as I was reliant on my web designers to select suitable methods for the design of the site. What I have learned from this whole experience is the value of trust. A collaboration is not one person telling another how to do something, it is a genuine conversation of respect, learning and moving forward. It is a shared space of talent where the individual skills of each person can flourish. I really hope that my collaborators in this project feel the same sense of pride and achievement that I feel about *The Book of Hours.*

Creative projects are not static. They may end because the artist says, 'It is done,' but they exist as windows for other practitioners to look through or as doors to open. I hope that spoken word poets will consider creating lyrical spoken word poetry films, individually or in collaboration with filmmakers, and begin to use moving image to complement rather than illustrate their voiced words. I hope that poetry film creators will see the possibilities of creating themed collections of work and begin to talk more with poets or even start to write poetry themselves. And I hope that the reflective quality of *The Book of Hours* will be inspirational to those who want to create quiet and thoughtful online projects. Finally, creative projects are also windows and doors for those who create them. I have plans for a more ambitious, wider-reaching project which can involve elements of immersion in landscape as well as the online films. I can't wait to begin.

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Details of Collaborators for The Book of Hours

Helena Astbury. *The River Girl*

Helena Astbury works across image, text and movement incorporating film, poetry and choreography. Her work often depicts literary characters and bodies, particularly Gothic figures, and Helena works extensively with text on screen. Her signature motif of the interplay between text and movement on screen has also led to her work being exhibited as works of screen dance in festivals worldwide.

Marie Craven. *The Last Days, Quiet Sounds, The Retreat*

Marie Craven assembles short videos from poetry, music, voice, stills and moving images by various artists around the world. Created substantially via the internet, the pieces are collaborative in essence. Since 2014, Marie has made over 50 videopoems, that have screened and been awarded at many international poetry film festivals and events. During the 1990s and early 2000s she wrote and directed short narrative and experimental films on celluloid that were also widely exhibited. Her earliest involvement in media was in the mid-1980s with super 8 film-making in Melbourne.

Cactus Chilly. *Night Walk*

Cactus Chilly is a UK based short film maker. Her work can be found on Vimeo.
https://vimeo.com/cactuschilly

Cheryl Gross. *Shop*

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Cheryl Gross is an illustrator, painter and motion graphic artist. She is professor at Pratt Institute and Bloomfield College. Cheryl received her BFA and MFA from Pratt Institute. Her work has been exhibited in major galleries and at festivals. She was the 2015 O Bheal poetry film festival winner. She has been artist in residence in Dilsbery, Germany and at the Kunstlerhaus, Saarbrucken, Germany. Her work has been described as Dr Seuss on crack.

Cinema Fragile. *Now Is The Time*

Katia Viscogliosi and Francis Magnenot have worked together since 2002. They direct fictions, documentaries, essays, and filmpoems. They create correspondences, multiply links between literature, poetry, cinema, and aim to make films as fragile and strong as life. Cinéma Fragile films have been screened in many international festivals. Katia Viscogliosi and Francis Magnenot also performed live cinema projections within collaborative projects and presented exhibitions of their works in Europe.

Helen Dewbery. *Do Nothing, The Litany of the Saints, Drive Through The Night, Lavender Blues.*

Helen is Co-Director of Swindon Poetry Festival and co-edits the online poetry film journal Poetry Film Live. Helen is an Associate member of the Royal Photographic Society and approaches poetry film as a contemporary photographic artist, combining still and moving images. Helen has worked collaboratively with a number of poets. She has also exhibited in solo and group photographic exhibitions. Helen is an editor of two poetry anthologies and currently lives in Wiltshire. Helen's films have been screened at a variety of poetry film festivals including Sadho, Visible Verse, Festival Silencio and Athens.

Kathryn Darnell. *From This Train, Things I Found in The Hedge.*

Kathryn Darnell came to poetry film only recently after several decades as a professional calligrapher and illustrator in traditional media. Her "animated calligraphics" grew out of experimental calligraphy on paper involving layers of words that create abstract manuscripts or calligraphic paintings: shapes and rhythms from the poetry, as well as those inherent in the act of writing. A native of Michigan in the U.S and a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Art, Kate divides her time between commercial art and fine art practice. She is also an adjunct professor of art at Lansing Community College.

Lori Ersolmaz. *What is Love (English Version)*

Lori H. Ersolmaz, founder of *Voices of Hope Productions* is an entrepreneur, visual storyteller, multimedia content producer and grassroots media outreach professional. Lori has diverse experience working with Fortune 200 corporations, nonprofit organizations and policy think-tanks on marketing, communication design and new media initiatives. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Rider University in the Communication and Journalism Department, and the Film and Media Studies Program. Lori is an active social justice, education, health, environment and media reform advocate with a Master of Arts degree in Media Studies and Film from The New School, a university with a history of progressive thought and service to others.

