

01:45:02.000 --> 01:45:12.000

Okay. feel free to introduce yourself. Okay. Well, I am Anne Acker, as you can see on my zoom screen.

01:45:12.000 --> 01:45:19.000

I am a professor of English literature at Tesculum University, in Greenville, Tennessee.

01:45:19.000 --> 01:45:25.000

Of the paper that i'm presenting today comes in part from a class I taught this past spring.

01:45:25.000 --> 01:45:36.000

I did a special topic score on Arthurian literature, and we essentially surveyed it from the earliest pseudo histories.

01:45:36.000 --> 01:45:47.000

All the way up to th white and so there were some things about white novel, the once in future King that I was left pondering.

01:45:47.000 --> 01:46:04.000

That's the semester. ended. and which I have carried over into the summer, and so I am hoping today that I have expressed them well in this paper We'll see Alright, the title is something which ought to be done when

01:46:04.000 --> 01:46:11.000

all else fails. the experiential education of Arthur in the once in future king.

01:46:11.000 --> 01:46:16.000

The reader is only 8 chapters into the once in future king.

01:46:16.000 --> 01:46:30.000

When the phrase quoted Sorry place there. When the phrase quoted in the title appears, it is spoken by the irritable Merlin to Arthur, known by his childhood nickname of

01:46:30.000 --> 01:46:35.000

the when he comes to him on a rainy day, looking for something to do.

01:46:35.000 --> 01:46:44.000

It is an august feature, and everything is wet, and everyone is impatient with the young boy inping around the castle.

01:46:44.000 --> 01:46:48.000

Finally he goes to Merlin and says I think I ought to have some education.

01:46:48.000 --> 01:46:54.000

I can't think of anything to do merlin responds sharply.

01:46:54.000 --> 01:47:00.000

You think the education is something which ought to be done when all else fails.

01:47:00.000 --> 01:47:09.000

The worst request with the reader, and especially the educator, in 2022.

01:47:09.000 --> 01:47:13.000

Some of us have not found pandemic teaching to be any easier.

01:47:13.000 --> 01:47:27.000

After 2 years than it was in the beginning. For me at least, the original stress and anxiety of learning, New modes of delivery gave way this past spring to a Malays, whereas I recently explained to a colleague

01:47:27.000 --> 01:47:33.000

a middle state that might be compared to swimming through Jello for teachers.

01:47:33.000 --> 01:47:45.000

Education has never been a last resort for the world's troubles, but we are confronting prices, political, economic, environmental, and health crises that have put educators under enormous stress.

01:47:45.000 --> 01:47:50.000

And scrutiny. I have no antidote for this other than the one.

01:47:50.000 --> 01:47:55.000

Fantasy has always offered, and that is the benefit of the other.

01:47:55.000 --> 01:48:07.000

And fancy worlds. We meet the same evils in human weaknesses as our own, but transmuted into new forms, so that we made salmon them differently, and understand them better without the casual familiarity.

01:48:07.000 --> 01:48:19.000

They wear on the nightly news. I think that th White, using the Arthurian legend, wants to argue that education is the thing to be done when all else fails.

01:48:19.000 --> 01:48:32.000

And for this reason the entire first book of the once in future king is dedicated to the education of Arthur, something which is not included in any prior version of Arthurian legend, while whites, novel has the same

01:48:32.000 --> 01:48:38.000

choice conclusion as the rests of part 3, and literature.

01:48:38.000 --> 01:48:41.000

He once described the Arthur Mythos as the Greek doom.

01:48:41.000 --> 01:48:57.000

He is the first author to suggest that the goodness of Arthur, and therefore of Camelot, from the intentional formation of Arthur's character through the education he is given by Marlin and education that is both experiential and

01:48:57.000 --> 01:49:03.000

humanistic. I want to trace out 2 ideas in this presentation.

01:49:03.000 --> 01:49:08.000

The first is that the political allegories of the once in feature King cannot be separated from what?

