

The Boss's Dilemma: Mark Twain and the Relation of Technology and Society

Author: Emil Stefan Kehlenbach

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Boston College
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Department of Political Science

THE BOSS'S DILEMMA:
MARK TWAIN AND THE RELATION OF TECHNOLOGY
AND SOCIETY

By

EMIL STEFAN KEHLENBACH

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Emil Stefan Kehlenbach
Susan Shell: Advisor

Abstract:

Mark Twain's understanding of the relationship between technology and society is complicated, and delivered through many of his individual works, including A Connecticut Yankee and The American Claimant. Through a close reading of Connecticut Yankee with additional support from The American Claimant I am to develop a fuller understanding of this relationship and how Twain's thought reflects on modern society.

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Introduction

The relation between society and technology is one of the defining characteristics of modernity. At times, this relationship seems tenuous at best, with the advances of technology oftentimes coming into conflict with the goods of society, or society being forced to adapt or catch up to the changes brought about by technological innovation. Mark Twain is sensitive to this concept and brings out this difficulty within A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court. Within this novel Twain attempts to understand this problem by removing the Connecticut Yankee from the context of his 18th century New England existence and placing him in an entirely non-technological society. Through the main character, Hank Morgan's, interactions and attempts to modernize this antiquated society and the disastrous results that follow Twain is able to shed light on the reasons why certain societies adapt more easily to new technologies, and why democracies seem to be particularly adapted for technological development. In this paper I will be undertaking a close reading of A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court as well as several other works by Twain, with the goal of fully understanding Twain's formulation of this problem, and his possible suggestions of a solution.

1) The Importance of Twain

Why Literature?

Literature as a whole occupies a unique place in academic thought; it is a popular entertainment medium that has the potential to develop complex philosophical ideas. It is this combination of the popular and the philosophical that makes it worthy for study, especially when the philosophic elements of the novel involve questions of political theory. The advantage of the

novel is its popular nature. The author of the philosophical novel has made a clear decision to break from the fold of traditional philosophic writing and present his ideas in a different way. This change in delivery does not make the work less valuable; in fact, it may actually be the opposite. The presentation of philosophical ideals within the framework of a novel may make these ideas more easily accepted by readers. This then fulfills the great goal of philosophy, which is to present ideas and arguments and have them accepted by both academic peers and the public. Perhaps this can be seen as going too far, but I think that if a philosopher is presenting a view that he believes is fundamentally correct, he, in some way asserts the idea that the entire world should know of his ideas and adopt them, because he believes them to be true, or show some truth about the world. Catherine Zuckert also points out that popular culture has an incredibly persuasive effect on politics, and if one wants to come to a full understanding about politics of a certain period, one must study the influential popular works. She claims, more generally, "that the study of literature has something to add to the study of politics." I do believe that one can go further and say that literature can be valuable even removed from its historical context.

Why Twain?

Mark Twain occupies a unique period in American history. Beginning with the American Revolution up to and through the Civil War, the fundamental American identity was still very much tied with the European one. Despite America's origins in a fundamental rebellion from the European model of government, the cultural and philosophic ties between the two regions remained very close. It took the fighting of the American Civil War and the subsequent rebuilding and westward expansion to solidify or create a truly American identity. Riding the leading edge of this was Twain himself. He experienced and described every aspect of the "American experience" during this particular era. A chronological, even biographic treatment of the major

events in his life shows how he was explicitly tied to the soul of the nation. Born in Missouri, his early life revolved around the small town of Hannibal, which then becomes both the locational and thematic backdrop for Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, published much later. He then, after working as a printer, becomes a “cub-pilot” on a Mississippi River steamboat, which provides the experiences for Life on the Mississippi. After the outbreak of the Civil War, Twain has a two week long stint in the Confederate irregulars before setting out west, a time which provides the themes of Manifest Destiny and western expansion which were treated in his early writings and in Roughing It. After this, based on his success as a reporter in California and in the Sandwich Isles, he is offered a chance to travel as a correspondent to Europe and the Holy Land. He publishes these observations on an American returning to the “Old World” in Innocents Abroad. After returning home, Twain embarked on his most famous exploration, defining race relations and the problems and benefits in the newly reconstructed America. It was in doing so that he published his most famous works, including Huck Finn and Connecticut Yankee. These experiences within the exceptional life of Mark Twain become the inspiration for his novels and writings that then are able to transcend this historical period and get at a larger theme.

As one of America’s most famous humorist, Twain is often relegated to the realm of witty quotations or seen as a simple “teller-of-jokes,” but the true nature of his humor goes beyond that. His humor hints largely at a darker truth and the purpose of the joke often holds a larger meaning than the joke itself. The way that violence and killing are portrayed in Connecticut Yankee is a prime example of this. This violence follows a noticeable split between being humorous, even slapstick, and somber massacre. We see Hank casually mow down dozens of knights with a pair of six-shooters during the tournament with comedic glee, but the final battle is presented with the all seriousness that such a battle deserves. The discrepancies between these two events highlight the thematic changes in the presentation of a very similar theme. The

fundamental challenge then becomes teasing out why certain situations are presented in a humorous manner and why some are not. Twain's humor is generally used as a means to introduce an unpleasant or controversial topic to get his audience on his side before taking that topic to its extreme. The presentation of the tournament then can be seen as Twain's introducing the reader to Hank's initial easy acceptance of using his massive technological advantage for violent ends. Twain then shows how this concept can be taken to its extreme, when these technological advantages turn a battle into a massive slaughter, leaving Hank and his "boys" to suffocate on the fumes of the rotting dead. Twain is attempting to point out that the understanding of technology as a acceptably destructive device coupled with the denial of full rationality to the knights in King Arthur's court can easily lead to tragic effects. It is immensely important to attempt to understand what the purpose of Twain's humor is, as very rarely is it simply for its own sake.

However, Twain's importance goes beyond that of a simple observer and master of humor, even humor that hints at a larger theme. His thoughts are also immensely valuable to the study of politics. Twain had an intimate relationship with American politics for an extended period of time, especially when he was most prolific. His fame attracted famous political figures and his work, already expressing hints of his political observations reflected more of his "insider" status. Twain published Ulysses S. Grant's memoirs and was considered a close friend. He also maintained relationships with Grover Cleveland and Fredrick Douglass, as well as being involved in several influential social circles. Through these experiences he grew to hold the political opinions that he expressed in his writings, including those on the uselessness of the party system as well as the inherent inequality present in all political regimes. These thoughts come out in Twain's later works, including Connecticut Yankee and The American Claimant, two of Twain's most overtly political novels, as well as some of his short stories, which often explore

apolitical theme.

The task of reading and interpreting the works of Twain, especially when the goal is to interpret them as philosophy or works of political thought, seeking the underlying teachings that Twain is attempting to set forward, is made much more complicated due to the naturally deceptive nature of Twain himself, and this aspect comes out in his writing. It is important to understand that the name, Mark Twain, is more than just a pseudonym for the man, Samuel Clemens. It is a character that Clemens perfected throughout his life. One could even track the progression of the character in relation to the man throughout his career. In most of Clemens' early works, the character of Mark Twain and the author, Sam Clemens, are very closely tied, if not indistinguishable. For example the narrator in "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" is Mark Twain the character, but it is closely based on Sam Clemens, the author, and at various times Clemens himself described how the events that occurred to the narrator also occurred to him. However, this is not always the case; Sam Clemens begins to grow apart from his alter-ego, and his alter-ego begins to take on a life of its own. This becomes apparent within his later works, especially compared to his personal letters and the writings in his various autobiographical fragments. This becomes even more complex when Twain himself becomes a character within his own works. He serves as narrator for most of his short stories and is even technically the narrator of Connecticut Yankee. When Twain introduces himself as a fictional narrator of one of his works, as he often does, the task of understanding what precise arguments he is attempting to put forward becomes even more complicated. This is because one then has to unravel what Mark Twain the author and Mark Twain the narrator are saying, and how these two, often different perspectives reflect what Samuel Clemens' intentions are.

In order to come to any full conclusion regarding Twain's precise thoughts one must be

extraordinarily careful. With Twain, as I have mentioned before, his use of humor is usually a means to an end, so tracing why he tells a certain joke in a specific way allows for some insight into the argument behind the humor. However, Twain advantageously has a tendency to repeat themes and arguments across different works. This allows the reader to track arguments and thoughts across the different works and come to a fuller understanding of what Twain or Clemens thought about a specific subject.

For simplicity, I will be treating Twain and Clemens as the same person, but I will still be aiming at understanding the true thoughts and arguments that Clemens' was putting forward, but when there is a significant distinction between the character of Twain and the person, Clemens, I will make that distinction clear.

Scholarly Literature

Fully explaining Twain's importance is a difficult exercise as he is already immensely ingrained in the American psyche, and it would be mere pedantry to attempt to rehash it. I would also never be able to cover the ground as effectively as the other writers who have preceded me. The overall importance and influence of Mark Twain stems from his both keen observations about the limitations of society and his ability to fill a hole in the American identity. This importance does have a relation to his time period, and while I feel that Twain's importance surpasses his historical relevancy, I also think that a full treatment of Twain would be impossible without understanding him within his historical context. This task is made somewhat easier through the immense library of work that has already been done.

The existing academic understanding of Twain can be best understood chronologically.

There are two main periods of time wherein the study of Twain was seen to be “in vogue:” the 1960s with a mild continuation into the 1970s and the mid- to late 2000s, which give us the majority of the political work on Twain that has proven useful to me in my current understanding of Twain and Connecticut Yankee. In each of these periods of time, serious, non-literary, academic work regarding Mark Twain flourished.¹ The body of work in the 1960s, in general, seems to occupy itself with the more historical questions, asserting that although Connecticut Yankee was generally a failure in a literary sense, Twain manages to express a sort of biting commentary on his contemporary times. These scholars, however, are divided as to whom this commentary or satire was directed towards. This line seems to be drawn based not so much on each author’s reading of Connecticut Yankee itself, but on their readings of Twain’s other works and letters. James Williams (1964) makes the classic case for this particular interpretation, offering a historical approach to Twain and directing his satire towards 19th century English society.² He bases this understanding on Twain’s various letters and journal entries from the time when he was penning Connecticut Yankee. This argument is balanced by Allen Guttman’s (1960) work on Twain, which takes a similar approach as Williams in that he treats Twain’s work as a fundamentally flawed text, but one that points towards a biting satire of modern technological progress that ultimately leaves the reader unsatisfied, as Twain offers no real solution to the problems that are raised.³ These two works serve to illustrate the two sides of the academic work on Twain in the 1960s.

¹ The question of why individuals in each of these time periods saw Twain as a particularly useful author would be the subject of a fascinating discussion, but one that I unfortunately, am unable to engage in here. However, it may be that both the late 1960’s and the mid 2000’s enjoy a sort of existential similarity with the late 1800’s in terms of self-understanding, international relations, and political and technological advancement.

² *Revision and Intention in Mark Twain’s A Connecticut Yankee* James D. Williams; *American Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Nov., 1964) pp. 288-297

³ *Mark Twain’s Connecticut Yankee: Affirmation of the Vernacular Tradition?*; Allen Guttman; *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Jun. 1960), pp. 232-237

This understanding was prevalent until Catherine and Michael Zuckert published their landmark article “*And In Its Wake We Followed*” *The Political Wisdom of Mark Twain*. This 1972 article engaged with the previous work of the 1960s but managed to fundamentally change how Connecticut Yankee is read. It is hard to overstate the importance of this article, as nearly every important political work on Mark Twain following its publication has used their work as a starting point and a baseline for interpretation. The Zuckerts reinterpret the assertions made by the earlier authors and conclude that Twain’s parallel structuring and consistency of theme throughout means that Connecticut Yankee was not a literary failure, or a rushed publication, but a carefully constructed political fable, through which Twain is lending “insight to the character and problems of modern politics.”⁴ This turn from the historical example to a consideration of Twain as a political philosopher is one that all following work on Connecticut Yankee has adopted. I take up a similar goal as the Zuckerts in this work, treating Twain as a consistent political philosopher and author, with a specific goal, but where they focus on the question of divine right, I focus on the question of technology. However, we both treat Twain’s criticisms and questions of the idea of progress, and the idea of the proper government.

After the Zuckerts’ landmark paper, the study of Twain came up again in the mid-2000s. Joel Johnson makes the case for this resurgence in his 2007 article, *A Connecticut Yankee in Saddam’s Court: Mark Twain on Benevolent Imperialism*. He argues that America’s current overseas wars in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq should lead to a resurgence in the study of Twain, as Connecticut Yankee shares many thematic elements with the intention of a country involved in “nation-building.” He argues that Hank himself is engaged in a type of “nation-building,” and that how one reads Connecticut Yankee can help lend a deeper insight into

⁴ “*And In Its Wake We Followed*” *The Political Wisdom of Mark Twain*; Catherine and Michael Zuckert; *Interpretation*; Vol. 3/1 (Autumn 1972) pp. 59-93

the understanding of American “benevolent imperialism.”⁵ This work seems to define the work on Twain in the mid 2000s, which is characterized with much less historic application, using Twain to address very modern concerns. Johnson’s concerns are with the new policy of American intervention. Wayne Ambler’s 2007 work, *Making Men Modern* is very much a spiritual predecessor to my own work, as it touches upon many of the themes that I wish to develop in detail and seeks to use Twain and Connecticut Yankee to address the problem of modernity and the destructive consequences of forcing individuals into the modern age.⁶ Ambler’s work concerns the problem of modernization, specifically how Hank attempts and fails to turn decidedly non-modern individuals into modern democrats, and is an exploration of the presumptions and necessary preconditions of each era.

In response to this existing body of literature on the political work of Twain, I aim to take this study in a slightly different direction. I am focusing on what appears to be to be a neglected element in the study of Twain, his treatment of technology. I take my bearings from the work of the Zuckerts’ in that I focus on a non-historical understanding of Twain and that I believe he does not simply allow us to understand his own time, but allows us to understand modernity more generally and has legitimate philosophical points that are worth discovering. In addition to taking inspiration from the Zuckerts’ article, my work is also an expansion of some themes that were discussed in Wayne Ambler’s paper. His ideas of the denial of rationality by Hank, and the focus on modernization within Connecticut Yankee are all themes that I wish to expand upon, and Ambler’s article serves as a good base to draw out the type of conclusions regarding technology that I wish to address. However, Ambler’s article is limited by its scope and its length, as he is unable to fully develop the questions of technology that are necessarily raised

⁵ *A Connecticut Yankee in Saddam’s Court: Mark Twain on Benevolent Imperialism*; Joel A. Johnson; *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No.1 (Mar., 2007), pp.49-61

⁶ *Making Men Modern*; Wayne Ambler; *The New Atlantis* Number 23, Winter 2009, pp. 121-129

when the idea of modernity in Twain is discussed.

