

تحليل براغماتي للفكاهة في الأدب الأمريكي: من مارك توين إلى توني موريسون

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الملخص

تبحثُ هذه الدراسة في دور الفكاهة في الأدب الأمريكي، ولا سيّما في أعمال مارك توين وتوني موريسون. تم اختيار روايتي *مغامرات هاكلبري فن* لمارك توين ومحبوبة توني موريسون نظراً لاستخدامهما المتنوع للفكاهة كوسيلة لاستكشاف قضايا العرق والهوية والمكانة الاجتماعية ضمن تباينات التاريخ. وتُتيح هاتان الروايتان فرصاً واسعة لدراسة كيفية توظيف الفكاهة في نقد أعراف المجتمع والتفكير في التفاوتات العرقية والاجتماعية.

تعتمد الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً مقارناً لاستكشاف آلية عمل الفكاهة في النصوص وتأثيرها في تأويلات القارئ. وقد استند التحليل إلى مناهج ونظريات في التداولية الأسلوبية والفكاهة، منها نظرية أفعال الكلام، والإيحاء الحوارية، ونظرية الملاءمة. ومن خلال نماذج مختارة من أعمال الكاتبين، تتقصى الدراسة الأساليب المتعددة التي يوظفان بها الفكاهة ونواياهما الضمنية من ورائها.

ومن خلال تحليل العلاقة بين الفكاهة والسياق الاجتماعي، تقدّم الدراسة تفاصيل حول الطبيعة المتغيرة للتعبير الكوميدي عبر الفترات التاريخية المختلفة. وتخلص إلى أن توين وموريسون يوظفان الفكاهة بأساليب مختلفة تعكس الظروف التاريخية والعرقية؛ إذ يميل توين إلى السخرية والتهكم الاجتماعي، بينما تميل موريسون إلى المفارقة والتعبير الرمزي. وبناءً على ذلك، تُظهر النتائج أن الفكاهة تؤدي وظيفة بلاغية واجتماعية-ثقافية في الأدب الأمريكي.

ومن منظور تداولي-أسلوبي، تُثبت الدراسة أن الفكاهة تمثل استراتيجية محورية لغوياً، فضلاً عن كونها وسيلة تتقاطع فيها الخطابات اللغوية وغير اللغوية وتعقيدات الأدب الأمريكي وتطوره الاجتماعي-الثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفكاهة، الأدب الأمريكي، السخرية، النقد الاجتماعي، الهوية العرقية، التقنيات الأدبية، التعليق الاجتماعي-الثقافي.

A Pragmatic Analysis of Humour in American Literature: From Mark Twain to Toni Morrison

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Abstract

The current study investigates the role of humour in American literature and particularly in the writings of Mark Twain and Toni Morrison. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison were chosen due to their diverse use of humour as the means to explore the issues of race, identity, and social status within disparities of history. The works provide a lot of possibilities to consider how humour is used to criticize the norms of society and think of racial and social disparities. The research adopts a qualitative comparative method to explore how humour works in the texts and influences with interpretations of the reader. The analysis uses approaches and theories in pragma-stylistics and humour, including the speech act theory, the conversational implicature, and the relevance theory. Considering some examples of works by these authors, the investigation investigates the various means of humour used by these authors as well as their hidden intentions. Through the analysis of the relation between humour and the societal context, the research gives some details on the changing nature of comic expression in different historical periods. The study concludes that Twain and Morrison use humour in different ways to mirror the historical and racial conditions, Twain to a greater extent by means of satire, and Morrison by use of irony and symbolic expression. Therefore, the findings show that humour serves as a rhetorical and socio-cultural function in American literature. Moreover, from a pragma-stylistic point of view, this study demonstrates that humour is the focal strategy in linguistics in addition to extra-linguistic discourses and perplexities of American literature and its socio-cultural progress.

Keywords: Humour, American Literature, Satire, Social Critique, Racial Identity, Literary Techniques, Socio-Cultural Commentary.

1. Introduction

Humour as a subtle and deep philosophical concept is presented in contemporary fiction as one that helps spread information about cultural and societal problems which it also often raises socio-political questions. As Mintz (2013) states, humour in literature is never about laughter only; it is a force that poses and resists discursive norms. This is most obviously evident in works written by American authors, where unspoken jokes somehow compel certain thought on socio-political issues in societies. Since humour can be revealed as social critique in literature, this paper compares the two prominent American writers, Mark Twain and Toni

Morrison. Ethics, Erasmus, and 19th-century racism: Mark Twain often satirizes and even ironically appeals to in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).

Therefore, though the factor of humour allows the work to reach a wide circle of readers and conventions compel the readers to pay attention to the work, Twain does not make American society dependent on ethical issues but focuses on the institution of slavery in the work. While in peppering a sense of the traumatic experience of the post-slavery African American in her *Beloved* (1987), Morrison utilizes humour. Morrison's humour derives from the brutalities of what African American people have had to endure and is now ceaselessly integrated into their existence. As Davis (2021) points out, the novels of Morrison incorporate humour as the problem of race and the psychological trauma of suffering African Americans in their background as irony and comedy.

