

Przypisy

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- 5/ A. Makarow, W ślębi Rosji..., s. 303.
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Тражина Пачень

Забора о будущем, память о прошлом

/О творчестве Виктора Астафьева/

Резюме

Виктор Астафьев - выдающийся советский писатель среднего поколения. В своих повестях - "Перевал" /1969/, "Знакомая" /1960/, "Крестьян" /1966/, "Последний поклон" /1968-1974/, "Пастух и пастушка" /1971/, "Надь-Дидя" /1976/ и сборниках рассказов "Поросята Юрия Травой" /1965/, "Онидэ-Темезки" /1965/, "Завески" /1972/ - писатель стремится кать ораз жизни человека своего поколения, причем преименом исследованию становления его собственной биографии, типичной для советских граждан довоенного поколения. Астафьев изображает судьбы старых деревенских жителей, потому что именно у них встречается самые ценные черты человеческого характера, которые олевет передать будущему поколению. Эта тема неразрывно связана у Астафьева с любовью к Сибири, к земле, на которой прошло детство, юность и лучшие годы жизни. Астафьев затрагивает актуальную проблему разлуки ипользования природных ресурсов. Его произведения, особенно повесть "Надь-Дидя", представляют собой своеобразный призыв писателя к защите сибирской природы, против борьбы нарушения ее законов.

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Ariel Poems - The Focal Period of T.S. Eliot's Poetic Development.

In the artistic development of almost every poet there are periods which are of particular importance for a literary critic. These crucial periods are not necessarily marked by mile-stones; or in other words, the most recognized and accomplished poems do not have to mark these climatic points in the poet's development. And this seems to be the case with the poetry of T.S. Eliot.

Strangely enough - but in consistence with what we have written above - my argumentation is that it is neither "The Waste Land" nor "The Hollow Men", nor even "Ash Wednesday" which should be treated as the nucleus of Eliot's poetic development. They are rather the culminating achievements of the separate stages of the poet's evolution. Instead, we shall postulate that it is rather the Ariel Poems cycle - probably the least known and valued cycle in Eliot's output - which appears to constitute the most versatile, "fermentive" and formative period of his poetic evolution. This statement seems to be all the more true if we try to look at Eliot's poetic output from a somewhat larger perspective.

Only then can we observe that the Ariel Poems cycle is actually the converging point of the thematic development of his poetry. The cycle represents then the point of intersection of the two main thematic strains of Eliot's poetry: on the one hand, the social criticism of mankind and contaminating modern civilization (Poems 1920, "The Waste Land", "The Hollow Men"), and on the other hand, the continually growing religious and metaphysical content of his later poems ("Ash Wednesday", "Four Quartets"). A closer analysis of the Ariel Poems cycle will show to what extent we are justified to claim this - and not the traditional, i.e., based on the "mile-stones" - line of viewing Eliot's poetry.

During the years 1927 - 1929 Eliot published three of his Ariel Poems. These were "Journey of the Magi", "A Song for Simeon" and "Animula". The fourth of the poems - "Marina" - was published a year after "Ash Wednesday", i.e., in 1931. The name of the collection of the poems is not a title given them by Eliot. It was a name of a series of Christmas poems edited on shilling greeting-cards by the Faber firm. Thus, it is for the first time that Eliot wrote his poems having in mind that they were meant for publication. This however cannot be treated as a fact which diminishes the literary value of the poems. On the contrary, the poems of this period belong to the stage of experimentation and innovation characterized primarily by the fresh treatment of old biblical themes and stories. All of them seem appropriate to the increasing metaphysical and religious content of his later poetry. The poetry of this period is mainly short and concise and is presented in the form of dramatic monologues of historical or legendary characters identified by means of names and titles. As Elizabeth Drew rightly observes all of the poems embody different aspects of the experience of rebirth and express the discovery of a new focus of existence. The meaning of the new birth is obscure, full of doubt accompanied by pain not joy, and perplexing in the extreme. <sup>1</sup> Thus, on the whole, we might say that it is the subject of the progress of the soul which is of particular significance to Eliot. This time, unlike his previous poems, the areas of reference are evident and easy to guess even for a random reader: these are, in the Bible - the story of the Magi, the story of Simeon and in Dante - the nature of the human soul. In the present paper however, we shall concentrate - mainly because of editorial limitations and thematic similarity of "Journey of the Magi" to "A Song for Simeon" - only on two most representative of Ariel Poems, i.e., "A Song for Simeon" and "Animula". "Marina" shall not be analysed, primarily due to the lack of religious content and also because it was written after "Ash Wednesday" and accordingly it does not belong to this period proper.