01:49:08.000 --> 01:49:14.000

Why the same about the purpose of education. The 2 themes are inter woven.

01:49:14.000 --> 01:49:32.000

The second is that white does indeed see education as the only help of the world, not because it preserves civilization, but because it allows us to see beyond civilization into a world where the human being and not the aggregate culture is

01:49:32.000 --> 01:49:41.000

the measure of all thanks. with the exception, perhaps, of the earliest pseudo history, the legend of Arthur has always been a political fantasy.

01:49:41.000 --> 01:49:50.000

The story, as we recognize it, begins in the hidden gears after the follow group, as the people left behind by the legions redefined themselves as Britain.

01:49:50.000 --> 01:50:03.000

Since then a new version of Arthur has appeared at the following: Nearly every watershed moment in British history. Jeffrey of Monmouth writes within a few decades of the Norman conquest and presents an

01:50:03.000 --> 01:50:06.000

Arthur, who drives back the barbaric sentence.

01:50:06.000 --> 01:50:11.000

Thomas Samallory's lemort dark tour is written during the worse of the roses.

01:50:11.000 --> 01:50:18.000

We think, by a man whose life had been ruined by civil strife and the unsettled state.

01:50:18.000 --> 01:50:26.000

Edmund Spencer adds nothing to Arthur and legend, but does use it to frame his political allegory of the Rise of Tudor, England.

01:50:26.000 --> 01:50:37.000

Tennyson revives Arthur and the height of the British Empire, and th white rewrites. The story after the collapse of that same empire, White's novel is overshadowed by the

01:50:37.000 --> 01:50:41.000

mid twentieth century terror of totalitarianism.

01:50:41.000 --> 01:50:50.000

Both the defeat of the nazis and the 19 forties, followed by the rise of the Soviet empire in the post or era like it's contemporary.

01:50:50.000 --> 01:51:06.000

Or well. White seems to have perceived communism and fascism, not just as competing models of governance, but as existential threats to humanity and their erasure of the individual, and their suppression free conscience and

01:51:06.000 --> 01:51:09.000

the sort of the stone which is the first book of the once in future.

01:51:09.000 --> 01:51:15.000

King. the word asked to be transformed into an ant. He has already been granted.

01:51:15.000 --> 01:51:21.000

Other transformations by Merlin at this point, and the reader is now familiar with this approach to his education.

01:51:21.000 --> 01:51:27.000

Merlin accompanies him on his first transformation, but after that the emphasis is on the work.

01:51:27.000 --> 01:51:32.000

Figuring out his own way through and out of difficult circumstances.

01:51:32.000 --> 01:51:39.000

The reader will note 2 key features of this approach. The first is that the words Education is entirely reliant.

01:51:39.000 --> 01:51:45.000

On his experiencing the life of the other fish, insect or mammal.

01:51:45.000 --> 01:51:55.000

In other words, it is training in empathy. Whether or not he would design to emulate a species he has not learned from them, and he has the experience of living.

01:51:55.000 --> 01:52:01.000

Ask them. The second is that this approached education is holistic.

01:52:01.000 --> 01:52:08.000

The lessons are not just about increasing the work's knowledge The testing and stretching his character kindness with openness.

01:52:08.000 --> 01:52:18.000

Others courage with sourcefulness, are just some of the traits the work must demonstrate to survive his adventures, and some of these adventures are close calls.

01:52:18.000 --> 01:52:23.000

Indeed, in her book review, Eileen Markey calls the words Lessons and antidote to education.

01:52:23.000 --> 01:52:32.000

That quest for the predetermined right answers, and as protection against a world that honors might overwrite.

01:52:32.000 --> 01:52:35.000

A good example of this is the words experiences as an amps.

01:52:35.000 --> 01:52:43.000

When he first asked Merlin to be an amp, the wizard objects that answer dangerous, and that is too soon.

01:52:43.000 --> 01:52:53.000

In his education, however, the Wizard relents, Considering that Arthur must have this lesson sometime, the word is immediately confronted with the nature of this society.