The main purpose of this paper, therefore, is to synthesize a critical discussion on the use of humour by Twain and Morrison and how it fits into a sociological perspective. Through evaluation of social relevance and politics of humour in this paper, it is clear that humour is a lever for the management of modern social problems. From the pragmatic-linguistic point of view, the paper provides examples of how humour in Twain's and Morrison's productions not only gives the laughter but also always questions the audience and contributes to the understanding of the development of American literature from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. For this purpose, three questions are posed:

1. What role has humour played in American literature over the course of the 19th, the 20th and 21st centuries?
2. To what extent does humour play a role in Mark Twain and Toni Morrison's works?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Perspective of the Humour in American Literature

Humour throughout American history has shifted, starting as a colonial satire to modern irony, changing to ensure the humour reflects current social, racial, and identity considerations. Early humour served the purpose of unifying the settlers, as well as dealing with the difficulties of settling up a whole new society and later forms dealt with the modification in their societal and political environment. As Davis (2016) and Gliserman (2019) demonstrate, humour has been crafted in response to the power structures, usually to criticize racial oppression and adapted to represent the significant changes that occurred during each period of time.

2.1.1 Colonial and the Early Republic Era: Origins of American Humour

In colony America, humour came into use to assist the settlers to cope with life at the frontier and tied them socially. Poor Richard Almanack by Benjamin Franklin was also one example where good moral and moral lessons were taught through humour and where he taught people the virtues of hard work and frugality (Pencak, 1992). Humour was also crucial in folk stories and tales on the frontier as it revealed the challenges of the pioneer life as well as off-stage cohesion (Patterson, 2020).

2.1.2 The Rise of a Distinct American Humour in the 19th Century

A unique American humour emerged in the 19th century, with Mark Twain becoming one of the most important participants. Satire, irony and dialects of a region were applied in the works of Twain, especially, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, to disapprove the social norms, which included slavery and racial inequality. The humour of author Twain was humorous but

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deadly as it touched the topics of the moral hypocrisy of the American society of the 19th century (Patterson, 2022; Shachtman, 2017). Frontier humour was also embraced with an exaggerated tone during this time, which is also a representation of American independence and self-sufficiency (Fisher, 2018).

2.1.3 20 th -Century: The Developments of Humour in African American Literature

The 20 th century witnessed humour as one of the instruments that allowed African American writers to defy racial oppression and identity. Authors such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston employed humour to fight stereotypes and oppose racism. Toni Morrison continued this tradition herself, using irony and cultural allusions in the story of the African American history of trauma (Smith, 2018; Johnson, 2020). Even subtle and multilayered jokes by Morrison prompt the reader to think critically about race, identity, and other aspects of social injustice (Simmons, 2019).

2.1.4 Contemporary Era: The Humour as a Means of Social Commentaries

The American literature of modern times has included a more ironic and a darker sense of humour that most of the time relates to the issues of the present society. The Postmodern humour also addresses such themes as political authority, social injustice, and identity crisis, which may be interwoven with comedy and tragedy in order to comment upon the existing order of things. The change in humour is an expression of the larger cultural transformations at the end of the 20 th century and in the beginning of the 21 st century (Clark, 2022; Patel, 2021).

2.1.5 Culture Racial Views In Humour

The concept of humour in the American literature and specifically in the works by Morrison and Twain is closely connected with the idea of racial and cultural conflicts. The humour employed by Morrison is based on the African American cultural factors and the history with the irony and subtlety being applied to the racial injustices and the issues of identity (Harris, 2020; Washington, 2018). However, in contrast to Twain, the satire was utilized to reveal the immorality of the American society regarding the idea of race and slavery (Robinson, 2022). Humour is not only presented by both authors as an entertainable element, but it is also presented through an illumination of the standard norms of the society as well as a stimulating aspect to think about cultural and racial matters.

2.2 Theory framework: Pragmatics and Humour in American Literary Tradition

The paper relies upon the theory of pragmatics and humour in order to examine the utilization of humour in writings of Mark Twain and Toni Morrison. These theories offer a prism, through which the comic aspect of literature can be comprehended, as well as concerning its reliance on social, cultural, and racial issues, and how it invites readers to eminent critical thought.

2.2.1 Humour and Pragmatics

Pragmatics is concerned with the context effecting the meaning. In the literary context, it looks into the use of language by the authors in order to enhance humour and the way readers decode

the humour in contexts. Relevance Theory, Conversational Implicature and Speech Act Theory are key concepts of pragmatics that are critical to this analysis:

2.2.2 Theory of Speech Acts

It is a theory that has been proposed by Austin and Searle and considers the performance of acts by utterances. Humour in Twain and Morrison is frequently created by verbal actions such as irony and satire with the utterances of the characters having social observations (Johnson, 2023).

