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兒童形象的再思：

論《永恆之王》中的童年再現

Reconsidering the Child:

Representations of Childhood in *The Once and Future King*

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本論文係黃姿樺君（學號 R95122013）在國立臺灣大學外國語文學系研究所完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 99 年 7 月 8 日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明

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（簽名）

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摘要

《永恆之王》雖是二十世紀最家喻戶曉的英語亞瑟王文學作品，但其學術評價始終曖昧不明。本論文聚焦《永恆之王》中兩種截然不同的童年形塑，經由文本分析指出,《永恆之王》的童年書寫雖悖離兒童文學傳統形象,其詮釋卻具有原創性與革命性。本文採用雷蒙・威廉斯的文化物質主義理論架構，首先提出兒童文學中的規訓傳統與童真形象的建構；其次，相互比較《永恆之王》中亞瑟與奧克尼兄弟的童年與兒童文學傳統形象。二十世紀早期，囿於兒童文學傳統與時代氛圍，兒童文學仍多半是規訓的工具與成人慾望的投射場域，然而,《永恆之王》作者特倫斯・韓伯瑞・懷特在此框架之中，質疑了童真的價值，並更進一步描繪了顛覆傳統兒童形象卻更寫實的奧克尼兄弟。由懷特與眾不同的童年再現而論,《永恆之王》超越了他身處時空的桎梏，並可作為近年來新興的童年研究之早期文本。

關鍵詞：《永恆之王》、特倫斯・韓伯瑞・懷特、童年、童真、文化物質主義、雷蒙・威廉斯、金柏莉・雷諾斯

Abstract

The Once and Future King, one of the most well-known twentieth-century Arthurian retellings, has been considered a popular yet ambiguous children's book for some subversive elements involved in the narrative. Probing into childhood representations in this tetralogy, this study aims to answer the ambiguity of this text in children's literature and proposes that *The Once and Future King* is one of the early examples of radical yet revolutionary children's books. Based on Raymond Williams's cultural materialism, this thesis first distinguishes the discipline and the construction of childhood innocence in children's literature, and then compares and contrasts White's childhood representations to these literary conventions. With his two childhood accounts, the author T. H. White attempts to disrupt childhood innocence and furthermore advocates attention to the child in life. Recent decades have seen the validation of childhood studies, and *The Once and Future King* is proposed to be read in this new light on the child.

Key words: *The Once and Future King*, T. H. White, childhood, innocence, cultural materialism, Raymond Williams, Kimberley Reynolds

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Introduction

The Once and Future King, one of the most well-known twentieth-century Arthurian retellings, has not received much critical attention in academic research. Particularly in children's literature, *The Once and Future King* is on the margin of study: it has been partially acknowledged as a children's fiction.[1] The obscurity of *The Once and Future King* reflects enduring problems of children's literature. *The Once and Future King* is partially acknowledged as a text for children, because it does not fully comply with the conventional image of the child in children's literature. Through the childhood accounts in *The Once and Future King*, the author T. H. White on one hand questions childhood innocence dominant in children's literature, and on the other hand endeavors to present an unconventional childhood, breaking the limit of children's literature. This study aims to provide a new reading of the obscurity of *The Once and Future King* through White's unusual representations of childhood.

Though named as "children's literature," the literature for children is always already under adult supervision. It is adults who write the stories, edit the content, and publish and most of the time purchase the texts marked as "children's literature." In children's literature, children are always the end-receiver. Though the child is the target reader of the text, the text has been much censored before it finally reaches the child reader. In the general introduction to *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, M. O. Grenby attributes the difficulty of researching popular children's texts to adult supervision:

> They [children] are not, after all, typical consumers, and their preferences are

[1] The first three parts of the tetralogy, *The Sword in the Stone*, *The Witch in the Wood*, and *The Ill-Made Knight*, were respectively published in 1938, 1939, and 1940. Due to the paper shortage during World War II, the revised one-volume edition of *The Once and Future King* was delayed till 1958. Since then the text has been published as a one-volume edition. *The Witch in the Wood*, the second part of the tetralogy, in the second edition is much revised and renamed as "The Queen of Air and Darkness."

> not based on unlimited access to literature, but have to be constructed from what is obtainable, where and when they live, what they are given by others, or what they can afford. To a large extent, access to children's books has been determined by publishers, who decide what to keep in print and what prices to charge, and by parents, teachers and librarians, who regularly attempt to supervise distribution. Any attempt to define popularity in terms of children's preferences thus necessarily runs up against these external controls" (General Introduction 4).

It is difficult to decide which text is really popular among children, because there is always adult supervision between the child reader and the text. The above citation indicates the problem of discerning popular texts among children, and at the same time reflects the unavoidable adult supervision in children's literature.

Moreover, as the text itself is seldom written by children, child characters in children's literature are always already the products of adult imagination. On the one hand, the child is often depicted as innocent, often with a touch of naivety, yet the child in children's literature in fact is shaped by adult wishes and desire: childhood innocence since the nineteenth century has long tenaciously held control over our imagination toward the child. On the other hand, children's literature often aims to educate the child, by either blatantly preaching or implying the lessons. The child reader often can only accept the morality of the text, and are encouraged to imitate the model child within the text. We may say that children's literature, though created for children, does not belong to children, for they seldom have a say in children's literature.

My interest of *The Once and Future King* lies in its conflicted passion for innocence, the indirect disruption of childhood innocence, and White's attempt to portray an unconventional childhood. Despite the fact that in *The Sword in the Stone* King Arthur's childhood is rather conventional, White implies, through Arthur's adult conducts, to disrupt

innocence; and at the same time he creates an unconventional, in many ways disturbing childhood in the story of the Orkney clan. Inspired by Raymond Williams's theory of cultural materialism, this research contextualizes the text in the conventions of children's literature and the social context when it was first published, the first half of twentieth century. This contextualization exposes the adult supervision underlying children's literature, and explains the obscurity of *The Once and Future King* in children's literature: Why *The Sword in the Stone*, the first part of *The Once and Future King*, can achieve popularity, while the rest of the text conspicuously fails to acquire the same level of positive reception in children's literature? *The Once and Future King*, I suppose, does not follow closely the established conventions of children's literature, so it has not been accepted completely as a children's book. However, by creating nonconformist representations of childhood it manifests the possibility of a more realistic depiction of childhood early in the twentieth century. In his effort to represent the disruption of innocence and an unconventional, or even radical, childhood, White shows sympathy to the unconventional child.[2]

This introduction consists of three parts: It begins with a literature review on the ambivalent status of *The Once and Future King* and then explains the theoretical base of this thesis: Raymond Williams's theories on literary conventions and his notion of "structures of feeling", a key term in his cultural materialism. Having elucidated the textual and theoretical bases, I will end this introductory section with an overview of the following parts of my thesis.

I. A Text on the Margin of Children's Literature

[2] The genuine concern for the child is inspired by Kincaid's argument in *Child-loving*. Kincaid proposes that the child is protected but not loved, for the child is the container of our desire. We project our longings and hopes onto them, seldom allowing them individuality at all. In this thesis, the sympathy, respect, or a genuine concern for the child all means altruistic love for the child and respect of their individuality.

"I don't object to *writing in* a few 'nature bits' to sweeten the farce, but so far as I can see at present there is nothing I can cut out" (Gallix *Letters* 99). So did T. H. White complain to his friend L. J. Potts about the revision of *The Witch in the Wood* required by his publisher Collins.[3] Despite massive revision, *The Witch in the Wood* does not repeat the immediate success of *The Sword in the Stone*.[4] In fact, *The Sword in the Stone* becomes the singularly popular part of the tetralogy.

The singularity of *The Sword in the Stone* is manifest in both sales and in academic research. The 1938 edition of *The Sword in the Stone* is never out of print. This edition and the revised one-volume edition of *The Once and Future King* are both available today, while the 1939 *The Witch in the Wood* and the 1940 *The Ill-Made Knight* have long been out of print. Though the 1958 edition of *The Once and Future King* has been credited with better coherence, the first version of *The Sword in the Stone* is preferred for its originality (Kertzer 283). In fact, *The Sword in the Stone* stands out of its sequels in academic research, and even when *The Once and Future King* is the focus text, *The Sword in the Stone* usually runs more pages than other parts of this tetralogy.[5]

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[3] Collins, in 1990 incorporated into the company HarperCollins, was at this time William Collins & Sons. It was founded in 1819, and published a wide range of works. It is noticeable that Collins published many fantasy and popular writers, such as H. G. Wells, Agatha Christie, J. R. R. Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis. HarperCollins Publishers, "Company Profile", 23 October 2009 2009, Available: http://www.harpercollins.com/footer/companyProfile.aspx, 27 June 2010.

[4] *The Sword in the Stone* gained critical attention and commercial success shortly after it was published. For the detailed record of the popularity of the 1938 *Sword in the Stone* please refer to Hugh T. Keenan, "T. H. White," *British Children's Writers, 1914-1960*, eds. Donald R. Hettinga and Gary D. Schmidt (Detroit: Gale, 1996), Alison Lurie, *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: Subversive Children's Literature* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990).

[5] The motifs of education, nature and wars—all of them related to *The Sword in the Stone*—are paid more attention in researches on *The Once and Future King*. The unproportionate focus of *The Sword in the Stone* can be witnessed in following essays: C. M. Adderley, "The Best Thing for Being Sad: Education and Educators in T. H. White's *Once and Future King*," *Quondam et Futurus* 2.1 (1992), Elizabeth Brewer, "Some Comments on 'T. H. White, Pacifism and Violence'," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997), François Gallix, "T. H. White and the Legend of King Arthur: From Animal Fantasy to Political Morality," trans. Edward Donald Kennedy, *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York: Garland, 1996), Andrew Hadfield, "T. H. White, Pacifism and Violence: The Once

Though the exact sales figures cannot be obtained, the success of *The Sword in the Stone* could be observed by the Disney animation of 1963. The animation mogul chose to adapt only the first part of the tetralogy. Though critical reception of the film is mixed,[6] it is a commercial success: it was the sixth highest grossing film of 1963 (Boxoffice Media), and in 2008 a special DVD edition of the film is released in celebration of its 45th anniversary. The Disney adaptation has canonized the text in popular culture. In a word, the childhood of King Arthur has dwarfed its sequels, both commercially and academically.

Partly because of the overwhelming popularity of *The Sword in the Stone* and partly because of the critically acclaimed originality of Arthur's childhood, *The Once and Future King* is often deemed children's fiction, but in fact *The Once and Future King* is *not* only for children. It is a series of novels with special design. Both Alan Lupack and Heather Worthington claim that the tetralogy "grows up" with the aging of the protagonist: the first part is for children as the hero Wart (the young King Arthur) is a child himself, and the latter parts cater to a larger audience as Arthur steps into his adulthood and kingship (Lupack 107; Worthington 98). Hugh T. Keenan thinks that the latter parts are "unsuitable either by their tone or subject matter" (308) for child readers, and the complete tetralogy of 1958 is "designed for a general reading audience" (310). Jane L. Curry even flatly denies the assumption that *The Sword in the Stone* is children's literature, though she concedes that it influences later Arthurian adaptations for children (161).[7]

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and Future Nation," *Connotations* 6.2 (1996), Debbie Sly, "Natural Histories: Learning from Animals in T. H. White's Arthurian Sequence," *Worldviews* 4.2 (2000).

[6] Please refer to Alice Grellner, "Two Films That Sparkle: *The Sword in the Stone* and *Camelot*," *Cinema Arthuriana: Twenty Essays*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002), Judith L. Kellogg, "The Dynamics of Dumbing: The Case of Merlin," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 17.1 (1993), Raymond H. Thompson, "The Ironic Tradition in Four Arthurian Films," *Cinema Arthuriana: Twenty Essays*, ed. Kevin J. Harty (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002).

[7] Unfortunately, Curry does not provide any reasons for her statement. She puts this unusual viewpoint in parentheses merely as a common note. It would be a lot better if she had explained why. The original sentence goes as follows: "The influence of White's *The Sword in the Stone* (*not, as is often supposed, written for children*) lies predominantly in the

Not only scholars, but White himself cannot decide whether his Arthurian retelling is fit for children. White once requested his godson's opinion to decide if *The Sword in the Stone* is a children's book: He sent a copy to L. J. Potts, his friend and former tutor in Cambridge, and said: "*It seems impossible to determine whether it is for grown-ups or children.* I will send a copy for my godson's birthday, if out in time, and you must try it on him when he is about twelve (Gallix *Letters* 87; my emphasis). And he later hesitated to depict the violent young Orkney brothers in "The Queen of Air and Darkness" because it is a very unusual representation of childhood and the book, after all, is intended for young readers.[8] Also, the characterization, especially the implicit homoeroticism of Lancelot[9] and the indifferent mother Morgause[10] make *The Once and Future King* a disturbing reading for children.

Perhaps due to these ambiguous elements, even when *The Sword in the Stone* is classified as a children's text, it is usually overlooked in the field of children's literature. In

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insistently humorous tone of the first chapters" (161; my emphasis).

[8] White does not frankly state that *The Once and Future King* is written for children, but it is inferred that at least the first two parts are intended for the young. First, White sent a copy of *The Sword in the Stone* to his young godson right after its publication, though he also stated in the letter that he was not sure whether it was for children or not (Gallix 99). Second, he deliberately revised *The Witch in the Wood* though he was distressed by Collins's request to tone down the darkness in the second book and make it more similar to *The Sword in the Stone*. Brewer also affirms that *The Witch in the Wood* is intended for young readers in her book *T. H. White's* The Once and Future King (52).

[9] The strong affection of Lancelot to King Arthur in the third and fourth book is often associated with homoeroticism. Critics have linked the implied homosexuality to White's own homosexuality. For detailed discussion please refer to Elisabeth Brewer, *T. H. White's* the Once and Future King (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), John Kenny Crane, *T. H. White* (New York: Twayne, 1974), Martin Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain: A Literary Overview* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1988), Alan Macdonald, "A Lost Story of Perversion: T. H. White's 'the Witch in the Wood," *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas* 23.4 (1993), Marie Nelson, "T. H. White," *British Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers, 1918-1960,* ed. Darren Harris-Fain (Detroit: Gale, 2002), Kurth Sprague, "The Troubled Heart of T. H. White: Women and *the Once and Future King*," *Arthuriana* 16.3 (2006), Heather Worthington, "From Children's Story to Adult Fiction: T. H. White's *the Once and Future King*," *Arthuriana* 12.2 (2002).

[10] The third chapter is to deal with the exceptional motherhood of Morgause, and to further clarify the importance of such a cold mother in White's unconventional representation of childhood.

the anthologies or survey works of children's literature, *The Sword in the Stone* is often left out, or at least, merely mentioned in a few lines or paragraphs. *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature* mentions neither White nor any of his children's works (Zipes et al.). Only a few lines on White are dropped in both *Modern Children's Literature: An Introduction* (Reynolds *Modern*) and *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* (Hunt et al.). T. H. White is often noted as an "ambivalent", "eccentric" (Hunt et al. 216), or "unclassifiable" writer (Hunt et al. 288), and none of the above-mentioned works discusses *The Sword in the Stone* in detail. The only in-depth discussion of *The Once and Future King* as children's literature appears in Alison Lurie's book, in which the text is recommended as a subversive work of children's literature (159-68). As Keenan claims, White's exceptionality lies in "his failure to fit into literary classifications" (314).

Thus, the ambiguity of *The Once and Future King* is evident: it is at most partially acknowledged as a children's work. And when it is recognized as a children's text, as Hunt, Keenan, and Lurie has credited, it is a unique or even a subversive work. The unclassifiability in part leads to the obscurity in academic research: That is, children's critics focus on the childhood of Arthur, while the other parts receive only sporadic attention in researches of Arthurian literature. In summary, *The Once and Future King* remains a text on the margin of children's literature.

II. The Obscurity in Question: Cultural Materialism as a Method

What caused the obscurity of *The Once and Future King*? This question is not easy to answer. First, it is almost impossible to re-present the readers' responses. Individual opinions can hardly represent the collectivity. Besides, the sporadic reviews could easily get overgeneralized. Therefore, instead of collecting and analyzing the original reviews and responses, another methodology is adopted in this research: Raymond Williams's cultural

materialism.

A pioneer of British cultural studies, Raymond Williams proposes a new definition of culture and a revised Marxist view of literature in his development of cultural materialism. Williams begins his theory in revising traditional opposition of base and superstructure in Marxism: contrary to traditional Marxist view, which categorizes culture and literature as superstructure, Williams proposes that the way we live (culture) is actually the base. He redefines the base as "the real social existence of man," "the real relations of production corresponding to a stage of development of the material productive forces," and "a mode of production at a particular stage of its development" ("Base" 33). In his essay "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," he urges a re-evaluation of base and superstructure:

> We have to revalue "superstructure" towards a related range of cultural practices, and away from a reflected, reproduced or specifically dependent content. And, crucially, we have to revalue "the base" away from the notion of a fixed economic or technological abstraction, and towards the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships, containing fundamental contradictions and variations and therefore always in a state of dynamic process. ("Base" 34)

Thus, Williams attempts to reassess the rigid opposition of base and superstructure, and he particularly softens the line between the two. In his view, base is not merely economy or technology—that is, material things in our life, but the relationships within economy and technology. Superstructure does not depend on and reflects the changes of the base, but is redefined as related cultural practice originated from economic and technological relationships. In his rethinking about base and superstructure, Williams strives to place cultural practice deeply related to, but not dependant on, the social existence of men.

Along with his reassessment of base and superstructure, Williams proposes a

re-examination of culture in his *Culture and Society* and *Long Revolution*. Opposing the elitist "culture and civilization" tradition represented by Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis,[11] he observes that culture is "a whole way of life" (*Culture* 325). In Williams's point of view, culture should not be limited to masterpieces and feats. Culture is dynamic: It constantly changes, and can be divided into different kinds of culture. Various lifestyles and values coexist in a culture. Culture is "natural growth" (*Culture* 337). Williams's emphasis on culture may reflect his redefinition of base and superstructure: starting from conventional Marxism, Williams seeks a new way to evaluate base and superstructure, and blend them together in his researches on culture. Perhaps culture for Williams is the new base, replacing the conventional base in Marxism.

To further develop his theory of culture, Williams proposes the term "structures of feeling": "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" in a certain social context (Williams *Marxism* 132). Though "structures of feeling" might sound a bit similar to Antonio Gramsci's "hegemony," Williams by the term strives to emphasize the mobility of

[11] Industrialization brings forth material progress and promotes a modern society, yet it also makes people, especially intellectuals, uneasy about the popular culture in this industrialized society. Matthew Arnold in 1896 calls for attention to the anarchy of the mass in his famous *Culture and Anarchy*. Anxious about the working-class protests, Arnold limits "culture" to work and lives of the educated people. *Culture and Anarchy*, written in Arnold's anxiety toward the emergent working class, is an attempt to suppress popular culture in development. (Williams "Hundred" 5-8). By giving a romantic yet strongly opinioned definition of culture, Arnold promotes a selective culture. "Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has but one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. Yes, it has one yet greater!—the passion for making them *prevail*" Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman and Maurice Cowling (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1869), <http://ebooks.lib.ntu.edu.tw/Statistics/statistics.jsp?ID=199869&State=0>. And this so-called "culture and civilization" tradition is still dominant between the two world wars (Turner 39). Led by F. R. Leavis, the quarterly *Scrutiny* vouches for a higher culture above mass culture. Leavis, together with Q. D. Leavis, Denys Thompson, and L. C. Knights, advocates a high culture in *Scrutiny*, a prominent periodical of literary criticism (Williams *Culture* 252-53). Leavis's viewpoint can be best represented in the opening remarks of his *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture*: "In any period it is upon *a very small minority* that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends" (3; my emphasis).

culture. He proposes that there is selection and reselection of mainstream ideology in the sustenance of hegemony, even if it is a total control over the society ("Base" 37-40). "Structures of feeling," as a cultural term, distinguishes mobility in culture that Williams has emphasized: different from the emphasis on total control in "hegemony," "structures of feeling" is "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt" (Williams *Marxism* 132). In a word, structures of feeling emphasize the lives that people lead and thoughts and issues concern them.

