

UDC 82

<https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/68/58>

## SOME FEATURES OF MARK TWAIN'S HUMOROUS STORIES

©*Pashayeva S., Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan*

## НЕКОТОРЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ ЮМОРИСТИЧЕСКИХ РАССКАЗОВ МАРКА ТВЕНА

©*Пашаева С., Нахичеванский государственный университет, г. Нахичевань, Азербайджан*

*Abstract.* The article deals with the early short stories of Mark Twain. It illustrates the key features of the humor of Mark Twain's short stories, and the role of American lifestyle, especially in the Western region's historical culture, folklore and traditions of newspapers humor in the formation of Mark Twain as a writer. There is an analysis about the mutual relations between humor and critique in the article too. To our conclusion humor was not the main goal in the literary activity of Mark Twain, the main principle and goal of the writer's works were to discover the materials coming from hypocrisy, dissimulation, ugliness and realities of those times, and their comic potential. That is why to use widely the ways and methods of the comic elements helped the writer to show and describe the personages, characters, things and objects in a conflicting manner with their full details and bareness in various colors.

*Аннотация.* В статье рассматриваются ранние рассказы Марка Твена. Иллюстрируются ключевые черты юмора рассказов Марка Твена и роль американского образа жизни, особенно в исторической культуре, фольклоре и традициях газетного юмора американского Запада в становлении Марка Твена как писателя. В статье также анализируется взаимоотношение юмора и критики. Мы пришли к выводу, что юмор не был главной целью литературной деятельности Марка Твена, главным принципом и целью произведений писателя было раскрытие материалов, исходящих из притворства, обмана, уродства и реалий того времени, а также их комического потенциала. Поэтому широкое использование приемов и методов комических элементов помогло писателю показывать и описывать персонажей, характеры, вещи и предметы в противоречивой манере, с их полной детализацией и откровенностью в различных цветах.

*Keywords:* Mark Twain, story, humor, laughter, criticism, grotesque, American lifestyle, realism.

*Ключевые слова:* Марк Твен, рассказ, юмор, смех, критика, гротеск, американский образ жизни, реализм.

### *Introduction*

The early creative stage of Mark Twain, who has a wide range of creative directions, is remembered for his non-standard and extremely funny humorous stories. Humor is Mark Twain's unique way of thought. The writer spent his childhood and adolescence in the far western region of America, on the southwestern banks of the Mississippi River. Most of his humorous stories were written in this region — in the 60s and 70s of the XIX century. The folklore of the American West

strongly influenced his works and played an important role in the formation of the writer as a humorist. Although the works of Mark Twain who is known in American literature as the “king of laughter”, has always attracted the attention of literary scholars and experts. Unfortunately, the writer's literary works have not been the subject of the research in Azerbaijani literary criticism, we find that there are still some research values in the art of humor so the research is becoming increasingly relevant [1].

The object of the article is Mark Twain's usage of humor in his short stories.

This object implies the following tasks of the research:

1. Revealing the reality of America by using humorous descriptions;
2. Considering main points in writer's humorous stories.
3. Examining the humorous effects employed in Mark Twain's stories.

The theoretical significance of the research is to identify the distinctions and proximities between humor and criticism which can be the object of further research works.

The practical significance is that the results of the study can be used in the lessons conducted at educational institutions.

The research method is based on the American school of comparative studies in terms of how the writer uses humor in his novels to convey his message. Furthermore, the research attempts to show how humor manifests itself in short stories.

