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# The Many Sides of Hank: Modifications, Adjustments, and Adaptations of Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

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"Literature is about the human condition. Regardless of where a story takes place or who is in it, the characters should still, at heart, be human."

- David Kelly, *Critical Essay on A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

"Am I in my right mind? And if I am, canst tell me where in the hellith I am?"

- Will Rogers, *A Connecticut Yankee* (1931)

1 Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* has been adapted to various media since its publication in 1889. The unique meshing of inspiration from Twain's commentary with varied public opinions on contemporary politics, in addition to his ability to make even the most macabre aspect of human nature into burlesque, has made one of the most read – and one of the most misjudged – works by Twain. *Connecticut Yankee* often address Twain's sources and historic/political interests, but rarely (if ever) the complexity of the novel's characters. Adaptations, moreover, often miss the fascinating and complex depiction of the Yankee, Hank Morgan. This essay

Hank's psychological aspects as they are presented in externalized form for characters, and then how these characters and their dynamics were modified, undone by adaptations of the novel to film and comic books.

2 On November 11, 1885, Mark Twain read an early draft of what would become *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* at the Military Service Institution, Governor's Island, New York. Although contemporaries praised the work, a close friend expressed concern regarding the humiliating treatment of characters from Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, the inspiration for his novel. In response to her concerns, he observed in a letter, "It isn't a satire peculiarity," he explained, "but more especially a *contrast*" between the Middle Ages and the present. Twain explained that he was only "after the *life* of that is all: to picture it; to try to get into it; to see how it feels & seems... & I should be glad if...the extinction of its old tender & gracious friendships...should lose their tears through my handling," (*Twain to Fairbanks*, 258). But it is true that the beautiful characters drawn by the master hand of old Malory would draw new breath through Twain's pen. As Twain's new heroes were developed, characters began to reflect Hank, in ways that were not necessarily true depictions of them as they appeared in *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Unique interactions with legendary heroes make Hank a deep, complex character, while allowing the reader to explore his ambiguities. Ironically, this dynamic is the very element of the novel most often highlighted in adaptations.

3 Hank Morgan is packaged and delivered to his audience as somewhat of a rebel who condemns the aristocracy, but joins their ranks when he earns a title ("The Boy Who Was a King" is not the only issue on which Hank plays both sides; for example, originally, when Morgan le Fay's cruelty toward her servants and subjects, Hank later appeases her by having her band hung, stating "A little concession, now and then, where it can be made, is the wiser policy" (Twain 155). At the outset a humanitarian, at the end a scoundrel, Hank, observes Fulton, "offered Twain a chance to 'set up man & woman against man & see if he was better or worse than this chaos & rubbish he was made of' [Twain] suggested in his marginalia" (Fulton 94-95). David Kelly notes that Hank's awareness of his own flaws," making him perhaps harder for readers to relate to. It is my

Hank's ignorance is exactly what makes him such a timeless character; Twain created Hank with contradictory behaviors and beliefs: in short, he created a character who is so human.

4 Hank takes center-stage throughout the novel, eclipsing the other characters. When other characters appear, they seem shadowy and only present to enhance Hank. But if we consider them as individual, fully-realized agents of the narrative, what are they? As the book's narrative of a peaceful revolution coupled with one man's psychological growth and development, we might contend that the other characters are reflections of Hank's inner psychology. These externalizations of his psyche control the reader's perception of Hank's contradictory behaviors. By externalizing them, Twain made it possible for the reader to "get inside" Hank's head without destroying the humor of the story in the process.

5 Amyas Le Poulet, or Clarence as he is better known, is left out of most critical discussions of *A Connecticut Yankee*, yet he plays an important – perhaps even the most important – role for Hank. Homoerotic overtones pervade their first contact. "This [Clarence], "was an airy slim boy in *shrimp-coloured tights* that made him look like a forked stick. The rest of his gear was blue silk and *dainty laces and ruffles*; and he had *long yellow hair* that wore a plumed *pink satin cap* tilted complacently over his ear. ... *He was prepossessing* [my emphasis]" (Twain 47). In this manner, the reader is first introduced to Clarence as though he were a fifteen year-old girl. Hank's reaction to Clarence is noteworthy because the homoerotic feelings seem to soon disappear. Perhaps Hank's initial reaction is a result of his dislocation in time and space; in other words, Hank's initial (unconscious) reaction is to identify with one of the first people he meets. Later in the book, we learn that Hank had a sweetheart from his own century named "Puss Flanagan" (Twain 114). It is worth noting that this conversation takes place between Hank and Clarence, and not Hank and Clarence with her. Clarence is also later connected to Puss in a stronger way; Hank