Though "structures of feeling" is a cultural term, it could also be used in literary contexts. The term first appears in *Preface to Film* with a strong sense of literary conventions. In his argument on the change of chorus in Greek drama, Williams uses "structures of feeling" to relate the change of meanings and feelings of contemporary people to the change of the chorus convention (Williams and Orrom 21-23). In one interview Williams reiterates that "the key to the notion [of structures of feeling]. . . is that it was developed as an analytic procedure *for actual written works*, with a very strong stress on forms and conventions" (Williams *Politics* 159; my emphasis). Since structures of feeling are meanings and feelings in a certain period, it is difficult for us to retrieve and revive them. Yet, structures of feeling can be retrieved in literature, because literary texts as social products observe the changes of culture.

Based on this theory of culture and society, literature for Raymond Williams is a shifting historical product. "All writing carries references, meanings, and values" (*Marxism* 155). The relation between literature and society, in Williams's view, can be divided into "alignment" and "commitment." "Writing, like other practices, is in an important sense *always aligned*: that is to say, that it variously expresses, explicitly or implicitly, specifically selected experience from a specific point of view" (Williams *Marxism* 199; my emphasis), whereas commitment is "surely conscious, active, and open: a *choice* of position" (Williams *Marxism* 200). In alignment, literature naturally relates to the society as a social practice,

not as something alienated from culture, whereas commitment is the individual writer's conscious choice of position. The relationship between literature and society is natural and dynamic as any other cultural fields: social contexts have great impacts on writing, but writing as a social and historical product in turn re-shapes the society.

To further discuss structures of feeling, an investigation of literary conventions is called for. As mentioned above, the term "structures of feeling" has embodied the change of literary conventions. Williams in *Marxism and Literature* reiterates and develops the idea of conventions:

> Within any social theory of art and literature, a convention is an established relationship, or ground of a relationship, through which a specific shared practice—the making of actual works—can be realized. [. . .] [I]t [understanding the shifting evaluations of conventions and of the reality of conventions] can show the real grounds of the inclusions and exclusions, the styles and the ways of seeing, that specific conventions embody and ratify. (*Marxism* 173)

Conventions of literature, as a consensus of writing and reading, can indicate structures of feeling of its time. To evaluate an individual text, we have to contextualize it in its literary conventions. Thus, in the investigation of the ambiguity of *The Once and Future King*, I would like to discuss first the conventions of children's literature.

Children's literature, beside their unique child readers, has been a multi-genre congregation. However, various children's texts share certain literary presumptions when they are written, published, and evaluated, because of their readers. I would like to summarize prominent genres and forms in children's literature throughout the centuries in the next chapter, and then analyze *The Once and Future King* in the second and the third chapters of my thesis in terms of the conventions of children's literature. I believe only based on the conventions can the unconventional be manifest.

As Williams argues, “Genre, [. . .] is neither an ideal type nor a traditional order nor a set of technical rules. It is in the practical and variable combination and even fusion of what are, in abstraction, different levels of the social material process that what we have known as genre becomes a new kind of constitutive evidence (*Marxism* 185). Genres and forms, like conventions, play significant roles during the ongoing interaction between the society and literature. Genre is the constitutive evidence of its culture, in a sense always already culturally defined; while the form, in a similar sense, is the re-negotiation of the collective and the individual consensus. In choosing a certain form the writer takes his or her position; in reading from a certain form the audience decide whether the writing is accepted to the collective mind. “Forms are thus the common property, to be sure with differences of degree, of writers and audiences or readers, before any communicative composition can occur” (Williams *Marxism* 187-88). The emergence of a new form, in this sense, represents “a newly shared perception, recognition, and consciousness” (Williams *Marxism* 188). Whether it is led or it takes the lead, a new form is deeply connected with transitions of the society. “Periods of major transition between social systems are commonly marked by the emergence of radically new forms, which eventually settle in and come to be shared” (Williams *Marxism* 189).

Since genres and forms could be solid linguistic proofs of the social milieu, I would like to focus on popular genres in the following investigation of conventions of children’s literature in order to understand the ambivalence of *The Once and Future King*. As I have cited earlier, Keenan also notes White’s failure to fit in the literary conventions (314). The imbalanced reception could be traced, in Williams’s theories, in conventions of children’s literature.

III. Chapter Overview

Having elucidated the ambiguous status of *The Once and Future King*, the importance of the ambiguity, and my theoretical base of cultural materialism, the following thesis will be divided into three chapters: the first chapter is to summarize the conventions of children's literature. The summary of literary conventions is to be the context of the second and the third chapters, in which textual analyses are made on two different representations of childhood. In the childhood of King Arthur, White generally follows the conventions of childhood innocence and the educational purpose in children's literature, but the innocence is disrupted in Arthur's conducts as a king. On the other hand, White presents a seemingly radical but perhaps more realistic childhood in the characterization of the Orkney brothers. The popularity of *The Sword in the Stone* derives from its conformity to the convention of children's literature, and the dubious status of the subsequent parts reflects the limitations of conventional children's literature and magnifies White's revolutionary representations of the child. In the end, it is exactly the ambivalence that gives rise to the value of research of *The Once and Future King*. As an equivocal text, *The Once and Future King* exposes the underlying power relations behind and beyond children's literature.

Chapter One

Conventions of Children's Literature

> Children's fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but in that it hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child. Children's fiction is clearly about that relation, but it has the remarkable characteristic of being about something which it hardly ever talks of. Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between. To say that the child is inside the book—children's books are after all as often as not about children—is to fall straight into a trap. It is to confuse the adult's intention to get at the child with the child it portrays. If children's fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp. (Rose 1-2)

In her groundbreaking work on children's literature, Jacqueline Rose argues fiercely on the impossibility of children's literature. In the quote above, she attributes the dominant authority of adults as the cause of the impossibility of children's literature. Children's literature, though titled as "children's," is never to describe the child in life but subsumes adult effort to transform the child into what we desire them to be. As James R. Kincaid forcefully points out, "[w]hat the child *is* matters less than what we *think* it is and just why we think that way" (62). In his *Child-loving*, Kincaid, like Rose, argues that the child is shaped by adult rule and maintains that the child is well-protected but not loved (209).

In fact, the past decades have witnessed a wave of discussion on the power relations

within children's literature.[12] Some critics, such as Perry Nodelman and Jack Zipes, agree on the overwhelming adult supervision in children's literature, and contend that children's literature could not be free from such formidable adult control, while some, particularly Kimberley Reynolds, affirm the possibility of sympathy and respect for the child in children's literature besides discipline and punish.[13] Whether agreeing to the impossibility

[12] For the heated discussion on childhood studies and children's literature, please refer to Nina Christensen, "Childhood Revisited: On the Relationship between Childhood Studies and Childrne's Literature," *Children's Literature: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Peter Hunt, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 2006), Stephen Gennaro, "Making Kids Sexy: Sexualized Youth, Adult Anxieties, and Abercrombie & Fitch," *Red Feather* 1.1 (2010), Jerry Griswold, "The Disappearance of Children's Literature (or Children's Literature as Nostalgia) in the United States in the Late Twentieth Century," *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), Kenneth Kidd, "Children's Culture, Children's Studies, and the Ethnographic Imaginary," *Children's Literature: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Peter Hunt, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 2006), Valerie Krips, "Imaginary Childhoods: Memory and Children's Literature," *Children's Literature: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Peter Hunt, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 2006), Karín Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), Eva-Maria Metcalf, "The Changing Status of Children and Children's Literature," *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (Wesport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), Claudia Nelson, "Adult Children's Literature in Victorian Britain," *The Nineteenth-Century Child and Consumer Culture*, ed. Dennis Denisoff (Aldershot, Eng: Ashgate, 2008), Claudia Nelson, "Mixed Messages: Authoring and Authority in British Boys' Magazines," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21.1 (1997) Perry Nodelman, "The Other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 17.1 (1992), Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1984), Marquard Smith, "Fantasies of Childhood: Visual Culture and the Law," *Journal of Visual Culture* 3.5 (2004), Jack Zipes, "Taking Political Stock: New Theoretical and Critical Approaches to Anglo-American Children's Literature in the 1980s," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 14.1 (1990), Joseph L. Zornado, *Inventing the Child: Culture, Ideology, and the Story of Childhood* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[13] Reynolds demonstrates the sympathy to the child in several studies on radical children's fictions. Please refer to Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds, *Representations of Childhood Death* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), Kimberley Reynolds, *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Also in her research of rewarding books she has specified the child receiver's resistance to rewarding books. See Kimberley Reynolds, "Rewarding Reads? Giving, Receiving and Resisting Evangelical Reward and Prize Books," *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, eds. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and M. O. Grenby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

of children's literature or not, recent discussions on children's literature have brought profound reflections and broadened our views of children's literature. This study, by taking *The Once and Future King* as an example, wishes also to contribute to the heated debate on children's literature.

This chapter, as a base for textual analyses in the following chapters, aims at clarifying the long-standing power relations in children's literature by distinguishing the adult's rule of discipline. As summarized in the introduction, Raymond Williams proposes that literary conventions can represent structures of feeling of its time. With a brief survey of the historical development of children's literature, I first would like to point out that in early children's literature educational purposes and enforcement of values are priorities. The emergence of childhood innocence in the nineteenth century helps soften the moralistic tone, but the intention to educate and to inculcate values into the child does not disappear in the adoration of the child: The lessons are concealed beneath the surface of carefree stories of childhood.

Yet, it is still possible for children's writers to express their genuine love and care for the child besides preaching and overwhelming admiration of innocence. In fact, *The Once and Future King* is proposed in this thesis as one example of Reynolds's "radical children's literature" that shows concern for the child in life. Against Rose's view of the impossibility of children's literature, Reynolds over the year has tried to distinguish the possibility of love for the child in life besides moral lessons and adoration enforced upon the child. She contends, for example, that the child reader is aware of the inculcation in their reading and protests against the starkly moralistic rewarding books in her essay "Rewarding Reads? Giving, Receiving and Resisting Evangelical Reward and Prize Books" (203-06). Her defense for children's literature is most vivid in her latest collection of essays *Radical Children's Literature*, in which she proposes that children's literature is not, as assumed by the public, obsolete and conservative (*Radical* 1-9). On the contrary, the underestimate of

children's literature offers it opportunities to comprise revolutionary thoughts. For example, she cites Mickenberg's research that various movements in the 1960s are partially indebted to radical issues in mid-twentieth-century children's literature (qtd. in Reynolds *Radical* 19). Reynolds claims that "children's literature matters beyond the pedagogic and historical explanations that are now so well established" by various radical texts involving issues deemed inappropriate for the child, such as violence and sex (*Radical* 2).

Inspired by Reynolds's demonstration of unconventional representations of childhood, I attempt to read *The Once and Future King* in a new light: since the text's marginal status is owing to its failure to comply with the discipline principle of children's literature prominent in the early-twentieth-century Britain (in Williams's terms "alignment"), its unconventionality may perhaps be re-evaluated in childhood studies today. Reynolds has mapped out radical children's texts since mid-twentieth century in *Radical Children's Literature*, but she does not, aside from citations from Dusinberre's research on children's literature and modernism, list radical texts prior to World War II (qtd. in Reynolds *Radical* 9-10). *The Once and Future King* thus might be an extension to Reynolds's proposal of radical children's literature. That is, *The Once and Future King* is proposed to be an early example of radical children's literature in terms of its unique representations of childhood, by which the author's love for the child is manifest.

In this chapter, I am to map out the adult control of children's literature operated in the inculcation of values and the projection of nostalgia in children's literature. These conventions may justify Rose's argument on the impossibility of children's literature, for the child has been under control whether they were disciplined as little sinners or adored as innocent cherubs. Yet at the end of this chapter, I will channel the argument to Reynolds's radical children's literature by the discussion of the fantasy genre, for it is based on the uses of fantasy that *The Once and Future King* suggests an indirect disruption of childhood innocence and furthermore develops an unconventional childhood. By this entire chapter on

conventional power relation in children's literature, I aim to acknowledge the change of conventions in children's literature: a transformation from Rose's impossibility to Reynolds's radicalism. The change of social milieu generates the public attention of the child in the beginning of the twentieth century, but the censorship of children's books is still strong. It is at this transitional stage that White delivers his unusual childhood representations in *The Once and Future King* in the fantasy form, and creates an early textual example of Reynolds's radical children's literature.

I. Disciplining the Child

From the beginning of children's literature,[14] it has had a strong educational aim. The word "instruction" appears in the titles of three anthologies of early children's literature: *From Instruction to Delight* (Demers and Moyles), *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic* (M. V. Jackson), and *Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children* (Samuel F. Pickering). And the early children's books are mostly in forms of education: alphabets, primers, or religious tales. As children's books came into being in the marketplace, the power relation between children and adults blatantly showed itself: Books for children were designed to educate the child and to instill values into their minds. For example, John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (1744), one of the earliest children's books, was promoted as "a Ball and a Pincushion, the use of which will infallibly make Tommy a good Boy, and Polly a good Girl." As Peter Hunt observes, the blurb "consciously exploited both gender differences and the adult-child power relationship inherent in all children's books" (Hunt "United Kingdom").

[14] It is generally agreed that children's books have appeared on the market around mid-seventeenth century. *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature* acknowledges The *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658) by Johann Amos Comenius as the first children's book (Zipes et al.). Patricia Demers, Gordon Moyles, Mary V. Jackson, and Samuel F. Pickering Jr. also start their anthologies around the same time.

The eighteenth-century books for children are filled with blatant moral teachings. According to the then popular "tabula rasa" theory, a child was regarded as "a soft piece of wax able to take any impression" (O'Malley *Making* 67), an empty mind education and nurture specially needed. Children, under the notion of "tabula rasa," became containers that received ideas and values from adult instructors. Puritans were especially conscious of children's need of moral instruction, for they believed that human nature was corrupt and children should be taught as early as possible Christian doctrines (Demers and Moyles 42-44). It was believed that nurture could overthrow evil nature, and children were in great need to be put right. Children, in either Locke's or Puritan theories, have to submit to the education and principles and rules set out for them.

Moral tales and cautionary tales, in the form of rewarding books,[15] flooded the marketplace. These stories are formulaic: they depicted stereotyped children, either virtuous or imprudent, redeemed themselves in life or death: Mitzi Myers points out the ever-presence of lessons in Mary Wollstonecraft's books for children: they often end in the child's regret, atonement and amendment (34-35). Sometimes, the death of a minor child character is used as a moral lesson for the child protagonists. Jacqueline Labbe in her essay exemplifies lessons taught through childhood deaths. Death to some, like Augusta Noble in *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818), is the punishment for bad behaviors and

[15] The act of rewarding books to schoolchildren for their good behaviors established itself in the late eighteenth century, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, publishers were in the custom of advertising the morality of their products in order to gain the rewarding book contract from schools. The publishing houses of evangelical societies thrived into the 1930s, with profitable magazines such as *The Youth's Magazine*. Originally used as an encouragement of children's good behavior, rewarding books become a special form in children's literature for the shared purpose of education. Rewarding books have formulaic plots and characters. Please refer to Dorothy Entwistle, "Counteracting Street Culture: Book Prizes in English Sunday Schools at the Turn of the Century," History of Education Society Bulletin 55 (1995), Siobhan Lam and George P. Landow, "Evangelical Tracts and Magazines for Childrens," The Victorian Web, 25 July 2009 <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/childlit/mag-evangelical.html>, Reynolds, "Rewarding Reads? Giving, Receiving and Resisting Evangelical Reward and Prize Books."

disobedience, while the death of a well-behaved child, though lamented, could be atonement for others, such as the deaths of Charles Trueman in *Fairchild Family* and Frank in *Holiday House* (1839) (Labbe 445; 450-51; 454). Besides the child hero in the book, the lessons in fact aim at the child reader of the book. Lectures, punishment, and death are all convenient vehicles of education. As Penny Brown summarizes,

> The ultimate goal of early children's literature was to construct an ideal child reader who would accept the values inscribed in the text and respond in the appropriate manner. The child characters in the text are intended to mirror and serve as a role model for the real reader, and their responses are therefore carefully scripted to seduce the reader into a desire to emulate their behavior. (207)

The child reader does not, as we might expect, denounce moral lessons in their reading, for entertaining elements are blended with the eighteenth-century morality tales. As Gay-White and Wadewitz observe, the eighteenth-century didactic has strong theatrical elements (v). O'Malley's records of the eighteenth-century robinsonnades[16] also reveal that the child readers enjoy their lessons though reading and performing those adventures on stage ("Acting" 135-40). Andrea Immel also proposes that the didactic can be funny with theatrical elements. Immel states that the Newbery popular titles, following William Hogarth's style, displayed contemporary follies to entertain and educate. Though Reynolds has specified the resistance and mocking of children to rewarding books they received ("Rewarding Reads" 203-06), she points out at the same time that the plots were exciting with the descriptions of crimes and sins before the final redemption. Children could enjoy

[16] Robinsonnades are stories either adapted from or following the pattern of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). This special kind of stories started after the immediate success of *Robinson Crusoe*, and spread throughout Europe. Robinsonnades are originally for adults but soon gain popularity among children. As O'Malley argues in "Acting out Crusoe," robinsonnades are tools of colonial education. Robinsonnades, throughout the centuries, has been deeply connected with colonialism. Please refer to Sandra L. Beckett, "Robinsonnades," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

the titles even though they were aware that at the same time they were forced to accept a particular set of values.

It is exemplified in Immel and O'Malley's researches that the didactic found a way into children's hearts through popular books. Aside from the much-enjoyed theatrical Hogarthian works and robinsonnades, adult inculcation of values gradually managed to enter more light-hearted and popular forms of children's reading. The didactic trend first emerged in chapbooks, and then continued to flow in penny dreadfuls, fantasies, and other popular genres in children's literature.

Before and after the appearance of children's literature, chapbooks[17] were widely read and enjoyed by children. Many Romantic poets, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and John Clare, fondly remembered chapbooks as their favorite reading in childhood (Grenby "Before" 36-38). Even after the development of children's literature, chapbooks, for its accessibility and low price, were still read by children, especially children of poor families. Containing various subjects inherited from fairy tales and folklore, chapbooks were condemned by the moralists and preachers as crude, violent, or wicked (Avery; Cunningham 126; Grenby "Before" 34-35). However, they were later turned into the machine of morality and class consciousness.

By the late eighteenth century, the rising middle class put in chapbooks moral values and class consciousness they wanted to spread, and cut off the parts that were immoral to them. (Avery; O'Malley *Making* 39-65). With the case of Jack and the Giant, O'Malley

[17] Chapbooks were originally referring to cheap books sold by itinerate hawkers. The content could be stories, nursery rhymes, poems, ballads, or anything that seems profitable. The form of chapbooks changed a lot with the passage of time, and in the end chapbooks were defined by the association with popular culture, rather by its binding form and way of distribution. For more information on chapbooks please refer to Gillian Avery, "Chapbooks," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), M. O. Grenby, "Before Children's Literature: Children, Chapbooks and Popular Culture in Early Modern Britain," *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and M. O. Grenby (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

demonstrates the inculcation of moral values in chapbooks. Jack in the earlier tales kills the giant out of greed for wealth, yet in later versions his violent act is justified (either because his father has been slain by the giant, or because he has to kill the giant for survival) (*Making* 21-23). In *The Making of the Modern Child*, O'Malley also specifies how middle-class values are reproduced in chapbooks. In the story "The Basket Woman", the poor family gratefully accepts the help of the middle class, but it is implied that the two children in the poor family do not desire social mobility. The middle-class view of the working class is revealed in this story: that the middle class has the obligation to help the poor, but the poor should be contented with their lower social status. Grenby, Reid-Walsh, and Speaight distinguish the plebeian tendency in chapbooks, but middle-class consciousness has tenaciously held children's literature by the end of the eighteenth century, plebeian or not.

