

Pudd'nhead Wilson :A Sombre Mark

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Abstract

Pudd'nhead Wilson (henceforth *PW*) is a novel which is full of pessimism and despair. This makes it different from the other works written by Mark Twain. Most of the novels written earlier by him are full of humour and this is why he has become a well-known humourist. *PW* introduces the other face of Twain; that is, it depicts his seriousness in treating certain social problems during his lifetime. After the failure of the Webster Publishing Company and his subsequent bankruptcy, Susie's death in 1896 and the final collapse of the Piage, July, 1893, the forthcoming events had apparently cast their shadow ahead. Cox (1966: 225) thinks that "The book, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, was written in a desperate effort to stave off the financial disaster engulfing him."

The caustic humour of *PW* sets it apart from its predecessors: a dry, bleak mirth that has a despairing hopelessness about it. The Tragedy of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* may be said to be Twain's way of trying to come to terms with personal tragedy, guilt and despair. It is really the tragedy of a black mother.

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* the aura of idyllic freedom and innocent fun in the earlier novels is replaced by an atmosphere of cynicism and distrust, deceit and betrayal. Twain depicts the rigid attitude regarding the distinction between races.

In *PW* Twain squarely confronts the issue of slavery and the injustice and oppression in perpetrates on the slave as a race, class and communi

Pudd'nhead Wilson is usually among Twain's novels in that does not appear to be the work of the humourist who wrote *Roughing It*, *Tom Sawyer* or *A Connecticut Yankee in king Arthur's Court*. Pessimism and despair lie at the center of the novel: a deep-seated pessimism that can no longer see a ray of hope in existence. Biographical explanations have been offered by critics like De Voto who seeks for the cause of Twain's sombre mood in the failure of the Webster publishing company in 1894 and Twain's subsequent bankruptcy, Susie's death in 1896 and the final collapse of the Paige Typesetter. Though all

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these took place after *PW* was claimed to have been completed at the end of July, 1893, the forthcoming events had apparently cast their shadow ahead. Cox also thinks that "The book, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, was written in a desperate effort to stave off the financial disaster engulfing him." At the same time Cox admits, "But for all the urgency of the period *Pudd'nhead Wilson* evolved slowly was extensively trimmed and concentrated before Mark Twain released it" (Cox,1966:225).

George Toles has suggested a possible connection between the bleak mood of the novel and the biographical factors which appear to have influenced it:

(This was) a time when despair over the long delayed but always expected financial ruin awaiting him fitfully alternated with a frantic hope of recovery [...] it was also a period of subtle and mysterious mental conversion, a growing away from easy securities and promised fulfillments of all sorts, and a simultaneous movement toward an obscure and measureless futility

(inKar,1992:198).

Apparently it was time of pressure and troubles from all sides .Twain was unable to keep up with the expenses of the establishment at Hartford, so he moved to Europe in order to economize. Meanwhile he was writing frantically to pay for the expenses incurred for the Paige Typesetter. He was also trying to keep up with his projects: sometimes corresponding and sometimes coming all the way from Europe. In this depressing scenario it is only natural that the writer's vision should be grimly deterministic and his irony savage in character.

However, more than personal catastrophes govern the bleak vision as found in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, which is basically an indictment of the oppression that was embedded in the slaveholding system of the south states. Mark Twain's critical attitude about slavery and its consequences was already there in the earlier novel *A Connecticut Yankee*, but it is in this novel that we see Mark Twain facing the issue of slavery squarely and for the first time taking a judgmental attitude toward it. The Civil War had left an indelible impression on Mark Twain's mind and had permanently coloured his attitude to slavery. In his description of Mr. Driscoll's attitude toward his slaves we have an instance of the savage irony that is characteristic of this novel: "He was a fairly humane man toward *slaves* and other *animals*: he was an exceedingly humane man toward the erring of his own race" (*PW*: 10). (Italics mine).

