

"In Safe Hands": Despotism and Guilt in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court
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This essay addresses the role Hank's guilt plays in terms of his transposition of Gilded Age American values onto an Arthurian-era society. Hank's love of democracy conflicts with his almost absolute power and he inflicts what he feels is righteous judgment on Arthur's knights to mask his own misgivings about his position. As Hank comes to enjoy his power more, his actions toward the knights as well as innocent civilians become more heinous and he begins to mirror the tyrannical nature of the system he abhors. The essay develops how unlimited power impacts even the most idealistic individuals and how humor and violence serve to mask Hank's not-so-slow descent into the abyss of undeserved social position, namely aristocracy. I also analyze whether or not the fallibility of Hank's "American" values proves that these ideals only exist in a vacuum and do not hold true under pressure.