01:52:53.000 --> 01:53:03.000

As he approaches the fortified Antioch, and sees that every entrance is smart, with the sign that says everything not forbidden is compulsory.

01:53:03.000 --> 01:53:08.000

He dislikes the sign, but does not understand it well enough to know why.

01:53:08.000 --> 01:53:23.000

Of course, in the society where there are only 2 categories of things, the forbidden and the mandatory, there is no room left for individual choice state which is instinctively repellent as an ant the war's antennae

01:53:23.000 --> 01:53:27.000

served to capture the incessant radio signals coming from the hive.

01:53:27.000 --> 01:53:36.000

A stream of monotony and repetitive works, occasionally broken by orders given to specific ants.

01:53:36.000 --> 01:53:53.000

He discovers that the ants are language poor, having no words for personal preference, taste, or happiness, and that the only qualitative indicators in the language are the expressions done and not done accordingly conversations are equally

01:53:53.000 --> 01:54:03.000

monotonous, an endless circle of talking points, without ideas or new events, As the narrator tells us, novelties did not happen to them.

01:54:03.000 --> 01:54:15.000

The word is part of a work detail that brings food back to the nest, a task which requires him to ingest the mash, and then let other ants feed from his stomach.



01:54:15.000 --> 01:54:20.000

That's making this body a communal asset when the ants go to war.

01:54:20.000 --> 01:54:24.000

There's propaganda for the war to figure out and along with it.

01:54:24.000 --> 01:54:34.000

The mind numbing or sets logic required to get large numbers of people to act in a way contrary to their own best interests.

01:54:34.000 --> 01:54:38.000

Here is an example, hey? We are so numerous that we are starving.

01:54:38.000 --> 01:54:47.000

B. Therefore we must encourage still larger families, so as to become yet more numerous and starving.

01:54:47.000 --> 01:54:51.000

See when we are so numerous and starving as all that.

01:54:51.000 --> 01:54:55.000

Obviously we shall have a right to take other people stores to seat.

01:54:55.000 --> 01:54:59.000

Besides, we show by then have a numerous and starving army.

01:54:59.000 --> 01:55:04.000

This propaganda is supplemented by songs and religious services and the language of difference.

01:55:04.000 --> 01:55:11.000

There is this nest, and there are other nest. Our young must be fed.

01:55:11.000 --> 01:55:21.000

So they're young stars. I have described the ants in detail, because some critics have read this chapter as White's most forceful critique of totalitarian governments.

01:55:21.000 --> 01:55:29.000

You probably heard echoes of the Nazis arguments about leaving scream and the promotion of large families to increase the area in race.

01:55:29.000 --> 01:55:42.000

The however, White does not spare his own nation. In this critique he parodies Biblical passages and British patriotic songs as part of the propaganda of going to war.

01:55:42.000 --> 01:55:47.000

Finally he makes a point which she returns to throughout the entire novel.

01:55:47.000 --> 01:55:53.000

The boundaries are the step of fiction. The Aunt Hills, the work visiting are not outdoors.

01:55:53.000 --> 01:55:58.000

They are held in a glass case in the room he shares with his foster brother K.

01:55:58.000 --> 01:56:07.000

They are the medieval equivalent of amp farms held in an artificial environment for someone else to study, and their demands for more territory.

01:56:07.000 --> 01:56:11.000

The ants demands for more territory become just, so much more absurd.

01:56:11.000 --> 01:56:19.000

Critics have also noted that the counterpart to the answer, the geese which the warp joins in chapter 18.

01:56:19.000 --> 01:56:26.000

Unlike the ants, the geese consider the idea of killing other geese to be obscene, and use lookouts only to warn them.

01:56:26.000 --> 01:56:32.000

The potential predators. They are so tolerant of others that the work is able to tell them what he does not tell.

01:56:32.000 --> 01:56:38.000

This other animal companions that he is really human, and has been sent to them to be educated.

