

Deflection of Personal Integrity in Mario Vargas Llosa's Conversation in the Cathedral and William Faulkner's the Sound and the Fury

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Abstract: *Mario Vargas Llosa is one of the most significant writers among the Latin American novelist and essayist. Vargas Llosa belongs to the first generation of Latin American novelist to capture fully the attention of an audience beyond their national borders. His novels can be considered as microcosms of Peruvian society. He has used the mythical, popular and heroic elements in his texts to capture the social, political or cultural reality of this country. William Faulkner is a seminal figure in modern American Literature. His works reflect the distinct heritage of the American South. His novels mainly deal with the Civil War and reconstruction devastated many of these once-great southern families economically, socially and psychologically. The novel **Conversation in the Cathedral** by Mario Vargas Llosa and **The Sound and the Fury** by William Faulkner talks about the depressed and disappointed characters because of the political strategy. The paper concentrates on how the Civil War and the dictator rule make an individual to distract or compels him to distract from the moral values.*

Key words: *faith, family, influence, society, politics*

I. Introduction

Comparative literature deals with the literature of two or more different linguistic, cultural and nation groups. Etymologically the term comparative literature denotes any literary work or works. It is the study of inter-relationship between any two or more than two significant literary works or literatures. Bijay Kumar Dass defines Comparative Literature as, "The simple way to define comparative literature is to say that it is a comparison between the two literatures. Comparative literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions and use of folk tales, myths in two different literatures or even more"(Dass 1).

Comparative Literature is the study of literature that takes students beyond the borders of one particular country and across time periods, languages and genres. It helps them to analyze and examine the literature around the globe. Mario Vargas Llosa and William Faulkner are the most significant writers from the two different continents. In their novels the writers deal with the problems in their society. Mario Vargas Llosa in his novels brings out the effects of corruption in the country and the entire social world is also corrupted by it. William Faulkner in his novels mainly deals with the Civil War and reconstruction devastated many of the once great southern families economically, socially and psychologically.

Mario Vargas Llosa's novel **Conversation in The Cathedral** is an ambitious novel. An epigraph from Honore de Balzac claims that the novel written by a true novelist represents, "the private history of nations". Vargas Llosa is presenting a "private history" of Peru. The novel **Conversation in The Cathedral** picturizes the Peruvian Society by describing Zavalita family, including the servants of the Zavalita household, Ambrosio and Amalia. Santiago, the protagonist of the novel accidentally meets Ambrosio. They go to The Cathedral, a café for poor people, to talk, to drink beer, and catch up on each other's activities.

In the very beginning of the novel the reader clearly learns that, the protagonist, is dissatisfied with his life, believing that somewhere he has taken a wrong turn. Santiago's wealthy parent wants their son to succeed in life. They hope he will go to the Catholic University favouring it over the state university, San Marcos like the rest of the Lima bourgeoisie. Santiago who has lost faith and dislikes priest goes to San Marcos and soon joins a Marxist discussion group. He becomes ashamed of his own family, although his father still treats him with great consideration.

When the Marxist groups were arrested his father uses his political contacts and brings him out. After his release Santiago leaves the University and goes to work for a newspaper, La Cronica, having broken completely with his family. When Santiago breaks with his family he also breaks with politics. Ambrosio, Don Fermin's chauffer becomes the chauffer of Don Cayo Bermudez, the Minister of Security. Don Fermin is acquainted with Don

Cayo who turns against him depriving him of government contracts. When Don Cayo loses his position he leaves the country. His mistress, the prostitute Hortensia is murdered and the criminal is unknown. At the end of his investigation Santiago finds the murderer but he realizes the truth was bound up by the wealthy businessmen's power or by the political power.

The novel **Conversation in The Cathedral** is a narrative fiction which captures the corruption in Latin America. It explores how individuals, communities and even an entire social world can be undermined by the corrosive effects of corruption. David Gallanger in his seminal essay published in 1973 states that, "Conversation is the culmination of Varga Llosa's literary explorations of Peru of the 1960s, in as much as it finds its way to the proper formal structure and the proper language to offer a damning picture of a nation in which every individual is compromised or corrupted in one way or another" (Gallanger 122-43).

