

University of Pardubice  
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Social and Political Satire in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King  
Arthur's Court*  
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Bachelor Paper  
2016

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Akademický rok: 2014/2015

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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Název tématu: **Sociální a politická satira v knize Yankee z Connecticutu na dvoře krále Artuše od Marka Twaina**  
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Závěrečná bakalářská práce se bude věnovat dílu amerického autora Marka Twaina, konkrétně románu *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, v jehož analýze se studentka zaměří především na jeho satirickou stránku.

V úvodu práce studentka stručně charakterizuje tvorbu Marka Twaina a zasadí ji do literárně-historického kontextu. Dále bude definovat základní pojmy, s nimiž bude ve svých analýzách pracovat, hl. pojem satira.


Jádrem práce bude analýza vybraného díla, v níž se studentka soustředí na způsoby, jimiž autor pomocí prostředků satiry kritizuje společenské a politické poměry v tehdejších Spojených státech a Británii. Svě vývody bude vhodně ilustrovat ukázkami z primárního díla a konfrontovat s relevantními kritickými zdroji. V rámci pojednání může také zmínit kritickou recepci díla.

Závěrem studentka své analýzy shrne a pokusí se vyslovit obecnější závěr o Twainových postojích k politice, společenskému uspořádání, válce, církvi, technickému pokroku, apod. tak, jak je ztvárnil ve svém díle.


Rozsah grafických prací:  
Rozsah pracovní zprávy:  
Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná**  
Jazyk zpracování bakalářské práce: **Angličtina**  
Seznam odborné literatury: **viz příloha**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **doc. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.**  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. března 2015**  
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **30. března 2016**

  
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## Příloha zadání bakalářské práce

Seznam odborné literatury:

- Mark Twain: *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
- Allen, Gerald. "Mark Twain's Yankee." *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Dec., 1966)
- Carter, Everett. "The Meaning of A Connecticut Yankee." *American Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Nov., 1978)
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- 
- + další
- + literárně teoretické práce o satíře (definice satiry)

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracoval samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využil, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

Byl jsem seznámen s tím, že se na moji práci vztahují práva a povinnosti vyplývající ze zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., autorský zákon, zejména se skutečností, že Univerzita Pardubice má právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití této práce jako školního díla podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona, a s tím, že pokud dojde k užití této práce mnou nebo bude poskytnuta licence o užití jinému subjektu, je Univerzita Pardubice oprávněna ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložila, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše.

Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 31. 8. 2016

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Markéta Smejkalová

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor doc. Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D. for her support, valuable guidance and time she devoted to my thesis.

## **ANNOTATION**

This bachelor thesis is concerned with the political and social satire portrayed in Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. The first part of the thesis explains the term of political and social satire and its use. The second chapter gives a brief insight into the life of the author, along with his ideals and opinions. The analysis of the book's criticism is covered in the third part of the paper. In this part, there is an overview of the different opinions of critics concerning what the focus of the book's criticism is, followed by a description of the main characters and the analysis of the concrete examples of the political and social satire in the novel. The fourth chapter covers the summary of my research in the conclusion of the thesis.

## **KEY WORDS**

Twain, satire, politics, society, history, present

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na politickou a sociální satiru vyobrazenou v knize *Yankee z Connecticutu na dvoře krále Artuše* od Marka Twaina. První část práce vysvětluje pojem politické a sociální satiry a její využití. Druhá kapitola stručně uvádí do autorova života, spolu s jeho ideály a názory. Analýzou kritiky v díle se zabývá třetí část práce. Zde je uveden přehled rozdílných názorů kritiků na to, jaký je cíl kritiky v knize, následovaný popisem hlavních postav a analýzou konkrétních příkladů politické a sociální satiry v díle. Čtvrtá kapitola se zabývá souhrnem mého výzkumu v závěru práce.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Twain, satira, politika, společnost, historie, současnost

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## Introduction

The world of the legendary King Arthur – the romantic image of the famous city of Camelot surrounded with the innocent picturesque landscape of vast fields and forests. The royal court filled with virtuous knights who found the purpose of life in defending the helpless, fighting glorious battles in the name of justice, and serving loyally to the King. The idyllic vision of kingship represented by a man of a noble character, high wisdom and endless courage – King Arthur himself. This is the picture of the Arthurian England given by an immense number of legends, above which undoubtedly shines the most famous of them all – Sir Thomas Malory's historical romance *Le Morte d'Arthur*. This exact depiction of the life on the court of King Arthur was for centuries loved and cherished by countless English-speaking readers, but in the year 1889, this idealistic portrayal was violated. In that year, Mark Twain published a book in which he recreated this society in his own way for the novel *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. This narrative dared to portray the glorious Camelot as a swamp-like village with muddy hogs and dirty children behind every corner. The honorable knights turned into contemptible men of rotten morals who scorn the common people. The central character of these legends, the noble King Arthur, was depicted as a gullible ignoramus supporting – or at best being blind to – the oppression of his subjects, and the whole nation was simply a group of savages. Mark Twain had his reasons to show the Medieval England the way he did, and it was not because he would dislike Malory's tales or that he would like to ridicule them. For, in fact, he adored them deeply until the end of his days. His initial purpose was to bring the two societies – the former and the present one – into a comparison of one another and show the contrasts as a result. The original idea, then, was to demonstrate the advantages of the modern civilization with the focus on how far the humanity has moved forward to its better days. However, as I will explore further in this paper, this is not the only possible meaning of the story. Just as there are evidences for this interpretation, there are also proofs for different ones – meaning mostly the criticism of the present-day society. The overall purpose, then, was to present to the reader the social and political issues the author despised, be it of the societies long gone, or the contemporary America, Victorian England, or any other country of that time holding similar values. The author fought frequently throughout his whole life against the aristocratic establishment, corrupt politicians and the abuse of the working men, and most of these topics he managed to depict in his *Connecticut Yankee*. The

book is dealing with a political and social criticism targeted at various issues and this thesis is focused on their analysis.

On the following pages of this paper, the reader will find an explanation of the terms political and social satire. The purpose of this chapter is to define what satire is, what types of satire can be found in this paper, their description, usage, and origin, too. Satiric comments represent one of Twain's most frequently used literary tools, and that is why a detailed explanation of such terms is needed, as I will be using them throughout the whole paper.

The second chapter aims to introduce the life of the author himself to the reader. The importance of this part is to provide the context and the relations of Twain's personal life and his literary works, as the author used his childhood memories, actual individuals, and his own experiences as an inspiration for the characters, situations, and settings he portrayed in his stories. His professional life serves as a guide to Twain's background, skills and interests, and at the end of this chapter, some of the values and ideals he held during his lifetime are revealed to support the various views on the *Connecticut Yankee's* criticism characterized in the following section.

The focus of the third part of this paper is to provide the reader with the publishing and background information about the book itself, specifying the style of the narrative, the literary tools and elements used, the tone of the story, and many other details concerning the composition of the *Connecticut Yankee*. Following this, the reader will find a description of the various impulses that served as an inspiration for the story, and along with it, the diverse views of critics on what the book's main purpose is. For a better understanding of the following analysis, a characterization of the main figures is included, among which the most important is, of course, Hank Morgan, the central character of the narrative. After providing all the above information, I begin my analysis first of the political, and then of the social criticism, be it concerned with the historical, or modern-day issues, and I will give concrete examples from the text to each of the critical interpretations mentioned previously in this chapter.

At the very end of this thesis, the reader will find a conclusion summarizing the findings collected throughout the whole thesis and my personal opinions on each critical perception of the book, and the main character, too. This part of the paper is enclosed by the final definition of the impression the *Yankee of the Yankees* left in my mind.

# 1. Satire

While the exact words of the definition of the term vary from dictionary to dictionary, the meaning remains the same. According to the Oxford dictionary, satire is a way of using humor, irony, sarcasm and ridicule to point out weaknesses or folly of a person, an idea, or a kind of behavior.<sup>1</sup> This term also stands for literary works, such as novels, plays, poetry or prose that use this kind of humor and critique. Even though satire is not limited to any particular type of literature, in the modern world it appears mostly in the form of novels.<sup>2</sup> Satire cannot be seen only in literary works, it is a style of a mocking spirit or tone that can exist in almost any kind of human communication.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, however, I will almost exclusively focus only on the literary form of satire.

These literary genres use laughter as a kind of a weapon targeted against anything the author considers silly, vicious or foolish. Given this, it could be said that satire is in a way an attack on someone or something ameliorated by the element of play and fun.<sup>4</sup> This amelioration may appear to work as intended only for the audience – who is meant to find the satiric disagreement more tolerable and entertaining thanks to this factor. On the other hand, as a specialist in eighteenth-century British literature Charles A. Knight specifies, this element of play may make the satiric statements appear worse from the victim's point of view, as being mocked may become more stressful than simply being disagreed with.<sup>5</sup> Satirists mostly use this “weapon” in an attempt to correct the injustices and restore the morals of the society.<sup>6</sup>

Satire has its certain characteristic features, as we find in the book from a teacher of the humanities in the United States – Gilbert Highet. It is usually written in bold and vivid language of that time and satirists tend to use as least convention as possible, but the maximum of reality of the situation. Satire tends to be more free, easy and direct than other literal genres or patterns.<sup>7</sup> Highet goes on by stating that “(satire) is topical; it claims to be realistic (although it is usually exaggerated or distorted); it is shocking; it is informal; and

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<sup>1</sup> Janet Phillips et al., *Oxford studijni slovník* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 678.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Hall, „The Satiric Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests and Disorders“, *European Journal of International Relations* 20 (2014): 222, accessed December 12, 2016. doi: 10.1177/1354066112445187.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Kuiper, *Prose: Literary Terms and Concepts* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2012), 164.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Quinn, *A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms, Second Edition* (New York: Facts On File, 2006) 374.

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, „The Satiric Vision of Politics“, 222.

<sup>7</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), 3.

(although often in a grotesque or painful manner) it is funny.”<sup>8</sup> One of the typical forms of satire is a monologue, spoken by one man without an interruption.<sup>9</sup> In some satiric works (i. e. Voltaire’s *Candide*), logic and system may never appear – the events happen without any pattern, which is reflecting the idea that a certain design in real life does not exist. On the pages of a satiric fiction, regarding this fact, anything can happen at any moment without any previous sign.<sup>10</sup> In terms of usage in literary works, there are two main types of satire – direct and indirect. With the direct type of satire, the narrator tends to speak straight to the reader and the criticism is immediately observable, on the other hand, the indirect one represents the critical comments hidden within the text of the narrative.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, I will not only work with the word satire as such, but also with political and social satire. Social satire is a humorous criticism based on pointing out follies of a single person or a group of people, their behavior or characteristics. It makes fun of the society and its cultural stereotypes. The beginnings of social satires date all the way back to ancient Greece and Rome. The very first Greek satirist is said to be the poet Archilochus, who lived in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Before the Common Era.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the term “satire”, as we know it, first appeared and was used by the ancient Romans, as the Greeks did not have a specific word for this kind of literature. Therefore, one of the Roman rhetoricians Quintilian stated “satura tota nostra est”, which in translation means “satire is wholly our own”.<sup>13</sup> He claims satire to be an exclusively Roman phenomenon, even though he knew about and read the satiric pieces of literature written by the Greeks.<sup>14</sup> Since then, the satire gained its popularity both, among the writers and the readers, and thus remained present and favored throughout the whole history of literature until the present.

The term political satire, as the words reveal, deals with the situation among the politics and the system of laws in a concrete country or generally, all around the world. It is intended to examine and expose the corruption, absurdity, and hypocrisy of politicians or the members of the aristocracy in history. Political satire is not, as someone might think, linked or connected to any concrete political ideology – it can be written by radicals, conservatives,

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<sup>8</sup> Hightet, *Anatomy of Satire*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Hightet, *Anatomy of Satire*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Hightet, *Anatomy of Satire*, 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Kuiper, *Literary Terms and Concepts*, 164.

<sup>12</sup> Kuiper, *Literary Terms and Concepts*, 169.

<sup>13</sup> Kuiper, *Literary Terms and Concepts*, 165.

<sup>14</sup> Kuiper, *Literary Terms and Concepts*, 165.

liberals or socialists. Political satires are mostly used to draw attention to a variety of moral rules, corruption or injustices. On the other hand, writing a political satire requires knowledge of political and moral rules, belief that they are important and that they matter and that these rules and social values should be followed at all times.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hall, „The Satiric Vision of Politics“, 229.

