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castle, she is a threat; the embodiment of the anima who surfaces in "male territory." As such, she is a target who is invariably raped. (Another, competing interpretation of this motif is that the "woman-in-the-wilderness" is a female in touch with her own animus, daring to move about like a man; then, as now, there are powerful reprisals for women who interact with men as equals, including, too often, rape.)³

In conclusion, Meister's "mirror" between shadow and persona, as manifested in the rapists and heroes of the courtly romance, is complemented by a mirror between male characters and their animas, as projected onto women. It is worth investigating the extent to which this "little acknowledged theme" of rape underlies the plot construction in other examples of this literature. In any case, Meister's analysis of this aspect of the courtly romance results in the transformation of the heroic quest from an endeavor of noble origin to the visible aspect of a more complex pattern which is inherently violent toward women.

NOTES

¹Angyal characterizes this splitting as the formation of a "duality" in the personality.

²Men are also trapped in this interpretation, becoming little more than actors locked in struggle with their animas.

³Brownmiller describes several instances of rape used to control women socially and politically, particularly when a woman exhibits behavior "appropriate only to the male and therefore intrudes upon and threatens the male role" (286).

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THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF T. H. WHITE'S

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

EVANS LANSING SMITH

Anthony Burgess includes *The Once and Future King* in his 99 *Novels: The Best in English Since 1939*, citing the novel's excellence of characterization, events, and dialogue, and pointing out its relevance as a "lesson . . . for our time" (72). Though he says that "his ambitious work is a true novel" (72), he does not mention the cunning use of the conventional devices of form that give extraordinary shape and significance to the novel's mythic materials. T. H. White has condensed the material into a narrative "whole. . . . It is the tragedy, the Aristotelian and comprehensive tragedy, of a sin coming home to roost" (312). He achieves this wholeness through a consistency of thematic development, a reconciliation of opposites in the plot structure of the individual books, and through a highly wrought scheme of parallelism among the books.

The plot structure of all four books is basically the same: each book oscillates between opposing settings in the progressive development of its plot, which culminates in a reconciliatory climax which recapitulates the entire action of the individual book. In book 1, "The Sword and the Stone," the action moves back and forth between the Castle, where Wart receives Ector's "edification" appropriate to a young squire and civilized gentleman, and the Forest, where Wart experiences the "education" of Merlyn's magic transformations. When in the penultimate chapter he pulls the sword from the stone, the opposed realms of civilization and nature come together, a reconciliation which consecrates Arthur's coronation. In book 2, "The Queen of Air and Darkness," White balances the opposed settings of Gallic Camelot in the South, and Gaelic Dunlouthian in the North, bringing the two realms together in the Battle of Bedegraine and the subsequent seduction of Arthur by Queen Morgause of Orkney. Book 3, "The Ill-Made Knight," oscillates between the chambers of Camelot where Arthur, Guenevere, and Lancelot enact their chivalric drama of courtly love, and the surrounding country where the various Quests occur. The action divides this large book of the tetralogy into three sections: before the appearance of the Grail, the Grail Quests, and the events after the Grail Quests conclude. The

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climactic moment which recapitulates the action comes with Lancelot's miraculous healing of Urre, on the plain outside the Castle walls. Finally, book 4, "The Candle in the Wind," toilers between the public chambers of Arthur's new Court of Justice, where the Orkney clan gathers to plot its conspiracy, and the private inner chambers of the Castle, where Lancelot and Guenevere are trapped by Mordred and Agravaun. The two realms of public "justice" and private "sin" are brought together during the ironically named "pageant of reconciliation" (696), during which Guenevere is absolved and Lancelot banished. After this ironic "reconciliation," the chapters polarize Arthur in his tents and Mordred the usurper in Castle Carlisle.

The notion of the reconciliation of opposites is of course basic to the structure of comedy, where the marriage of male and female brings together the opposing factions within and without to make new life possible. The ineluctable severing of the opposites constitutes the motive of tragedy, where the death of the hero results from the triumph of internal and external schisms. T. H. White incorporates the structure of both genres in his "comprehensive" novel, relying on the rhythms of comedy in books 1 and 2, and modulating towards tragedy in books 3 and 4. The novel as a whole is both a comedy and a tragedy" (Crane 85), and divides itself into two halves accordingly. Furthermore, although each of the books is a self-contained novel, each also functions "contrapuntally" as a movement within a symphonic whole.

