

POET ON A BOAT

“Why do you write, poet?” Daled asks.

“I write only for myself.”

“Interesting, but not what I asked. You write for you. Fine. I’ll get to that in a moment. But the question is WHY do you write. Not for whom.

A bit annoyed, the poet responds, “I write to share about our human condition, the alienation, the loneliness, the existential fears.” Here he pauses, then smiles. “But not just the bleakness. The hope that by facing the darkness, we can find the light.”

“Moving. I’m touched. Now let’s go back to your first answer, Is it really only for yourself? If it is, why then do you care about others’ reactions or who sees it?”

“My task is to write with vividness, clarity and precision of language. That’s all I can control. That’s only for me, and it provides some solace to put my insides on paper.” He pauses, then adds, “And there is something miraculous about the creative act; from a blank piece of paper, sometimes emerges.” He holds up a finger to keep Daled from responding, then adds “To answer your other question, of course I would be delighted if some reader somewhere enters into dialogue with the words and gains a better self-understanding.” Another pause, then, “If that reader felt less alone, a bonus; if readers eventually recognized their common humanity, understood each other better and that led to greater harmony in our world.....perhaps a pipe dream, but a wonderful one.”

“Lovely, poetically stated,” Daled replies. “But you yourself just undercut your first response. You now admit that you don’t write only for yourself, you write to communicate ...to create a one way dialogue with the reader. . “For that to happen, mustn’t others see your communication? And, as you yourself intimate, aren’t you hoping that your works can bring peace to this world? How many do you want to see it? How many are necessary to meet your goals? You do care about others. You only deceive yourself.” Then, after a pause, he adds, “And is your desire for brotherly harmony your only reason for sharing your work? Don’t you also want recognition, a feeling of being understood at the least, and perhaps a feeling of being less lonely, even , belonging.t?”

The poet is silent. Daled, looking on, sees a person trying to be stoic, willfully holding back his emotions, wanting to act like he is an unmoved mover.--still, calm, unperturbed by Daled’s questioning and interrogation.

Daled continues, “Is it really love for society, or is your writing a pretense to justify yourself—an illusion of meaning, a tenuous effort to connect, even as an outsider?”

After another moment the poet turns to Daled and finally responds, “Why do you care?”

Ellis smiles and speaks for the first time. “You know why.” He stares at the poet then winks at Daled. “You’re part of this society, in spite of yourself. Else, why would you care why Daled cares?”

Commented [JS1]: Very clever

The poet again does not reply and Daled continues.

“Perhaps you, Poet, really are on a different level than others, that keeps you apart, looking and observing. Yet, don’t you fear that it is perhaps your own pride, or weakness that keeps you from interacting and joining? You want to be different from other men. You stand part and outside them, but inwardly isn’t there a part of you that fears you stand outside because you feel inadequate to live with them. Who has expelled whom? You the society or the society you?”

Commented [JS2]: Good questions

More silence. And the baton is passed back to Ellis. “Daled, you’re being too easy on him. He’s trapped himself. He says he wanted to be outside society, yet every conversation he has revolves around that very thing which you’ (and he turns to face the poet directly, “say you’ve left for good, expelled from your mind.”

The poet then looks calmly and clearly at both Daled and Ellis “Who began this conversation? Not I. Perhaps you both are struggling to find your own places. I’m merely a foil for your own issues. And I spent these few moments with you as a gift to you, trying to be of service.”

Commented [JS3]: Ah turning the tables on his interlocutors

“Exactly,” Daled nods. “Look at how you engage. Sharing your hopes, vision, dreams. Very kind of you. But you do so because you’re still part of us. We’re all in the same boat. Maybe you fear there is still a higher level beyond you as an outsider. But you can’t quite leave. Where would you go?”

Commented [JS4]: Clever!

Commented [JS5]: Interesting possibility

To which Ellis adds: “Or do you see yourself as the person who has lived apart from us, but now returns? But your return is without confidence. You are still tormented. You are afraid to return, even if there is a part of you that wants to. What if no one needs you; what if you’re aren’t wanted back?”

“Is this all self-protection, hiding behind your words?” Daled doubles down.

The poet turns and smiles. His hands grip the railing. There is a tautness in his face, as if he is either sinking deeper into himself to find a response, or has retreated and returned within to avoid a response

Commented [JS6]: Good alternative interpretations.

The poet then turns away, the mask of calmness gone. There is almost a bitterness in the lines of his face as he returns to the bow.

Ellis goes back to the mast to keep watch. Daled goes down the stairs. They are now all on different levels.

Commented [JS7]: Aha. So are they all in the same boat? And simultaneously on different levels? It would appear so.