Aside from O'Malley's demonstration of the morality and class consciousness within chapbooks, the effort to spread the "contented poor" ideology or the fear of class trespassing is also apparent in the half-hearted rewarding books for the poor. Reynolds has listed the imposition of class values one of the four themes in rewarding books: "Constructions of the working class, in particular, dominate reward fiction, both in terms of characterization and implied audience. [. . .] Even the occasions and venues where rewards were given and the reasons for making such presentations would have been influenced by class" ("Rewarding Reads" 200-01). Moreover, the working-class parents are the indirect aim of religious education. "It was hoped that parents would be sufficiently inspired by the good example of their newly literate (and perhaps considerate) children to learn to read the Bible and to embrace its tenets of humility, submissiveness, and patience, even in the face of social, economic, and political inequality" (Vallone 73). Even penny dreadfuls, a genre considered

to be immoral and improper for children, secretly prevents social climbing.[18] Despite the criticism of immorality, penny dreadfuls actually reinforces the mainstream ideological values: with a staff of upper- to middle-class publishers and writers, aristocrats often appeared degenerate in the stories (thus strengthens the middle-class aversion of so-called "useless" aristocracy), and the protagonists were often proved to be upper- or middle-class children denied with their born rights (Springhall "Life" 225-26). A true social climbing is thus prevented by the revelation of the nobility of the protagonist, and the class structure thus is kept intact.

To sum up, children's literature has long been closely connected with discipline: to educate and to instill values. No matter how the forms change in children's literature, the didactic manages to filter into even the most entertaining, or most immoral genres for the child reader. Children, whether aware of the inculcation or not, receive the lessons in their readings. The clear effort to educate and construct the child could be textual examples of Rose's argument on the impossibility of children's literature. Yet, a notion of childhood innocence was developed along with blatant morality lessons, and realized Rose's argument in a more subtle and more terrifying way: the formation of the child into cherubs smothers the child with projected nostalgia and desire, and continues to effect to this day.

II. The Emergence and Development of Childhood Innocence

With the impact of romanticism, childhood innocence became another major

[18] The term "penny dreadful" originated from the middle-class journalists in the 1870s "in order to amplify social anxiety or 'moral panic' over the latest commercial innovation directed at the young" (Springhall "Disseminating" 568). Penny dreadfuls were melodramatic and sensational serial novels published in the form of installments, especially for boys. The popularity of penny dreadfuls was across class boundaries: the middle-class schoolboys and working-class pageboys all enjoyed the exciting adventures in penny dreadfuls, and it was a profiting business. For more information on the business of penny dreadfuls please consult Springhall's two articles on Edwin J. Brett and the business of penny dreadfuls.

convention of children's literature since the nineteenth century. The notion of the innocent child changes children's literature: First, the image of the innocent child softens the preaching tone dominant in children's books in previous centuries. Writers become more conscious of writing to teach and delight the "innocent" child reader. Most of all, the innocent child is turned into an object of adult desire. Rather than preaching doctrines and ideologies, adults project their dreams and wishes to the innocent child. Thus, the romanticized image turns the child into an object of adult nostalgia.

It is observed that in the late eighteenth century childhood was gradually associated with innocence. Cunningham poses examples of autobiographies which fondly recalled childhood as a time of pure joy and innocence (134-36). Though the morality convention continued (especially in the moral tales produced in the Evangelical Movement and related institutions such as Sunday schools), a romantic association with the child was gaining prominence. Among the romanticists of childhood, Wordsworth is recognized by both Cunningham and Roni Natov as the major figure of the formation of childhood innocence. In "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," "We Are Seven," and many other poems, he elevated childhood memory as the healing of our pain and regrets in later lives. Cunningham, while acknowledging the influence of Blake, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb, distinguishes the importance of Wordsworth and even compares the impact of Wordsworth to that of Freud:

> Wordsworth's impact on thinking about childhood was deep and pervasive. He was as important for the nineteenth century as Freud was for the twentieth. [. . .] What Wordsworth had done was to break decisively with all previous thinking about children. Childhood now became a repository of sensitivity and wisdom. And if that were so, it became almost a duty to stay in touch with childhood, to remember as an adult what it felt like to be a child. (134)

This romanticist notion of the child, that is, childhood innocence, helped soften the

tone of morality in children's literature. In the nineteenth century, the evil child is less witnessed,[19] while the innocent child appeals.[20] Child characters in major nineteenth-century texts were the innocent observer of the filthy society. In Jean Mills's words, "The author both conveys the freshness of the child's view and uses this within the overall scheme of the book in conveying character and themes" (50).

Among the nineteenth-century writers, the influence of Dickens is specially marked by Cunningham, Kincaid, and Mills. Not only did Dickens reflect an overview of the society through the innocent eyes of a child, he also created many classic child protagonists, many of whom the title character, such as Oliver Twist in *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), David Copperfield in *David Copperfield* (1849-50), Jo in *Bleak House* (1852-53), and Pip in *Great Expectations* (1860-61). As Cunningham summarizes, "There was very little in the history of fiction to suggest that children and childhood should be centre stage. But Dickens placed them there, and by doing so he not only shaped the attitudes of the contemporaries towards childhood, but also deeply influenced posterity" (149). Besides the child protagonists of Dickens, there are also important fictional children whose innocence is critical to the text. Eppie, for example, transformed the alienated life of her adoptive father Silas Marner in *Silas Marner* (1861). Children in these texts become a symbol of the good for their innocence, and childhood innocence, along with these texts, is adapted into structures of feeling.

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[19] The heartless child in Charles Dickens's *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain*, though, could be a residue from the precedent misbehaving children in the eighteenth century.

[20] While the child was romanticized in literature, children in the Victorian Age had polarized childhood experiences: either as the cherished child at home or a young member (much too young in today's notion) contributing to home economy. For the childhood experiences in the nineteenth century please refer to chapter four of Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (London: BBC, 2006). The third chapter will in part address the opposition between the child in literature and childhood experience in life in the early twentieth century.

III. The Uses of Fantasy and Children's Literature

Childhood innocence prevails in children's fantasy published in the "golden age" of children's literature.[21] As Raymond Williams argues, the prominence of a specific genre is actually culturally defined: Williams specifically argues that the rise of a new literary genre or form often accompanies the transition of structures of feelings. Children's fantasy, one of the most popular genres in the nineteenth century, reinforces the connection between innocent children and an idyllic, pre-industrial environment. This genre can be an epitome of Rose's impossibility of children's literature, for the fascinating otherworld adventures best disguise the discipline. It is also based on *Peter Pan*, a classic of children's fantasy, that Rose proposes her groundbreaking arguments. Yet, fantasy also provides opportunities to reflect upon and protest against reality: it is in the form of fantasy that White attempts to disrupt innocence and deliver a radical childhood to children's literature. In a way, children's fantasy marks the transition from the impossibility to possibility of children's literature.

Fantasy has always been on the margin of popular and serious literature in adult world, but has long been established as a classic genre for children since the nineteenth century. According to Maria Nikolajeva, it "is a high and esteemed genre in children's literature" ("Fantasy"). Many critics have argued upon the uses of fantasy, but it is probably José B. Monleón's emphasis on the submission to reality that best explains the discipline underlying children's fantasy.[22] Monleón argues that fantasy is actually "the defense of the status quo and the preservation of economic order" (14) by discharging the insatiable desire

[21] The publications of Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* (1846), Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) marked the beginning of this golden age, and most children's classics of this period were fantasies.

[22] Though Monleón is cited here to explain the didactic and the construction of childhood innocence in children's fantasy, he intends to conclude fantasy in general, rather than children's fantasy.

toward the reality. Likewise, children's fantasy provides a beautiful other-world to the child protagonists, but the other-world is actually a test, a lesson, or an education. Children's fantasy, as other seemingly entertaining genres in children's literature, is to help the child grow up and adapt to reality, in the cloak of an escapist.

Two strands of adult supervision coexist in children's fantasy: moral lessons and the reinforcement of childhood innocence. As Briggs and Butts summarize, in children's fantasy "some element of moral teaching was usually present" (138). The adventure in the secondary world represents necessary struggles and experiences of growing up. When the child hero comes back to reality, he or she is mature enough to face challenges in the real world. The adventure in the other world, however interesting it is to characters inside the text and readers outside the text, is in fact an education. Sarah Gilead analyzes fashions of return of the child hero to reality in children's fantasy fiction, and points out the socializing function in the adventure.

> The return closure establishes a clear ontological and narrative hierarchy wherein dream becomes secondary to the ordinary reality of consciousness and social life, with fantasy serving as a necessary detour in a schematic *Bildung*. The return regulates the world of imagination, the place where the wild things *were*. Internalized and transformed, imagination disavows its anarchic, escapist energies. (281-82)

Elain Ostry goes further and relates the seemingly diametrically opposite yet actually intersecting relationship between conduct books[23] and Victorian and Edwardian children's fantasy. With the examples of *The Water-Babies* (1846), *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869), and *Five Children and It* (1902), she points out the morality lying in the magic growth of the child characters in children's fantasy:

[23] According Ostry, "[c]onduct books address the child and/or parent, and focus on the moral development of the child. They include lectures on morality, cautionary and exemplary tales complete with glosses, and sermons" (27-28).

> In works of fantasy, magical physical growth can be a way of exploring the topic of moral maturity: it is a metaphor for the invisible side of growing up. Physical growth is related to power and independence, and the child must negotiate this power by exercising moral qualities. [. . .] Children here are on a quest to achieve moral and physical maturation. (27)

In a word, "[g]uiding the child through this process [growing up] was the key concern of writers for children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regardless of which genre they chose" (Ostry 27). Thus, in children's fantasy, the tenacious control in children's literature does not loosen. It is only repeated in a light-hearted way.

Children's fantasy may moreover have reinforced the connection between the child and the pastoral or the nostalgia; childhood has become the projection of adult nostalgia since mid-nineteenth century. As Cunningham comments, "[c]hildhood becomes the best time of life, anything after it almost inevitably a decline" (152). The nostalgia for childhood is probably best exemplified in *Peter Pan* (1911) with the extended childhood of the protagonist: the contrasts between Peter Pan and other child characters (who eventually grow up), and the admiration and love toward Peter Pan despite his willful or even self-centered character. But long before Peter Pan, the nostalgia for childhood has appeared at the end of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where Alice's sister imagines how Alice will cherish her childhood summer days when she becomes a grown woman (Carroll 111).

Children's fantasy, set in a pastoral landscape, is naturally the best form to project adult nostalgia, both to a carefree stage of life and to an irretrievable past. Children's fantasy enables the combination of the nostalgia of childhood and that of the pastoral. The other world where children explore often is idyllic, an environment where traces of industrialization are often absent. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, for example, Alice throughout the book aimed to go to the garden she first saw through the tiny door. The close relation between the child and nature can be traced back to Rousseau's theories of education,

that a child should grow up in a natural environment and uncontaminated by civilization, and the ideal childhood has long been associated with the natural environment. Lesnik-Oberstein even claims that few concepts connect so closely as “children” and “nature.” Early in Rousseau’s *Émile*, children were seen as the embodiment of nature and should be kept away from the civilization as much as possible. In the convention of children’s books, there are often natural elements and interactions between animals and children. In *Norton Anthology of Children's Literature* there is also a section for the genre “animal fables”.

On the other hand, Victorian structures of feeling tend to disconnect happy childhoods with city, as Dickens in his various works represented traumatic childhoods in the city (Sicher 27, 62-63, 120-21, 154). The disconnection between childhood happiness and the city continued in Victorian and Edwardian children’s fantasies, the epitome being *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). E. Nesbit contrasted childhood in the city and the country in the beginning of *Five Children and It* (1902), when the Devereux family moved from London to the country house in Kent:

> [T]he White House seemed to them [the Devereux children] a sort of Fairy Place set down in an Earthly Paradise. For London is like prison for children. [. . .] [N]early everything in London is the wrong sort of shape. [. . .] This is why so many children who live in towns are so extremely naughty. They do not know what is the matter with them, and no more do their fathers and mothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, tutors, governesses, and nurses; but I know. And so do you now. Children in the country are naughty sometimes too, but that is for quite different reasons. (Nesbit 2-3)

Thus, children’s fantasy is perhaps nostalgia doubly represented: our nostalgia toward an innocent world and innocent childhood. Yet, both the pastoral and childhood innocence are expectations and fantasies, rather than facts and figures.

Furthermore, landscapes in fantasy, according to Peter Hunt, have yet another layer of meanings: Landscapes in English fantasies are national symbolism. With the examples of *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Hobbit* (1937), and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1949-54), Hunt observes that the rural landscape in English fantasies reflects the national psyche in "Landscapes and Journeys, Metaphors and Maps." Hunt's observation correlates with Jackson's theory that fantasy is "a literature of desire" (3): in fantasy we put into what we lack and long for. Yet, the national symbolism in fantasies further opens up a void for adult imposition of values.

In *The Once and Future King*, we witness a strong implication of national symbolism in White's lessons on wars besides the image of childhood innocence and the nostalgia toward the rural environment. In fact, the popularity of *The Sword in the Stone* is owing to its complying with conventions in children's literature: it depicts a childhood in a pastoral environment, where an innocent boy is educated by fantastic and entertaining lessons, to be the future king (a role model for the child reader, and a symbol of national glory). It not only fits the requests of conventions, but also the nationalism and nostalgia in the early-twentieth-century Britain.

Yet, it is also with the uses of fantasy that White makes his commitment—his own choice of position—in the childhood accounts of *The Once and Future King*. His unusual childhood representations are developed upon more radical uses of fantasy: a reflection, contemplation, and even a protest.

In fact, the conventions and functions of fantasy are deeply linked. The origin of fantasy is arguable, and even the term "fantasy" itself is in constant dispute.[24] Generally speaking, fantasy was first noticed in Gothic novels, renowned in children's books during

[24] Though there is a general assumption of the genre fantasy, the range varies from one to another critic, and some critics (most notably Tzvatan Todorov) even discuss the aggregate of non-realist literature as a whole under the terms of "the fantastic," "the uncanny," and "the marvelous."

the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, and finally made its way into the higher regard in literature since J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55). Fantasy is generally defined as the opposite of reality, though the exact range varies.[25] Thus for a long time fantasy has been stigmatized for its seeming escapism and childishness while more and more scholars are now vehemently defending for it.

Early in 1976 Eric S. Rabkin re-defines the correlation between the reality and the fantastic in literature: "The fantastic is a direct reversal of ground rules, and therefore is in part determined by those ground rules" (14-15). Rabkin in his definition first notices the parallel of the ground rules (reality) and fantasy. Jules Zanger and Roger C. Scholobin begin with an escapist definition of fantasy: in their words fantasy is "defined by those aspects of reality it denies" (226) but quickly complement a positive feature that "fantasy offers an alternative vision, a critique, and the basis of opposition to that real world" (227).

The above-mentioned comments point to the importance of reality to the formation of fantasy, indirectly reacting to the escapist presumption, but it is Peter Hunt that pinpoints the wrong of the escapist charges: "[I]nvented worlds cannot be 'merely' places of wonder or delight: they must mean something else (morally, rather than inevitably) if they are to be interesting or valuable" ("Fantasy and Alternative Worlds" 3).[26] Secondary worlds in fantasy, however far-fetched they seem to be, cannot be isolated from reality. As Hunt argues vehemently in his two essays on fantasy, "fantasy is the ultimate relative term" ("Fantasy and Alternative Worlds" 10) and it "often becomes a commentary on, or a satire on, real life" ("Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction: Revisited" 170).

Rosemary Jackson in her definition of fantasy deals with both the escapist and the

[25] Todorov's discussion on the fantastic is based on the assumption that the events in the narrative are extraordinary, different from the ordinary rules we have applied to the world. Kathryn Hume defines fantasy as "any departure from consensus reality" (21). Colin Manlove has a similar definition as "a fiction involving the supernatural or impossible" (3).

[26] In this citation Hunt mainly questions the "adult criticism" of children's fantasy. Though the didactic and the discipline are still underlying, children's fantasy in the contemporary era facilitates border-crossing of children's literature.

sociopolitical trends: in her words fantasy can *tell of* the desire or it can *expel* the desire. Yet whether the desire is told off or expelled, it is deeply related to the world outside the fantasy. Often a fantasy assumes double function in one action: it expels the desire by telling it off. Jackson's definition of fantasy is widely quoted, for she not only probes into the two seemingly contradictory elements but combines them and elevates fantasy to a psychoanalytic level.[27] Fantasy, according to Jackson, is the interface between the individual and the social. It contains our desire and at the same time reacts to (whether directly or indirectly, positively or negatively) the social norms. Earlier we have cited Raymond Williams's argument that all the genres and forms are interface between the individual writer and the reading public, and a similar statement appears here in Jackson's definition of fantasy. It is since Jackson's argument on fantasies that many researchers study the revolutionary influence of fantasies to the society.[28] They generally argue that the other-world in fantasies distinguishes what is beside the norm and often reflects our desire. I would quote Kelly Searsmith here as a summary of arguments on the power of protests and reforms of fantasies:

> They [romance-tradition fantasies] may make readers even more keenly aware of their lack of fixed identity, the limits of their agency. They have the potential to encourage readers to make the most of whatever relative autonomy they are

[27] Fantasy for Jackson is the unconscious in literary form. "[I]t is in the unconscious that social structures and 'norms' are reproduced and sustained within us, and only by redirecting attention to this area can we begin to perceive the ways in which the relations between society and the individual are fixed" (6).

[28] Please refer to Kelly Searsmith, "News from Somewhere: A Case for Romance-Tradition Fantasy's Reformist Poetic," *The Utopian Fantastic: Selected Essays from the Twentieth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. Martha Bartter (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), Kim Selling, "'Fantastic Neomedievalism': The Image of the Middle Ages in Popular Fantasy," *Flashes of the Fantastic: Selected Essays from* the War of the Worlds *Centennial, Nineteenth International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts*, ed. David Ketterer (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), Tobin Siebers, *The Romantic Fantastic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984), Meredith Veldman, *Fantasy, the Bomb, and the Greening of Britain: Romantic Protest, 1945-1980* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994).

> able to practice and to seek more self-conscious, less mainstream, identifications. [. . .] Romance-tradition fantasy employs cultural myths not only to reify the dominant paradigm, but also to reopen possibilities for—albeit qualified—idealistic reform. (Searsmith 142; 145)

The strong reference to the reality allows White's contemplation on warfare. Starting with anti-war lessons, White disrupts the omnipotence of innocence. Arthur's childhood seems to be White's alignment to structures of feeling, but the anti-war lessons reveals White's commitment. Exposing the innocence Arthur to the cruelty of wars, White deconstructs the perfect image of childhood innocence. In the form of fantasy White again revises the conventional image of misbehaving children and icy mothers in his representations of the Orkney clan. With the genre of fantasy, White not only represents the nostalgia in accordance with structures of feeling in the early-twentieth-century Britain, but brings forth a sociopolitical contemplation on wars, innocence, childrearing methods, and the childhood in life. The unusual representations cause the ambiguous status of *The Once and Future King*, but based on with a view of childhood studies, this tetralogy is as an early text of Reynolds's radical children's literature. Long before the recent wave of re-examination of the child, there has been an effort to depict the child outside the dominant rigid opposites of innocence and delinquency.

Children's fantasy, though realizing the construction of the child, can help the transformation from total control over the child to liberating representations of the child. *The Once and Future King*, written in fantasy form, is an example. Though Reynolds does not mention the liberating function of the fantasy, she in *Radical Children's Literature* specially points out the limit-breaking ability of magical realist works in children's literature. These two genres are related to each other, only different in expressions of supernatural elements. Moreover, in the past years, children's fantasy has caught much

critical attention and become a representative genre in the discussion of the crossover phenomenon.[29] The potential of children's fantasy is yet to be discovered.

As presented above, the conventions and the changes of mainstream forms in children's literature always already reacts to the adult rules underneath. Having seen the adult discipline and construction of childhood, it is easy to see through the reason of the imbalanced reception of *The Once and Future King*: *The Once and Future King* is a text dangling between alignment and commitment. It follows the conventions of children's literature in representing King Arthur's childhood (but the innocence is indirectly disrupted), while it also depicts an unconventional, even disturbing childhood of the Orkney brothers. The following chapters would thus respectively examine two very different representations of childhood: the making of King Arthur and the Orkney brothers.