The comedy of both books 1 and 2 relies structurally on the reconciliation of carefully orchestrated oppositions (of character, of setting, and of theme). In "The Sword and the Stone," the opposition is between the "edification" Sir Ector provides his son Kay in the environs of the Castle, and the "education" Merlyn gives Wart through a series of magic transformations. The former is largely concerned with the skills and virtues of a civilized country lord: a dose of rhetoric in the morning followed by horsemanship and tilting, hawking, fencing, archery, theories of chivalry, and the terminology and etiquette of hunting (9). The latter, however, constitutes Merlyn's rejection of these petty skills; Merlyn provides the Wart complex instruction in the ways of nature, a kind of eccentric course in natural history during which the young King Arthur is transformed into a fish, a hawk, an owl, an ant, a goose, and a badger.

Each natural transformation, however, is meant to prepare Wart for the kingship of an ideal country, and each transformation introduces him to the variety of social and political systems he would be likely to encounter during a course in political philosophy. From the King of the Moat, the pike Wart meets in the watercourse around the Castle, Wart learns about an

"absolute monarch" (51) whose philosophy is Power: "only Might is Right" (52) he tells Wart before nearly devouring him. Among the hawks in the initiations, complex pedigrees and hierarchies, and ritualized modes of social interaction. As an ant he experiences life in a totalitarian state: the ants have numbers instead of names, no language adequate to free thought, an unquestioned devotion to their "Mammy," a chant which goes "Antland, Antland Over All," and a hysterical craving for "defensive" warfare. Opposing the fascist totalitarianism of the ants is the Utopia of the snow geese, a boundaryless democracy of pacifist individuals, and the academic circle of badgers who live in a humulus like "a college" surrounded by portraits of "ancient . . . departed badgers" in the Great Hall, and sip from decanters while their black gowns are hung up outside during the reading of a treatise about the embryonic origins of the species (189-90).

While this plot seems merely repetitive and circular (one transformation after another), it is actually linear and progressive, having to do with the education of the King. In this sense, the encounter with the badger is truly, as Merlyn says, "the end" of Wart's education (183); its treatise on the origins and development of animals leading up to Man (190) sums up everything Wart has learned under Merlyn's tutelage in book 1. In fact, the episodes of the Wart's transformations anticipate in microcosm the structure of the novel as a whole: we move from the "Might is Right" philosophy of the King of the Moat, which Arthur encounters and then fights in books 1 and 2, to the Utopian vision of a boundaryless world among the snow geese, a vision Arthur returns to in his monologue on the concluding page of book 4, where he imagines a world "which had no corners . . . without boundaries between the nations" (639). This first book is indeed "contrapuntally omnivorous" (75) as a "foundation for the three books that follow it" (Crane 85).

The tragic ending which it anticipates is led into by the counterpoint of comedy, a "light and refreshing" tone (Crane 76) appropriate to springtime and youth. All of book 1 is invigorated by the energy of satire: of politics, of academia, and of course of Malory. Yet it is a gentle, loving satire of the latter, and adds to the tradition of Arthurian literature a unique and extended view of Arthur's childhood, unlike anything before it. The only possible Arthurian source I am aware of for the techniques of Merlyn's education is the "Romance of Vallesin" from the *Red Book of Hergest*, a thirteenth-century Welsh manuscript which Lady Charlotte Guest included in her well known edition of the *Mabinogion* of 1848. This romance concerns the education of Gwion, the apprentice of the witch Ceridwen, who cooks up a cauldron of inspiration to feed her youngest child, an ugly boy not

favoured (like Wart) by his father. By tasting her magic brew, Gwion transforms himself into a hare, fish, sparrow, and grain of wheat before being eaten by Ceridwen. He is then reborn from her as the poet Taliesin, an ancient Welsh poet of the sixth century who claimed that he had once been Merlin (Graves 27-28; Stone 58-60). Perhaps T. H. White adapted this mythological view of the education of poet and sage to his concerns with the education of the young boy King.