Claire Ewbank. *Hipster Central*

Claire started combining her poetry with visual art and her videos can be found on Youtube under 'Claire Ewbank, Spoken Word'. Claire won first prize at the Heidelberg University Art Slam in 2014. She was commended in the Stephen Spender Poetry Translation Competition (2009, 2010). She was commended in the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Competition in 2008. Claire has been part of three different art exhibitions in Hamburg over the last two years, exhibiting poetry and paintings looking into the subject of refugees, nationality and community.

Pamela Falkenberg and Jack Cochran. *The Shadow, The Names of Trees*

In 2015, Jack Cochran and Pamela Falkenberg reconnected and formed Outlier Moving Pictures, aspiring to make films worthy of the name; films that avoid the usual patterns and approach subjects from the margins. Their first new film, *The Cost of Living*, based on Jack's short poems, screened at the Buffalo International and Cornwall Film Festivals winning the best experimental award at the 2016 WV FILMmakers Festival. Other short poetry films have screened at the Ò Bhéal, Juteback, Silencio, Filmpoem, CYCLOP, and Athens poetry film festivals. *Teddy Roosevelt and Fracking,* their recent experimental documentary about the North Dakota landscape, premiered at the 2018 Queens World Film Festival, taking the best documentary short award.

Jane Glennie. *Glitter*

Jane Glennie is an artist, typographer and filmmaker. In film, she works predominantly with the flicker film technique, composing films from thousands of photographs. Her films have been selected for: Digital Graffiti festival in Florida; PoetryFilm at the Hackney Picturehouse (UK) and Reykjavik; Art Language Location in Cambridge; and Visible Poetry Project at the New York Poetry Festival. In 2018, her work was awarded a Jury Special Mention at the Weimar Poetry Film Festival and 4th Place at the LightUp Poole Poetry Film Competition. In 2017 she founded Peculiarity Press to publish books by artists: the first being the conceptual work *'A New Dictionary of Art'* by Robert Good, followed by 'the book of the film' to accompany her flicker film *'447: Intellect – N'*.

Janet Lees. *The Last Flowers*

Janet Lees is a poet and artist working with text, photography, collage and film. Her poetry has been widely anthologised and won prizes in many different competitions. She has been published in a wide range of magazines including *Magma*, *Poetry News*, *Lighthouse* and *The Missing Slate*. Her poetry films have been selected for international festivals and prizes including Filmpoem, the Aesthetica Art Prize and the British and Irish Poetry Film festivals. She is currently working on a collection combining her poetry and images, and two collaborative projects.

Matt Mullins. *Aubade, Still There, Looking for Eurfyl*

Matt Mullins writes and makes videopoems, music, and digital/interactive literature. His work has been screened at numerous festivals and other venues in the United States and throughout the world including Visible Verse, Zebra, VideoBardo, Liberated Words, Rabbit Heart, The Body Electric, and Co-Kisser. His fiction and poetry have appeared in print and online literary journals such as the *Mid American Review*, *Pleiades*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Descant*, and *Hobart*. His debut collection of short stories, *Three Ways of the Saw*, was published by Atticus Books in 2012 and was named a finalist for *Foreword Magazine's* Book of the Year.

Marc Neys. *The Perseids, Weird Weather, Remember, May Queen, Postcard to my Future Self, Stone Life*

Marc Neys describes himself as a 'videopoetry and soundscape addict'. Marc is one of the world's leading creators of poetry films and makes films in English, Flemish and German. He is the founder of Swoon, which creates soundscapes and poetry films. He has won awards and acclaims in many international poetry film and short film festivals.

James Norton. Sheltering from the Rain in a Country Church, Can't Sleep

Working primarily in film, paint and collage James explores narratives spaces. Where occurrences between objects, space and time bring into existence a unseen topography. These landscapes often refer to speculative futures or otherworldly influences. James has worked for clients as varied as The National Trust, the National Portrait Gallery, Filmpoem, the Poetry Society, the British Library, the Science Museum, the South West Film and TV archive and the British Museum.

Maciej Piątek.   Numbers, Time and the River

 aka Vj Pietrushka is a Polish video artist based in the UK. Over the years he has been involved in many projects, working mainly on his own experimental video works but also collaborating with various local and international musicians, exploring closely improvised and electronic scene. He has recently received significant recognition of his work with the international video poetry network. Since 2013 Maciek has been cooperating with a Polish improvising group Shepherds of Cats. This informal relation has become the driving force behind his latest short films and visuals.