01:56:38.000 --> 01:56:48.000

The gates fly over the earth in great migrations, and looking down from the heights, they see no boundaries carved into the earth as the gift.

01:56:48.000 --> 01:56:52.000

We all yacht says, How can you have boundaries if you fly?

01:56:52.000 --> 01:56:56.000

Those ants of yours, and the humans, too, would have to stop fighting.

01:56:56.000 --> 01:57:01.000

In the end, if they took to the air sadly, that prediction has not come true.

01:57:01.000 --> 01:57:12.000

But our definition of boundaries is imaginary lines. on the earth we'll come back to the work when he is King Arthur, and his kingdom is falling apart around him.

01:57:12.000 --> 01:57:18.000

Well, the Anson geese give insight into Whites use of nationalism and war.

01:57:18.000 --> 01:57:26.000

There are 2 other incidents in the book which I think eliminate how the words Education is teaching him something about humanity.

01:57:26.000 --> 01:57:32.000

Early in his adventures. the work succeeds in getting Merlin to turn him into a hawk growing up on his foster father's estate.

01:57:32.000 --> 01:57:39.000

He is being trained in the handling of these birds, though always under the supervision of Hobb the falconer.

01:57:39.000 --> 01:57:42.000

It is the huts that Merlin sends him to.

01:57:42.000 --> 01:57:46.000

On the rainy August evening that he asked for education.

01:57:46.000 --> 01:57:59.000

Visiting the hawks is a bit like visiting a Spartan military mess. To use Merlin's analogy, there is an unwritten code of behavior that the hawks are expected to understand based on military rank

01:57:59.000 --> 01:58:14.000

and species much like the British army of the last century, and which difference might be due to someone based on military rank or on their social status transformed into a Merlin debris, not the wizard.

01:58:14.000 --> 01:58:20.000

The word commands a certain social difference. Despite his low right as a sub altar collie.

01:58:20.000 --> 01:58:28.000

The old veteran is a kernel, and therefore must be treated with respect, despite his otherwise low status in the infantry.

01:58:28.000 --> 01:58:35.000

In short, the wart misnavigated complex hierarchy, and read the room well enough to avoid giving offense.

01:58:35.000 --> 01:58:40.000

Merlin's advice to him is to Listen and say little but this proves ineffectual.

01:58:40.000 --> 01:58:54.000

Is, the newer arrival is immediately subject to testing by the other factions he has questioned as to his pedigree, tested on his knowledge of hunting, and forced to undergo an initiation this comes in the form of standing

01:58:54.000 --> 01:59:08.000

next to Collie. The old hop that is half crazy. and therefore liable to kill any other birth that comes to place The explanation of collie's craziness is comical, but suggestive of the satire underlined the whole

01:59:08.000 --> 01:59:12.000

episode. The leader of this group of hawks is the Peregrine falcon.

01:59:12.000 --> 01:59:19.000

In her one time. condescension to Collie is reputed to have deranged him, as another bird explains.

01:59:19.000 --> 01:59:22.000

Kind of collie is not quite right in this wits.

01:59:22.000 --> 01:59:30.000

It is his liver, we believe, but the Kestrel says it is the constant strain of living up to her ladyship standards.

01:59:30.000 --> 01:59:33.000

He says that her ladyship spoke to him from her full social station.

01:59:33.000 --> 01:59:40.000

Once cavalry to infantry you know and that he's just close to size and got the vertical.

01:59:40.000 --> 01:59:50.000

He has never been the same since. Clearly, why this making fun of British social hierarchy rather poignantly, since Collie shows unmistakable signs of battle trauma.

01:59:50.000 --> 02:00:00.000

This hierarchy in the quasi madness of Culley are important for assessed up the challenge that the work is given as a new recruit to the barracks.

02:00:00.000 --> 02:00:07.000

He is required to stand next to Collie something Merlin has warned him not to do, and which horrifies collie as well.

02:00:07.000 --> 02:00:15.000

He says, I beg of you not to do that. I am such a villain, your ladyship, that I do not answer for the consequences.

