

MARK TWAIN AND ERNEST HEMINGWAY : BOTH ARE REALISTIC PAINTERS OF LIFE

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Mark Twain's primary concern as a writer was to unmask the prevailing myths about America and to create fresh conditions for their reappraisal. He examined some of the stereotyped American myths and found them inauthentic in the context of his times.

Mark Twain felt that the best way to counter these myths about America circulated by certain writers influenced by borrowed ideas was through comic techniques like parody, burlesque and pastiche. Through playfulness and comic irony one could demystify more effectively than through other devices the prevailing notions of romance. Thus his comedy became a tool for serious satire.

But Mark Twain did not sustain his comic mode throughout his career. As things at home made him bitter he developed a grim and misanthropic attitude to life. His "bifocal" vision, comic and sardonic at the same time with one dominating the other at a given moment, was almost characteristic of his temper and to some extent was representative of the mood of an average sensitive American of his time caught up in the transition of changing paradigms. Mark Twain in fact straggled between the two worlds, one derived from the aristocracy of the South, the other from the liberal humanism of the North, and between the two was the dark shadow of Puritanism with its emphasis on determinism and innate depravity of man. Caught up in these diverse and often contradictory forces, he developed a mixed response to life. To such a response any kind of teleology was suspect. Therefore, Mark Twain disliked progressive historians who mapped out culture in terms of its gradual refinement through time. In *Mysterious Stranger* and "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" he ridiculed the notion of human goodness and civilization achieved through cumulative order of refinement. History as a vertical structure of progressive

temporal improvement represented, according to him, a distorted picture of reality; on the contrary, it was, he felt, arbitrary, chancy and contingent. There was something whimsical about life which could not be explained by any logic or rational principle. There was a sort of built in aporia in life which could be best explained when encountered. This notion of indeterminacy undermined any structure of order or system based upon the philosophical attitude that the manifest structure was justified by the presence of a fundamental base. Mark Twain's recurrent employment of mysterious strangers in his fiction served as his example of disruptivity which might occur any time to an otherwise ordered system. Beginning with the stranger at Angel's Camp who filled Smiley's frog full of quail shots in "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaverous County" to the mysterious stranger in *The Mysterious Stranger*, Mark Twain filled his writings with the various incarnations of the mysterious visitor who descended from nowhere and disrupted the atmosphere of order. He perhaps modelled these figures after the mysterious visitor from the Internal Revenue Services who knocked at his door at Elmira just after his marriage and "seduced" him into declaring his income.

Mark Twain attacked the ideology of the well-defined mode of cultural expression with the counter-discourse that the notion of definability was a sort of decadence. Since everything in Europe was neatly defined, classified and labelled its culture was crystallized into frozenness, whereas the American culture by its constant renewal continued to remain vital.

Mark Twain remained comfortably at home with a large number of such inherent contradictions and paradoxes sustaining the vitality of American culture. He not only dealt with various value systems which obtained in his immediate context in their ludicrous coexistence, but also tried to transcend his milieu by philosophically joining contradictions – through playful juxtaposition. Both the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are as much a celebration of the American ideal of pastoralism as a critique of that ideal. While Mark Twain observed American culture from the perspectives of children and found it joyful, he also discovered its seamy side. Apparently comical and playful, these two novels transcend their comic exterior and address issues which have profound psychological significance even for children. Tom Sawyer is created out of nostalgic evocation of his St. Peterburg

childhood. In his attempt to relive the world which was lost forever Mark Twain suggests that even for a child certain past incidents are tremendously significant for their tragic overtones. The novel is as complex as *Huckleberry Finn* in its symbolism. McDougal's Cave, where Injun Joe had hidden his money and where he finally died of starvation, is invested with rich metaphoricity. The Cave is almost Gothic with elements of horror. Tom's entry into the Cave is described as his entry into a labyrinth: "McDougal's Cave was but a vast labyrinth of crooked aisles that ran into each other and out again and led nowhere. It was said one might wander days and nights together through its intricate tangle of rifts and chasms, and never find the end of the cave; that he might go down and down, and still down, into the earth and it was just the same --- labyrinth under the labyrinth, and no end to any of them. "Tom journey into the Cave can be taken as Mark Twain's entry into the heart of America, into the very core of American reality, which is labyrinthine. That's why, whether he was making fun of European culture or decadent romanticism in frontier consciousness, he was only trying to probe deeper into the American cultural psyche.