#### *Results of the research*

Mark Twain, in the early stages of his career, understood what the official concept of American civilization was, by creating various images of the “naive man”, through his humor, its despotic nature, and the destruction of the most sensitive moral values of human dignity. It is known from history that in the seventies of the XIX century, American business life began to revive. Lies, deceptions, and the temptation to trade seemed to pervade all spheres of business life. Joint-stock companies, banking structures, trading companies are growing like mushrooms, they were deceiving people, national treasures were being plundered. It was during this period that there were opportunities for success in America, the real result of which — wealth, was of great importance as a moral criterion. It seemed natural for Mark Twain to turn to genres larger than the story genre—novels and short stories. However, by this time the writer's reputation as a humorist had already been established. Based on our analysis, we can say that his first successes were mainly due to his journalistic articles and short stories. The writer himself said that “in literature, it is impossible to remain only a humorist ...”. Mark Twain believed that a comic work could be artistically perfect if it contained an image of the world as a whole and expressed certain views on life. Mark Twain was able to fulfill this condition in the first stage. His pen was the first to create the features of folk culture of laughter with burlesque, cartoon, joke, grotesque, nonsense, anecdote, changing and meaningful movements of metaphors, and it was not only a literary event. It laid the foundation of realism poetics. The young Mark's “anti-literary” revolt, his “disrespect” to influential literary figures, and the destruction of all rules and frameworks marked the first stage of his career with the creation of new works of art, which provoked deadly and ridiculous laughter against European civilization. As a result, the writer gained a wide readership and achieved his goal with his works based on the understanding of the world and the formation of new views on life.

In Mark Twain's early stories (The Jumping Frog From Calaveras County (1865), Journalism in Tennessee, and The Abduction of the White Elephant), Mark Twain created life boards; the truths of the common man, as a humanist writer, determined the principles of his later artistic creation. As

a journalist and publicist, Mark was not different from the humorist Mark; When you read his first stories, you are convinced of that. These stories had both essay and sketch features, as well as fiction. In his humorous stories, Mark Twain not only embodied the folklore style of the Western region, but also brought a cheerful, noisy, and boisterous atmosphere of life. Thus, by creating his first masterpieces, the writer laid the foundation for future literary reforms. In addition to bringing Western folklore to American literature, Mark Twain also brought living life energy, a colorless, pure, rough, delicate, ordinary, and simple life. A life that he had the right to live, a life that he could fight against those who hindered him, he was able to reject the “bone” stuck in his throat. The writer saw the pillar of his creative program in folklore; his narrative style resonated with the newspaper-style tradition of southwestern humor. These traditions can be considered the first sources of American realism. At that time, the stories of many talented American humorists (Longstreet, Helbert Harris, Hooper, etc.) were critical of the realities of life. They had sharp and sharp views, independent judgments, and bold ideas that could attract the attention of readers at a time when romanticism was shining as the dominant trend. It was these humorists who, for the first time in the history of American literature, brought to national art images of shameless politicians, shameless and thieving businessmen, and shameless swindlers.

It was in their work that Mark Twain found rich material for his own creative laboratory. Many aspects of the writer’s artistic method — minimum description and abstract judgment, maximum movement, dynamism in narration, the accuracy of language, use of dialect, and intonation of oral speech — have their origins in folklore humor of the 30s and 70s. Mark Twain also skillfully used this rich realist fund; He revived the tradition of the American short story genre, adding special shades and colors to it with household sketches.

One of Mark Twain’s most important traits was that he broke with the standard storytelling genre and took a new approach to storytelling, becoming the first writer in American literature to break all the conditions of the plot and draw the plotline from ordinary, everyday life details, he created stories based on primitive, ordinary life, wrote about the people who do not make an unusual impression on anyone, from small details ... created readable texts. In his stories and short stories, the writer felt the dynamic development of the movement, and this feeling was not deceptive. Mark created special “dramatic” conflicts, which were the source of hidden dynamism in his work. The clash of conflicting forces in the internal structure of the humorous series was an astonishing picture of a vibrant, energetic, optimistic, and contradictory life, drawing a line under dead and unnatural rules and schemes in the literature.

