

## THE PORTRAYAL OF CHILDHOOD IN THE LITERATURE OF MARK TWAIN

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*Abstract:*

This article outlines the stages of the poetic heritage and the portrayal of childhood in the literature of Mark Twain. The fame and worldwide recognition of Mark Twain and his works. At present, the works and literary language of the genius novelist of American literature Mark Twain are of great interest to literary critics and translators. A famous figure of modern literature, the founder of a number of new genres, a pioneer of American literary art, a master of poetic harmony, a scholar of meaning, a traveller through the mysterious expanses of consciousness will be everlastingly remembered by descendants.

*Key words:* portrayal, childhood, trailblazer, unmistakable, adulthood, concept of childhood, adventurous, play, favourite, self-righteousness, boy.

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The portrayal of childhood in the literature of Mark Twain explores the theme in a manner that is unique and representative of American literature. The portrayal of childhood in the literature of Mark Twain explores the theme in a manner that is unique and representative of American literature. This trend had its roots in Romanticism, but it was through Twain's novels that the image of the child in American literature achieved its greatest level of expressiveness. A common characteristic of the child in American literature is their inquisitiveness and perpetual drive to explore. He not only has freedom in his choice of life path (or at least, he endeavours to perceive it that way), but he also starts life anew, both literally and figuratively, without any deep historical or social roots, as a genuine child of his nation. He is not always overflowing with optimism, but he strives to establish himself in this existence, one way or another.

Undoubtedly, Mark Twain was the trailblazer of the image of the child in American national literature. His characters Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn embody an unrestrained desire for adventure, optimism, and a refusal to accept the sanctimonious morality enforced by adult society. According to E. Hemingway, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" by Mark Twain is the book that shaped American literature.

A.M. Zverev acknowledges this fact. Twain's realist perspective is evident in his dismissal of languorous romanticism. In "Tom Sawyer", he satirizes the contrived melancholy and flowery language common in children's literature. Twain's talent for parody is unmistakable, and his mockery of the artificiality of Sunday literature is clear.

Traditionally, scholars of Twain's work have identified his creation of a distinct child character, distinguished by its innate authenticity, in contrast to the contrived children portrayed in the works of his romantic imitators.

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Mark Twain began writing *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1874 and completed it in 1875, conceiving and writing it primarily as a play about childhood rather than a children's book. Twain saw childhood as a lost paradise as he observed America a decade after the Civil War. Remarkably, Twain later confessed that "Tom Sawyer is simply a psalm arranged in prose". Most researchers agree that the story provides a sobering contrast between the world of childhood and adulthood. However, this is not a conflict between age groups, between 'adult' and 'child' as psychological categories, or even an Enlightenment opposition between 'natural' and 'artificial', but rather a clash between the ideal and reality. Twain's concept of childhood is surprisingly consistent with Blake's romantic ideal of childhood, and is represented in the narrative by a wealth of motifs evoking memories of their romantic past.

The protagonist of this literary work is Tom, an unrestrained schoolboy who can be impolite at times. He has a playful imagination and often engages in naughtiness and mischievousness. Furthermore, he detests disloyal, insincere, deceitful individuals and those who propagate lies and defamation. For instance, he has a fondness for playing hooky and pretending to be either a pirate or the infamous outlaw, Robin Hood, in the nearby forest. Additionally, he runs away from home, sparking anxiety and frustration in his guardian, Aunt Polly.

He has a playful imagination and often engages in naughtiness and mischievousness. Nonetheless, despite his flaws, Tom is a visionary and an inventor who values courage, integrity, and genuine relationships. He assumes responsibility for the actions that befell Becky, the girl he fancies, and endeavors to notify his aunt of his survival to alleviate any concerns.

Tom's ingenuity enabled him to transform punishment into entertainment, advertising the attraction of painting a fence which attracted a queue of eager participants.

Tom Sawyer experiences many adventurous, often perilous situations, but he and his friend Huck emerge unscathed while Tom discovers his finest qualities, despite causing concern to his loved ones.

Tom and Huck are not irresponsible troublemakers. In fact, they are known for their helpfulness and even bravery. Huck's quick thinking and call for help also saved the life of the widow. Without Tom's restless nature, Becky may have remained lost in the cave, and without the help of the boys, Meph Potter would have wrongly faced execution.

Mark Twain's literary works are not burdened with overt moralizing as their inherent morality speaks for itself. Their prescribed morality is to live freely without the biases and conflicts imposed upon us by others, in a cheerful and simple manner. Consequently, happiness ensues, as simplicity attracts people. However, this thought only represents one of many ideas regarding this topic, as each individual uncovers various perspectives within this book.

Romanticism perceives a child as a sage and a philosopher who gains access to the hidden knowledge of the world, its essence, and marvellous nature. Twain's child protagonists also correspond to these Romantic ideas. It is not coincidental that Huck Finn, like little Diogenes, resides in a barrel. He flees from affluence and success in the abode of the Widow Douglas, residing in a barrel, and realizes the appalling essence of the society reposing on wealth, calculations, and lack of autonomy: "It transpires, Tom, that affluence is not an enjoyable thing. It is distressing and worrisome...All that concerns you is death."