## 2. Mark Twain

Mark Twain is a mere pen name of a famous American writer of the second half of the nineteenth century, but throughout my work, I will refer to the writer only by this nom de plume he used in his writing. Mark Twain was born as Samuel Langhorne Clemens, the sixth child of John Marshall and Jane Lampton Clemens, on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri. He was named Samuel after his grandfather Samuel B. Clemens and Langhorne after a close family friend from Virginia.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his childhood years, the Clemens family moved several times and the places young Twain visited, the people he met and the situations he went through, were later portrayed into some of his works. On the other hand, the fact that he used a lot of his actual experiences and even his own persona in his writing should not mislead us to read his works as autobiographies, as he often changed significant elements of reality.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, these changes were made completely intentionally and willingly, other times, it was a product of his idealizing tendencies powered by connecting the places with happy childhood memories.<sup>18</sup> We can see this in, for example, the fictional St. Petersburg in two of his best-known books – *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and later *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It is basically depicting Hannibal, a larger town located on the Mississippi River, where the family moved shortly after he turned four. However, it is not a quite realistic picture of Hannibal, as its key characteristics are also mixed up with elements of Florida, where he occasionally lived on his uncle's farm.<sup>19</sup> The very same farm, concretely its surroundings, can be also seen in his description of the innocent picturesque landscape of the Arthurian Britain in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.<sup>20</sup> His uncle John Quarles and his mother both served as a huge inspiration for several of Twain's fictional characters, which he described quite affectionately as very kind, friendly and warm-hearted.<sup>21</sup> Tom Sawyer himself is kind of a reflection of Twain's youth, with only a few major differences, as for example in Tom Sawyer

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<sup>16</sup> R. Kent Rasmussen, *Critical Companion to Mark Twain: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts On File, 2007), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Gray and Owen Robinson, *A Companion to The Literature and Culture of the American South* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 389.

<sup>19</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Mark Twain's Fable of Progress: Political and Economic Ideas in "A Connecticut Yankee"* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 412.

<sup>21</sup> Gray and Robinson, *American South*, 389.

being an orphan. Hank Morgan, the main character of the *Connecticut Yankee*, is also oftentimes seen as a character based on the author's personality, but as I will explain later, Hank too is in certain ways very different from his creator. Other characters populating these and other Twain's books are also modeled on, or strongly inspired by, his family members or childhood friends and acquaintances.<sup>22</sup>

Twain's somewhat rich and diverse work life began quite early, at the very young age of about thirteen. After the death of his father, the family was under an immense financial pressure and he had to start working. His first full-time job was as an apprentice in the printing office of Joseph Ament's *Missouri Courier* and later as a printer and general assistant for his eldest brother Orion, who was running the *Hannibal Journal*. Even though Twain's time of working for Orion was quite short, this job had a crucial impact on his further development, as his position offered him a great deal of literary experience,<sup>23</sup> and what is more, he had a chance to publish some of his earliest writings there.<sup>24</sup> Twain sensed his chances of becoming successful in Hannibal are relatively low and that led him to leaving the town and seeking new opportunities.<sup>25</sup> Since then he worked at several other printing offices and wrote some more humorous sketches, but still, his ambitions were not quite met. Twain later became interested in exploring the upper reaches of the Amazon River and started his journey on a steamboat. He was amazed by the glamour of the steamboats and strongly admired the authority of its pilots. That is why he desired to be one. He officially became a licensed steamboat pilot in 1859 and for the next two years, he was enjoying a generous income.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, the peaceful days of piloting a steamboat were interrupted by the outbreak of the Civil War, which stopped the river traffic. During the Civil War, Twain shortly joined the Confederates, presumably only because of his "regional heritage"<sup>27</sup>, but he eventually left to work for his brother Orion again, this time as a secretary to the Secretary of the Nevada Territory.<sup>28</sup> Since then he tried several other jobs, but he always kept returning to writing. He started writing travel letters to newspapers and several of them caught the attention of the editor of the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, who offered him a position

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<sup>22</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Messent, *The Cambridge Introduction to Mark Twain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Messent, *Cambridge Introduction*, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> L. David Allen and James L. Roberts, *Cliffs notes on Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (New York: Hungry Minds, 2003), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Gray and Robinson, *American South*, 390-391.

among their writers. Twain accepted the offer in 1862 and that was the start of Twain's career as a newspaper reporter. Not long after that, he used the pen name Mark Twain for the very first time.<sup>29</sup> Twain wrote for many different newspapers over a number of years, but he never stayed just at that. He also devoted many of his adulthood years to lecturing basically all around the world, mostly on the subject of Hawaii that he visited in 1866. Throughout the years, Mark Twain earned a reputation of a lecturer, popular humorist and his travel letters and sketches were widely reprinted. But it was not until the November 1867 that he got an offer to write a travel book. His first published book was *The Innocents Abroad* (1869)<sup>30</sup> and since then he was known also as a literary author, who later published many more well-accepted fictional and non-fictional books.

By the end of his life in 1910 – and long after his death, too – Mark Twain was by many honored as a “moral philosopher”, “social reformer”, or “social critic”.<sup>31</sup> The reason for this was that he mostly used his writing skills for the purpose of criticism, and throughout his life, he managed to comment on a vast number of various issues. One of the things he despised the most was the idea of monarchy. In a letter to Sylvester Baxter, an American poet and a newspaper writer, written on November 20, 1889, for example, Mark Twain expressed his delight concerning the downfall of the Brazilian monarchy<sup>32</sup>: “Another throne has gone down, and I swim in oceans of satisfaction. I wish I might live fifty years longer; I believe I should see the thrones of Europe selling at auction for old iron. I believe I should really see the end of what is surely the grotesqueness of all the swindles ever invented by man – monarchy.”<sup>33</sup> This disdain of monarchy, along with his support of the working people, shows us his own idea of Utopia. The world of pure democracy and equality<sup>34</sup> where there is no room for hypocrisy and pretense, and hard work and practicality are valued above any unearned personal status.<sup>35</sup> Twain highly despised human greed, which he also addressed frequently in his writings, and above all, he was very skeptical towards religion. His anti-Catholic ideas occupy, more than noticeably, the *Connecticut Yankee*, where the Established Church is shown as a controlling

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<sup>29</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 6-7.

<sup>31</sup> Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 197.

<sup>32</sup> Everett Carter, „The Meaning of A Connecticut Yankee“, *American Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (1978). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 441.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Letters*, edit. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York: Harper, 1917). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 302.

<sup>34</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 197.

<sup>35</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 210.



force over the whole nation, and what is more, as the main reason for the backwardness and ignorance of the people.<sup>36</sup> An Established Church was not only by Mark Twain, but also by other writers and philosophers seen as more of a political than spiritual force.<sup>37</sup> As such, its criticism was frequently present in Twain's writing, for he enjoyed commenting on all sorts of political injustices. Concerning the nineteenth-century political situation, he was outraged by the working system of the American jurisdiction. In his opinion, "the jury system had outlived its usefulness"<sup>38</sup> and there were no longer any honorable intelligent men involved.<sup>39</sup> Another one of the issues he oftentimes commented on was the destructive force of colonialism, as I will explain in more detail in the following chapter of this thesis. Twain railed against imperialism in his speeches, notebook entries, and all sorts of other writing, and in the end, for these views and frequent criticism, he was referred to as "the most influential anti-imperialist ... that the country contains."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 64.

<sup>37</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 35.

<sup>38</sup> Evelyn L. Harrison, "Mark Twain as a Social Critic" (M.A. thesis, University of North Texas, 1944), 25.

<sup>39</sup> Harrison, "Social Critic", 25.

<sup>40</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 241.

### 3. Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court

*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* was first officially published in 1889 and even though Twain was, shortly after publishing the novel, accused by Charles Heber Clark of plagiarizing the story from his work written nearly a decade earlier, the *Connecticut Yankee* became quite popular among the general public.<sup>41</sup> This novel follows Twain's typical model of writing, and thus, it is episodic – it consists of a sequence of confrontations between Hank Morgan, the main character, and the inhabitants of the Arthurian England.<sup>42</sup> It is a satirical book filled with indirect satire targeted almost exclusively at political and social topics. This novel is a work of fiction, and moreover, it is considered to be one of the pioneering pieces of the science-fiction genre, given the element of the time-travel.<sup>43</sup> As such, it is considered to be a powerful foundation stone for the genre of science-fiction mainly because the author plays with the idea of what might be the consequence of bringing modern technology and advanced political ideas into the simple and innocent times of the sixth century England.<sup>44</sup> This factor also results in the main source for the humor in the novel, as the comical elements of this book are based on anachronism<sup>45</sup> – which is, according to the Oxford dictionary, “something that does not belong in the period of history in which it appears”.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the book's comical elements and the use of satire should not mislead us to read it as a light-toned humorous story. Beneath the comical surface of the narrative, there is hidden a severe violence, destruction and Hank's, in some critics point of view, personality and ideas of a dictator.<sup>47</sup> The language, used mostly in the speeches of the Arthurian population, is highly archaic. Considering historical facts, the language used serves as a mere literary decoration, borrowed from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and other legends about the King Arthur, as the modern English language actually did not exist until the eleventh century.<sup>48</sup> According to Baxter: “The quaint early English speech is handled with ... artistic skill ..., and the constant admixture of a concisely expressive American vernacular thereto makes a

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<sup>41</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 74-75.

<sup>42</sup> Chadwick Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss: Mark Twain's Yankee“, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1973): 63, accessed May 25, 2016, doi: 10.2307/2933153.

<sup>43</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 873.

<sup>45</sup> Messent, *Cambridge Introduction*, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Phillips et al., *Oxford studijni slovník*, 29.

<sup>47</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 66-7.

<sup>48</sup> R. Kent Rasmussen, *Bloom's How to Write about Mark Twain* (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2008), 183-4.

contrast of lingual coloring that is unspeakably delightful.”<sup>49</sup> As mentioned by Baxter, Hank’s language is filled with vernacular, and also some slang expressions, too. According to Baxter, the book’s language is a reflection of the language of the legends and chronicles, and therefore it does not mind that it is not historically accurate.<sup>50</sup> The book is written in the first person narrative as a story of a man travelling from the nineteenth to the sixth century within a frame set in England in around 1889. The frame narrator – used to separate Mark Twain’s own personality from the figure of Hank Morgan<sup>51</sup> – is on a tour in Warwick Castle in England. There, he meets a quite curious stranger with whom he eventually begins a conversation. The stranger, Hank Morgan, begins his narration orally, but then grows too tired and leaves the narrator with a manuscript of the whole story. The frame-narrator then spends the whole night reading the manuscript, which serves as the core of the book – chapters one to forty-three. The reader gets back into the nineteenth century only at the very end, in the last few paragraphs of the chapter forty-four, when the frame-narrator finishes reading the manuscript and arrives to Hank’s room just in time to hear his last words and see him pass away.<sup>52</sup>

The tone and seriousness of the situations portrayed in the book change quite significantly and often rather suddenly – one scene is light-toned and humorous, and the following one shows the cruelty and heartlessness of the characters. For example, in the castle of Morgan le Fay, there is a moment, when Hank is terrified by the Queen cold-bloodedly killing a young page for a trivial reason, and only a few pages later, Hank, calmly and with no obvious moral battle, lets Morgan le Fay hang not only the music composer, as she first intended, but the entire band, simply because their musical performance was bad.<sup>53</sup> Another example comes at the very end of the book. After Hank returns to Camelot struck by the Church’s Interdict, he finds Clarence, who tells him the story of what happened while he was gone. Clarence in his report lists all the knights killed in the war between the King and Sir Launcelot. Hank is truly saddened by the news and as Clarence continues with his list, he cries out: “Oh, you tear out my heartstrings. ... My peerless short-stop! ... Come, I can’t stand this!”<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, in the duel with Sir Sagramor, Hank kills his opponent and nine

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<sup>49</sup> Sylvester Baxter, „Nothing More Delicious,“ *Sunday Herald* 17 (1889). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 321.

<sup>50</sup> Baxter, „Nothing More Delicious“, 322.

<sup>51</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 69.

<sup>52</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 91.