The implication that tragedy is the underside of comedy and threatens to surface with the slightest provocation makes Mark Twain's writing rich with complex nuances of meaning. He employed complex symbolism and metaphors in order to suggest that issues were not easily resolvable and better be left as they were in their murky uncertainty. Like Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Mark Twain attempted to probe the mystery of the journey into the heart of the American reality at the close of the nineteenth century when values were fast changing and earlier myths were being exploded. *Huckleberry Finn* is about the frontier, both geographical and psychological, about exploration and also about metaphysical quest. As Huck and Jim move on their raft from North to South, the river closes in on them and they appear to be drifting slowly into the labyrinth from which they cannot easily extricate themselves. Using the complex symbolism of the fog, Mark Twain evaded an important issue and escaped from any commitment to it. This evasion was not an escape from responsibility, but a philosophical position from which success and failure, attachment and detachment were difficult to ascertain. Jim and Huck face disaster after disaster during their journey and as they near Cairo in thick fog

Jim's prospect for freedom gets murkier and murkier. Finally, Mark Twain implied in Jim's freedom that it was not worth trying for. In fact, his freedom becomes a travesty of freedom.

Since the novel is about freedom, Huck's freedom from civilization and Jim's hope for freedom from slavery, Mark Twain plays on the concept of freedom in a philosophical way. First of all, he is undecided about whether freedom is centripetal or centrifugal. Since Huck is running away from civilization, which for Jim is where freedom is located, freedom has different connotations for each. Jim wants to be reintegrated to his family and there to enjoy the fruits of freedom, but Huck wants to flee the security of home to the wilderness of the outside world. To the former freedom is centripetal; to latter it is centrifugal. And both are justified in their pursuits. How then can one define the concept of freedom in one distinctive way? Mark Twain illustrates through this inherent instability of the notion the problematics of this concept in the American context. Does the notion of freedom really exist in America? How can one reconcile with the fact that the man who drafted the Declaration of Independence had owned slaves. How can one accept the "3/5th compromise" and say that the American constitution stresses liberty, equality, and pursuit of happiness? Mark Twain makes freedom for both Huck and Jim difficult goals to achieve. He implies, Can Huck escape from civilization? Can Jim ever be free? What is the boundary – line between civilization and barbarism? In the beginning of the novel everything looked bright and clear to Huck: "I stood on the bank and looked out over the river. All safe." But soon he was struck by terror, first by the steamboat and then by other incidents. His narrow escape from the overturned raft and from the battle-torn village of the Shephardsons and the Grangerfords suggest that he is never safe either on the raft or on land. The river becomes turbulent and dangerous. So his escape from civilization was only illusory; in reality, the more he tries to run away from civilization the more he suffers.

One can easily gather from the works of Ernest Hemingway that he is the master of great vigour and vitality. All his character, men and women have a touch of unusual energy. It has been pointed out that one of the women in one of his novels covers her husband's money but values even more her power over him. There is another important character, Margat He is drawn into the emotional mess against his

will. Although his perspectives are limited to the international sporting set the indictment is very severe. He thinks that these women are the hardest in the world. He regards them as the hardiest and the cruelest, though they are the most attractive. On account of the cruel behaviour their husbands are not happy and quite often nervous. This story might have carried the title which Hemingway attached to one of his works entitled *Esquire* : Notes on Dangerous Game : The Lion and the Buffalo are vanquishable in a strange manner.

It has been pointed out that it is only a few character that find a lasting away in man's memory, as some peculiar figures do. In *A Farewell to Arms* we come across a sentimental story of love affair. But while lieutenant Henry is only a gray shadow, the heroine has an old passion, dressed in a nurses uniform. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, we come across an unimpressive hero. On the other hand the unfortunate heroine is better remembered for her cropped hair and her participation in the famous but ludicrous sleeping bag episode than as a special person. Her name to superman pilar who alone finds a place in the memory. She will continue to be remembered as long as the Spanish are remembered for their heroic courage and power are not forgotten. Courage shown by the Spanish people in the civil-war cannot be forgotten. The critics regard Pilar as one of the best portrayed characters.