Fifteen! Break – my heart! Oh, my lost darling!...whom I shall never see again. The thought of her carries me back over wide seas of memory...many, many centuries hence, when I used to wake in the soft summer mornings, out of my dreams of her, and say "Hello, Central!" just to hear her dear voice come marching back to me with a "Hello, Hank!" that was music of the spheres to my enchanted ear. (Twain 142-3)

This statement takes on new meaning for Clarence, as there are two cases in which he replaces Puss at the other end of the wire, once in the Valley of Holiness where Clarence exchanges "affectionate interchanges" (Twain 218) over the phone, and once in London during Hank and the King's bondage as slaves (Twain 342-43). There is a discrepancy of Clarence's age; he tells Hank that he was born in 513, and that the present year is 561 (Twain 48), making Clarence the same age as Puss. It is my opinion that Clarence's connection to the telephone and his age and girlish appearance when Hank meets him indicate that when Hank met Clarence, he formed a cathartic bond with him, using Puss Flanagan as a defense mechanism. This allowed Hank not only to project his memory, but to identify with someone familiar in a strange place. The implications of their relations disappear gradually during the course of Hank's conjunction with Sandy, who comes to replace Puss as Hank's love interest. Hank is therefore bound to his past and to giving him depth as well as breadth.

6 Sandy is another character of the novel who demands our attention. She begins as a nuisance to Hank as he begins his knight-errantry, but eventually proves herself by acting as a kind of cultural guide. When he bests several knights in battle (with them with his pipe), Sandy claims them for him and sends them off to King Ahab in Hank's name – "she was," he observes, "a handy person to have along in a pinch" (Twain 135). Hank begins to have an unusual "reverence" for Sandy's use of language, turning to praise as he claims, "it was borne in upon me that I was standing in the presence of the Mother of the German Language," (Twain 204). Eventually, Sandy becomes a love interest for Hank (and an actual mother), but this only occurs because of her faithfulness to him: "this sort of partnership would compromise her, sooner or later" (Twain 372). So, in the interest of propriety – not love – Hank arranges a wedding. Clarence seems to represent Hank's misanthropic feelings during their first adventure together; he complains, "I was ashamed of her, ashamed of the human race" (Twain 100). In mere paragraphs earlier she was "handy to have along." Because of Hank's slow change of attitude toward Sandy, and because of the many times he flips back and forth between admiring and being ashamed of her, Sandy must surely represent an externalized

Hank's own conflicting emotional growth. This conjecture is supported by Sandy Puss as Hank's love interest; as Hank assimilates the sixth century, he grows and outgrows his desire for Puss. Sandy, acting as a replacement, gives Hank the comradeship that ever was" (Twain 372), when he had grown to the point where he could appreciate such a thing as an equal partner in a relationship. But just as Hank grows from Puss, he is torn away from Sandy, by Merlin.

7 Merlin and Morgan le Fay present the reader of *A Connecticut Yankee* with some of the darkest characters in the novel. Neither character seems able to stand on his or her own without Hank, but – unlike Puss – neither represents anything good about human nature, suggesting that they foreshadow darker aspects of the hero. For example, Merlin's power in the kingdom rests on the people's superstitions. Although Hank professes to hate this sort of mindless superstition, he engages in it himself by eclipsing the sun with his "power," blowing up Merlin's tower, and fixing the well with "magic" that turns out to be merely roman candles. Morgan le Fay embodies Hank's basic paradox: she embodies the very thing Hank wants to see destroyed – a bloodless revolution, and yet Hank relies on the same power over the people as Merlin (superstition) in order to institute that revolution.<sup>[2]</sup> Ironically, it is Merlin who delivers Hank his final blow in the sixth-century, suggesting that Hank's failure to be a better man than his enemies is what eventually destroys him.