Between transformations, we see Wart in his adoptive father's Castle during chapters devoted to the ideals of Sir Ector's feudalism (chapter 14), a glorious Dickensian Christmas feast (chapter 15), boathunts on Boxing Day for the gentry (chapter 16), and the initiation of Kay into knighthood (chapter 20). As in so many Arthurian works, the central opposition here is between the Courtly world of chivalry, and the Celtic world of natural magic, which the hero must unite within himself (Zimmer 67-201). The two come together in the chapter devoted to the pulling of the sword from the stone in a church courtyard in London. It is to this climactic moment that all of Merlyn's transformations of the Wart were leading up to, and in this moment the opposites are reconciled. Although the setting (London, Church Yard, *Jousting/Tourney*) represents the realm of chivalric concerns associated with Sir Ector's "edification" of the boys, the actual moment of the pulling of the sword from the stone recapitulates all of the Wart's transformations under the tutelage of Merlyn. All of the animals encountered during Wart's "education" join together in this moment to encourage him in his efforts: the King of the Moat urges him to use the "power that springs from the nape of the neck"; the Badger calls him "my dear embryo" and reminds him of the foreruns; a Merlin urges him never to let go and a tawny Owl suggests he "Keep up a steady effort"; finally, the snow goose says "Fold your powers together, with the spirit of your mind, and it will come out like butter" (204-05). What follows is the splendid coronation scene, the last grandly detailed chapter of book 1 which brings together all of the major human characters of "The Sword and the Stone."

The second book of the tetralogy, "The Queen of Air and Darkness," follows exactly this same structural principle based on the reconciliation of opposites. The chapters move back and forth between contrasting settings and characters: Camelot in the South, where Arthur and Merlyn discuss matters of statecraft and warfare, and Dunlothian in the Orkney islands of the North, where the sons of Morgause (Gawain, Agravaun, Gareth, and Caheris) struggle to win their mother's love and enjoy the stories of St. Toridealhach. Thematicallly, the book juxtaposes the concerns of War (Mars), the primary focus of Arthur's deliberations, and Love (Venus), the malady afflicting all the characters in the North. The plot gradually effects

a union of the opposites in the last chapters of the book, when, after the Battle between Arthur and Lot, the elaborately wrought marriage of King Pellinore and Piggy of Flanders brings Mars and Venus together during the seduction of Arthur by Morgause.

The maladies of love unify the action in Castle Dunlothian. Book 2 begins with the young Gaelic clan recounting the story of Uther's seduction of their grandmother, the "chaste and beautiful Igraine" by means of the "infernal arts" of the "nigromancer" Merlyn (216). That Igraine was "forced into marrying the King of England—the man who had slain her husband" sows the seeds of the revenge tragedy that the novel as a whole will inevitably come round to harvesting: "Gawaine said: 'Revenge!' and so it will be" (217). Meanwhile their mother, rightful daughter of Igraine and the Earl of Cornwall, amuses herself by boiling a cat to make herself invisible, and falls asleep in her usual state of sexual agitation. Her sons vow revenge because they love her (219), and they attempt to demonstrate their love by brutally slaughtering a unicorn, the poor beast falling prey to the charms of the chambermaid whose virgin lap he is tricked to laying his head into.

Morgause, however, is at this point completely indifferent to her children's efforts to win her love: she is much more interested in King Pellinore and Palomides, who have arrived from the south on a mythic barge, and who look to Morgause likely candidates as lovers while her husband Lot is away fighting Arthur. Pellinore, however, is preoccupied with Piggy of Flanders, with whom he had fallen in love before being swept off by the magic barge. Palomides attempts to alleviate his melancholy by dressing up as the Questing Beast, but Pellinore is as indifferent as Morgause was to her children. When Piggy arrives in Orkney, the real Questing Beast serendipitously arrives with her, and takes such a fancy to the fake Beast that it requires a psychoanalysis ("But not too much of Freud") to be cured (305). St. Toridealhach, the tutor to the Gaelic clan, is also afflicted by the urgings of love that rule the denizens of Dunlothian; he sits drinking whiskey in Mother Morvan's kitchen, cooking up a "new heresy" having "something to do with the celibacy of the clergy" (240). When Merlyn appears briefly during his walking tour of the North, he too is preoccupied by love, pondering the preparations for his "nuptial journey to the Sargasso Sea, for the time of Ninive was at hand" (304).