The first of the poems, "A Song for Simeon", is based on the Bible and has as its reference the story of Simeon as told in Luke 2:25 - 35. The title itself is derived from "Nunc dimittis" or "Song for Simeon" in the Prayer Book. <sup>2</sup> Thematically the poem is not very different from the "Journey of the Magi". In most general terms it centers on the friction between the encroaching

new order and the doomed to become extinct "old dispensation". This clash is again exemplified in terms of human drama. Simeon, unlike the Magi, knows that the fulfillment of the old law is to be its end and that Christ is a long-awaited Messiah and the only way to salvation. Thus, Simeon is, as it were, one step further in his spiritual realization. But this fact proves insufficient to make Simeon accept wholeheartedly the contradictory new order. He tries to account for his indecisions and vacillation on the ground that he is too old and tired to create anything himself. His only desire is peace and waiting for a tranquil death for himself. It is exactly at the very beginning of his tired monologue that we can notice the use of the leading theme of birth and rebirth (ll. 1-3). The major contrast that we observe here is that between the stubborn approach of spring and the stubborn life and fertility. <sup>3</sup> But the distinction between spring and winter is not a clear-cut division. Grover Smith suggests that this is so because spring also brings the Child and thus the hyacinths have a new meaning in view of which the fertility cults of Rome belong with the "winter sun" that creeps by the snow hills. The key-phrase in this fragment - "the stubborn season has made stand" - adds again to the sense of vagueness and obscurity in the distinction between the two states, mainly as it may fairly well refer either to winter or the spring. This confusing and perplexing state reinforces also Simeon's vacillation and uncertainty, as he is so languid, numb and passive (ll. 4-7). The passive character of Simeon is best exemplified by a very fine simile "My life is light... / Like a feather on the back of my hand". Thus, his life - a feather - is so torpid and stagnant that the only thing it is waiting for is the "death wind", "the wind that chills toward the dead land". The operation of the wind would bring Simeon death, fulfilling in this way the Gospel prophecy as related in Luke 2:25-35. Again, the relation, this time between the death and birth, is vague and confused. Interestingly however, Simeon's death is equivalent to the "new life" for him; thus although the feather - i.e., his life - is blown in the "dead wind", still it does not have to be dissipated. After all, it may be blown up, which would symbolically mean approaching the realm of the sacred and spiritual.

The new section of the poem begins with a liturgical form of appeal for God's blessing: "Grant us thy peace". The whole stanza however consists of an enumeration of Simeon's merits and deserts (ll. 8-12). After Simeon's earnest prayer for peace, supported by a catalogue of his "good deeds", he is suddenly overwhelmed with a penetrating fear about his tribe and relations. He is no longer preoccupied with his own cravings for peace and tranquility; it is rather the agonizing, prophet-like awareness of the approach of a prolonged "time of sorrow". In a vision he sees the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of his tribe. Simeon's agony is also reinforced by his awareness of the persecution of the early Christians (ll. 13-17).