8 Morgan le Fay presents an equally odd case. Hank's name seems to insinuate a connection between them: Morgan le Fay is a projection of Hank Morgan's darker, more humanitarian side. Her presence in the book seems to suggest some sort of connection to Hank's psyche, or perhaps she serves instead to foreshadow his later cruelties. Morgan also inspires Hank's soliloquy regarding how much of a man is himself, and how much is inherited. He says, "All that I think about in this plodding, sad pilgrimage, this journey between the eternities, is to look out and humbly live a pure and blameless life, so that that one microscopic atom in me is truly *me*: the rest may land in Sheol and woe me no more. I care" (Twain 161). In this passage, Hank seems to be excusing not only Morgan, but also himself, of every heinous crime that has been or will be committed from now on in forward time in the novel. By absolving her, he frees himself to continue employing the same scare-tactics in order to run Camelot.

# Films of the novel



**Figure 1.** Will Rogers plays a funnyman-version of Hank Morgan in David Butler's *A Connecticut Yankee*. & 1931 CBS / Fox Video.

- 9 In 1931, Will Rogers starred in one of the first film versions of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (see Figure 1). The film added an ingenious new frame narrative; however, this version lost some of the story's mystery. Hank Morgan, a radio announcer from Hartford, Connecticut, receives a call from a local patron for a battery delivery. Upon arriving, Hank comes upon a house on a stormy night, where "an inventor has created a machine that is powered by electricity and sounds from the past" (Sindelar, July 5). The storm knocks over a suit of armor, which comes crashing down on the unsuspecting Hank, rendering him unconscious. Hank finds himself in Camelot, where King Arthur's daughter, Alisande (Sandy), is a captive by the King's sister, Morgan le Fay. Clarence is love-struck with Sandy, and Hank decides to go in Clarence's stead, as Hank discovers that Clarence is his great-great-great-great grandfather. Merlin conspires with Morgan le Fay to kill the King and Sir Boss, but they are foiled. Bombs dropped on Morgan le Fay during the rescue serve to smash a tower – which falls on Hank, again rendering him unconscious, and bringing him back to the present.
- 10 These revisions to Twain's original story call for examination of Hank and his character's projections (the other characters). Hank begins the story with a bit of a shyness, which is maintained throughout. This is slightly undermined, however, by his sa

remains fairly true to the tone of the novel. In this setting, Hank is a sarcastic playing on Rogers' familiar stage persona – but as in the *Classics Illustrated* con the novel, he is flat, his darker side sacrificed for the adaptation. Moreover, in t is not after a peaceful revolution that will change England for the better; instea interested in becoming rich at the nation's expense. When Arthur asks whi magic advertising is, Hank replies, "It makes you pay money you don't have f don't want." This sentiment directly contradicts Twain's text, where Hank soap, for example, to "introduce cleanliness among the nobility, and from th work its way down to the people," (Twain 144-45). The film Hank does rescue from Morgan le Fay's castle during the final scene in Camelot, suggesting th humanitarian, but this side of Hank was not well-established before this point

11 Clarence is substantially transformed in the film. He is much older than 15, a being Hank's page, he is madly in love with the King's daughter, Alisar important role in the novel is much reduced; she is a damsel in distress, n Clarence is knighted in order to rescue her, but Hank discovers that Clarence i and so insists that he remain safe at the palace. (If Clarence is harmed or reasons, he can never be born.) Clarence has no relation to the telephone or a other inventions, with the exception of the air raid that ends up sending Han own time. But having no connection to the telephone does not damage his ass Puss Flanagan, as in this movie there is no association; Puss is never mentio aspect of Clarence's character that is notably preserved is Hank's first question what is thy sex?" (Rogers 1931). But this uncertainty is then dropped a addressed, nor used to deepen Hank's own character.

12 Merlin, on the other hand, retains his "my magic versus yours" role throughout Hank uses a cigar lighter and a cigar to show that he is more powerful than M "Where I come from, you pretty much have to be a magician to make a liv 1931). In this version, however, Merlin is not the instrument of Hank's den magician relies on Morgan le Fay for support, enmeshing their characterizatio Merlin could possibly still pass for the embodiment of superstition, Hank d him to gain his own power quite as much as in the novel.



13

Morgan le Fay's depiction in the film presents an interesting and ambiguous case. When Hank's last name is changed from "Hank" to "Martin," the tie between Morgan le Fay and Hank is weakened. Instead of serving as Hank's dark double, le Fay represents a love interest. This subplot only lasts for a few minutes, though, and soon we find that Hank is in love with her for the sake of freeing the King and his daughter.