Back in Camelot, Mars rather than Venus reigns, as Arthur discusses history, military strategy, and political philosophy with Merlyn in preparation for the upcoming wars with King Lot of Orkney. Merlyn relates to Arthur the historical background of the opposition between the Norman Galls and the Celtic Gaels. His historical overview looks backward from the

Norman to the Saxon to the Roman invasions to a prehistoric conflict between two Gaelic races, one wielding copper hatchets and the other bronze swords (229-31). Later in the novel, T. H. White will update the conflict by suggesting Morfred's connection to contemporary Gaelic groups like the I. R. A. (518). In dealing with this latest eruption of civil war in the United Kingdom (of which Arthur is the first mythical king), Arthur develops a less feudal approach to battle, working out a revolutionary military strategy which requires attack by night, neglects slaughtering the serfs to take the brunt of charge directly against the barons, and the utilization of a foreign alliance with two French kings (298-302).

But the primary focus of the chapters in book 2 set in Camelot is on Arthur's efforts to think out a new political philosophy which will reconcile the opposites of Might and Right. Merlyn criticizes the "Might is Right" motto of the feudal barons, which is devastating the country (225). This leads Arthur to work out an "order of chivalry" (248) for the "new ideal of the Round Table" (298). Its oath will be "that Might is only to be used for Right" (266), and it becomes the basis for justifying the current war with the Gaelic Confederation. Merlyn is at first enthusiastic, reacting the "first few words of the Nunc Dimittis" when Arthur communicates his plans (248), but as a philosopher, he is later skeptical, seeing Arthur's attempts "to impose his ideas on King Lot" (as Kay realizes) as parallel to Hitler's efforts at "reformation by the sword" (266-67).

The opposite realms of Gall and Gael come together on the plain of Bedegraine, where the battle is fought which will unite the Kingdom. The conflicting themes of Love and War merge in the chapters following the battle, when Morgause seduces Arthur shortly after arriving in Camelot with her four boys from Dunlothian (Gawain and his brothers). In the last chapter of book 2, all opposites are "reconciled" in the grand manner of comedy, with a splendid marriage feast celebrating the nuptials of King Pellinore and Queen Piggy. Marriage of course is the end of comic works, and it symbolizes the union of opposites (male and female) which resolves tensions in the society and makes new life possible. But among other opposites, this novel as a whole is also a mixture of comedy and tragedy; hence the marriage "reconciliation" is complicated by the fact that two other unions occur in chapter 14: Merlyn falls asleep with "the image of Nimue already weaving itself in his sleepy brain" and Arthur falls asleep thinking "of being married himself one day" and awakens with his half-sister Morgause standing in front of him (311).

Morgause effects her illicit union with Arthur for partially martial ends, having had her husband defeated by the King and her grandfather

killed by Arthur's father: the offspring of this union will be Morfred, the avenger of Gaelic wrongs. All is fair in love and war, and Morgause brings Venus and Mars together through the use of Celtic magic. As she stands before Arthur, she is folding up a Spancel, a strip of skin cut from a corpse on the battlefield to form a continuous silhouette of the body. When thrown over the head of the loved victim, it has the power to compel love, unless the victim awakens during the maneuver, in which case he will die within the year (305). Morgause, in other words, is an avatar of the ancient Celtic Triple Goddess, who brings the opposites together: she is the eternal nymph, the mother of four sons, and the hag whose magic can kill. Her seduction of Arthur evokes the *liebedod*, the love death motif of the Tristan romances here worked out so that the progeny of Arthur's love will be the instrumental cause of his death (Morfred).¹ The allusion to the triplicate nature of the Celtic Goddess is even clearer when we look carefully at the pedigree T. H. White provides us at the end of book 2. Igraine is the Grandmother (the one Great Goddess) of three daughters, all witches (Morgan le Fay, Elaine, and Morgause). There are three major female characters in the novel (Morgause, Elaine, and Guenevere), and Arthur becomes the lover consort of the Goddess under the spell of her magic.² With a Gallic father and a Gaelic mother, Arthur is ideally suited to unite the schisms in the Kingdom.