In Twain's earlier novels in which slave characters appear (as in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*) the author's attitude to slavery does not appear to be one

of horrified aversion. Samuel Langhorne Clemens was brought up in the southern states where slavery was *de rigueur* and the attitude towards slaves was that of indulgent paternalism rather than selfishly cruel exploitation (as in the cotton plantations further south). As he looks back, though, the very tone of his reminiscences suggests an implied criticism which appears to have crept into his later writings:

In my schoolboy days I had no aversion to slavery . I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it . No one arraigned it in my hearing : the local papers said nothing against it : the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind

(*Autobiography* 6).

However, while confessing to an appreciation for the fine qualities of the Negro and a strong liking for them in general, Clemens admits to the existence of a fine line of demarcation between the Negro slave and his white masters:

All the negroes were friends of ours, and with those of our own age we were in effect comrades [...].we were comrades and yet not comrades : colour and condition interposed a subtle line which both parties were conscious of and which rendered complete fusion impossible

(*MTA*: 5-6).

This recollection – with a faint tinge of the confession – seems to imply the admission of an earlier acceptance which he had come to question in later years.

II

The caustic humour of *PW* sets it apart from its predecessors : a dry , bleak mirth that has a despairing hopelessness about it – a misanthropic attitude that can be found in many of Twain's later works like 'The Mysterious Stranger' , 'The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg ' and 'What is Man ?' According to Fiedler, the humour of *PW* is "on a level of grotesquerie that is more violent and appalling than anything avowedly serious. It is the humour of Quilp and Faulkner's idiot Snopes, the humour of the freak "(in Smith, 1962: 132).

If, as Eric Bentley says, misery is the basis of comedy, and "gaiety is [...] an ever-recurring transcendence", so that "comedy, like tragedy, is a way of trying to cope with despair, mental suffering, guilt and anxiety" (in Palmer, 1984: 140).

The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson may be said to be Samuel Langhorne Clemens's way of trying to come to terms with personal tragedy, guilt and despair. Though Clemens, or Twain, calls *Pudd'nhead Wilson* a "tragedy", it is definitely not a "tragedy" of the man so-called; rather, it is his story told with a comic overtone. At the same time it is the tragedy of a black mother.

The opening description of Dawson's Landing is ironic: the outwardly idyllic appearance conceals the essential corruption of life inside the village. Dawson's Landing is different from the St. Petersburg of Tom and Huck: it is an adult world seen, as Leslie Fielder points out, from the outside rather than the inside (in Smith: 133).

A rather farcical episode in the meeting of the Sons of Liberty, a faction of the village that was in favour of rum drinking; the rather haphazard manner in which the event is conducted is amply demonstrated by the inadvertent election of Count Angelo Capello, a teetotaler, to the membership of the faction along with his brother Luigi, who is not. Tom, who is fairly inebriated, insults the twins without provocation and is kicked into the auditorium by Luigi. His tumultuous progress down the length of the auditorium is described in a typically burlesque manner. The resultant fire does not harm the members, but the efforts of the village fire company to douse the flames do, washing some off the roof where they had taken refuge, and nearly drowning others. "Such citizens who were of a thoughtful and judicious temperament did not insure against the fire; they insured against the fire company," Twain concludes ironically at the end of the chapter (*PW*: 70).

The description of F.F.V.s and their code is apparently admiring and respectful but it is seen to contain elements of bathos which come to the surface at a later stage. The exaggerated disbelief of Judge Driscoll's reaction to Tom's contemptible retaliation against his humiliation at the hands of Count Luigi is comically grotesque:

" ' Say it ain't true , Pembroke; tell me it ain't true! He said in a weak voice.

" There was nothing weak in the deep organ- tones that responded :

' You know it's a lie as well as I do, old friend. He is of the best blood of the Old Dominion. "

(*PW*: 72)

The theatrical manner in which he receives the news of Luigi's acceptance of his challenge is purposely made to seem as if it has come straight out of the melodrama performed on the riverboat theatres of the period.