<sup>53</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 360.

other knights, regardless who they are, and later, in the Battle of the Sand Belt, he kills twenty-five thousand knights, among whom undoubtedly were many of his friends and knights who saved him from being hanged, without a blink of an eye or a single thought of doubt.<sup>55</sup> These sudden changes in tone, along with some other contradictions of the story, resulted in this book being referred to, by some critics, as “Twain’s most magnificent failure”.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, for many other critics, these contradictions are “in fact, a necessary consequence of the Yankee’s mental processes, and thus an integral part of his character”<sup>57</sup> and that is why it is celebrated and considered to be one of Twain’s “most complex and ambitious novels.”<sup>58</sup>

The original thought for writing this book emerged from Twain’s visit to Hawaii.<sup>59</sup> In 1866, he arrived to Honolulu in order to write travel letters<sup>60</sup> and reports on the business opportunities available in Hawaii for the *Sacramento Union*.<sup>61</sup> At first, he intended his stay there to be brief, but eventually, he found the islands to be so harmonious that he decided to stay for four months.<sup>62</sup> From the works and diaries he wrote during his stay, we may get the grasp of his opinion on the place and the society he encountered.<sup>63</sup> He was fascinated by the Hawaiian traditional social and political system and compared it to European medieval feudalism.<sup>64</sup> That is, presumably, why the first evidences of his views concerning this matter may be understood in the way that he saw missionary and civilizing efforts as a righteous deed done for the good of the inhabitants.<sup>65</sup> As we can find in an article from Jennifer A. O’Neill, a member of Iowa State University’s Creative Writing and Environment program, in a citation from one of Twain’s diary entries, concretely dated to the third day of his stay in Hawaii, he states:

The missionaries have clothed them, educated them, broken up the tyrannous authority of their chiefs, and given them freedom and the right to enjoy whatever their hands and brains produce, with equal laws for all, and punishment for all

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<sup>55</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 59.

<sup>56</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 26-27.

<sup>57</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 70.

<sup>58</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 59.

<sup>59</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 74.

<sup>60</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 722.

<sup>61</sup> Jennifer A. O’Neill, „Twain’s A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court and U.S. Imperialism“, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.3 (2007): 3, accessed January 25, 2016, doi: 10.7771/1481-4374.1224

<sup>62</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 722.

<sup>63</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 723.

<sup>65</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 3.

alike who transgress them. The contrast is so strong – the benefit conferred upon this people by the missionaries is so prominent, so palpable, and so unquestionable, that the frankest compliment I could pay them, and the best, is simply to point to the condition of the Sandwich-Islanders of Captain Cook’s time, and their condition to-day. Their work speaks for itself.<sup>66</sup>

However, although Twain’s views concerning expansion seemed to be positive at first, it did not take long for him to change his opinion. Later on, not even after a year of contemplating his visits on the islands, he began fighting against the annexation of Hawaii, which can be seen in his two letters submitted to the *New York Tribune*.<sup>67</sup> Since then he remained a strong anti-imperialist and his hostility towards this issue filled his work and speeches for the rest of his life, until he died in 1910.<sup>68</sup>

Twain’s mind inspired by the Hawaiian elements of feudalism and the local underdeveloped society started to form an image of a new story. He began writing a book dealing with these topics in 1884, but eventually abandoned the idea.<sup>69</sup> Later, he travelled several times to England, which triggered his mind with another inspiration, this time for a medieval England as a setting for his tale.<sup>70</sup> But the most important stimulus that eventually started his writing of the *Connecticut Yankee* was when he received a copy of Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* in December 1884 from George Washington Cable.<sup>71</sup> When Cable found out about Twain’s obsession with the romance, he immediately thought that the story will sooner or later “bear fruit in the brain of Mark Twain”.<sup>72</sup> Twain was so charmed by Malory’s work that he repeatedly referred to him as one of the supreme writers of the English language and desired to create an Arthurian piece of literature of his own.<sup>73</sup> Twain’s fascination with the book is visible in the *Connecticut Yankee*. A whole tale about Sir Launcelot slaying two giants is in the first chapter of the novel, when the narrator reads Malory’s book, and also, there are a few paraphrases of the tales in Sandy’s recitations to the Yankee on their adventure.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 3.

<sup>67</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 3.

<sup>68</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 229.

<sup>69</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 723.

<sup>70</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 74.

<sup>71</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 74.

<sup>72</sup> Arlin Turner, *Mark Twain and George W. Cable* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 291.

<sup>73</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 772.

<sup>74</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 772.

As I will explore in this part of the paper, there are many different interpretations of what the book criticizes. For some it is a book criticizing feudal laws and monarchy, and for others, there is a clear criticism of the society of to-day. Each interpretation has its proofs and I will try to describe them. One of the interpretations is that the book is an attack on the English past. There are evidences that approve and disapprove of this reading. It is supported by the fact that Twain himself stated in his autobiography that his purpose was to contrast the life in England during the Middle Ages with that of a modern civilization – “to the advantage of the latter, of course.”<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, the author himself wrote in the preface that he is not trying to pretend that these laws and practices actually did exist in the sixth century Arthurian England, but that because they quite clearly did exist in other institutions of much later times, he considers it safe to portray them into the historical times of the King Arthur’s Court. Twain continues: “One is quite justified in inferring that whatever one of these laws or customs was lacking in that remote time, its place was competently filled by a worse one.”<sup>76</sup> This preface, therefore, could be interpreted in the way that the laws of the sixth century were nearly not as horrifying as some that came much later, and moreover, some that still exist. As an evidence to this can serve a passage from his autobiography:

The conditions under which the poor lived in the Middle Ages were hard enough, but those conditions were heaven itself as compared with those which have obtained in the Congo State for these past fourteen years. ... Cruel and pitiful as was life throughout Christendom in the Middle Ages, it was not as cruel, not as pitiful, as is life in Russia today. ... Russia is way back of the Middle Ages; the Middle Ages are a long way in front of her and she is not likely to catch up with them so long as the Czardom continues to exist.<sup>77</sup>

In the time of the *Connecticut Yankee*’s publication, most of the readers saw the book as a severe criticism on the past political establishments and an attempt to show that the nineteenth century America of advanced knowledge and technical improvements is a kind of a promised land. Hank, for these readers, was a praiseworthy man with a golden heart, whose intentions were righteous and for the good of the society he encountered. Critics with this point of view are called “hard” in an article from Everett Carter, a University professor and a scholar of nineteenth-century American Literature.<sup>78</sup> In the group of the “hard” critics can be

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<sup>75</sup> Mark Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, ed. Charles Neider (New York: Harper, 1959). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 304-5.

<sup>76</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Twain, *Autobiography*, 304.

<sup>78</sup> Carter, „The Meaning“, 434-5.

found for example Kenneth R. Andrews, who views the novel as Twain's enthusiastic approval of the contemporary society.<sup>79</sup> As mentioned, the author stated that this book was meant to be a contrast of the past and the modern civilization. Concerning this juxtaposition, the reader can unmistakably see the horrors of living in the sixth century in comparison to the advanced and technical age from which Hank arrives. However, some critics observed that as the book develops, it becomes clearer that the nineteenth century does share a lot of the Arthurian deficiencies, and actually bears the burden of many others of its own.<sup>80</sup> These readers, mostly from about the second half of the twentieth century, saw the book as an attack on American imperialism, destroying underdeveloped countries, and also as a kind of a warning about the power of technical progress. For them, Hank is either a "well-meaning fool"<sup>81</sup> or a power-thirsty villain obsessed with technology. Carter called these critics "soft".<sup>82</sup> The criticism of the American imperialism and the destructive and narrow-minded means of establishing democracy is represented very well by the devastating outcomes of Hank's technological improvements to the innocent Arthurian society, and also of his ultimate political revolution. We can find an accurate summary of Hank's gradual change, from a humanitarian to a villain, in a book from Peter Messent, a professor at the University of Nottingham:

His role as the technocrat hero who fosters and celebrates American democratic values fades as, instead, he becomes the agent of colonialist rule who imposes his authority and value-system on the mass of the population by increasingly brutal means. As this occurs, his technological abilities become cause for abhorrence rather than admiration, especially in the concluding Battle of the Sand-Belt scenes.<sup>83</sup>

For one of the "soft" critics – Henry Nash Smith, a scholar of American culture and literature and a literary author – this book was not about the past at all. Nash saw the novel as "the most urgently focused on the state of the nation and of the world at the moment of writing."<sup>84</sup> Nash continues with the idea that the medieval setting of the novel serves as a mere background for the purpose of allowing "a nineteenth century American industrial

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<sup>79</sup> Kenneth S. Lynn, *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 383.

<sup>80</sup> Peter Messent and Louis J. Budd, *A Companion to Mark Twain* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 416.

<sup>81</sup> Carter, „The Meaning“, 443.

<sup>82</sup> Carter, „The Meaning“, 434-5.

<sup>83</sup> Messent, *Cambridge Introduction*, 93.

<sup>84</sup> Messent and Budd, *Companion to Mark Twain*, 417.

genius to show what he can do with an underdeveloped country.”<sup>85</sup> This is supported by Hank Morgan himself, when he says: “My works showed what a despot could do with the resources of a kingdom at his command. Unsuspected by this dark land, I had the civilization of the nineteenth century booming under its very nose!”<sup>86</sup> In contradiction to this, the “hard” critics use as evidence Mark Twain’s speeches and notebook entries, in which he celebrates the society of the nineteenth century, civilization and technology in general. In a summary of the plot for the *Century Magazine*, Twain wrote: “Meantime, the Yankee is very busy; for he has privately set himself the task of introducing the great and beneficent civilization of the nineteenth century, and of peacefully replacing the twin despotism of royalty and aristocratic privilege with a “Republic on the American plan.”<sup>87</sup> This seems to be a quite strong argument in favor of the “hard” critics’ interpretation, but on the other hand, Twain was a satirist and in some of his works it was hard to determine whether he writes seriously, or satirically. In regard to this, one may find a similarity of the above citation with a part of Twain’s second letter to the *Tribune* concerning the issue of annexation of Hawaii: “We *must* annex those people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government.”<sup>88</sup> In the end, the fact is, as I previously mentioned, that at the end of the nineteenth century, Twain became more and more sceptic of the American imperialism and criticized violence accompanying it.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, this book can be seen as one of his weapons against such issues. As stated John B. Hoben, it is undeniable that Twain preferred the nineteenth century over the sixth, but at the same time, he was well aware of the flaws and imperfections of the age he lived in.<sup>90</sup> With this in mind, I will later in this paper give examples of both, the criticism of the sixth and the nineteenth century, too.

### 3.1. Description of characters

Hank Morgan, the central male character of the novel, is by many critiques considered to be one of Twain’s most complex characters. It is a fictional figure, but his personal traits, ideas and characteristics are partially based on Mark Twain himself, and many of Twain’s

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<sup>85</sup> Messent and Budd, *Companion to Mark Twain*, 417.

<sup>86</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 72.

<sup>87</sup> Carter, „The Meaning“, 442.

<sup>88</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 232.

<sup>89</sup> Messent, *Cambridge Introduction*, 11.

<sup>90</sup> John B. Hoben, “Mark Twain’s *Connecticut Yankee*: A Genetic Study,” *American Literature*, 18 (1946). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 341.



previous book characters.<sup>91</sup> Even though Hank shares some of the author's ideals, Twain does not want to be associated with this character, and that is why he himself stands in the book as the frame-narrator. Moreover, he wrote to the illustrator of the book, Daniel Carter Beard, that the Yankee is an ignoramus. He gave the illustrator the following description: "He is a common, uneducated man. ... he can make a Colt's revolver or Remington gun – but he's a perfect ignoramus. He ... can survey land and run a locomotive; in other words he has neither the refinement nor the weakness of a college education."<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, in spite of considering Hank to be an ignoramus, the author was quite fond of him, too. When Howard Taylor recreated the novel for the stage, Twain wrote to his wife: "... he has captured but one side of the Yankee's character – his rude animal side, his circus side; the good heart & the high intent are left out of him ... I told Taylor he had degraded a natural gentleman to a low-down blackguard."<sup>93</sup> Hank is a "Yankee of the Yankees"<sup>94</sup>, as he describes himself at the beginning of the story. He is a practical and unsentimental American, born in Hartford, Connecticut, "around 1849"<sup>95</sup>, as a son of a blacksmith. He is about 30 years old when he arrives to Camelot, and presumably, he is of robust figure. Hints in the story reveal, that he probably travelled a lot, before getting to Camelot, and had a wide knowledge of literature and history, too.<sup>96</sup> He says he gained a lot of skills from his father and his uncle, who was a horse doctor,<sup>97</sup> but he "learned (his) real trade"<sup>98</sup> only after he went to the "Colt Arms Factory".<sup>99</sup> There, he learned how to make basically any type of machinery a person could ever want – guns, revolvers, engines and all sort of other machines or gadgets. He goes on by saying that if there was not an easy way to make something, he could invent one quite easily.<sup>100</sup> The reader finds Hank's description of his skills and practicality to be true quite quickly, just at the beginning of Hank's "Boss-ship".<sup>101</sup> After being appointed the King's minister, Hank begins to notice the inconveniences this age bears for a nineteenth-century technical man. He found out that these people have no soap, matches, gas, or candles, and there is no looking-glass. The list continues: "There were no books, pens, paper or ink, and no

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<sup>91</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 91.