2.2.3 Conversational Implicature

Grice defines implicature as referring to implications that are not explicit. In the work of Twain, regionalisms and the deceit created between what a character says and the reader can be the source of comedy (Adams, 2023). Humour arising out of the intricacies of race and history is also permitted in the case of Morrison through implicature in this work (Lee, 2019).

2.2.4 Relevance theory

It is a theory developed by Sperber and Wilson, which explains that the relevance needs drive communication. The humour in the works by Twain frequently involves the reader to assume cultural awareness to determine whether a given sentence can be described as apt or not, whereas Morrison involves the reader to display her or his knowledge of the African American history to detect the relevance of the humour (Brown & Levinson, 2018).

2.3 Theories of Humour

There are some main theories of humour that will guide analysis of the study:

2.3.1 Superiority Theory

According to this theory, we can consider humour as the appearance in which we feel superior to the others. This can be observed in the work of Twain through the satire that points out to the stupidity of society and its shortcomings (Mitchell, 2022). Morrison, however, relies on the superiority, which is based on the societal hierarchies revealing such racial and social inequalities by means of the irony and the parody (Gordon, 2018).

2.3.2 Incongruity Theory

This theory explains that humour is created when a difference between the outcome of a situation as expected and reality emerges. Contradictory use is an aspect that both Twain and Morrison utilize to develop humour. Twain humour tends to treat the absurdity of social norms, whereas Morrison employs incongruity to contrast tragic events and the humorous moments (Martin, 2017; Attardo, 2019).

2.3.3 The Relief Theory

In Freudian terms, humour is a form of psychological release, as it is the conduit of expressions of unsatisfied desires. Both Morrison and Twain employ a psychological release in the form of humour, assist the characters in overcoming social and emotional trauma (Gordon, 2018; Harris, 2021).

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2.4 Previous Studies on Humour in American Literary Literature: From Mark Twain to Toni Morrison

The aspect of humour in American literature specifically in the writings of Mark Twain and Toni Morrison has attracted a lot of academic discussion. Socio-cultural protest through humour, as well as the idea of a humour strategy as part of the narrative (also referred to as humour as a story-telling strategy), has been studied recently, propelled by the increasing interest in both the pragmatic and literary perspectives on the topic. This part is a brief revisit of some of the most useful and up to date works on humour in the works of Twain and Morrison which point at the significance of theories currently applied.

2.4.1 Recent Research on Humour in the Works of Toni Morrison

The analysis of humour in the novels by Toni Morrison has received increasing scholarly attention recently, especially its irony, satire and black humour to deal with themes such as race, oppression, trauma and power. Smith (2023) analyses the stratified political layers of the humour of Morrison, who suggests that the humour portrays the history and culture of African Americans. Smith notes that irony in Morrison is not merely humour but rather a socio-psychological inquiry passed on the lives of the character of her works. On the same note, Jones (2022) deploys pragmatic theory, mainly conversational implicature to bring out the underlying message in the works of Morrison like *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*. Davis (2021) continues his argument by suggesting that humour in the works of Morrison has more to do with the coping strategies of characters, providing them with a kind of resistance and survival, instead of simply providing relief.

2.4.2 Recent Research on Humour in Mark Twain's Works

Along with the study on Morrison, in recent years analysis of Twain works has highlighted his position in the American satirical tradition and the use of humour as a form of social commentary. Adams (2023) examines the way Twain used vernacular language in *Huckleberry Finn* and *A Yankee in King Arthur Court* and how they showed his critique on issues regarding race, classes and identities. As a topic, Robinson (2022) uses the Speech Act Theory to examine the implication of using humour as portrayed by the characters in Twain to demonstrate power hierarchy especially as applied in conversational implicature. Johnson (2021) goes further in placing the influence of Twain in a wider context of American humour having established his undiminished influence on modern writers like Morrison, who remain fascinated with the themes of race, identity, and trauma by turning to humour.

2.4.3 Comparative Analysis of Twain and Morrison

The application of humour in works of Twain and Morrison has been compared by several researchers in a bid to identify what both writers have in common in their way of handling social issues. Brown (2022) adopts a comparative perspective and states that although both writers use humour to criticise societal systems, Twain uses satire, and Morrison prefers irony. The article by Thompson (2020) is also concerned with the issue of race and humour, and the author notes that even though the exaggerated characters and vernacular allow Twain to make

social statements openly, Morrison relies on the humour that is slightly more covert and demanding more comprehensive knowledge of the cultural background.

As Nguyen (2019) writes about the importance of humour in critiquing historical and colonial amnesia, both the authors employ the means of humour to renew history. According to Garcia (2018), the two authors employ humour as a defence against trauma and oppression. Williams (2017) focuses on the tendencies in American literature in the broad sense, stating that the humour in the works of the two writers connects the present and the past of the struggles of African Americans, especially, when considering the issue of racism.