[29] Crossover books are popular beyond the age limit. In other words, a crossover book can be enjoyed by both adults and children. Crossover could be dually directed: both adult-to-child and child-to-adult texts are listed in the two books on crossover phenomenon, but the researches on the crossover phenomenon, for now, are mainly conducted by children's critics. Children's fantasy is a representative crossover genre, for example, both Sandra L. Beckett and Rachel Falconer attribute the beginning of crossover prominence to Harry Potter series. For the discussion on the crossover phenomenon please refer to Sandra L. Beckett, *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Chapter Two

Innocence and its Disruption: T. H. White's Retelling of King Arthur

In the first chapter, we have examined the popularity of children's fantasy since the nineteenth century, and have pointed out that the nostalgia to childhood innocence and a pastoral environment and intended moral lessons are realized in children's fantasy. In the early twentieth century, children's fantasy remained one of the most popular genres in children's literature. And the popularity strongly correlates to structures of feeling in Britain in the inter-war years: the nostalgia toward innocence and a pastoral environment when British people faced the failing Empire. Despite the failing imperialism, an attempt was made to revive the imperialism in school education, and children's literature likewise dodged the collective doubt toward Britain. *The Once and Future King* in the childhood of Arthur realizes the nostalgia toward innocence and nature: it depicts an innocent childhood surrounded and educated by a pastoral environment. Yet, the text also reflects the doubtful attitude toward wars and nationalism, and even deconstructs innocence and reveals imperialist connotation in the second and the third books. Besides the realization of the nostalgia toward nature, White in his retelling of King Arthur presents an innocent Arthur defenselessly confronted by the cruelty of wars, and in the end beaten in wars. In White's ambivalent presentation of innocence, *The Once and Future King* reflects structures of feeling not only in its realization of the nostalgia, but also in the debates on wars. White, confronted by the conflicted structures of feeling between nostalgia and nationalism, conducts his "commitment" (in Raymond Williams's terms, the writer's conscious choice of position) and chooses to disrupt the omnipotence of childhood innocence by wars.

Children's classics published in the 1930s could give us an overview of children's literature at that time. According to *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* and *Norton*

Anthology of Children's Literature, notable works in children's literature published in the 1930s were P. L. Travers's *Mary Poppins* (1934-1988), Enid Blyton's *Adventures of the Wishing Chair* (1937), J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937), and Walt Disney's first animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) (Hunt et al.; Zipes et al.). Like *The Once and Future King*, most of them (the only exception is *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*) are fantasies. They are fantasies in which the protagonist enjoys adventures or extraordinary events, and finally returns safely to their homes. The adventure in the secondary world, as Gilead has pointed out, is fit for education for the child characters in the text and the child reader of the text. The environment is of natural beauty and kindness. Even *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the only one which is not a fantasy, is set in idyllic environment: a natural forest with kind and happy animals. Fantasies of the secondary worlds, especially children's fantasy, are often set in the idyllic environment, in which human protagonists are enabled to have closer contact with nature. The natural surroundings bring relaxation and content to the characters, and a longing for the nature is strongly implied. Glen Cavaliero early in 1977 has pointed out the importance of the country and childhood in fantasies:

> The English rural scene takes on the character of an Arcadia. And just as memory covers a rural childhood with a fine haze of happiness, so a would-be mystical strangeness becomes an element in the rural novel, making of the country side not merely an idyllic world, but also a gateway into world greater than itself. (34-35)

Paul Fussell has noted that the pastoral was popular in the trenches of World War I. I intend to argue that it is not a coincidence that the pastoral in the trenches and the popular fantasies in children's literature share a longing for nature. The adult longing for a pre-industrial world, together with their imagination of childhood innocence, is realized in inter-war children's literature.

In fact, retreatism is the key tone in the early-twentieth-century children's literature in Britain, especially during the inter-war years. As Peter Hunt explains, "War, change, and the threat of war and change made nostalgia and retreat even more attractive and urgent than before, and it naturally found a place in children's books—at once a place of retreat for adults and of protection for children" ("Retreatism and Advance 1914-1945" 195). In the 1920s the retreatism in rural fantasies was already strong in A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh series (1926-1928) and Hugh Lofting's Dr. Doolittle series (1920-1952). Fantasies connected with the rural and the natural continued to be popular well into the 1930s, along with other popular genres such as school stories and family stories. Yet, fantasy or not, most of children's books at that time did not escape from the retreatist frame of mind. As Donald R. Hettinga and Gary D. Schmidt summarize, mediocre children's works were prevalent in this period, because

> it came in a disturbed and unquiet time, trying to hold on with easy assurance to the assumptions that undergirded children's literature of the Victorian period: that the world is a secure place, that society is capable of both technological and moral progress, that happiness is accessible, that homes can be established or reestablished, that secret gardens do not always have to remain secret but can gladly yield their healing fruit. For writers working after World War I, these same assumptions were not always easy to keep. (xi)

The inter-war years was indeed "a disturbed and unquiet time" for Britain as Hettinga and Schmidt described. As Malcolm Smith notes, "[t]he First World War marked a fundamental cultural disjuncture in British history" (183). From the belief of "the war which ends all wars" to the unexpected long battles and the heavy casualty, the British on the one hand vowed patriotism, but on the other hand lost belief in the Great War and the government. The inflation during and after the war struck the once prosperous kingdom,

and the government's interference to boost the failing economy proved only futile. The discontent toward the government and the church led to the strikes during 1917-21 and the rise of Second Adventism and spiritualism (Dewey 46-47; Pugh 1-20). "[B]ehind the gaiety, exuberance and irresponsibility of post-war social life lurked a pervasive undercurrent of pessimism, the inevitable consequence of the devastating human impact of four years of mass war" (Pugh 4). Trapped between the external appearance of patriotism and morality and the internal discontent and alienation, people yearn much more than ever for the lost Arcadia. "Compared with the overweening uncertainties, the sense of doom that pervaded inter-war culture, pre-1914 was soon bathed in nostalgia [in the inter-war era]" (Malcolm Smith 179).

The conflicted patriotism and a strong nostalgia led to the emphasis of nationalism in the newly established school education.[30] As Hugh Cunningham argues, the quick succession of war failures (the Second Boer War, the First World War, and later the Second World War) had caused a growing concern on children's welfare. Frustrated by the failures, the British trusted their hope to the future, with children considered the core of that future. The education of nationalism was thus introduced into school education. Ironically, by the time British imperialism was included in textbooks, the Empire was near its end. "The Empire Day," a renowned tool of imperialist education, was established after Boer War. It was fondly remembered as "a day when there was a break with routine, and often some buns and oranges to eat" (Cunningham 180), yet it was actually the reinforcement of a failing belief: British imperialism.

Nationalism did not disappear in schoolbooks though the First World War dampened British people's spirit in nationalism. It softened a bit and did not amplify the

[30] Though school education was first introduced in Britain in the late nineteenth century, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that people adapted to the necessity of school education. For more detailed discussion on school education in Britain please refer to chapter four of Cunningham's *The Invention of Childhood*.

glory of the British Empire anymore, but it was transformed into "produce imperialism": each and every part of the Empire was associated with a local product and together the British Empire was presented as an economic aggregate in the textbook. Political imperialism was reincarnated in economic terms. According to Cunningham, imperialism does not die down in school education in Britain and its colonies until the 1960s (182). The war failures helped promote imperialism in school education, but it at the same time promoted the importance of childhood. The government's interference into childhood increased, and the well-being of the child became a national concern.

Arthuriana, under this circumstance, is an apt field for the submission to or reflection on nationalism, whether in adult or children's reading. Stephanie Barczewski has observed that the legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood in the early twentieth century were encouragement for the failing English kingdom. King Arthur, as one of the most important national myths of England, is by nature an allegory of British collectivity. Though T. H. White does not mark nationalism as his motive to write *The Once and Future King*,[31] the anxiety toward wars and nationalism and the longing for the rural environment are key motifs, especially in *The Sword in the Stone*. White, though seldom links his Arthurian adaptation with the inter-war politics (aside from the inserted anti-war sentiment), chooses to write on a topic deeply connected to the conflicted structure of feeling: nostalgia and nationalism projected onto the concern of childhood. Since the lessons Arthur took during childhood influenced his ideas of ruling, childhood is located in a central position, both in an individual's life and a nation's destiny.

Just like the incongruous structures of feeling, *The Once and Future King* is also an conflicted work. It is noticeable that White chooses to write on the education of Arthur, for the primary education (a newly established constitution and concept), like children's

[31] In his letter to L. J. Potts he simply intends to write "a preface to Mallory" (Gallix 86). He intends only to retell *Morte Arthur* in modern languages due to his renewed admiration to Malory.

literature, is the means of instilling ideology, and White, like his predecessors in the convention of childhood innocence, softens rigid and boring educational messages with vivid depiction of nature and entertaining episodes of childhood. However, Arthur's innocence, in these novels, is contrasted by the cruelty of wars, and tainted by his idealistic yet somehow imperialistic rule. From the beginning the childhood of Arthur is comprised of clashing elements: the general nostalgia projected onto childhood and the idyllic environment and the confrontation between wars and innocence. The good reception of *The Sword in the Stone* is due to its complying with structures of feeling of nostalgia, but actually Arthur's life is not merely another example of adult nostalgia, but White's contemplation upon wars and nationalism. Arthur's rise and fall, his personal growth from innocence to maturity, the forming and executing of his political project from ideal to frustration and failure, are all deeply related to structures of feeling of the inter-war Britain, and White, by his indirect disruption of innocence, has consciously chosen his position between the conflicted nostalgia and nationalism manifested in the early-twentieth-century Britain.

I. Nostalgia toward Nature in *The Sword in the Stone*

> It [*The Sword in the Stone*] is more or less a wish-fulfillment of the kind of things I should have liked to have happened when I was a boy. (Gallix *Letters* 86-87)

White's description of *The Sword in the Stone* as "a wish-fulfillment" matches the afore-mentioned collective nostalgia to nature and the innocent childhood, as well as his own strong preference to the child.[32] Though Arthur's innocence is challenged in lessons

[32] White, with a traumatic childhood and pedophilia to young boys, favors the child. In the depiction of the Orkney brothers White's preference to the child escalates even to the detriment of morality. For detailed discussion please see the next chapter.

about wars, White still retains a genuine passion for children and nature through detailed depiction of the harmony in Arthur's childhood home. It is best put by Glen Cavaliero that White "succeeded perhaps better than any of his contemporaries in voicing the pleasure, the boyish pleasure, to be found in field sports and in mastering one's environment" (38).

In *The Sword in the Stone*, nature provides a serene order of life, contrasting the uncertainty felt by British people after World War I. The castle of the Forest Sauvage is "a paradise for a boy to be in" (White *The Once and Future King* 38). The surrounding of a forest gives the castle security, natural resources, and ideal rural life. The chapters in *The Sword in the Stone* are often introduced with a description of seasonal changes in the surroundings of the Forest of Sauvage. Like the medieval illuminated calendar in book of hours,[33] every season is distributed with its events and due adventures. An episode often begins with the introduction of season and time, and the change of seasons is always clearly identified. White described a lovely summer afternoon when Merlyn could not resist dozing off comfortably under a tree while Wart and Kay were taking archery lessons:

> It was still the loveliest summer weather, and there had been chicken for dinner, so that Merlyn had gone off to the edge of their shooting-ground and sat down under a tree. What with the warmth and the chicken and the cream he had poured over his pudding and the continual repassing of the boys and the tock of the arrows in the targets—which was as sleepy to listen to as the noise of a lawn-mower or of a village cricket match—and what with the dance of the egg-shaped sunspots between the leaves of his tree, the aged man was soon fast asleep. (White *The Once and Future King* 49)

[33] Books of hours are devotional books popular in the late Middle Ages. They contain prayers to be said in the honor of Virgin Mary, and sometimes with illuminated calendars. The *Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*, for example, contain illuminations on seasonal activities.

Although the archery lesson of Wart and Kay could easily do without this small digression, White starts his chapter with this paragraph to foreground the ease of the summer afternoon and thus the content with the environment. Aside from this paragraph White also provides detailed accounts on storing food and resources for the winter (White *The Once and Future King* 130-31) and a joyful Christmas festival (White *The Once and Future King* 137-41). The living order of nature is both a recalling of medieval ages and a demonstration of the harmony between nature and men.

As the epitome of the innocent child, Wart[34] came in touch with nature and was educated by it. Through lessons of transformations, Wart was turned into different animals by Merlyn and was able to learn from them. White represents a childhood connected and harmonious with nature not only in Arthur's education, but in his daily life. Like the scene when Merlyn fell asleep, White always provides specific detail of the natural environment. In the first chapter, White begins the whole book with the busy but merry hay-making in July in the Castle (White *The Once and Future King* 5-7). The hay-making could easily be deleted for it does not have direct link with Wart's education, but White nonetheless spends two to three pages on the hay-making. The harmony between people and nature has shown vividly in the depiction of the hay-making: from the landscape, the farm, and farmers working on it. The whole scene of hay-making, in White's presentation, seems just like an illumination in medieval books of hours.

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[34] "Wart" or "the Wart" is the nickname of young Arthur throughout *The Sword in the Stone*. He was only called as Arthur at the end of the *The Sword in the Stone*. "Wart" rhymes with "Art," the first syllable of his full name "Arthur." Also the nickname "the Wart" indicates Arthur's situation as an orphan and somebody added (perhaps not wanted by his adopted brother Kay) to the family. The origin of the nickname is in the first paragraph of *The Once and Future King*, also by this nickname it shows the secondary position of Wart and the relationships between Kay and the Wart. "The Wart was called the Wart because it more or less rhymed with Art, which was short for his real name. Kay had given him the nickname. Kay was not called anything but Kay, as he was too dignified to have a nickname and would have flown into a passion if anybody had tried to give him one" (White *The Once and Future King* 9).

> It was July, and real July weather, such as they had in Old England. [. . .] The dogs moved about with their tongues hanging out, or lay panting in bits of shade, while the farm horses sweated through their coats and flicked their tails and tried to kick the horse-flies off their bellies with their great hind hoofs. In the pasture field the cows were on the gad, and could be seen galloping about with their tails in the air, which made Sir Ector angry.
>
> Sir Ector stood on the top of a rock, whence he could see what everybody was doing, and shouted commands all over the two-hundred-acre field, and grew purple in the face. The best mowers mowed away in a line where the grass was still uncut, their scythes roaring in the strong sunlight. The women raked the dry hay together in long strips with wooden rakes, and the two boys with pitchforks followed up on either side of the strip, turning the hay inwards so that it lay well for picking up. [. . .] One man stood on top of the cart to receive the hay and direct operations, while one man walked on either side picking up what the boys had prepared and throwing it to him with a fork. (White *The Once and Future King* 6)

After the hay-making, Wart and Kay went hawking. When they went across the field, they were in pursuit of rabbits for their hawk Cully to hunt. White adds a detailed paragraph on the hay-field:

> [T]hey went out across the hay-field, noting how the carefully raked hay was now sodden again and losing its goodness, into the chase where the trees began to grow, far apart as yet and parklike, but gradually crowding into the forest shade. The conies had hundreds of buries under these trees, so close together that the problem was not to find a rabbit, but to find a rabbit far enough away from its hole. (White *The Once and Future King* 9-10)

Again, the seasonal activity here adds the vivacity of the Castle of Forest Sauvage. The hay-making was linked to Wart and Kay's hawking when they searched for prey (rabbits) for their hawk on the hay-field. Later they lost Cully, and Wart was obliged to search for it, thus he found Merlyn's cabin in the woods. Before he reached Merlyn's cabin, Wart spent a night alone in the woods. Though Wart was a bit frightened by the woods, he grew at ease in the woods and fell asleep on the ground:

> The boy [Wart] slept well in the woodland nest where he had laid himself down, in that kind of thin but refreshing sleep which people have when they begin to lie out of doors. [. . .] These little noises of footsteps and soft-fringed wing-beats and stealthy bellies drawn over the grass blades or rattling against the bracken at first *frightened* or *interested* him, so that he moved to see what they were (but never saw), then *soothed* him, so that he no longer cared to see what they were but trusted them to be themselves, and finally left him altogether as he *swam* down deeper and deeper, *nuzzling into* the scented turf, into the warm ground, into the unending waters under the earth. (White *The Once and Future King* 21; my emphasis)

Though he was first startled by sounds in the woods, Wart came to be at peace with wild nature around him. White does not state plainly that Wart fell asleep, but uses a series of images to describe how Wart sank deeper and deeper into slumber, fusing with nature.

The lessons of Wart likewise often start in seasonal description. It was in August that Wart thinks of becoming a fish in the moat, for the water in the moat was deep and seemed to be cool. When asked what kind of fish he wanted to be, Wart could not decide immediately because it was too hot to think about it (White *The Once and Future King* 40-41). In contrast, the military adventure in the mews took place because "[i]t was a cold wet evening, [. . .] and Wart did not know how to bear himself indoors" (White *The Once*

and Future King 69). In *The Sword in the Stone*, the natural environment correlates with Wart's daily life and lessons.

In addition to seasonal changes, some episodes also reflect the customs of the pre-industrial medieval society. For instance, the catechism Wart receives in the mews tells the reader much about falconry. Several terms of hawking, such as "tiring" and "the Beast of Foot," appear in this chapter, and modern readers may feel thrilled with the narrator's rich knowledge of nature and medieval life. We also learn how a merlin kills a pigeon in this lesson: strangling the prey with the feet. Some episodes are related with the skills of aristocratic men in the medieval society, such as archery, tilting and the Christmas boar hunting. A yearning for the pre-industrial rural life is obvious with these fascinating glimpses of the medieval world. The nostalgia toward the pre-industrial time and nature is combined together in the childhood of Arthur, when White representes an image of medieval or Old England, when people were content with nature. White's elaborate depictions of the Castle of Forest Sauvage fulfills his and the collective wishes to return to a pre-industrial time. And the realization of the nostalgia in a children's fantasy reinforces Gilead, Monleón, and Ostry's arguments: children's fantasy is in fact a void in which the mainstream ideology is instilled. In the case of *The Sword in the Stone*, it is the nostalgia toward nature that realizes the ideal childhood innocence.

Toward the end of the lessons, White keeps up with the rhythm of seasonal changes. White wraps up the transformations again with the hay-making: "It was hay-making again, and Merlyn had been with them a year. The wind had visited them, and the snow, and the rain, and the sun once more. The boys looked longer in the leg, but otherwise everything was the same" (White *The Once and Future King* 180). Nature provides the order of living in the world of the Castle Sauvage. White states in the text that "in the Old England there was a greater marvel still. The weather behaved itself" (White *The Once and Future King* 137). Nature is not only an ideal surrounding of living but also a guide of order in life. And

nature itself provides an ideal nurturing home for children. Like the popularity of pastoral on the battlefields of World War I, *The Sword in the Stone* is a nostalgic hymn to the nature and the countryside in prose. As Brewer notes, "Like many late nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers, he [White] enjoyed looking back to an imaginary golden age in the past. In *The Sword in the Stone*, he devised his own utopia, [. . .] consisting partly of the happy child, and partly of his vision of what pre-industrial England might have been like" (*T. H. White's* 19).

Through his knowledge of nature and related activities,[35] White successfully transforms the collective nostalgia for nature to vivid depictions of various animals in nature. The animal tutors are not human beings in animal shapes, but instructors through their animality instill core values of character education in Wart.

White's realistic depictions of animal behaviors are best represented in Wart's food when he was transformed into an owl. When Archimedes (Merlyn's owl, and Wart's teacher in this lesson) came to Wart that night, he gave Wart a mouse for food, and Wart, with the natural instincts of an owl, ate the mouse. White makes it clear that Wart was eating food an ordinary owl eats. He compares the mouse to human food, so the intensity of horrible scene of eating a raw mouse gets explained away. "The Wart felt so strange that he took the furry atomy without protest, and popped it into his mouth without any feelings that it was going to be nasty. So he was not surprised when it turned out to be excellent, with a fruity taste like eating a peach with the skin on, though naturally the skin was not so nice as the mouse" (White *The Once and Future King* 162). Uniquely, White does not adapt the human habits to animals, nor does he elude the natural habits of animals, but chooses to adapt a boy into the animality in different phases of transformations.

[35] White has a good knowledge of the nature: He has spent most of his life in a gamekeeper's cottage. He learns hunting, fishing and falconry as a remedy to his trauma, and enjoys those activities in his hermitage. Please refer to Crane, *T. H. White*, Keenan, "T. H. White.", Nelson, "T. H. White.", Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 1968).