2) On Human Freedom and Democracy

Twain's thoughts on democracy are immensely interesting as he manages to skirt the line between being a harsh critic of democracy, and remaining a supporter of the American system. These thoughts allow us to understand Twain as an individual who is able to shed light on the question of technology and democracy. These understanding and critiques come in three forms. First, he understands democracy as a government based on his understanding of human nature. From this we have his direct critiques of the American system and finally he makes a few direct suggestions for improvement. His critiques and suggestions for American democracy, however, are unsatisfying, so we have to look further into his work for further solutions regarding his conceptions of democracy.

A possible conception of Twain's ideal democracy would be an interesting combination of aristocratic principles and popular ideals. This makes for a very conflicted sense of democracy, but one that plays out throughout nearly all of his separate works. This hypothetical ideal could be drawn from his understanding of the observable democracy of America, the democracy that Twain experienced and participated in. It is a democracy full of entrenched party lines and forced adherence to doctrine, as well as a not-so-secret envy of the class system of more monarchical governments. This is a democracy that, in the wake of the Civil War, is struggling to re-assert itself as a functioning and moral system of government. However, in doing this, it is also dealing with its own fundamental flaws, and the flaws of the people participating in it. Twain's critiques of American democracy come out in a large number of his works, including Connecticut Yankee, The American Claimant, and his autobiography, amongst many others. In true Twain

fashion, these critiques are subtle and leveled in pieces throughout the different works. However by piecing them together we can attempt to come to an understanding of how Twain understood the modern democracy that he was living in.

Despite his harsh critiques, Twain does offer solutions. Twain is very much an American democrat, and as such, he believes that democracy is currently the most advantageous system of government. However, through his observations, he begins to develop what may be considered as his ideal form of democracy, or that which he thinks will be the most beneficial for all people. In order to fully understand Twain's fundamental ideals of democracy, a brief inquiry into his understanding of human nature is necessary because the two are so closely connected.

To this end, this chapter will be broken up into several main sections; first there will be a brief inquiry into Twain's conception of human nature and its fundamental aspects, so as to provide a philosophical background to the democratic situations discussed. Then I will give a treatment of Mark Twain's observations and brief general critiques on democracy. Finally, I will attempt to understand what Twain believes to be the fundamental purpose of a government and a democracy and what his ultimate solutions to this problem of government may be.

Twain and Human Nature

Twain's understanding of human nature is key to his observations and conceptions of democracy because his perception of the fundamental human condition influences who should be in power and how much trust should be placed in the American people. Mark Twain has a fundamentally dark view of human nature, and believes that people in general are quite rotten.

One might be able to write this assertion about human nature off as a dark element of Twain's humor, but there are two aspects to this treatment that makes this seem unlikely. The first is the consistency with which Twain presents this view. From the penning of Connecticut Yankee onward, this becomes a persistent theme in a large majority of his writing. This comes out most explicitly in his short stories and essays, along with his singular philosophical treatise What is Man?. In a short essay entitled "Man's Place in the Animal World," Twain is especially damning of human kind, showing that man is a violent, unreasonable animal whose status on the planet is, contrary to popular understandings, lower than the other animals. Regarding the rationality of man, Twain says that "Man is the Reasoning Animal. Such is the claim. I think it is open to debate." Mankind's fundamental violence is also at issue. He claims that in an (obviously hypothetical) experiment, he put men of differing faiths and origins in a cage with one another, and "when I came back to note results, the cage [...] was but a chaos of gory odds and ends of turbans and fezzes and plaids and bones and flesh - not a specimen left alive. These reasoning animals had disagreed on a theological detail and carried the matter to a Higher Court."⁷ Twain's prose does here what so many of Hobbes' words could not describe. Even in society, man exists in a tenuous state of war with every other man, and his own nature does not allow him to go on without seeking the complete destruction of those who do not agree with him.

If we take Twain's understanding of human nature, as presented in What Is Man? we can come to understand not only Hank Morgan, but also the individuals who he is attempting to drag into modern society. According to What Is Man?, the individual has no free will or independent thought and is wholly subject to the effects of his temperament and his training. His concept of free will comes only modified within the idea of "free choice," a purely mental process by which we are able to rationalize decisions that have already been made. For Twain, man is ultimately

⁷ What Is Man Pg. 86

defined by his experiences and the environment which he has been brought up in. Human nature is fundamentally an assimilation of all previous experiences and trainings into a defined set of parameters, within which we make all decisions. We are all slaves to our sense of “self-approval” our individual, internal “master sense,” which dictates that we only seek our own personal “spiritual” fulfillment. This fulfillment is defined by our training and experiences, and because every decision made or action taken is ultimately directed at self-approval, we are fundamentally selfish creatures. Even the most altruistic behavior is only committed because we get personal fulfillment and enjoyment from these actions. The fact that we get this pleasure from good actions is only a result of our previous training which has conditioned our “master sense” to believe that altruistic action is good and that we should be fulfilled by it. Free will becomes a delusion and we are beholden to this sense for all decisions. All external signs of debate or indecisiveness that we exhibit are understood to be the equivalent of a “speaking trumpet,” as “outside influences... have persuaded the Master within you,” and this internal master, ruled by outside, experiential influences, has already made the decision.

Twain himself was dissuaded from widely publishing What is Man? by his wife because she felt that it was too inflammatory; Twain’s reaction to this comment was to say that it was the truest thing he had ever written. This led to a compromise where Twain initially only published 250 copies and distributed them to close friends, but the publication was widely disseminated after his death. The consistency of theme through his works and his remarks regarding the publishing of What is Man? show how this conception of human nature was not a simple joke or exaggeration, but an actual element of his own thought.

American Democracy

Twain's conception of the current American democracy is based on one main objection with this current process--that it simply is not very democratic. However, this objection manifests itself in several ways: as a result of flawed voting procedure combined with excessive adherence to party doctrine, or as a result of the fetishism of the English class system.

The first reason for the objection is described very clearly in his autobiography when he recounts the story of the election of Grover Cleveland. At this point, Grover Cleveland was running for president on the Democratic ticket against James Blaine, who was on the Republican ticket. Twain and a few of his friends were gathered in his house waiting for the Republican primary results to come in. They were all Republicans, but did not like Blaine. When the results came in and Blaine was announced as the candidate, there was much grumbling and discussion until Twain announced, "But we *don't* have to vote for him." This statement caused much controversy, and Twain and a few of his friends who sympathized with him were labeled as traitors to the party, and Twichell, a close friend of Twain's and a local pastor, was chastised and nearly removed from his position because of his refusal to vote with the party line. One of the main objections that Twain has with the modern conception of democracy is that party loyalties are greater than loyalties to the good of the country. Twain felt that Cleveland was a better candidate than Blaine, but because of his party affiliation, he was still expected to vote for Blaine. Twain claims that "the people of this nation have no political independence,"⁸ and that those who have a large share in this lack of independence are the preachers who are forced to vote according to their congregation in order to keep their jobs. Exacerbating this problem, Twain identifies the problem that the press also is not politically independent. He tells how the *Hartford Courant* "had been making a 'tar baby' of Mr. Blaine," but as soon as the primary selection came in, they were expected to change their tune, and did, praising Blaine and holding him up as the

⁸ Autobiography 320

high hope for the country.

This is not the only critical observation of democracy that Twain offers in his writings. In The American Claimant, Twain discusses at length the American fixation with British nobility, stating how Americans, in some way or another, wish to be considered nobility and set apart from other men. The interesting aspect about this idea is that it seems to be common to both the North and the South. Twain addresses this by setting The American Claimant in Washington D.C., a midway point between North and South, to avoid this particular trouble. Twain also has equal contempt for the Northern aristocrats and Southern plantation owners, who have the same delusion of nobility. This concept is explored through the character of Colonel Sellers. Early in the book, Sellers receives a telegram that informs him that due to a tumultuous series of events he has become the claimant to an earldom in England. This sets off a series of events, and he and his family and friends immediately embrace their newfound nobility and give themselves new names, rename their house, and engage in other activities that they believe befit an earl. This shows the precarious nature of American democracy for Twain. He believes that the American people, although they do value their democracy, will leap at the chance to become royalty. Twain reacts violently to his observations of women who marry into British royalty with their fortunes. He writes in his diary:

“Go for these American women who buy titles (& noble tramps) with their money. Give them a foul nickname. (Mongrel-Breeders; have a bench show of their children.)”⁹

Twain sees this idolization of the class structure of England and even sees it beginning to be imitated in America. Again, in The American Claimant, a young earl, wishing to cast off his

⁹ Mark Twain Diaries- Found online at <<http://goo.gl/oBiQy>>

aristocratic cloak and join the democratic workers of America finds it hard to get a proper job, as he is lacking of the necessary qualifications. He then comes to understand that, despite the perception of American democracy, there are two main aspects that seem to contradict this. The American idolization of earls is once again cemented with a conversation with the other residents of his boarding house, who claim that, if offered, they would gladly receive any nobility granted to them by England. In addition to this, the young earl, who has taken the name Tracy, finds that it is much more difficult to find work than he thought. He finds himself without any necessary skills or associations to become employed. This represents another element of the subtle classes in American society, the aristocracy by education and affiliation. Tracy finds that he is unable to find work because he is in the lowest class of American society, the uneducated, unaffiliated, unskilled laborer (it is worth noting that Tracy does have an advanced education, but he refuses to acknowledge it). The aristocracy in America is not based on birth or perceived conceptions of nobility, but it exists just the same. It is based on the type and amount of education received, and the people that one associates with. These two elements come into conflict with one another in The American Claimant as Tracy, who is very well educated, having a proper British education and schooling at Oxford, attempts to get work for which his education is worthless, but because he does not belong to any unions or societies, it proves to be nearly impossible.

The interesting thing about this last aspect is that Twain does not critique this as harshly as he does the other elements of democratic society. Here, Tracy is portrayed as a pitiable character, but ultimately, he is a noble on a temporary excursion, looking at this type of living and labor as entertainment. He explicitly refuses to use his education to get work, preferring to eschew his proper roots and start from nothing. His misunderstanding of American society, where he thinks that democracy means that he can simply show up, play the part of a

lower-class worker, and still get by is the ultimate source of his failure. The aristocracy of education is something that Twain actually encourages and it is the primary aspect of his suggested improvements on democracy.

Despite all of these different critiques and observations of the American democratic society, Twain remains a staunch Democrat. He believes that the current system of government is far and away better than any other. This is evidenced by his immensely scathing critiques of British society (found easily in the preface to Connecticut Yankee, and in various letters and diary entries). What Twain does want to do is issue a set of improvements on the American system of governance that will bring about a more useful society. Once again, in typical Twain fashion, these improvements are found within his other writings, and by bringing them together, we can fully understand his conceptions.

Improving America

The purest account of Twain's idea of an improved, or more efficient, democracy comes from his short story *The Curious Republic of Gondor*. This story details the narrator's (presumed to be Twain) journey to the fictional land of Gondor, where he then aims to understand the local customs and system of government. The system of government that Twain lays out for Gondor takes the form of a modified republic. The Gondorians first started with the normal universal suffrage, "but had thrown that form aside because the result was not satisfactory. It had seemed to deliver all power into the hands of the ignorant and non-tax-paying classes; and of a necessity the responsible offices were filled from these classes also."¹⁰ This is a common critique of democracy that Twain discusses. We find the similar concern in the short story "The Mysterious

¹⁰ *The Curious Republic of Gondor* -Digital Copy

Stranger,” in which he claims that the human race is “made up of sheep.”¹¹ We can understand the argument in “The Mysterious Stranger” as elaborating on the brief phrase in “The Curious Republic of Gondor” to more fully understand what the Gondorian solution is trying to solve. In “The Mysterious Stranger,” the angel Satan¹² claims that men in society are easily persuaded by the loudest minority and that “some day a handful will rise up... and make the most noise... and in a week all the sheep will wheel and follow him.”¹³ If we look at both of these passages we can see that Twain is suggesting that these individuals are not the most qualified people for leadership, they are simply the ones who can yell the loudest. The problem, then, is in ensuring that those individuals most qualified to make decisions are the most influential. In Gondor, the solution is to foster an aristocracy of means and education. In Gondor, every individual is granted a single vote in all things, but with more education or more property, the number of votes an individual has increases. Thereby, an individual with a doctoral degree and no significant property is given 9 votes, while the other votes tied to property can increase or decrease in accordance to his holdings. Twain develops this system to its extreme. He claims that, in this nation, they had also developed an examination for holding public office so that no uneducated persons could enter the public realm. Here then Twain is suggesting the creation of a system of classes based not on prior standings or heredity, but on education and worth. However, other than these two qualifications, the aristocracy was open to anyone, and Twain describes how women have free access to government, as the educational barriers were blind, and that several women had made great “Grand Caliphs” (the head executive of Gondor, who serves for 20 years) and were often valuable members of the cabinet, making these claims for women’s suffrage almost 50 years before suffrage was granted. Here, Twain seems to be making a case

¹¹ *The Mysterious Stranger* Pg 227

¹² He claims to be the nephew of the famous fallen angel, whether this is a true statement or not is an inquiry for another time.

¹³ *The Mysterious Stranger* Pg 227

for the equality of women, which can be achieved with the development of equality of education. With equal access to education, women are just as capable at ruling as men are. Possibly the most interesting aspect of this piece is the fact that no downsides to this system are discussed, as Twain did not often write without critiquing the subject matter. This element of strict praise is a convincing argument for the seriousness of Twain's ideas. However, one must still be cautious, as the same manner of hierarchy seemingly idealized in *Gondor* is also criticized in some of his other works, especially in The American Claimant, which will be treated with more detail in a later chapter.

Therefore, an ideal government under Twain would seem to be a universal republic or democracy where everyone had a baseline understanding and influence on the government, but the educated and wealthy members of the society could have more of an influence. The focus here is clearly on the educational aspect of this society. In *Gondor*, Twain argues at length that this system would provide for the grand education of the youth. This is because each individual would want to obtain as many votes as possible, and education would be the most secure means to do so. It is interesting to note here that Twain himself had an interesting relationship with education, especially higher education. In his early life, he was very proud and a staunch defender of his own self-education. This appears in a small amount in The American Claimant as the earl, Tracy, despite his high education, cannot find a job. It also appears in his early travel writing, as in both Life on the Mississippi and Roughing It, he praises and elevates the individuals who have educated themselves and risen to a place above their birth as being the most celebrated, or the most free. But later in his life, he cherished the honorary doctorate that Oxford bestowed upon him. Here, Twain is setting up a system where those who would otherwise be self-educated and intelligent could benefit from the advantage of a higher education, and become even more valuable to society than they already are. This education

works to maximize the advantage that they were born with. Twain's thoughts on education and "training" are very present in *What Is Man?*, where he discusses the necessity for exposing oneself to the best possible experiences and training in order to maximize the abilities and spiritual wants of a person.