The second most important aspect was that he accepted the simple, healthy, and natural existence of objects and things, and denied everything that made them ugly, ugly, immoral, and filthy. It was based on the methods and means of comedy, creating a laughing and “deadly” effect. In his stories, the writer dressed in comic costumes for the characters to strike each other with bloody, crushing blows with various weapons and cutting tools, and in his walks approached the “terrible” events with a cheerful and funny spirit. Only a writer with an inexhaustible love of life could write about death and murder in such a mood and tone. The craziness of his images, his enthusiasm and madness, his naughty and whimsical actions, his readiness to resist everything, even natural disasters, his opposition to everything that contradicts the hero’s wishes, to all prohibitions, took a systematic and figurative place in all his stories. led to a world of fun and humor; to a world where everything is roaring, mischievous, hooligan, excited. Even the Siamese twins are noticeably turning into very anxious and scandalous subjects here. They throw stones at the funeral of the “benevolent Templars” in a drunken state, and the deceased, instead of sleeping quietly in the grave, sits next to the coachman in his chariot, saying that he wants to see his friends for the last time.

Here, Captain Stormfield (Captain Stormfield's Journey to Heaven) immediately enters the race with the first comet he encounters during his voyage to heaven; Despite the futile attempts of the passenger to resist the car with a special whim, the ordinary bike moves where and how he wants. Harmless pocket watches, on the other hand, try to give their hands all the unthinkable and unthinkable situations with the idea of satanic ingenuity. It is as if the writer releases the secret life energy, finds it in both living and non-living things. The power of its internal pressure is felt even in the attributes of everyday life, even in a peaceful and comfortable home environment. The quiet and flamboyant McWilliams couple (The McWilliams Family and Sore Throat, 1875, and Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning, 1880) live in silence and hostility from the mob, the cups, the tables; there is a fierce struggle between the family and the objects, which is the main content of their lives. Mrs. McWilliams had no doubt that these harmless, useful things had a secret connection with the lightning that raged outside the window. The terrifying force hides in everyone and everywhere with its endless life energy, even the woman herself, the dull and indecisive goddess of the hasty, agile, "burning hearth"! A crackling, loud, violent, and impolite lightning strikes in people and things, turning the world into a chaotic pastime. Mark Twain loved a steady life, a positive, fun passion, and enthusiasm, a good laugh. American literature has never seen such a laugh, such a lively, noisy, and loud "simple vernacular". In the example of the "rough" humorist of the Western region, the people of America — alive, healthy, cheerful, and sincere, suddenly appeared in the literature with a loud noise.

In the early years of his career, Mark Twain still did not fully understand the severe difference that separated the America of the common people from the other America, the America of greed, arson, hypocrisy, and fraud. However, the young writer had a spark of rebelliousness, he had the ability to see and talk about things in the style of writing; somewhere in his stories, one could feel the calls and traces of the hypocritical, hypocritical American flamboyant morality. The writer protested against all artificial and imaginary judgments and thoughts. He did not like to see the dogmas, the shackles, the frames, the rules, every template that turned life into poison, and he did not like the people who gave those templates an educational cover and image born of the morality of the forest. In the first stage of the writer's career, he became an enemy of the superstitious, false, and hypocritical American bourgeoisie. According to our analysis, humor was not the main goal for Mark Twain, and humor was not considered a duty. However, at first glance, Mark Twain, who gave the impression of a carefree writer-humorist, accurately assessed the nature of his creative mission. The following aphoristic statements of the author about humor prove it: "Everything human is sad. The intimate source of humor is sadness, not joy. There is no humor in the heavens ...". In another statement, he notes that "there are different types of stories, but in fact, the most difficult of them is the humorous story". The writer would later write that "... only humorists cannot survive. After all, humor is like perfume, decoration. A humorist should not be a preacher; he must not be a teacher of life. If he wants his works to last forever, he must teach and preach. When I say eternal, I mean thirty years ...". As you can see, there is sarcasm mixed with subtle humor in this aphorism.

Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning, The McWilliamses and the Burglar Alarm" [2]. Short stories by Mark Twain, from his collection Merry Tales (1892). In the process of getting rid of religious-moral and literary "standards", the realities of life seemed to return to their true form. In this sense, Mark Twain can also be considered a follower of "newspaper" humorists. Continuing with the humor laid down by journalists, he was able to add color to even the most ordinary truths and the simplest situations, to present them in sensational, parody tones. It can also be called realistic innovation. However, we believe that Mark Twain was not satisfied with the methods of "newspaper" humor, he did not even compare with them. Mark Twain created himself, created his

own style of humor. Therefore, he can be called a unique writer, because he was able to get into the events, decorate them with such unusual colors and inflate them, which gave him an individual style. In all grotesque and fantasy stories the basis of the poetics of realism was laid; the warmth, sincerity and novelty of its forms still amaze man. The images of the writer are visible, convex and capacious, the metaphors are expressive and meaningful, shaped, the comparisons are accurate, the plots are distinguished by sudden turns. There is a “syncretic” thought in the metaphorical structure of Mark Twain’s language, and you see the “sweet” part of the text or story, it makes sudden moves, it compares the unimaginable with the imaginary, it unites them, it separates them, it takes events in a complex way. integrates with simple, mythical thinking. In our opinion, this is the power and uniqueness of the writer. Let’s look at some more examples: in the writer's stories, the frog “shrugs his shoulders like a Frenchman”, “squats like a cookie in a frying pan”, people present the “tick watch as an ancestral weapon” ... The author’s astonishing observation, sharp poetic vision shows itself. “An angry old man enters the editorial office of an agricultural newspaper and puts his hat on the floor instead of touching the stick”, he says, taking a red silk scarf from his pocket. In the other editions, in the Tennessee newspaper, in the Morning Dawn and in the Johnson County Call to War, descriptions and observations are drawn down to the smallest detail: a three-legged chair in which the editor sits, he spins in a chair, his legs bent over a pine tree; there is another three-legged table in the room and a table made of pine wood, covered with piles of newspapers, paper, and manuscripts ... there is also a wooden box with sand in the corner, and a cast-iron stove with a small door; The editor’s suit is in the style of 1848, he often puts his hand in his “messy hair” ... There is a serious social content behind these illogical situations; Among the objects of ridicule were journalists, he criticized in his parodies the free press and publishers. (How I Edited an Agricultural Newspaper, Journalism in Tennessee) In his humor, How I Edited an Agricultural Newspaper (which can also be called a feuilleton!), The protagonist doesn't know much about farming, but he easily writes about something he doesn't know, saying how to “pull” a turnip out of a tree. Apparently, Mark Twain did not think highly of his correspondent colleagues. He later wrote in that feuilleton: “Who edits the agricultural newspaper? Often in poetry or in boulevard novels, sensational melodramas, chronicles published in the tabloids, the unlucky fail! They came looking at the agricultural newspaper as a temporary shelter ...”. The writer could compose a funny story or a story out of nothing (My Watch, Talk to the Interviewer, Punch, Brothers, Punch, etc.).

In the description of colorful and fantasy events, convincing and realistic lines flow from his pen, filter and gain a life of uniqueness. Mark Twain discovers a new world for the reader, revealing every detail of life events, even the microscopic point in such detail. When describing objects, it shows the other side of them, their invisible sides, thus renewing the reader's perceptual character, enlarging the smallest points that he cannot see. The writer describes the realities, especially through the eyes of naive, open-hearted people. These people want to see everything as natural, and their natural, non-false impressions are of universal importance in the author’s style of writing. During his travels to Rome and Florence, the young American Yankee also looked at Michelangelo’s adoration from this point of view: “Yesterday I was overwhelmed with amazement, joy, and extraordinary peace: I learned that Michelangelo was not alive”. Yankee’s nostalgic attitude towards European classics is foreign: “It’s good that all the old artists are dead, but it’s a pity why this didn’t happen before” (Academy of Arts). In aristocratic families (one of Mark Twain’s favorite targets!). Conservatism irritates the writer too much, disgusting their habit of relying on their ancestors. In other words, the naive American believes that antiquity is by no means worthy of respect, it only irritates. That naive American tourist is also dissatisfied with the guide, who thinks that he will make an impression by showing the ancient mummies: ... if you have a good and fresh