Santiago is a complex and best developed character. When he ponders on the misery and degradation of Peru, he feels that his own life was ruined. He abandons a life of privilege to reject the social milieu of his father. Santiago's father Don Fermin gained his wealth and position from the shady business dealing with powerful men from whom he gains political influence. He is actually a self-made man from the lower middle classes who gained a measure of power through his willingness to participate in unlawful activities. Don Cayo, the brutal head of a secret police, also climbed the social ladder through the use of ruthless force.

Santiago Zavala is an example of one of those university students unable to translate his contempt for the capitalist system into anything other than a sense of personal frustration. Santiago is a conflicted individual who does not know what to do about the human misery that surrounds him. Santiago has no doubts about the problems that plague his country but he is agonised about solutions, "The worst thing was to leave doubts. Clenching your fist, grinding your teeth, Ambrosio, APRA is the solution, religion is the solution, communism is the solution, and believing it. Then life would become organized all by itself you wouldn't feel empty anymore, Ambrosio" (CTC 99 -100).

The dialogue between Santiago and Ambrosio reflects their own and their country's predicament. Santiago Zavala's muted tragedy a rejection of family and nation that justifies his decision to lead a mediocre life is symptomatic of a corrupt social order. The following line clearly shows his situation, "He was like Peru, he'd screwed up somewhere along the line. He thinks: when? He thinks: there is no solution" (CTC 3). The lines of Ambrosio also show his frustrated life: "He would work here and there and after that here and there, and then well after that he would have died, wasn't that so, son?" (CTC 601).

The Sound and the Fury is the novel that establishes Faulkner's reputation as a permanent figure in American literature. This novel is praised for its structure and for its penetrating examination of human characters. The novel brings out the complex distinctions between past and present by employing nonchronological narration, stream-of-consciousness techniques, and multiple points of view. This work focuses upon the deterioration of the Compsons, a Mississippi family destroyed by lovelessness, selfishness, and an obsession with lost southern nobility. According to Robert Griffin The Compsons are doomed by the curse upon them, a curse of blood passed down through generations, expressing itself in feeble-mindedness, in sanity, alcoholism and promiscuity and leading to the complete destruction of the family. They are also fated to destruction through the pride in the Compson blood, their extreme awareness of the Compson name.

The Sound and the Fury is composed of four sections each with different narrators who relate the events of a specific date in the Compson's history. The first section consists of a monologue by Benjy Compson, a mentally retarded man whose mind at the age of thirty three is equivalent to that of a three-year-old child. Although Benjy perceives his surroundings acutely and understands language, he remains locked in his own solitary world, unable to speak, interpret his emotions, or understand the passage of time. In the opening of the novel, he stands near a golf course that was once his favorite pasture, but was sold to pay for his sister Caddy's wedding and for the first year of his brother Quentin's Harvard education. His mother rejects him when she discovers Benjy is retarded. His name is also changed from Maury a family name to Benjy. His brothers, Quentin and Jason, see him only as a burden and a source of shame.

In the second section of **The Sound and the Fury** Quentin narrates the events and turbulent emotions he experiences on the day of his suicide. Like Benjy, he is immersed in a private world and recalls his childhood. Benjy is unaware of temporal progression and hungers for affection, but Quentin is incapable of love and is virtually paralyzed by his perception of time as a destructive force, he is obsessed with the past and the only future he can imagine for himself is death. Quentin is obsessed with Caddy's sexuality, he associates her loss of virginity to a brief lover by whom she becomes pregnant with the loss of southern nobility and pride. It has also been suggested that Quentin's fixation on his sister stems from his own incestuous feelings and his longings to reclaim the closeness they shared as children. Quentin refuses to accept Caddy's pregnancy and her subsequent marriage to Herbert Head, whom she weds to conceal the illegitimacy of her pregnancy. David Minter comments,

Quentin kills himself in part a punishment for his forbidden desires.... But he also kills himself because he fears his own inconstancy. What he discovers in himself is deep psychological impotence. He is unable to play either of the heroic roles; as seducer or as avenger----. What he fears is that he will ultimately fail, too, in the role of the despairing lover. What he cannot abide is the prospect of a moment when Caddy's corruption no longer matters to him. (CLC 105)

