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Heterotopia and T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*

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Abstract

Although a lot has been achieved in the history of humanity through discovering new lands and inventing new technologies, there is an undeniable heritage from the Middle Ages which has recently manifested itself through scholars' "new" interpretations of the old. This is more evident with the neo-medievalist movement that emerged at the turn of the 20th century, especially in prominent literary works. This movement has been, in Umberto Eco's words, a "quest for our roots" that continuously incites curiosity in our minds. Since it is part of the discussions of political theory and philosophy, neo-medievalism is also present in the postmodern discussions of representations and functionality. Heterotopia is one of those topics of postmodernist discussion that look at certain cultural, institutional and many other places to understand what is within and outside, how they are different in different perspectives and how power or powerlessness reside. As a popular topic for neo-medievalist works, Arthurian legends underline the myth of power and rightful ownership. In these legends and many of its recreations, places such as Camelot play into this narrative of what it means to be a king. Therefore, it is aimed in this paper to investigate how T. H. White used heterotopic spaces as learning grounds for Arthur to become a king by studying his fantasy novel *The Once and Future King* (1958).

Keywords: Arthurian legends, Heterotopia, Middle Ages, Neo-medievalism, Representation

The Once and Future King (White, 1958/1996)[1] is about the reimagined story of King Arthur, taking place in the twelfth-century England that displays the mental and physical growth of young Arthur – named Wart initially – into the King of England. The main focus of the book is the lessons given to Wart by Merlyn, who is a wizard that lives backwards through time and thus knows especially about the future of this young boy. Throughout the story, these lessons mostly take place in the Forest Sauvage and Camelot. Since the lessons, as will be looked at in more detail, are to shape Arthur to be a ruler of a nation, they carry much deeper meaning than normal lessons. The places, then, become a focal point for providing the perfect environment for such lessons of kingship that require many skills to hone. The flexibility as well as the fertility of such places are beyond the expectations of everyday uses. Therefore, the theory of heterotopia comes into play, which focuses on the constant clash between sites and counter-sites. Through textual analysis, the heterotopian characteristics of

[1] Although originally the four books of *The Once and Future King* were first published in 1958, the 1997 paperback version by HarperCollins*Publishers* will be used as reference in this paper.

the main places for Arthur's lessons will be analyzed so as to consider White's use of place as transformative lessons of kingship.

According to the story, Merlyn is sent to educate Wart through various lessons such as shapeshifting into animals to get him to know about the people he is one day going to rule over. Throughout the novel, we see Wart facing questions about politics and war. These instances instill philosophical insight into the young boy and help him come to a conclusion on what makes a good leader. Since these one-on-one lessons with Merlyn are of great importance for the growth of Wart, the settings of each lessons are of significance as well. The adoptive father of Wart – Sir Ecton – lives in a castle located in the Forest Sauvage. Merlyn is also one of the habitants of the forest whom Wart comes across during one of his adventures. Merlyn is a practical man who uses the forest as a microcosmos of the country that this young boy one day is going to rule. In using the forest, Merlyn is able to provide various scenarios for Wart to experience. After the crowning of Wart as the King, the setting changes into Camelot, but Merlyn's lessons do not stop there. During his stay in and around Camelot with his loyal knights, the second stage of Arthur's lessons begins. This time, this castle provides a restricted environment for the King to observe with its specific group of people and their power relations. Here, he can test his limitations as well as learn about his weaknesses and strengths as a king. In both of these stages of Wart's education as a young boy and a young king, these settings – the Forest Sauvage and Camelot – work as heterotopic places since they reveal more than the surface-level functions and meanings of their existence. Their functionality is key in being useful tools for Merlyn to educate the young boy into adulthood and kingship. Thus, it can be argued that the settings of Wart's education throughout the book are heterotopic places, whose function is to shape Wart into a proper king.