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in "Mark Twain, the Man, as Dan Beard Knew," *San Francisco Examiner*, April 25, 1910. In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 309.

<sup>93</sup> Carter, „The Meaning“, 437.

<sup>94</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 10.

<sup>95</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 91-92.

<sup>97</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 9-10.

<sup>98</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 266.

<sup>100</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 10.

<sup>101</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 99.

glass in the openings they believed to be windows. ... But perhaps the worst of all was, that there wasn't any sugar, coffee, tea, or tobacco."<sup>102</sup> Because of this, Hank felt like a second Robinson Crusoe and compared the Arthurian England to "an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals".<sup>103</sup> He realized quite quickly that if he wants to have all the conveniences he had in his century, he would have to invent them all, create them on his own and reorganize the whole nation.<sup>104</sup> As we can see, Hank is simply a man who knows exactly from the very beginning what he wants and he is sure he will get it.<sup>105</sup> Hank is a very ambitious man and it is visible just from the very beginning. Even though Hank is still not fully convinced he really appeared in the age of King Arthur, he immediately comes up with the idea that his intellectual superiority can actually improve the society, culture and the living standards of the people.<sup>106</sup>

Hank cherishes typical contemporary American values, he is "passionately devoted to general ideas such as progress, civilization, justice, equality before the law, universal suffrage, representative government, free trade, and separation of church and state."<sup>107</sup> He believes in democracy and cannot stand the sight of the whole nation accepting an "unearned supremacy".<sup>108</sup> That is why his greatest goals are to undermine and eventually destroy the knighthood and aristocracy and proclaim a republic. Step by step he slowly achieves these goals, but when we take a closer look at the ways he uses to fulfill his ambitions, he mostly uses secrecy, conspiracy and takes advantage of the simplicity of the minds of the Arthurian Englishmen. Moreover, his enormous power was established on frightening and terrifying the people more than on earning their trust and respect.<sup>109</sup> Hank makes fun of the irrationality of these people and wants to release them from their superstitious beliefs, yet the way he established his power only deepens these beliefs.<sup>110</sup> As we can find in an article from a professor at the University of Illinois and a literary author Chadwick Hansen: "One is forced to the conclusion that he is disgusted at the sight of people deluded by medieval beliefs but delighted at the sight of people deluded by himself."<sup>111</sup> Anyway, even with all this in mind, Hank's actions towards improving the living standards of the sixth century English nation

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<sup>102</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 49-50.

<sup>103</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 50.

<sup>104</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 50.

<sup>105</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 62.

<sup>106</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 75.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *Fable of Progress*, 409.

<sup>108</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 62.

<sup>109</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 76.

<sup>110</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 24.

<sup>111</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 65.

may seem justified and positive at first to the reader. All in all, from his point of view, he really did do all the things in order to help the Englishmen. That, and several other reasons, is why some critics consider Hank to be a humanitarian. He shows us that he cares for the people, weeps for them, is moved by their tragic stories and tries to make their lives better. On the other hand, after a closer examination of his true deeds, we can see that the humanitarianism Hank presents to us is only at the outer layer of his personality and that his real characteristics include for example the enjoyment of the spectacle of thousands of people terrified by his powers.<sup>112</sup>

The second most frequently appearing character, is King Arthur. This figure is based on the English legend about the fearless and wise ruler of the medieval England who received a magical sword Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake.<sup>113</sup> But even though the character is inspired by the heroic legends and other literary pieces about this persona, Twain's portrayal of this figure is quite different. King Arthur is usually portrayed as a courageous, noble and generous man of high wisdom and intelligence. In the *Connecticut Yankee*, the King is partly shown as a dimwitted and gullible man, afraid of anything unknown and insensitive to his subjects' well-being.<sup>114</sup> We can see this just after Hank is thrown into the prison with the unpleasant vision of being burned at stake the next day. In the prison, Hank finds out how credulous these people are after Clarence tells him about the spells Merlin casted upon the dungeons. Hank then sends a message to the King that he is a great magician himself and he will bring a terrible tragedy upon the whole kingdom if not released on the instant. After the King receives the news he immediately wants to release Hank and clothe him as a prince. It never even came to his mind that the person could be lying and that he might need a proof of these words. Moreover, when Merlin points out that Hank might be a fraud, Arthur does not want to listen to him and they argue.<sup>115</sup> In this, we can see that Mark Twain created a version of King Arthur that is quite naive and not very bright. Anyway, this is not the final picture of Arthur the readers get in the story.

On the contrary to Hank's hatred of the ruling system of monarchy, Hank actually grows to adore Arthur as an individual of a highly noble character.<sup>116</sup> After Hank gets to know the King a bit more, he states: "Well, I liked the king, and as king I respected him – respected the

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<sup>112</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 64.

<sup>113</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 82.

<sup>114</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 82.

<sup>115</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 36-38.

<sup>116</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 44.

office; at least respected it as much as I was capable of respecting any unearned supremacy; but as MEN I looked down upon him and his nobles...”<sup>117</sup> He respected what the King represents, but he simply could not get over his ideals and values. Even though they have very different opinions on certain problems throughout the whole story, Hank and Arthur actually become somewhat close and we eventually get to see more of Hank’s positive views of the King and less of the negative ones. For example, in chapter twenty-nine, we receive somewhat glorious and a very human picture of Arthur. When Hank and the King travel together in disguise through the kingdom, they arrive to a little hut, where a poverty-stricken family is dying of smallpox. Even though Hank warned the King and begged him not to enter the house, fearing for the King’s life, Arthur is not frightened by the disease. He told Hank that it would be shame that a king should know fear of any kind, and in addition, he later carries a dying young girl in his arms to her yet living mother, so she can see her child for the last time.<sup>118</sup> In Hank’s eyes, this was the greatest proof of the King’s heroism – he carried death in his arms, unarmed and with no spectators or no reward.<sup>119</sup> Hank immediately thinks: “He was great now; sublimely great.”<sup>120</sup> Later in the narrative, Hank says about Arthur that he had “a heart that isn’t capable of thinking evil of a friend”,<sup>121</sup> regarding the fact that the King was the last person in Camelot who did not know about the affair of Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot. Towards the end of the story we can see that Hank really liked the King, as he grows sad when he hears about his death. Overall, Arthur is described in a several different ways throughout the whole story. He is a naive and highly superstitious man who believes almost anything anyone tells him, but on the other hand, he shows his intelligence in some situations in the story. He supports slavery and the idea that people without an inborn title are of a less value, but on the other hand, he risks his own life in order to let a poor mother see her dying child in their last hour. As cited above, Hank begun the relationship with Arthur with a respect for the King’s office, but not for him as a man. Throughout the book, though, their relationship changes and particularly after Arthur’s heroic deed in the smallpox hut, he begins to admire him as a man too.<sup>122</sup>

Other, what we might call, important characters of the book include Hank’s companion Clarence, the court sorcerer Marlin and a lady Hank eventually marries – Sandy. Clarence, a

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<sup>117</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 62.

<sup>118</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 246-8.

<sup>119</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 248.

<sup>120</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 248.

<sup>121</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 359.

<sup>122</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 83.

young page serving Sir Kay the Seneschal, is probably one of the most important minor characters in terms of the plot of the story. He joins the Yankee just at the very beginning of the book and Hank describes him as a very slim boy with long blond curly hair.<sup>123</sup> Clarence is a cheerful and curious lad who is quite talkative and interested in the odd-looking figure Hank certainly represents in the English medieval court. The Yankee immediately called him Clarence, without ever asking his true name, after they began their talk and kept it this way until the only time in the whole narrative, concretely at the end of the chapter thirteen, when he mentions his real name – Amyas le Poulet.<sup>124</sup> Clarence, being young and adaptive fellow, quite quickly accepts all Hank's teachings, including his nineteenth century values, ideas and technical knowledge, too. Thus, by the end of the story, Clarence can be seen as more of a modern than medieval man. He is Hank's right hand and helps him with all his plans and actions. The Yankee trained Clarence to write and edit the court newspaper, the *Camelot Weekly Hosannah*, and he eventually became so good at it that Hank states that he is "a first-rate newspaper man."<sup>125</sup> The boy also helped him with the Man-Factory, recruiting and teaching the boys, or to build a secret telephone network. Clarence later saved Hank's life by sending to his rescue "...five hundred mailed and belted knights on bicycles!"<sup>126</sup> Clarence's loyalty to Hank is almost boundless. After the Church struck the kingdom with its interdict, Clarence gathered all the truly loyal boys there were left to be ready to fight for The Boss. And last, but not least, at the very end of the story, Clarence takes care of Hank's wounded sleeping body and finishes and later hides the manuscript Hank wrote about his experiences in these medieval times. Clarence's narrative is the very last chapter of the book, chapter forty-four – A Postscript by Clarence.

The character of Merlin appears much less in the story than King Arthur or Clarence, but his impact on the development of the storyline is more than noticeable. Merlin appears in every legend or story about the great King Arthur and always plays a very important role in the plot. He is usually portrayed as an elderly white-bearded male figure endowed with a magnificent magical power and great wisdom, who serves as a valued adviser to King Arthur.<sup>127</sup> Here again, just as with the character of the King, Twain creates a bit different picture of this individual. In this storyline, just as in many others, Merlin is a court sorcerer

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<sup>123</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 19.

<sup>124</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 100.

<sup>125</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 364.

<sup>126</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 330.

<sup>127</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 89.

and the whole kingdom fears his powers, at least until the Yankee uses his modern knowledge to pretend an enormous supernatural potential, and thus, completely undermines Merlin's reputation. Since then, Merlin is Hank's rival throughout the whole story, until he eventually wins by casting a spell that put Hank to sleep for thirteen centuries.<sup>128</sup> The overall Twain's portrayal of this character corresponds to the trend of the nineteenth-century authors, who often "depicted Merlin as a simpler but often menacing wizard".<sup>129</sup> The very first picture of Merlin the reader receives is in chapter three, when Hank is brought as a prisoner to the feast and Merlin puts almost every single person in the room to sleep with his old tale about King Arthur and the Lady of the Lake. Just as he begins his tale, Clarence tells Hank that all the people in the court fear his mighty powers, but not one person in the room seems to respect him. Hank himself considers Merlin to be a simple fraud deceiving people and oftentimes enjoys mocking and ridiculing him. He even says that Merlin is "...an old numskull, a magician who believed in his own magic; and no magician can thrive who is handicapped with a superstition like that."<sup>130</sup> The facts are, that throughout the whole storyline, the reader never sees Merlin actually succeed in any of his magical attempts. On the other hand, at the very end of the book, he does manage to send the Yankee into the nineteenth century and therefore, he cannot be only a humbug after all.

Demoiselle Alisande la Carteloise, whom the Yankee calls Sandy, is a damsel who one day arrives at Camelot to seek help for forty-five beautiful young princesses held in a captivity by three menacing ogres in a faraway vast castle. She plays the role of a simple-minded inhabitant of this innocent and trusting land. When she tells her tale about the captured princesses, all the knights trust her immediately and completely. Hank is assigned with this mission and he decides to question Sandy first. She is more than surprised that Hank requires proofs of her words and does not believe her. Moreover, during this conversation, Sandy does not understand Hank's expressions. This results in Hank thinking that she was not very clever – for he even said that she had as many ideas as a fog has – but she definitely had a heart of gold and "was a quite biddable creature".<sup>131</sup> On the mission, Hank constantly complains about Sandy endlessly just talking and talking – for this, he called her "a perfect blatherskite".<sup>132</sup> Hank becomes quite desperate to get rid of her, but she day by day proves

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<sup>128</sup> Rasmussen, *Bloom's Mark Twain*, 168.

<sup>129</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 89.

<sup>130</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 175.

<sup>131</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 91.