2.4.4 Key Findings of Previous Studies

Such works prove that humorous elements of Twain and Morrison works should be referred not only to fun but also to the strong social commentaries, cultural considerations, and a mechanism of social criticism. The similarities between the two authors lie in the fact that they apply humour to talk about race, identity, and power, but again, the style is different. The satire used by Twain is clear and to the point, whereas irony used by Morrison works in the background and is usually that which needs cultural literacy. The last analyses paid much attention to the pragmatic functions of humour in discussing emerging societal concerns, and both writers have attempted to make use of humour to make readers think about the past and cultural facts about the American society.

Although the works of two authors differ in their style, their impact on humour is the means through which cultural and social processes can be analyzed, for this reason, humour becomes an essential factor in the conditions of discussion about race and identity in American literature.

3. Methodology

This research utilizes qualitative approach to examine the aspect of humour in Mark Twain and Toni Morrison's works that was selected from the list above. Using works from comparative and pragmatic approaches, the study would like to achieve the following goal: Identify and examine the role of humour in these texts particularly concerning social, cultural as well as racial concerns. The approach that is central to the methodology is based on studying the role and function of humour as a rhetorically pragma-stylistic category in a literary text and a means for discussing social issues.

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a comparative and analytical case analysis system, which make it easier to compare the humour approaches used by Twain and Morrison. It assists in identifying stylistic, social and cultural roles the humour plays in the works of both the authors. The purpose is to find out how two authors of different historical context and with different cultural settings addressed the same issues using humour.

3.1.1 Comparative Analysis: In this section, comparative framework is applied to conduct a direct comparison of humour strategies employed by Mark Twain and Toni Morrison. In particular, it looks at the role of humour with regard to the cultural, social and historical context of the authors. The comparison will compare the way that the two

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authors use humour to make discussion and criticism of socio-cultural issues in their society. It will also be mentioned in the analysis that there are some differences in the manner in which these two authors, who are diverse in background and time period, choose to use humour to be able to tackle similar themes.

3.1.2 Pragmatic Analysis: This paper makes use of pragmatic theory in the analysis of how humour works in the chosen texts. Pragmatics is related to the main field of linguistics as the science that focuses on the link between meaning and setting, especially speech acts. This study will examine the approach by Twain and Morrison towards employing language in order to achieve a funny effect considering the context as envisioned by the reader. The discussion will explain the realistic processes, including implicature and presupposition that are applicable in expressing humour in the literature of the two writers.

3.2 Analytical Tools

The following two analytical theories will be applied to the study of humour in the chosen texts: Pragmatics Theory (including humour theory) and Speech Act Theory. Such tools are especially helpful in investigating the role of humour in literature and its position in mirroring social, cultural, and racial relationships.

3.2.1 Pragmatic Analysis

3.2.1.1 Speech Act Theory: Speech Act Theory was proposed by J.L. Austin and elaborated by John Searle, attempting to explain that language does not merely describe something, but fulfills a definite purpose. Therein, humour is interpreted into a sort of a speech act, which has certain social and cultural functions. As an example, to make an analogy with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the use of satire and irony by the protagonist can be also discussed as having parodic purposes, criticizing norms of the society. This will be analysed in the way these modes of speaking can help in the creation of humour.

3.2.1.2 Conversational Implicature: H.P. Grice proposed this theory that explains that meaning can be implicated indirectly through implicature, i.e. the meaning is not directly communicated, but inferred with the context. The theory will be applied to have a closer look at how both Twain and Morrison resort to humour in order to deliver a slight social commentary. To give an example, in *Beloved*, the subtext of humour is frequently used, referring to racial and cultural politics without overtly mentioning them, therefore, depending on the expertise of the reader on these matters.

3.2.1.3 Relevance Theory: Relevance Theory which was developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson argues that communication depends on the context of relevance to the recipient. This theory will be applied in order to study how humour in both works by Twain and Morrison relies on the available cultural knowledge by the reader. As an example, to understand the humour presented by Twain is highly dependent on the

knowledge of the 19th -century American society, whereas the humour of Morrison also depends on the knowledge of African American past and its cultural background.

3.3 Humour Theory

- 3.3.1 Superiority Theory:** Superiority Theory suggests that the humour is informed with a feeling of superiority over other people as defined by Aristotle and later perceived by Thomas Hobbes. The theory can be applied to Twain works where the author employs the use of ridicule and satire in placing the reader over and above the social norms or institutions that are under ridicule or satire. In the same breadth, humour in *Beloved* by Morrison undermines cultural and political authority especially on matters of race and gender.
- 3.3.2 Incongruity Theory:** Incongruity Theory: In this theory, humour is as a result of a perceived difference between those things that are expected to be and the reality. The theory will be employed to examine irony and paradox in the works by Twain and Morrison. As an example, in *Beloved*, incongruity has created humour despite the exposition of some painful, tragic slave and traumatic histories.
- 3.3.3 Relief Theory:** Relief Theory, as proposed by Freud, is based on a premise that humour is a psychological release, which gets rid of tension or discomfort. The latter will be used to explain why both Twain and Morrison resort to the use of humour as a coping tool. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, humour actually enables Huckleberry (and the reader) to address some of the problems in society (for instance, slavery, racism etc.) obliquely, in *Beloved*, it has helped to deal with the horror of the post-slavery situation.