The longing for the natural environment, along with the preservation of animal nature in the animal tutors, is best represented in the lesson of the grass snake in the 1938 edition, while the deletion of this lesson signifies the change of themes. Before each transformation, Merlyn always pinpointed what Wart could learn from his animal tutors. Yet, contrasting the other adventures, Merlyn did not credit the grass snake as a good teacher; he even claimed that it would not teach him much about anything. "It [Being a snake] isn't much of a life. I don't think you'll get anything very exciting to happen to you. This chap probably only eats about once a week or once a fortnight, and the rest of the time he dreams. Still, if I turned you into one, you might get him to talk. It won't be more than that" (White *The Sword in the Stone* 151). Yet it is the relaxing nothingness that Wart learned. Like Merlyn said, "it will be *a rest* after shooting Anthropophagi[36]" (White *The Sword in the Stone* 151; my emphasis). And the rest itself is a lesson to learn.

The grass snake in fact teaches a very important lesson: to enjoy the harmony with nature. From the grass snake Wart learned a life rhythm of eating, drinking, and dreaming in accordance with the pace of nature. Though termed a "rest," the lethargy is important: to learn to follow the rules of nature. The grass snake at the end of the chapter was elevated to into a representative of the history and tradition of the snakes and the ancient world.

> He was old, as old as the veins of the earth which were serpents like him, and Aesculapius [the snake] with a beard as white as glaciers was lulling him to sleep. He was teaching him wisdom, the ancient wisdom, by which the old snakes can walk with three hundred feet at once upon the same world in which their grandchildren the birds have learned to fly" (White *The Sword in the Stone* 161).

[36] The Anthropophagi only appeared in the 1938 edition of *The Sword in the Stone*. They were cannibalistic creatures living like outlaws in the woods. Their arrows were lethal. In the 1938 *Sword of Stone* Wart and Kay followed Robin Wood for a battle against the Anthropophagi, but in the 1958 edition the Anthropophagi was replaced by Morgan le Fay.

Ironically, the lesson of the grass snake also signifies the lost pure content with nature in the 1958 edition. The grass snake is deleted in the 1958 edition, and replaced by the belligerent ants, an important lesson on wars. Instead of the rest Wart should take, he was thrown into the dystopia of the ants and was shocked by their aggressive nature. The lesson of ants is only the first step into the discussions on wars and implied imperialism. Together with the lesson of wild geese, the lesson of ants marks White's clear distaste toward wars (Elisabeth Brewer *T. H. White's;* Gallix "T. H. White"; Hadfield). In the 1958 edition, the distrust to human beings is magnified in the lesson of the badger, and wars develop into an important motif and finally resulted in the disruption of innocence.

II. Wars, Nationalism, and the Disruption of Innocence

Adrienne Kertzer once stated her preference of the first edition of *The Sword in the Stone* to the second one, though she concedes that the second edition makes a better link with the other three works. To Kertzer the 1938 edition is more original. In his revision, White deleted the episodes of Madame Mim and giant Galapas, and replaced the lessons of the grass snake with ants, the visit to the goddess Athene with a migratory journey among wild geese, and the fight against the Anthropophagi was turned into a fight against Morgan le Fay and her griffins. Among the changes, both the lessons of ants and geese are specified as lessons about wars (Elisabeth Brewer *T. H. White's;* Gallix "T. H. White"; Hadfield), and it is noteworthy that both Elisabeth Brewer and Kurth Sprague attribute the revision to White's change of attitude toward wars (Brewer 206; Sprague 25).

Due to the general effort to revive national glory, nationalistic values permeate in primary education. Likewise, war narratives in children's literature in this period mostly work as propaganda for patriotism. As Dorothea Flothow summarizes, "these narratives memorialize the war as both a necessary fight *and* as an exciting adventure" (147). The

promotion of wars in children's literature might be aimed to protect the children from the cruelty of war, or it might be a way of escapism, or, it was to teach children nationalistic values through the necessity of wars. However, wars have different impacts upon T. H. White's King Arthur. On one hand White, like his contemporaries, trims out dangerous adventures to preserve law and order for young Arthur, and he also added several lessons on wars. Yet, contrary to the promotion of wars as well as patriotism, White condemns the cruel nature of human beings in his anti-war lessons. Arthur's response to questions about warfare sounds idealistic, sometimes quite naïve. The confrontation between Arthur and the harsh reality of wars somewhat deconstructs innocence. And in the sequels, Arthur's ideal to tame Might with Right is also tainted with imperialism. In his kingship Arthur might even realize imperialism. Despite White's strong preference to the child, he shadows the pastoral tone in Arthur's childhood with Arthur's conducts in adulthood.

As I mention in the last paragraph, White's attempt to preserve a safer surrounding for Arthur is witnessed through his revisions. Among the adventures Arthur took in the first book, the episode of Madame Mim, the giant Galapas and the Anthropophagi are most dangerous. The Anthropophagi had lethal weapons and were very threatening to inhabitants in the woods. Galapas, though a comic figure, imprisoned King Pellinore and many others, and intended to capture Merlyn and Wart as well. Madame Mim is made after the image of the witch in Hans and Gretel with a similar method of temptation and a clear intention to boil the boys alive for food. Here I would like to take the examples of Madame Mim and the Anthropophagi to explain White's preservation of a safer childhood for Arthur.

Madame Mim is undoubtedly the most dangerous villain in the first book, and in her cabin Wart and Kay nearly met their end. She lured Wart and Kay into her cabin, imprisoned them, and was nearly successful to cook Wart before Merlyn came to their rescue. White delivers to us Madame Mim's cruelty by her careful measurements of her prey and her happy but chilling work songs. She treated her little prisoners in a way that is

matter-of-factly scary: “Before Madame Mim had finally shown him [Kay] in [the cage], she had pinched him all over to see if he was fat. She had also slapped him, to see, as the butchers put it, if he was hollow” (White *The Sword in the Stone* 65-66). When Merlyn came to rescue the boys, the witch was tearing off Wart’s clothes, happily singing her plucking song. One verse goes as, “Soft skin for crackling, / Oh, my lovely duckling, / the skewers go here, / and the strings go there / And such is my scrumptious suckling” (White *The Sword in the Stone* 71). The song is horrifying when we consider it is a boy that she was “plucking.” As Brewer comments, “White is much more explicit than the brothers Grimm [in Hans and Gretel] about the intended fate of the witch’s victims. [. . .] [H]er treatment of the Wart is frighteningly sadistic and long drawn out” (*T. H. White’s* 33). The removal of Madame Mim secures Wart and Kay from their greatest danger, but gone with Madame Mim is also the excitement generated by a dangerous adventure. The attraction of a dangerous encounter with Madame Mim perhaps prompts Disney to revive Madame Mim on the screen, though the experience is no longer dangerous but turned into “exciting and humorous chases” (Thompson 111).

The toning-down of danger could again be witnessed in the replacement of the Anthropophagi. In the first edition, the enemy of Robin Wood and his people was the Anthropophagi, violent creatures with poisoned arrows. According to Robin Wood, “They are cunning archers, [. . .], and their murders grow more pestilent every week. [. . .] [L]iving in the worst quarters of the forest, they creep out like wolves or adders and assassinate any person that they see (White *The Sword in the Stone* 129). When Wart and Kay met Robin Wood in the woods, he and his people were planning an ambush. Together with people in the woods Wart marched a long way in the night. The introduction to their enemy, the meeting before the ambush, and the long march in the night make the whole adventure warlike: desperate and dangerous.

Also, through Wart’s eyes White provides a vivid account of ambush, killing, and the

first battle in Arthur's life.

> He [Wart] saw his own arrow fly wide of a crane-man, and eagerly bent forward to snatch another from the ground. [. . .] He saw the rank of his companion archers sway forward as if by a preconcerted signal, when each man stooped for a second shaft. He heard the bow-strings twang again, the purr of the feathers in the air. He saw the phalanx of arrows gleam like an eye-flick in the firelight. All his life up to then he had been shooting into straw targets which made a noise like Phutt! He had often longed to hear the noise that these gay, true, clean and deadly missiles of the air would make in solid flesh. He heard it. (White *The Sword in the Stone* 140)

This battle with the Antrhpophagi is given a vivid account through Wart's point of view, and he even had his first tête-à-tête with an enemy on the battlefield, but this event is much softened in the second edition. In the 1958 edition, the enemy became Morgan Le Fay, who tempted people into her castle and imprisoned them, but quickly surrendered her prisoners when threatened by Wart and Kay with iron knives (in accordance with the folklore, Morgan le Fay, as a fairy witch, fears iron). The fight with the Anthropophagi was transformed into the fight with a griffin, with a much reserved description. "But the griffin's plates were as thick as a crocodile's and all but the best placed arrows glanced off. It still came on. It squealed as it came. Men began to fall, swept to the left or right by the lashing tail" (White *The Once and Future King* 111). The sense of a battle is much reduced.

Besides, the condition that only children could enter Morgan Le Fay's castle glorifies childhood innocence. In the second edition, Robin Wood needed Wart and Kay because they were the only people who could rescue the prisoners. "Fairies are magic too, and *only innocent people* can enter their castles. That is why they take away people's *children* out of cradles" (White *The Once and Future King* 101; my emphasis). In this passage, the fairy-tale tradition of changeling is linked to the innocence of the child. Children are

directly linked with innocence, with which they became the only rescue from a witch. This condition is newly added in the second edition. Innocence is elevated to be the redemption, as it has been the solace of adults in reality, especially in tough times. In the 1958 *Sword in the Stone*, White is more protective of childhood innocence. As retreatism permeated in inter-war children's literature, Arthur's childhood became much safer in the second edition.

But White does address the issue of wars; in fact, the anti-war sentiment becomes one of the most important themes in *The Once and Future King*. As Brewer concludes, "[h]is [White's] horror at the carnage of World War II inevitably affected his view of the past, making him indifferent to the ideals of chivalry and only able to see, for the most part, its evil aspects" (*T. H. White's* 206). When it comes to a book for children, White somehow, in the 1958 edition, abandons the pure joy in harmony with nature, and resorts to preaching against wars and reflected on evil human nature. Thus the lethargic grass snake was replaced by ants, and the visit to Athene's residence became a long migratory journey with the wild geese. The anti-war lessons, however, plant seeds for disruption of innocence. When young Wart is confronted with questions about wars, his innocence turns to naivety. Different from his retreatist contemporaries, White in his introduction to the motif of wars chooses to confront innocence with wars, and in his retelling of Arthur achieves his commitment by the indirect disruption of innocence.

The new episodes of the ants and geese have been acknowledged as a demonstration of White's theory of the cause and the antidote to war, as afore-mentioned. The comparison and contrasts between ants and geese has been acknowledged as representations of White's disgust with wars and dictatorship and his ideal social system. Arthur in the last night before the battle also recalled the lesson of ants, geese, and the lecture of the badger when he reflected upon the utility of wars (White *The Once and Future King* 676).[37] François Gallix

[37] In *The Book of Merlyn* (1977) the short reflection was turned into the main focus of the whole book, in which White elaborated again the lessons on wars and humanity. *The Book*

in his essay “T. H. White and the Legend of King Arthur” has explained lucidly the opposition of ants and geese. He points out White’s allusion to Hitler and some contemporary dystopian works, such as *We* (1921), *Brave New World* (1931), and *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) in the lesson of ants ("T. H. White" 285). Indeed, their lack of individuality (they do not have names, only numbers) and constant propaganda of collectivity (the broadcast of nationalism is non-stop in their territory), and their aggressive nature all remind us of the Nazi Germany and dystopia. White attributes the belligerence of the ants to their strong sense of territory, while wild geese are their opposite.

Contrary to dystopian ants, wild geese are the representation of an ideal society: their leader is voted by all geese and they have no concepts of territory. Therefore they do not wage wars, nor do they understand wars. Lyo-lyok, the female goose Wart befriended with, was stunned by human fights. When Wart described wars to her, she was firstly confused, then disgusted by it. “She began to understand this idea slowly and doubtfully, an expression of distaste coming over her face. When it had sank in, she left him. [. . .] Moving round to get a glimpse of her eyes, he was startled by their dislike—a look as if he had made some obscene suggestion” (White *The Once and Future King* 171). As Lyo-lyok later angrily hushed Wart from talking of wars again, she cried out, “What a horrible mind you must have! [. . .] [W]hat creature could be so low as to go about in bands, to murder others of its own blood?” (White *The Once and Future King* 171)

Following the anti-war lessons of ants and geese, White delves into the reasons behind wars, and comes to blame on the evil nature of humans. In the last lesson instructed by the badger, White adds a discussion of human follies in the 1958 edition to the original happy ending of the badger’s thesis on the formation of the world, in which a human being

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of Merlyn was originally intended as the conclusion of *The Once and Future* King, but it remained unpublished until 1977. In this book Merlyn appeared on the night before the battle and brought Arthur to have a council with his animal tutors on wars. The lessons of ants and geese were at first part of this book, but they were moved into *The Sword in the Stone* after the decision that *The Book of Merlyn* was not to be published.

pleased the God and gained the dominance over other animals. The badger in the 1958 edition thought his thesis "a trifle optimistic," and went on to point out men had "a quantity of vices" (White *The Once and Future King* 196). In this edition the badger had actually twisted the Order of Dominion into a power relationship motivated by violence and fear: "if even Sir Ector was to go for a walk beside a river, not only would the birds fly from him and the beasts run away from him, but the very fish would dart to the other side. They don't do this for each other" (White *The Once and Future King* 196). Of human vices, the most obvious one is belligerence: "Homo sapiens is almost the only animal which wages war," and "[t]rue warfare is rarer in Nature than cannibalism" (White *The Once and Future King* 196; 97). Interestingly, the word "belligerence" is also used on the ants for several times, both before Wart's transformation into an ant and his recollection of those lessons on the last night (White *The Once and Future King* 120; 676).

Yet, despite all these lessons on wars, young Wart could not understand the futility and horrible nature of wars. He told Lyo-lyok he liked fights (wars in fact) because it was "knightly" (White *The Once and Future King* 172). He told the badger he supposed he would have "courage in warfare, [. . .] and endurance, and comrades" through warfare (White *The Once and Future King* 197). Why would Wart long for a war? As Lyo-lyok's response to Wart, Wart liked fighting because he was "a baby" (White *The Once and Future King* 172). It explains much from Wart's answers that he did not understand fully the cruelty of wars. The badger asked Wart if he preferred the ants or the wild geese. It was not, as Wart misunderstood the badger, a change of subject. The badger was actually asking Wart's motive behind his love of war. It turned out to be a noble and somehow foolish motive. Wart declared, "I should pray to God to let me encounter all the evil in the world in my own person, so that if I conquered there would be none left, and, if I were defeated, I would be the one to suffer for it" (White *The Once and Future King* 184). Before departing the court for good, Merlyn called Arthur "an innocent fellow" (White *The Once and Future*

King 294). From his answers to the questions on wars, young Wart did not only sound innocent but naïve. Though White's Arthur could be read as a figure of Jesus Christ as Andrew Hadfield and Evans Lansing Smith have argued,[38] the conducts of Arthur in his kingship made him seem nationalistic, or even imperialistic. Not until the last night of his life did he understand the anti-war lessons in his childhood. The innocence of Arthur was disrupted step by step when we take his adult life into accounts.

Though White proclaims his distaste of wars and makes it one of the themes in *The Once and Future King*, he always holds an ambivalent attitude toward wars when it is related to nationalism (Elizabeth Brewer; Hadfield). White himself was against violence, yet he once offered himself to serve in World War II (though not accepted). During World War II White lived in Ireland, away from the battlefield, yet he was worried about the war and anxious about the victory of England. The internal contradictory attitudes might result in the nationalistic tone in the text. The introduction to ants is already with a touch of nationalism. Merlyn specifically explained the foreign origin of ants to Wart, "[t]he ants are not our Norman ones, dear boy. They come from the Afric shore" (White *The Once and Future King* 120). White distributes the oppressive ants to a foreign land, and a foreign land associated with barbarism. Considering that Britain just lost Boer Wars, a series of wars with people of Africa. Merlyn's remarks are an echo resounding British nationalism: the belligerent ants could not be Normans, and they are originally from a barbaric land.

Merlyn's contradictory attitudes toward wars and nationalism further complicates the discourse on wars in this book. Merlyn harbored disgust against wars, but he encouraged Arthur's decision to use wars as a tool. On the one hand Merlyn claimed "wars are a

[38] The comparison between King Arthur and Jesus Christ could be traced back to *The Idylls of the King*, and was one of the conventions in twentieth-century Arthuriana. For more discussion please refer to Maureen Fries, "Trends in the Modern Arthurian Novel," *King Arthur through the Ages*, eds. Valerie M Lagorio and Mildred Leake Day, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1990), Raymond H. Thompson, "Conceptions of King Arthur in the Twentieth Century," *King Arthur: A Casebook*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002).

wickedness, perhaps the greatest wickedness of a wicked species" (White *The Once and Future King* 237), yet on the other he encouraged Arthur's decision to fight: When Arthur finally made the decision to beat his enemies and rule with the principle of Might for Right, Merlyn thought his lessons accomplished.[39] During their long discussion on wars, Kay once excitingly came up with a good reason for wars,

> [T]here might be a king who had discovered a new way of life for human beings—you know, something which would be good for them. It might even be the only way of saving them from destruction. Well, if the human beings were too wicked or too stupid to accept his way, he might have to force it on them, in their own interests, by the sword. (White *The Once and Future King* 274)

Again, when Kay excitingly shared his ideas on the necessity of wars, Merlyn reproached Kay with an allusion to Adolf Hitler. He then contrasted Hitler with Jesus Christ, and implied that Arthur was closer to Jesus Christ in the effort to "make ideas *available*, and *not* to impose them on people" (White *The Once and Future King* 274). Yet Arthur's goal sounds much more than "making ideas available": "My idea is that if we can win this battle in front of us, and *get a firm hold of the country*, then I will *institute a sort of order* of chivalry. [. . .] And then I shall *make the oath of the order* that Might is only to be used for Right" (White *The Once and Future King* 254; my emphasis). As Kay insistently retorted

[39] In the text Merlyn "said the first few words of the Nunc Dimittis" (White *The Once and Future King* 255). According to Michael Anderson and John William Sutton's online glossary of *The Once and Future King* and their reference to Britannia Online Encyclopedia, Nunc Dimittis is a brief hymn of Simon when he saw the newly born David. The first lines go as "Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised." Michael Anderson and John William Sutton, "A Glossary of Names, Allusions, and Technical Terms in T. H. White's *the Once and Future King* and *the Book of Merlyn*," Available: http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/thwhite.htm, April 21 2010. "Nunc Dimittis," *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2010), 21 April 2010 <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/422490/Nunc-Dimittis>.

Merlyn, “Arthur is fighting the present war [. . .] to *impose* his ideas on King Lot” (White *The Once and Future King* 274; my emphasis).

Not only on King Lot did Arthur impose his ideas, but on all the people in British Isles, and more and more foreign lands in his ruling days. In *The Ill-Made Knight*, Arthur left the British Isles to extend territory across continental Europe. Arthur indeed stuck to the end his idea of Might for Right, yet the Right, ironically was based on Arthur’s warfare. Throughout his life he strived to keep his knights bent on the principle of Might for Right, in order to bring his people to a more civilized way of life, yet his conducts could be interpreted that he was in love of Might. It is noticeable that he did not stop conquering after he got hold of Britain, but went for outlandish battles. Arthur’s noble establishment of Right could not justify his pursuit of further lands. Nor could he deny the fact that he had waged wars in the name of his people and country. Furthermore, Arthur’s scheme of invasion and education sounds quite similar to imperialism: Is not educating the underdeveloped people the proclaimed noble motive of colonialism?

James Purdon notes White’s usage of a strong word “atrocity” on the description of young Arthur’s methodology of wars. It indirectly reveals that Arthur, in his adulthood, had turned into a man good at wars, and his outlandish battles only proved that he enjoyed conquering. In his innocent youth Arthur expressed he was not against wars, and his rule was indeed built on wars. Though he was an honest man and king, his innocence (or, should we say naivety?) had led him too easily to welcome warfare, to the affair with Morgause and the conception of Mordred,[40] and to his downfall. Only on the night before the last battle did Arthur fully understand the anti-war lessons in his youth. He recalled vividly the lessons, and this time knowingly attributed the cause of wars to the sense of territory, but it

[40] In White’s adaptation it is Morgause who seduced Arthur with her charm as a mother. Morgause and her motherhood will be further developed in the next chapter.

was too late for him to start over. As Colin Manlove suggestes, *The Once and Future King* was "a flight to Aleppo."[41] Arthur fails despite all the preparation for his kingship.