A system of government where the most educated and capable individuals rise to the top is the ideal. This is an education based aristocracy combined with the features of a democracy that Twain suggested. Here we see the beginning of a recurring theme in Twain, wherein he acknowledges the fundamental necessity of a type of aristocracy. This is supported in *The Curious Republic of Gondor*, as well as What is Man? and other writings. It is also apparent in Connecticut Yankee. Hank Morgan, being the most educated individual, sets up his "man-factories" with the goal of creating this ruling educated class. He also claims to wish to start a republic, but what he is really aiming for is this type of aristocratic democracy led by Hank himself. The consent of the people is a major point for Hank, as he claims "to be vested with enormous authority is a fine thing; but to have the on-looking world consent to it is a finer." Hank wants the Arthurian world to consent to his rule, and in order to do so, they must understand what this consent is. Hank is "a man of knowledge, brains, pluck and enterprise," and it is clear that Twain views this type of individual as being the most valuable to any nation. This is the same type of person he describes as being the most free, including the pilots of steamships on the Mississippi and the owners of stagecoach stations (these individuals are to be given a fuller treatment later in this work.) A proper democracy should cultivate these individuals and give them the opportunity to rise beyond their station and rule. However, these solutions are unsatisfactory as these are no means for actually enacting these changes, and the ideal society for Gondor really has no basis on America. Therefore, in order to obtain a practical, workable solution to these problems, we have to turn to other works. Connecticut

Yankee provides fertile ground for this line of inquiry.

3) Introducing Hank Morgan

Connecticut Yankee is a useful novel in bringing out Twain's understanding of technology and society, in part because the main character, Hank Morgan, is representative of the American attitude towards technology. Utilizing the overall plot of Connecticut Yankee, involving the introduction of technology to Arthurian England, we can begin to shed light on the problem of technology. Hank's background as a New England technocrat makes him an ideal character through which to study the relationship between democracy and technology. In fact, his existence as a character seems to represent all of America's understanding regarding this relation. If we can come to understand Hank Morgan, we can obtain a proper lens with which to view Connecticut Yankee and understand Twain's suggestions for democratic society in the modern age.

Hank Morgan is an idealized character, taking various exaggerated aspects of Mark Twain's character, and adding to that is Twain's concept of perfect freedom in order to create a character who is capable of drawing out the distinction between technology and society in both the 18th and 6th centuries. As a reconstructionist technocrat with a perfect knowledge of everything relevant to his situation, he is a perfect exaggeration of the time he represents. His first words to Mark Twain, portrayed as the Frankenstein-esque "proper" narrator, are simply "I am an American."¹⁴ This is fitting in a practical sense, as Twain "meets" him on a tour of a castle in England, but is also quite revealing as it describes the simple, yet surprisingly deep nature that Hank embodies. He is the "Yankee of the Yankees - and practical; yes, and nearly barren of

¹⁴ Pg. 50 Connecticut Yankee

sentiment.”¹⁵ This phrase invokes both the idealistic, representative nature of Hank’s existence as well as his technological understanding. He is never more the “Yankee of the Yankees” than he is thirteen hundred years in the past, and it is through this lens that we come to know Hank. He is exclusively portrayed as the singular man-of-his-time, solely representing the nineteenth century to the sixth. So idealistic is Hank that he spends nearly half of the book without a proper name, referred to only as this “Yankee.” This lack of a name only serves to emphasize his representative nature. He is the exaggerated democrat used to show the advantages and disadvantages of the two governmental structures that Twain is comparing in Connecticut Yankee. In fact, Hank Morgan can be understood both as this ideal democratic character and as a characteristic Mark Twain taken to the extreme. In order to understand the political and technological implications of Connecticut Yankee, one must first understand the titular character.

Hank and Twain

Hank Morgan can be seen as an exaggerated caricature of Twain himself, who is also a character. Mark Twain, the character, is distinct from Samuel Clemens, the individual, and this character appears as the narrator in the book. So we are immediately placed in a precarious position where an exaggeration of the Twain character is telling the story to Mark Twain (the character), which is actually a novel written by Mark Twain (the pseudonym of Samuel Clemens). However, this puts the attentive reader in a unique position that allows the reader to use Hank as a window into how Twain views himself. Twain is a cynical democrat whose embrace of technology influences every aspect of his life, and Hank reflects this as well as his particular humor and harshness of character. However, these aspects of Twain’s personality are exaggerated in Hank Morgan. Hank is more devoted to technology, is more of an

¹⁵ *Ibid*

entrepreneurial manager and an all-around further exaggerated character than Twain. These similarities are found in both the various writings of Twain, including The Autobiography,¹⁶ and with the actions that Hank takes. In his Autobiography, Twain comes off as knowledgeable about technology, having one of the first telephones in his Hartford house, as well as developing or funding numerous technologies (sometimes to his own financial ruin) and both a staunch defender and critic of democracy, even going so far as to advocate the destruction of the party system and a man with a short temper who is quick to lambaste or threaten individuals. He is also a skeptic in regards to nearly every aspect of his life, including religion, technology, and politics.

This creates the unique dichotomy of Twain's character and the relation between the acknowledgement of the necessity of technology and government, and the internal skepticism regarding their usage. Hank takes these elements of the character of Twain to their fundamental or extreme position by removing all skepticism. Where Twain is skeptical about the usage of government, Hank aims to create democratic governance in his own image, taking for granted the goods of democracy. He takes the same attitude towards technology, Twain accepts, but still questions the usage of technology, while Hank accepts it outright. The question of whether the technology that Hank aims to provide to the Arthurian kingdom is actually good for the individuals is never raised, but for Hank, it simply must be; progress is always and necessarily good. This allows Hank to embody the positive elements of Twain's thought, and lets Twain play with the possible consequences of the type of blanket acceptance. But the question of why Twain would use his own characteristics can still be raised, especially as he is going to critique them quite harshly. Besides that being the standard procedure for Twain, as he used elements of his own personality or character in nearly all of his works, it seems to point at the Twain character being a conscious model for America. Twain has intentionally molded his personal

¹⁶ The Autobiography of Mark Twain Volume 1; Harriet Elinor Smith, Editor.

character with the intent of appealing as a American everyman. Therefore it seems only natural that when he needs an exaggerated American ideal, he steals from himself. It is also worth noting that he is intentionally exaggerating these elements and is making the argument that skepticism is fundamentally a good thing, and failure to exercise proper skepticism can lead to disastrous consequences.

Twain also elaborates on the different conflicts developed within Connecticut Yankee: this includes the religious question of the divine right of kings as well as the questions of democracy and technology that I am most interested in. These questions are raised because, as such a headstrong and dynamic character, Hank allows Twain to put the extremes of the two societies in a head-to-head contest where the advantages and flaws of each are drawn out.

Hank's Freedom

Hank Morgan is one of the few individuals that Twain characterizes as being “perfectly free.” Amongst these individuals are the steamboat pilot of Life on the Mississippi and the stagecoach driver of Roughing It. So what is this perfect freedom that Twain attributes to these characters, and how does it affect Hank Morgan and what he represents? If we take these three individuals we can, through a comparison of the specific features of each, come to an understanding regarding Twain's idea of freedom and how this freedom interacts with the clash of governments seen in Connecticut Yankee. Each of these perfectly free individuals has specific aspects that bind them together and create a coherent picture of freedom in America. These aspects demonstrate how Hank and the other free individuals are ultimately defined by their jobs, which require a high level of skill and are unique in the complete autonomy allowed.

Hank defines himself through his occupation, and it is because of his job that he enjoys this freedom. He is the “head superintendent,” with “a couple of thousand men”¹⁷ under him at the Colt gun factory and is able to “build anything that can be built.” Hank does not even acknowledge the existence of his superiors; we never see or hear them, leaving Hank perfectly free to “boss” this factory as he likes, including handling disciplinary issues himself.

Hank’s freedom in his occupation is similar to the two perfectly free individuals already mentioned. The first of these is the Mississippi river boat pilot, who has complete control over the Steamboat that he piloted up and down the Mississippi in the early 1800s. These pilots were extremely skilled operators who had to know every aspect of thousands of miles of the river, and when at the helm, answered to no one. According to Twain, “a pilot, in those days, was the only unfettered and entirely independent human being that lived on the earth.”¹⁸ All other individuals and occupations, from kings to clergymen, are subject to the will and control of others, but the steamboat pilot is the ultimate authority on his ship. “His movements were entirely free; he consulted no one, he received commands from nobody.” He was “an absolute monarch who was absolute in sober truth and not by a fiction of words.” Twain finds this free and authoritative occupation both admirable and intoxicating. The majority of Life on the Mississippi concerns his own (mildly fictionalized) efforts to become one of these pilots. For Twain, there are two implicit aspects of the steamboat pilot that make him into this “perfectly free” individual who also represents the pinnacle of American freedom. This is how his freedom ties into the concept of political freedom found in a democracy, and how his mastery of a particular technology allows him to gain this freedom. Despite the fact that Twain compares the pilot to an unfettered king, this type of freedom that he enjoys is actually a democratic one, tied

¹⁷ Connecticut Yankee pg 50

¹⁸ Life on the Mississippi pg 80

directly to his reputation, skill, and understanding. He is an American self-made man, whose ability to navigate the incredibly treacherous waters allows him to rise above the captain, and even the owner, by the virtue of his developed skill. This is freedom based in not only the pilot's skill, but his skill with a specific piece of technology, the Mississippi river steamboat. It is because he has developed this intimate knowledge of this technology and its proper use that he gains this nearly unlimited freedom. This seems to be one of the examples of the proper use of technology in society. The Mississippi steamship is a technology that expanded trade and facilitated economic growth, and allowed for young, technologically deft individuals to rise to a prominent station and gain a freedom that would not have been available to them in any other location, doing any other job.

The stagecoach driver found in Roughing It also has many of the same traits that Hank and the steamboat pilot share. He, too, has complete autonomy in going about his business, and is solely responsible for the maintenance of the station. He is, to his co-workers, station keepers, and hostlers, "a hero-a great and shining dignitary, the world's favorite son."¹⁹ The driver enjoys a different type of freedom and respectability than the Mississippi river pilot, but their overall condition is similar. The driver's respectability and freedom both come from his skilled occupation being the master of technology. For the stagecoach driver, this technology is more tied to the idea of progress than the steamboat is. The driver allows for continued westward expansion, and the progression of America as a nation. This technology that he is a master of is the entire stagecoach structure, from the actual coach itself to the routes and stations established across the wilderness. This is a technology of logistics, but a technology nevertheless, and the stagecoach driver is the master of it.

¹⁹ Roughing It pg. 17

Now, for Twain, we can come to gain some manner of insight to what his idea of perfect democratic freedom is. This freedom is defined by the individual profession, and the manner in which it is completed. These are professions that involve both the mastery of cutting age technology and the freedom that democracy offers. Hank works in a landmark and innovative gun factory, the pilot is on the bleeding edge of the Mississippi river trade, and the stagecoach driver facilitates westward expansion. Therefore, the use of technology is key for the full democratic experience. These are the individuals who are taking the most advantage of their democratic experience. Each of these professions are uniquely American jobs, and the individuals who master them are embracing the American and democratic themes that play large roles in Twain's other works, themes that Hank himself is able to explore in Connecticut Yankee.

We find that Hank Morgan manages to be both a dynamic and interesting individual character, and a representation of the American "technocracy." This representative nature of Hank Morgan comes out when the elements of the plot fall aside to the needs of the larger points that Twain seeks to make. These are the same elements that Twain is criticized for. Kurt Vonnegut especially understands this, when he brings out the improbabilities of some of Twain's plot elements, especially Hank's usage of the eclipse to gain power, in his introduction to the Oxford Mark Twain edition of Connecticut Yankee. Hank utilizes this eclipse to not only save his own life, but also to propel himself to a place of honor and influence in Arthurian society. However, as Vonnegut points out, the knowledge that Hank has regarding this event is so far-fetched, so improbable that it very much nearly causes the reader to abandon this whole enterprise. However, this plot point is necessary to make the larger point about intellectual superiority and the supernatural suspicions of the members of the Arthurian court. It represents the dual nature of Hank Morgan. He represents one side of the fundamental conflict of Connecticut Yankee. He is the representation of democracy and its corresponding ideology,

in opposition to the monarchy of the Arthurian court with its own ideology. Hank Morgan is perfectly developed to bring out the theme that Twain is looking to develop within Connecticut Yankee. This semi-autobiographical, semi-ideal character is intended to conflict with the medieval idealistic characters of King Arthur and Merlin, regarding government and technology, respectfully. I will aim to explore all of these issues in dealing with Twain's understanding of technology in democracies.

4) The Democratic Arrogance

Now that we have been introduced to Hank Morgan, and we understand the origins and purpose of his character, we can now turn to his interactions with the non-democratic characters. This is important for several reasons. Ambler makes the case that this interaction shows insight into his mentality, and how his attitude towards them changes over the course of the novel. I agree with the assessment, but I believe we can push Ambler's case further and help us understand the relationship between the democratic character and the non-democratic character. This understanding shows us how these relations influence both American colonial relations, which have effects on both Twain's contemporary colonization of the Philippines, and our interactions with the Middle East, as Joel Johnson argues in *A Connecticut Yankee in Saddam's Court*. It also puts the focus on Hank's contempt for the non-rational, and establishes the idea that a certain type of rationality is necessary for a proper society.

In Connecticut Yankee, the obvious critique that Twain is making is against the monarchical government of 19th century England. This is the particular argument that the majority of Twain scholars, particularly in the "golden age" of Twain scholarship--the mid to late 1960s--have fixated upon. However, in addition to this, there is an additional critique of American

democracy and its interactions with other governments. This critique is manifest through Hank Morgan's reaction to a non-democratic society caused by the obvious hardships and political inequalities on display in the picture of Arthurian England. This comes to the fore as a demonstration of "the democratic arrogance." This arrogance refers to the general manner in which the Connecticut Yankee, Hank Morgan, addresses, references, and generally views the individuals within that society. It invokes the idea that the display of American democracy to other, nondemocratic nations often becomes a display of arrogance as the assumption is made that democracy is superior to the other form of government by default. However, as is the case with Twain, this is not a specific, isolated incident, used only for humor but a recurring concept, which can be seen by tracing similar themes in other works. In Connecticut Yankee, this democratic arrogance is manifest in several ways. First is the Yankee's insistence on ruling the Arthurian Kingdom, next is the language he uses in referring to the members of the court and the citizens, both internally and externally, and finally is in the denial of reason or rationality to King Arthur and the members of his court. It is through these elements, along with similar thoughts or themes in other works by Twain, including What Is Man? and The American Claimant, that Twain's critique of the assumption that democracy or democratic government is the best form of governance comes to light. This interesting critique can almost be seen as self-deprecating as Twain aims, quite overtly, both in Connecticut Yankee and in his private life, to critique other governments, especially the British Monarchy, quite severely. His critique or ridicule of his own actions can therefore show the knowledge or realization of the limitations of his own beliefs. This furthers his understanding that men are slaves to their experiences and cannot be held accountable for things they believe, which may be caused by things outside of their control.