The next stanza continues the same tone of supplicatory reverie over his own life. But this stanza is interesting for its extensive referential use of the Bible and Roman Catholic liturgy. (ll. 18-25). It is in the very first line of this fragment that we have two words of interest: i.e., "scourges" and "lamentation". The former is reminiscent of Christ who was scourged at the order of Pilate, the Roman Governor. The latter, however, shows us the scene from Luke 23: 27-29 where a crowd of bewailing and lamenting women followed Christ out of Jerusalem on the way to the Crucifixion. The whole second line is - as has been mentioned above - a liturgical form of appeal for God's blessing. The "stations" of the next line bring to mind the Stations of the Cross - a Roman Catholic devotion conducted before a series of fourteen images or pictures representing the events from the time that Christ was sentenced to death, to the placing of His corpse in the sepulchre. In the same line we have "the mountain of desolation" This clearly refers to Calvary, where the Crucifixion took place. B.C. Southam<sup>6</sup> presumes that R.S. Eliot made up this phrase from Mark 13:14, in a passage where Christ is forewarning the disciples of the persecution yet to be faced: "But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation . . . then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains". With the fourth line the Gospel account is helpful just enough to enable us to decipher the vague, and unclear "certain hour of maternal sorrow". The Gospel records that Christ died at "the ninth hour". Certainly, in coining the phrase "the still unspeaking and unspoken Word" - line 23 - Eliot uses "Word" in its original Greek sense of *LOGOS*, as in John 1:1:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

As we can see the third stanza abounds with biblical and liturgical references which certainly broaden and deepen the reading and analysis of the poem, as they are invested with a special emotional load. Thus, for instance, a word like "lamentation" - third stanza, first line - apart from its regular connotations carries also associations with one of the most tearful and weebone scenes from Christ's life.

In the last stanza Simeon repeats his petition for quietude, for exempting him from this totally new and perplexing consciousness. Dramatically however, he seems to understand that it is death alone that can bring the peace. This new consciousness and the prophetic sense of foreseeing future events gives a tragic dimension to his state, mainly because, just as Simeon, these are the early saints and devotees who shall be persecuted and tortured. The sacrifice made of their lives seems to be an inevitable prelude, the first step on the way to the mystical transformation of death into life, the perpetual cycle of birth, death and rebirth. But is Simeon ready to face this new reality, the reality of a different dimension? Unfortunately, the answer is negative as he appears to find in his heart no kindling fire which would enable him to come out of shadow into the reality of "light upon light" (ll. 26-32). In this stanza also we have a biblical reference: "(And a sword shall pierce thy heart / Thine also)". This line is a vision of Simeon's prophetic warning to Mary. He is referring to the suffering Mary will have to endure at the sight of her son's torment and death. These words also look forward markedly to the suffering of Christ and the persecution of the early Christians.<sup>7</sup>

The last lines (ll. 36-39) stress again Simeon's prophetic-like over-sensitivity which is for him too heavy a burden to bear it. He has to cope not only with the "mystery" of his own life but also with the "mysteries" of the lives of those that come after him. Simeon, moreover, being so downcast and depressed identifies himself with the miserable lot of every mortal. Thus, we are not surprised - having known the perplexities and dilemmas of Simeon's "heart" - to hear that he begs for a quiet departure without further participation in the mystery which is beyond his understanding.

This poem, "Journey of the Magi" and "The Hollow Men" bear some important thematic resemblances. On the whole, they seem to take up as a leading motif the problem of man's inability to go beyond the human limitations. As man is always and only man, no omnipotent semi-god, so his endeavours to comprehend or reach the sphere of the sacred are bound to failure. But they are bound to failure not only because of the difference between the two realities but also because of these human limitations which often hinder or preclude the necessary reversal in the direction of the "light upon light". Maybe that is why Eliot emphasizes so much in these poems the function of a beneficial and salutary element: the eyes in "The Hollow Men", the Birth in "Journey of the Magi" and the Word in "A Song for Simeon". It is also interesting to observe that at the moment of writing Eliot's personal state of religiousness seemed to be very similar to that of the Magi and Simeon, i.e., he "had evidence and no doubt" but he vacillated before accepting it wholeheartedly.

"Animula" - the second of the Ariel Poems that we shall analyse here - takes up as its theme the problem of the development of the human soul from the time "it issues from the hand of God" to adult life. The title itself is Latin, meaning a little soul. All major critical analyses agree that Eliot in selecting the title seemed to take into account the most notable use of the word, i.e. that in the poem addressed by the Roman Emperor Hadrian to his soul, with the first line: "Animula, vagula, blandula" (Little soul, fleeing away and charming). The quotation at the opening of the poem: "Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul", has been derived from a passage in Dante, *Purgatorio* XVI: 85-88, where the poet is discussing the nature of the human soul and remarks on the freedom of the will. <sup>8</sup> Thomas Reece suggests another source influencing the conception of this poem. He draws an interesting parallel between Eliot's "Animula" and Jules Laforgue's "Complainte des pianos qu'on étend dans les quartiers aisés". In Laforgue's piece - he argues - the poet asks what thoughts are running through the minds of rich little school girls as they execute their idle piano flourishes. Though life is real and criminal they innocently feel impulses leading them to the ideal; but their souls, which Laforgue calls pure flasks of living water, will soon be baptized with the waters of dull and deadening conventionality. Therefore, their capacity for the ideal growth of the soul is suffocated by life's