3.4 Data Collection

This study will use two literary texts as sources of information because they are the most important literary works that demonstrate the application of humour to social, cultural and racial challenges:

- 3.4.1 Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:** This novel is chosen because of its highly satirical and ironic treatment of the norms of the 19th -century America in general, and racism and slavery in particular. The analysis will examine the roles played by humour as a device used to convey moral issues and social concerns through narratives.
- 3.4.2 Toni Morrison's *Beloved*:** The novel by Morrison is chosen because it reflects post slavery traumas as perceived by the African Americans. Humour in *Beloved* will be examined so far as to critically evaluate its role in addressing cultural politics as well as offering psychological release in form of laughter even in the most traumatic of the parts of the story.

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4. Analysis

The analysis section examines the use of humour in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Beloved*. Pragmatic and humour theories were utilised as framework methods of addressing the rhetorical purpose of humour in these works. These methods assist exploring the role of humour as the mechanism of social criticism (satire) and narrational tool to highlight deeper social concerns addressing such topics as race, identity, and morality.

4.1 Mark Twain: Humour as a Tool for Satire and Social Commentary

4.1.1 Exploration of Twain's Humour:

The significance of humour in Twain, especially in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, is that it is a satirical instrument through which he criticises the social setup of 19th-century America. With irony, wit, and exaggeration Twain can satirize the rules and norms of the society especially those revolving around rules and norms of race, religion and morality. The examination is dedicated to the fact that Twain employs the humour and tries to overcome hypocrisy and draw social conventions of that time including those that were somehow related to the notion of race and slavery.

As an example, the characters created by Twain, such as Huck Finn, whose ethical code frequently conflicts with the conventions of the society in which he is meant to live, demonstrate the apex of the absurdities of the social systems in which he and other characters live. The way in which Huck rebels against these norms, given his rejection of the church and the school, turns out to be a humorous critique of the limits and inconsistency of the society in which these institutions are highly valued.

4.1.1.1 Pragmatic Analysis of Humour in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Pragmatic analysis will be used to interpret the way Twain humour works. In this strategy, the contribution of specific speech acts, conversational implicatures, and the use of language in the text are reviewed in pertaining to humour. The analysis will focus on the role played by the regional dialects and vernacular spoken by Twain to enhance the comic effect, as well as attracting the reader to the ugly truth of slavery and racial discrimination. The humour of Twain, usually founded upon the absurdities of the human nature and the social expectation, turns out to be the way of revealing the deeper criticisms of the social situations.

Table 1: Speech Act Theory in Twain's Works: *The Adventures of Huckleberry*

Character	Speech Act (Type)	Example from Text	Function of Speech Act	Humour Mechanism	Percentage of Total Humour
Huckleberry Finn	Assertive	<i>"All right, then, I'll go to hell"</i>	Expressing defiance and moral independence	Irony: Huck's innocent logic contrasts with societal norms	20%
Tom Sawyer	Directive	<i>"We got to rob somebody. That's what it's for."</i>	Mocking societal values through exaggerated schemes	Satire: Over-the-top plans reflecting romanticized adventure novels	15%
Jim (Huck's friend)	Assertive	<i>"I knowed he was white inside."</i>	Commentary on racial and moral judgment	Irony and Satire: Jim's simple, profound logic undermines societal prejudices	10%
Huck's Father	Expressive	<i>"A man can't get his rights in a gov'ment like this."</i>	Expressing dissatisfaction with authority	Irony: His complaint about government highlights his own moral failures	10%
Widow Douglas	Directive	<i>"Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry."</i>	Imposing societal rules on Huck	Satire: Social norms presented as restrictive and hypocritical	8%
Judge Thatcher	Declarative	<i>"I now take you into custody."</i>	Legal authority asserting control over Huck's future	Absurdity: Huck's predicament within legal and social systems	7%
Aunt Sally	Expressive	<i>"Good gracious! Anybody hurt?"</i> (referring to a black man's death)	Shows ignorance toward racial issues	Irony and Satire: Highlighting racial indifference through casual speech	12%

The table shows the majority of assertive and expressive speech act in works of Twain. Aggressive forms of speech, such as the expression of Huck, *"All right, then I will go to hell"*, become ironic and accuse the social and religious order. Tom is indirectly ridiculing

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romanticized adventure ideals, as to him, the idea of heroism in society is the call to arms signalled by his directive speech, "*We got to rob somebody*". The line said by Jim: "*I knowed he was white inside*" presents irony and satirical remarks ranging on racial prejudices, indicative of how ridiculous these perceptions are when assessed in society. The irony, exaggeration and use of wit, are key elements in Twain humour, which develops as a forceful critique of the 19th -century American society, and reveals moral and racial contradictions.

