



American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews (AJERR)



Intertextuality and pastiche Technoques of Mark Twain Select Novels

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ABSTRACT

William Dean Howells remembered Twain as “entirely satisfied with the result of the Civil War and . . . eager to have its facts and meanings brought out at once in history.[19] By 1881, Twain had observed the consequences of the Civil War and felt that the freedmen needed help in their new roles in society. Hence twain uses in his two novels Intersexuality and Pastiche techniques. Which means an important element of postmodernism is its acknowledgment of previous literary works. The intersexuality of certain works of postmodern fiction, the dependence on literature that has been created earlier, attempts to comment on the situation in which both literature and society found themselves in the second half of the 20th century: living, working, and creating on the backs of those that had come before.

Key words: Intersexuality, pastiche techniques, postmodernism, literature and society

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How to cite this article:

G.SANKAR, DR.R.SOUNDARARAJAN and S.P SURESH KUMAR. INTERSEXUALITY AND PASTICHE TECHNIQUES OF MARK TWAIN. American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews, 2016,1(1): 0031-0037.

Accepted 16 September 2016; published 16 September 2016.

eSciencePublisher®

eSciPub LLC, Houston, TX USA.

Website: <http://escipub.com/>

INTRODUCTION

Pastiche has elements of previous genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice, or to comment on the writing of their contemporaries. Thomas Pynchon, one of the most important postmodern authors, uses elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction, songs, pop culture references, and well-known, obscure, and fictional history.

He openly supported Frederick Douglass, a champion of the Negro, and one of his personal contributions was supporting one Negro through college for four years. He argued that most of the guilt of the blacks when they went wrong fell upon the heads of the white race [20]. He publicly exclaimed in 1888 that “we used to own our brother human beings, and used to buy them and sell them, lash them, thrash them, break their piteous hearts and we ought to be ashamed of ourselves.” [21]

The deep concern that Twain obviously felt over the plight of the Negro was the incentive behind his attack on the institution of slavery in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. He was attempting, through the use of satire, to make the world aware of man’s inhumanity to his fellow man and to demonstrate through the characters of Huck and Jim the difficulty of the Southern whites (regardless of social status) in accepting the Negro as a human being. To do this he maintained that they must repudiate their consciences. Buck, by being white, is representative of the society of the antebellum South which not only accepted slavery as a natural part of existence but depended upon it for that existence.

When Buck first confronts Jim on Jackson’s Island he has no difficulty in joining forces with him. Buck has been accused by some critics of being so wild and uncivilized that “he had imbibed no proper feelings for runaway slaves. Be chummed with Jim immediately.” [22] It is obvious in the novel that, even though Buck’s decision to stay with Jim was relatively easy, he did indicate his awareness of the issue when he stated, “People would call me a low-down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum . . . but that don’t make no difference. I ain’t a-going to tell, and I ain’t a-going back there, anyways.” [23] Twain is ironically showing through Buck’s statement that society would ostracize him for joining forces with a runaway slave. As Jim and Buck prepare for their journey on the river, Huck asks Jim why he ran away. Jim had overheard Miss Watson, his owner, propose to sell

him down to Orleans for “eight hund’d dollars.” [24] This pious maiden-lady could in an instant decide to sell “a faithful servant, an affectionate creature”, [25] because she couldn’t resist the \$800 offered for him. Twain indirectly criticizes the slave owner for her inhumanity to her fellowman. Yet, we must remember that the society in which she lives finds no fault with her deeds.

Another satiric reference to the white man’s feelings toward slaves is seen through the thoughts of Pap Finn. Pap, being a representative of the lowest white social strata, felt strongly superior to the Negro. His tirade on the “free nigger from Ohio” [26] reflects the stupidity of a social system that ranks Pap higher on the social scale than the Negro professor, despite the Negro’s obvious superiority of personality and intellect.

Twain chooses to expose the evils of slavery through the use of Huck’s conscience, and throughout the book we see his human feelings in conflict with the pressures of the social morality into which he was born. Huck admits being shocked when Jim says he would steal his children. Until this point in the novel, Huck was not clearly aware of what he had done by helping Jim, and when he began to realize it, it “scorched” him “more and more.” [27] Richard P. Adams maintains that Huck’s inner struggle arises because “an individual conscience is usually an ally of the social pressure for conformity.” [28]

Buck’s remarks such as “he had an uncommon level head, for a nigger” [29] and “you can’t learn a nigger to argue” [30] are two prime examples of the imbedded prejudice within him. Twain used statements such as these to emphasize the injustice toward the slave. The white man attributed little or no intelligence to the Negro, and through Huck Twain reveals his disgust with this attitude.