dead, drag him here too!” (Innocents Abroad) The “naive man” is the “American Adam”, a man who lives, thinks, and reacts like a child, with a sense of humor and simplicity. Mark Twain’s “naive man” gets acquainted with the ancient monuments of Europe, it turns out that he does not understand anything, asks “childish” questions. The Old World seems to him like a graveyard of various remains and rare specimens. However, in the field of culture, the naivety of the writer's image is balanced by his destiny against these monuments: here the common sense of the American unites the energy from ancient monuments. The “naive man” believes that Europe is a thing of the past, not modern, and its historical perspective is connected with America, America means the New World — the New World, which represents the hope of world civilization.

The “naive” man is one of the main characters in almost all the stories of Mark Twain. The presence of this character in the stories actually defines Mark Twain’s style of narration with a special intonation. The writer created the mask of the “simple” man; a person who believes, trusts, is inexperienced, is not cunning, is close to the author, at every step falls into extremely bad situations, unusual situations, but does not lose himself, does not grieve, although inexperienced and lame, he speaks at the right time or He can avoid reprimands, that is, he finds a word that hits the target, “hits the bird straight in the eye”.

It is the image of that “naive” man who creates the comic effect of Mark Twain’s stories; in his mind, all events can suddenly change direction. He sees the world in his own way. That's why Mark Twain likes to narrate by means of first person. This style helps him to reveal the inner worlds of the heroes, to show the comical inconsistencies of their imaginations of life and the incompatibility of the surrounding world with the laws of life. Mark’s favorite image is “naive” inspired from various sources. The most important of them is the tradition of American Western folklore. The “naive” man is one of the constant characters of American humor. His simplicity and openness not only create a variety of comic situations, but it is also a mask, under which a strong ironic laughter, a mockery of official moral codes is hidden. In Mark Twain’s stories, the “naive man” was a somewhat dangerous figure for the “American way of life”. His unveiled negative views permeated the deepest layers of American public life. He was either a failed candidate for governor (How I was Elected Governor, 1870), a poor Chinese worker in a “land of freedom” (Goldsmith’s friend is in abroad again, 1870), or a coward of the tumultuous and scandalous American press, was a heartless collaborator (Journalism in Tennessee, 1869), and was simply a man who ridiculed the bitter truths of local rules among clowns, clowns, and idiots. He sometimes unknowingly says that the American press was sold for money, talks about election comedy and fraud, ignorance and hypocrisy, and Senate fraud (How I Edited an Agricultural Newspaper, 1870). He then goes over religious and moral values, points out sensitive points, and shows that the realm of religion in America is in fact hypocritical, ignorant, ignorant, and greedy. “Who is God? Is it true or not?” the writer asks a question. “God is money! God is gold, banknotes, stocks (The Revised Catechism, 1887).

#### *References:*

1. Twain, M. (1966). Which was the Dream? University of California Press, 31-75.
2. Twain, M. (2010). Autobiography of Mark Twain, 1. University of California Press.

#### *Список литературы:*

1. Twain M. Which was the Dream? University of California Press, 1966. P. 31-75.

2. Twain M. *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, V. 1. University of California Press, 2010.

*Работа поступила  
в редакцию 03.06.2021 г.*

*Принята к публикации  
07.06.2021 г.*

---

*Ссылка для цитирования:*

Pashayeva S. Some Features of Mark Twain's Humorous Stories // Бюллетень науки и практики. 2021. Т. 7. №7. С. 412-418. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/68/58>

*Cite as (APA):*

Pashayeva, S. (2021). Some Features of Mark Twain's Humorous Stories. *Bulletin of Science and Practice*, 7(7), 412-418. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/68/58>