14

Throughout the film, then, Hank remains a static character, because the other projections of his psyche – are less complexly realized. His sarcasm is intact, but he lacks an external measure of his growth (Sandy), no attachment to his past life (Clarence), no way to reveal his darker side (le Fay), and little to no competition from Merlin. On the other hand, Rogers's *A Connecticut Yankee* "a very entertaining rendition of the story" (Sinclair Lewis, but I would contend that this critic does not grasp the deeper relationships between the characters, which are largely lost with this rendition. Machinery and modernity pervade the screen, but their original significance – peaceful industrial revolution is sacrificed to forced love stories and a weak characterization of Hank.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Comic adaptations of the novel



**Figure 2.** Kings Classics page 3. Hank and Clarence are shown holding hands as Clarence shows Hank to Arthur's hall. © 1997 King Features.

15

One of the first adaptations of *A Connecticut Yankee* was a comic book product by King Features. In this version of the story, Hank is portrayed with notable complexity compared to the novel. His humane side is exposed when he frees Morgan le Fay's prisoner



also flashes his crueller side as he throws a bomb at a group of men while he are roaming the countryside. (The men are cast as brigands, not as knights as it perhaps as a way to justify Hank's cruelty.) During the tournament against S. Hank wields a gun, but instead of shooting the knight outright, he shoots just Sagramore's horse, making him buck and throw his rider. Thus, while Hank's image of humanitarian/heartless knave is maintained, his cruel nature is very much and in some cases even explained away.

16 Clarence is presented somewhat differently than one would expect; he offers help to Hank when they meet, and declares his own name as "Clarence." He also climbs through a loose stone instead of being the go-between for Hank and the king. Hank's threats to blot out the sun. Although there is no mention of Puss Flanagan, the homoerotic overtones of the novel are preserved. In one panel, Clarence binds Hank to King Arthur's court by the wrist, but in the next panel they are holding hands (Figure 2). Also, Hank observes that Clarence has become an indispensable "secret agent" (Classic 8); these devices effectively blur Clarence's gender.

17 The depiction of Sandy is also different from Twain's original. Where in the original she is a girl who's a bit of a nuisance, she appears in the comic as a voluptuous woman who agrees to go on her mission because "On second thought, these women are very pretty" (see Figure 3). No mention is made of her language, and all Germanic significance of the Valley of Holiness are gone. In the end, Hank marries Sandy, but the circumstances of their union appear to be different than in the original; Hank seems to be in love with her when he is marrying. This doesn't allow for the externalization of Hank's growth during his 6th century, as neither one of them seems to change much through the course



Figure 3. Kings Classics page 8. Hank agrees to help the king because "the women

- 18 Morgan le Fay is reduced in the comic to a watered-down version of her former self. She no longer has any power, only keeps prisoners. She pouts when Hank wants to free the slaves and has tantrums, only child-like tantrums. (This, coupled with the alterations of Sandy, suggests a sexist undercurrent of the adaptation.)
- 19 If Clarence, Sandy, and Morgan le Fay are notably less developed in the comic, the character of Merlin is beautifully rendered, aesthetically and faithfully to Twain's original. All of the strife between superstition and modern science are marked between Hank and Merlin in this edition. Hank observes of Clarence; "I thought it best to go along with you, not believing in Merlin's phony magic" (Kings Classic 4). This suggests to the reader the connection between Merlin and unfounded superstition, and also Hank's scorn for such beliefs. He does, however, use the eclipse as a way of saving his life and restoring power in the kingdom, and Merlin is still the one to ensure poetic justice by being the cause of Hank's undoing. In an interesting twist, however, Merlin tells Clarence to fix the eclipse that Hank started, thereby preserving Hank in history.
- 20 There are three *Classics Illustrated* editions of *A Connecticut Yankee*, published in 1945, 1971, and 1997. The 1945 is rare and exceedingly difficult to obtain, but I had the opportunity to examine the 1971 and 1997 editions, which are nearly identical. In the 1997 edition, Hank's depiction is very flat (his personality, that is; the comics are drawn with notable grace in this version – see Figure 4). This is due to the treatment of his supporting characters. Morgan le Fay, Hank's dark double, is left out entirely, rendering Hank the subject of heartless master/humanitarian. Sandy, too, plays a very different role and is no longer the mirror of Hank's growth. Their adventure together is struck from this edition; she shows up only to guide Hank to the Valley of Holiness, and once more in the end where Hank may marry her. Hank's sarcastic demeanor and jokes are maintained – for example, his quip to Clarence, "you're not more than a paragraph," is preserved – but his darker side is sacrificed, perhaps in order to reach a younger readership.
- 21 Merlin is depicted with somewhat greater complexity. After Clarence tells Hank that Merlin cast a spell on the dungeon, Hank thinks to