The incident of the separation of Huck and Jim in the fog is a critical one in helping to establish Huck’s awareness of Jim as a sensitive and proud human being. In making Jim think he had dreamed of the separation, Huck’s practical joke backfired, and Jim’s speech to Huck opened Huck’s eyes to the dignity of his friend:

What do dey stan’ for? I’s gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin’ for you, en went to sleep, my heart

wuz mos' broke bekase you
 wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no
 mo1 what become er me en
 de raf'. En, when I wake
 up en find you back agin*, i
 all safe en soun', de tears
 come en I could a got down
 on my knees en kiss' you'
 foot I's so thankful. En all j
 you wuz thihkin' 'bout wuz how
 you could make a fool uv i
 ole Jim wid a lie. Hat truck
 dah is trash; en trash is
 what people is dat puts dirt
 on de head er dey fren's
 en makes 'em ashamed.[31]

Huck's reaction to Jim's speech was one of shame, and this feeling was brought it about by the sudden realization that he had betrayed a friend. He admitted,

It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger—but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn't j dohimnomoremeantricksneither, and I wouldn'tdonej that one if I'd a knower it would make him feel that way.[32]

Twain has used Jim in this instance to point out that the slave had feelings just as any other human being. Huck had to start to come to terms with his prejudices before he could apologize for his thoughtlessness.

In the confrontation with the slave hunters, Twain again uses Huck's struggle with conscience to emphasize the social implications of slavery. Huck is keenly aware that by not exposing Jim he is bucking the dictates of society. He is completely puzzled by his inability to turn Jim over to the slave hunters and can only ascribe his actions to his not having gotten "start-ed right." [33]. This episode is full of ironic implication. Huck has placed himself outside society by protecting Jim. He considers his act a wrong against society, and never fully understands that he has obeyed his human instincts. Ironically, the slave hunters who are engaged in a socially acceptable profession are actually the guilty parties in committing a social wrong.

As the story moves along Jim's independence grows and it becomes increasingly easier for Huck to accept him as a fellow human being. We begin to share Jim's heartbreak and see with our own eyes the coldness with which slave families were separated. We also

become aware through Twain's satiric inferences of the cruel attitudes and actions of the white people brought about by owning their fellow man. It is easy to identify with Huck when he is fighting his battle of conscience. He is aware that through helping his fellow man he is inviting social disgrace and is "damning himself to hell-fire." [34] Through this feeling, Twain again satirizes the horrid fate man believed would come if he opposed the convictions of society.

With the emergence of the Duke of Bilgewater and the Lost Dauphin, Twain presents two characters with convictions as much outside the conventions of society as he could. These two rogues interfere with the closeness between Huck and Jim. They are convinced that Jim is run-away and it is implied that they hold him as an ace in their backpocket in the event circumstances do not work in their favor. The treatment Jim endured from these two rogues was no better than that of a slave. They left him tied on the raft while they were on their escapades and finally, after his complaints, they dressed him up, painted him blue, and labeled him a "sick Arab" [35] to prevent anyone from bothering him. This appeased Jim but this type of action is purposely used by Twain to show how the whites misused their fellow man and how the Negroes silently accepted the ridicule.

Huck learns a lesson about human nature when he discovers that the King has sold Jim for "forty dirty dollars." [36] Because of the King's despicable action, Huck is again in a moral dilemma. He has to choose between what he has been taught and what he feels. When he decides to seek Jim and help him escape, he honestly believes he is damning himself forever.

I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other wam't. And for a starter, I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too; because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog.[37]

The feelings Huck experiences as he makes his decision satirize the feelings of Southern white men of the time. I feel that Twain is attempting to expose their

prejudices so that they and others might come aware of how deeply instilled and how ridiculous they were.

The final chapters of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have brought forth as many varied criticisms as the novel itself. Most of the literary critics have felt that the novel could have ended prior to Suck's arrival at the Phelps' farm. As always, there are those who disagree. In a study, "The Unity and Coherence of *Huckleberry Finn*" (1956), Richard P. Adams argues that Twain used the escape plot involving Tom Sawyer to satirize sentimental literature of his times and to ridicule the aristocratic pretensions by identifying Jim, the imprisoned slave, with the noble persons in whose renowned adventures his liberation is molded. [38] Mr. Adams states that the more absurd Tom's antics become through this satire, the more immense expression of contempt for adult society is shown. Twain attempts to show, through Jim's acquiescence to Tom's ridiculous plan, Jim's sense of loyalty and his moral stature. He makes the reader aware of Huck's acceptance of Jim as a fellow human being and the cruel nature of that segment of society involved.