At this moment, the climax of book 2 and the exact middle of the novel as a whole, the rhythm of comedy modulates towards tragedy. T. H. White concludes the chapter by stating that "the pedigree is a vital part of the tragedy of King Arthur," and that "the narrative is a whole It is the tragedy, the Aristotelian and comprehensive tragedy, of sin coming home to roost" (312). Arthur's "sin" is of course incest (with Morgause his half-sister). His tragedy is both pagan Greek (Oedipal and Oresteian) and Christian. It is Oedipal in the sense that he is fated not to know who his mother was (Crane 94) and hence is subjected to "a set of inescapable circumstances, one more fashioned by fate than by human error, which will doom the hero no matter how hard he tries to escape them (Crane 96); and it is "a regular Greek doom, comparable to that of Orestes" in that Arthur must pay for the wrongs of his father and the transgressions against his mother (White, *qtd. in* Warner xi). It is Christian in the sense of being the inevitable consequence of original sin, and the novel as a whole proceeds according to the Biblical paradigm: from Arthur's childhood and youth, when "Take the man in Eden before the fall, he was enjoying his innocence and fortune" (White 226), to the fall effected by his incestuous union and the adultery of Lancelot and Guenevere, to the descent of the instrument of

redemption (the Grail as the Incarnation), to the apocalypse of the last battle with Mordred, after which Arthur hopes to see a new heaven and a new earth established with his return.

White tells us explicitly, however, that the tragedy is "Aristotelian" (312), and this provides the basis of the clever linkage between books 2 and 3. An Aristotelian tragedy is one rooted in the consequences of a tragic flaw (*hamartia*), usually pride (*hubris*). Hence when the eye moves from page 312 to the title of book 3 opposite (in the paper edition), one cannot fail to notice the connection between the title, "The Ill-Made Knight," and the notion of the tragic flaw in Aristotelian theory. Lancelot, in book 3, is most predominately, in White's characterization, a flawed, or ill-made knight, and when we read the opening pages of chapter 1 of book 3, we find the young Lancelot contemplating his ugly face, which seems to suggest that something "must have gone wrong in the depths of his spirit to make a face like that" (317). It is of course this flaw in his nature which plays a major role in the tragedy of Arthur. In fact, the entirety of book 3 develops the implications of the various flaws in the major characters which lead up to the final tragedy: Lancelot's cupidity and pride, Guenevere's selfishness, and Arthur's innocent avoidance of domestic problems (Crane 103-08).

Book 3, like its predecessors, oscillates between opposites of character, and setting, with its major focus being on the war within each character, what the Middle Ages called psychomachia. Guenevere suffers from a dual love for both Arthur and Lancelot which produces a "chaos of the mind and body" (379) which she struggles to "balance" during her middle years (377). Her dual love enacts the medieval theme of the conflict between love (*amor*) and honor (*arres*), a theme exhaustively treated by, among others, Chretien de Troyes³: she feels "respect . . . gratitude, kindness, love and a sense of protection" for Arthur, but none of the "passion of romance" (363). Lancelot, of course, is caught in a similar but more complex "dilemma" (367) which opposes *logos* (Christian and Chivalric ideals) and *eros* (367): he is driven by a need to serve God and King, but even more compelled by his obsessive love for Guenevere, for whom he would sacrifice everything. Add to this his sense of responsibility in the complications which result from his seduction by Elaine and the conception of Galahad, and the capacity for cruelty which paradoxically makes him merciful, and one begins to have a sense of Lancelot's "contradictory nature which was far from holy" (339).