Obtaining Power

The insistence on obtaining power within the Arthurian society is one of the primary ways by which Hank demonstrates his “democratic arrogance.” One of Hank’s initial thoughts when he is told that he is truly in the 6th century, before he is dragged in front of the court and sentenced to death, is that he would “boss the whole country inside of three months.”²⁰ He makes the similar statement regarding the possibility that he has simply landed in an asylum by accident. Already, Hank is putting the feudal inhabitants on par with inmates within an insane asylum. By the nature of his being the assumed “best educated man in the kingdom by a matter of thirteen hundred years and upwards,”²¹ Hank takes this to mean that he is deserving of ruling this kingdom, despite the fact that he has no experience in any governmental position and his only previous authority is as the floor manager at his gun factory. Simply being from a democratic country in the future gives Hank de-facto authority to run this country. Even though he does not make explicit reference to democratization, or indeed anything he wishes to do as the “boss” of the “whole country,” the reference to education makes it all but explicit. Hank seeks to take his superior thirteen-hundred-year educational advantage to impose the customs and technology from the 19th century onto the 6th. This is the first example of Hank’s democratic arrogance. In addition to this initially insistence on ruling, Hank’s manner of referring to the members of the court, and greater society further explicate the situation. Despite the fact that Hank himself is an unrealistic character, designed for satire and to exaggerate the humor of the situation, he still is relatable enough; Twain’s casual vernacular is able to present a humorous, affable character for the reader to accept as a protagonist. His inherent humor and exaggerated sensibilities are intended to point towards the deeper problems within the democratic experience.

²⁰ Connecticut Yankee pg. 63

²¹ *Ibid*

The “Rabbits” and “Children”

Hank’s treatment of the citizens and members of the Arthurian society demonstrates the difference in attitude between the democratic mentality and the monarchic individuals in England. This treatment is characterized by the persistent animal and childish references that Hank makes towards both the Knights of the Round Table and the citizens that he encounters. This begins nearly immediately when Hank arrives in the 6th century. After arriving in Camelot, Hank immediately gets captured by a Knight of the Round Table, and paraded before King Arthur and his court. After this parade, Hank is cast aside and left to observe the proceedings. Now, even in this poor situation, captured (even sentenced to death) Hank manages to observe many things about the court while he stands in shackles. Remarkably, Hank still manages to judge the feast-goers. He immediately begins referring to them as a “childish and innocent lot” who appear to be talking and telling lies like small children while still telling gory and detailed stories “of blood and suffering with a guileless relish.” However, despite these stories, Hank characterizes them sympathetically, as if they were a group of small children milling about, pretending to be adults. When he turns to describe his fellow prisoners, the other end of this conception comes out. He observes their sorry condition, unwashed, wounded and covered in blood, but standing about, passive and uncomplaining and determines that “their philosophic bearing is not an outcome of mental training, intellectual fortitude, reasoning; it is mere animal training, they are white Indians.”²² The apparent racism towards Native Americans aside, Hank expressed the sentiment of human nature that was explicated in What is Man?; these are individuals who are not only driven by experience and training, but their training is “mere animal training.” After this explication of the prisoners, Hank continues with these descriptions to the actual knights, whom he decries as

²² Connecticut Yankee, Pg. 66

having collectively the “brains insufficient to bait a fishhook.”²³ He still views this apparent lack of intelligence as something softly pitiable, again comparing them to children and calling them “great simple-headed creatures,” who had “something attractive and lovable” about them. This general attitude put Hank in a position of superiority with regards to the inhabitants of Arthurian England, and this continues throughout the events of the novel. By continually putting himself in a position of moral and intellectual superiority, Hank represents the fundamental, instinctual reaction against any non-democratic society. He views the society, right from the outset, as a childish game, something waiting for an adult to step into and establish proper order. This attitude regarding the superiority of democracy and democratic citizens is a theme that is not strictly limited to Connecticut Yankee, and therefore we can understand it as more than a simple joke or an element of Hank’s persona.

This arrogance appears in one of Mark Twain’s more autobiographical works, Roughing It. In Roughing It, Twain seeks to show the arrogance and default understanding of democratic superiority with regards to the inhabitants of Hawaii, or the Sandwich Isles, where Twain criticized anyone who assumes that their belief structure or governmental ideals are de-factor superior to any other. While on assignment in Hawaii, Twain encountered a group of missionaries who were preaching Christianity to the native inhabitants. In response to this attempt to tame and bring the “savages” around to democratic sensibilities, Twain quipped, “how sad it is to think of the multitudes who have gone to their graves in this beautiful island and never knew there was a Hell!”²⁴ In this passage we see the bold critique by Twain against those who assume that all peoples are somehow better off with a particular religion or governmental structure. However, in what seems to almost be a contradiction for Twain, he does believe that

²³ Connecticut Yankee pg 69

²⁴ Roughing It Pg 368

some beliefs or governments are better than others, and later in the passage, he does praise the missionaries in helping to overthrow the more tyrannical rulers of the indigenous population. However, the important distinction for Twain is the automatic acceptance that a particular belief or view is superior. This can be seen in the larger purpose of Connecticut Yankee which can be seen as both a comparison and a critique of both American democracy and the constitutional monarch of England. While Connecticut Yankee has its significant and justified critiques of both 6th and 19th century England, it offers the critique of the American democratic hubris as well.

Hank Morgan's fundamental understanding of himself and his time period leads to this understanding and labeling of the citizens of Arthurian England. Hank understands himself to be riding the leading edge of a technological wave that improves life for all individuals. He views the world through the creation and use of this technology. The better they use and create technology, the more worth they have within society. This is evident through his initial position at the gun factory, as his managerial status and position over his employees is based on his knowledge with and experience building and using various forms of technology. Even his romantic relationship was based on the use of the telephone. Therefore, it comes as no surprise when Hank judges everyone based on their level of technological prowess; the lack of familiarity with technology makes them the equivalent of children or even small animals, to Hank, he is the elephant among the rabbits.

Denial of Rationality

The question then becomes why Hank has this perception of superiority towards the English and what this says about modern America. When he initially made his judgment, his understanding was that these individuals are lacking in rationality. However, this does not

advance any solutions, as it simply implies that rationality is contingent on a specific belief structure. For Hank, this requires being in a properly technological democratic republic. This is evidenced in several ways, but the main situation where this is developed is late in the book, where Hank aims to impress the blacksmith, Marco, and his family, along with several other artisans in the community by treating them to an extravagant, expensive dinner. This move reveals a large amount about Hank and the culture he represents, and the initial concept says much about the democratic character, Hank, and even Mark Twain himself. This exchange also shows many useful topics that are represented in Connecticut Yankee, as the topics addressed by Hank during the feast include the purpose and advantages of democracy, the value of economies and currency, the need for Hank, and the democratic mentality that necessitates the display of extravagance, evidenced by the feast he prepares.

The purpose and advantages of a democratic republic are explained by Hank to the various artisans present after the feast. Hank begins this extended discussion, covering a multitude of topics by asserting that “in a country where they have ranks and castes, a man isn’t ever a man, he is only a part of a man, he can’t ever get his full growth.”²⁵ This makes it evident that, even after this extended period of time in Arthurian society, he still views everyone as being less than fully human. Within the hierarchical society based on birth and the divine right of kings, “a man” can never gain his full potential. It is unclear here if Hank is aiming to make the distinction between the gentry class and the class whose company he currently shares. Does this existence of a rigid, birthright hierarchy stunt the rational growth of the king as well as the peasant? Judging by Hank’s aforementioned treatment of both King Arthur and the various knights, it seems to be apparent that Hank here is making no real distinction. The king and the peasants both suffer under the insufficient rationality allowed to them by their governmental

²⁵ Connecticut Yankee, Pg. 368

structure. This also leads to the implication that only through proper governance can man reach his full potential.

Hank has a dual purpose in throwing the feast for the artisans. He initially wants to embarrass them and establish his superiority over them as a clear example of the type of democratic arrogance that he embodies, and that can be seen even in our modern times, where we assume that other individuals will leap at the chance to be democratic. This is reflected in the rhetoric leading up to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and can be seen again in the more recent coverage of the “Arab Spring.”²⁶ However, Hank’s goal isn’t just to humiliate them in the face of democratic superiority, he still does want to teach them something and convert them to the system of government and economics that he thinks will truly make their lives better. This is why Hank is a sympathetic character, and not a simple antagonist who is set up for failure. He has an understanding of a type of society that he believes will improve the station of the lower classes in this feudal society. This genuine care makes the devastation when he ultimately fails even more poignant. It shows that even the best intentions can go awry and leave the people that you are trying to help worse off than they were originally.

Women in Camelot and Connecticut

This idea is contrasted immediately with the treatment of women that occurs within the novel. This subjugation is more evident in the Arthurian society but it is still implied in Hank’s contemporary era as well. It is especially notable when Hank makes this comment about the partial man, while at the same time the women in the family act simply as servants, keeping entirely out of the feast and conversation, and not participating actively in the discussion, or

²⁶ *Demystifying the Arab Spring: Parsing the Differences Between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya*; Lisa Anderson

society at large at all. Even Morgan Le Fay, the strongest female character in the book is still in power only through her old and ineffective husband and the carefully developed rumor that she was a sorceress, buttressed quite effectively with unrelenting displays of cruelty. The source of her power still resides in the king and she is only the proxy. The other major female character, Sandy, Hank's early guide and later love interest, is in reality a glorified guidebook, and after their trip, she neatly drops out of the narrative, despite doing some rather significant things, such as marrying Hank and having his child.

This treatment is established even in contemporary times for Hank. His relationship with the telephone operator is such that he only refers to her as "Hello Operator." Not only is this romantic interest of Hank's, who influences his actions with Sandy through half of the book, only named once (Puss), and briefly, in passing, but she is more defined by her occupation than Hank is. She only exists as a telephone operator, the polar opposite of Hank's employment. From this we can see how Hank's soul can be seen as lacking in *eros*. He freely admits that his soul is lacking in what he calls "sentiment" or "poetry." His treatment of Sandy is also evidence of this fact. He is initially very dismissive of her, and only eventually marries her out of an internalized custom. This is a fact that the Zuckerts have picked up on quite explicitly. They call Hank "prudish," and note his explicit lack of romance, even back in his own time. This is a keen observation, and it seems like Twain is using Hank's own lack of *eros* or romance, to make a more general point about democracy. Specifically, it seems that as a result of technological advances, democratic societies tend to lose the sweeping romanticism that is characteristic of earlier societies. But perhaps the overall point is that this idealized romance never existed in the first place. This perfect romanticism and chivalry is presented in Sir Malory's²⁷ account of King

²⁷ Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* provides Twain with the context and setting for Connecticut Yankee, he even goes so far as to quote it at length twice.

Arthur, but Twain shows this romance corrupted. King Arthur is a cuckold, and all the members of the court, men and women engage in the telling of stories and jokes so explicit that Hank is often embarrassed and offended at hearing such discussion in what he has always thought of as a proper and classically romantic society. This lack of *eros* and classical romance, coupled with the treatment of women, shows how neither the feudal society or Hank's contemporary democracy have all of the solutions. There is something fundamentally flawed about both societies.

Implications of Childish Names

However, the question that goes to the core of the lessons to be learned in Connecticut Yankee is the question of the reasoning and implications behind Hank's "pet names" for both the knights and the plebeians. Wayne Ambler, in "Making Men Modern," makes the argument that Hank's use of derogatory names for the citizens is a way for Hank to in some way to excuse the cruel actions of the court and of himself. Ambler's argument in general is a bit meandering, but he engages in a character study of Hank, which shows how his failed attempts at modernization bring out the fundamental problem of being modern, especially within the context of the divided America at the end of the Civil War. Amber's assertion that Hank used the denial of rationality to justify violence can be developed further. It shows one of the underlying conflicts with Hank's understanding of individuals, and this leads to the tragedy that marks the end of the novel. The argument that Ambler makes is that Hank, by continually referring to the individuals in the sixth-century in sub-human terms, including children, small animals, or lunatics, denies their fundamental rationality and as such, excuses their actions, as irrational individuals cannot be held accountable for the things they do. However, this assertion is problematic as Hank's actions regarding this are rather inconsistent. Hank does indeed continually refer to these

inhabitants as lacking reason and being equivalent to children or rabbits, but Hank's desire for power is also of a mildly nurturing nature. He sees King Arthur's court as the logical conclusion of child-like governance. The irrationality of the punishments handed out by King Arthur and Morgan Le Fay, as well as the focus on storytelling and lying as a method for determining proper are taken as childish or irrational solutions to governmental problems. Through this, we can understand Hank's motivations to become "The Boss" of this court. His initial thought is that, with his knowledge and expertise, he can quickly and easily "boss" this country and therefore make his own life more comfortable. However, after some exposure to the individuals, (and nearly being burnt at the stake) Hank decides that his efforts would be better directed towards changing the overall structure of the government to suit both himself and the individuals that are already living within this society. His goal then becomes to advance history by twelve centuries. Through the proper application of technology, Hank believes he can benefit the individuals who live in those Arthurian times and simultaneously become the most important man in history.

The way Hank attempts to placate the knighted nobility class is a combination of clever thinking and the apparent, proper use of technology. Ultimately this effort proves to be a failure, but in its execution it becomes quite revealing in showing how technology interacts with a noble class. Hank initially refers to the knighted class most ruthlessly. They are the biggest children and those who Hank targets first. Looking to disarm their attitude and ferocious mannerism, Hank goes on a campaign to embarrass and humiliate them into submission. This is Hank's arrogance coming out again. Unable or unwilling to deal with this perceived threat in a normal manner, he turns to more underhanded means including attempting to redirect their energies towards baseball. However, Hank's confidence, or even arrogance in his own methods, blinds him from his own revelations regarding man's fundamental subservience to training or experience, and not a single knight stands with him at the Battle of the Sand Belt, instead uniting

20,000 strong against him. Hank then is a victim of his own hubris as he refuses to accept that he may be unable to retrain the Knights. Hank fails because he attempts to subvert his own observations about human nature and political life.