Savage irony and a bitter mordant humour take the place of fun and laughter. The tone is dryly sarcastic all along- whether it is the initial action of calling a clever, discerning man a " Pudd'nhead " or the eventual acceptance by the

villagers that the joke's on them :“ And this is the man the likes of us have been called a Pudd'nhead for more than twenty years. He has resigned from that position, friends.’ ‘Yes, but it isn't vacant- we're elected” (PW: 142). The biting sarcasm is very much there, as much in the sayings quoted from “Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar” as in the way the events are described. The use of indirection, duality, irony and sarcasm in the “Calendar” is Wilson's (and, incidentally, Twain's) way of overcoming the inherent misery of life and living, which is otherwise grimly portrayed in the rest of the novel. Erick Bentley's dictum – “Comedy is indirect, ironical. It says fun when it means misery. And when it lets the misery show, it is able to transcend it in joy” (in Palmer: 141) -- is amply illustrated by sayings in the “Calendar”: “Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? Is it because we are not the person involved” (*Epigraph to Chapter IX, PW: 48*). “If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man” (*Epigraph to Chapter XVI, PW: 99*). “Gratitude and treachery are merely the two extremities of the same procession. You have seen all of it that is worth staying for when the band and gaudy officials have gone by” (*Epigraph to Chapter XVIII, PW: 105*).

While the tragedian highlights a particular crisis in the life of an individual, family or class, the comic genius writes from the steady ache of misery which is a part of life. The strategy of comedy is to avoid or evade the unpleasant rather than tackle it head on. In Chapter XX, in which it is revealed that Tom's fingerprints tallied Judge Driscoll and also that babies had been interchanged in early infancy, the saying from the Calendar appended to the head of the chapter is:

Even the clearest and most perfect circumstantial evidence Is likely to be at fault, after all, and therefore ought to be received with great caution. Take the case of any pencil, sharpened by any woman: if you have witness, you will find she did it with a knife; but if you take simply the aspect of the pencil, you will say she did it with her teeth

(PW:

123).

The devastating satire of the epigraph of Chapter II is something that seems to belong less to Twain than to Pope and Swift:

Adam was but human – this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the people's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The

mistake was in not forbidding the serpent: then he would have eaten the serpent (*PW*: 6).

April 1. This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty- four

(131).

A rare example of Twain's benign tolerant Kind of humour (in this novel) is to be found in his description of the appearance of the twins at the Widow Cooper's. The naïve and simple delight of both the widow and her daughter (not to speak of the villagers) at being honored by the presence of such talented and distinguished foreigners is described in tones of indulgent humour:

It was a proud occasion for the widow, and she promised herself high satisfaction in showing off her fine foreign birds before her neighbors and friends - simple folk who had hardly ever seen a foreigner of any kind, and never one of any distinction or style

(*PW*: 33).

Indeed, Rowena's triumph is almost Tom Sawyerish: "She was to be familiarly near the source of its glory and feel the full flood of it pour over her and about her; the other girls could only gaze and envy, not partake" (*PW*: 33).

In the Calendar the utopian ideal is implied even though the observations are realistic in character. The quotation from the heading of Chapter II of *PW* is a very realistic illustration of human psychology but it does make one involuntarily think of a world in which there is no serpent to tempt Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and entice Adam to do likewise. The "sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities" that Bakhtin speaks of in his Introduction to *Rabelais and His World*, and "the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' [...]" (in Palmer: 100) is illustrated in this saying at the head of Chapter III: "Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life is, knows how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first great benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world" (*PW*: 13)

The profane character of the carnivalesque is brought out in this saying: "*October 12, the Discovery*. It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it" (*PW* 'Conclusion': 142).

The laughter of "Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar" is complex, ambivalent, gay and triumphant as well as mocking and deriding. For instance, there is the epigraph at the head of Chapter IV :

There is this trouble about special providences—namely, there is so often a doubt as to which party was intended to be the beneficiary. In the case of the children, the bears, and the prophet, the bears got more real satisfaction out of the episode than the prophet did, because they got the children

(PW: 18).