By using Huck's conscience, Twain has satirized both sides of the social problem of slavery. He has exposed the reader to the "injustice, hypocrisy, and the general moral ugliness and weakness of the Southern society before the war. [39] Not only did Twain feel that slavery was evil, but he also felt the society which depended upon it was evil and that the way that society concealed the evil from itself was equally bad

Temporal Distortion and Christianity

The use of non-linear timelines and narrative techniques in a story The picture Twain has painted of the majority of the Southern folk throughout *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been of "honest, brave, sincere, good Christian people. [40]. And, yet, he continuously displays their thoughts and deeds in a hypocritical light. The incidents which are highlighted by comments on Christianity and Christian folk are intermingled throughout the entire novel.

The conflict of what people think they stand for and what social pressures force them to do is highly accentuated by the actions of these so-called Christians. Early in the book, Huck forms his opinion on religion. He begins to think that the kind of religion one practices is sometimes dictated by the personality of the

person practicing it. The Widow Douglas, who took Huck in to raise and "civilize," [41] was a very pious woman but yet she appeared hypocritical to Huck.

They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself. [42]

Miss Watson, the widow's sister, was supposedly ardent for piety and good manners. She was always "peeking" [43] at Huck and yet she herself, exhibited social traits not included in the Christian code. She was so greedy that she could sell Jim for eight hundred dollars. Perhaps, on her death bed, fear of going to the "bad place" [44] - was responsible for her change of heart about Jim. She set him free.

Huck's attitude about religion reflecting personalities perhaps came from the "Providences" [45] of the widow and Miss Watson. He reckoned that he "would stand considerable show with the widow's Providence, but if Miss Watson's got him there warn't no help for him anymore." [46]

The supposedly Christian heart of the new judge was satirized when he talked to Pap Finn of temperance and attempted to reform him. When Pap Finn could not last through one night out of his routine, "the judge felt kind of sore. He reckoned a body could reform the ole man with a shotgun, maybe, but he didn't know no other way. [47]. Here, Twain has broadly satirized the Christian do-gooders (in the person of the new judge) who take up causes without any real knowledge of the people or situations involved.

After Huck's elaborate murder scene planned to help him escape from Pap, the townsfolk search for his body by firing cannons over the water and sending out loaves of bread with quicksilver in them. Huck was quite hungry by that time and received the bread gladly: "I reckon the widow or the parson or somebody prayed that this bread would find me, and here it has gone and done it." [48] He professes that prayer must work for some people but is certain that nothing

would have come from his prayers.

Pap's questionable Christian attitude is significant only in that it is in perfect line with his character. He always said to "take a chicken when you get a chance, because if you don't want him yourself you can easily find somebody who does, and a good deed ain't never forgot." [49]. Pap called this borrowing; the Widow Douglas said it was "a soft name for stealing." [50] Twain has thus set forth yet another attitude that is inconsistent with Christianity.

After Huck convinced the watchman of the steamboat Walter Scot that he would be paid handsomely, he rushed to rescue a band of murderers. In this instance, Twain has emphasized the inhumanity of the watchman who would have left the people to die until his greed could be satisfied. By comparing the watchman and Huck, one can see that Huck's tolerance and humaneness far outide that of most supposedly good people. Huck expresses his pleasure to have done a Christian deed when he thought, "I wished the widow knowed about it. I judged she would be proud of me for helping these rascallions, because rascallions and dead beats is the kind the widow and good people take the most interest in." [51] The obvious intent in Huck's thought was to question the basis for the need to help people such as this.

The slavehunters were supposedly good men and yet their lack of consideration for their fellow man is evident when they assume Huck's fictional Pap has the smallpox and lack the charity to help the boy. They try to ease their consciences by leaving Huck money. And, their most un-Christian gesture is to suggest how he might convince others to help him. They are unaware that they have been duped.

The Grangerford-Shepherdson feud is another definite example of the pseudo-Christian code of honor that many in the South lived "by. That honor is essentially a perversion of a Christian Code and, ironically, an unwitting violation of the First Commandment with its admonition against pride. The two families are committed to destroying one another for a reason no one can remember.