In order to make a connection between the aforementioned places and the idea of heterotopia, Foucault's works – especially the essay titled "Of Other Spaces" (1967) – are important works of references for this study. Foucault's (1967) understanding of the space in the new century is the fact that it is "not an innovation" (p. 1). He further outlines how the hierarchies normally associated with the medievality are not in fact disrupted. It is, therefore, not possible to say that the categorization of the certain places such as temples, palaces or hamlets were at all different in the medieval times. Foucault calls the specific places assigned for specific purposes, which is actually the practice of being orderly for the purpose of functionality or establishing hierarchy and order - as *emplacement*. This idea proposes that the places are not ordinary spaces. They are assigned, similar to a militaristic point of view, to fit specific needs that are deemed necessary for the functioning of the society. These functions, whether they are beneficial or happily accepted by the society subjected to them, ensure that the order is maintained. When it comes to the functionality issue of the Arthurian legends, there is a clear motive. Of course, there were many legends centered on this heroic King Arthur. This was the case for Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Histories of the Kings of Britain* (1136) as stated by Johnson (2012): "Arthur was an immediate hero in medieval Western Europe, and as a result Geoffrey's book would take a back seat only to the Bible in terms of copies made in the Middle Ages" (8). Written by Sir Thomas Malory in 1470, *Le Morte D'Arthur* was impressive for the fact that it became popular and one of the first ones to be printed after the Bible. Another impressive fact was the introduction written by Caxton (1485) revealing the reasoning for undertaking this task of printing this book as follows: "I, according to my copy, have done set it in imprint, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days" (preface).

One of the reasons why these acts of labeling such purposes and assigning duties on the spaces continue is the result of trying to find solutions to certain problems today including the rapid growth of population and the consequential awareness of limited space in the world for a sustainable environment. Regardless of these needs that on the surface look in line with the changes of the century which we live in thanks to the technological advancements and better quality and longevity of life, the essential categorization of the spaces remains the same. As stated by Foucault, these spaces are defined by their "set of relations" (p. 3). Comparing the places with which the people have day-to-day interactions, Foucault emphasizes certain places that have a specific condition, which is comparable to all the other sites in question. These places are called heterotopias. This word of Greek origin is made up of two words, *έτερος* meaning "other" and *τοπία* meaning "spaces." Under this umbrella term, he divides these places into two, *utopias* being the first. Utopia is the perfect version of the society. Although the meaning of utopia is a place which is not real and cannot be found in the real world, it is possible to find the analogy or the representation of it. Thus, Foucault talks about how the utopia attempts are possible to be detected in every culture.

However, some of these places are very different from their surface level representation. That is why, there is a contrast between the utopias and heterotopia. For a better understanding, Foucault offers certain principles to define and detect heterotopias. The first principle argues that every culture has its own heterotopia and therefore it is not possible to talk about a singular heterotopia. This might bring the necessity to have a sufficient knowledge on a specific culture and the group of people living in that space as a prerequisite so that a sufficient analysis can be conducted. Giving the examples of the nursing homes and psychiatric hospitals, Foucault describes this first principle as the places where normally a set of behaviors including the problems generated by simply getting old would be welcomed. In a way, they help the society to look away from these disturbing occurrences. The second principle draws on the idea that the heterotopias also can be subjected to change in line with the changing needs of the societies. Foucault talks about the example of cemeteries, which undergone drastic changes accordingly with the society's approach to and understanding of death and what happened after death. The location and the ceremonies surrounding this space transformed over time across the cultures (pp. 5–6).

The third principle is about how the heterotopia enables the multiplication of "a single real space" (p. 6). The important element of this principle is that these multiple parts are not compatible with each other. So, knowing that the surface-level function or functions of the place is already not possible, the observers are further challenged by the hidden dimensions – just like an iceberg – of the space. With the example of Persian gardens, it has brought forth the idea of various reproductions of the original space, thus creating a microcosm of its own. This notion is quite important in understanding what Wart thought of the garden he was raised in. Was it really a nourishing and sacred place? Was it really the representative of his innocent youth? In *The Sword in the Stone,* Wart asks Merlyn to be turned into a hawk out of boredom. Since, the hawks are known to be predatory birds of the forest with their sharp instincts, Wart seems interested in the idea of being like them. Merlyn takes this as an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of Wart's request. Stating that they are a very male-dominant and warrior-like creatures, Merlyn says: "Another subject they have is food. It is a depressing thought, but of course they are mainly trained by hunger. They are hungry lot, poor chaps, thinking of the best restaurants where they used to go, and how they had champagne and caviare and gypsy music. Of course, they all come of noble blood" (p.75). In response to Merlyn, Wart comments: "What a shame that they should be kept prisoners and be hungry" (p.75). The forest does not provide the freedom one assumes it to provide for these creatures. It is revealed through this conversation that, the forest is not at all what it seems. Even one of the

most independent and strong birds can become prisoners. In that sense, the main function of the forest morphs into a dysfunction. There are many realities and microcosms of the forest of its own, with its very own hierarchies and rules that are not revealed to the naked eye.