The epigraph at the beginning of Chap. V is another illustration of this: "Training is everything. The peach was once a Bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but Cabbage with a college education" (26). As Ian Donaldson puts it in "Justice in the Stocks" (1970):

It is not surprising, then, that the comic dramatist should do often find himself accused of being a social saboteur: for such comedy characteristically represents society collapsing under the strain of scandalous and widespread folly and ineptitude, [...]

(In Palmer:

108).

Thus Wilson says in his 'Calendar': "Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example" (PW: 115). "Nothing so needs reforming as other people's Habits" (91).

At certain levels, comedy is a satisfying act of "revenge those whose authority we habitually respect and fear" (in Palmer: 105). As Pudd'nhead Wilson observes in his 'Calendar': "When I reflected upon the number of disagreeable people who I know have gone to a better world, I am moved to lead a different life" (75).

Another saying goes: "When we speak of Clive, Nelson, and Putnam as men who 'didn't know what fear was', we ought to always add the flea-and put him at the head of the procession" (70).

Comedy is a means of presenting the truth and to that extent, the role of Wilson, as the writer of the "Calendar" is generally equivalent to that of the professional fool who creates laughter. If comic laughter acts as corrective to man's behaviour — "*castigat ridendo mores*" (quoted as Biancolelli's motto by Howarth in his 'Introduction' to *Comic Drama : The European Heritage* 6) — the 'Calendar' is merely performing its comic function.

III

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* the aura of idyllic freedom and innocent fun in the earlier novels is replaced by an atmosphere of cynicism and distrust, deceit and betrayal. Ungratefulness and hate take the place of love and trust, and adult criminality rather than boyish mischief provides the chief motivation for the actions of many of the characters.

Langston Hughes, in his Introduction to the Bantam edition of *PW*, points out that the novel is modern in more ways than one : the fact that there are no heroes and villains; the idea that man is shaped by his environment and that there is no such thing as innate goodness or innate evil ; the presentation of slaves as complete human beings rather than stereotypical comic servants of dangerous brutes- ignorant and happy as slaves and ignorant and miserable as freed men : and the use of the science of fingerprinting (which was still in its infancy) as one of the mainstays of the plot.

Mark Twain, in his presentation of Negroes as human beings, stands head and shoulders above the other Southern writers of his times, even such distinguished ones as Joel Chandler Harris, F.Hopkins Smith, and Thomas Nelson Page [...]. In 1894 *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was a 'modern' novel indeed. And it still may be so classified

(Hughes' 'Introduction' to *PW*

xi).

The rigid attitude of society regarding the distinction between the races (mentioned in an earlier section) lies at the root of Roxy's tragedy: "To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, *but the one-sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other fifteen parts and made her a negro* (*PW*: 9) .[Emphasis added].

This is an obvious dig at the racist snobbery of the ruling ethnicity. As Bruce Michelson points out, "Roxy is a white woman who thinks herself black because her race -obsessed world thinks her so "(Michelson, 1995:107). Fielder, who thinks very highly of *PW*, says that Twain

[...] creates in Roxy , the scared mulatto mother Sold down the river by the son she has smuggled into white respectability, a creature passion and despair rare among the wooden images of virtue of bitchery that pass for females in American literature

(in Smith

131).

Roxy's character is a complex one: she changes and develops as the novel progresses. As a carefree lass at the beginning of the novel, she becomes crafty and skilled in deception as the need arises: smearing jam over the faces of the babies when she takes them out for an airing, she sends them into paroxysms of laughter when Percy Driscoll comes to see them, so that they become unrecognizable.