The third section of the novel is narrated by Jason Compson, whose monologue has been variously described as suspect, egocentric, and grimly satiric. Unlike Benjy, Quentin and Jason are caustic, avarice and harsh rationalists. He is sharply opposite to Benjy's confused observation and Quentin's melancholy narrative. At the time of his narrative, Caddy's husband had divorced her after discovering that her child is not his. Caddy sends her illegitimate daughter, whom she has named Quentin in honour to her brother's memory, to live at the Compson household. Acting as Miss Quentin's guardian Jason steal the money Caddy entrusts to him for the child care. When Miss. Quentin receives a continuous verbal abuse from Jason, she gets angry and breaks into his room, steals back her money as well as a considerable portion of his saving, and runs away.

The final section of the novel focuses on Dilsey, the Compson's black housekeeper. Dilsey's narration is different from the three preceding monologues; it is an idea of a third-person, 'A figure of strength, Christian morality, and humanities decency'. Dilsey encourages peace and order in the embittered Compson household. This final part of narration occurs on Easter Sunday and ends with Dilsey taking Benjy to church with her. Robert Griffin States: "Dilsey represents the 'old verities' of Christianity - not Christian rites or theological dogma but the fundamental Christian ethic-forbearance and endurance and love and brotherhood".

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a number of prominent Southern families such as the Compsons. These families gave great importance to traditional Southern values. Courage, perseverance, moral strength and chivalry are expected from men to maintain the honour of the family name. Women were expected to be models of feminine purity, grace, and virginity until it came time for them to provide children to inherit the family legacy. Faith in God and profound concern for preserving the family reputation provided the grounding for these beliefs.

The warfare and Reconstruction desolated several of those once-great Southern families economically, socially, and psychologically. William Faulkner contends that within the method, the Compsons, and different similar Southern families, lost bit with the truth of the globe around them and have become lost during a haze of preoccupation. This preoccupation corrupted the core values these families once unforsaken and left the newer generations fully unequipped to wear down the realities of the fashionable world.

Mr. Compson has a vague notion of family honour, he passes something on to Quentin but is mired in his alcoholism and maintains a fatalistic belief that he cannot control the events that befall his family. Mrs. Compson is just as self-absorbed, wallowing in hypochondria and self-pity and remaining emotionally distant from her children. Quentin's obsession with old Southern morality renders him paralyzed and unable to move past his family's sins. Caddy tramples on the Southern notion of feminine purity and indulges in promiscuity, as does her daughter. Jason wastes his cleverness on self-pity and greed, striving constantly for personal gain but with no higher aspirations. Benjy commits no real sins, but the Compsons' decline is physically manifested through his retardation and his inability to differentiate between morality and immorality.

The Compsons' corruption of Southern values results in a household that is completely devoid of love, the force that once held the family together. Both parents are distant and ineffective. Caddy, the only child who shows an ability to love, is eventually disowned. Though Quentin loves Caddy, his love is neurotic, obsessive, and overprotective. None of the men experience any true romantic love, and are thus unable to marry and carry on the family name.

At the conclusion of the novel, Dilsey is the only loving member of the household, the only character who maintains her values without the corrupting influence of self-absorption. She thus comes to represent a hope for the renewal of traditional Southern values in an uncorrupted and positive form. The novel ends with Dilsey as the torchbearer for these values, and, as such, the only hope for the preservation of the Compson legacy. Faulkner implies that the problem is not necessarily the values of the old South, but the fact that these values were corrupted by families such as the Compsons and must be recaptured for any Southern greatness to return.

Corruption is a cancer, which every human being must strive to cure. Corruption spoils the image of the individual, family, society and country. It may not be able to root out corruption completely at all levels but it is possible to contain it within tolerable limits. It can only be eradicated only when an individual understands and start to believe the values of ethics and morality in the life. Corruption is a global problem that all countries of the world have to confront but the solutions to this problem come from the every individual of the society.

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