

The art of literature has long been used as a vehicle for entertaining the masses. However, many stories have another purpose, such as expressing the writer's feelings on social customs from years gone by or at the time of writing. One vehicle which is often used to attain this goal is satire. Mark Twain's novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, is an excellent example of using satire as social commentary (Reis 316). The novel is definitely a commentary on the ideals of King Arthur's sixth century Camelot, but the many inconsistencies and ambiguities which are apparent in the story also suggest that Twain was also satirizing the flaws in the author's own nineteenth century society (Wiggins 80). If we look at the character progression of both Hank Morgan and Merlin, the reader can easily see Twain's dual-criticism.

When Hank arrives in Camelot, he quickly rises to power. His manipulation of public opinion regarding him by the use of "miracles" immediately brings Hank to the realization that he can basically do whatever he pleases. His knowledge of nineteenth century technology makes Hank Morgan a "human standing next to apes" (Robinson 190). This section of the story is filled with Twain's commentary on the absurdness of the ideals of Chivalry. When Camelot is looked at from the standpoint of twentieth century practicality, it looks so absurd that it is funny (Robinson 184). An excellent example of this can be found in the banquet which the Knights of the Round Table attend and at which Hank is sentenced. The knights, supposed pillars of Chivalry, sit around the table discussing their own deeds, drinking, and embellishing the facts of events which had taken place. The Knights also partake in activities that we would label as childish, such as the amusement over the dog chasing its tail (Twain 24-25). The passage emphasizes the childish innocence of the sixth century people, but it also shatters the romantic ideals that the modern world holds of the Knights of the Round Table (Robinson 185).

Hank immediately sets out to employ his nineteenth century ideals in the sixth century. His first action in office is to create a patent office. From here, he proceeds to modernize Camelot. He establishes a Navy, and begins to string telegraph wires. At the same time, he is avoiding the Church. This section shows Twain's favorable attitude towards nineteenth century progress. Hank has been making true progress in the nation, the most noticeable affect of which is the quadrupling, and redistributing of the revenues. It is here where Twain expresses his most fervent support for the nineteenth century ideals of Democracy. Throughout the novel, the Catholic Church is blamed for the problems of the land. The Church epitomizes sixth century ignorance and superstition, specifically by hindering Hank's technological advances. The Church is feared more than the Monarchy (Baldanza 75-76).

This favorable attitude is not held throughout the novel however. The final product of Hank's endeavors is nothing. At the end of Hank's journey, the world is not robbed of superstition, in fact the Church's power is heightened. The downfall of Hank's utopia is Twain's criticism of his own nineteenth century society (Dendinger 2668).

Much of this criticism can be found in the Character imperfections of Hank Morgan. Hank thinks of himself of the progressive Yankee, forward thinking, and ready to save the people from their superstition (Wiggins 79). Although he does make progress in several areas. such as administrator, statesman, technician, and astronomer, Hank is still an ignoramus when his views on religion economics and politics are viewed (Wiggins 79). It should also be noted that Hank was only empowered to rescue the superstitious sixth century folk by preying on that superstition (Wiggins 82).

Another problem with the portrayal of the nineteenth century as such a perfect world is that fact that when he returns, Hank cannot fully return to the nineteenth century. The very society which he attempted to import into the sixth century is no longer capable of satisfying Hank (Robinson 192). A third aspect of Hank's failure to be a truly practical Yankee is his relationship with Sandy.

Twain cannot condemn Sandy for her simplicity and eventually grows to worship it (Wiggins 82).

Twain felt that the sixth century was far from perfect. However, the nineteenth century did not contain the answers which Camelot needed to overcome its ignorance and superstition.

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