<sup>132</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 91.

that she is dedicated to staying with him throughout their journey. Sandy shows that she is a handy person for Hank to have around on an adventure, for she helps him in many situations. When she later nurses him out of an illness in the Valley of Holiness, it definitely changes their relationship, and eventually, Hank marries Sandy and they have a daughter called Hello-Central. In the end, when Hank is dying in the nineteenth century, his last words belong to Sandy, whom he sees in his delirium.

### 3.2. Political Criticism

As mentioned above, my goal in this paper is to identify and analyze Twain's use of political and social satire in the *Connecticut Yankee*. In the previous paragraphs, I also mentioned that there are many views on what this book's satirical criticism might actually be target at. Let me begin with the criticism political, be it on the sixth century monarchy or the nineteenth century policy of expansion and colonization. It was known that Mark Twain enjoyed mocking nobility and aristocracy in general, and thus it is no wonder that this book is filled with its criticism.<sup>133</sup> One of the first political ideals we can notice in this book is the superiority of people with inborn titles and long pedigrees above the rest of the population. Hank observes that these people believed "that all men without title and a long pedigree, whether they had a great natural gifts and acquirements or hadn't, were creatures of no more consideration than so many animals, bugs, insects".<sup>134</sup> The Yankee states that for his lack of title, the nobles saw him as inferior. He goes on by saying: "I was admired, also feared; but it was as an animal is admired and feared. ... I was not even respected. I had no pedigree, no inherited title; so in the king's and nobles' eyes I was mere dirt..."<sup>135</sup> Thus, even though Hank was, in his own words, "by all rational measurement the one and only actually great man in that whole British world"<sup>136</sup>, anyone with a noble ancestry was officially a better man. Moreover, Hank continues that the same view was still in existence in the nineteenth century England, too. We can find more than one situation concerning these nobles' ideas when the Yankee, accompanied by Sandy, arrive to Morgan le Fay's castle. For example, when Hank frees the prisoners from the Queen's dungeons, he finds out that many of the prisoners' names and offenses are no longer known and the King and Queen know nothing about them, simply because they were not their prisoners. They were imprisoned by their ancestors and the King

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<sup>133</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 59.

<sup>135</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 59.

<sup>136</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 60-61.

and Queen inherited the castle along with them in the dungeons. Hank is petrified by this and asks the Queen why she did not set them free. The Queen, puzzled by this question, answers that it had never come up to her mind that there would be such an option. Because of the way she was raised, the prisoners for her represent a mere property, just as a set of porcelain mugs inherited after a grandmother would to any modern man.<sup>137</sup> Another situation in the le Fay's castle happens shortly after Hank's arrival. A young page enters the room and brings something on a golden plate to the Queen, kneels to her, presents it to her, and overall does every courtesy there is to do. The only problem appears when the boy loses his balance and slightly falls against the Queen's knee. She calmly, but without any hesitation, slips a blade into the boy's body and he falls to the floor dead. The Queen peacefully continues with her talk as if nothing noticeable happened and the servants quietly carry out the body and clean the room.<sup>138</sup> The boy meant nothing to her, in her eyes, he had basically no value. She was going to pay for him, even though she was not obliged to do so, and that was all there was to be done. The Queen could not understand Hank's suggestion that it is a crime. It was her right to kill the page and so she did, she did not understand she did something wrong. Moreover, from her point of view, she was being generous for planning to pay for the boy to his family.<sup>139</sup> This shows us that in the system of monarchy, the nobles undoubtedly believed in their superiority above all others and transferred these ideas, with the help of the Established Church, onto the commoners, too. The Church was an enormous help with establishing the divine right of kings, which the commoners eventually accepted and thus the aristocracy could treat them in any way it pleased.<sup>140</sup> When Hank is having a breakfast with a group of commoners, whom Sandy compared to cattle, he comes to realize, that the majority of the people listened to commands of a very small amount of individuals, concretely "...six persons in each thousand of its population."<sup>141</sup> The thing that astonished him the most about this is that the people accept it completely, and moreover, that they actually believe it to be right. For such a long time, the whole population, and their ancestors, were told by the priests that this establishment was ordained by the God.<sup>142</sup> Another prove of this acceptance is given after the Yankee and Sandy save the captured princesses, in reality hogs, and on their way grow hungry. Sandy enters a house and gives the pigs a breakfast, along with Hank and herself. Hank naturally thinks it to be the house of her family, but it turns out that Sandy does not

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<sup>137</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 144-145.

<sup>138</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 120.

<sup>139</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 136-137.

<sup>140</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 26-27.

<sup>141</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 99.

<sup>142</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 95.



even know whom the house belongs to. She explains that the owner of the house should be thankful that they decided to eat in his house, as it represents a great honor for him. She states: “Do ye dream that one of his estate is like to have the honor twice in his life to entertain company such as we have brought to grace his house withal? ... Then let him be thankful ... he were a dog, else, and the heir and ancestor of dogs.”<sup>143</sup> The commoners were expected to be grateful to host any knight who wanders into their house, without any reward or pay. That was a quite noticeable interference into their already poor financial situation. The financial abuse of these people was even worse in terms of the taxes. The taxes were not only unbearable, but what is more, they were collected only from the commoners. As Hank says: “...there were taxes, and taxes, and taxes, and more taxes, and taxes again, and yet other taxes – upon this free and independent pauper, but none upon his lord the baron or the bishop, none upon the wasteful nobility or the all-devouring church...”<sup>144</sup> Not only that the common people worked for the nobility, not only they were supposed to be grateful for hosting them on their travels, but also, they were the only ones in the whole kingdom to pay taxes – the nobility and the Church were, of course, freed of this burden. These situations clearly portray Twain’s hostility towards the Church and monarchy that filled his work and notebooks. Concerning the Church and money, he once wrote: “This brutal superstition squeezes and robs the poor of the whole world of millions annually”.<sup>145</sup>

Nevertheless, the oppression portrayed is not only financial, it is mainly in terms of law and justice, too. Throughout the days, months, and eventually years, Hank spends in the Arthurian England, he notices the enormous injustices happening to the commoners. Hank states, watching the King in the role of a judge, that: “Whenever there was a dispute between a noble or gentleman and a person of lower degree, the king’s leanings and sympathies were for the former class always ... It was impossible that this should be otherwise.”<sup>146</sup> Hank mentions that even though the King is a wise judge and does everything in his best conscience, his judgements are very often unjust and wrong only because a person with a higher degree is involved. Thus, he concludes, the King is not capable of a righteous judgeship.<sup>147</sup> The overall laws and justice system in the Arthurian England terrified Hank more than anything else. “Some of these laws were too bad, altogether too bad”,<sup>148</sup> said the

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<sup>143</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 160.

<sup>144</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 96.

<sup>145</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 235.

<sup>146</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 206.

<sup>147</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 207.

<sup>148</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 138.

Yankee in regard to the fact that a master could kill a slave with no consequence at all, a gentleman was allowed to kill a commoner, but had to pay for him, and the list of conditions of who could kill whom with no punishments goes on. The only punishments awaited the commoners and the slaves, who had no privileges at all. If they happened to kill someone, it was a murder and the law system could not tolerate a murder.<sup>149</sup> The law also prescribes that if a commoner confesses to a crime, he is mercifully killed, but all his estates are taken from him and his family become beggars. On the other hand, if the man did not confess, it was a sin and he was tortured until he makes a confession.<sup>150</sup>

The supremacy of the upper class is shown also in the situation, when the King and the assembled Board are to choose proper candidates for the leading position in the new army. Hank, having prepared an examination based on knowledge and abilities, is confident that only the absolvents from his West Point military academy will prove themselves worthy. The Board, though, shocks him with rejecting his candidate only after three simple questions – his name and the name and occupation of his father. After finding out that the boy is a son of an ordinary weaver, their verdict is clear. The second candidate, on the other hand, is a high-born lad, who is accepted as quickly as the Board finds out he has a fine lineage of ancestors. Even though the boy cannot read or write and knows very little about the strategies of the battle, he is accepted on behalf of his family having lived at least for four generations. Hank becomes quite desperate and cannot understand these conditions. The King explains: “All places of honor and of profit do belong, by natural right, to them that be of noble blood, and so these dignities in the army are their property and would be so without this or any rule.”<sup>151</sup> Therefore, all the honorable positions that bore profit to the person, could be occupied exclusively by the noble-born, regardless their skills, knowledge or aptitude. We can find a comment on this issue in a book from doctors L. David Allen and James L. Roberts. “As a result, the defense of the country will lie in the hands of the nobility simply because they are nobility – not because they are capable of defending the country.”<sup>152</sup> This shows us that in Twain’s eyes the “unearned supremacy”<sup>153</sup> of the nobility is literally unearned. No skills are needed to be born into a noble family and none are required from such person. These and

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<sup>149</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 138.

<sup>150</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 133-134.

<sup>151</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 215.

<sup>152</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 44.

<sup>153</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 62.

other similar examples from the book summarize and support the view of the “hard” critics, as mentioned previously.

The “soft” critics, on the other hand, saw the book as an attack on imperialism and in this part of the paper, I would like to point out the examples proving this interpretation to be justified. In the introductory sentences about the origins of this narrative, I mentioned Twain’s fight against American colonialism, which begun after he saw the devastating situation of Hawaii. In regard to this, he even expressed an idea that civilization is a kind of a disease, killing off the original population on the islands.<sup>154</sup> We can find a citation of Twain’s lecture on the issue of Hawaii given on March 25, 1867, in St. Louis, Missouri, in a book from Shelley Fisher Fishkin, one of the leading scholars on the work of Mark Twain. The citation goes as follows: “The white men came, brought civilization and several other diseases, and now the race is fast dying out, and will be extinct in about fifty years hence.”<sup>155</sup> In a way, something similar happened to the Arthurian England with just one difference. It was no fancy modern-world disease that killed most of the original population, it was modern technology and a narrow-minded vision of one man. Later on, when Mark Twain travelled basically all around the world with his lecture tours, he had a chance to see more of the outcomes of colonialism, mostly of the British Empire.<sup>156</sup> This only deepened his disdain of colonialism in general. In regard to the plot of the *Connecticut Yankee*, one might object, that in comparison to American imperialism, no obvious expansion of a nation is happening throughout the pages of this book. This objection is valid, as the nation really does not expand. Nevertheless, in one moment in the story, Hank suggests:<sup>157</sup> “We had a steamboat or two on the Thames, we had steam warships, and the beginnings of a steam commercial marine; I was getting ready to send out an expedition to discover America.”<sup>158</sup> This clearly, although only briefly and in the context of a single sentence, shows us Hank’s desire to expand his English empire in the future.<sup>159</sup> Other colonialist ideals are much more visible. Just as Mark Twain himself in his early years, all colonialists thought that their culture is superior to that of any undeveloped pagan land they encountered. They thought it to be their duty to

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<sup>154</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 228.

<sup>155</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 231.

<sup>156</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 236.

<sup>157</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 2.

<sup>158</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 343.

<sup>159</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 2.

colonize and bring civilization to the people without culture.<sup>160</sup> The fact that Hank considers himself to be superior to the Arthurian Englishmen and his American system of values to be the best there ever could be is present and clearly visible since the very first moments of his stay in the sixth century England to his very last. His initial thoughts, after being told by Clarence that he is in the year 528, are as follows:

I made up my mind to two things: if it was still the nineteenth century and I was among lunatics and couldn't get away, I would presently boss that asylum or know the reason why; and if, on the other hand, it was really the sixth century, all right, I didn't want any softer thing: I would boss the whole country inside of three months; for I judged I would have the start of the best-educated man in the kingdom by a matter of thirteen hundred years and upward.<sup>161</sup>

Immediately after he is definitely convinced he really is in the Arthurian England, he simply states: "Yes, I was in King Arthur's court, and I might as well make the most out of it I could."<sup>162</sup> This proves that Hank's ambitions are not of an ordinary man, who simply wants to fit in, he wants to boss the place, take control over it and only after that he will be satisfied. The Yankee quite quickly comes to the belief that he can be the most powerful man in the whole kingdom, and moreover, that it would be for the best of the population.<sup>163</sup> Later, he even reveals, towards the end, that he is "beginning to have a base hankering to be (the republic's) first president myself."<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, throughout the whole book, Hank comments and thinks about these people as innocent and simple children, animals, savages or even white Indians,<sup>165</sup> and in addition to that, he constantly mentions his superior intelligence, as for example when he says: "Here I was, a giant among pigmies, a man among children, a master intelligence among intellectual moles".<sup>166</sup> His presumed master intelligence lead him to one conclusion – he has to use his power to reorganize the whole nation and civilize these poor creatures. This serves as a clear proof of Hank's colonial ideals. Colonialism, defined by the Oxford study dictionary, is "the practice by which a powerful country controls another country or countries."<sup>167</sup> In this case, of course, it is not a country controlling another one, it is a single man, but apart from that the description is quite accurate. Overall, the Arthurian

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<sup>160</sup> Olga Roebuck, „We are becoming the Best People in the World.“ Lecture, University of Pardubice, Pardubice, October 22, 2015.