How un-Christian can people be? And yet, Twain leads us to believe that these people regarded themselves to be brave, honest, sincere good Christian people. Huck became aware of the religion the feuders claimed to believe in and the ironic brutality of their deeds. The nearness of their guns during the church service (about brotherly love) emphasized the

hypocrisy. When Huck returned to the church later in the day to get Miss Sophia's Testament, he found inside the church "a hog or two." [52] He took the time to compare man to a hog, to man's disadvantage: "If you notice, most folks don't go to church only when they've got to; but a hog is different." [53] Here again, Twain points out the hypocrisy of "good Christian folk" who attend church on Sunday but are unaware of the non-Christian deeds they do all week.

The King and the Duke, two scamps if there ever were any, take advantage of the country folk. The King and Duke depend upon the stupidity, ignorance and gullibility of the people in order to succeed in their schemes. The scene at a country camp meeting when Twain allowed the King to repent of his evil life of piracy indicates Twain's feelings toward this hell-fire and damnation religion. By allowing these people to be duped, he reveals his scorn of this type of religion.

When the King and Duke had difficulty deciding on their next project, the King said he would "just trust in Providence to lead him the into the Wilks episode which was a perfect plan for these two scoundrels whose lives were a continuous circle of role playing. Twain uses these scenes to show us that human beings seem to enjoy sentimentality and actually prefer it to rational thinking. When Huck gets to know the Wilks girls and realizes that there are a few really good, pious people in the world, his conscience will not allow further victimizing of the girls. By stealing the already stolen money, Huck is committing an un-Christian act but, because he is working against the evil forces of the King and Duke, he feels no guilt.

The funeral service of Peter Wilks is another truly humorous satire of people in a religious situation. The satiric description of the proceedings make the reader aware of how ridiculous they are. One readily sees that the people involved in a religious ceremony act as if it is purely for their entertainment. Through his association with the Wilks family, Huck is beginning to realize that there are some rewards in taking a Christian attitude. When he finally decides to expose the King and Duke as the frauds they are, he says, "I'm going to chance it; I'll up and tell the truth this time, though it does seem most like setting down on a bag of powder and touching it off just to see where you'll go to." [55] .And, he was rewarded in his judgment of Miss Mary Jane. When she learned the truth she said she would pray for him. Huck was touched by her gesture and his self-opinion shows through his thoughts

when he says, "Pray for me! I reckoned if she knowed me she'd take a job that was more nearer her size, if ever I'd a thought it would do any good for me to pray for her, blamed if I wouldn't adone it or bust." [56]

Even though Huck was responsible for thwarting the plans of the King and Duke in the Wilks episode, when he later witnesses the scene of their punishment for all their scandalous deeds, he relates to the reader his own Christian attitude:

Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pityful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another. [57]

Huck tells us, "It don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway." [58]

Huck had "been helped in arriving at the above conclusion when he was confronted with his soul-searching problem of whether or not to rescue Jim from slavery after the King's despicable action of selling him. Huck's moral dilemma at this point emphasized the strong Calvinist attitude in the South at this time. He knew that, had he attended Sunday school, he would have been taught that to help a "nigger" would have condemned him to "everlasting fire." [59] When he learned that Jim had been sold, he felt that Providence had slapped him in the face to remind him of his wickedness. He tried to pray for forgiveness and said he would write to Miss Watson to let her know Jim's whereabouts. In trying to exonerate himself he learned, "You can't pray a lie." [60] He wrote the letter exposing him and struggled with his conscience. His final decision to free Jim was the ultimate irony of the scene. In order to do the Christian thing he was going against the order of society and to his way of thinking, he was a sinner.

CONCLUSION

In the final scenes of the novel, which take place on the Phelps' farm we are once again reminded of the conflict of what people think they stand for and what social pressure forces them to do. The Phelps Christians and tries to live as they should, but yet they look upon slavery as an acceptable practice.

Even though slavery is not considered un-Christian by some, the deeds enacted and attitudes toward fellow beings brought about by the institution of slavery are un-Christian. We do see that these people visit their run-away captive, pray with him, and show him some kindness. However, Twain used Tom Sawyer's romantic notions and run-away imagination to show one example of how the slaves were at the complete mercy of their masters and how they had to endure much suffering. We see Tom's amorality when he betrays his aunt's hospitality and when we learn of the torment he has purposely put Jim through, knowing full well that Jim was a "freeman." [61] The terms "sister" and "brother" [62] frequently used in this section are indicative of the practices of certain religious groups to show that in their eyes, all are children of God. The series of factions in these final chapters show quite the contrary. And throughout the novel, in developing Huck's character, Twain has attempted to give us an inside view of hypocrisy in the Christian attitude.

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