himself, "I hoped everyone was as superstitious as Clarence," (Classics Illustrated 4) and then tells Clarence to deliver the message to Merlin that he will blot out the sun if not released. In this way, Hank uses Merlin's power against him in that he harnesses the fears of the people; however, this concept is not developed further. The episode at the Holy Fountain is played down, making it seem as though Hank is buying into the power instead of dismissing it, even though he still uses it to his advantage. In the comic, Hank states, "Merlin! That cheap old humbug! He oughtn't to set up for an expert magician when there's a real artist like me around" (Classics Illustrated 11). The corresponding passage in the book is quite different: "Merlin was a magician who believed in his own magic. And no magician can do well who believes such silly things as that!" (Twain, 201). This difference is significant; in the Classics Illustrated version Merlin may still represent the people's superstition, but Hank's reaction to it, and subsequently to Merlin, is changed. Instead of scorning the superstition and yet still playing on it, as in the original, Hank is presented as believing in his own power, thus in a way sinking to a lower level. When Merlin causes Hank to sleep until he wakes in his own century, the justice of the scene is lost.



**Figure 1**  
Illustration of the Holy Fountain scene from the comic book Classics Illustrated, 1945.

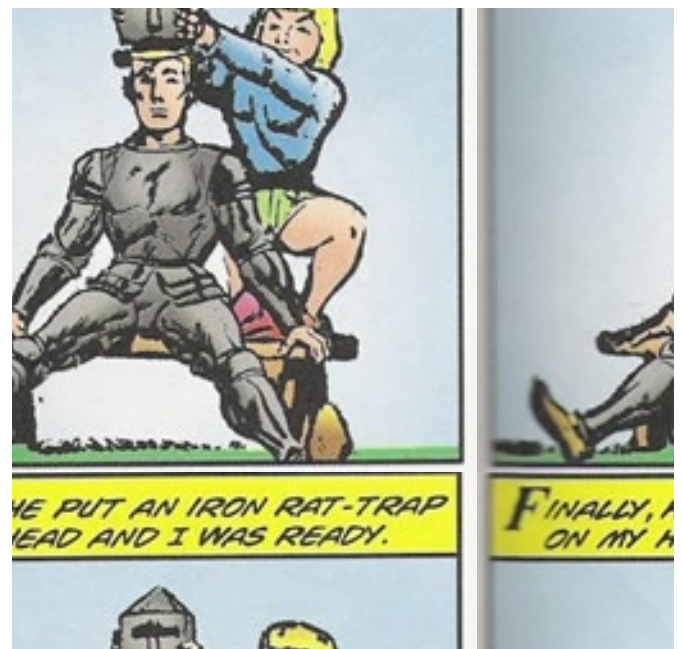
22

The only secondary character truly exploited in this version is Clarence. Although not stated directly, visual clues in the comic intimate the homoerotic overtones associated with Clarence in the early chapters of the novel. In the first panel showing Clarence (Figure 1), he is subjected to a rear-view of the "lad." His position and haircut strongly evoke the image of a Coppertone baby. A page later (see Figure 6), Clarence is drawn from the waist up, with an unusually prominent breast for a boy of fifteen. This is emphasized even more in Figure 7 and in two adjoining panels on page 9. Towards the end of the story, however, the homoerotic and feminine insinuations diminish, and in a matter of seven pages, disappear entirely. It is interesting that these homoerotic messages are maintained only pictorially. The homoerotic elements of the original, Clarence's doubling of Puss Flanagan, are nonexistent in the comic.





**Figure 5.** Classics Illustrated page 3. Clarence is shown with a feminine haircut. In this particular panel, his posture seems to be a throwback to the Coppertone Baby, who was a girl. © 1945 Circle Publishing Co.