Hemingway's philosophy of mankind is the philosophy of action. He has sincere faith in the belief that honesty of a man lies in the honesty and sincerity of action. He is humble according to him if he acts humbly. Hemingway concerns himself primarily with the presentation of procedure. The procedure is carefully stated It is meticulously detailed. It must result in a satisfying experience. The procedure is most clearly evident in Hemingway's treatment of the bull fight, in *Death in the Afternoon*. It is concerned with an evaluation of manhood or the ability to abide by the rules and the description, the procedure by means of which they prove possession and communicate the satisfaction to be gained from a proper performance of function to the spectator. War, the prizefighting, hunting etc. are some of the other celebrations by means of which Hemingway's philosophy of man is conveyed. The bull fighting is the worst because it always ends in the death. It amounts to a religious sacrifice by means of which a man can place himself in harmony with the universe. He can satisfy the spiritual as well as the physical side of

his nature. He can satisfy and elevate himself in much the same way that he can in any sacrificial religion. The difference between Hemingway's religion of man and formal religion is simple, yet profound that in the former the elevation does not exist beyond the limits of this world, and in the latter, the ultimate elevation is totally otherworldly.

Hemingway's description of the bull fight has been widely popular. There are aspects of his work which have equally been liked and praised. For example, there is the description of Santiago's Killing the Marlin: "He felt faint again, but held on to the fish and maintain The Strain, "Fish", said the old man, "You are going to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too." His admiration for the fish grew with his exhaustion. He did not care who killed because his respect for his adversary was as great as his confidence in himself. "Keep your head clear and know how to suffer like a man." His eye sight was failing him and he could see only in flashes. On the seventh turn he dropped the line. Taking all his pain and what was left of his strength and his long lost pride he lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove and drove it with all his might into the side of the fish where the heart of the fish was. The fish rose in the air and he felt the iron blade of the harpoon going into the heart of the fish. The fish seemed to hang in the air, then it fell into water and was dead.

The old man, weak and faltering, cleaned the harpoon, and when cleared, he looked carefully, in the glimpse of the vision that he had. He wanted to see the fish to touch and feel it. But the fish was dead.

Now the fight against the fish was over. But there was a lot yet to be done. When he had tied the fish's head against the boat, he could not believe its size. It was about fifteen hundred pounds. He stepped up the mast and set sail moving south west. Hard wind was blowing which helped him considerably in his carrying the weight. He caught some shrimps, pinched off their heads and chewed them up. Now he lay in the boat thinking whether the whole experience was a dream. The sight of the fish beside the boat assured him that it was not a dream. It was as real as reality itself. As they were sailing homeward Santiago thought that he had proved superior to the fish through trickery and that he did not mean any harm to the fish. There were clouds in the sky and the old man knew that the breeze would last the whole night. Toward evening first shark hit him. The shark was no accident. The blood flowing out of the

Marlin was leaving a long trail behind it and it had attracted the shark. It was absolutely sure of the prey. It was a big marco shark, built to swim as fast as the fastest fish in the seas.

It has been stressed that Hemingway made efforts to offer life as simply, lucidly and frankly as possible with some exception. Generally his novels have simple plots which not only made them effective and pleasing as possible. They are primarily concerned with one or two characters, their action, two characters, their actions, their odds and ordeals and their struggle to achieve some dignity. Let it be remembered that dignity is the greatest achievement and the struggle to achieve dignity is one of the greatest sources of joy. This phenomena of his work applies to everybody and apply measures that one could think of. The novels usually at a point where they begin. For example Jack Barnes love for Brett. Ashley cannot be consummated because he is badly physically injured. At the end of the novel he is as frustrated as in the beginning. The few complications that creep into the theme are generally solved and their method is just a step into the development of the main character. The reader is interested to know how the main character resolved a certain conflict and overcome obstacles, but the end seems to be predetermined. For example, in *A Farewell To Arms* Catharina Barkley is slightly crazy because she has lost her lover. She meets Henry and falls in love with him. At the end of the novel when she dies in childbirth Henry is not in a different state of mind. He is as disconsolate as Catherine in the first pages of the novel. Other examples may be cited with similar effect. In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Robert Jordan has gone to blow up the bridge, but the futility that hangs over the whole novel makes his vigorous effort useless. It leaves a void in Maria's mind, and psychological pain is much deeper than the one the Faseist had left earlier. Pilar's prediction that Jordon may not live long seems to take away the sting from the tragedy from Jordon. All that is achieved is the insight that one ought to go on struggling come what may and whatever be the cost, In Santiago's heroic struggle one sympathises with him, but he returns as empty handed as when he set out on the eighty fifth day.