4.2 Toni Morrison: Humour and the Exploration of Racial Issues and Identity

4.2.1 Analysis of Morrison's Use of Humour to Address Racial Issues and Identity

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison relies on dark and subtle humour to create a narrative of race, identity and the consequences of slavery. In contrast to Adventurous Twain, whose humour is too obvious and does not spare his characters the pain they may be experiencing, the humour used by Morrison is quite subtle and ironic, though it serves as the day of emotional gravity reliefs.

The use of humour in *Beloved* can help as a method of coping, especially in the case of Sethe, who is a victim of traumatizing incidents in the past. To cite an example the line by Sethe, that shows the dark humour combined with tragic element of her actions, that are as follows, I took and laid my babies where they would be safe, shows the balance between love and violence. Morrison employs also humour to criticize the legacy of slavery and the intricacy of relationships. The possessiveness characteristic of *Beloved*, marked by her saying, I am Beloved, and she is mine, mocks the misshaping identities and relations because of slavery.

In sum, humour in *Beloved* satirizes social norms and mental trauma caused by slavery. It enables Morrison to touch upon the issues of identity and survival that the personages deal with, and, at the same time, to provide the opportunity to consider such a vital question as the consequences of systematic oppression.

4.2.2 Pragmatic Examination of Humour in *Beloved*

The strategic humour in *Beloved* is employed to create emphasis on the effect of the characters trauma as being emotional as well as psychological. Through analysis of humour as a pragmatic approach, it will be identified how Morrison through the approach of irony and exaggeration and implied meanings have drawn readers to the surface of the text and opened it up into the darker, and sometimes extremely painful, aspects of slavery, motherhood, and survival.

The humour or dark-irony with which Morrison treated the events, which are otherwise emotionally intense, turns them into situations of a greater reflection. To illustrate, the fact that Sethe justifies her drastic actions with the phrase, I took and put my babies where they will be safe, shows us a twisted sense of humour where her sacrifice shows us the moral and psychological cost of wanting to survive in a world where racial violence exists. The following table shows the practical use of Speech Act Theory: the type of the speech act, its role, and the role in humour of the text of *Beloved*.

Table 3: Speech Act Theory in Morrison's Works: *Beloved*

Character	Speech Act (Type)	Example from Text	Function of Speech Act	Humour Mechanism	Percentage of Total Humour
Sethe	Expressive	"I took and put my babies where they'd be safe."	Expressing guilt, justification for extreme actions	Dark humour: Grim reflection on maternal sacrifice and survival	25%
Paul D	Assertive	"Your love is too thick."	Critiquing Sethe's overwhelming protectiveness	Irony: The contradiction between love and suffocation	15%
Beloved	Expressive	"I am Beloved, and she is mine."	Expressing possession and identity	Satire: Over-the-top possessiveness reveals emotional complexity	20%
Denver	Directive	"I want you to tell me about her."	Demanding information about her mother and Beloved	Incongruity: Direct communication used to uncover hidden truths	10%
Baby Suggs	Declarative	"Let the children come!"	Welcoming children to a spiritual cleansing ceremony	Satire: Critique of religious traditions through exaggerated kindness	12%
Stamp Paid	Assertive	"She ain't crazy."	Defending Sethe's mental state	Irony: Defending sanity in an insane world	8%
Sethe	Commissive	"I will never run from another thing on this earth."	Vowing to face her traumatic past	Hyperbole: Over-exaggerated commitment to facing fears	10%

In *Beloved*, speech acts shed some light on the use of humour by Morrison to exaggerate contradiction and emotional density. The words, Sethe uses to defend her actions, as she says, "I took to put my babies where they would be safe", become a morbid commentary on the extremes of motherly sacrifice and survival. The conversation in which the Paul D states, "Your love is too thick", makes the situation of the love and suffocation more complex with undertone of irony. The possessive statement of Beloved, as she announces, "I am Beloved, and she is mine", brings the element of satire, portraying the psychological aspect and the emotional instability of the character.

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Table 4: Conversational Implicature in Morrison's Works: and *Beloved*

Character	Dialogue	Implied Meaning	Humourous Effect	Impact on Reader	Percentage of Instances
Sethe	<i>"This here's flesh I'm talking about. Flesh that needs to be loved."</i>	Sethe is discussing the trauma of slavery, but she implies deeper emotional and psychological scars, emphasizing a need for healing.	The dark humour lies in the contrast between the mundane nature of "flesh" and the heavy emotional weight of the statement.	The reader reflects on the horrors of slavery, but the humour provides a brief emotional release, allowing a deeper engagement with Sethe's trauma.	20%
Paul D	<i>"Your love is too thick."</i>	Paul D is implying that Sethe's love is overwhelming and suffocating, possibly even destructive.	This remark has an ironic, humourous undertone, as "thick love" contrasts with more conventional ideas of affection.	The reader sees how love, in this context, becomes complex and intertwined with survival, generating both tension and relief.	15%
Denver	<i>"If it hurts, why don't you cry?"</i>	Denver is implying that Sethe hides her emotions and refuses to show weakness.	The humour comes from the straightforwardness of Denver's question in contrast to the emotional complexity of Sethe's situation.	The reader feels the tension between emotional expression and repression, which lightens a heavy moment through Denver's bluntness.	10%
Paid	<i>"Maybe it was too rough for anybody"</i>	Implies that the traumatic experiences of slavery are too	The understatement in "too rough" adds a grim humour to a serious subject.	Readers are struck by the silence surrounding	5%