02:00:15.000 --> 02:00:19.000

Spare the poor boy your ladyship, and lead us not into temptation.

02:00:19.000 --> 02:00:31.000

Reading the room. The word accepts the challenge. He achieves it by talking quietly to colleague, to soothe him during the short duration that he stand within reach as the time progresses, and Collie gross more

02:00:31.000 --> 02:00:39.000

restless. The work finally calls out that there is a cap behind him, just as the bell sounds, and he is able to fly to safety.

02:00:39.000 --> 02:00:46.000

All this is significant, for it demonstrates something that is present in the words adventures.

02:00:46.000 --> 02:00:58.000

Time and again the lesson consists not only of being the other, and living is the other, but also of overcoming the challengable lesson by behaving in a way that is distinctly human.

02:00:58.000 --> 02:01:10.000

In other words, you must undertake the challenge as a hawk, and learn to relate to the other bird supportingly. but he can only survive the ordeal by doing something human in this case using language in a

02:01:10.000 --> 02:01:25.000

sophisticated way to diffuse a dangerous situation. He does something similar in the anthill when he is deprived of individuality, even if bodily autonomy, and immersed in their propaganda, and yet is

02:01:25.000 --> 02:01:34.000

able to keep himself sufficiently apart to analyze the propaganda and retain his feelings of reputance and dissatisfaction.

02:01:34.000 --> 02:01:38.000

He retains his humanity by retaining his capacity for critical thoughts.

02:01:38.000 --> 02:01:44.000

Towards the end of the first book there is a scene which encapsulates this very well.

02:01:44.000 --> 02:01:49.000

Just before the day when K. is to be knighted, and the word is to become a squire.

02:01:49.000 --> 02:02:02.000

Merlin grants in one last transformation, so that you can visit the Badger as he trudged so long in his own badge, or formed the work, comes across a hedgehog, which is This natural prey demanding that

02:02:02.000 --> 02:02:05.000

the hedgehog come out of this hole and meet its doom.

02:02:05.000 --> 02:02:13.000

The badger work, finds himself in a most ridiculous argument with the hedgehog, who was very smoothly trying to talk his way out of trouble.

02:02:13.000 --> 02:02:21.000

At first the worst reaction is purely instinctive. The more you squeal, said the wart, the more I shall, Nash.

02:02:21.000 --> 02:02:27.000

It makes my blood boil within me. He is dismissive of the hedgehogs, please, that he has a family.

02:02:27.000 --> 02:02:34.000

He is oddly stern, but annoyed when the animal begins singing sentimental songs.

02:02:34.000 --> 02:02:36.000

When he asked where the hedgehog learned these homes.



02:02:36.000 --> 02:02:42.000

Home, Sweet Home for suit. he discovers that the animal was once kept, as if that by Merlin.

02:02:42.000 --> 02:02:47.000

At this point the work seems to have fully remembered himself.

02:02:47.000 --> 02:02:53.000

He has been talked around in much the same way that he coaxed Collie years before.

02:02:53.000 --> 02:03:00.000

But, unlike Collie, he has come into a census at the end, and remember who he is, and treats the hedgehog with gentleness upon party.

02:03:00.000 --> 02:03:04.000

The contrast to a real batcher is a parent.

02:03:04.000 --> 02:03:12.000

When the word finally Meets merlin's friend it tells them about the hedgehog, they do have the sort of pathetic appeal, said the Badger sadly.

02:03:12.000 --> 02:03:22.000

But I'm afraid I generally just munch them up There is something irresistible about port, correct correct links and anthropomorphism aside.

02:03:22.000 --> 02:03:34.000

There is a point of the novel in which no of the end animals ever actually transcend their own natures, their creatures of instinct and part of the words.

02:03:34.000 --> 02:03:40.000

Education is to occupy their forms, so that you can understand the instincts that direct them.

02:03:40.000 --> 02:03:50.000

But he must not stay them. He must rise above their instincts with reason and compassion. in order to really learn from the adventure she is given.