The fourth principle brings together the flow of time and space. For people, there are certain places which offer a specific slice of time that works towards keeping and protecting it. This points towards a more symbiotic type of relationship that both parties rely and feed on each other. Although the chronology in question cannot be really found in that space, it is the representation that is experienced. When talking about the fifth principle, Foucault shows how the heterotopias have an isolated yet penetrable characteristic. Although they are not easily accessible, certain prerequisites and rites enable the entry (p. 7) to such spaces. These can be considered to the extremes of places, say, if you are knighted or if you are crowned, you are allowed to enter. Similarly, there can be illusions of being accepted into these spaces, though in reality you are just allowed a certain area. The sixth principle talks about the functionality of the heterotopias "in relation to all the space that remains" (p. 8). These spaces can be considered very superficial in the sense that it creates a great juxtaposition with the "outside" boundaries. They are quite regulated, offering a sense of unity and togetherness as well as harmony. Out of these six principles of heterotopia outlined by Foucault, this essay will focus on the third principle that underlines the multiple representations of places which are seemingly not compatible with each other or easy to detect at a first glance. This characteristic of a place is meaningful in giving lessons to a future king.

When we look at the training scenes of Merlyn and Wart, the first lessons appear in the first book, *The Sword in the Stone,* which takes place in the Forest Sauvage. The images of forest and childhood generally paint a happy picture. They are the places of connecting with the nature and the flora and fauna provide countless options for the imaginative mind of the child. The forest is the perfect place where ideal relationships and representations and interactions take place. As stated by Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1998):

> In Classical thought, the Utopia functioned rather as a fantasy of origins: this was because the freshness of the world had to provide the ideal unfolding of a table in which everything would be present and in its proper place, with its adjacencies, its peculiar differences, and its immediate equivalences; in this primal light, representations could not yet have been separated from the living, sharp, perceptible presence of what they represent. (pp. 285–286)

It is possible to understand what is being represented as the ideal thing in such an image of the forest. There are many living organisms, animals and more that are part of a system which is well perceived and accepted by all. "The great dream of an end to History is the Utopia of causal systems of thought, just as the dream of the world's beginnings was the Utopia of the classifying systems of thought" (Foucault, 1998, p. 286). In this place, it is true that Wart takes his first steps into becoming an accomplished king as it provides a very much fruitful training ground for him. In the example of meeting King Pellinore, the impact of the Forest Sauvage and Sir Ector's Castle is undeniable. In describing King Pellinore, White (1997) writes:

> He was mounted on an enormous white horse that stood rapt as its master, and he carried in his right hand, with its butt resting on the stirrup, a high, smooth, jousting lance, which stood up among the tree stumps, higher and higher, till it was outlined against the velvet sky. All was moonlight, all silver, too beautiful to describe. (p. 16)

Despite this gleaming first impression, as it can be seen further in the story, Wart does not meet that utopic world the forest has to offer. Wart, as part of his education, has to *really*

experience being part of the forest for the first time. Merlyn, as a magician living backwards through time, is aware of what the future holds for this young boy. This is the future, in which the king will be amid conflicts, unrest and war, just like King Arthur of all the Arthurian legends depict. As stated by Barber and Jones (1961): "By the time he became commander, most of eastern England was dominated by the Saxons…but under his command they were decisively overthrown…The Saxons, realizing the superiority of the Britons ceased their attacks…until Arthur himself died probably in battle" (p. 12). Merlyn knows of the dangers of this, and at the earliest chance, wants to inform the boy of the dangers of these utopias or *ideals.* This ideal as becoming the perfect knight is repeated again by Wart as he says: "I should have had a splendid suit of armor and dozens of spears and a black horse standing eighteen hands, and I should have called myself the Black Knight" (p. 58). It will be apparent that these expectations of Wart are described to be very naïve and childlike as he faces the other side or other face of the coin. As stated by Filimon (2014):

> When Thomas More first coined the term "Utopia" in his literary satire (1516) of sixteenth-century society, he collapsed two Greek words together: *eu-topia* meaning "good place" and *ou-topia* meaning "no-place" or "nowhere". His Utopia was a good place that existed nowhere, except in the imagination. Ever since, people have been trying to create utopia, by turning the nowhere into the good place. (p. 22)