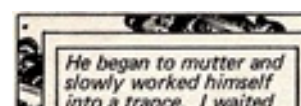
**Figure 6.** Classics Illustrated page 9. Shown here from the waist-up, Clarence is drawn with a rather large chest for a boy of fifteen, perhaps alluding to feminine breasts. © 1945 Circle Publishing Co.

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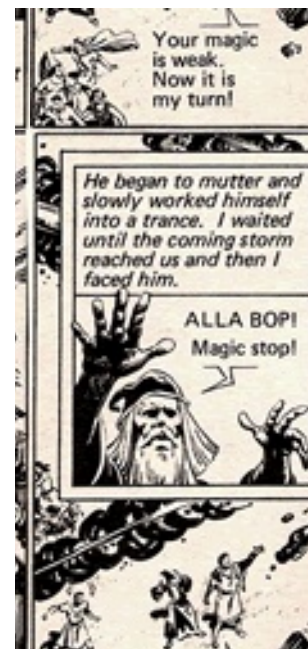
The 1984 *Pocket Classics* comic differs substantially from the *Classics Illustrated*. Where Hank in the *CI* version is simply a sarcastic funnyman, in the *Pocket Classics* he is dry and straightforward. A similarity of the comics, however, is that in *CI* cruelty is less prominent than in the novel. For example, in the *Pocket Classics* version, Hankle Fay is present, but it is she who has both bands hung (26-27) and is completely isolated from Hank's character, diminishing the importance of their relationship. Sandy is more frequently present in this version than in the *Classics Illustrated*, but she still fails to reflect Hank's emotional growth. Here, she is described as a blonde, but that is never resolved, as Hank's "Mother of the German language" solution is never made it into this version. He does mention that Sandy is useful to have along, but she is mute through the rest of the story, appearing only to be wed to Hank and to bear his child. Although she is present in more nuances in this comic than the *Illustrated Classics*, she is still an inferior version of what she was originally, and with this the complexity of Hank's character is diminished.

24

If Clarence most fully realizes his original functions in the



*Classics Illustrated* version, in the *Pocket Classics* version that role goes to Merlin. (In fact, Clarence is left out of this version almost entirely, appearing only by allusion as a generic page in one panel, and by name only three times.) Merlin is also given the distinction of being placed in non-linear panels, a device which no other comic adaptation of *A Connecticut Yankee* utilizes so effectively (see Figure 7). Upon hearing Clarence's declaration that Merlin cast a spell on the dungeon, Hank replies, "Merlin! Why, that crazy old man with his silly beliefs!" An aside then gives us Hank's thoughts, "But it suddenly occurred to me that if everyone here was so afraid of Merlin's magic, perhaps I could work out a plan" (*Pocket Classics*, 12). In this single panel, an entirely different tone is set with regard to Merlin and superstition. In *Classics Illustrated* version, Hank seemed to believe in his own power, falling for the superstitions which gave him his power. In this version, however, Twain's conception is followed more closely, as Hank regards Merlin (and superstition and magic) as "crazy," but then decides to use that to his advantage. This hypocrisy is what gives Hank's character its depth in the original. Also, this version quotes Twain directly during the episode at the Valley of Holiness: "Merlin was a magician who believed in his own magic. And no magician can do well who believes such silly things as that" (*Pocket Classics*, 35; Twain, 201). As a result, Hank's undoing by Merlin's magic has more significance, for Hank is beaten by the very power he harnessed to achieve greatness and win first place.



**Figure 7.** *Pocket Classics* adaptation of *A Connecticut Yankee*. Merlin's character is depicted as a villain, but a very effective one. The paneling throughout the comic book version of *A Connecticut Yankee* depicts Merlin as a very interesting character. © Academic Industries, Inc.

## Conclusion

25 Throughout different adaptations of *A Connecticut Yankee*, a common trait is clear: Hank is not the character that Twain originally wrote him to be. Although different elements of the original are changed in each adaptation, Hank is generally either boring, or simply a flat funnyman with little humanitarian intent. His connection with Morgan le Fay, is generally omitted in the comic book version:

And it is also clear that the modifications to the other characters affect Hank, ; Sandy does not parallel Hank (or, when Hank shows no change in percep Sandy), his growth throughout the story is diminished; there is little to development for Hank in those texts where Sandy plays a more minor role.