Hank's New Hierarchy

Hank's conception that he is superior to not only the knights but to everyone in 6th century England is based on his knowledge and prowess with technology, not his intellectual ability, political skill or moral compass. This automatic assumption of superiority speaks to an additional point that Twain makes regarding the inherent hierarchy that occurs within governments or societies. Hank claims to strive for equality for all of the individuals within the Arthurian society. He moves to, and succeeds in, abolishing slavery in the society and moves to abolish the noble class, with less success. However, in order to accomplish this goal he puts himself in a position of superiority over the individuals in that society he embraces the idea of hierarchy. However, the important difference for Hank and Twain is the idea that hierarchies based on intangible things, such as birth, are fundamentally unjust, but when based on achievement or democratic principles, something changes. Twain devotes a large portion of not only this work, but many other works as well to establishing the idea that perhaps the idea of hierarchy is inherent to human nature, or perhaps simply inherent to the idea of government.

This idea of inheriting hierarchy appears in Connecticut Yankee as Hank, in attempting to destroy the birthright-based hierarchy of the Arthurian society, sets up his own hierarchy with himself at the top. The idea of the divine right of kings is incredibly repulsive to Hank. However, it appears that he doesn't object to the idea of men being in a position of superiority to other men, but objects only to the means by which men gain this superiority. This is evident by not only the

default position he takes against the knights and other members of the Arthurian society, but also the fact that he, when given the first opportunity, manages to put himself at the head of a specific hierarchy that he sets up within society. Hank is not against the overall concept of hierarchy, but simply the basis on which it is established. If one is created in such a way that favors him, which, in this case is based upon the idea of a specific, technologically based intelligence that disguises itself as magic, he is perfectly happy to exploit it. In fact, the entire basis for the hierarchy and power-grab that Hank is based on is a fundamental deception. Hank believes that he should run or “boss” the 6th century society because he has specific worldly knowledge, and because he comes from a more “enlightened” democratic society. However, he does not make his claim to power by these means, but instead chooses to pretend to have magical powers, and through either foreknowledge or coincidence, convince all in attendance at his would-be execution that he is in fact a magical being who deserves their worship and adulation. So, the case of Hank is even worse than anticipated because his acceptance of hierarchy is based or originated in his belief in his own superiority. This is not based on his technological knowledge, but on the means by which he obtains this power. The basis of the hierarchy has nothing to do with this knowledge, but only with the masses’ perception of him as a magician, not as a proper technocrat, or anything else that would possible cause the citizens to choose Hank as a legitimate ruler or high-ranking member of the society. Hank does not seem to object to being in power. In fact, his sense of arrogance regarding his opinion of non-democratic individuals and the value and skill system that comes with such a set of experiences almost require him to take control of this society. Hank views it as a duty to take this backwards society and improve it far beyond the natural progression of history.

5) Social vs. Technological Rule

Since we have come to understand Hank Morgan, and his attitude regarding democracy and non-democratic individuals and societies, we can now turn to see how his character can shed light on the fundamental problem of technology and democracy. This understanding is best developed by comparing Hank Morgan, and his idealistic opposite, King Arthur. We have already come to understand Hank in relation to the general 6th century population, but we can use this relation between Hank and Arthur to learn what if any good comes from Arthur's feudal rule, and this can perhaps shed light on the problem of modern democracy.

As Connecticut Yankee develops, the relationships between Hank and King Arthur develop as well. This progression allows Twain to use the dichotomy presented through these characters to explore the two aspects of governmental rule that they both epitomize. Hank's experience with the comforts and societal impact of technology has made him the ultimate technological ruler. King Arthur's experience in 6th century England, within the honor-bound society that emphasized not only social stature but proper action within that rigid structure, makes him a model for "social" government, or government based on prevailing social norms. Through these two characters and their specific actions within the novel, we can come to an understanding of the benefits and drawbacks to each style and perhaps understand what Twain views as the most advantageous strategy for ruling or governing a society. This divide between Hank and Arthur can also be seen as an anachronism for North/South relations in America. However, this is not to be taken as the only representative quality at work here. This relation, and the issues it brings out, is reflective of many different governmental and technological dichotomies, including the overt present/past understanding, an east/west understanding, encompassing both the difference between the civilized east of America, and the Wild West, and the relation between modern American and modern England. This relation even can be seen as representative of America's relation to other, less developed nations. This is what

makes the connection between Hank and Arthur so valuable; it provides a basis for comparison for a large multitude of other scenarios. Within these comparisons we are able to derive possible solutions to the problem of technology and modern politics. Hank and Arthur end up both being representative of the differing roles of technology in society, and it may be that by combining the two elements we can come to understand Twain's improvements on American society. In order to do this, we must also appeal to the distinction between the North and the South in the period following the Civil War.

While we have already explored Hank's origin and his dependence on technology, but Arthur's origin and motivations are still mysteries. To do this, the society that he rules over must first be understood. This society is one of strict social hierarchy that emphasizes the proper role of honor and just actions. Although the society that Arthur is involved in is oppressive, oligarchic, unusually cruel, and decidedly un-democratic, the one thing that it does do well is put a large amount of responsibility onto its singular leader. While in some cases this does go wrong (Morgan Le Faye is a prime example of how this responsibility can go wrong), with Arthur this seemed to have worked, and his travels with Hank are a demonstration of this. The development of his character through these chapters in the middle of Connecticut Yankee, shows how, in some ways, he may actually be superior to Hank with regards to governing a society. In order to observe this, we look at the two separate ways in which they attempt to rule over the English society. Through this comparison we can see the unique advantage, and the way that Arthur's character approaches ruling a society, through what I am defining as "social" means. These social means are lacking from Hank's approach to governance. Hank attempts to substitute the implementation of technology for actual political skill, while Arthur uses this type of social skill in a very political way to maintain control of his society.

King Arthur rules his citizens by a combination of force of character, established social norms, and a highly developed sense of honor. Arthur's force of character is evidenced by his interactions with his other knights. The early scenes of the novel display this character, based mainly on the fable of King Arthur that is told by the old man in the court. This is the standard understanding of how Arthur became King of England,²⁸ but in the land of tall tales and extravagant fables, Arthur's is the most extravagant. He is aided in this staying power by the social norms that the power of the Church is able to lend to his power. Arthur is able to utilize the moral authority that the church grants him, through the divine right of kings,²⁹ to hold power over the noble class and inspire reverence from the peasants. Arthur's sense of honor also makes it so that he has the ability as well as the noble obligation to place his own honor over his own life and make noble sacrifices in times of need.

"Bossing" a Government

Hank's fundamental conception of proper government is closely tied to his managerial experience. He believes, and seeks to prove that his experience leading men at the Colt factory gives him the requisite experience necessary for running a society. This points at a larger, more fundamental mentality. If the proper executive is not a politician or a king, but a manager, a "boss," then society and the way society is represented changes in a fundamental way, and Twain seems uncomfortable with this idea. This lack of comfort comes out with the comparison between Hank and Arthur. In order to help understand this comparison, and fundamental understanding that drives it, Hank must first be understood within the context of what he

²⁸ Based on the Mallory work. (See footnote 27)

²⁹ The theme of the divine right of kings is something Twain explicitly mentions in the introduction to Connecticut Yankee, but he does not claim to resolve it, pointing to his next publication The Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc to do that.

represents. To do this, we must understand how the focus on technological progress changes the defined good of a society, shifting it towards an ever expanding desire to obtain better technology. This is driven by a desire for creature comforts, or as Hank describes them, “little conveniences” that make life better on a personal level. This seems an obvious claim, especially when one considers the advances in modern technology driven by the desire for new entertainment technology, smartphones and other personal technological advancements. In addition to this, however, the progress of technology is also driven by the focus on military ends. This is seen both in Connecticut Yankee and historically, as Hank rushes to develop military innovations, including firearms and an advanced navy. The progress of technology is landmarked by large innovations in destructive capabilities, including the development of the tank, the submarine, and even the nuclear bomb. Both Twain and Hank understand this concept, and the contrast between this understanding and the understanding of the ruling class of 6th century England make for the foundation of the major conflict in Connecticut Yankee.

For Hank, the proper goal of society is the obtaining and enjoying of what he calls “little conveniences.” These conveniences are technological innovations or small items that allow for an individual to be more comfortable within his station in life. After gaining power in this feudal society through his manipulation of the eclipse, the first complaint that Hank has about the society is its lack of the “little conveniences that make the real comfort of life.”³⁰ These conveniences are small innovations like soap, matches, and clocks, or “chromos,” that allow for an individual to truly enjoy his station. It is in a quest for these conveniences, as well as a megalomaniacal desire for adulation, that leads Hank to develop technology in this society. He views himself as being a type of Robinson Crusoe, in his own unique island. He was “cast away on an uninhabited island with no society but some more or less tame animals,” and in order to

³⁰ Connecticut Yankee pg 98

make life bearable he had to “invent, contrive, create; reorganize things; set brain and hand to work.”³¹ This understanding shows both reflections of this democratic arrogance, as he views himself surrounded by essentially “tame animals,” but also the fundamental idea of technological progress being necessary for any governmental regime. In order to change a deserted island into an actual society populated by true people, Hank must “reorganize’ and invent these types of conveniences. The goal of the society that Hank aims to develop then is not based, at least fundamentally, in the idea of bettering mankind directly, or in some lofty goal of universal peace, or even the philosophic aim of living the “good life,” but in the constant search after progress. It is by seeking out new technology, and chasing the goal of progress, that mankind progresses and becomes freer. An example of this type of understanding that Hank has is evidenced through the introduction of a newspaper, and the assumption that by developing the simple convenience of reading, individuals will attach themselves to this idea, and then free dissemination of information will result. This is not to imply that Hank does not have some humanitarian goals. He does, with the main one being his extended campaign to end the practice of slavery, but his main goal is the development of technology in the pursuit of material comfort.

Hank’s focus on technology also extends to how he approaches his position of “perpetual minister and executive.”³² He understands this position as a managerial position, not a political one. His concept of political power is representative of the society that he originates in. His idea of being a minister of the government is to go around pretending to be a magician, blowing up towers, and creating spectacular fireworks displays while secretly planting the seeds for a full-fledged technological revolution. Hank accomplishes nothing specifically “political” while in his position as minister. He does not create or change any laws, only addressing the

³¹ Connecticut Yankee Pg 100

³² Connecticut Yankee pg 95

institutional unfairness of the arbitrary system of justice while outside of his own realm. While on the quest for the Holy Grail with Sandy, he meets with Morgan Le Fay, the ruthless queen, who has imprisoned and tortured individuals for arbitrary reasons, even going so far as creating elaborate schemes to cause mental anguish to those imprisoned.³³ Hank is directly moved by the plight of these prisoners and manages to secure their releases. The interesting aspect here is how he does not translate this idea into a more widespread reform of justice throughout the kingdom that he has influence over. He does not attempt to secure the release of any of King Arthur's prisoners, for example. This is a recurring theme for Hank. He is moved by his own pity, and will go to great lengths to help out those who he directly sees to be ailing. This is evidenced by his actions within the smallpox hut, where he and King Arthur go to great length to provide comfort for the woman whose entire family has either died or is currently dying of smallpox after being abandoned by the Church and the community. This initially seems to be in direct contrast with Hank's own statement about being devoid of "sentiment," but as I have shown earlier, this does not mean he is free of pity, only of the manifestations of *eros*. However, these individual acts of pity and compassion do not translate into direct political action. This does not seem to be based on Hank's consent to these practices being continued, but with the idea that he does not think of political solutions to problems, seeking the answer in the development of technology. However, this ultimately fails, and the society turns against him. What this shows is Hank's inability to analyze a situation and create a political solution. The only political victory that Hank scores comes through the action of King Arthur. Hank has been seeking to abolish slavery for some time, but has been unable to do so. However, after Hank and the king are taken, sold, and even sentenced to death as slaves, Hank is able to persuade Arthur to abolish slavery.

³³ The most elaborate example of this is the man who was imprisoned in a cell that had a view of the hut where his family lived. Morgan Le Fay devised the plan where empty coffins were brought out of the house to create the illusion that all but one of his family members had died, when in reality they were all still alive and well.

However, Hank still is unable to do this dealing himself. He needs to use Arthur as the political authority and mind to pass this decree and have it be accepted by the majority.

In addition to pointing at Hank's technological understanding, these events also show how Hank interprets politics as management, rather than as separate and different political action. This is based in Hank's fundamental focus on personal economics, and large scale development rather than any other political matters. Hank never holds court or offers political wisdom to King Arthur, as one would expect a minister to do. He instead spends his time developing his man-factories and "Bossing" his technological developments. This represents a fundamental shift in political understanding that was in effect during the second half of American history that Twain is honing in on and bringing out through the character of Hank. Politics is turning from an intellectual realm of political action to a larger focus on political leadership as management, with the primary focus shifting to be on the invention and production of goods for a profit. It is because of this mentality that Hank decides that in his position as minister to King Arthur, his official title should be "The Boss," rather than Duke, or Lord. This moniker is much more descriptive of the style and limitations of rule that Hank employs than any traditional noble identifier. Hank views all of the political development in economic and technological terms. He brags that without changing any existing laws he doubled revenue, simply by changing how taxation was enforced. However, he is still blind to the problems of this feudal taxation system, and makes no effort to alleviate the burdens imposed on the lower classes. In addition to this, nearly all of the technological innovations Hank creates within this society are specifically designed to create a profit or introduce some manner of economic improvement to the nation. These improvements include turning the bowing hermit into the glorified sewing machine, the revised tax system, and even the stock exchange that serves to bring about Hank's inevitable downfall. Hank represents a fundamentally different view of politics, one where the emphasis is

not placed on the ruler as a politician in the classical sense, that is one who seeks the moral good for a society, or even one in the feudal sense, where the goal seems to be focused on self-preservation of both the state and the ruler, but on the ideals of management simply. For Hank, the proper job of the executive is best represented by the individual who creates the technological machinations of society and then takes on a more passive role, letting the free industry play out. This ideal represents a fundamental shift in politics that is pioneered by the speculative nature of wealth acquisition and politics that accompanies the contemporary 19th century politics that Hank was familiar with. This is characterized by the continual focus on progress as the necessary end of society, and seems to be Hank's fundamental understanding. Progress in itself is the highest virtue of society because it provides for convenience, which is the greatest good of man. When Hank is viewed within this context, his lack of legislative actions and his focus on providing technology to this primitive society become both rationalized and clear. Hank is trying to provide the greatest end, as he understands it, for himself and the society into which he is thrust. However, what he fails to understand are the complications of this understanding, especially for a society unaccustomed to such a view and completely lacking to what seem to be the necessary preconditions for such an approach to succeed, namely, a democratic government with a longstanding acceptance of political and technological innovation. Twain summarizes Hank's view of society, and the potential difficulties with such a view quite well in the preface to the London edition of his novel The Gilded Age:

In America nearly every man has his dream, his pet scheme, whereby he is to advance himself socially or pecuniarily. It is this all-pervading speculativeness which we tried to illustrate in "The Gilded Age". It is a characteristic which is both bad and good, for both the individual and the nation. Good, because it allows neither to stand still, but drives both for ever on, towards some point or other which is a-head, not behind nor at one side. Bad, because the chosen point is often badly chosen, and then the individual is wrecked; the aggregations of such cases affects the nation, and so is bad for the nation. Still, it is a trait which is of course better for a people to have and sometimes suffer from that to be without.³⁴

³⁴ This edition of The Gilded Age is particularly difficult to find, but the notable preface is available online at the Mark Twain Project website.
<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/MTDP00364.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>

In this, Twain explains in surprisingly frank terms the main problem with Hank's method of governance, albeit characterized solely in the terms of personal advancement, but Hank's main project within the Arthurian society can be seen as a personal project or "pet scheme" where he aims to become "the most important man in history" by advancing English technology by twelve centuries. Twain here ultimately comes to the conclusion that the good of this "all-pervading speculativeness" outweighs the bad, but the conditions need to be correct, and Hank is still the example of the catastrophic ways in which this can go wrong. These good traits can be brought out more effectively within a government that is designed to encourage them. This type of government seems to be the one Twain is pointing at, and will be developed later in this work.