Externally, T. H. White uses the figure of the "Eternal Quadrangle" to describe the conflict between paired sets of opposites in book 3: Lancelot is caught between both Guenevere and Arthur and Guenevere and God, and in both cases "the two objects of his affection were contradictory" (483). This

figure might also be applied to the mutually interlocking of love triangles of book 3, which combined give us a four-sided diamond, symbol of eternal love (Arthur, Lancelot, Guenevere, Elaine). Or perhaps the Pentangle would be the appropriate figure, with God the fifth point of the star which the *Gauvain*-poet calls "the Endlesse Knot" (623). If so, then we might have to put a picture of Morgan le Fay on the inside of the shield, since she is the one pulling the strings of fate in the novel. Or, we might put a "God" or perhaps a "Goddess" in the center of this Eternal Quadrangle, for it is a divine personification of the Self which makes the reconciliation of opposites possible, performing what Jung called the "transcendent function" of the psyche (273-300). If we focus on the Lancelot-Arthur-Guenevere half of the Quadrangle, then a Christian God would be in the center, but if we focus on the Lancelot-Elaine-Guenevere half, then it would be the opposing pagan counterpart of the Christian divine in the center, the Celtic Goddess Morgan le Fay. For it is "Queen Morgan le Fay" who, we learn, is responsible for putting Elaine in the boiling cauldron for five years, from which she might be rescued only by "the best knight in the world" (370), who everyone knows is Lancelot. It seems that Morgan has set this Celtic "miracle" up for Lancelot, perhaps out of revenge for being spurned by him four chapters earlier in White's narrative (chapter 7).

The rest of the novel also implies that the nearly divine power of the feminine rules the action from behind the scenes, as does Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In book 1, several of the major powers Wart encountered during his transformations were female: "the great peregrine falcon" (78) who rules in the news is addressed with fear and respect as "Madam" (79), the ants sing a monotonous hymn of praise to "Mammy-mammy-mammy" (126-27), and the snow goose who gives Arthur the vision of a world with "no boundaries" (638) that the novel ends with is female. In book 2, the appearances of Morgause in the first and last chapters frame the narrative, suggesting that somehow its action falls within her dominion. In fact, White will in book 4 be quite explicit in identifying the feminine (specifically the mother) with "the heart of tragedy": "It is the mother's not the lover's lust that rots the mind. It is that which condemns the tragic character to his walking death. It is Jocasta, not Juliet, who dwells in the inner chamber. It is Gertrude, not the silly Ophelia, who sends Hamlet to his madness" (611).

White brings the four human actors of his tragic Quadrangle together in chapter 16 of book 3 in a masterful dissection of the "subtle motives" of his "interesting characters" (389). In a logical progression of paragraphs, he delineates the "artlessness" of Elaine, the "revolted elements" of Lancelot's

character, the prescient intuition of Guenevere, and the loving "simplicity" of Arthur (386-69). Each paragraph is detailed and carefully structured, moving point by point through the terms of its analysis. This shows that White's attention to the larger issues of form and structure in his treatment of Arthurian matters is consistently applied as well to the smaller building blocks of the novel: the microcosm of sentence and paragraph reflects the "comprehensive" sense of order White applies to the macrocosm of the narrative as a "whole" (312). There are in fact many other examples of White's rigorous ordering of sentence and paragraph structures within the context of clearly focused chapters of the novel, such as his splendid historical overviews of Medieval England in book 4 (chapter 3), and his penetration into the "Inferno" of Arthur's pre-war monologue in the last chapter of the novel (627-34).

The plot structure of book 3 follows the same oscillation between opposites we saw in the first two books of the novel: the action moves back and forth between Castle and Quest. At Camelot, Lancelot and Guenevere enact their drama of courtly love, while Lancelot and Arthur discuss the progress of Arthur's chivalric ideals of the Round Table. During his Quests, Lancelot seeks to impose those ideals upon the feudal barons (chapters 7-8), to rescue and be seduced by Elaine (chapters 11-12), to run naked as the Wild Man of the Wood and be healed by Elaine (chapters 19-24), to go forth in quest of the Grail (chapters 28-33), and to do battle as the Knight of the Cart with Meliagance (chapter 42). The narrative of book 3 is not "loosely structured" as Crane suggests (93), but divisible into three parts, each of which moves between Castle and Quest: the Quests before the appearance of the Grail, the Grail Quests themselves, and Lancelot's departure from Camelot to Corbin after the Grail Quests. In the first, Lancelot attempts to escape from his illicit passion for Guenevere in Camelot by enforcing Arthur's chivalric ideals on the barons; in the second, the Grail quests by which Arthur attempts to direct the power of Might in the service of the spirit are recounted by the knights returning to Camelot; and in the third, Lancelot fights Mador and Meliagance at Camelot to absolve Guenevere of adultery charges after he returns from Elaine.