<sup>161</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 20.

<sup>162</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 45.

<sup>163</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 75.

<sup>164</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 344.

<sup>165</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 68.

<sup>166</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 60-61.

<sup>167</sup> Phillips et al., *Oxford studijní slovník*, 152.

England is dealing with an outside force trying to change the original national establishments and constraining foreign values and ideals upon its population. Therefore, an anti-imperialist interpretation of the book is more than logical.<sup>168</sup> As a colonizer, Hank establishes his system of education, sets up newspapers, a stock board, creates workshops and factories, and invents batteries, electric lights, telephones, telegraph, steamboats, trains, weapons and many more.<sup>169</sup> His further plans included dividing the Established Church into a number of different free sects, as he was afraid of a united religion and its power, and eventually establishing the democratic system of a republic. In this way, Hank's actions correspond quite to the word to this description of colonialism and the actions of colonialists: "Colonialism ... is a system of direct political, economic, and cultural control by a powerful country over a weaker one."<sup>170</sup> Hank definitely represents the stronger force, occupying, changing, and eventually, although unintentionally, destroying the weaker one. Therefore, in the end, Hank's modern American system of values, so celebrated by the Yankee throughout the whole story, turns out to be in multiple ways just as dysfunctional as the one he is trying to supersede.<sup>171</sup>

The political criticism was targeted not only at the various political issues as such, but also upon one more seemingly unpolitical power. The Church, as mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, was by Mark Twain and many other writers viewed as more of a political than spiritual force, and in the *Connecticut Yankee*, this belief is strongly portrayed into the text of the story. The criticism is targeted upon the power of the Church in the past, and just the same on the present-day religious establishments. Mark Twain himself turned from religion as a child, following the footsteps of his father,<sup>172</sup> and he saw the Roman Catholic Church as an authoritarian despotic force ruining democratic ideals.<sup>173</sup> This was his view for the rest of his life, as he would never again join any kind of religion, and he thought of himself as a "free thinker."<sup>174</sup> In the story, there are many examples of his views towards religion. For instance, just at the very beginning, when Hank boasts about his power being equal to the King, he mentions that at the same time, there is a power stronger than both of theirs combined – the power of the Established Church. He later states that he is afraid of its power, which is supported also by one of the illustrations from Daniel Carter Beard where

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<sup>168</sup> O'Neill, "U.S. Imperialism", 2.

<sup>169</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 59.

<sup>170</sup> Darrell J. Kozlowski, *Key Concepts in American History: Colonialism* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2010), 1.

<sup>171</sup> Messent, *Cambridge Introduction*, 2.

<sup>172</sup> Harrison, "Social Critic", 56.

<sup>173</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 40.

<sup>174</sup> Harrison, "Social Critic", 57.

The Boss is but a little man standing next to an enormous figure representing the Church. This fear is the reason why Hank built his nineteenth-century infrastructure in secret, hidden from the Church's reach. One of the Yankee's main goals, when reorganizing the nation, is to divide the united Church into a number of small sects controlling each other. He plans to undermine the Church first with the cleanliness of the bodies, with the introduction of his soap to nobles and eventually commoners, too, second with education, and last, but not least, with freedom of the people. Freedom, for Hank, means not only the idea of abolishing slavery, but more importantly, it is meant in terms of religious freedom, which he promotes. "Everybody could be any kind of a Christian he wanted to; there was perfect freedom in that matter."<sup>175</sup> Twain's belief that a united Church does have enormous power is, within the context of this story, shown at the very end, when the Church, in order to gain control over the whole kingdom, tricks the Yankee into leaving the country. With its Interdict, the Church turns all the people of the Arthurian England, except for Clarence and the fifty-two lads, into Hank's enemies. During the last chapters, Twain shows to the reader his belief that the Church oftentimes, throughout the history of mankind, played the role of an obstruction to the advancement of civilization and was actually slowing down the development of the human race.<sup>176</sup>

### 3.3. Social Criticism

Social satire, as mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, is used to point out the follies, behavior or certain characteristics of a group of people or a whole society and its stereotypes. In this book, we can find several examples of social criticism. The first one is the chivalric code and the overall behavior, ideals and values of the Arthurian population. Hank scorned the Code of Chivalry throughout most of the story.<sup>177</sup> The tournaments are ridiculous for him, he mocks the fact that the knights are going on journeys to find the Holy Grail – in his words they are just "snooping around"<sup>178</sup> – and he is initially annoyed by the fact that Sandy will be with him until another knight should win her from him in the field.<sup>179</sup> Towards the end of the story, Hank shows us that the knights are not as pure and honorable as they seem to be. Clear evidence of this is the affair of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenevere.

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<sup>175</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 71.

<sup>176</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 62.

<sup>177</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 79.

<sup>178</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 69.

<sup>179</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 353.

Another one is found in the duel between Sir Sagramor and The Boss. When Merlin steals Hank's lasso, the King announces Hank to be weaponless and demands Sir Sagramor to borrow him one of his weapons. Sir Sagramor refuses, forbids Sir Launcelot to do so and eventually attacks seemingly defenseless man.<sup>180</sup> In doing so, Sir Sagramor breaks the Code of Chivalry and disobeys the King's demands, allowing Hank to have his victory in destroying the knight-errantry. The Yankee wins his battle with the chivalry not only by eventually killing several of the knights with the rest cowardly fleeing in front of the whole Arthur's court, but also by proving that they are capable of breaking their moral principles and the rules they so honorably live by.<sup>181</sup> Another characteristic criticized in the book is the infinite trustfulness of these people. Just at the very beginning, when Hank is introduced as a prisoner of Sir Kay the Seneschal, the Yankee notices a certain pattern. Everybody tells lies – glorious heroic lies. And they love to hear someone else's lies and believe them, too.<sup>182</sup> Even the story Hank was presented with to the nobles of the Arthur's court was over exaggerated. The story reveals, that Sir Kay encountered Hank in a far-away land of barbarians, all wearing the same clothes – enchanted in order to secure the wearer from any harm. Sir Kay broke the enchantment, slayed thirteen of Hank's knights in a three-hour-long battle and spared the Yankee's life in order to bring him to the court. Hank, listening to this glorious narration of his captivity, is wonder-struck by all the people present at the court believing the tale without a single doubt.<sup>183</sup> Similar situation is portrayed in chapter eleven, when Sandy arrives to Camelot and tells, in Hank's words, "a tale of the usual pattern"<sup>184</sup> about forty-five princesses held in captivity by three ogres in a far-away castle. All the knights are so captivated by this tale that they beg for the chance to go on this adventure. The Yankee states, concerning this characteristic of this society: "There never was such a country for wandering liars" and continues with his astonishment that nobody ever thought to ask the person for some credentials or at least a direction of the castle – "No, everybody swallowed these people's lies whole, and never asked a question of any sort or about anything."<sup>185</sup> Moreover, when he requires these information from Sandy, he is unsuccessful, as Sandy simply does not understand why he would not believe her. So far, she has never met a person who would have doubts about her credibility, and just the same, she has never met a person to whom she would not believe. Subsequently, Hank notes: "They were the quaintest and simplest and trustingest

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<sup>180</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 339.

<sup>181</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 78.

<sup>182</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 23.

<sup>183</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 31.

<sup>184</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 75.

<sup>185</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 75.

race”.<sup>186</sup> And not long after that, the Yankee shows us how easily this can be used to someone’s advantage. Hank does not take advantage only of these people’s simplicity, innocence and trustfulness, his main source of power is their superstition. The very same superstition Hank mocks and wants to root out of them. Another criticism of social issues of the sixth century’s society include the social classes – in this case the divine right of kings – and the people’s acceptance of these conditions, both of which I already mentioned in my analysis of the political criticism. But just as with the critique of the political situations, this book’s social commentary does not target only the follies and characteristics of the sixth century, as some readers, if they may, can interpret several sections of the story as a critical commentary on social issues of contemporary England or America. The modern-age England, along with any other country that supports royalty and aristocracy, is mocked mostly for still adoring the concept of monarchy. Hank expresses his opinion on monarchy as follows: “Why, dear me, *any* kind of royalty, howsoever modified, *any* kind of aristocracy, howsoever pruned, is rightly an insult”.<sup>187</sup> This statement could be just the same taken from any of Twain’s notes or letters, for as stated before, he himself highly despised royalty of any kind.

The criticism of the contemporary society is in most cases unspoken, but whatever the text fails to point out, it appears in the illustrations from Daniel Carter Beard. The fact that Mark Twain criticized the historical values of injustice to commoners, in favor of nobles, was already mentioned. Beard in one of his illustrations showed that this is not an extinct issue and that it can be found in the nineteenth century, too. The illustration shows two females representing justice, one of the sixth and the other of the nineteenth century. Both of them are “peeking out from behind the bandage covering her eyes, and each holding a balance in which a hammer marked “Labor” is outweighed – in the sixth century by a crown ... labeled “Title,” in the nineteenth century by a moneybag labeled “\$1000000.”<sup>188</sup> From this we can see that the justice of the sixth and the nineteenth centuries are the same in one way – they both weigh their scales against the working men.<sup>189</sup> The fact that Twain himself criticized the greed and corruption of the politicians in the contemporary society<sup>190</sup> and saw labor as a foundation stone of a “republican gentility”<sup>191</sup> only supports this critical portrayal. Another illustration

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<sup>186</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 57-58.

<sup>187</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 58.

<sup>188</sup> Smith, *Fable of Progress*, 310.

<sup>189</sup> Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 211.

<sup>190</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 60.

<sup>191</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 100.



concerned with issues of not only the sixth century is portrayed in chapter twenty-eight, when Hank is “drilling the King”<sup>192</sup> on their journey among commoners. The King, when imagining to speak to the commoners, does not realize he should use a different attitude, as he is now pretending to be a one of them. Hank corrects him and suggests that he should call the man friend or brother. This outrages the King and he says: “Brother! – to dirt like that?”<sup>193</sup> The illustration accompanying this statement shows not one, but three pictures. All of them portray the same sentence, but each in a different situation. The first one shows a King despising a commoner, the second an American Southerner talking about a Negro, and finally, the third represents a capitalist looking down upon a working man. All of these pictures have a label under them stating “Oppressor.”<sup>194</sup> One may argue that since the illustrations are not Twain’s own creation, they should not be included in the analysis of his text. On the other hand, Mark Twain himself expressed multiple times his fondness of these illustrations and moreover, in a letter to a reader, he specifically said: “...and to my mind the illustrations are better than the book”.<sup>195</sup> He admired the illustrations so much that he called the illustrator “the only man who can correctly illustrate my writings, for he not only illustrates the text, but he also illustrates my thoughts”<sup>196</sup> and stated that Beard managed to put into the book a even more than Twain himself – he put most of it into the book and the illustrator put the rest, everything that Twain meant to be there.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, taking into account the author’s comments, I consider it accurate to mention them in my analysis.

As mentioned, the criticism of the contemporary society is mostly visible in the Yankee’s improvements. It was also stated that Mark Twain saw colonialism as a destructive force<sup>198</sup> and that is what we eventually see in Hank’s actions. At the beginning, Hank is offended by the bodily odors of the unbathed Arthurian Englishmen.<sup>199</sup> That is why he builds a soap factory in Camelot – to truly civilize and uplift these people.<sup>200</sup> Hank is delighted with the popularity of his invention, but he ceases to see the downsides of it. His overworking

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<sup>192</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 240.

<sup>193</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 242.

<sup>194</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 160.

<sup>195</sup> Cyril Clemens, „Unpublished Letters to Dan Beard,“ *Mark Twain Quarterly*, 7, ii (1975). In book: Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, ed. Allison R. Ensor (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982): 310.

<sup>196</sup> Rasmussen, *Bloom’s Mark Twain*, 183.