Yet, Arthur's failure is not futile. At a time when the glory of British Empire was fading, White's retelling of King Arthur might be interpreted as his thesis on wars and nationalism, just like the badger's thesis on humanity. As Hunt observes, fantasy is national symbolism. Arthur's final recollection on the utility of boundaries in a way is White's conclusion of his contemplation on wars and nationalism:

> The fantastic thing about war was that it was fought about nothing—literally nothing. Frontiers were imaginary lines. [. . .] It was geography which was the cause—political geography. It was nothing else. Nations did not need to have the same kind of civilization, nor the same kind of leader, any more than the puffins and the guillemots did. [. . .] Countries would have to become counties—but counties which could keep their own culture and local laws. The imaginary lines on the earth's surface only needed to be unimagined. [. . .] How mad the frontiers had seemed to Lyo-lyok, and would to Man if he could learn to fly. (White *The Once and Future King* 676)

Like his contemporaries in children's literature, White writes on wars. He does not, however, turn his war narratives into nationalistic propaganda, but a thoughtful contemplation on wars. And *The Once and Future King*, as a fantasy, channels two opposite uses of fantasy: it is both an escape into the pastoral childhood and a reflection on reality.

Arthur's pastoral childhood is not futile, either. In his invention of Arthur's childhood, White voices the nostalgia toward childhood innocence and nature, which is dominant in his time. When frustrated by war failure and national recession, innocence and

[41] It is an allusion of a folk tale: a man of Damascus fled to Aleppo to avoid his death, but found Death waiting for him right in Aleppo.

nature is critically needed. Just as King Arthur fondly remembered his childhood on the even of the last battle when he was nearly beaten by despair, we need the innocent childhood to cherish, to recollect, and to hope, as in Wordsworth's "Ode to Immortality," only that innocence could not save us from difficulties in life. Likewise, innocence could not save Arthur from (or perhaps even led him to) warfare and a questionable ideal of Might for Right. From the original creation of a pastoral childhood, the ensuing anti-war and misanthropist lessons, and the degradation of Arthur's kingdom, the making of King Arthur faithfully reflects the conflicted structures of feeling in nostalgia and doubtful nationalism. White projectes all the hopes and expectations onto Arthur and his innocence, as if a king could save all the people, but deep down his heart he knows clearly innocence could not prevent failure. As White comments at the end of "The Queen of Air and Darkness," "it seems, in tragedy, that innocence is not enough" (White *The Once and Future King* 323).

The life of King Arthur, in White's retelling, tells of an ideal (a pastoral childhood and an aim of Might for Right) yet at the same time reveals the ideal insufficient to cope with reality. John K. Crane concludes that White's strong sense of here and now makes him a unique fantasy writer (45-46). Perhaps that is why Kertzer prefers the first edition of *The Sword in the Stone* to the second one: in the finished tetralogy, White's sense of here and now leads to his forced preservation of childhood, yet through the anti-war lessons and imperialism he gives out too much of the insufficiency of innocence, deconstructing the omnipotence of innocence. The pure joy over nature and innocence is bleached beside the reality of wars and failure. And it is probably why the following three parts are deemed not appropriate as children's books as the first one: the myth of innocence should always be maintained.

Perry Nodelman once compared children to the Oriental people or the colonized. Adults, like the colonizers, willfully project their educational concepts and desire onto children and the books they read. Today, it is still parents and educators who write, publish,

and purchase children's books. Though critics have been calling for liberation, or broadening of children's literature,[42] the discipline in children's literature to a certain degree remains. "Protection of childhood, then, and everything it entails, has become key in the wake of a whole series of high-profile legal, political, economic and ethical show trials, spectacles [. . .] that are usually disturbing, at times amusing, always disquieting" (Marquard Smith 7). What motivates the myth of innocence? In *The Sword in the Stone*, White makes it clear that it is the need to hope that drove the notion of childhood innocence. Though White complies with the convention of innocence (his alignment), he also manages an indirect disruption of innocence (his commitment). In the representation of the Orkney brother, he furthermore provides an account of totally unconventional, sometimes even very disturbing childhood. In the next chapter, I would examine White's revolutionary account of the Orkney brothers, the transformation of parent-child relationship in the early-twentieth-century Britain, and the interaction between the changing notion of motherhood and childhood and White's unconventional representation of the Orkneys.

[42] Please refer to David Galef, "Crossing Over: Authors Who Write Both Children's and Adults' Fiction," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 20.1 (1995), Henry A. Giroux, *Stealing Innocence: Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), Jerry Griswold, "The Disappearance of Children's Literature (or Children's Literature as Nostalgia) in the United States in the Late Twentieth Century," *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), U. C. Knoepflmacher, "The Balancing of Child and Adult: An Approach to Victorian Fantasies for Children " *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 37.4 (1983), Eva-Maria Metcalf, "The Changing Status of Children and Children's Literature," *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (Wesport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), Maria Nikolajeva, "Exit Children's Literature?," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 22.2 (1998), Maria Nikolajeva, "Children's, Adult, Human . . .?," *Transcending Boundaries: Writing for a Dual Audience of Children and Adults*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (New York: Garland, 1999), Anne de Vries, "Literature for All Ages?: Literary Emancipation and the Borders of Children's Literature," *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature since 1945*, ed. Sandra L. Beckett (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997).

Chapter Three

Unconventional Childhood and Beyond: Representing the Orkney Clan

> I am not idly asking for compliments, but asking you to say whether the book which Collins will send you is to be published or not. It is the old story of the author being so close to his work that he cant [sic] see it, like Epstein trying to judge his Adam with his nose one inch away from it. (Gallix *Letters* 98)

Such was White's words about *The Witch in the Wood* when he asked his former tutor L. J. Potts to help revise it. In the same letter, White disclosed that he had encountered difficulties while working on it. "I cannot think of a better way to introduce this nasty incest business [the incest between Arthur and his half-sister Morgause], and yet keep the books fairly sweet, than the way I have used" (Gallix *Letters* 99). His publisher Collins could not accept the first draft of *The Witch in the Wood*, because it was not appropriate for the child reader.[43] White rewrote half of the book under Potts's advice, but still he did not sound content when *The Witch in the Wood* was first published in 1939: "Personally I think it is pretty frightful still, but it will nearly do" (Gallix *Letters* 107). In the 1958 one-volume edition, *The Witch in the Woods* was again revised in large proportion, and was renamed "The Queen of Air and Darkness."

The difficulties and constant revisions of the second part have been noted by scholars. Brewer attributes White's revisions partially to his grudge toward his mother, Constance White, and partially to White's effort to cater to the young reader (Elisabeth Brewer *T. H. White's* 51-52). Macdonald likewise lists the censure that White feared he might receive as one of the reasons that led to his revisions (Macdonald 123). Collins, when refusing the first

[43] It was compared to *Troilus & Cressida*, while Collins wanted something similar to *Alice in Wonderland* (Gallix *Letters* 98-99).

draft, also suggested White add some "nature bits" similar to the episodes in *The Sword in the Stone* (Gallix *Letters* 99). The revisions are, in part, to make the second book of this tetralogy more appropriate for children, yet the final draft, despite all the effort on revision, fails to be recognized as a children's book.[44] In fact, "The Queen of Air and Darkness" not only marks the beginning of the imbalanced reception of the tetralogy, but also the most unconventional part of the whole series.

Among the four books, "The Queen of Air and Darkness" is particularly evaded by critics and readers. While *The Once and Future King* was adapted twice into movies,[45] neither of both films—*The Sword in the Stone* nor *Camelot*—include any part from "The Queen of Air and Darkness." The Disney animation undoubtedly would leave out parts that were not appropriate for the child, but *Camelot*, a movie for the general public rather than for children only, did not relate anything about the Orkney clan, either. *Camelot*, in relating the adult years of Arthur, chose to focus on the royal triangle of Arthur, Guenever, and Lancelot, and at the same time reduced the role of Mordred and the Orkney clan. Avoidance of this part of the story in both adaptations implies something unusual, or even disturbing.

In fact, "The Queen of Air and Darkness" has a very unconventional plot: it relates a childhood contrary to the notion of childhood innocence and a mother contrary to the notion of tender motherhood. However, in such an unconventional plot, White succeeds in making enquiries into structures of feeling on childhood and motherhood. Also, it is in the childhood account of the Orkney brothers that White's altruistic concern for the child is made apparent.

In the making of King Arthur, as I have argued in the second chapter, White indirectly questions the ideal of innocence, while in the characterization of the Orkney brothers he

[44] Please refer to the introduction for the reception and the ambiguous status of *The Once and Future King*.

[45] Aside from the Disney animation *The Sword in the Stone*, the musical *Camelot* (1960) was also adapted from *The Once and Future King*. Later the musical was adapted into the movie *Camelot* (1967).

directly relinquishs conventional depiction of childhood innocence and opts for a radical but in many ways revolutionary representation of childhood. The Orkney brothers are everything other than innocent children: they had a strong propensity to violence, and had done violent deeds early in childhood. Yet White, out of his sympathy for the child and his own trauma in childhood, chooses to distinguish them from conventional misbehaving child characters:[46] The young Orkneys are neither corrected nor punished, nor does their story end with morals for the child reader. The stark morality in conventional stories of bad children is nowhere to be seen in this book; instead, the four brothers' suffering and trauma are represented aside from their evil deeds. By creating the disturbing Orkneys, White broadens the scope of childhood accounts.

Yet, on the other hand, White's defense of the child, together with the impact of his own family on him, makes him transfer the consequences the Orkneys should take to their mother Morgause. Though it has been widely acknowledge that White's characterization of Morgause involves his ambivalence toward his mother Constance White, in this chapter I would like to take other respects into White's retelling of Morgause: in addition to his defense (sometimes over-defense) of the child, White also draws on literary conventions and the parent-child relationship in his time (with exaggerations though) to present Morgause as an indifferent mother. In his depiction of a cold mother, White indirectly calls for attention to the child in life, which was a new concept in the early-twentieth-century Britain. Though "The Queen of Air and Darkness" is a radical representation of childhood and motherhood, it reveals, in fact, much altruistic love for the child in life. Despite its ambiguous reception, "The Queen of Air and Darkness" is a text with the child at the central position, and proposes a reconsideration of the notion of childhood. In the representation of King Arthur, White only indirectly questions innocence, while in the representation of the

[46] Misbehaving child characters appeared often in early children's literature, in which they were put as moral lessons for the child reader. Please refer to the introduction for the blatant morality in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century children's literature.

Orkney family, White more openly makes his commitment as a writer.[47] By observing the text in terms of the literary conventions of children's literature, children's books in the 1930s, and the child in the early twentieth century, this chapter aims to provide a rereading for the disturbing "Queen of Air and Darkness" and argues that the radical representation of childhood and motherhood is in the end originated from White's deep concern for the child.

I. Other than Innocence

> The idea which the children [the Orkney brothers] had was to hurt the donkeys. Nobody had told them that it was cruel to hurt them, but then, nobody had told the donkeys either. On the rim of the world they knew too much about cruelty to be surprised by it. (White *The Once and Future King* 247)

This passage shows a totally different image from the notion of childhood innocence. The young Orkneys were well aware of the pain they caused the donkeys, but they would not stop abusing them, because they intended to hurt these poor animals. In this way, the Orkney brothers could have easily fallen into the conventional misbehaving child category prominent in early children's literature. Yet, White also reveals in this passage that they were not conscious of their wrongdoing, that they were never told it was wrong to abuse animals ("Nobody had told them it was cruel to hurt them"). Furthermore, White implies that the Orkneys were not properly taken care of, having experienced cruelty, or to be more exact, that they were themselves victims of others' cruelty, for "they knew too much cruelty to be surprised by it" (White *The Once and Future King* 247). In a few sentences, White sketches an overview of the Orkney brothers: violent yet vulnerable, hurtful yet hurt.

[47] "Commitment" here is based on Raymond Williams's theory on the interaction between the writer and the society. Commitment is the writer's personal creation or choice, which should be differentiated from the "alignment," the influence the collective structures of feeling on an individual literary work or a writer. For more information please refer back to the introduction.

The “bad child” characters are never new in children’s literature. The first chapter has provided an overview of prominent morality tales in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and misbehaving child characters were convenient tools of moral education. Acting as “examples” or “models” for the child reader, so misbehaving child characters always redeemed themselves, or they died as a warning to other child characters in the story. But the Orkney brothers are different from these conventional bad children: neither did the brothers receive any punishment for their violent deeds, nor did the imposition of morals occur at the end of their misconduct, as it would be in morality tales. What lies in the episode of the brothers’ bullying the donkeys is an innate preference to violence uncorrected. Thus, in “The Queen of Air and Darkness” the formation of villains is witnessed, for the Orkneys grew up to be the most troublesome knights in Arthur’s Round Table. Throughout this book, White reveals step by step that violence accelerates with the brothers’ coming of age. The Orkney brothers at the beginning proclaimed their preference to violence, and realized it, first to animals, then to human beings, and their violence ended up in a tragic sexual awakening.

White opens up “The Queen of Air and Darkness” with the four little boys’ story-telling game. At the beginning of this book, they lay close together in their room, telling the story of Cornwall feud. Different from the opening of *The Sword in the Stone*, which narrated a merry hay-making of Wart and Kay, this story-telling represents the dark atmosphere looming in the Orkneys’ childhood. The Cornwall feud is not a proper story for children: It tells the rape of Igraine, the Countess of Cornwall, and the murder of her husband by King Uther Pendragon. After the story-telling, the four children vowed for revenge and justified their father’s ongoing war against young King Arthur. “[W]e must keep the feud living forever,” said Agravaine. “We must avenge our family, said another

brother.[48] The Orkneys' pledge to revenge the Cornwall feud symbolizes their belief in force, and at the same time it is a prelude to the later development of the four brothers: they became a nuisance to the Arthurian court. Instead of going to adventures and learning from nature as Wart did, the little Orkney brothers devoted themselves to a bloody vengeance.

The Orkney brothers' early intention of violence again is proclaimed in words when they discussed wars with St. Toirdealbhach, their tutor. When asked to talk about the war King Lot went to, St. Toirdealbhach, who is "a sort of guru, as Merlyn had been to Arthur" (White *The Once and Future King* 258), answered that he was tired of wars. This triggered different responses from the four brothers: Gawaine could not see why people could ever be tired of wars, for "it is a gentleman's occupation" (White *The Once and Future King* 245). Agravaine loved the war purely for the killing involved. Disagreeing on St. Toirdealbhach's preference of single combat, Gawaine and Agravaine would like involve as many people as possible in a war, because "otherwise you could not kill them," as Agravaine said (White *The Once and Future King* 246). Gaheris as usual supported his elder brothers unconditionally. Only Gareth voted against the war for its cruelty, and complied with the idea of single combat and knighthood with their teacher (White *The Once and Future King* 245-46). Meanwhile, on the battlefield, Arthur, Kay, and Merlyn were also discussing the aim and means of wars. But unlike Merlyn, St. Toirdealbhach did not strive to correct the Orkney brothers' views of wars, nor did he spend time inducing them to ponder on the values and consequences of wars and killings. When confronted by his pupils' disagreement on his strong distaste of wars, St. Toirdealbhach took to drinking and banished the boys outside the house, threatening to beat them:

> "Wars," he [St. Toirdealbhach] said with disgust. "And how would kids like you be talking about them, will ye tell me, and you no bigger than sitting hens?

[48] It is not notified in the text which brother said this sentence, but it is very likely Gawain, for he deems family honor the utmost thing to defend for in his life.

Be off now, before I beget an ill wish toward ye."

[. . .]

"Och, now," they [the Orkneys] said. "Your Holiness, no offence, we are sure. We were only at wishing to make an exchange of ideas."

"Ideas!" he exclaimed, reaching for the poker—and they were outside the low door in the twinkling of an eye, standing in the level rays of sunset on the sandy street[.] (White *The Once and Future King* 246)

This failed lecture on war is an antithesis of Merlyn's lengthy induction of wars for Arthur and Kay. The young Orkney siblings are in need of lessons on war, but St. Toirdealbhach ends the discussion abruptly as he could not convince the brothers at once the evil of wars; his forceful banishment only consolidates their belief in force. When St. Toirdealbhach reached for the poker, he had chosen to subdue his pupils' preference to violence with anger and threats. The gesture indicates he clearly intended to beat them if the noisy of boys did not leave the cottage at once. St. Toirdealbhach fails to correct the boys' values, and his words and acts only reinforce the brothers' belief that power and force would rule.

For the Orkneys adult guidance at home or in the "classroom" is nowhere to be found, and they quickly imposed their force on their inferiors in the model of their tutor, first on animals and later on people. Though the slaying of the unicorn has attracted more critical attention,[49] it is in the abuse of the donkeys that the four brothers' belief in force was first and most clearly revealed. White, in this case, identifies the link of torture and pain between the Orkney children and the donkeys. They tortured the donkeys simply because they wanted to go to the beach on them, but their violence on the animals was radical and unproportionate for such a simple purpose. They kicked, whacked, and thrashed the poor

[49] Please refer to Brewer, *T. H. White's* the Once and Future King, Florence Field Sandler, "Family Romance in *the Once and Future King*," *Quondam et Futurus* 2.2 (1992).

animals to make them move, while the donkeys resisted their orders.

> So the small circus was a unity—the beasts reluctant to move and the children vigorous to move them, *the two parties bound together by the link of pain to which they both agreed without question.* [. . .] The animals did not seem to be suffering, and the children did not seem to be enjoying the suffering. The only difference was that the boys were violently animated while the donkeys were as static as possible. (White *The Once and Future King* 247; my emphasis)

In this passage, White specifically indicates that the young torturers and the tortured animals are united by the link of pain. The brothers did not enjoy their abuse; neither did the donkeys deliberately resist the abuse. The Orkneys acted so because they believed it was the way of life. As masters the brothers believe that they have a right to mistreat the donkeys, and as serving animals the donkeys bear the beating. They both live under the principle of force. Furthermore, this unity bound by pain happened right after St. Toirdealbhach ousted them from the cottage. The abuse of donkeys reveals that the boys acknowledged the hierarchy of force in the emission of their tutor and quickly applied it to their inferiors. Before the ill-treatment of the donkeys, the Orkneys merely talk about violence. In this episode their preference to violence is first realized in action. In contrast to Wart's fantastic transformations and lessons from animal tutors, the Orkney brothers treated animals with blatant cruelty. Later, in the hunt of the unicorn, the cruelty reappears and is reinforced, and it is first used on human beings.

Before they set out for the unicorn hunt, the brothers decided to force the kitchen maid Meg to go with them and play the role of the virgin required in a unicorn hunt.[50]

[50] The unicorn hunt requires a virgin as the bait: The unicorn is suspicious of human beings, but he will lie in a virgin's lap. The hunt of the unicorn is a popular theme in medieval art. "Unicorn," Encyclopedia Britannica (2010), 22 June 2010 <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9074248>.

Gawaine took hold of her by the plaids despite her pleading and weeping. On the way, the brothers held her by the hair to prevent her from running away. They even talked about tying her, but only gave up the plan because they could not find a rope at hand. When she begged to be released back to the kitchen to do her work, she was scolded as a wicked girl and told to shut her mouth. The Orkney's gestures and language are predominating. Like St. Toirdealhbach, they order and expect to be obeyed by their inferiors. Their values of force again appear in their interaction with Meg, only this time it is enforced upon a human being. Their ill-treatment of Meg is a further establishment of their belief in force. Throughout the book, White maps out the escalation of violence in the Orkney brothers. At the beginning they only talk about violence. Now they succeed in establishing their own power with force upon inferiors.