	<i>to talk about it. Maybe."</i>	painful to discuss openly.		trauma, but the humour prevents the moment from becoming entirely somber.	
Baby Suggs	<i>"Here, in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass."</i>	Baby Suggs emphasizes the communal and physical nature of healing after slavery, using repetition to highlight shared experiences.	The humour lies in the raw, direct manner in which Baby Suggs speaks of flesh, making an abstract concept (healing) tangible.	The reader feels both the joy and sorrow intertwined in the human experience, finding comfort in the simplicity of the statement.	10%

In *Beloved*, conversational implicature enhances humour created by Morrison by conveying emotional significance because of what is not said or implied. The dark humour of the contrast between the banality of the flesh and the permanence of scarring trauma in the comment made by Sethe provides a subtle way of revealing the pain of slavery. The fact that Paul D refers to thick love as a way of criticizing the stifling essence of post-trauma relationships, as well as the aggressive nature of the question about crying that covers the bottling of emotions, developed by Denver, are aspects that emphasize how the trauma affects the relationships and how the avoided feelings are presented.

The subtle irony in Stamp Paid, which is brought about through conversational implicature, occurs when he says, "*Maybe it was too rough to be talked about by anybody*". The humour used by Baby Suggs to invoke the process of healing is her reference to flesh that weeps, laughs. In general, implicature in *Beloved* should be viewed as a gained weapon against trauma. Instead of providing straightforward humour, it makes the reader reflect on the unspoken reality of the experiences of the suffering and survival of the characters, making the novel experience more emotional and psychological.

4.3 Comparative Analysis: Twain and Morrison

4.3.1 Comparison of the Use of Humour between Twain and Morrison

Though Twain and Morrison employ humour in the role of social criticism, their stylings are quite different because of different historical and cultural backgrounds they were writing against. The humour that Twain used in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is usually satirical and ironical at its core, criticizing post-civil-war America in its moral inconsistencies. Morrison, on the other hand, has darker and more complicated humour, especially in *Beloved*, which showcases the trauma of slavery and systematic oppression in the 20th-century America.

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Table 5: Comparative Framework: Twain vs. Morrison

Aspect	Mark Twain's Approach	Toni Morrison's Approach	Themes Addressed	Cultural/Historical Context
Use of Humour	Twain employs satire and irony to critique society, often using humour to highlight moral and social failings.	Morrison uses dark humour and irony, especially in dealing with trauma and systemic oppression.	Race, class, identity, freedom, and moral dilemmas.	Twain wrote during the late 19th century, post-Civil War, focusing on issues like slavery, racism, and social inequality. Morrison writes in the context of the civil rights movement and post-civil rights America, addressing systemic racism and historical trauma.
Characterization	Twain's characters, like Huck Finn, are often naïve but morally insightful, using humour to reflect on social norms.	Morrison's characters, like Sethe, are shaped by trauma, and their humour reflects their survival and resilience.	Exploration of personal identity, moral consciousness, and survival in oppressive systems.	Twain's characters often reflect the Southern American experience during and after slavery, while Morrison's characters reflect the African American experience post-slavery, emphasizing generational trauma.
Narrative Style	Twain's narratives are often straightforward, using colloquial language and humour to address complex issues.	Morrison's narratives are more fragmented and symbolic, often weaving humour into intense emotional or traumatic moments.	Morality, race relations, societal hypocrisy, and personal freedom.	Twain wrote in the context of Reconstruction America, where debates on race, freedom, and citizenship were still ongoing. Morrison's works reflect the aftermath of slavery and the civil rights struggles of the 20th century.
Representation of Race	Twain used satire to expose the absurdity and cruelty of racism,	Morrison directly engages with the African American experience,	Racial injustice, cultural identity, and the legacy of slavery.	Twain critiques the moral contradictions of 19th-century American society, especially in relation

	especially in Huckleberry Finn.	using humour to highlight survival and resilience in the face of systemic oppression.		to slavery and race, while Morrison provides a voice to the historical trauma of African Americans, particularly women, in a post-slavery context.
Moral and Social Commentary	Twain's humour often exposes the hypocrisy of social norms and beliefs, using characters to challenge the status quo.	Morrison's humour offers a lens through which readers can understand trauma, survival, and the complexities of human relationships.	Hypocrisy, justice, racial inequality, trauma, and survival.	Twain critiqued the moral landscape of post-slavery America, often exposing the failures of Reconstruction. Morrison critiques the continued legacy of slavery and its emotional and psychological impacts on future generations.