<sup>197</sup> Fishkin, *Historical Guide*, 235.

<sup>198</sup> O’Neill, “U.S. Imperialism”, 4.

<sup>199</sup> Hansen, „The Once and Future Boss“, 70.

<sup>200</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 34.

factory<sup>201</sup> is horribly polluting the air in Camelot, and thus, his soap factory is actually “making Camelot dirtier, instead of cleaner.”<sup>202</sup> Unfortunately for the Arthurian society, the Yankee sees the only way of development of civilization in a material progress.<sup>203</sup> The Yankee’s modifications of the sixth century England eventually result in enormous changes in the society. The aristocracy is made into passenger conductors on the railway lines throughout the country, the Round Table becomes a stock-board consisting of its knights and Sir Launcelot being its president, schools and colleges function in the country, there is a number of good newspapers, and even the very first book of jokes almost comes out.<sup>204</sup> These alternations to an undeveloped society may not seem harmful at first, but as their consequence, the sixth century Britain resembles more of a nineteenth century America, with its greedy materialism. The innocent and romantic picture of Camelot no longer exists.<sup>205</sup> The greed and materialism of the formerly innocent and honorable knights is shown on one of the most noble of them – Sir Launcelot – who, after becoming the stock-board president, begins to manipulate the stock market.<sup>206</sup> As we can find in a book from R. Kent Rasmussen, an editor and a literary author: “Human greed and overreaching soon consume these men who had dedicated themselves to saving others, seeking the ideals of their society and of chivalry, finding the Holy Grail, and attaining purity.”<sup>207</sup> Sir Launcelot’s maneuvers resulted in several knights being financially hurt, including the nephews of the King – Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred.<sup>208</sup> As a result, these knights seek revenge and so they inform the King about the affair of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever.<sup>209</sup> This eventually starts the war that divides the whole kingdom into two parts – the knights fighting for the King and the knights taking Sir Launcelot’s side.<sup>210</sup> The war leads to Arthur’s death, and that leads to the Church’s Interdict, which Hank cannot stand and thus eventually annihilates most of the population. In this sequence of events, the turning point of the final massacre is the affair of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever – from the moment the King found out, everything went towards destruction. On the other hand, Clarence states: “Well, if there hadn’t been any Queen Guenever, it wouldn’t have come so early; but it would have come, anyway. It would have

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<sup>201</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 34.

<sup>202</sup> Rasmussen, *Bloom’s Mark Twain*, 168.

<sup>203</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 34.

<sup>204</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 343-346.

<sup>205</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 62.

<sup>206</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 34.

<sup>207</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 79.

<sup>208</sup> Allen and Roberts, *Cliffs Notes*, 59.

<sup>209</sup> Rasmussen, *Critical Companion*, 73.

<sup>210</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 360.

come on your own account by and by; by luck, it happened to come on the queen's."<sup>211</sup> Clarence's words tell us that sooner or later, the end of Hank's civilization would come and that eventually, it would be on Hank's own account. A question here arises – why was not Hank's civilization sustainable and successful? The answer can be found in several of the works I cited throughout this paper, and mostly it is the same. The Yankee's civilization was simply too fast. He educated the people, within the several years of his office, to accept new values, ideals and to eventually require a revolution and long for a republic. He thought he educated them well, but when the Church struck, they all came back to the ideals they grew up with.<sup>212</sup> The Arthurian population was "simply not ready for a self-determined national republic."<sup>213</sup> He rushed the civilization upon these people and they could not keep up with it, it brought too sudden changes. The social improvement of a nation should be in the form of a "steady growth of civilization"<sup>214</sup>, but the Yankee failed to realize this. Moreover, Hank's American system depended on violence and destruction, and as such, it could not bring anything else than more violence and more destruction.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 358.

<sup>212</sup> Twain, *Connecticut Yankee*, 366.

<sup>213</sup> Messent and Budd, *Companion to Mark Twain*, 9.

<sup>214</sup> James Fulcher, „Mark Twain's Critique of Political Conspiracy in the 1880s: A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court“, *Studies in Popular Culture*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2003): 109, accessed June 4, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41970402>.

<sup>215</sup> Fulcher, „Twain's Critique“, 118.

## 4. Conclusion

Satirical literary works always provoked an interest in my mind. In my opinion, they represent an intelligent and witty way to draw the reader's attention to a serious issue. Moreover, I consider these works to be multifunctional in a certain way, for when such piece is read by an individual who wishes not to look beyond the lines of the text for any deeper meaning, he or she may enjoy the story just as a simple piece of comedy. On the other hand, when a person with higher ambitions reads the very same book, he or she is able to appreciate the wit and effort of the author and perhaps come to interesting conclusions of his own.

This exact wit is one of the main reasons the author this whole paper is about – Mark Twain – was, and still is, celebrated as a social critic. He started as a humorist, who eventually used his gift – being able to make people laugh – to address truly serious problems of the society. Twain used laughter as a weapon and his rich and fascinating narratives as a bait to catch the reader's attention. His works are perfect examples of my idea that satirical texts can be multifunctional. Many readers consider, for instance, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to be innocent stories for children. Others, in contrary to this, read these books as a criticism of the society the author lived in, racial issues, and many other contemporary topics. The focus of my analysis in this paper – Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* – is a similar case. There are several different ways to interpret the story. First, there are readers who see it as a simple humorous story, perhaps even a children's story, second interpretation is as a critical commentary upon the past society, third group of readers views the novel as a criticism of the contemporary issues, and last, but not least, the book is also read as nothing more than a violation of the peaceful image the Arthurian legends from other authors created. In the context of these interpretations, I would categorize myself as a member of the second and third group mixed together, which is, concerning Carter's terminology – a “soft” critic who at the same time agrees with the “hard” interpretation. I see it as a genial mockery of political establishments of both, the past and the present, and the societies of one and the other, too. The book tries to show to the modern person the life of the past. For it is hard to imagine how hard the life must have been in the times of strict social divisions, when a common person was of no particular value no matter how skilled he or she was, and on the other hand, the nobles needed no talent at all to be honored and admired. However, as I categorized myself to be a “soft” critic, I saw the book as a criticism of the contemporary society, too. The strict social division was yet not extinct in

England during Twain's life, England, America, and other countries, too, colonized underdeveloped parts of this world for better future, the society was rotten with corruption and greed, and the book also showed the threat technology represents when in wrong hands, and American endless confidence, meaning the idea that their way of life is the best there is. Concerning the other two perceptions, I strongly disagree with the point of view that it is a light-toned and humorous narrative, and it would never even come up to my mind to consider this book to be a children's story. An innocent child could never truly understand, for example, the complexity of the main character, and a simple humorous tale should never end up with such massacre and destruction – with an explosion blowing an enormous number of knights into the air and turning them into microscopic pieces, with electrocuting the rest of the knights, and in the end, with rotting corpses poisoning the air the “heroes” breathe. These are just a few of many other examples that contradict the first interpretation. The last group of readers sees the book as being unworthy of the author's intellect for its historical inaccuracy and a crude, animalistic portrayal of their beloved Arthurian land. I sincerely hope that this is the least populated group, as Mark Twain himself stated in the preface to the book that he is not trying to pretend that these laws and customs actually did exist in England during the sixth century. Therefore I would consider the argument that the book is a failure for its historical errors to be invalid. The second part of their understanding of the book is, as mentioned, that it is nothing more than a violation of the Arthurian legends. Personally, I would not even consider this as an option of interpreting the story, as Mark Twain was, and to the present-day is, widely known among the readers of the whole world for writing his stories with a higher purpose – a purpose of attacking certain injustices or follies.

Hank Morgan, the modern-day American Yankee, is also viewed from many various perspectives. For example, the last mentioned group of readers see him as a rude animal wrecking a picturesque land. As I read the book, I would agree only partially with this description. Yes, Hank really is slowly damaging the land and the society with his technological improvements and factories, but I never got a glimpse of this being his intention. Therefore, I would say that even though he is the cause of the destruction, he never meant it to be that way. I honestly believe Hank's only objective was to help these people, put an end to the oppression they lived in and introduce technological advancements to them. On the other hand, one of his biggest flaws was his narrow-mindedness. He considered only his own ideals and values as the only correct ideals and values, and as the only ones there ever should exist in a society of any kind. Throughout the whole book, I never noticed that he

would simply stop and wonder whether these people want such changes at all. He wanted to establish a democratic republic so bad that he was willing to use weapons of mass destruction and an almost complete annihilation of a society – the least democratic way possible – to achieve his goal. A true democracy should always follow the voice of the people, and in the end, Hank stood alone, with only Clarence and 52 lads by his side, against the whole nation. The Yankee had the intelligence of a present-day enlightened man, but at the same time, his hidebound approach is why I consider him to be a simple well-meaning fool, and in certain ways, I see him also as a hypocrite. He despises the aristocracy and the Church mainly because of their unearned power, but at the same time, he gained his own power only by tricking and frightening the people, and he enjoys being a powerful man as much as he can. There are two other interpretations of Hank Morgan’s personality – one that considers him to be a warm-hearted humanitarian, and another that sees him as a pure villain. I oppose both of these, as in my mind, he is neither. Concerning the first interpretation, as I see it, he certainly is anything but a humanitarian. He only weeps for the people with a theatrical tragedy in their life, and in relation to others, he completely lacks any kind of empathy at all. What is more, for instance, he is willing to sacrifice a person of – in his own words – no particular value, only to create an extraordinary spectacle. An honest humanitarian should be at all times more concerned with the well-being of others than of his own, and oftentimes in the story, that is the exact opposite of what Hank actually does. The second perception of the Yankee’s character considers him to be a villain, for he uses tricks, violence, and severe destruction to fulfill his ambitions. That is, of course, an undeniable fact, but as mentioned previously in this paragraph, in my opinion, it was never his intention to destroy the society, for he only wanted to uplift and improve it. Therefore, my final view concerning the Yankee could be summarized in a simple statement such as this: he destroyed the society in an attempt to save it.

## 5. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce je zaměřena na analýzu sociální a politické satiry v díle *Yankee z Connecticutu na dvoře krále Artuše* od Marka Twaina. Cílem práce je tedy analyzovat satirickou stránku této knihy, ilustrovat zmíněné poznatky konkrétními ukázkami z textu díla, a následně vyslovit vlastní názor ohledně různých interpretací kritiky příběhu společně s vyřčením, ke které skupině kritiků se po přečtení knihy přikláním.

První kapitola se zabývá vysvětlením pojmů satira jako taková, dále pak satira politická a sociální. Na tyto pojmy odkazují prakticky v celém rozsahu práce, a tak je důležité tyto termíny blíže specifikovat a popsat jejich formu, využití, či původ. Satira je definována jako způsob použití humoru, ironie, sarkasmu, či zesměšnění s cílem poukázat na pošetilost jedince, myšlenky, nebo i určitého způsobu chování. Pojem satira se používá též pro označení literárních děl využívajících tohoto druhu humoru a kritiky. Tato díla využívají humor jako zbraň proti čemukoliv, co chce autor kritizovat, a jsou obvykle psána smělym a barvitým jazykem. V této práci používám mimo samotného termínu satira ještě dva její poddruhy, a to satiru politickou a sociální. Sociální satira se zaměřuje na zesměšňování hloupostí jednotlivých lidí, či celých skupin, jejich chování, určitých charakteristik a v neposlední řadě i kulturních stereotypů. Satira politická, jak již sám název napovídá, je orientovaná na politickou situaci a právní systém společnosti, země, či světa jako celku. Tento typ satiry se převážně zabývá odhalováním korupce, morálních zásad, nespravedlností a pokrytectví v politické sféře společností historických či současných.

Druhá část této práce uvádí čtenáře do života autora samotného. Jméno Mark Twain je pouhým pseudonymem známého amerického spisovatele druhé poloviny devatenáctého století, ale v celém textu práce odkazují na tohoto autora právě jeho uměleckým jménem. Mark Twain se narodil jako Samuel Langhorne Clemens 30. listopadu 1835. V průběhu jeho dětství se Clemensovi několikrát stěhovali, a spousta míst, zážitků a lidí, které mladý Twain potkal, se následně promítla do jeho literárních děl. Nicméně bychom se tímto faktem neměli nechat zmást a považovat jeho díla za autobiografická, jelikož často měnil významné aspekty reality. Tyto změny byly v některých případech úmyslné, v jiných naopak zcela podvědomé, jako výsledek spojení různých míst se šťastnými dětskými vzpomínkami. Jednou z jeho opakujících se vzpomínek byla farma jeho strýce, která se objevuje jak v popisu města St. Petersburg v knihách *Dobrodružství Toma Sawyera* a *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna*,

tak i v barvitém líčení krajiny středověké Anglie, kterou popisuje Hank Morgan v knize *Yankee z Connecticutu na dvoře krále Artuše*. Twain ve svém psaní využíval jako předlohu pro některé postavy i svou vlastní osobnost, a tak například v popisu Toma Sawyera a myšlenkách Hanka Morgana můžeme najít určité podobnosti s autorem samotným. Na druhou stranu, jak vysvětlují dále v práci, Hank Morgan je zároveň od svého tvůrce velmi odlišný v určitých názorech a aspektech osobnosti.