Hank here is put in a very dangerous position: he is a man with no political experience, with no conception of the current political or social environment thrust in a position of incredible power within the society, with the technical skill to create weapons that have the capability of destruction that hasn't yet been seen by society. It is through this that Twain can be seen to be making a sly commentary on the political situation in which he lives. Technology, and especially weapons technology is progressing at an unheard-of rate, and will continue to do so for more than the next century. Twain, in writing this novel is commenting on a society that has just come off a war that is still the deadliest conflict that America has been involved with, and weapons technology was continuing to gain steam, with the new Gatling guns getting first use at the end of the Civil War, and seeing more action in the Spanish-American war. While this novel was published over a decade before the Spanish-American war, Twain understood its destructive tendencies enough to have a crew of them mow down 20,000 knights in the final stages of the Battle of the Sand-Belt. This destructive capability is placed within the mind of Hank Morgan, the

inexperienced politician, the glutton for glory and esteem, who is unable to understand the social norms of 6th century England and the potential usefulness of both the Church and the normative class structure that served to keep the society banded together. This is the failings of the apolitical mind, the “boss” mentality that asserts that man is fundamentally better on his own, with only minimal, unobtrusive oversight. When this mentality is paired with insurmountable destructive technology, slaughter is almost necessarily a result, as Clarence himself brings to mind, telling Hank that the rebellion of the knights and the Church was bound to happen, and was not a result of Hank’s absence or his lack over oversight of the newly created stock market. What this says about our modern society is that technology has made our violent tendencies more destructive. Technology, if left unchecked, can actually be bad for societies. Twain aims to improve governmental understanding to limit this possibility.

King Arthur as the Social Politician

Contrasted with the “boss” mentality of Hank, King Arthur is representative of the existing governmental structure in England that Hank aims to upset. Arthur’s rule is based primarily on the prevailing social, moral, and religious conditions of his kingdom, relying on the power and acceptance of the Church, and the power of the nobles in enforcing the feudal rule, to keep him in power. He also has a fundamentally different motivation than Hank in what he cares about most. While Hank’s primary care is up for debate, it most definitely involves advancing technology, remaining in power, and democratizing England. On the other hand, Arthur’s primary motivation is in preserving the sanctity of his own honor. This is why he is the “social”³⁵ ruler, in contrast to Hank’s “technological” rulings, as Hank’s are based only in his knowledge of

³⁵ I am using this term “social” to represent all of the social constructs that support Arthur’s rule, including prevailing moral and religious aspects. The term social, or social ruler is intended to encompass all of these aspects and provides a clearer contrast to Hank’s “Technological” rule.

technological things, and Arthur's rule is based in his understanding of the social elements of his society. However, this fundamental concept of ruling is complex. It offers benefits for the society and is in many ways more stable, and perhaps even more beneficial to the society as a whole than Hank's introduction of technology into that society, but this is not to diminish the very many adverse effects that this has on the individuals within the society. The simple facts are that within this society, the concept of justice is at best arbitrary, and at worst based completely on the whims of both the king and the Church. In addition to this, the entire governmental structure is set up in such a way that its only goal is the perpetuation of its own existence.

However, despite these significant drawbacks, there are some advantages to the feudal system. These come in the form of methods of governing that Hank does not think to implement that may prove to be necessary for the proper guidance of any nation. Within this context, these methods displayed within King Arthur are his focus on honor and his disposition towards those he rules over. All of these elements add to the general success of King Arthur's rule and demonstrate elements that are lacking in Hank's conception of proper government.

King Arthur's focus on honor is a fundamental element of his developed social rule. This is based on the Arthur's social standing. His position as a member of the gentry class has made him into a slave of honor. This conception affects his understandings and interactions with every other member of society, from Hank, to the knights, and even towards the peasant class. Arthur's commitment to honor within his dealings with Hank allow for Hank to rise to the social and political standing that he enjoys after the first few chapters. It is through this honor that Arthur accepts Hank as the perpetual minister to the government and allows him to enact all of his major technological advances on the 6th century society. However, the most interesting display of Arthur's sense of honor comes from his dealings with the lowest class of this society.

Arthur does indeed understand himself as being fundamentally different and superior to the peasants, but this does not mean that he holds no obligation towards them. This is best displayed through Arthur's treatment of the family within the smallpox hut. However, this sense of honor also comes with a sense of vanity and pride that makes Arthur view himself as fundamentally better than his ordinary citizens. This especially comes out when Hank is attempting to teach him how to blend in with the peasant class at the beginnings of their journeys. Arthur is initially unable to come to the idea that individuals will not recognize him everywhere he goes, and will fail to show him due deference. When Hank attempts to teach him the proper means of addressing the peasant class, his reaction is almost violent. So ground in is his sense of superiority that he is incredulous towards the necessity of using a common term like "brother" for his fellow man, exclaiming "Brother! - to dirt like that?"³⁶ This causes some additional troubles for the two travelers, as Hank has to intercept whip blows, exercise extreme caution, and even resort to blowing two charging knights to smithereens because of King Arthur's inability to sully his own honor by properly submitting to the passing knights. Hank rationalizes this pride and honor of King Arthur by describing how the entire scope of Arthur's life, all his training and experience, has led him to believe that he truly was better than all other individuals. This was ingrained in Arthur so much that he believes that other people must view this as an inherent quality and not as a byproduct of his social standing. Hank laments this insoluble viewpoint of Arthur's, saying "he could see only see one side of it."³⁷ Arthur, because of his education and birthright-based social standing, can only understand the surrounding world from one perspective. In this later instance, Hank laments Arthur's inability to see the fundamental inequality of the arbitrary justice system of the feudal age. The system allows the lord to imprison men without evidence or charge and punish their families for their imprisonment,

³⁶ Connecticut Yankee pg 323

³⁷ *Ibid* pg 388

and then still consider it unjust if these men sought to escape their bondage and break out of their captivity. This leads to the fundamental problem of both feudal rule and Arthur's role in it. The ultimate goal of this type of feudal regime is only the perpetuation of the regime and the individuals who are in positions of power. From this, all of the additional problems that King Arthur embodies arise. The focus on only remaining in power leads to the subjugation of the lower classes, the insistence on the rigid class structure, and all of the different elements of the society that Hank wants to fundamentally change. King Arthur then can be seen as being stuck between these two worlds. A king, raised with such a focus on honor so that he both cares for and resents his subjects, seems to be the natural conclusion of such an understanding. This critique involves the blind acceptance of inherited norms as being one of the fundamental problems with not only this, but of any society. Arthur may do some good actions but it is only because his birthright forces him to hold certain beliefs and act a certain way. If that unjust conception of birthright were to collapse, there would be no motivation for his actions. Twain here is advocating for the development of independent rational decision-making within society.

We can here see Twain's main critique of such institutions. Twain himself is not striving for precise historical accuracy with the portrayal of the 6th century, even before the more fantastical elements of time travel and Hank's technological achievements, this is evidenced by the depictions of slavery that are reminiscent more of the American South than anything that would have existed in England at the time. This serves to show how much Twain was aiming to make a larger point with this presentation. With regards to King Arthur, this point is a critique of the hierarchical structure and its affect upon the population at large. By contrasting the self-involved yet honorable mentality of Arthur with Hank's well-intentioned political ineptitude, Twain is hinting at the idea that an ideal form of government may be possible, but must also take into account the underlying condition and mentality of the population upon which this government

is to be implemented. This lesson is even more important for democratic governments, because where everyone has a say in the development of society, proper social institutions are more important than ever. The voting population must be made capable of making intelligent decisions that guide the nation in a proper direction.

Putting the Two Together

From this idea here we can see that both Hank and Arthur's approach to governing do not provide for this ideal, but perhaps, by combining the best aspects of both ideas, the ideal government for the 6th century society, given Hank's involvement, can be discovered. In addition, while undertaking this exercise, we may be able to see how this interaction between both Hank and Arthur are representative for the role of technology in society, in a more general sense.

Through combining both Hank and Arthur's understanding of government, we can come to what may be the best possible scenario for the 6th century feudal society. If Hank were also able to understand the prevailing social conditions of the 6th century not as offensive blocks to freedom, but as necessary preconditions that need to be dealt with in a subtle manner, he would not have had to resort to the subversive methods, creating secret armies and technologies, and therefore could be more successful with his attempts at modernization. From this understanding we can see how Twain is using the ineptitude of both Hank and Arthur to make a larger point about the assimilation of culture and forced colonization. He seems to be returning to the ideas presented in Roughing It when he comments upon the American colonization of the Sandwich Isles. The native society on the island had some merit, it promoted a working society, and one that had a large amount of unique and interesting native culture. However in many ways it was

quite barbaric, a history of cannibalism tinged the culture of the natives, and the tribes were ruled by an often oppressive king. However, when the American missionaries arrived at the island, they began imposing American culture and especially religion on to the islanders. This destroyed all elements of their culture, both the good and bad. The missionaries' singular goal was to promote American religion and culture and bring the islanders towards the conceived ideal of society. This is the same element that is going on within Connecticut Yankee, but with a larger focus on technology. Instead of religion, Hank is attempting to impart wholesale technology on this "barbaric" culture but without seeking to understand if there is some element of this culture that may be worth saving. Instead, he immediately goes to war with the Church and seeks to disrupt the social order without providing any real tangible benefits except overt displays of magic. All of his technological innovations are initially kept secret, and throughout the book Hank establishes mild technological innovations, such as baseball and a newspaper, but does nothing that radically changes the fundamental society. The Arthurian society when Hank arrives is a hereditary monarchy run with the religious authority of the church as its backing, and at the end of the novel, all Hank has achieved is angering the Church to the point where it removes all support from his authority and sets the entire society after him. If Hank had instead recognized the necessity of such a strong social force within that society and introduced elements of technology that actively improved people's lives, he could have had more success in winning social support for his mission and avoided the disastrous outcome of the final chapters.

However, one must be careful in taking this too far. It seems like the American South was a model for this type of combined government, and they were by no means a perfect society. The South was able to combine part of the technological innovations that were characteristic of the North, with romanticized and inherited social norms of both England and times past. Despite this understanding, however, they still created an inegalitarian society based on ingrained concepts of hierarchy and social norms. This may mean that these two types of societies are perpetually

in conflict, and one must simply accept the fundamental limitations of each.

With Connecticut Yankee and some of his other works, including sections of Roughing It, Twain is advocating a type of modified relativism. It seems clear that Twain does not view any one particular society as being the ideal society and that each nation or culture has both its advantages and disadvantages. The key aspects of this multitude of societies are the social norms, and the experience and training of individuals within these societies. As he demonstrated in What is Man?, Twain believes that all men are fundamentally dictated by their past experiences and training. Therefore, coming into a foreign society and forcibly attempting to implement not only your morals but your technology or religion on the existing society will only instigate or provoke the current population against you, and ultimately you will either have to put them down by force or be driven out. In the case of Hank Morgan, he was ultimately driven out. In the case of the Sandwich Isles, the natives were assimilated by force. Overall there are fundamental limitations on each type of society, and attempts at forcibly combining them will result in conflict. This is evidenced by the conclusion of Connecticut Yankee and by the American Civil War. The social or Arthurian society has the advantage of a rich communal life, and advanced social interactions, while the technological has the advanced conveniences to the detriment of these social ties. However, it is worth noting that this does not mean that technology is limitless. There are still fundamental restrictions on its use and understanding, and these limits help us define the type of society we are currently living in.

6) Limitations of Technology

If we are now stuck in this technologically understood society, and attempts to forcibly change it into any other type of society end with only destruction, we must now attempt to

understand this society and understand the fundamental limitations imposed by the technological society.

For Twain, the general concept of technology is a double-edged sword. It serves a useful purpose within society by providing comfort and convenience for individuals, but it also has its strict limitations. In order to explain this concept, I will here aim to explore two aspects of Twain's treatment of technology across several important works. I will first explore the limitations of technology as described through the plot of Connecticut Yankee, with the goal of finding both what the fundamental limitations of technology are and how Hank Morgan experiences these limitations and their effect on the events of the novel. I then turn to man's relationship to technology, exploring how Twain claims that in some ways man himself is a piece of technology, or even a specific machine. To do this, one must appeal again to Connecticut Yankee but also to What Is Man?, where he makes his clearest argument regarding the relationship between the individual and technology.

The Limits of Technology

Within Connecticut Yankee Twain makes the argument that technology, while useful, is not the ultimate end and there are limits to the use of technology. These limitations of technology are not simply practical limitations, but a categorical difference between technology and human understanding that prevents certain problems from being solved fully through the simple implementation of technology. This is evidenced through the problems that arise as a result of Hank Morgan's use of technology in Connecticut Yankee. By technology here I mean a specific, physical, scientific creation of man that is intended to provide some service or solve a particular

problem.³⁸ This definition expands from the idea of the telegraph, or a gun, to more overarching elements; the creation of and dissemination of a newspaper in 6th century England is also considered within this definition of technology. This also includes the economic reforms that Hank puts into motion by creating factories, which attempt to undermine the feudal system by providing alternative means of survival for the peasant class beyond subsistence farming. This is because they are based in a scientific understanding of a nation and based on a physical ordering of certain elements of society. However, the main limitations of technology, and specifically the technology that Hank introduces to the Arthurian society, are its lack of moral guidance. Hank believes that all problems can be solved through the proper application of technology and it is this lack of subtlety that becomes his downfall. He cannot understand that there may be different or better solutions to problems, or even that technology may occasionally cause more problems than it solves. All of this comes to a head in the final chapters of Connecticut Yankee, in the final battle. Here we see the ultimate failings of technology. It can cause untold destruction, as Hank and his 52 “boys” are able to mow down close to 20,000 armored knights, using Gatling Guns, electrified fences, and explosives, but they cannot escape the fate they’ve caused for themselves, trapped in a cave, left to die surrounded by mountains of rotting corpses.³⁹ However, the proper question that needs to be asked is why this destruction happened in the first place. This is revealing of the great failing of technology that Hank is blind to. This is the inherent lack of morality within technological advancement as well as its destructive tendencies on the communal relations between people in societies. Technology, by

³⁸ That is, physical as opposed to a metaphysical creation, or conceptual creation, else philosophy could be seen as a technological innovation, and scientific as opposed to irrational, or even religious or social, as a new manner of government, such as the American system at the time of the founding, or any religious innovation or reform could be mislabeled as technological.