02:03:50.000 --> 02:03:58.000

The animals reappear at the end of book one they're the words only audience in the churchyard and see pulls the sword from the stem.

02:03:58.000 --> 02:04:04.000

After his first 2 attempts fail, he calls upon the now departed Merlin for help, and instead the animals come.

02:04:04.000 --> 02:04:09.000

They urge him on, and he feels empowered by the memories of his adventures with them.

02:04:09.000 --> 02:04:13.000

On the third attempt he pulls the sort out effortlessly.

02:04:13.000 --> 02:04:25.000

The memories come to him again as an old man when he sits in his tent before battle, urged onto war by the vengeance of Gawain, helpless to pardon Lancelot for his crimes against the

02:04:25.000 --> 02:04:29.000

roundtable, and facing the murderous hostility in his own illegitimate sense.

02:04:29.000 --> 02:04:34.000

His last thoughts of the novel are of the futility of war.

02:04:34.000 --> 02:04:47.000

His restless ruminations on evil in the possession of wealth; and whether or not there is any hope for human nature comes full circle to education in the end, Homo Pharaoh see reasons must become Homo

02:04:47.000 --> 02:04:51.000

sapiens man, the fierce must become than the wise.

02:04:51.000 --> 02:04:55.000

And so Arthur concludes with this: there would be a day.

02:04:55.000 --> 02:05:09.000

There must be a day when he would come back to grammarie with the new round table, which had no corners, just as the world had none, a table without boundaries between the nations, who would sit to feast there the hope

02:05:09.000 --> 02:05:17.000

of making it would lie in culture if people could be pursued to read and write, not just to eat and make love.

02:05:17.000 --> 02:05:25.000

There was still a chance that they might come to reason. Sylvia Townsend Warner knows that, argues.

02:05:25.000 --> 02:05:35.000

I should say that there are holes in white's rhetoric is antipathy to war seems to have been born out of his own tears as he weathered out the second world war in Ireland having described this

02:05:35.000 --> 02:05:47.000

innate fears of humanity she has argued that he is best when he is describing the characters and their respective ends, and not when he is trying to reason away the possibility of war.

02:05:47.000 --> 02:05:51.000

I don't think we should judge him too harshly for his fears.

02:05:51.000 --> 02:06:10.000

However, on this, anyone would have felt the same tears in those same circumstances, and if he was trying to reason his way out of the impossibilities of his own time, perhaps we can identify with that as we try to reason out of the

02:06:10.000 --> 02:06:25.000

impossibilities of our own. The legend of Arthur has always been the kind of political fantasy. At every stage of this literary development the authors of the legend have stretched to describe the perfect kingdom

02:06:25.000 --> 02:06:28.000

exemplary cadet, the very best of courtiers.

02:06:28.000 --> 02:06:32.000

And always the story is a tragedy. Camelot is a shining moment.

02:06:32.000 --> 02:06:36.000

The fortified city on a hill, and then it all implodes.

02:06:36.000 --> 02:06:40.000

Arthur is betrayed by his wife, his son, his friend.

02:06:40.000 --> 02:06:44.000

The formulation changes, but the outcome is always the same.

02:06:44.000 --> 02:06:51.000

Camelot erupts into civil war. Arthur is mortally wounded, perhaps transformed into a place of healing when we need him.

02:06:51.000 --> 02:07:01.000

Arthur will come again, except it seems that he never does What white offices in this modern retelling is the seed of hope.

02:07:01.000 --> 02:07:17.000

The world may change when culture changes and culture changes, when enough people are educated to think critically about the lines on the map and the political structures that enforce them. it changes when the emphasis of our education is not on the

02:07:17.000 --> 02:07:29.000

culture or its structures, but on the growth and well-being of the still maturing humans who sit in our classrooms, and whom must confront the world as it is to get to the world as it should I don't know if

02:07:29.000 --> 02:07:40.000

anything more humanistic than that