

Issue of Existence in American Literature – A Review of Joseph

Heller's Novels

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Abstract:

The current paper proposes to tangentially examine the works of Joseph Heller which present the brutalizing and unhinging impact of authoritative powers on person whose rational survival was compromised by these preposterous composed systems. The purpose of the examination is to lay emphasis on the fact that the authors composing during these times of social disturbance responded to the unfortunate incongruities of American life somehow. Thus the paper proposes to arrive at how Heller regarded that "entire society is nuts" and how he embarked to look for a response to the essential inquiry, "What does a normal man do in a crazy society?"

Introduction:

The growth of American novel can directly be related to the prevalence of issues in the society and these were the raw material out which the works were forged. In the middle of the nineteenth century women's demands for suffrage grew in intensity. Along with this, grew what has come to be known as 'temperance movements' – responses to the habits related to the consumption of alcohol by the immigrants. This led to an increase in the number of works called 'temperance works' that were based on the temperance issues. The fact that the Irish were Roman Catholic also heightened the anxiety in the Americans.

It was under these circumstances that novelists considered as the main progenitors of the modern American novel began surfacing on the literary scene. Certain changes that took place during this time is said to have had a great impact on the novel writing in America. These works largely pertained to the laxity in the enforcement of laws of copyright which did not extend protection to the international novelists. The works of the foreign writers were constantly pirated. This discouraged the off shore writers evincing any interest in the production of their works in America. This led to the rise of a new profession of creative authorship which was found attractive by the young talented writers. These writers began a period of transition that saw a decisive break from commercially oriented formulaic conventions of the American Novel.

Newness in the American Novel:

Joseph Heller's penchant for introducing a new mode of expression in American creative practices in the twentieth century did not concern either surrealistic world of dreams or the world beyond the 'natural'. He, in line with the novelists of the time, skilfully attempted to side step what had by then become an abiding favourite of most of the playwrights then. He tried to steer clear of the realistic and pseudo-realistic trends that the novelists were besotted with.

In 1955, one night, lying in the bed, Joseph Heller wound up pondering *Journey to the End of the Night* by Louis-Ferdinand Celine when, apparently all of a sudden, the primary line of what was to progress toward becoming *Catch-22* zoomed over his brain. That corresponding year, the 32 year old advertising specialist composed, revamped, and distributed in *New World Writing* no. 7, "The Texan," the initial section of a novel he called *Catch-18*, a quarterly compilation committed to books in progress. During the same time as Heller composed the initial chapter of what might turn into a bestselling work of genuine writing in American distributing history, Alfred A. Knopf distributed the primary American release of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus' infiltrating examination of the illogicality of the human condition. Normally considered "the most broadened treatment of the logical Absurd," treatise of Camus gives profitable knowledge to anybody moving towards the works of Joseph Heller, a creator whose books, as indicated by Steven Potts, show "an image of a desolate universe that, in Absurd, existentialist style, is deficient of meaning or inborn qualities".

Individual Vs the Incomprehensible World:

For Camus, the individual is probably going to have various "thoughts or figments that provide them a purpose behind living". For whatever length of time, a person keeps up a confidence in such a dream, the individual in question will stay content, regardless of living what Martin Esslin depicts as "a presence that has turned out to be mechanical, trite, self-satisfied". The deceptive feeling of solace one feels towards an individual's existence results from the unthinking acknowledgment of some core value organizing human life into an effectively comprehended and conspicuous example. The nature one feels towards the structure of an individual's life cultivates a deceptive feeling of conviction that the authority deciding the structure is dependable. For certain individuals, however, a time emerges when "a series of every day motion is broken" and the person must face the disrupting craziness hiding behind his or her agreeable life. The unexpected awareness that humankind capitulates to the burden of basically discretionary routine welcomes the all of a sudden well-spoken individual to consider the suggestions this new cognizance has upon the individual's life. Martin Esslin, here calls "a universe denied of what was previously its middle and its living reason, a world denied of a by and large acknowledged coordinating guideline, which has turned out to be disconnected, purposeless preposterous" that Joseph Heller's fiction unfurls. The outrageous strain Heller's pointless universe forces upon his heroes smashes the human soul and prompts a conclusive showdown with mortality, the main sureness such a presence permits.

However, as David M. Craig contends, Heller never admits demise. The conclusions of his books for all intents and purposes shriek about its certainty;

however demise remains a rival to be pondered, despite the fact that it can't be survived. In the New York Times, Mordecai Richler records in his 1984 survey of *God Knows* that Heller's topic has shifted from novel to novel, the author over and over comes back to the person's battle to torque importance from a presence confrontationally moving towards the certainty of death. Taken all in all, Heller's books speak to 50 years' battle to express a path for the person to live a noble and real presence even with the Absurd.

So as to put forth a persuading defense for his perspective, Heller at first barrages his reader with proof vouching for the misleading idea for the most part acknowledged realities about the world, driving the reader to experience the Absurd as his heroes find the human condition. Heller's books methodically reveal the relativity behind such acknowledged structures as the military, the American Vision, Western faith, Western way of thinking, and the verifiable record so as to uncover the dull mystery at the foundation of human affliction: the unquenchable human craving for power, fame, and benefit. When the reader joins Heller's heroes in perceiving the harmful thought processes hiding behind the fanciful core values of human presence, the person in question must, alongside Heller's anecdotal legends, figure out how to react to the merciless universe.