³⁹ Interestingly, this element of Twain’s writings would prove to be nearly clairvoyant. In March 10th, 1909, over 900 Moro tribesmen were killed by the immense technological advantage of the American Army’s mounted guns against the tribesmen’s swords and spears, in what would be called either the First Battle of Bud Dajo, or as Twain himself described it, “The Moro Massacre.” Twain wrote a scathing piece criticizing the Army’s actions in a short piece entitled “Comments on The Moro Massacre.”

definition, is a machination created by man, and as such, it is up to either the creator or others members in society to understand the possible consequences of its use and, when necessary place proper limits on its implementation. Hank, in being so committed to the idea that technological progress is always good, fails to understand the possible moral or social consequences of his rapid introduction of technology into this society, and as such he reaps the destructive consequences of such an understanding.

The various implementations of Hank's technology in the 6th century Arthurian society into which he is thrust, lead directly to the seeds of this societal discontent. One of the first examples of this comes when Hank goes the Valley of Holiness, to one-up Merlin yet again. Hank sees a hermit whose claim to fame is standing on the top of an elevated structure and bowing constantly. He views this religious act of piety as a potential for technological improvement. As a labor saving measure, Hank hooks up this hermit to a mechanized loom, so to use the motion of his bowing to run a sewing machine and turn out linen shirts. This is the perfect example of the limitations of technology. Hank is able to turn what he views as wasted energy into a useful product, and especially one that has the potential to be economically feasible. However, in order to create this human-powered sewing machine, Hank must sacrifice the non-technological purpose for his actions. If we assume that the hermit's actions have some manner of societal good, which they seem to have, as the pilgrims that come to see the Valley of Holiness get religious inspiration from his actions, we can see how Hank takes this societal good, and turns it into a technological good. He is essentially taking one individual's religious expression and exploiting it for profit. This is the fundamental limitation of technology. It doesn't necessarily change people's cultures or ideals, but it does not take them into consideration. If they are useful, they will be utilized, regardless of how it changes the culture or perverts its previous intentions. It is fundamentally and categorically different from human interaction and is

therefore unable to conform to any social or moral norms. Technology, taken in itself, cannot understand any of the repercussions of its use. This aspect, the understanding of consequences, must fall to the individuals who put themselves in a position to be responsible for the technology. In this case, this responsible individual is Hank, but his lack of consideration of the consequences lead to major societal problems. The bowing hermit still feels that his actions are for a religious end, but Hank is exploiting that end. He, as the extreme interpretation of a technocrat, only understands the good of the technology. For him the religious implications do not matter. He only views the bowing as a wasted energy source. However, the fact that the hermit did not consent to having his energy exploited in such a way points at the larger issue. Throughout Connecticut Yankee, Hank assumes that simply implementing technology, creating the telegraph, establishing a new West Point, or any number of other technological advancements that he creates, will advance the English society. He makes no attempt to change society by any means other than technological ones. He makes basic attempts to re-educate the population, but it is always through either trickery or the forced implementation of technology. He attempts to pacify the nobility by turning the knights into walking billboards and traveling salesmen. He assumes that his conception of the embarrassment of wearing a billboard will make the knights aware of their own ridiculousness and turn them into less of a threat. What Hank fails to realize is that the knights do not have the same sensibilities that he does, and simply injecting modern technology into the situation does not change their culture. As soon as Hank leaves, they return to their old ways with only the slightest of provocation. This also rings true for the introduction of the newspaper. Hank goes to great length to establish the newspaper as the great medium of the masses, hoping that reporting and opinion pieces will influence individuals and even teach literacy on a greater scale. However, this is the only move he makes to educate individuals, and he makes no further move to actually teach literacy. He is printing a newspaper for the masses, who are unable to read it. Hank does not engage with the

societal impact of his advancements, nor does he address any of the implications of his actions.

The ultimate limitation of technology is the lack of interpretation or understanding that it grants. A particular piece of technology ultimately serves only the purpose for which it is built. It requires others to advance the idea that the purpose for which the piece of technology was built is indeed a useful purpose for the audience. Hank needed to not simply create the newspaper or the telegraph, but create the social or governmental situation in which these technological innovations would have the desired effect and be accepted by the population. He erroneously believed that simply creating these things and introducing them into the society would be enough to bring about the social change that he desired. Instead, this strategy backfired, and Hank's downfall was brought about by the backlash of the Church, who viewed his technological innovations as blasphemous. Hank makes the mistake of failing to recognize the need for a moral and governmental foundation for technological progress.

The Man Factories and the Concept of Man as a Machine

A further example of both Hank Morgan and Mark Twain's understanding of both technology and education is the means by which men are portrayed as being an element of technology themselves. This comparison comes in Connecticut Yankee, but it also occurs in What Is Man?. In Connecticut Yankee, Hank approaches the education of the individuals within the society in the same way that he would approach creating a new technological development. He creates "man-factories," where he sends particularly promising individuals to learn the modern societal and technological ideals that Hank means to implement on a large scale within the 6th century. In What Is Man? he makes the argument that man is essentially a machine who is governed by his own past experiences and training. From these two aspects we

can come to a full understanding of the nature of man and how Hank's understanding of human nature may cause him to misunderstand the limitations of technology that have been explored above.

In Connecticut Yankee, one of Hank's first moves as the new found "Boss" is to set up his "man-factory" where he aims to train "a crowd of ignorant fools into experts - experts in every sort of handiwork and scientific calling."⁴⁰ He describes setting up "A teacher-factory" and various other schools and even military academies across the nation. These factories and schools were set up with the intention that with enough schooling, at a young enough age Hank could circumvent the prevailing superstition and blindly obedient nature of individuals and educate young people in his own image. However this seems to be almost self-contradictory. These "factories" are themselves elements of technology and as such need to be assimilated to as well. The concept is that one's experience within their social surroundings defines their outlook, and conceptions of life are already well established at this point. Hank attempts to subvert this by recruiting individuals while they are very young, but knowledge of the novel shows how fruitless this ultimately becomes. After the Church issues its edict, only 52 young men remain at Hank's side, with many more reverting back to their initial training and abandoning him. Hank then becomes both correct and incorrect, and his early exclamation that "the man who would have proposed to divert [the mental ruts established by time and habit] would have had a long contract on his hands"⁴¹ becomes more persistent than he initially imagined. Even he is unable to fill in the ruts formed by time, habit, and the Roman Catholic Church. His man-factories attempt to deal with man in a technological way, molding him, shaping him through force of manufacture into something rational and useful for the society that Hank wants to create. However, man's inherent machinations go much deeper than Hank

⁴⁰ Connecticut Yankee pg 127

⁴¹ Connecticut Yankee Pg 111

initially expected. Here Twain is pointing out that the type of education that Hank offers in Connecticut Yankee is an improper education, as it does not support the educating of the masses to change society, but only creates a secret, underground educated minority that then aims to rise up and change the nation by force, which, as has been already established, is doomed to failure.

Twain's conception of technology is that it is a thing so fundamental to our society and existence that it forms a fundamental part of who we are and how we make decisions. If this is truly the case, then the relationship between politics and technology is much more intimate than initially thought. This is because this relationship becomes more than the way that man's creations affect the situation in which he lives. It becomes the question of how man's fundamental nature reacts with the society he creates for himself, and how this understanding and use of technology, and machinations affects his life, including how he views himself. Hank, even despite being transplanted into the 6th century can still only understand his own existence and purpose through the lens of 19th century American technology. Likewise, the inhabitants of the 6th century English society can only understand their own existence through that context. However, it should be noted that Hank does have some degree of success with his education. He manages to convert Clarence and 50 other boys to his way of thinking, to the point where they easily and willingly give their lives for Hank's cause. There is no mention of why these particular boys are special, but it must be assumed that Hank has managed to alter their own training more effectively than others', or perhaps it suggests that there will always be a few amongst a population whose training and experiences put them "out of their time" and make them more willing to accept strange and new concepts. In addition to this, it also stands to reason that Hank's methods of technological innovation and education would work fine if he were surrounded by men like him. This is a perfectly reasonable claim and one that is supported

by the text. We see that Hank, before he gets transported to the 6th century, is quite successful and has a large amount of men willing to work under him. However, this is not to say that Twain here is suggesting that each society has its own modes of action and each mode is relativistically good for its respective time period. Twain is attempting to make the point that while Hank's methods may be accepted in the 18th century, there is still something off about them, and by removing them from the familiar context, he is able to bring out the problems with such a view. Hank's methods of technological advancement and education are appropriate in his society. However that's at issue as well. When taken out of their context we can see how off-putting they may be. By removing this context and placing Hank in the far past we get to see "behind the curtain" to the social and governmental apparatus that have been created in order to make these methods appropriate. We've been propping up potentially objectionable technological methods, and only by removing their context can we see them for what they really are.

This understanding adds another level of complexity to the limitations of technology explored by Hank Morgan. If each individual is governed by a "Master Sense" that dictates action based on previous experiences and training, then the idea of introducing technology out of context, especially when that technology is from over 1200 years in the future, is an impossible task. Hank's right hand man, Clarence, seems to hint at this idea when he explains the backlash against Hank's technological achievements and societal changes by the Church. He explains that this backlash and subsequent warfare was inevitable, and that all members of this society "were born in an atmosphere of superstition, and reared in it. It is in their blood and bones."⁴² This means that no manner of education could remove this self-conception from the general population (with Clarence and his 50 loyal followers being the notable exception) and Hank's

⁴² Connecticut Yankee 466

project was doomed from the very beginning. One also sees this idea in Twain's other works.

This aspect also comes to the fore in the most famous passage of Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, when Huck decides that instead of turning Jim in, as he has always been taught to do, he would rather go to hell for the sin of harboring a fugitive slave than abandon his friend. This moment is revealing of Twain's thought because it describes many aspects of his concept of human nature. First, there is the aspect of unwilling choice. Huck accepts the fact that he is going to go to hell because he is incapable of going against his experience with Jim and turning him in. However, the pull of both sides show how opinions can come to be changed within Twain's definition of human nature. It might be thought that opinions, or choices for Twain are to be considered static, but this is not specifically true. While our experiences do unfailingly dictate our actions, certain powerful experiences can re-train our natures against previous experiences. This is what is going on within Huck's mind when he decides that he would rather go to hell. His experiences with Jim finally win out over his conventional upbringing, and the choice is already made for him. Huck's outward expression of this is not the true decision, as he had made this decision already when his experience almost subconsciously dictated that he would only be "spiritually" fulfilled (as described in What Is Man?) by protecting Jim and that turning him in would go against Huck's own interest. From this idea, we can see how Hank's own efforts with technology were simply not able to change the experiences for the 6th century inhabitants enough to accept his technology. This would make the case that one of the limitations of technology is its inherent difficulty in affecting actual experiential change within society.

7) Technology and Society

It is at this point that we can come understand the relation between technology and society, especially democracies, that Mark Twain is presenting in Connecticut Yankee and other works. This relation cuts to the core of Twain's presentation of Hank Morgan within the text of Connecticut Yankee but also throughout his corpus. Twain aims to make a larger point about the relation between society, government, and technology. This argument, or even critique, seems based in Twain's own personal relationship with technology and his inherent skepticism regarding the focus on progress as the ultimate social good. Twain's personal experiences with technology as elements of progress brought him both success and ruin. This duality of experiences with the integral aspect of American society led him to develop this complex view of the relation between society and technology. Overall he treated technology with what I call inevitable skepticism. For Twain the progress of technology is not something that can or should be stopped. Still, this does not mean that all new technology should be blindly accepted, but that it should be treated with all the skepticism that a new, potentially devastating aspect of society deserves. This skepticism asserts that one does not become like Hank and blindly follow one technological advance after another with no regards to the consequences. This is the subtlety of Twain's argument, and one that he brings out quite effectively within Connecticut Yankee. This inevitable skepticism regarding the progression of technology rests upon the foundational topics that I have already discussed. These elements of Twain's work combine to create a full picture of his skepticism regarding the interactions of technology and society.

As we can see in the presentation of Connecticut Yankee, the proper application and development of technology is dependent on a society that is specifically tailored for, and embraces the progression of, technology as a good. One of the prevailing lessons of Connecticut Yankee was precisely that. The individuals within the feudal society were unable to accept the fundamental societal changes that Hank's technology made necessary. This was

particularly evident when Hank attempted to institute a new merit based military command structure. His goal was to have the national army be run not by the high-born knights, who had traditionally taken this role, but by his own “West Point” trained men. This turns out to be one of his greatest failures; Hank was unable to have his men accepted by the king or any of the other knights because his men were not of noble birth. Hank had trained his “West Pointers” in all of his newly developed technology, and by all merit-based standards they were indeed superior to all other contenders. However, they were unable to breach the restraints on social status that were fundamentally in place within that society. Therefore, it seems that for the proper application of technology to a society, that society must be based on a fundamentally merit-based social structure. This is because technology is the great equalizer. It does not rely on a particular class structure for its use, nor does it require an individual to hold a particular position within society for the implementation of any particular innovation.

This is the fundamental technological lesson of Connecticut Yankee, but it also seems to be undermined by the argument made within The American Claimant. If the progression of technology is to occur in such a way that it does not destabilize the society and actually provides measured benefits for the individuals who are living within that society, it seems that a purely merit based society is the ideal location for such innovation. However, within The American Claimant the concept of technological innovation is alive and well, and it also appears that Colonel Sellers makes his entire living, meager as it may be, off developing various innovations. He seems to thrive within this society. This does not mean he is without flaws, but they are more a result of his specific character, rather than the result of some societal pressure or restriction on his technological output. It is then surprising to find out that this society within which this immense amount of technological innovation exists and thrives is very different from the ideal form that is developed within Connecticut Yankee. As the displaced Viscount Tracy,

quickly finds out, America is not a purely merit based society, there exists a hierarchical quality within the perceived perfectly free society.