Marcia Pelletiere. *The Woman at the Window*

Marcia Pelletiere is a poet, singer, composer, and interdisciplinary artist. Her second poetry collection, A Crown of Hornets, is forthcoming from Four Way Books (Spring 2019). Marcia's poems and videos have appeared in festivals, journals and magazines including Ploughshares; JAMA; Prairie Schooner; Light Up Poole Digital Art Festival; Bath Film Festival, Southern Poetry Review; South Florida Poetry Journal; and Painted Bride Quarterly. Marcia's forthcoming poetry collection and accompanying videos deal with her recovery from a Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (MTBI). Marcia incorporates her own poems, music, artwork, and videos to immerse the audience in the experience of living with an MTBI.

Jutta Pryor. *Clouds, Our Lady of the Rocks*

Jutta Pryor works in multimedia. Her interests stem from international online collaborations across diverse creative fields working with sound, moving image and word to create immersive installations, projections and poetry films. The internet plays an important part in facilitating her creative process through online film sharing.
Based in Australia her images are often inspired by landscape and nature.

Carolyn Patricia Richardson. *High Summer*

Carolyn is a poet, painter with work in the Public Catalogue, now re-branded as ArtUK; a maker of filmed poems and a guerrilla poet in the wilds of Dumfries & Galloway. Carolyn was a Director of the Scottish Writers Centre and worked for the 2017 Cumbrian literary festival *Borderlines*. Carolyn's filmpoem "Spring Train" was commended in Cumbrias FilmFling in 2017 and her recent publication is *Scots' Rock,* Red Squirrel Press, 2016.

Stevie Ronnie. *Dark Place, The Smell of Mist*

Stevie Ronnie is a freelance artist and writer with a background in computing. His work crosses art forms to produce pieces for exhibition, publication, installation, screening and/or performance. Stevie has received two prestigious MacDowell fellowships for his interdisciplinary works and a Northern Promise Award for his poetry. His most recent book is *Self Portrait as Someone Else* (Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, 2017). His work has screened at several international festivals including Zebra Poetry Film Festival, Monstra, Kinofilm, Filmpoem, dotdotdot Festival, Juteback Poetry Film Festival, Ó Bheal International Poetry Film Festival and others

Lucia Sellers. *Kandahar, The Sundial*

Lucia Sellars is a poet, an environmental scientist and a quiet observer. She has published in magazines such as *The Response*, *Cronopis*, *Tears on the Fence* and *Datableed*. She was part of *Poetry Can F* Off*, by Heathcote Williams in 2015. Her video-poems have been projected at the Athens International Video Poetry Festival 2016, Film Poem Festival 2017 in Lewes, UK and in The Film and Video Poetry Society, L.A, USA 2018. She writes in both English and Spanish

Othniel Smith. *Saturday*

Othniel Smith is primarily a writer. His work includes eight episodes of children's television series *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (CBBC), the short film *Say It* for BBC Wales/*It's My Shout* (2013), the stage play Giant Steps (published in New Welsh Drama II, Parthian Books, 2001), the novel *Yer Blues*, and a number of dramas for BBC radio. He also has a PhD in Independent Film from the University of Glamorgan. His poetry films have screened at events such as the Zebra Poetry Film Festival in Germany, Vancouver's Visible Verse Festival and the New York Jazz Film Festival.

Sarah Tremlett. *Mr Sky, Solstice, Solstice, (Sol Invictus)*

Sarah Tremlett, MPhil, FRSA, SWIP, (poemfilm) is a British poetry filmmaker, artist and arts theorist, known since 2005 for researching text, rhythm and 'contemplative' video poems, giving international talks on the subject. Described as a 'visual philosopher' by Karina Karaeva, (Video Curator, NCA, Moscow), and the author of *The Poetics of Poetry Film* (Intellect Books), in 2017 Alastair Cook (Filmpoem) commissioned her film for *Claire Climbs Everest* by National Poetry Competition finalist Sam Harvey. In 2012, she co-founded Liberated Words at the MIX conference in Digital Writing with Lucy English to screen established poetry filmmakers alongside films from the community.

Eduardo Yague. *What is Love (Spanish Version), High Summer, Daisy Chain*

Eduardo Yagüe studied at the Drama Art School of his hometown Gijón (Spain), then moved to Madrid, where he lived for twenty years and studied Spanish Language and Literature at UNED. He worked as an actor, theater teacher, while also writing poetry and short stories. In 2012 he started to make videopoetry. He is interested in exploring and mixing the limits of poetic and cinematographic languages. He loves working with actors in his videos, using them as a vehicle to talk about strong and deep emotions. Currently he lives in Stockholm.