Death In Venice: A Tragic Vision Of A Flawed Artist? Essay, Research Paper

To what extent is Death in Venice a tragic vision of a flawed artist?

Aschenbach was certainly an artist. A very decent one. He had his life planned out, was very accurate and organized. Perhaps even a bit boring, monotonous. He was a hard-working man, he had that certain motus animi continuus. He was seen as a genius. From the beginning, he wanted to become known, to become famous, but his life was empty. He yearned for a change of pace, for some action, adventure and unpredictability of what might come. He was afraid of ?breaking out?, yet he was also afraid of being trapped.

Then he goes to Venice, where all will change. In his hotel, he sees a young boy by whom he is fascinated. The young boy is the perfect image of a happy, idle child that has all it desires, all Aschenbach never had; his childhood was rather gloom since it was spent mostly at home and indoors, he didn?t meet many people and he certainly never had that laisser aller attitude that the young boy so obviously possessed. Aschenbach studied the child and found out that his name was Tadzio. The sound of his name was almost musical. Aschenbach would sit on the beach and watch him play, the young child that, in his point of view, looked like the god Apollo. Slowly but surely, he became obsessed with Tadzio, with his youth, beauty, effortlessness and his idleness.

Whilst being obsessed with this young boy with whom Aschenbach has no connection or relation, around him disease broods. The plague is sweeping over Venice, unnoticed at first and denied by the Venitians. They are all lying, denying and acting as to make sure the tourist business will continue to thrive through this period of silent turmoil. People are dying around Aschenbach, while he is alive in the midst of death.

If he would have been wise, he would have left as soon as he started considering the fact that there was indeed a plague in Venice. Yet he could not leave. He was so immensely drawn to Tadzio, he could not make himself leave. After he finally takes the step to leave the wretched place of contagion, his bags go missing, giving him the opportunity he subconsciously longed for; to stay longer with a cause. Even when his luggage is returned, he has no intention of trying to leave again. Instead, he stays to be close to Tadzio, with whom he believes to have a bond. When the boy looks at him, he feels that the boy is interested in him, but it might as well have been a random look at which their eyes met for an instant. Tadzio?s family is now aware of Aschenbach keeping a peculiarly close eye on Tadzio. Aschenbach has changed from a dignified artist to a scary old man, lurking in the dark.

One thing he does notice about Tadzio though is that his teeth look very unhealthy and bluish. Tadzio looks sickly, fragile. And Aschenbach is glad. He is glad that Tadzio is unhealthy and will probably not live to an old age. That way he will die beautiful and young and not become like Aschenbach; a man yearning to return to the his former glory.

At this point, Aschenbach?s life goes out of hand. He no longer is under control of it. When he takes the gondola, a foreign gondolier takes him across the waters. The black gondola, reminding him of a coffin, is a grave sign of what might come for him in just a few days time.

The gondolier seems to ignore the orders given to him and goes his own direction: a direction Aschenbach didn?t ask to go to. His life is now being controlled by someone else, he has lost grip of where he is going, what he is doing and the consequences. Aschenbach is indecisive, will he let himself be directed or will he take action and rebel against this injustice? He decided to sit back and let himself be carried over the waters by a complete stranger. He?s out of control and he realizes it.

He is so obsessed with Tadzio that he actually sits on the terrace with a drink ?pretending? to enjoy it, while in fact he is neither enjoying or drinking. He is there for Tadzio. He?s devoting and dedicating all his time to this stranger that he has not even had the courage to speak to. He watches the performance being performed, his face fixed in a painful smile, while he is inwardly only thinking about Tadzio.

Trying to stay as clean and decent as possible, Aschenbach is now a frequent customer at the barber shop. Besides his hair getting cut and getting a shave, the barber suggests for him to restore what belongs to him: his youth. He dyes his hair the colour of the night, as black as it once was. His eyebrows were also tampered with, they turned into youthful arches and the eyes become larger and more brilliant by use of some delicate touches. His skin glowed again and his lips were full. As he looked in the mirror, he saw a young man looking back at him. But he did not realize he turned into that which he loathes, he now looks just like the old man he saw on the boat when he traveled to Venice at the beginning of his trip.

Tadzio sees him and Aschenbach believes that he is being admired, but he is actually being ridiculed.

The plague is now everywhere. Reckless and careless as he is, Aschenbach ignores the fact. A simple act brings him closer to his death; he buys strawberries, they were overripe and soft, but he ate them. Did he realize they carried the plague?

Every great man has a flaw, Hamlet was indecisive, MacBeth had too much ambition, Othello was jealous?and Aschenbach was obsessed. His obsession led him to forget about his own well-being and life. That?s what led him to his unlucky end. An end that is not even as satisfactory as it could?ve been. An end he didn?t deserve.