So there now is developing a bit of a contradiction within Twain's work. The proper progress of technology is not a fundamentally bad thing, but is actually good for a society because, as Hank points out, it leads to more freedom for individuals, greater conveniences and overall a better quality of life. It seems absurd to think that one would argue that the knights of the Middle Ages had a better quality of life than the life of Twain's contemporaries. Twain points to one of the major driving forces of this improvement being technology, possibly even more so than any other social or governmental change, but this is perhaps going too far, too fast. The contradiction Twain is developing is the idea that technology requires a merit based society to thrive in, but a society in which it actually IS thriving appears, at least initially, to be merit-based in fact harbors many hierarchical elements. This issue, it seems, can be solved in one of two ways. The first would be to say that the progression of technology does not require an actual merit-based society, but only a society that appears to be merit-based. This solves the problem posed by the revelation of the Earl of Rossmore in The American Claimant, but it seems to be going too far with Twain's own skepticism. A more measured solution, and one that I believe Twain endorses, is to say that the 19th century American society is not the ideal form of government. It does not fully promote the development of technology either as a social and moral good or as a governmental form in a more general sense. This possibility allows Twain to both put forward his own time as a model of technological acceptance, when compared to the 6th century, in Connecticut Yankee but still be able to critique it within the context of The American Claimant.

When coupled with the fundamental limitations of technology that are presented in both of

these works, we can come to have a full understanding of how the relation between technology and society, and specifically how technology and democracies are developed and how they go awry. The limitations that are fundamentally imposed by technology, as discussed earlier, involve the lack of moral aspects of technology or moral thought that is involved with development and use of technology. Technology cannot think, and therefore it has no definitional limitations placed on its use. This means that it relies upon the creator or user of the particular aspect of technology to enact moral limits upon it. This is part of the issue that is brought to the fore within Connecticut Yankee, as Hank is not able to develop his own moral sense to the proper degree so that the technology is not used towards devastating ends. His application of technology only works for his own benefit, and Hank fails in understanding how to properly use these new implementations in a moral way without bringing large scale destruction to the land. Hank does have good intentions and he does wish to bring about “a proper republic” to Camelot, but he does not have a full understanding of the best method of doing so. He neglects to address the prevailing social conditions within the feudal monarchy and as a result brings the ire of the church and the nobility down upon him. This points at Twain’s larger understanding about the relation between technology and society. These different elements need to evolve together so that the appropriate social structure is in place to restrain and temper the effects of technology. This is especially true with regards to military technology, as the result of unrestrained military technology is death and destruction. This aspect is reflected both in Twain’s fictional works and in his personal life, as Twain was present for a small amount of the Civil War and was very tied to the internal politics of his day. Within Connecticut Yankee this leads to the difficulty of the rationality that I have already mentioned and becomes the focal point of Ambler’s article. By denying the rationality of the members of the Arthurian society, Hank manages to put himself in a position of moral superiority over the knights and other members of the noble class. This moral superiority allows him to kill knights and other members of society without any repercussions or

moral guilt. This comes up at various points within Connecticut Yankee where Hank mows down knights at a tournament with a pair of six shooters, blows up knights with an improvised dynamite bomb, and culminates in the massive destruction at the Battle of the Sand Belt. This represents the “turn” in Connecticut Yankee from the playful humor of the first half, degrading into the horrific consequences of the final chapters.⁴³ These events are treated with decreasing levels of indifference by Hank, with him initially treating the killing of dozens of knights at the tournament as a triviality and even glorying in the adulation that is lauded upon him. He then treats his destruction of the two knights with a similar amount of triviality but without the immediate glory, he describes calmly standing under the rain of minuscule particles of man and horseflesh, chatting with King Arthur. These two very casual treatments of Hank’s killing of knights are directly contrasted with the destruction he causes at the Battle of the Sand Belt. This battle is treated soberly, with the grave realization of his nearly single-handed destruction of an entire army of Knights. The horror of this situation is brought fully into view as Hank and the remainder of his “boys” are trapped in the cave that they made their last stand from. This turns into a horrific Catch-22 because if they leave the cave, they will be killed on sight by the remaining knights and the members of the church, but if they remain in the cave, the fumes from the massive piles of rotting corpses outside their cave will suffocate them. This change in attitude and tone from the simple adulation received at the tournament to the horror of the Sand Belt is indicative of the lack of a moral shift that is necessary with such a large influx of new technology. This is technology interacting poorly with society and Hank fails to create the society that will properly accept and limit technology. He instead creates a culture of magic wherein every technological achievement achieved is treated as an act of magic, and no understanding is ever granted to the citizens. Hank is put in the position of a god, an infallible and omnipotent magistrate who is given free rein to do nearly anything he wants, with the

⁴³ This turn is one of the main focuses of the Zuckerts’ article.

country. Twain uses Hank's social position, in conjunction with the effects of his technological implementations, to make a larger point about the use of technology in society. The problem with Hank's implementation of his innovations is that he did not educate. He continually passes off his abilities as magic and even goes so far as to orchestrate large publicity stunts in order to perpetuate this belief in the public. He makes no attempt to educate the general public so that they become accepting of his technological innovations. He restricts his advanced, technological education to the chosen few who he whisks off to the "man-factories" where they get churned into (not so) perfect disciples of Hank's technological prowess. This is precisely the wrong way to integrate technology into society, and Twain uses this as a counter example, building all of Hank's actions up to the inevitable, catastrophic end. By failing to educate the population-at-large, Hank fails to fulfill another societal requirement for the proper embrace of technology. The general population must be both aware of and supportive of the progress that this sort of technological innovation offers. The essential means to accomplish this is by providing open education for individuals so that they have a personal relationship with technology and the skills to either develop additional technology themselves or obtain skills to work with the new technology. Hank fails to do this, and is left with a society lacking in two of the most important aspects required for the acceptance of technological innovation. The members of this Arthurian society exist within a hierarchy that is not based on the required meritocracy, as well as not familiar enough with the application of technology to accept its common use. The famous Arthur C. Clarke phrase comes to mind, wherein these 6th century individuals were unable to distinguish Hank's "sufficiently advanced technology"⁴⁴ from magic.

Democracy as the Technological Government

⁴⁴ This is a paraphrase of Clarke's famous Third Law which states "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

However, we have at this point only shown that the 6th century was ill-equipped to understand or react to the influx of technology that Hank portrayed for them. Twain also seems to be making the argument that, at least in some way, American democracy, despite its flaws, is better suited for this type of technological development than other contemporary societies. This American democracy, which is so open to the new ideas of progress created by technology, is most overtly contrasted with the English government, which Twain believes to be, in its present state, unable to fully embrace this type of technological innovation. This is portrayed in several ways; first is the fundamental picture of the two societies given within The American Claimant. Here the British and American societies are explicitly compared, especially with regards to their technological achievements. Twain also slips in a number of intentional critiques of English society and their antiquated ways into Connecticut Yankee. Understanding these will help understand what exactly is holding them back from embracing the benefits of full-fledged technological innovation. Finally, we have to address the limitations of the American democracy as well. While Twain thinks that American democracy is currently the most favorable government for technological progress to flourish, this does not mean that he has no critiques. Twain's criticisms of the American government are both numerous and cutting. However, I will mainly concern myself with the particular critiques that aim to prevent the proper innovation from developing and leave to the side some of his other critiques of this society.

The fundamental comparison between Twain's portrayal of the American and British societies in The American Claimant allows us to understand how Twain views these two societies, even though they are portrayed in an exaggerated and caricatured manner. The America of this novel is one that offers the appearance of unprecedented opportunities. While this later proves to be untrue, the appearance stands, and Colonel Sellers is the greatest

example of this. He represents the potential that unlimited technological growth allows, and his multitude of fantastic, yet imagined technological innovations give the picture of an America where any individual can maintain a prosperous lifestyle through the individual creation of technology. This is the land of the individual innovator, the land populated by Nikola Tesla and Thomas Edison. Sellers is a combination of this idea and amusing incompetence, which makes Sellers such an interesting character. He spontaneously represents both elements of American society for the purposes of the novel, the technological advancement and focus on personal achievement, but also the result of ambition stretched too far. His inventions are fantastical, including a plan for raising the dead for use as a cheap new labor force and for turning sewer gas into power for boarding houses,⁴⁵ and thereby clearly impossible, at least for Twain's contemporary age. His ambition regarding these projects causes him to always be looking towards the financial gain on the horizon, neglecting the burdens of today. From this we can derive the fundamental North-based American identity that is being presented; incredibly optimistic, with ultimate faith in technological prowess, but at the same time, neglecting to fully understand the current problems with the larger society. These problems include all of various post-Civil War issues that Twain aims to draw attention to in his other novels, the racial inequalities that still remain, the poverty of the South, the problems with Reconstruction, and the continuing divide between the North and South despite the resolution of the war. This understanding indicates one of the major limits on society based on technological progress, and removes the communal feelings of society and replaces them with a want for progress. This puts a technological society in fundamental conflict with any non-technological one, as evidenced by the problems in the North and South following the Civil War until the South was more fully industrialized.

⁴⁵ In yet another interesting instance of Twain predicting the future, a recent innovation may make this a possibility in our modern age. <http://io9.com/5889110/breakthrough-technology-turns-sewage-into-fuel>

In contrast to this Northern conception, we are presented with the picture of English life, through the Earl of Rossmore. The English society is backward-looking, a society that is still attempting to hold on to the glories of their caste system, even though the world is changing around them. This is England at the height of her imperial claim to the world, yet Twain portrays the English society as functioning only as a result of generally accepted, but otherwise baseless, social norms. The Earl of Rossmore understands his position with regards to the other members of the English society, and the world at large, and sees himself as their superior. This leads to his continual dismissal of the claims of Colonel Sellers and all of the other claimants that came before him. His son Tracy initially believes his father's assertions, but begins to have his doubts. He wants to own his status, and travels to America in order to make his own way. By doing this he manages to display, almost better than his father does, the attitude of the "Old World". He is dismissive of his own inherited wealth and status, but he still believes himself better than the Americans, as his initial assumption is that he will be able to come to America, gain employment, and obtain status simply through the virtue of his actions. He believes that, even without his title and without his inherited status he is better than the majority of Americans and will be recognized as such. His father does not seem to share this view, and understands that his position as Earl is based on the social structure of England. This leads him to continually dismiss the claims of Sellers, because he knows that if he lends any credibility to this attempt, he will undermine the institution that supports his existence. It is this social structure that prevents England from enjoying the technological progress that America does. They lack the merit-based society that is necessary to promote individual technological achievement and instead focus on the maintenance of older inherited customs. The social hierarchy is established so that birth is valued over achievement, and this is a necessary pre-condition to reap the full benefits of technological progress.

Similar critiques of the English government also come out in Connecticut Yankee. As I have already pointed out, Hank claims that a birthright-based government, especially one with a rigid class structure, is incompatible with the development of the full rationality of an individual. This gets fully explained in the chapter where Hank is providing the feast for the various artisans. This is what I have deemed to be the “Democratic Arrogance,” as Hank views democracy as the only system of government that allows man to develop to his full potential. Within this understanding or even “arrogance,” Hank and by extrapolation, Twain, comes to elaborate on the greater point made in The American Claimant: England is stuck in a 6th century mindset, hearkening back to and idealizing these times, and this prevents them from fully advancing. Therefore one of the larger purposes to the writing of Connecticut Yankee is to provide an alternate context to the works of Sir Thomas Malory,⁴⁶ whose idealized picture of Camelot had become incredibly popular in both England and in parts of America at the time of Twain’s writing. Twain also aims to show that the Middle Ages were not as clear cut and simple as Malory portrays, and by doing so, hopes to either persuade some British readers that perhaps their historical approach to government was not the best or, failing that, to educate his American readers as to why such an approach was problematic.

Despite such critique of the English government, Twain is not making the claim that the American government is flawless. Twain’s own cynical nature would prevent him from making any statement of this sort. The American democracy is still flawed, and even the natural goodness of technology is not apparent for Twain. However, the advancement of technology does provide for more of the conveniences of life that he attributes to societal success, and does not subtract from the rational potential of individuals. Twain’s general position on

⁴⁶ See Footnote 27

technology is that its progress is inevitable, regardless of the government, or the individual, but it is under a proper government that it can progress with the least amount of harm. The British government is too backwards looking to anticipate the harm associated with the implementation of technology. The American government is better but its focus on individual merit allows for things to slip through the cracks. The difficulty that Twain sees in American society is that its focus on merit and freedom for the individual does not create a situation where technology is properly checked by the moral feelings of society. This is evidenced within Twain's co-authored novel, The Gilded Age. While being non-technological in nature, it does manage to show the corrupting elements of a pursuit after wealth and status. In combination with Connecticut Yankee and some of the contemporary events of both the Civil War and the Philippine-American war, which Twain vehemently opposed, these elements combine to create a picture of how Twain viewed warfare and of America's ultimate failings in tempering technology. In both *The War Prayer* and *Comments on the Moro Massacre*, two of Twain's late writings regarding the war in the Philippines, Twain emphasizes the destructive characteristics of the military technology that were being utilized against the Philippines' inhabitants. This destruction shows how Twain's concept of the proper place of technology becomes corrupted when a nation is unable to place the proper moral limits on it.

The solution to the excesses of a technological society that Twain develops is threefold, and is developed over the course of Connecticut Yankee as well as the other materials I have treated. The first element of this is a technological skepticism, which allows the individual to adapt to the progression of society without being rendered blind to the possible negative consequences. The next element is education. This is not the type of education that Hank attempts to bring, but a full and open education with the goal of developing rationality within a population. This allows individuals to be trained to develop and work with technology on a large

scale, so there does not become a disparity between those with technology and those without it. Finally this requires equality, of both race and sex. We can see how Twain, in nearly all of his work, champions universal equality.⁴⁷ This equality allows for any capable individual to rise to an advanced station and develops the only acceptable form of hierarchy, one which is based on pure merit.

Overall, Twain takes a very cautious view towards the development of technology and its place within society. Any attempts to stop the progress of technology will be ineffectual and only lead to devastating results, as the ending scenes of Connecticut Yankee show, but the solution to this is not to give technology free reign. Twain believes that technological development is a necessity, a fundamental part of life, but that a proper social and governmental structure has to be developed in order to properly temper and control the ways in which this dangerous technological progress is utilized. Failure to do so results in the great massacres seen by Twain in the Civil War and the Spanish-American war. Twain's advice was not well heeded however, as less than a decade after his death the First World War brought the consequences of unrestricted technological development to the world stage. New innovations caused untold destruction on the populations of both Europe and America. Twain's inevitable skepticism was both a byproduct of his personal relationship with technology, including his own well-known financial ruin as a result of literally buying into new printing technology, and his more philosophical understandings of human nature. These two understandings drive the interplay between Hank and the feudal society he has come to inhabit, but also, in a greater role, shed light on the nature of relations between the progress of technology and its effect on the governance of society.

⁴⁷ Huck Finn and to a lesser extent Tom Sawyer for racial equality, and Connecticut Yankee and *Republic of Gondor* and even parts of The American Claimant for gender equality.

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