grim realities. A similar theme forms the poems of both Eliot and Laforgue: the effect of a cold and perplexing world on the simple soul of youth. <sup>9</sup>

The first fifteen lines of Eliot's poem are devoted to the analysis of the development period of adolescence. Eliot shows this "flickering world" as seen through the eyes of a suckling, an infant lying in a cot or a cradle. This fantastic world is both changing and similar, i.e., at the same time different and identical. This duality of perception of the world is exemplified for instance in the juxtaposition of antonyms like "dry or damp"; obviously, the similarity is achieved through alliteration. It may be useful to notice here that this juxtaposition of two worlds - that of infancy and of maturity - seems to be the main organizing principle of the whole poem. In these highly poetic lines Eliot presents the whole period of childhood with a few strokes only. So he begins with an infant (ll. 2-3), then passes to the times when as a toddler it begins to walk on all fours (ll. 4-5), then it manages to climb up the parents' knees (ll. 6-7), to reach the period when its mental capacities expand and it is able to understand speech and play cards (ll. 8-15). The importance of these lines, apart from their marvellous terseness and compactness, lies in the fact that they depict most fully the happiness and freedoms of childhood; this period of life which Eliot considers to be not yet contaminated with the contagious influence of our reality.

Anyway, if the soul remains more or less undisturbed during the period of early childhood its situation changes diametrically with the passage of time. This uncomplicated and active world of childhood, which is governed only by the instincts, is invaded by Time with its injunctions and dictates, prohibitions, freedoms and moral choices. The soul is no longer its own master but rather a slave in the service of Time (ll. 16-20). B.C. Southam throws some light on the obscure, but at the same time pivotal, to this fragment, "imperatives of is and seems". He says that it is a concept taken from the philosophy of F.H. Bradley, <sup>10</sup> and that in this mysterious phrase the distinction is between appearance (seems), and reality (is). In itself reality is an awareness to the gap between the actual and the ideal, giving rise to the notions of obligation, duty and ethical value contained in the philosophical term "imperatives", those considerations that move us to act morally. <sup>11</sup>

But the growing soul cannot follow its natural path in search for God, towards whom it is by nature directed. It is easily deflected from its way by the trivialities and evils of adult life. The factor responsible for this distraction is: "the pain of living and the drug of dreams", which results in inhibitions and the trammeling of will. This in turn perplexes and confounds the soul to such a degree that it takes refuge in totally barren and bookish learning (ll.21-23). The next line - "Issues from the hand of time the simple soul" - brings us the main factor which hinders the progress of the soul. It is the inevitable and unavoidable operation of Time. But "the hand of time" differs considerably from "the hand of God". The soul issues from the hand of time contaminated and hampered in its activities. It becomes "irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame". Its former vivacity and sprightliness is now reduced to being "unable to fare forward or retreat". The new life toward which the soul points i.e., "the warm reality, the offered good", is feared now due to the operation of time which brings perplexities to adult life. Therefore, the soul's delight in life and light is reduced to complete nonentity without substance or pattern <sup>12</sup> (ll.29-31).