26 In the case of Clarence, the sexual ambivalence of the original is generally lost entire past is ignored, including Puss Flanagan and the conflict between Hank his "lost darling" and his growing feelings for Sandy. Clarence's role in the a generally to guide Hank through the first scene with the King and to bring ne his dungeon cell before the eclipse. As Clarence is reduced from a page to a ] borrow Twain's pun,<sup>[4]</sup> Hank's corresponding depth of character is reduced. Th which Clarence maintains any depth is when he is portrayed, as in the Classi version, as possibly gender-crossing.

27 Changes in the depiction of Merlin have a similar effect on Hank's depictions. represents the superstition that Hank scorns but uses to his own advantage, treatment of Merlin's character alters Hank's adopted use of this power. Cha unavoidably changes Hank's original perception of whether or not using Me power is wrong.

28 None of the comic book adaptations of *A Connecticut Yankee* capture the co ambiguity of Twain's novel. Generally, each version seems to champion one o characters in order to challenge or promote Hank's personality. If my analysis so critical at times, it is only because Twain's original story offered us much ma with in the first place. Sifting through all the possible variations of how to adap came to find that the characters which most radically changed the story – written poorly – are Clarence and Merlin. Clarence has the potential to connection to his past, and thus alter his perception of his current situation. M other hand, must embody unquestioning superstition in order for Hank to 1 such an idea while simultaneously using it to his advantage. In short, each co different and varying aspects of Twain's original tale; however, no two versions in which character is developed in order to support the Yankee. At the end of



offers us a different lens by which to view the novel, whether the lens of superstitions, Clarence's offering of a transitional relationship, or Sandy's equality in relationships.

29 Twain's novel is, of course, only one of countless texts that have been adapted to the comic book medium. Classics Illustrated, Graphic Classics, Pocket Classics, and King's Comics are only a few of the various companies that heavily rely on classic works of literature as source material, and their popularity among comic book aficionados and scholars attests to the believability of the attraction readers feel for these adapted texts. But in most of the adaptations, the original stories are substantially flattened; they are limited by the physical space of the comic book they hope to transpose the story (such as the number of pages they have to work within the comic book's dimensions) and by the projected readership, generally excluding adult and young readers<sup>[5]</sup>.

30 The adaptations of *A Connecticut Yankee* demonstrate why special attention should be paid to comics that adapt long prose fiction. Those elements that are excluded from the adaptation because of medial limitations, or to tailor the original to a narrower readership, help to determine how well an adaptation represents (or resembles) the text from which it was adapted. Lenny Kaye discusses the role that Albert Kanter, creator of the Classics Illustrated comic books, imagined his comic books to serve. He had no intention of supplanting the original texts, but instead "he merely wanted to place the original books in a form more accessible to a generation that was beginning to recoil from the linearity of printed matter and the immediate...media" (Kaye, qtd in Sawyer 6). Comics should not be judged by how well they not only successfully stuff a long novel into a comic format (which is surely impossible for many reasons), but by what lens they offer of the original text. Each adaptation offers a different aspect of the original, and these differing lenses may serve to help readers view old texts in new lights, to see, in effect, those aspects of prose narrative difficult to see in the original because they are present – rather than omitted – or are differently integrated into the system of the work.

## Notes

[1] See, for example, Howard Baetzhold, "Well, My Book Is Written – Let It Go..."

of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. 1996; Joe Fulton, *Mark Twain in Margins: The Quarry Farm Marginalia and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, 2000; and David Kelly, "Critical Essay on *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*," *Novels for Students*, 2005.

[2] See chapters 6-7, 14, 20, and 22-24 for examples of Hank's dealings with sixth-grade superstition.

[3] Other film adaptations of the novel – *Unidentified Flying Oddball* (1979), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1995), and *Bugs Bunny in King Arthur's Court* (1977) – are so far from original in nearly every respect that "adaptation" is too strong a word for their relationship with Twain's story. (I believe "borrowed the general idea" is closer to the truth.) Little reason exists to include them in this study, as none of Twain's characters or settings are in these adaptations.

[4] When Clarence meets Hank for the first time and introduces himself as a paragraph, Hank replies "Go 'long,...you ain't more than a paragraph," (Twain, 47).

[5] For a fuller discussion of Classics Illustrated Study Guides, please consult William B. Jones Jr.'s *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History With Illustrations*.

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