Huck and Tom acquire a distinct understanding of life, its extraordinary facets. The focus is not on juvenile beliefs such as the healing properties of an old stump, a deceased feline, or a bean that remedies warts. Twain's work fully encompasses the romantic theme of miracles and the belief in their potentiality. The author describes the "marvels of Nature, shedding her slumber," which "revealed themselves to a pensive lad." Twain uses romantic

stylistics to depict the island's nature. Thus, Tom appreciates the "colonnade of the forest temple", "the charms of the wild forest", and the glittering glades "carpeted with carpets of grass and flowers like jewels". He finds marvel in a green caterpillar or an ant that "bravely fights a dead spider, though it was five times bigger". Tom also observes beauty in "long spears of sunlight" and butterflies that suddenly appear from somewhere. For Tom, the incredible is a part of his everyday life. That is why it was instinctual for him to command the ladybird and direct it back to her offspring to protect them from the flames.

Surprisingly, Twain, a realist, allows the miraculous to manifest to a greater degree than the romantics. Tom and Huck are convinced that the treasure must be discovered, and it is ultimately located in a dwelling referred to as "the house of ghosts". Ball, at the urging of the incantation "Brother, go find your brother!", assists in the search for another lost balloon. While this event may be a mundane occurrence for an adult, it embodies the wondrous nature of life for the child Tom.

The child in the works of Twain and the Romantics is capable of perceiving a wondrous essence through their imagination. Tom possesses this ability to an extraordinary degree. Tom feigned illness when he did not wish to attend school, and his imagination was so effective that he genuinely suffered and caused distress to those around him. However, what is most important is not Tom's harmless antics, but rather the fact that his imagination serves as a foundation for creativity, or even the creation of a fulfilling life. Tom seems to construct his own reality either via his script or by skillfully adjusting it. By living in accordance with his sense of self, Tom avoids the ennui, monotony, and commonplace existence of the adult bourgeois.

Play is a fundamental distinction between children and adults, as shown in Twain's story, where adults do not engage in play. Acronyms are defined when first used. The only instance where the entire adult population of the town participated in an activity was during a search for actual treasure, which was not a game but a serious endeavour. During this search, there was no regard for sacred time and place, rather an abundance of improbable omens, accessories, and procedures. Additionally, acquisition of wealth merely for the sake of wealth holds no value for children. Blue and yellow tickets are highly valued and can be exchanged for a Sunday-school Bible to impress a favorite companion. Alabaster balls, a rat on a string, a fireplace lump or a one-eyed kitten are all highly priced and cherished for their unique uses. The treasure's proceeds can go towards purchasing a cake and a glass of soda water, or, for the most daring dreamers, a drum and a red tie.

The author links their aspirations for global purification, a rebirth of its creative capabilities, renewed humanity, acceptance, and spirituality with childhood. Consequently, Twain asserts that children will salvage the world, or rather, the reminiscence of youth will help adults rediscover lost principles. This idealistic vision, cherished by Twain, is manifested notably in "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer". Passing through the treacherous Mac-Dougal Cave, the young adventurers Tom and Becky managed to find their way out. MacDougal's Cave is a vast multi-level maze that stretches for miles, and serves as a metaphor for life - complex, endlessly perplexing, and labyrinthine. None could claim to know the way out of this dark abyss, as it confounded even the most learned explorers. The only hope was to follow the known path to the entrance-exit, counting oneself lucky for any escape at all.

According to Twain's conviction, only a child can find alternative resolutions to life challenges. Tom unexpectedly found a way out of the cave. When the children sought help from the boat's crew and claimed to have ventured out of the cave, their statement was disregarded as implausible.

Twain utilises a favourite romantic literary device in the story i.e. repetition of the same plot move, which may initially appear irrational to the reader. Twain has St Petersburg's citizens meet Tom twice after his supposed demise. The return of the children casts aside the lethargy of the town's inhabitants, imbuing them with the prospect of new life, fervour and all-encompassing love. The emergence of the lost children during the commemoration prompted an enlightenment and spiritual unity so profound that the aged hymn of gratitude "shook the rafters of the church." Tom's second return from his cave adventure became a celebration of unity and compassion that all of the townspeople experienced: "Lights could be seen everywhere, and no one went to bed. The community had never had such a marvellous night. In the initial thirty minutes all the townspeople congregated at Judge Techera's residence." Each member of the group kissed the rescued children and shook hands with Mrs Techer. Emotions overwhelmed them, and they couldn't find words to express their joy as they flooded the entire house with tears of happiness.

The concept of the "messianic" role of children is central to Twain's novel "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and is expressed through the rescue of Jim the Negro by Huck and other plot lines.

Twain vividly illustrates the world of American boys who face not only their own childish problems but also the cruelty and injustice of the adult world.

The tale of two boys, the innovative and imaginative Tom Sawyer and his devoted friend and servant Huck Finn, has captivated multiple generations of readers. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer has been read by almost all adults. This novel is counted among those works which are first read in childhood and then revisited in adulthood, where one discovers a depth of meaning that was lost in childhood naivety.

This multicoloured book is a well-crafted work that parodies 'scary' literature for children. It narrates the lives of provincial people plagued with boredom, self-righteousness, and foolish biases while also celebrating their commendable qualities through poetic verse.

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