The subsequent unicorn hunt is the climax of this book, for it symbolizes the destruction of innocence and reveals the hidden sexual longing of the brothers toward their mother Morgause. Before the unicorn hunt, the young brothers had done violent deeds, but they were not aware that it was cruel to abuse animals and people, but when they butchered the unicorn, they were conscious of the evil in murdering such a noble creature. White spends two paragraphs on the nobility and purity of the unicorn, and the brothers were charmed by the unicorn at the first sight (White *The Once and Future King* 265). Also, the conventional depiction of the unicorn often credits it a strong and splendid animal with healing power. Its horn was believed to cleanse the poisoned water. For the power to clean the water (to save others) and the preference to virgins (a linkage to Virgin Mary), the unicorn is often associated with Christ by medieval writers. Murdering the unicorn is considered a hideous sin, as Voldemort's murder of the unicorn in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) was vehemently condemned. Likewise, in the hunt of the unicorn the four brothers knowingly committed a crime, which then came to signify the end of their childhood.

The unicorn hunt also marks their sexual awakening. From the motive of their hunt to the execution of the unicorn, their repressed love toward their mother is gradually revealed. As sexuality is always deliberately edited out of children's reading due to the notion of childhood innocence, this sexual awakening, together with their knowledge of sin, representes their loss of innocence and the end of childhood.

The Orkneys' hunt of the unicorn was motivated by a fruitless unicorn hunt conducted earlier by three visiting knights (Sir Grummore, Sir Palomides, and King Pellinore) and Morgause. Subtle emotion toward their mother is inferred in their discussion of the hunt. Gawain started with a question: "What was our mother doing [. . .] with the knights on the mountain?" (White *The Once and Future King* 257). During their talks, there often was silence between questions and answers. Much evasion was used in their talk: Gaheris "answered with some difficulty, after a long pause" (White *The Once and Future King* 257); Agravain's "voice sounded strange" as he continued the explanation on the unicorn hunt (White *The Once and Future King* 257); Gawain suddenly proclaimed that two of the three knights have either been married or been in love with someone else; and finally the talk just ended nowhere. "They plodded on, reluctant to disclose their thoughts" (White *The Once and Future King* 258). The awkward talk implies their jealousy to the three knights, and behind the jealousy there is something that could not be said: their sexual awakening.

Later, Gareth proposed to go about the unicorn hunt themselves to please their mother. Their idealized adoration of Morgause is shown through their dialogue on the hunt:

> "It would be better than not having anything. We have not seen our Mammy for one week."
>
> "She has forgotten us," said Agravaine bitterly.
>
> "She has not so. You are not to speak in that way of our mother."
>
> "It is true. We have not been to serve at dinner even."
>
> "It is because she has a necessity to be hospitable to these knights."

"No, it is not."

"What is it, then?"

"*I will not say*."

"If we could do a unicorn hunt," said Gareth, "and bring this unicorn which she requires, perhaps we would be allowed to serve?"

They considered the idea with a beginning of hope. (White *The Once and Future King* 260-61; my emphasis)

The dialogue begins with an innocent longing for their mother and at the end their motive for the hunt is explained as to see their mother every day, but between the lines some emotion is revealed and repressed. It starts with Agravaine's resentful complaint that Morgause has forgotten them, and is quickly repressed by their admiration ("You are not to speak in that way of our mother"), but reappears when they spoke of Morgause's hospitality to the visiting knights. It was not because of the due hospitality to the knights that Mammy neglected them, argued one of the brothers, but what was it? The line "I will not say" reveals much of their experience of sexuality: the speaker had already known about courtly love and their mother's intention to seduce the knights, but he would not say it out loud. Perhaps he wanted to negate the possibility that their mother intended infidelity. Perhaps he would not admit that he knew about seduction, a sexually related thing. Or, perhaps he would not reveal his secret longing for his mother. It is significant to note that White in this dialogue chooses not to identify the speaker. Each of the brothers could be the one that said the line, or, more radically put, all four brothers had known it by heart. In the end of the dialogue, their unspeakable longing was contained by the simple and innocent wish to see their mother every day at dinner table, so they happily started planning the hunt.

But their incestuous love could never be repressed in the hunt. Before the hunt, they told Meg she should be proud to play the role that Morgause played, and Agravaine identified Meg as his mother at the scene. "'The girl,' said Agravaine, 'is my mother. This is

what our Mammy was at doing yesterday. And I am going to be Sir Grummore'" (White *The Once and Future King* 263). The substitution idea was re-proposed when Agravaine butchered the unicorn simply because it lay on the lap of Meg. In Agravaine's words the unicorn violated "his mother." When the unicorn stepped into their bait and lay his head on Meg's lap, it was Agravaine that suddenly leapt out to beat the animal and stabbed him to death. The cruelty in the killing is viscerally described.

> Agravaine came to the unicorn, and began jabbing his spear into its quarters, into its slim belly, into its ribs. He squealed as he jabbed, and the unicorn looked to Meg in anguish. [. . .] The blood, caused by Agravain's spear, spurted out upon the blue-white coat of hair. [. . .] Gawaine came up, just as Agravaine's spear went in under the fifth rib. The unicorn shuddered. He trembled in all his body, and stretched his hind legs out behind. They went out almost straight, as if he were doing his greatest leap—and then quivered, trembling in the agony of death. [. . .] The unicorn's legs stretched out horizontally behind him, and stopped trembling. His head dropped in Meg's lap. After a last kick they became rigid, and the blue lids rose half over the eye. The creature lay still. (White *The Once and Future King* 266)

The painful dying of the unicorn is specifically addressed. With the death of such a noble animal, it signifies their loss of innocence, for the brothers can neither repress their sexual drive since Agravaine's lethal attack, nor ignorant of their sins. Agravaine calmly explained his sudden attack on the unicorn once it died, "This girl is my mother. He put his head in her lap. He had to die" (White *The Once and Future King* 266). Sandler points out that Agravaine cherished an incestuous love toward his mother, and he killed the unicorn for he could not stand the intrusion of other men (76-77). But I contend that all of the four brothers harbor the same secret love to Morgause, though to what extent we cannot discern, for otherwise they will not have behaved so awkwardly in the discussions on the unicorn

hunts. Agravaine's attack only forces them to face their long-time hidden desire. Rage, sorrow, and reproach appeared in the other three brothers following the death of the unicorn. They nevertheless regained peace and cooperated to dissect the corpse and bring the head back to their mother, dying for her affirmation. The other three did not act as radically as Agravaine, but mutual was their adoration and later indignation to their mother.

Also, the unicorn is the first prey that they regretted killing. They loved the unicorn for its nobility at first sight. The rage and sorrow over its death proves in another way their instant admiration. And their regret over the corpse indicates an awareness of their sin. White in the text also clearly points out their sense of guilt:

> All three of them [Gawain, Agravaine, and Gaheris] loved the unicorn in their various ways, Agravaine in the most twisted one, and, in proportion as they became responsible for spoiling its beauty, so they began to hate it for their guilt. Gawaine particularly began to hate the body. He hated it for being dead, for having been beautiful, for making him feel a beast. [. . .] He hacked and cut [the corpse] and felt like crying too. (White *The Once and Future King* 268)

The unicorn hunt, in the indication of their sin and their sexual awakening, marks the end of their childhood. When the unicorn's head was brought back to the castle, it was "muddy, bloody, heather-mangled" with its "eyes ruined, flesh bruised and separating from the bones" (White *The Once and Future King* 270), like their ruined innocence. The unicorn hereafter stands as evidence of their sins: physical violence and incestuous love toward their mother.

The butchered animal traumatizes them all, and continues to haunt them in their later lives. The unicorn was brought up again when Gareth reported their matricide to King Arthur. Gareth paralleled the unicorn with Morgause's corpse: "Agravaine cut off her head [. . .] [l]ike the unicorn. [. . .] I always knew he would [commit matricide, because] [i]t was

Agravaine who killed the unicorn" (White *The Once and Future King* 451). When Agravaine and Mordred suggested disclose the affair between Lancelot and Guenever, the unicorn appeared again in the four brothers' minds and triggered a huge fight among them:

> "Do we go to the King? Is any other coming?"
>
> Gawaine planted himself in their path.
>
> "Mordred, ye shallna go."
>
> [. . .]
>
> Gawaine put out his red hand, [. . .] and pushed him back. At the same time Agravaine put out his own white hand [. . .] to the hilt of his sword.
>
> "Do move, Gawaine. I have a sword."
>
> "You would have a sword," cried Gareth, "you devil!"
>
> The younger brother's life had suddenly fitted into a pattern and recognized itself. Their murdered mother, and the unicorn, and the man now drawing, and a child in a store-room flashing a dirk: these things had made him cry out.
>
> "All right, Gareth," snarled Agravaine, as white as a sheet, "I know what you mean, and now I draw." (White The Once and Future King 557).

In the childhood narrative of the Wart, it is through the link to the natural environment and the animal tutors that the innocence is made distinct; in the second book, it is the violence and cruelty to animals that defines the loss of innocence of the Orkney brothers.

The non-typical Orkney brothers help made the marginal status of *The Once and Future King* in children's literature. The blatant cruelty of the Orkney brothers unsettles the reader, for the cruelty in children rarely goes without condemnation. The Orkneys' violence is even more radical than modern childhood representations. Despite the recent wave of

interests in more radical fields, such as children's gothic or horror fiction,[51] only one article addresses children's active violence: the suicidal and self-harming behavior in children.

In "Self-harm, Silence, and Survival: Despair and Trauma in Children's Literature," Reynolds probes into the desire of suicide and self-harming in children or adolescents, and lists picture books and novels on these two themes. In Reynolds's point of view, the books on these radical themes help children cope with similar events in their own lives. "By making it possible for children to encounter such emotions and situations on the page, these works are not only reshaping children's literature, but also creating opportunities for young people to gain insights into themselves and those around them that may have positive long-term social and emotional benefits" (*Radical* 89). In this essay Reynolds also points out the conventional image of a happy childhood can further traumatize a child when he or she encounters difficulties in life: "Many fictions that deal with self-harming explore the way mistaking an ideal of childhood for reality can lead to a sense of crisis, for believing that one has been or should have been the ideal is likely to make unhappiness, anxiety, and other less-than ideal emotions seem illegitimate" (*Radical* 91).

Taking up Reynolds's theorization, the writers behind these seemingly inappropriate books are actually concerned about children's difficulties in real life and try to help them by empathetic description and explanations on these behaviors. It is no wonder that the suicidal or self-harming children depicted are in the end capable of recovery from their trauma or at least are making hopeful progress. Though pessimistic in the beginning, the stories manage to provide an optimistic ending. And the motive for their violent behavior—the trauma—is

[51] Recent decades have seen the bloom of interests in unconventional children's tales. See Anna Jackson, Karen Coats and Roderick McGillis, eds., *The Gothic in Children's Literature: Haunting the Borders* (New York: Routledge, 2008), Lurie, *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: Subversive Children's Literature*, Marilynn Olson, "Turn-of-the-Century Grotesque: The Uptons' Golliwogg and Dolls in Context," *Children's Literature* 28 (2000), Reynolds, *Radical Children's Literature: Future Visions and Aesthetic Transformations in Juvenile Fiction*, Mark I. West, "The Grotesque and the Taboo in Roald Dahl's Humorous Writings for Children," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 15.3 (1990).

explained. But, even though these books are ended with recovery and hope, they are often criticized (*Radical* 85-91; 95).

The depictions of the Orkneys, compared to the afore-mentioned suicidal or self-harming children, are far more radical, not to mention that during the inter-war Britain, when “The Queen of Air and Darkness” was first published, images of children and representations of childhood were far more conservative. In a stark contrast to their contemporaries in literature, the Orkneys had publicly declared their preference to violence, actually done damage to others, and did not receive punishment for their deeds. Though they regretted over the murder of the unicorn, their behavior have crossed the fine line in children’s literature: children shall not read unpunished cruelty and violence. Despite the effort of writing the incest off, White keeps the violence in Orkney brothers in full length, which is not at all typical in children’s literature of his time.

Yet, in the representations of the Orkneys, White successfully pilots a liberating image of childhood. As Reynolds powerfully argues, the conventional notion of a standard idyllic childhood “overlooks the fact that children's literature caters for readers from birth to sixteen, from different backgrounds and with different needs, sometimes including the need to acknowledge disturbing experiences and overwhelming feelings of despair, anger, and frustration” (*Radical* 89). The image of the Orkney brothers provides a very different image from the mainstream idyllic childhood popular in the inter-war Britain. Like the suicidal or self-harming kids in recent children’s fiction, the Orkney brothers did not have a happy childhood. They blindly followed their tutor, learning to measure the world by the rule of strength and power. They sacrificed the unicorn to exchange for a chance to serve their mother at dinner, yet they failed to get even a word of denouncement for their “heroic” conduct when they showed their achievement (the unicorn’s bloody head) to their mother.

White depicts, early on in the beginning of the twentieth century, a group of traumatized children, creating a modern radical image of childhood. White thought the

purpose of this book was to bring out the incest leading to the birth of Mordred (Gallix *Letters* 99), but Brewer has observed that it is no need to relate the Orkney brothers' childhood to bring forth the final incest between King Arthur and Morgause (*T. H. White's* 50). Nor did he specify his motive in such a radical representation.[52] But he keeps this radical representation of childhood after many revisions. And I propose that behind the radical representation of the Orkney brothers lies White's deep concern for the child in life. He, like the writers cited in Reynolds's essays, wants to be empathetic to violent but traumatized children by inventing the childhood of the Orkneys. Unfortunately, his effort is to be evaded by readers for the digression from conventions is too much. When the childhood account of the Orkneys is reassessed, with the renewed interests in childhood studies, it is actually a liberating image from conventional children's literature, and it may provide a chance for us to be more empathetic to the child rather than project our values upon them.

Though the radical representation of the Orkney brothers' childhood provides a liberating image other than conventional children's literature, White's sympathy for the Orkneys results in his over-defense for them: White does not hold the Orkneys responsible for their wrongdoing even after they grew up. On one hand, the Orkney brothers are too easily forgiven for their crimes because of their miserable childhood. On the other hand, their mother Morgause is sketched as the omnipresent evil figure different from White's usual well-rounded characterization in this work,[53] for she has to bear the blame for her

[52] He did, though, intentionally parallel two fights of the brothers in the second book (White *The Once and Future King* 282-83) and the fourth book (White *The Once and Future King* 554-558). (Gallix 99)

[53] In the correspondence, White first related his discovery of Malory's greatness to L. J. Potts, "the characters were real people with recognizable reactions which could be forecast" in *Morte Arthur*. What he intended to do in *The Once and Future King* was to provide the motive for the human characters (Gallix 86). White provides motives for these characters: Arthur's motive lay in his happy childhood and Merlyn's tutorship, the Orkney's motive lay in their relationship with Morgause, Lancelot was driven by his love and respect to Arthur and later his love to Guenever. Only in the characterization of Morgause did White give up

sons and for the downfall of Camelot. White's concern for the child is already evident in his indirect disruption of childhood innocence of Arthur and the violent yet vulnerable Orkney brothers, but his sympathy for the child, together with his own troublesome relationship with his mother, results in his blame on mothers. In his characterization of Morgause, White's concern for the child unfortunately escalates to overprotection of the child.

White's over-defense for the Orkneys can be exemplified by Arthur's imploration to Sir Aglovale. When Sir Aglovale asked to avenge his brother Sir Lamorak, who was killed by the Orkneys, King Arthur implored Sir Aglovale to forgive the Orkneys, partly because Arthur tried to stop the custom of retribution ("an eye for an eye"), partly because he knew that the Orkneys had an unhappy family life and a twisted mother. In Arthur's argument the Orkneys' responsibility for the crime was fully transformed to their mother Morgause. He stated twice that the Orkneys' lives were unhappy, and he emphasized the importance of Morgause in the Orkneys' misconduct:

> It is a pity you [Sir Aglovale] never had the opportunity of seeing the Orkneys at home. They didn't have a happy family life like yours. [. . .] [A]ll the Orkneys adored their mother. She made them love her too much, but she only loved herself. [. . .] [T]heir lives have been unhappy, Aglovale. So, you see, my hope is with you" (White *The Once and Future King* 474).

With these arguments Arthur persuaded Sir Aglovale to give up the revenge. The fact that the Orkneys remains their mother's victim helps them get away with their crimes in

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his usual characterizations and opted for a limited appearance and looming presence on the other characters' minds. His representation of Morgause could not be simplified as misogynist, for he had succeeded in the representation of Queen Guenever, the other important female figure. For the detailed discussion on White's characterization please refer to Elisabeth Brewer, "The Figure of Guenevere in Modern Drama and Fiction," *Arthurian Women*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (New York: Routledge, 2000), Amanda Serrano, "T. H. White's Defence of Guenever: Portrait of a 'Real' Person," *Mythlore* 21.1 (1995), Evans Lansing Smith, "The Narrative Structure of T. H. White's *the Once and Future King*," *Quondam et Futurus* 1.4 (1991), Sprague, "The Troubled Heart of T. H. White: Women and *the Once and Future King*."

adulthood.

In Arthur's arguments and Aglovale's concession, we can detect that the utmost influence of mothers is acknowledged, but it is also discerned that White deprives the agency of the Orkneys by shifting the blame onto Morgause. In other words, the Orkneys always remains the wounded boys, never to achieve full adulthood. The childishness of the adult Orkneys is specifically pointed out in "The Candle in the Wind." "All of them, except Mordred, had wives of their own tucked away somewhere—but nobody ever saw them. [. . .] There was something childish about them when they were together, which was attractive rather than the reverse" (White *The Once and Future King* 554). The existence of their wives indicates that the brothers achieved adulthood, but the missing of the wives and their childish appearances clearly shows their mental childishness. Though the Orkneys' traumatic childhood and their violent behaviors diverge from the conventional image of childhood, White remains to a degree the defender of childhood innocence, for he refuses to let the Orkneys take any responsibility, and even prevents them from adulthood. He, in this cited passage, implies their psychological childishness. On the contrary, Morgause is created the arch-enemy in *The Once and Future King*. Interestingly, in White's blame on mothers we again witness a reversal against conventions: children's literature has always been the means of imposition of values, but now the imposition is reversed back to adults, rather than children: the dysfunctional family takes more blame than the grown-up sinners.

Though Morgause's formation is due to White's wishes to protect his child characters, I would like to propose that, through the distant parent-child relationship, White has represented a closer image reflecting the early-twentieth-century childhood in Britain. Though the child had been put at the central place of the family in literature since the nineteenth century, the child in life did not enjoy the same admiration. Citing from historical researches, I would like to propose that the childhood of the Orkneys and their distant relation with their mother is more realistic than conventional children's books, in which the

child often is tenderly taken care of and much loved. The characterization of Morgause may be an exaggerated image of strict mothers of White's time. And through his formation of Morgause, White calls for a more tender motherhood. In either way, White's radical representation of the mother and the child is due to his genuine concern for the child. Even though his love for the child is so overwhelming and extreme as to diverge from conventions and moral principles, the effort to defend for the child in *The Once and Future King* could not be overlooked.

II. Blaming the Mother: White's Morgause and the Inter-war Childhood

> They adored her dumbly and uncritically, because her character was stronger than theirs. [. . .] It was more as if she had brought them up—perhaps through indifference or through laziness or even through some kind of possessive cruelty—with an imperfect sense of right and wrong. It was as if they could never know when they were being good or when they were being bad. (White *The Once and Future King* 217)

The citation afore is from the first page of "The Queen of Air and Darkness." White presents the imbalanced mother-children relationship right in the beginning of "The Queen and the Darkness."[54] At the beginning of the second book, the Orkney children told themselves the Cornwall feud.[55] From the change of narrators and constant corrections from one another, the Orkneys obviously were already very familiar with the story. It was merely another re-telling. The constant re-telling of the feud was to commemorate their maternal ancestry and to obtain recognition from their mother, though Morgause was not

[54] By the opening scene, White might also intend to bring forth the Cornwall feud, which is one of his listed factors that lead to the final tragedy (Gallix 98), through the Orkneys' story-telling.

[55] As mentioned in the previous section, the story-telling also reveals the Orkneys' preference to violence.

present at the scene. During their tale-telling, the brothers took care not to disturb their mother; they whispered the story for fear that they should upset their mother downstairs. Finishing telling the story, they "listen[ed] to some secret movements in the room below," where their mother slept (White *The Once and Future King* 220). The listening discloses their strong desire to please their absent mother. The desire is at the end of the chapter represented in the vow. They pledged to remember and revenge the Cornwall feud "[b]ecause our Mammy is the most beautiful woman in the high-ridged, extensive, ponderous, pleasantly-turning world" (White *The Once and Future King* 223).