Yet, is this true for the case of T. H. White in his work *The Once and Future King*? It can be said that the traces of finding the good place are there. He portrays a very serene scene of Wart being one with the forest. This can be coined with the term pre-Camelot or pre-maturity Wart. Yet, in neo-medievalism, there is also the element of turning the narrative to fit into a context that is approachable by the contemporary reader. Therefore, the dystopic twentieth-century context cannot be disregarded in analyzing the places of the novel. One important aspect of the heterotopic places of *The Once and Future King* is that the discontinuity in space and time is prevalent. In order to further the level of this discontinuity, Merlyn acts as the medium.

> It was different from the universe to which he had been accustomed. For one thing, the heaven or sky above him was now a perfect circle…It is difficult to imagine. What makes it a great deal more difficult to imagine is that everything which human beings would consider to be above the water level was fringed with all the colors of the spectrum. (pp. 44-45)

In the first minutes of his experience as a fish, Wart enjoys the benefits. He is still excited about the positive impression of this new perspective.

> The next most lovely thing was that Wart had no weight. He was not earth-bound any more and did not have to plod along on a flat surface, pressed down by gravity and the weight of the atmosphere. The best of it was that he did not have to fly in a machine, by pulling levers and sitting still, but could do it with his own body. It was like the dreams people have. (p. 45)

Regardless, it becomes clear that these are some general expectations and assumptions of the men if being asked to imagine what it would be like to become a fish. Later in his journey in the lake as a fish, he comes across a tyrant. These are one of the many instances, where Wart will be surprised by facing quite the opposite consequences of his actions. His transformation as a fish is a way of training adopted by Merlyn in the hopes that as a king Wart will be ready to represent every one of his subjects in various conditions and situations. Therefore, the education of Arthur must be a very harsh and versatile one. His exposure to these various animals, being face to face with some of the figures of important status will be beneficial for

Wart in the long run. As a result, he will be knowledgeable not only in the ways of his subjects survive in a daily basis but also some of the powerful rulers and their impact in giving shape to the politics and diplomacy. This will be in contrast with what he considered as an exemplary knight figure he saw embodied by King Pellinore. Throughout the novel, the idealistic image of what a heroic knight looks and acts like is always challenged. Thus, the Forest Sauvage becomes a harsh learning ground for him to face the cruelty of the other side of the lake.

> Wart began to hang behind his conductor [the tench, who was his mentor as a fish] a little, perhaps it was as well that he did, for they were almost on top of their destination before he noticed it. When he did see the old despot he started back in horror, for Mr. P. was four feet long, his weigh incalculable. The great body, shadowy and almost invisible among the stems, ended in a face which had been ravaged by all the passions of an absolute monarch – by cruelty, sorrow, age, pride, selfishness, loneliness and thoughts too strong for individual brains. There he hung or hoved, his vast ironic mouth permanently drawn downward in a kind of melancholy, his clean-shaven chops giving him an American expression, like that of Uncle Sam. He was remorseless, disillusioned, logical, predatory, fierce, pitiless – but his great jewel of an eye was that of a stricken deer, large, fearful, sensitive and full of griefs. He made no movement, but looked upon them with his bitter eye. (White, 1997, p. 49)

King Pellinore is a man of contradictions. He is as stated, a man of courage but also of grief. Instead of vanishing into the history, however, he remains in the Forest Sauvage, where he is welcomed to roam. The forest, not only produces but also enables and encourages such dualities as its inhabitants, enabling the coexistence of counter-space and space. The forest also provides the setting for Wart in facing the cruelties and realities of what war is like. Since Great Britain was exposed to many wars with having most of its inhabitants – men and women as well as children – as warriors, the violence was a common occurrence for the medieval Britain. It was constantly under attack by various groups and therefore they learned how to fend for themselves. Under the Roman rule, the Roman legions were trying to help for its defense. All the invasions that the island suffered starting with the Anglo-Saxons as well as the Vikings with the hopes of making use of the riches of the land, the continent was no stranger to threats and attacks. As stated by Burns (2010): "Early Britain had a warlike culture, and many of the artifacts that survive are related to war. A common form of settlement was the hill fort, built on top of a hill to dominate surrounding territories" (p. 5). This was one of the reasons why Merlyn wanted to show how the country needed a great ruler and his reasoning was to educate him in the very lands that are surrounded by violence and greed on a daily basis. Thus, the surrounding forest was not only home to fun cute little animals with shiny knights passing through but it was the stage for everyday survival. Although this was the reality for the world Wart was in, his experience in the ant colony as he was transformed into one by Merlyn was quite revealing for him. After spending some time inside the colony, the professed community-based order between the ants turns from fascination to terror for Wart. He is horrified upon witnessing the war among the members of the ant colony:

> The repeating voices in his head, which he could not shut off – the lack of privacy, under which others ate from his stomach while others again sang in his brain – the dreary blank which replaced feeling – the dearth of all but two values – the total monotony more than the wickedness: these had begun to kill the joy of life which belonged to his boyhood. The horrible armies were on the point of joining battle, to dispute the imaginary boundary between their glass trays when Merlyn came to his

> rescue. He magicked the sickened explorer of animals back to bed, and glad enough he was to be there. (White, 1997, pp. 135–136)

That level of hostility is striking since it disrupts the understanding of violence in Wart's head. Seeing the size of the animals and the level of cruelty displayed by the ants were unexpected for him. However, regardless of this dark revelation about the ant colony, Camelot with its high-rise towers manifests a very different level of hostility for Wart. When he comes to Camelot as a castle, the transition of Wart's experience towards a more hostile one is very apparent. This time, Wart faces more complex relationships and sees the true conditions of his kingdom. The castles, similar to prisons or mental institutions which are the focal places of Foucault in regards to power relations that come into existence through systems like panopticon, are also very important structures dating back to the Middle Ages. It would not be an exaggeration to state that, for kings such as Arthur, the castle life equals the ownership of a title and right of rule over the people. In addition, the Arthurian legends all center around Camelot which stands for more than the space itself. It is home to the fellowship of the knights who are brought together for the purposes of bringing peace and order. *The Once and Future King* also puts a great emphasis on Camelot and the order – or chaos – of things are described with their positions being inside or outside the castle. The castles are important spaces for the heterotopic studies. In regard to the castle as a heterotopic space, Filimon (2014) draws parallel between the carceral places such as prisons and mental hospitals and spaces such as castles due to both of them having a sense of ordering, discipline and surveillance – a form of authority. Using this concept of panopticon, Filimon (2014) states the following:

> However, places of Otherness have more often been envisaged as examples of sites of an ambiguous spatiality associated with identity formation in relation to acts of resistance, rather than panoptical ordering and social control. In general, the term has been used to try and capture something of the significance of sites of marginality that act as postmodern spaces for resistance and transgression – treating them in many ways as liminal spaces. The paradox is that heterotopia can be either or indeed both. Spaces of total freedom and spaces of total control, are a paradox the symbol of the castle embraces. (p. 43)

Filimon shows here that the push and pull of the spaces create a sense of impending doom. There is danger inside and outside. There is a constant battle between what it is and what it should be. As a transcendent figure, Wart – who transitioned into young Arthur – cannot ignore both of the worlds and thus suffers. Especially in the Arthurian works, the castle already represents places of total control which is home to bureaucracy and ultimate law. We cannot talk about individualism and freedom as limitless issues when it comes to hierarchy. Similar to what Foucault called the heterotopias, the castle in this sense is a space of sacred and inaccessible borders that can be entered depending on specific conditions. It is important to note that, with it comes the possibility of being excluded from heterotopias. In his book *The Order of Things* (2002)[2], quoting a joke by Borges, who mentions a Chinese encyclopedia which provides arguably funny definitions of animals with various categories, Foucault recognized the tendency of classification and categorization. The main question that framed his work was to understand the validity of any sort of categorization. However, as he states, the lack of any categorization was the worst option for him:

> Perhaps because there arose in its wake the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the incongruous, the linking together of things that are

[2] English edition published by Routledge Classics.

> inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the heteroclite; and that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are "laid", "placed," "arranged" in sites so very differently from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them all. (p. xix)

This finding translates into the issue of locality. For a person, it is impossible where one can situate himself. Yet, for the trained eye, there is an order to be understood. Merlyn, aims to create this same awareness in Arthur. This order – whether incongruous or not – can be found in every civilization. It can help establish a connection which is maybe not normally visible to the immediate eye. For the reader, the world of the *The Once and Future King* presents this duality. As Foucault (1967) states:

> Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. Heterotopias are disturbing probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy "syntax" in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to "hold together. (p. xix)

This "holding together" is the key element in making sense of the immediate world and being part of the commonalities. As Merlyn teaches the ways of the forest to Wart, he restructures the ways things are called and thus ordered. The existence of such rules and the emphasis on the importance of calling them specifically – otherwise with consequences – are well-established for the residents of the forest. Merlyn considers Robin Hood as an important figure of the forest since he knows everything there is to know about it. Therefore, Robin and Wart end up meeting, which was not known for either of them to be a pre-planned event by Merlyn. "One of the few things we know, said Robin, "about the Blessed Ones, is that they go by the names of the animals. For instance, they may be called Cow, or Goat, or Pig, and so forth. So, if you happen to be calling one of your own cows, you must always point to it when you call" (p. 105).

Following his coronation as the king, Arthur's lessons surprisingly do not come to a halt. His interactions while carrying this title mostly take place in and centered around Camelot. Camelot has an initial significance which is certainly familiar to the reader. In line with the sentiments of these readers, Camelot represents a crucial function for King Arthur and his Knights of The Round Table. The expressions of Camelot, although blended with the Christianized allegories are as such and centered around the presence of the Grail as stated by Ashe (1992):

> The Grail stands for a Christian mystery entrusted only to Britain. It is a token of the friendship of God, the vehicle of a special sacrament. Strange rituals are built round it. Secret words are spoken. Visions of Christ and the Blessed Virgin are vouchsafed to those who approach the Grail in the right spirit. Not everyone sees them. The Grail sometimes has the air of a *speculum* like the crystal-gazer's ball, a channel for the scrying gift which some people possess (whatever the source of the images they see) and others do not. By King Arthur's time, it is explained, the Grail has been lost. It is

> still in Britain, but in a mysterious castle surrounded by a waste land, behind a watery barrier. (p. 98, *Camelot and the Vision of Albion*)

The readers of the Arthurian legends were aware of the fact that Camelot represented more than the house of their ruler. It expanded to become a representative of more. Arthur and his knights were intrinsically connected to these later-Christianized missions of Camelot being home to the holy relics. Of course, the representations of the knights varied greatly within Arthurian legends. However, their importance as part of the reconstruction of a war-torn England was never diminished. As Ashe in *Camelot and the Vision of Albion* (1971) stated:

> In Malory the Roman war is moved back. Arthur wins it, and then most of the adventures take place in a long peace that follows. As a result, Malory evokes what is never delineated before – a British golden age that is not only romantic and chivalrous but, in a more serious way, good. Under Arthur a noble mode of life does to some extent flourish. Arthur's Britain therefore has relevance. Malory holds it up as a contrast and lesson to the distracted England he knows. (p. 143)

Of course, this was the case for White as well. He, too, considered Camelot as an important space for the continuing growth of a leader who has the potential to become a great leader. Yet, his method of making this point is in contrast with Malory. As opposed to Malory's vision of Camelot, White looks at the war-torn country and through Merlyn, shows a gloomier picture. As Filimon (2014) states:

> For Foucault, there are two principal modes of ordering: through resemblance and through similitude. It is the latter that we should associate with heterotopia. The ordering represented by resemblance is a familiar one, social expectations developed over time assume that certain things go together in a certain order. These representations act as signs where what is being signified refers to a known referent. Similitude, however, is all about an ordering that takes place through a juxtaposition of signs that culturally are seen as not going together, either because their relationship is new or because it is unexpected. What is being signified cannot be easily attached to a referent. (p. 20)

Looking at the pairing of Arthur with Camelot, the understanding is almost always positive. Ashe states (1971): "In medieval romance, Camelot is King Arthur's best-loved city, where he reigned over all Britain (and other countries) before the Saxon conquest (p. 70). Further, he comments on what the overall impression of Camelot is: "This city of the imagination is a gorgeous image projected by the tradition of a real Arthur with a real headquarters. It owes its glamor to the way in which the real Arthur came to be thought of" (p. 71). However, in White's Camelot there is another world awaiting Arthur. When he was crowned king and moved to Camelot, we see the problems that Arthur immediately must address:

> They have rebelled, although you are their feudal sovereign, simply because the throne is insecure. England's difficulty, we used to say, is Ireland's opportunity. This is their chance to pay off racial scores, and to have some blood-letting as sport, and to make a bit of money in ransoms. Their turbulence does not cost them anything themselves because they are dressed in armor – and you seem to enjoy it too. But look at the country. Look at the barns burnt, and dead men's legs sticking out of ponds, and horses with swelled bellies by the roadside, and mills falling down, and money buried, and nobody daring to walk abroad with gold or ornaments on their clothes. (White, 1997, p. 238)

The castle Arthur arrives at as a king is not a gorgeous one which represents the victorious deeds of the country, and certainly not a country with a victorious leader. Although the main features of the castle, the high walls and the long-standing architecture that can endure storms and fire, it cannot stand against the civil unrest and war that would eventually end a supposed peaceful era. This paints a different picture than Camelot the readers knew to represent. The gruesome details of the war cannot be escaped by hiding in Camelot. Merlyn had to remind Arthur of the very fact that Camelot is also just like another learning place as can be seen in the conversation between them with Merlyn starting:

> I was talking about advice, and how you must never take it. Well, I am going to give you some now. I advise you to think about battles, and about your realm of Gramarye, and about the sort of things a king has to do. Will you do that?
> I will. Of course I will. But about this girl who learns your spells…
> You see it is a question of the people, as well as of the kings. When you said about the battle being a lovely one, you were thinking like your father. I want you to think like yourself, so that you will be a credit to all this education I have been giving you – afterwards, when I am only an old man locked up in a hole. (p. 237)

Arthur finds out the ultimate lesson for him is to be himself. This is in a way a cautionary tale for him because of the mistakes his father did, but also to the readers making the connection that the past mistakes should become a guide for better decisions in the present time. Camelot, thus, as a heterotopic space works as a bridge for the readers where once a great king learned a lesson to take a different path from his ancestors, and therefore reaching the reader in the present time shedding its presumed symbol of perfection.

All in all, the heterotopic places play an important role in shaping King Arthur. They become an effective tool for teaching the lessons via presenting all the chaos and order – the duality that is in fact the reality of life. Of course, a special attention must be given to the teacher, Merlyn. Unlike Wart, he is not bound to the lessons and places of the present time. He acts as the mediator between the past and the present. As Merlyn says.

> Ah yes. How did I know to set breakfast for two? That was why I showed you the looking-glass. Now ordinary people are born forwards in Time, if you understand what I mean, and nearly everything in the world goes forward too. This makes it quite easy for the ordinary people to live, just as it would be easy to join those five dots into a W if you were allowed to look at them forwards, instead of backwards and inside out. But I unfortunately was born at the wrong end of time, and I have to live backwards from in front, while surrounded by a lot of people living forwards from behind. Some people call it having second sight. (p. 31)

In a sense, Merlyn acts as the mirror which connects Wart to his past and future, with the real Wart standing in the present, looking through Merlyn. On the contrary to the idea of preserving a specific timeline, heterotopias can also reflect a "flowing, transitory, [and] precarious aspect" (p. 7). This goes in line with the aforementioned fourth principle of heterotopia which is about the functionality through the various representations enabled with such works. These works, as stated by Mayer (2010), "uncover the dissatisfaction with the present that often motivates recreations of past, and the character of Chaucer constantly reminds the viewer that representation is power" (p. 70). The ideal representation for Merlyn is linked with the mission of teaching Wart the ways of being a good leader. The common traits of the lessons a child learns is no different for Wart. The readers are able to make the

connection, whether the story is from the legends or from the present, is a lesson that transcends through time.

> Whether positive or negative, the implicit argument is that the Middle Ages can be understood, usually within a fairly limited set of terms that can then be used for a variety of agendas. Medievalism in this sense is the process of locating a particular set of phenomena as an anachronism or a return of the past. In the process, the idea of historical progress is reaffirmed as a pattern, even if elements of the present are seen as "returns" from the past. (p. 71)

The Once and Future King plays into the function that as heterotopic places, the forest and Camelot both remind the reader of a past which is familiar to the extent that they are quite relevant to the dualities of their present, which is still surrounded by tyrants, killings, wars and conflicts. In the story, these heterotopic places taught Wart how to be himself and thus be a better king. For the reader, these places also became the learning ground to recognize the patterns and take the lessons for life with them. For us all, having a great teacher like Merlyn, there is a lesson to be learned.

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