Carlos Baker calls the plots of Hemingway cyclic. But some other critics do not agree with him. They opine that if the plots of Hemingway had been cyclic , they would not have insight obtained in the course of action . It is said, therefore, that

his plots are not cyclic. The hero does not achieve anything materially, but he has obtained an insight into his own identity and presented this unique experience to the world. The main character invariably grows in stature in the course of the novel.

Hemingway is a great fictional artist. He has employed with credit symbolism, irony, allusion and metaphor to give his script a better and clear understanding. For example Frederic Henry's experience becomes the experience of the whole of American nation during the First World War. Similarly Santiago's experience is the struggle of the whole mankind against nature which is sometimes benevolent and sometimes mysteriously cruel. The ignorant tourist at the end of *The Old Man and the Sea* represent all the outsiders who cannot understand what Santiago has achieved, and what his huge Marlin signifies. The short scene in *A Farewell to Arms* where Frederick Henry empties his glass on a burning log of wood so that he may drink his whisky and kill hundreds of ants immaturely, even they were burning to die in any case, becomes a symbol of humanity caught between the devil and the deep sea. At the time of the award of the Nobel Prize the selection committee made a very adequate observation: "He is one who has achieved a style forming mastery of the art of modern narration."

The first impression of the American life and letters is paradoxical: On the one hand they claim to be peace-loving people, offering even their lives in the cause of peace all over the world. On the other hand they are attracted by violence. Their literature is full of men and women who have employed questionable means towards desirable ends. The conventional morality to which they pay lip service goes overboard. Its roots can be traced to Hemingway's writing of twenties and thirties. The worldview that implicitly prevails in Hemingway's novels and short stories is responsible for the qualities that make the tough guy. Hemingway's had already popularized the cult of violence in his short stories which made its strong impact on people. We were already introduced to violence in some of the earlier novels and short stories in different forms. For example in *Indian Camp* we have seen through the eyes of Nick Adams. He saw an Indian Husband cut his throat from ear to ear with a razor blade because he could not bear the agonies of his screaming wife in child birth. In *The Battle* Nick escaped several punishments at the hands of ex-prize fighter, an outcast from society. It is not noticeable that the experiences of a

revolutionist are not pleasant. *Big Two Hearted River* is the account of a young man's psychological condition who has just returned from war and is suffering from Neurosis. In *The Killers* even if violence is not let loose, the threat of violence is as ominous as violence itself. One might argue that there are few murders or executions in these stories but the fact remains that the atmosphere is charged with violence, It is the narrator's technique that keeps the cries and shrieks muffled, but in their effect in the mind of the reader, they are devastating. The overwhelming impression is that of a violent world, a world war, the world gone to pieces, the world disintegrating. It is true that Hemingway is concerned more with human relationship as novelists are, but he could not be indifferent to the social framework and cosmic order in which men and women make their futile efforts to connect the demands of the westerners as opposed to contemplate or reflect-and for these men and women violence seems to be the only resource to assert themselves to make their presence felt.

It has been pointed out in his earlier collections of stories he was attracted toward violence whether it may be in the woods of the Michigan or on the battle front in Europe. According to Philip Young, "Hemingway is one in which things do not decompose or even erase." In *the Michigan* he describes the disillusionment suffered by a virgin in her first sexual intercourse. In *Indian Camp* caesarean operation performed on young Italian wife without giving anesthesia. The invalid husband who watched the whole operation could bear it no longer, therefore, he cut his throat with a sharp razor. It is also noticeable that the American adolescent has come face to face with the brutality of life and in this corrupt world, he realizes that it is no longer possible to have a decent, respectful and dignified life.

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