Thus, the soul that issued from the hand of time becomes gradually deadened, to live again only in the silence after the vaticum (i.e. the Last Eucharist). In Eliot's "Animula" then, the religious element performs an important function. It is this spiritual, God-oriented reality which offers a remedy for the failures and frustrations of the painful and deadening existence. The soul is most perfect and it lives most fully when it is, as it were, in contact with the realm of the mystical and spiritual; when it issues from the hand of God and when it is living only after the vaticum. Towards the end of Eliot's poem however, the frustrating and gruesome reality - so far alluded to in a more abstract way - receives a more precise articulation. The concluding stanza of the poem, with its images of death and destruction set in the form of a prayer, constitutes a jarring divergence in the use of imagery; in the preceding lines the imagery is fairly neutral and quiet. These lines are made all the more dramatic through the fact that we are aware that these people <sup>13</sup> originally issued from the hand of God. Their potentials for a full spiritual realization have been lost with the passage of time whose operation produces spiritually

crippled and mutilated human wrecks. It is no wonder then, that we have to pray for those whose beginning was quiet and promising but their ending is shrouded in darkness and violence. The ending of Eliot's "Animula", however, gives the only positive answer, which in its spiritual mood it can offer: "Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth". Thus, in replacing "birth" for "death", in the quotation from the Hail Mary, Eliot makes it evident for us that we must direct the soul's growth from its very beginnings and in this way prevent it from being contaminated with the disastrous operation of the hand of time.

Accordingly, Eliot colours the poem with the elements of social criticism so characteristic of the first stage of his poetic development. This criticism is manifested primarily in emphasizing, so to say, "external" factors which hinder the spiritual progress of the human soul. The fact that the process of spiritual self-realization is dwarfed is due to the contaminating influences of civilization and social interrelationships rather than to some emotional states of the person involved. The soul, in its "predestined" existence, is bound to fall on its way back to God if the barrenness and trivialities of the world continue hindering his development. It is also interesting to observe that this line - "Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth" - in a way concentrates Eliot's previous considerations about the nature of birth and death and in consequence rebirth. Like in "Journey of the Magi" and "A Song for Simeon" the last line of "Animula" ironically emphasizes again that the hour of birth and death may be sometimes the same. <sup>14</sup>

This focal period of the evolution of Eliot's poetry is marked with an extensive use of Christian heritage and tradition which is exemplified by taking biblical personae as a basis of the poems. It is important also to notice that all these three poems are decidedly set in a religious background and tradition. They all deal with the essential Christian dogmas such as: faith, birth, death, rebirth and soul. Moreover, the treatment of these problems shows that the poems have been written by someone who at least treats the questions seriously and is fairly competent as far as the Bible and Church liturgy is concerned.

This focal phase thus, both anticipates the course of Eliot's later development and echoes the themes and ideas he had touched upon in the phase of social criticism. The example of the latter case is represented by "Animula" with its shaft of criticism directed

against the pernicious influences of civilization and spiritually barren society. However, in exploiting the cycle's key motif of the experience of rebirth and the discovery of the new focus of existence, the poem foreshadows also the new course Eliot's poetry will take in the near future. This new direction is manifested in the growing metaphysical and religious content of the whole Ariel Poems cycle.

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2. Grover Smith, T.S.Eliot's Poetry and Plays : A Study in Sources and Meanings ( The University of Chicago Press, 1958 ), p. 124.
3. George Williamson, A Reader's Guide to T.S.Eliot : A Poem - by - Poem Analysis, Thames & Hudson, ( London, 1955 ) p. 166.
4. G.Smith, op. cit., p.125
5. B.C.Southam, A Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S.Eliot, Harcourt Brace & Jovanovich, ( New York, 1968 ) pp. 121-122.
6. *ibidem.*,
7. *ibidem.*,
8. *ibid.*, p. 125
9. Thomas R.Rees, The Technique of T.S.Eliot : A Study in Orchestration of Meaning. The Mouton, ( The Hague, 1974 ) p. 286.
10. Eliot was a close student of Bradley. His doctoral thesis (Begun October 1911, completed April 1916) was entitled "Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley".
11. Southam, op.cit., p. 123
12. Drew, op. cit., p. 157
13. In answer to a researcher's inquiry Eliot said that Gullerriez and Boudin "represent different types of career, the successful person of the machine age and someone who was killed in the last war. Floret - he said - is "entirely imaginary" and therefore "no identification" should be made. However, he added that the name Floret "might suggest not wholly irrelevantly to some minds certain folklore memories". Quoted after Southam op. cit., p. 124.
14. Drew, op. cit., p. 158.

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