Součástí druhé kapitoly je i souhrn autorových profesních zkušeností, které započaly prací učedníka tiskaře v pouhých třinácti letech. Později pracoval u svého staršího bratra Oriona pro noviny *Hannibal Journal*, a právě zde Twain publikoval své úplně první články. Jeho ambice však mířily výš, a tak Twain opustil Hannibal a hledal lákavější příležitosti. Jednou z nich byla i práce kapitána parní lodi na řece Mississippi, kterým se stal v roce 1859. Jeho bezstarostné dny práce na lodi však po dvou letech byly přerušeny americkou občanskou válkou, ve které Twain velmi krátce bojoval za jižní armádu. Po opuštění vojska odešel opět pracovat pro svého bratra Oriona, tentokrát jako sekretář zastupujícího guvernéra Nevady. Nicméně, i přes různorodost jeho zájmů a profesí se Twain stále vracel k žurnalistice, a tak začal psát do novin dopisy ze svých cest. Právě díky těmto dopisům následně dostal nabídku žurnalisty pro *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, kterou v roce 1862 přijal, a za nedlouho poté poprvé použil pseudonym Mark Twain. Od té doby přispíval do několika dalších novin, ale nikdy nezůstal jen u toho. Po návštěvě Havaje v roce 1866 začal přednášet, a to především na téma civilizace a kolonizace právě na Havajských ostrovech. Mark Twain byl tedy v té době známý jako žurnalista, oblíbený humorista a přednášející, ale jako literární autor se vepsal do povědomí čtenářů až po roce 1869, kdy vyšla jeho první kniha *Našinci na cestách*.

Mark Twain byl po dobu svého života, i dlouho po něm, známý jako morální filozof, sociální reformátor a kritik společnosti. Tato označení pramenila z jeho děl, která Twain využíval k poukazování na různé problémy současné společnosti. Jedním z nejčastějších terčů jeho kritiky byla monarchie, kterou považoval za nejabсурdnější podvod lidské rasy. Další opakující se témata v jeho dílech zahrnují především podporu pracujícího lidu, prosazování demokracie, nesouhlas s kolonizací a imperialismem, opovržení lidskou chamtivostí a pokrytectvím, a v neposlední řadě také skeptický pohled na náboženství a jednotnou církev, kterou Twain viděl spíše jako politickou než duchovní sílu. Právě za tyto své postoje a neúnavný boj za lidskou rovnoprávnost a spravedlnost byl Twain ke konci svého života označen jako nejvýznamnější anti-imperialista amerického národa.



Třetí kapitola udává podrobnější informace o skladbě a publikaci díla. Kniha byla poprvé vydána v roce 1889, a ihned byla velmi pozitivně přijata širokou americkou veřejností. Příběh je epizodický, jak je u Twaina zvykem, a plný satirických komentářů útočících především na politická a sociální témata. Tato fikce je mnohými označována jako stavební kámen sci-fi žánru, jelikož se v ní autor zamýšlí nad tím, jaké by byly důsledky přenesení moderních technologií a pokročilých názorů do prostých časů středověké Anglie. Právě tento faktor v celé knize slouží jako zdroj komických momentů. Na druhou stranu je ale dílo pod touto komediální slupkou velmi vážné, jelikož se v něm nachází těžké násilí, destrukce a Hankova osobnost diktátora, jak jej označují někteří kritici. Jazyk použitý v knize je založen na předloze historického románu *Artušova smrt* od Thomase Maloryho, nikoliv na historických faktech. Samotné vyprávění je psáno v první osobě, a to následující formou: na začátku knihy se ocitáme v devatenáctém století, kde hlavní vypravěč potkává podivného návštěvníka hradu Warwick, se kterým se dává do řeči a ještě tentýž večer mu cizinec poskytne rukopis svých zážitků, hlavní vypravěč se do nich začte, a tato část slouží jako jádro knihy samotné. Čtenář se vrátí do devatenáctého století až druhý den ráno, kdy vypravěč manuskript odloží a vejde k cizincovi do pokoje právě ve chvíli, kdy umírá. Tón a vážnost příběhu se mění prakticky z momentu na moment – komické scény jsou v knize velmi často následovány smutnými či hrozivými situacemi. Původní myšlenka k napsání podobného příběhu vzešla z Twainovy návštěvy Havaje v roce 1866, kde autor viděl, jak americký kolonialismus přivádí nevinný feudální způsob života k jisté zkáze. Dalším impulzem byly jeho výpravy do Velké Británie, které mu vnukly nápad na zasazení příběhu do středověké Anglie. Žádný z těchto podnětů však nebyl tak silný, jako když se v roce 1884 dostal Twainovi do rukou výtisk Maloryho knihy *Artušova smrt*.

Ohledně interpretace Twainovy kritiky vyobrazené v tomto díle je více než několik různých názorů, a právě v této části práce je popisují. Pro některé čtenáře je tato kniha jasným útokem na feudální uspořádání, monarchii, a nespravedlnosti společností dávno minulých. Na druhou stranu jiní kritici čtou tento příběh jako zřejmé napadení společnosti současné, a to především jejího imperialismu, kolonialismu, lidské chamtivosti a dalších výtisků moderní doby. V období publikace knihy, čtenáři nejčastěji viděli příběh jako nelítostnou kritiku historických uspořádání a oslavu devatenáctého století, jakožto ukázkou civilizačního pokroku lidstva. Tato interpretace je podložena autorovými výroky o jeho úmyslu postavit vedle sebe společnost minulosti a současnosti, a poukázat na prospěch druhé zmíněné. Nicméně, pro druhou skupinku čtenářů kniha představuje útok na americký imperialismus ničící rozvojové

země a upozornění na možnou hrozbu technického pokroku. Oprávněnost tohoto výkladu dokazuje, mimo jiné, především již zmíněný autorův boj proti kolonizaci. Obě tato porozumění se dají podložit hned několika různými výtažky z Twainových osobních poznámek, článků či ostatních děl, a tak se oběma věnuji v následné analýze, kde každou z nich ilustruji konkrétními příklady přímo z textu knihy.

Popis postav začíná hlavní postavou příběhu – Hankem Morganem, kterého spousta kritiků označuje jako jednu z Twainových nejsložitějších literárních osobností. Tato fiktivní postava je částečně založena na autorovi samotném, konkrétně tedy jeho názorech a postojích, ale zároveň s ním autor nechce být spojován, a proto v knize sám působí jako hlavní vypravěč. Autor tedy obdivoval Hanka v určitých aspektech jeho osobnosti, ale stejně tak opovrhoval jinými a považoval ho za hlupáka. Hank Morgan je v knize popsán jako zručný moderní muž bez vyššího vzdělání. Hank v devatenáctém století pracoval v továrně na zbraně jako vrchní dozorce a správce, a právě zde se naučil jak vyrobit cokoli, na co si jen člověk vzpomene. Technologie byla Hankovou vášní, a tak mu pochopitelně scházela, když se dostal na dvůr krále Artuše. To byl důvod, proč se hned pustil do vynalézání všech nezbytností pro pohodlný život moderního člověka. Hank byl přesvědčený o své nadřazenosti nad těmito lidmi, a tak si také uložil za svůj cíl nahrazení monarchie demokracií a jednotné církve mnoha malými náboženskými sektami, jelikož se bál její moci. Když se však podíváme, jaké způsoby používá k dosažení svých cílů, je zřejmé, že Hank není čistě kladná postava, jelikož zneužívá prostoduchosti obyvatel Artušovy Anglie a převážně pracuje v utajení. Zároveň si čtenář může všimnout, že přesto, že Hank zesměšňuje pověrčivost středověké populace, je to právě tato pověrčivost, na které založil své postavení.

Mezi další postavy patří král Artuš, Hankův společník Clarence, kouzelník Merlin a dáma, kterou si Hank nakonec vezme, Sandy. Král Artuš je oproti klasickým Artušovským legendám vyobrazen jako důvěřivý prostáček, který ale s postupem času ukáže i svou lidskou a hrdinnou stránku osobnosti. Clarence je mladík, kterého Hank potká hned první den svého pobytu v šestém století. Tento mladík se následně stane jeho pomocníkem ve všech jeho činech, a zároveň také přijímá jeho pokrokové znalosti z devatenáctého století. Clarence tedy na konci příběhu připomíná více moderního než středověkého mládence. Merlin, stejně tak jako král Artuš, také neodpovídá popisům z klasických legend. Twainův Merlin je popsán víceméně jako starý pošetilý blázen, kterého se všichni v království bojí jen pro jeho kouzelnou moc – tedy alespoň do Hankova příchodu. Mladá dáma, kterou Hank nazývá Sandy, působí v příběhu jako prostoduchá obyvatelka Artušova království, se kterou se náš

hrdina vydá na dobrodružství s cílem zachránit čtyřicet pět princezen držených v zajetí. Přes počáteční odpor si Hank nakonec na Sandy zvykne a na samém konci knihy se čtenář dozvídá, že si ji vzal a mají spolu dceru.

Po popisu a analýze postav začíná v této části práce analýza samotného textu, a to konkrétně nejprve rozbořem kritiky politické, odkazující na již zmíněné interpretace knihy a ilustrované konkrétními situacemi z příběhu. Nejprve se věnuji kritice politických uspořádání dřívějších společností, konkrétně tedy monarchie, přesvědčení, že člověk bez titulu má menší hodnotu, než šlechtic, božského práva králů, a finančnímu a právnímu útlaku prostých občanů. Všechna tato témata jsou v knize zastoupena víc než jen několika příklady, a právě ty jsou k nalezení v této sekci. Následně analýza přechází ke kritice společnosti současné, tedy ke konkrétním ukázkám Hankova imperialismu, kolonialismu, suverenity, přesvědčení o vlastní nadřazenosti a touze ovládnout a přeorganizovat celou středověkou Anglii. Politické kritice však nebyla podrobena pouze anglická monarchie, či americká imperialistická vláda, nýbrž také katolická církev. Autorovo přesvědčení, že jednotná církev působí více jako politická než duchovní síla, už bylo zmíněno v části zabývající se Twainovým životem. V této kapitole je tento autorův postoj ilustrován vhodnými výtažky z textu knihy.

Sociální analýza je opět rozdělena podle dvou hlavních interpretací knihy, a to na kritiku někdejší společnosti, a následně té současné. Dle prvního výkladu Twain zesměšňuje především rytířské zásady, turnaje, neoblomnou důvěřivost a pověřivost všech obyvatel středověké Anglie, a v neposlední řadě jejich oddanost monarchii, která, jak Hank podotýká, přetrvává v Anglii až do současnosti. Následná kritika současné společnosti je ve většině případů v knize nevyřčená, ale velmi zřetelně je viditelná v původních ilustracích k dílu od Daniela Cartera Bearda. Twain sám byl těmito ilustracemi přímo okouzlen a prohlásil, že dokonale doplňují vše, co chtěl v knize uvést, ale neuvedl. Tím pádem jsem se zaměřila na analýzu některých těchto kreseb útočících na lidskou chamtivost, nespravedlnost právního systému a pocit nadřazenosti nad pracujícím člověkem jako formu Twainových nevyřčených komentářů. Kritika, která je viditelná mezi řádky textu, se zabývá především ničivou silou imperialismu, Hankovou americkou sebedůvěrou, povýšeností a omezeností ve smyslu neschopnosti přijmout cizí názor.

V závěru práce jsou shrnuty dříve uvedené poznatky a především mé osobní postoje ke každému z nich. Zároveň zde vyslovuji své finální stanovisko ohledně toho, se kterou interpretací díla a hlavní postavy se ztotožňuji, a se kterou naopak důrazně nesouhlasím.

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