Twain uses the social status and situation of the beautiful Mulatto girl, when he introduces her as "one of [Percy Driscoll's] slave girls, Roxana by name. Roxana was twenty years old" (*PW* 4). This is only appropriate in the context of the cruel reality of her situation where there is nothing to relieve the dull prosaic nature of her hopeless existence. We have no clue about Roxana's extraordinary personality till the middle of Chapter II, except for her exceptionally striking appearance: fair complexion, rosy cheeks, liquid brown eyes, beautiful brown hair, majestic form, structure and imposing, and statuesque attitudes. Her "gesture and movements [were] distinguished by a noble and stately grace" (8). Her strength of character is evidenced at each juncture: when she interchanges the babies, when she threatens to disclose "Tom's" true identity to the Judge; when she offers to be sold back into slavery in order to pay off Tom's gambling debts; and when she stands by Tom till the bitter end - advising him as to the best course to pursue so that both may have a sufficiency of money: now threatening, now cajoling, in order to have her own way.

Early in the story Twain points his finger at the malady conditioning the slave psyche: the slave's haunting insecurity that may demoralize him/her quite naturally. When Percy Driscoll misses a sum of money and threatens to sell his slaves down the river, Roxy realizes how vulnerable and insecure the position of a black slave is in a white household- "She was a slave, and salable [sic] as such" (9), Twain grimly reminds the reader in Chapter II.

The resemblance between the two babies and the fact that Percy himself had been unable to tell them apart when they were in their bath emboldens Roxy to switch them (in an earlier draft the resemblance was traceable to Tom's paternal identity). Perhaps Twain here wishes to make the point which he had made earlier in *The Prince and the Pauper*: that the clothes make the man and that there is basically no difference (or at best only a superficial one) between a white infant born to a general European mother and a "black" infant born outside wedlock to a Negro slave.

Social conditioning and early upbringing account for most of the behavioural differences. As Langston Hughes out in his Introduction, "In this novel Twain shows how more than anything else environment shapes the man. Yet in his day behavioural psychology was in its infancy" (*PW*, Introduction:xi).

However, it must be noted that the so-called "Chambers" is far more noble, manly and courageous than the pseudo-Tom, who is a mean, cowardly criminal and takes unfair advantage of Roxy's maternal weakness. Twain does not seem to have overcome his racist prejudices, so that the false Tom is never able to

quite measure up to the role assigned to him by the fond ambitious mother. The physiognomic resemblance between the two babies may not be merely a clever narrative ploy but an instance of Twain's deep and penetrating insight into behavioural psychology.

The interchange of the babies is germane to the novel and the source of the tragedy of two "Tom Driscolls", precipitating an identity crisis for the false Tom in the middle of the novel and in the true Tom (erstwhile Chambers) at the end of the novel . The latter is left in a kind of limbo: unable to sit in the kitchen with the slaves or to mix with the "whites" on account of his slave upbringing; he ends up as a tragic figure whose wrongs can never be fully righted- a victim of the pernicious system just as Roxy and the false Tom Driscoll are.

The interchange of identity between the two Toms is fraught with irony at multiple levels: and the irony, if comical, is only grimly so. Roxy practices speaking with respect to her son, as if he is the master, and with rough familiarity to the real Tom Driscoll; thus there is a role reversal not only between the two babies but also in the relation between mother and son. In this topsy-turvy world the matriarch figure is no longer the figure of authority or the basis of identity: as was generally the case with slave-children, whose white father was unwilling to acknowledge his natural-born offspring. Roxy's son - in spite of being passed off as the master's son- is gradually transformed into a parasite sucking his mother's life-blood. For the first time Mark Twain clearly points an accusing finger at slavery for having brought about the ultimate degradation of human nature by subjecting it to a dehumanizing system.

In his article "Mark Twain and Pudd'nhead Wilson: A House Divided", George E. Toles points out that it is a grim Kafkaesque world of inverted values where everything is distorted :

In the world of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, one cannot easily afford to be virtuous, to be generous, and most importantly, to be open in one's dealings with others. Attempts at goodness are so often twisted by the workings of circumstances and unrecognized motive into an expression of weakness or hidden self-interest that one begins to think of 'goodness' chiefly as an unwise vulnerability to others

(in Kar, 1992 :

212).