As with the previous books of the novel, a penultimate public ceremony serves as the climax of book 3, bringing together all of the major events and characters in a grand finale. This ceremony involves the healing of Sir Urre of Hungary, whose wounds "were to go on bleeding . . . until the best knight in the world had tended them and saved them with his hands" (511). Lancelot privately dreads the ordeal of being chosen to perform this miracle, which he is certain will result in the "public demonstration" of his "treachery, adultery, and murder" (512). His honor, however, stands up to

the test against his shame, and he heals Urre during the pageant in the pavilioned fields surrounding Camelot. When he does so a tremendous display of energetic joy is released by those looking on, among whom we notice all of the major characters encountered by Lancelot during his movements between Castle and Quest: Arthur, Gawaine, Bors, King Anguish of Ireland, Sir Bellicus, Sir Bedivere, Sir Bliant, Sir Castor, Aglovale and Gareth, Sir Mador and King Pelles, Uncle Dap, and of course Guenevere (514). Each character played his role in what we might call Lancelot's "education," and each appears in this scene, which parallels Arthur's miracle of pulling the sword from the stone at the end of book 1, when all of the animals of his previous quests appeared in his support.

Lancelot is able to perform this miracle through the grace of god: "The miracle," he says, "was that he had been allowed to do a miracle" (514). Unlike the pure Knights whose discovery of the Grail had led them to abandon life for the pure realms of the spirit (Bors, Galahad, and Percival), Lancelot is drawn back into the mortal realm of suffering and sin through his love for Guenevere and Arthur. In so doing, he enacts the mythological role of the Bodhisattva, the enlightened one who out of compassion for the world returns from Nirvana to help others. Perhaps this is why Lancelot becomes a Christ figure in Chrétien de Troyes's "The Knight of the Cart": like Christ, Lancelot endures the sorrows and sins of the world because of his love, unable to ascend with his son Galahad into the heaven of a distant God (note that the Arthurian material reverses this traditional equation of the incarnate son and the deincarnate Father).⁴

In the final book of the tetralogy, "The Candle in the Wind," the setting moves between two sections of the Castle at Camelot: the Justice Room and the inner chambers of the King and Queen, from the public to the private realms of court. In the early chapters, only Arthur moves between the two worlds, in both cases coming by surprise first on the feuding Gaelic clan in the Justice Room, where Mordred and Gawain debate a public accusation of Lancelot and Guenevere, and then upon Lancelot and Guenevere, who are arguing in the inner chambers about a private confession of their affair to Arthur. Because of Arthur's new preoccupations, justice and civil law, Mordred and Agravaïn determine to catch Lancelot in Guenevere's bedroom and present the evidence in court for a trial by jury. They do so, and Lancelot kills everyone but Mordred, but Guenevere is then tried and sentenced to be executed. Lancelot rescues her and takes her to his own castle, Joyous Gard, where he is besieged by Arthur and Gawain, who believes Lancelot killed his innocent brothers Gareth and Gaheris when rescuing Guenevere. The public and private sectors then come together during the so-called "pageant of reconciliation" (596) in chapter 10, an attempt to unify the court

effected by a Papal Bull, during which Lancelot is banished and Guenevere absolved. The opposing factions are sharply drawn during this scene, and take on historical significance: Mordred and his anti-Semitic Thrashers suggest the decadent corruption of Nazism (393), and are compared to the I. R. A. and all other Gaelic threats to the United Kingdom (518); Lancelot and Arthur represent the nobility of the older generation, upholders of the grandeur and grace of chivalric idealism. With Lancelot's exile, the unity of the Table is shattered. What had been devised as a celebration of "reconciliation" turns sadly ironic, as what in previous books had been a climactic moment of comic redemption in a public ceremony now turns towards the tragedy demanded by the Arthurian apocalypse. The parallelism among the Coronation at the end of book 1, the Marriage at the end of Book 2, and the Healing of Urre at the end of book 3 is broken in book 4, which must move from the "pageant of reconciliation" to the last battle with Mordred.