While the brothers were trying to please their absent mother through story re-telling, Morgause was self-indulgently trying out a cruel magic for fun downstairs: she boiled a cat alive, and tried to make out which bone of the cat could make her invisible. The magic was, actually, of no practical use to her for she enjoyed her own beauty. She tried out the magic only to pass the time. "It was something to do, an easy and well-known charm. Besides, it was an excuse for lingering with the mirror" (White *The Once and Future King* 222). Such is her motive for the magic, and such is the motivation of her life: self-interest. She welcomed the three wandering knights because she anticipated being the seductive love object. Morgause held the same attitude toward her four little boys: while she was practicing the magic, she listened to the whispering of her boys. The power relation between the mother and her sons is thus disclosed in their listening (with different motives): Even when Morgause is not present, she dominates the brothers' thoughts; even though Morgause does not care her boys' wellbeing, she wants their submission.

Morgause's reaction to brothers after the unicorn hunt tells clearly again her self-interest character. When the four brothers gallantly showed her the unicorn, she did not see it at all because "[h]er mind was busy with other things" (White *The Once and Future King* 270). When further detained by Gareth she dismissed them half-heartedly. "She had not noticed that her children's clothes were ruined: had not even scolded them about that"

(White *The Once and Future King* 270). Her motive of the unicorn hunt was to seduce the three visiting knights. The unicorn to her was of no importance. And she easily projected her disappointment to her children. “When she found out about the unicorn later in the evening she had them whipped for it, for she had spent an unsuccessful day with the English knights” (White *The Once and Future King* 270). The brothers, in contrast to their brutal behavior toward their inferiors, humbly apologized the next day. Morgause changed herself to a loving mother at the apology only because she was tired of the seduction and found herself apt to be a good mother. Or, she found solace in the sustaining love of her sons. “When Gareth nervously brought white heather to her bedroom as an apology for being whipped, she covered him with kisses, *glancing in the mirror*” (White *The Once and Future King* 280; my emphasis).

Morgause’s motive for being a good mother is clearly to contain her desire of being admired, and there is a convention behind the image of cold and self-centered mothers. In literature, a conventional image of icy mothers can be traced back into the nineteenth century. Yet the original icy mothers did not signify the real mother but the coldness of the natural environment. Naomi Wood in her essay paves a literary history of icy mothers in children’s fantasy from Hans Christian Andersen’s Snow Queen to Mrs. Coulter and Serafina Pekkala in Philip Pullman’s *Northern Lights* (1995). According to Wood, John Ruskin is the first critic to theorize the northern lands and to connect the North with the Gothic. The magazine *Punch* also pictures the Arctic as a cold but beautiful Queen waiting to be conquered (Yan 74). The link between the icy Queen and the North was popular in the nineteenth-century structures of feeling, but it had different connotations in adult and children’s literature: While Yan calls the image of the icy maiden as a result of “Mr. Punch’s masculine imperial gaze” (72), the icy mothers in children’s fantasy are beautiful and powerful, and most importantly, they demanded submission.

Bracing, pure, and intimately connected with the poles of life—birth and

> death—these chilling mothers work as a commentary upon the fashioning of children: the narratives stress *submission to irresistible sublime power,* [. . .] and mark all of these tales with *a masochistic signature*, a masochism that lends the submissive child moral if not material power. (Wood 199; my emphasis)

The Queen of Orkney's image is also from a terrifying female figure in fairy tales. "The witch in the wood in a fairytale is generally a symbol of all the dangers and terrors that can threaten the unprotected child, struggling on his own through the unforeseeable perils of this world" (Elisabeth Brewer *T. H. White's* 52).The masochistic Morgause and her four submitting boys may be added to Wood's collection of icy mothers, only not as the symbol of indifferent nature but as the cruel mother.

With the icy mother Morgause, White achieves not only in his protection of the Orkney brothers, but in the protection of King Arthur. It is her motherly position that seduced young Arthur and results in the conception of Mordred. In one of his letter to Potts, White stated his purpose of forming Morgause as a dark, mystifying, and self-interested presence: to preserve the honesty of Arthur.

> Morgause (the sister) is really far more important in the doom than ever Guenever is. [. . .] I had to shew her as a bad mother and the kind of person who would bear more of the incest onus than my hero (Arthur). Error or frailty. If I hadn't made her nasty, it would have been *more* than an error or frailty in Arthur and I should have spoiled the tragedy." (Gallix *Letters* 99)

White intentionally blames the doom on Morgause, or Arthur would be too frail to be the noble hero. Morgause, as a bad mother, takes the blame for her sons and her half-brother. With the conventional image of icy mothers, White achieves his preservation of Arthur's honor, his defense for the Orkney brothers, and also, he might advocate against the strict parenthood widely applied to childcare of his time, as well as his traumatic relationship with

his mother, Constance White.

Scholars in general have attributed the characterization of Morgause to Constance White.[56] White had a difficult relationship with his mother, Constance White. Kurth Sprague spends an entire chapter on Constance White in his dissertation on female characters in *The Once and Future King*. According to Sprague, Constance White was a person of strong will and selfishness. She rarely mentioned her son in her journals, and showed unwillingness when she was informed that she had to send her distinguished son to college. White's description of his mother can also be applied to Morgause: "My mother was (is) a woman for whom all love had to be dependent. She chased away from her her husband, her lover and her only son. All these fled from her possessive selfishness, and she was left to extract her need of affection from more slavish minds. She became a lover of dogs" (Warner 123-24). There is one description of Morgause similar to White's criticism on Constance White: Morgause is "an insatiable carnivore who lived on the affections of her dogs, her children and her lovers" (White *The Once and Future King* 553).

It is not to be denied that Constance White had affected her son's characterization of Morgause, but biographical criticism is not without its flaws: often the focus is too much on the similarity between Morgause and Constance White that the social factor is often overlooked. I do not wish to argue against the biographical notice on the formation of Morgause, but would like to broaden White's representation to structures of feeling in the early-twentieth-century Britain, a time when the notion of childhood was in change. The

[56] The impact of Constance White on the image of Morgause is firstly pointed out by White's most prominent biographer, Sylvia Townsend Warner. Later scholars and critics expand Warner's biographical criticism of "the maternal rape on the child" relationship (Warner 130). See Christiane Berger, "More Than Just a Fashion: T. H. White's Use of Dress as a Means of Characterization," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997), Brewer, *T. H. White's* the Once and Future King, Crane, *T. H. White*, Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain: A Literary Overview* , Sprague, "The Troubled Heart of T. H. White: Women and *the Once and Future King*.", Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography*, Weller, "Wizards, Warriors, and the Beast Glatisant in Love."

personal distress probably led to the difficulty in working on “The Queen of Air and Darkness,” as Brewer suggested (*T. H. White’s* 50). The mother-and-son relationship might affect White’s (over)defense on childhood and the renewed convention of the icy mothers. Different from conventional image of the child, children can be in agony and struggle with desire and violence. But at the same time they are always in need of protection, no matter whether they grow up or not. White’s child characters are blended with his ideal childhood and his real childhood, along with the contemporary rising status of the child in life.

Morgause’s neglect of her children goes against our expectation of a devoted mother. However, she is not very much different from the upper-class parents in the early twentieth century. This kind of life pattern is consistent with Martin Pugh’s statement that “[t]he overriding aim of the upper classes was to arrange things so that young children did not disrupt their social life” (194). The Orkney brothers’ separate lives from their mother are not unusual compared to the childhood in the earl twentieth century, though perhaps with exaggerations.

The end of the nineteenth century saw a beginning of a new cult of childhood, which is similar to the concept of childhood nowadays, yet the society did not adopt the central status of children in a family till the end of the World Wars. In the meantime, children were either distanced or neglected by their parents. In studying the condition of children, both Harry Hendrick and Martin Pugh classify them according to their social class. In the upper classes, parents entrusted the duties of childcare to housemaids or nannies. Children were to stay in the nursery for the most of the time and only to see their parents at set times. Children of these classes often relied on one of the servants or the nanny for emotional support. Pugh exemplifies the parent-child distance by the overseas visit of the Duke and Duchess of York in 1926 and their separation from their three-month-old daughter

Elizabeth.[57] No communication was conducted between parents and the child for six months. The Duchess was not happy about leaving her child, but "their behavior was typical both of people in the circle in which they moved, and also of the era in which they lived" (Pugh 193).

The upper-middle-class childhood in the colonies was basically the same, only the children were parted from their families earlier in order to return to Britain to attend schools (Pugh 195). White himself was raised up in the common way of Indian colony childhood: During his childhood his parents left the childcare to the nanny. At five he went back to England with his parents, and was left there with his maternal grandparents for schooling. Though White stayed with his grandparents partly because his parents were in constant disagreement, eventually he was supposed to take education in England following the custom of his age.[58] Born in an upper-middle class family in India, George Orwell likewise was sent back to Britain for a preparatory boarding school at the age of eight.

Besides the separation, behaviorism was prominent in inter-war childcare. Both Cunningham and Hendrick report that the mainstream childcare method in the early twentieth century was prone to behaviorism: F. Truby King and John B. Watson, two eminent and influential doctors in childcare, both aimed to impose self-control and self-reliance on children. They promoted regular timetables in child-nursing, whether it was in breast-feeding, toilet-training, or sleeping. It is possible that their theories echo the evangelical teaching from the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, but an even more pressing reason: national poverty induced by the wars.

As we can see, the distanced parent-child relationship is commonplace in the British Empire in the early twentieth century, and the Orkney childhood to a large extent correlates

[57] The Duke of York is later King George VI, and the little Elizabeth is the future Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

[58] White's family was of the upper-middle class in India since Garrick White (his father) was an Indian police superintendent while Constance White was the daughter of a judge.

the distance between parents and children in life. Kept at a distance, the Orkneys idealized Morgause and throughout the book were very eager to impress their mother. It is also consistent with the idealization of mothers that Hendrick noted in children separated from their parents (27). White himself was raised up in such a manner of parent-child separation, and growing up he continued to witness the prominence of behaviorism in childcare. With his own trauma from childhood, he might want, by his radical representation of the Orkneys, to advocate a loving attitude toward the child, but White fails to penetrate the reason behind such strict methods of childcare. Some parental negligence might be genuine, but some parents took the severe manner for the sake of the children. Some mothers regretted that they followed the rules of minimum tenderness in child-nursing, pressed by their hope to make children behave and their need to maintain the family (Cunningham 200). The childhood situation of the Orkneys might be similar to the child in life in White's contemporary, but White's representation of Morgause's motherhood is exaggerated.

In White's attribution to a bad mother for her children's conducts, not only in their childhood but also well into their adulthood, a modern notion of childhood experience is demonstrated: children were becoming the center of a household, the importance of childhood experience and education were recognized, and mothers were required of more childcare. Constance White might drive White to depict a cruel icy mother as Morgause, but it is the social attention paid to childhood provoked White to write down the childhoods of Arthur and the Orkney clan. As Freud proposes in "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming," creative writers realize their phantasy in their works, but they have to withhold their true ego to gain readers' sympathy. Therefore, Morgause could be the reincarnation of Constance White, but too much attention to the link could simplify the work. After all, it is not White's autobiography. Also, Freud proposes the social factor in a creative work: it is a new current in life that provokes the creative writers' desire to express: "A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging

to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work" (Freud 151). Some old concepts still clang to the society as Pugh has reported in the early-twentieth-century Britain, but the modern concept of childhood was taking shape. In the formation of Morgause and her children, White participates and takes sides in the contemporary studies of childhood and motherhood. The drive behind his liberating yet defensive portrayal of the child and the overemphasis on the mother could be the result of his childhood and his relationship with his mother, but without the changing view of childhood and the World War I, White could not have written down the childhoods of King Arthur and his enemies.

White's pedophilia might also propel him to the concern of the child. Kincaid once noted that perhaps only a pedophile is concerned with the child in life, while the others are concerned about the child in our imagination (209-10). White, as a person once in love with a young boy,[59] is one of the pedophiles that Kincaid defines. White is also cited by Kincaid as one of the representative of the pedophile voices (205-06). The diary entry he wrote in many ways express his love for Zed and his deep concern for the child in general as well:

> It would be unthinkable to make Zed unhappy with the weight of this impractical, unsuitable love. It would be against his human dignity. Besides, I love him for being happy and innocent, so it would be destroying what I loved. He would not stand the weight of the world against such feelings—not that they are bad in themselves. It is the public opinion which makes them so. In any case, *on every score of his happiness, not my safety, the whole situation is an impossible one*. All I can do is to behave like a gentleman. (Warner 277; my emphasis)

[59] White once fell in love with a young boy named Zed, but he was never sexually active. See Brewer, *T. H. White's* the Once and Future King, Keenan, "T. H. White.", Nelson, "T. H. White.", Sprague, "The Troubled Heart of T. H. White: Women and *the Once and Future King*.", Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography*, Weller, "Wizards, Warriors, and the Beast Glatisant in Love."

In the same entry, when he explained why he chose not to realize his pedophilia, he mentioned that “the old exist for the benefit of the young, not vice versa” (Warner 278). It might indirectly answer his characterization of Morgause: in his point of view, the child should be the central position of our life, not vice versa.

Encroached by the author’s intention for the young, the author’s personal trauma, the social circumstances of conservatism and newly awakening recognition of childhood, “The Queen of Air and Darkness” is destined to be a complex text. But it is also in the complexity that makes the research value of this text. Though White’s love for the child prompts the overprotection of the adult Orkneys and the embodiment of evil on Morgause, it is revealing to see an effort to represent the child unconventionally, or, even liberating. In the representation of the young Orkneys, White realizes a possibility of breaking the limit in children’s literature: the child is given the right to be different from our imagination and imposition of values in the example of the Orkney brothers.

Conclusion

> Fictional opportunities to explore the fact that even early childhood is not always and for all children a carefree and happy period could help young people recognize emotions, symptoms, and patterns of behavior before they become acute. (Reynolds *Radical* 91)

In the previous chapters, I endeavor to present two unique childhood representations in *The Once and Future King*, and propose that White's representations wavering between alignment (to comply with conventions) and commitment (the writer's choice of position) results in the ambiguous status of *The Once and Future King* in children's literature. White achieves immediate success in his invention of King Arthur's childhood for his alignment to literary conventions and structures of feeling of his own time, but he also makes commitment in the retelling of Arthur: he indirectly disrupts childhood innocence in Arthur's conducts as a king. Besides, his representation of the Orkney brothers transgresses the conventions of children's literature, and in a way exposes the underlying surveillance in children's literature and reveals his deep concern for the child.

In King Arthur's childhood, the nostalgia toward nature and the pre-industrial time prominent in inter-war British structures of feeling is realized in the natural surrounding of Arthur's childhood home, the Castle of Forest Sauvage. Arthur is the epitome of Rousseau's ideal child: he was brought up in nature and educated by nature, to a large extent secluded from civilization. Furthermore, with his rich knowledge of nature and medieval England, White succeeds in bringing entertaining elements and interesting adventures into young Arthur's education. In a word, the success of *The Sword in the Stone* is due to White's full alignment both to literary conventions of children's literature and to the retreatist structures of feeling in inter-war Britain. However, White, confronted with the cruelty of wars, inserts

the anti-war sentiment in Arthur's childhood lessons, and by the confrontation of the lessons on wars and human nature with young Arthur's innocence, he disrupts childhood innocence in the reality of human aggression and warfare. Arthur's innocence, when faced with questions on wars, is dwarfed to naivety and easily falls into well-meant imperialistic rule.

In the second part of *The Once and Future King*, White furthermore daringly presents a radical childhood account of the Orkney brothers. Their uncorrected and unpunished violence is unprecedented in children's literature, and the unconventionality of this part explains much the imbalanced reception of the entire tetralogy in children's literature. However, I propose that behind this radical representation of childhood White expresses his genuine concern for the child in life. The young Orkney brothers are provided with a depiction other than conventional innocent or misbehaving children, and the reasons behind their misconducts, the traumatic relationship with their mother and their lack of proper guidance, are presented in detail along with their violent behavior. Through this radical image of the child White is actually calling for attention to the child in life. White's two childhood accounts, though seemingly running opposite to each other, in fact both reflect in different fashions his love for the child.

Through the investigation into representations of childhood in *The Once and Future King*, I attempt not only to answer the ambiguity of this text, but to contribute to the debates on the possibility of children's literature with the example of *The Once and Future King*. White's childhood representations provide the child reader an alternative to identify themselves with different images of the child other than the conventional opposites of innocent children and misbehaving ones. As Reynolds's words cited in the beginning of this chapter show, fictions depicting unhappy or unconventional childhoods can provide children, especially unhappy ones, opportunities to identify with the child characters and by doing so recognize their own unhappy emotion and help deal with their related symptoms caused by their difficulties in life. Based on Reynolds's arguments on radical children's

literature, unconventional childhood accounts in fact are writers' commitment made due to their concern for depicting the child in life.

As I cite earlier in the introduction and the first chapter, scholars such as Nodelman and Zipes have observed the predominating control of the adult in children's literature. Rose even proposes, based on the one-sided power relations in children's literature, children's literature is impossible. And, as I try to present in the survey of children's literature, there is indeed strong discipline with educational purposes in children's literature, only that the education often develops into imposition of values through children's reading, but the genuine child-love is not impossible, so neither is children's literature impossible, despite the domineering discipline and control.

Kincaid, though elaborates the general projection of wishes and desire onto the child, does not negate the possibility of altruistic love for the child. He proposes that, as I mentioned before, perhaps pedophiles are the people who truly care about the child in life, for in their sexual longing for the child they have broken away from the innocent child in our imagination. Non-practiced pedophilia in Kincaid's argument is a way to get rid of the long-existing cult of childhood innocence. Other than Kincaid's daring proposal, Reynolds in her various essays and books also has argued forcefully, with textual examples, that there is possibility of children's literature: that the child reader could resist moralistic readings thrust upon them ("Rewarding Reads" 203-07), and writers do express their altruistic concern for the child by endeavoring to be empathetic through unconventional representations of the child (in the book *Radical Children's Literature*).

Following Reynold's demonstration of empathy and the child's subjectivity, in this study I propose that *The Once and Future King* is another textual example of the possibility of children's literature. The marginal status of this text offers actually an opportunity for us to delve into the underlying conventions of discipline in children's literature. When White's childhood accounts are compared and contrasted by the conventional child, his unique

representations not only expose the discipline purpose of children's literature, but reveal his promotion for attention paid to the child in life. As the opening citation reveals, fixed images of childhood perplex the child reader who leads a life different from the innocent, happy childhoods represented in books, and perhaps will even cause them pain, for they could not identify themselves with the child characters in their reading and to get inspiration to cope with their difficulties and unhappiness in life. White attempts to face this, and he achieves in creating more liberating and more radical images of the child than modern writers, and his representations at the same time reveal his profound concern for the child in life.

In the effort to distinguish the conventions of children's literature there is possible overgeneralization in this study, for in distinguishing the conventions of discipline, I might have overlooked more dynamic parts, which are less rigid than the discipline I have proposed, in children's literature. But I believe that only when we read *The Once and Future King* based on the conventions of discipline of children's literature can White's effort for the child be revealed most vividly. Contrasted by the discipline and arguments of impossibility of children's literature, the disruption of Arthur's innocence and the empathic representation of the Orkneys' violence distinguish themselves with the author's moving attempt to sympathize the child.

In recent decades, discussion emerges on the border-crossing of children's literature. In the border-crossing discourse, *The Once and Future King* is posed as a crossover book, that is, a text enjoyed by both adult and child readers, in Sandra Beckett's *Crossover Fiction*. Beckett's argument on this book as a crossover text in a way provides a re-evaluation of its ambiguous status in children's literature. In a time when we try to reassess the child in literature and the child in life, *The Once and Future King* could be a pioneering text in its attempt to break away from conventional depictions of the child in children's literature. *The Once and Future King*, for its indirect disruption of childhood innocence and empathy for

the misbehaving children, deserves renewed scholarly attention in a time when childhood studies call for an urgent rethinking of the child.

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