In trying to deceive others as to the true identity of her son, Roxy becomes her own dupe and the usurper becomes her real master. The author points out the irony of the process of transference from the outward to the inward with a remarkable psychological insight:

[...] this exercise soon concreted itself into Habit; [...] the mock reverence became real reverence, the mock obsequiousness real obsequiousness, the mock homage real homage; [...] She saw herself sink from the sublime height of motherhood to the sombre depth of unmodified slavery

(*PW*: 20-

24).

This bare narration subtly underlines the fact of the social conditioning of human response, even genuine human emotions and behavioural patterns. The comment points to the tragic irony of her situation, both before and after the interchange. The false Tom's calling Roxy "nigger-wench" and "hussy" (24) and even going so far as to strike her , is a natural outcome of the inversion of values and roles that results from Roxy's ill-considered action, and can be called a kind of hubris for Roxy. Her impotence vis-à-vis the Frankenstein that she has unwittingly created makes her helplessly speculate on barren schemes of vengeance and exposure. The rage and frustration that she feels at this unexpected outcome of her daring action is however tempered by the triumph she feels in her singular revenge on the "whites" for centuries of racist oppression and cruelty.

Roxy realizes only when it is too late that the depravity of the false Tom is not merely due to the excessive luxury in which he was brought up, but also to her own misguided petting and pampering. His physical ill-health, resulting from an unwholesome diet, is exceeded only by his moral depravity, brought on by lack of sound principles of ethical behaviour. The petty thievery to pay off his own benefactor and father-figure Judge Driscoll, are merely symptomatic of the moral perversion that affects the in-growing society of Dawson's Landing. All his dealings are cowardly and despicable, and Tom's bravado soon changes into cowardly cringing when he perceives that Roxy knows some dark secret about his past that can ruin him forever. The humorous description of Roxy's marching out of her door "as grim and erect as a grenadier" (*PW*: 48), while her son "humbly" holds the door open for her, has Dickensian echoes, bleak as it is. Twain may be seen to be taking a racist view by suggesting that Tom's "base" origins are the cause of his moral depravity. Roxy, anyway, appears to subscribe to this view, perhaps because, as G.E. Toles notes, her intellect is "thoroughly infected with a white virus and she cannot prevent herself from seeing her child often and unsparingly through a white person's eyes" (Toles: 216).

The mood becomes progressively grim as the precarious nature of "Tom's" social status and the dark secret of his identity is revealed, with the dark and ruinous-looking 'haunted' house providing an appropriately gloomy background " You's a nigger ! - bawn a nigger en a slave! En you's a nigger en a slave dis

minute; en if I opens my mouf ole Marse Driscoll'll sell you down de river befo' you is two days older den what you is now ! (*PW*: 49).

Twain's expression "gloomed above him like a Fate" (49) evokes the suggestion of Greek tragedy, in which Fate often plays an important part and the secret of one's birth is one of the important part factors leading to tragic hubris. Wilson's famous speech in the courtroom scene underlines the Greek concept of Nemesis which is operative in the final sequences of the novel, and casts an aura of tragic gloom over the novel. His thrilling disclosure carries the sense fatal inescapability and irrevocable doom that is normally associated with Greek tragedy.

A streak of pessimism is apparent in Twain's grim portrayal of Tom: his malevolence, corruption, perversion and betrayal of all values that the average human being holds dear turn him into a kind of Iago who nurses a grudge against society as a whole and is only too willing to do it or any individual in it an ill turn if he can. All Tom's relationships- whether with Roxy as real or surrogate mother, or Judge Driscoll as foster-father, or Chambers as faithful attendant- are diseased and rotten. While Roxy is socially conditioned to believe that it is due to his slave descent, Cox and Toles blame it on the lust and the ambivalent moral attitude which denies paternity while financially supporting the misconceived progeny. This ethical and moral ambivalence in Southern slaveholding society is the determining factor behind Tom's life, attitude and ways. Neither is Tom able to hide the fact that he is the real assassin of Judge Driscoll nor does the secret of his birth remain hidden from him (or from anyone else, for that matter). The tragic irony lies in the fact that the child is made to bear the consequences of his descent, though he cannot be held responsible for it.