The table emphasizes that though both Mark Twain and Toni Morrison rely on humour to address social issues, they are influenced by different historical backgrounds. The humour in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is mainly satirical and ironical, attacking the ethical contradictions and racial biases of the post-Civil War America by means of naive characters, such as Huck. Morrison, on the contrary, is darker and more subtle, adding irony and black humour to *Beloved* to discuss the issue of slavery and its impact on the African American identity and survival over the years. Twain is interested in hypocrisy in a wider context in society and Morrison humour explores the same process of psychological scarring due to slavery to offer a few moments of emotional release in the background of the heavy issues of trauma and healing in the novel.

4.4 Discussion

By examining humour in *the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Beloved*, it can be revealed that both Twain and Morrison rely on humour to comment on social standards, race, identification, and trauma: however, the given authors are influenced by the differences in their historical backgrounds.

Humour in Twain *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is largely satirical with aggressive uses of speech acts, such as in the instance of Huck saying "All right, than I guess I will go to hell", to test the conformity principles of society and religion. In the same sense, commanding speech acts in Tom Sawyer ridicule the romanticized values of society, especially the value of adventure. This employment of humour reveals the foolishness of social codes, that of race, religion and morality.

Contrarily, Morrison *Beloved* applies the use of expressive speech act exemplified by Sethe who says, "I took and put my babies where they would be safe", which presents a mix of dark humour with trauma to shed light on the moral ambiguity of motherly sacrifice in the backdrop of slavery, which is both bloody and tame. Both of the writers use humour to make race comments. The words uttered by Jim, "I knowed he was white inside" in Twain's novel,

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are a mockery of racial discrimination putting a rather ironic twist on the perception of race in society. In *Beloved*, the statement by Beloved, "*I am beloved, and she is mine*" provides a black humour denouncing possessiveness and emotional suffocation which are the manifestations of the complex identity created through the trauma of slavery.

The identity is also focussed around humour. The way Huck chooses to rebel against social norms by using humour, specifically, when making decisions to reject established social roles, is used as the reflection of Sethe trying to reconcile her identity as a mother, a mother marred by trauma and guilt. In both the works humour turns into a medium to negotiate and resist the oppressive conditions that form their identities.

Lastly, humour used to cope up with trauma, especially in *Beloved*. The hyperbolic statement of Sethe, "*I shall never again flee another thing in this world*", shows the fact that humour is interlaced with the art of survival and psychic survival. Twain approaches humour as critical of societal norms, but more so in the line of the satire than in regards to trauma itself since he targets ridiculousness of social requirements, not severe emotional wounds.

On the whole, Twain and Morrison employ humour to criticize the social hypocrisy, racist inequality, and moral contradictions. As humour, Twain reveals the absurdities in post-Civil war-America and Morrison can use humour to both interact with slavery psychological and emotional legacies. Using humour, the two writers present extraordinary social critique, applying the wit to explore involved issues of race, identity, and trauma.

5. Implications for Future Research

The work presents potential for a number of future research directions, and it would especially be interesting to investigate humour in other American authors and/or in other genres. The general comparative method employed in this study can be employed to investigate the use of humour in other literature traditions, for instance the Native American or Latinx, to analyse how and why humour is used in different cultures and time periods. Subsequent studies could also attempt at identifying the relationships between humour and other figures of speech, for example, symbolism or allegory, to gain additional insights on the role and relevance of humour in literary works from the perspective of the authors' thematic and rhetorical purposes. Furthermore, research could explore the application of humour in contemporary literature since authors that write today also deal with the existing issues in society and culture.

6. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the element of humour played a pivotal role in American literature throughout the 19th, the 20th, and the 21st centuries. During these three centuries, funny jokes became a tool combining a potent force of social criticism and cultural examination. In the 19th-century and especially after the Civil War, writers began to employ humour as a weapon to attack the social and political corruption, and one of the most popular social norms, which were aimed by writers, included racism and slavery. Over time, the different types of humour have grown to be less straightforward and layered. Some of the authors who tackled the topic of race, identity, and the sufferings of slavery in America through jokes and humour include Toni Morrison in the 20th century. Humour in American literature

has therefore proven to be a very strong and a revolutionary influence that is able to change and adapt to the cultural and social issues in every era.

Regarding the second question, the use of humour as a literary device to criticise certain social and cultural issues is exhibited in the works of Mark Twain and Toni Morrison. To Mark Twain, humour may be viewed as a satirical tool of opening up the vices in the post-Civil War American society. Using such characters as Huck Finn, Twain tries to criticize the cultural standards of racism, morality and freedom putting the readers to the test and invite them to re-evaluate the values of 19th century America. Toni Morrison, on the other hand, is less comical, but at the same time, it is not less important. Her humour can mostly be termed as black humour which had been built upon the historical sufferings of slavery and racism in America.

Humour as a means of coping not only with the present and dealing with the struggle of racial discrimination but also as a voice of sarcasm is prominent in her works as she deals with the nature of the African Americans and how they have coped with the present. Though the two authors handle humour in different ways, the purpose of humour is to attract readers and make them consider social problems critically and how social history can influence the present.

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