

VIRGIL, HIS SPACE BOY

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While discussing with my friends about the Stanley Kubrick movie “Space Odyssey 2001” we came up to a conclusion that this film is much more based on Virgil works, than the ones from Homer. After this discussion in the student canteen we came up to a conclusion that this film is much more “Oneida” than “Odyssey”. Most of this discussion was based on the fact that in his “Georgica” Virgil in his 4th eclogue mentions the space boy which was born in the landscape, as a joy of all nature, hay and gaze that surrounded him. Thought Virgil was a pagan, Christians admired his work because they thought that he was a prophet. He predicted the birth of Christ. Many of the pagans throughout centuries were accepted in the Christian doctrine, since certain elements of monotheism were found in their works. The earliest acceptations date way back in the time of stoics and Plato (and his instance of puritanism, platonic love, reduction rather than sensation; for e.g. he ironizes his beloved professor Socrates and his vices, he didn’t attend his funeral etc.). Another example for this are the Golden writings of the Emperor Marco Antonius Aurelio. Like his stepfather, he didn’t admire promiscuity, amorality, bestiality; thought deist himself, he was very modest. Real virtue for him was to be faithful to his wife. He didn’t believe that he may deceive her as much as he can, like his deistic

ancestors (the emperors) did and thought that the gods will not punish him for that because he was an emperor, chosen by them. Furthermore, the title of the film contains the number 21(2001) what is the real birth date of Christ. Namely there was another very popular monotheistic cult of that time- Mitridad, whose holyday was at 23rd of December. The church authorities changed it into this date, so that they would not have any conflicts later. Similar they did with Halloween. Of course it is possible that this is just another coincidence, so that the title of the movie could sound more like from the other century. As like for e.g. I invented the conversation in the student canteen at the beginning of this text. Actually about everything in this text I came to a conclusion all by myself. But it would be pretty uninteresting to begin this text with that notion. Wouldn't it?

The thing that provoked me to write this text is that in many works of art, I found the motive of the mature man that wants to purify himself through a little boy. It is like the mature man was longing for his lost innocence, what he had while he was just a child. I found this a very Christian attitude. In a short presentation for this I will give some examples from literature. Of course I am aware that not everybody will agree with me. Some of the works I am presenting here the classic psychoanalysis finds as examples of latent homosexuality or pedophilia.

In his novel "A Stoic", John Galsworthy gives a portrait of an aging businessman, whose work every day becomes nastier and riskier. He feels really bad about all this, but he has nobody to talk with. He just has that beautiful little boy. "The innocent boy approached; with his girlish complexion, his flowery blue eyes, his perfect mouth, he stood before his mother like a cherub. And suddenly he blew his ocarina in a dreadful manner." The boy has this antiseptic aura of purity and innocence. But the old fella cannot be like the boy again. This disappointment stresses him with a tragic and painful outcome, as he begins to feel the first psychosomatic consequences on his health. It is just as he doesn't want to live like

that anymore. He wants again to be like that boy - pure and innocent. But it is too late, his health is already ruined and he dies with this disappointment on his mind.

In his story "At Home" Anton Pavlovich Chekhov depicts somewhat a similar (similar with Goldsworthy) psychic landscape for his character. At the beginning this is a classic story about a father that has couth his son how he steals and smokes his cigarettes, in his library. He explains him that it is bad for his health to smoke. But later he notices that unlike him, his son even when he is smoking still looks very clean. "When he looks in his eyes he sees his mother, his wife and everybody he ever loved..." I used previously the expression psychic landscape, which means → soul landscape (ψυχή from anc. Greek- psyche what means soul). His son is all beautiful, pure and genderless.

In his story "Dziewczyna i golebie" ("Girl and the Pigeons") the Polish writer from Ukraine, Yaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz develops a story about a engineer that lives all alone with his son. Only the lady that cleans their house visits them from time to time. At one moment the father realizes that his son is old enough to be with a woman. He is aware that he has to make him grow, but at the same time he wants his purity and irresponsibility to be near to him. He wants to continue to live with him forever. This beautiful and unfortunately unknown writer presents us a story about father that wants to separate his son with his girlfriend. His son for her is like the pigeons, she wants to play with them like with him. Though the Christianity is never mentioned, the father tries to make everything in their life innocent and virginal. But he cannot communicate with his son anymore, because he will have to communicate with a grown man (and that would be the scariest thing in the world for him → the death of the father ↔ child). So he tries to communicate with him through their cleaning lady. Nothing is innocent anymore. When the father enters the room of his son, the sharp smell of the un-cleaned socks of his son reminds him viciously that he is a grown up man already. Soon nothing will be the same again; his son (the idea of the father-child) will grow up. So the

father - child will have to enter the cruel world because the illusion of the endless virginity will end?

In his story “Separating”, which is about divorcing parents, John Updike elaborates a case where the father has to find a way to tell this to his son, without causing him annoyance. But as the story develops, the father realizes that his son is stronger, because he still has purity. He still cannot recognize the evil, the danger in this world. In this amazingly beautifully written story John Updike presents his craftsmanship of storytelling, at his best; by depicting an antiseptic environment as a location for the story, he wants to give as a hint that god approves the innocence, the virginity, the eternal man-child(father-child, man-boy etc.). So at the end when the father places the boy in bed to sleep, his son kisses him straight in his mouth. With all its purity, like the monks. It is like the boy sings a lullaby to his father, not vice versa.

Since Ernest Hemingway was working as a doctor, many of his stories and novels are about doctors. But in his “A Day’s Wait” I think he somewhat exits this/his paradigm. For e.g. in his autobiographical novel “A Moveable Feast” he tells us a story of himself taking care of his baby son Bambi, “disinfecting the bottle in the boiling water in order to give him milk...” This is more or less a classical parenthood story, which doesn’t have any inner meaning. But in his story “A Day’s Wait”, first he cognizes just like a doctor → his son doesn’t believe the medicine will cure him(he has a fever), so the father has to find a way how to make him believe. But his son doesn’t care if he pays him any attention, since he is still a child. Thought he wants his father to read him the Pirate stories. The son is pure and natural; the son has just his conscience and nothing else; the son is an eprouette that contains only honesty and virginity. So the father is the injection that contains sin, lies and deviancy...Since the son didn’t want anybody to come in his room, because he thought he will die. Consequently he didn’t want to infect everybody with his deadly disease. But it was a misunderstanding. While in school in France his son heard

that if he has temperature of one hundred and two he was going to die. Simply the degrees were different, like miles and kilometers.

Thought and this novel is not strictly about a relationship between a father and a son, but between an aging/dying musician and a teenage polish tourist, Thomas Manns` novel -“Death in Venice” is about this correlation. While to the musician everything (including the music) seems fake and nasty, everything that is about the boy is real and alive. That’s why at the end of the novel Achenbach (the musician) has to die.

This we can also see in the ending of the Kubrick’s movie: The civilization is old and nasty; it has to be purified or replaced with a birth of a space boy. As that old man dying in that expensive, luxurious saloon, yet the space boy is just naked. The boy doesn’t really have anything material. But has the most precious thing in the universe- the innocence. The boy is left in front of us (like Oneio found the golden brunch in Oneida, in the movie they found the obelisk) so that we can appreciate his presence.

References:

- 1.A.P.Chehov-“At Home”
- 2.John Galsworthy-“A Stoic”
- 3.Ernest Hemingway-“A Day’s Wait”
- 4.Jaroslav Iwaszkiewicz-“Dziewczyna i golebie”(“Girl and the Pigeons”)
- 5.John Updike-“Separating”
- 6.Thomas Mann-“Der Tod in Venedig”

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