Twain in *PW* shows how the system of slavery itself exercises a corrupting influence on the master. The ironic reversal of identities here poignantly brings out the author's attitude. A "white" child is made to undergo the indignities reserved for the "black", whose blood-line rather than complexion and ways are the basis of his being condemned to slavery. The relationship of the two boys serves as an ironic commentary on the insensitiveness of the master vis-à-vis his slave, which is generated by this system. Basically it is the power equation that conditions their relationship and behavioural pattern. Chambers optimizes the helplessness and suffering of the slave: there is no redress for grievance, no court of appeal against Tom's cruelty. Any attempt at retaliation meets with harsh and instant reprisal. It is significant that this perception of the black slave's predicament (which is missing in Twain's earlier novels) is similar to Harriet Beecher Stowe's somewhat sentimental portrayal of "Uncle Tom's" plight. and in more recent times, Alex Haley's candid unsparing perception of the nature of the suffering of black slaves in *Roots*. It is the disproportionate power of the supposed master that debases him: whether Tom ties "Chambers' shirt into knots and dips it in water when he goes swimming, so that he would find it difficult to untie; or drives his pocket-knife into Chambers when he refuses to beat up his

boyish enemies. The viciousness of the very system is underlined by Tom's viciousness and depravity because Tom is the product and end result of the same system.

In *PW* Twain squarely confronts the issue of slavery and the injustice and oppression in perpetrates on the slave as a race, class and community. He also interrogates the basis of this absurd system. Cox sees the false Tom Driscoll as "the figure embodying the long history of miscegenation in the background" (Cox, 1966: 228). The very lust which has given him the appearance and manner of the white man while denying him the patrimony that is his by right, equips him to assume the role of the changeling. Thus he becomes an instrument of revenge, whose murder of Judge Driscoll (even though the latter is his benefactor), may be seen as the eventual fallout of history, the logical outcome of the sins of generations. The unrelieved malevolence and unmitigated cowardice and depravity of the false Tom is rarely to be found in any of the principal characters of twain's novels: this overshadowing of the whole action by an evil presence like that of Tom- who pervades the novel like a miasma- makes the novel characteristic of twain's increasingly 'darkling vision' during these years.

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الخلاصة :

تُزخر رواية بودن هيد ولسن لمارك توين بالتشاوم واليأس مما يجعلها مختلفة عن رواياته الأخرى المليئة بالفكاهة والدعابة والتي جعلته كاتباً معروفاً بروح الدعابة والفكاهة . لكن رواية بودن هيد تقدم الوجه الآخر لمارك توين وترسم جديته في معالجة مشاكل اجتماعية معينة . ألقى وبشكل واضح كل من فشل شركة وبستر للنشر وإفلاسه اللاحق وموت سوزي في عام 1896 والانهيار النهائي لنياج في تموز 1893 والأحداث المتتابعة بظلالها على حياته . يعتقد كوكس (1966:255) إن رواية بودن هيد ولسن كتبت بجهد مفرط لتسرع بالكارثة المالية التي إصابته .

إن الدعابة اللاذعة جعلت من بودن هيد عملاً روائياً مختلفاً عن الأعمال السابقة ، أي إنها تتسم بمرح جاف كئيبي وبيأس شديد . يمكن أن يقال إن مأساة بودن هيد هي طريق توين للمحاربة لفهم مأساته وذنوبه ويأسه الشخصي ، إنها في الحقيقة مأساة أم سوداء .

إن عبير الحرية الرومانسية والمزاج البرئ في الروايات المبكرة لتوين يُستبدل بجو التعبير الساخر والارتياب والخداع والخيانة في بودن هيد . حيث يصور لنا توين موقفاً صارماً يخص التمييز بين الأعراق . يواجه توين وبصرامة قضية العبودية والعدالة والاضطهاد بحق العبد كعرق وطبقات ومجتمع .