White shies away from ending his tetralogy with an apocalyptic scene. Instead, he sums up the action of all four books with Arthur's long monologue in chapter 14, during which he broods over the causes of war and the collapse of the Round Table. He recounts his life achievements (Table, Chivalry, Grail, and Justice) as failures in his efforts to quell rule by Might (628), and struggles for explanations for war: original sin, evolutionary determinism, wicked leaders, ancestral feuds going back to Cain and Abel, greed, and suspicion (629-34). The opposites of youth and age are brought together as Arthur summons his thirteen year old page (Thomas Malory) and instructs him to tell his story to later generations. He then dreams of Merlin and the novel closes by circling back to its first book. The end and the beginning of the novel are brought together during Arthur's reverie about the peaceful snow geese living in a world without boundaries (638-39). Past and present are brought together in the calm of Arthur's reconciliation with himself and history: he goes forth to "meet the future with a peaceful heart" as the once and future king (REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS) who imagines a new dispensation to be inaugurated by his return. This is the ultimate reconciliation of opposites, echoing Christ of Revelation, who says "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22.13).⁵ Hence the last words of White's novel are "The Beginning" (639)—instead of "The End."

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NOTES

¹For the *liebestod* as the mystical reconciliation of opposites, see of course Wagner's libretto for *Tristan und Isolde*, in which "Love's Goddess" weaves together joy and grief, love and hate, death and love (66). In Wagner's source, Gottfried von Strassburg, the notion of opposites occurs in the thematic figure of the oxymoron, so popular in Medieval poetry. Tristan muses on the multiple implications of Isolde's pronunciation of "*lamerz*," which could mean bitter, love, and the sea (199). Joseph Campbell discusses the implied meanings uniting love ("*amour*") and death ("*la morte*") as a basic theme in Arthurian mythology (*Creative Mythology* 175-257).

²On the triple powers of the Goddess to bestow, sustain, and destroy life see Robert Graves in *The White Goddess* and "Joseph Campbell on the Great Goddess" in *Parabola*.

³On the "conjuncture" of "*armes*" (honor) and "*amour*" (love) in Christian, see William Kibler (xiii-xvii).

⁴On the linkage between the Bodhisattva and Christ, see Joseph Campbell (*The Mythic Image* 415-19; *Oriental Mythology* 304-10).

⁵See Valerie Lagorio, who suggests that "one critical approach to the Vulgate cycle of Arthurian romances should consider the apocalyptic outlook which prevailed in the era of its composition" (1).

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AN INTERVIEW WITH ROSEMARY SUTCLIFFE

JOHN WITHERINGTON

JW You've been drawn several times to the Arthurian legend, notably in *Sword at Sunset*, but also in a series of books beginning with *The Sword and the Circle*. What inspired you to tackle the legend of Arthur in the first place?

RS I suppose originally just the fact that I was brought up on Arthur: from a very small child it was a part of my heroic life. I suppose the mystery was the great thing about Arthur: obviously the Arthur that Malory produced is gorgeous, but he's not really very reliable factually. But one does feel strongly that behind all this there's certainly—well, I think there's certainly a man, possibly a group of men, but I think just one man, who all the other sort of legends have sort of accrued to.

JW Do you believe he actually existed?

RS Yes, I do. I don't think he was King Arthur. He was just a war leader of some sort, possibly a member of the old Royal House, as I made him in *Sword at Sunset*. There's a fascination, a mystery, as far as I'm concerned. And for me in a way he stands for Britain, for the Celtic way of life.

JW You use a poem by Frances Brett Young in the introduction to *Sword at Sunset*. Did that actually inspire you in any way, or was it a fortuitous discovery?

RS No, it didn't inspire me. I had thought of, begun to think of, the reconstruction of the historical Arthur, and then I came across this poem; it didn't know who it was by, but it sort of rang bells for me in all directions. It did have a great effect on getting me going on the book.

JW The poem itself makes great use of the theme of darkness, a theme that comes through in your work as well: for example, *The Lantern Bearer*. Do you think there's something about the Arthurian legend which invites a kind of naive nostalgia for a Golden Age, or does the legend contain within it some kind of essential truth?