Absurdity – The Predicament of the Modern Man:

At the initial look, as Richler watches, Joseph Heller's seven books appear to be inconceivably not the same as each other, going in topic from the crazy antics of a gathering of animation pilots serving in the Mediterranean during the Second

World War to the over the top mental meanderings of a corporate official, from the Jewish American experience to a freewheeling frolic through all of Western history. The apparently unique subjects Heller treats are, nonetheless, misleadingly comparable. Starting with *Catch-22*, every one of Heller's books comes back to the topic of Absurdity, moving toward the existential predicament of the modern man from an alternate edge to underscore the universality of the Absurd and to show a staggering contention for receiving the credible way of life embraced by Albert Camus, the French existentialist as enunciated in *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

Martin Esslin, in his preface to *The Theater of the Absurd*, takes note that the person's underlying showdown with the Absurd starts with a feeling that the convictions and resolute fundamental expectations of previous ages have been cleared away, that they have been tried and discovered needing, that they have been undermined as modest and to some degree infantile dreams". So as to bring his reader into a legitimate perspective wherein to consider the choices accessible to the Absurd individual, Joseph Heller utilizes books, for example, *Picture This*, *God Knows*, and *Catch-22* to undermine and clear away the essential expectations and certainties administering human life. Heller's most glaring strike on mankind's confidence in socially-developed certainties, *Picture This*, utilizes real authentic archives to expose humankind's confidence in Western art, theory, and the verifiable record itself. Like *Picture This* which "shares less of fiction than truth"; *God Knows* utilizes the narrative of one of the Old Testament's most adored figures, King David, to devalue the Judeo-Christian religious power

pervasive in the Western world. *Catch-22*, then again, utilizes a dramatized military organization to shake the reader's confidence in the genuine specialist employed by the military and administration.

Primarily in *Picture This*, the speaker introduces Rembrandt van Rijn as he makes his well-known painting of Aristotle thinking about the ruins of Homer, yet takes a note of the "ruins of Homer was a duplicate". He keeps, depicting the Homer as "a true Hellenistic impersonation of a Hellenic multiplication of a statue for which there had never been a true unique subject". Truth be told, he observes, the verifiable presence of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* can't compensate for the way that there is completely "no confirmation that the author of these sagas was genuine". In this manner, in one brief section, Joseph Heller's scornfully hypercritical speaker establishes the pace for the whole novel. Taking only one of the many "fictions are shown to us as 'reality,'" the speaker uncovers, with the "miserable mind and not surprising pessimism" of a Heller hero, the misleading idea of aesthetic expert. Deciphering the speaker's fairly tangled deconstruction of Rembrandt's work of art, the reader endeavors to envision a 17th century Dutch elucidation "on canvas in shade of a duplicate in mortar or stone of an impersonation in marble of the resemblance of a man whom no one had ever observed and of whose presence there is no dependable composed or oral confirmation". Having gotten a handle on the numerous layers of uncertainty contorting Homer's representation, the reader feels separated from a work of art the person in question had assumed, just minutes sooner, to be a straightforward portrayal of Aristotle looking at a ruins of an artist. Afterward, the speaker

uncovers that Rembrandt models his Aristotle not on the ruins of the savant the painter has in his studio, but instead upon the presence of a companion who "was big, olive-skinned, with a long dark facial hair, dark despairing eyes, and Eastern, Slavic, maybe Semitic highlights".

With every layer of shade Rembrandt adds to his sketch, the speaker uncovers extra components that bring the work's legitimacy into inquiry. Instead of the garments a man of Aristotle's social place would have tattered in old Athens, Rembrandt dresses the rationalist in "a white Renaissance vestment and an old-fashioned dark robe" and enhances his neck with a pendant delineating his student, Alexander the Great, a man whose notoriety happened after the passing of Aristotle. Afterward, the speaker uncovers that the artwork known as the *Portrait of Aristotle* seemed to be, at various occasions, accepted to be either a representation of the Roman artist Virgil or the Dutch essayist Pieter Hooft by different Rembrandt "specialists". At last, the reader discovers that the artistic creation might not be by Rembrandt by any means, yet rather by a student, for example, Govert Flinck, "so supernaturally talented in learning the exercises of his lord" that specialists can't distinguish the falsification. In the expressions of Heller commentator Judith Ruderman, the spiralling uncertainty the reader feels in light of the book's disclosures about the work of art results from the acknowledgment that the person has become victim to "the human inclination to confuse dream with the real world." By uncovering the misleading "pictures and plans" with which the reader may have been hoodwinked into unquestioningly tolerating the

validness of Rembrandt's artistic creation, the speaker makes it feasible for the reader to see "the thickness and abnormality of the world that is the crazy".

Conclusion:

Joseph Heller is largely regarded a conspicuous American author who takes up the issue of existence and looks for an important presence in a preposterous and crazy world. Recognized to be a writer with 'the most phenomenal talents', Heller made a prime specialty for himself on the after war American fictional situation with his maiden epoch-making novel *Catch-22*(1961).Writing in the original 'vivacious, lucid, imaginative, ambiguous, raging times Heller made a fiction set apart by fretfulness and merciless addressing about the values of American authoritative life.

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