Once And Future King Analytical Paper Essay, Research Paper

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Sir Lancelot?s intense desire to perform heroic deeds was brought on by his lack of confidence and insecurity. His childhood was spent in seclusion, training for a job desired only to escape the hellish life that his hideous face would otherwise hold in store for him. Lancelot?s adulthood was spent trying to overcompensate for this ugliness by performing Herculean feats and good deeds. And the twilight years of his life were spent in remorse for the bad things he had done. Although held up to almost godlike stature in T.H. White?s novel The Once And Future King, Lancelot was truly the most human character of them all.

Lancelot?s childhood was spent sequestered, training to be a knight in order to escape from his ugliness and give him something to be proud of. Lancelot wanted to be a knight because he felt that he was a depraved, lubricious soul. His hideously twisted visage was a sure sign to him that deep in his inner self he was an evil person. Night and day he brooded over his ugliness, his malfeasance. ?The boy thought that there was something wrong with him. All through his life – even when he was a great man with the world at his feet – he was to feel this gap: something at the bottom of his heart of which he was aware, and ashamed, but which he did not understand.?(p.315) As a result of this fear of himself, Lancelot trained to become a knight. The knighthood, a bastion of chivalry and nobleness, would be the only way to counter his immoral soul. Secondly, Lancelot lived a baneful existence as a boy. He was kept away from all the other children and spent his every waking hour with a fiery old man in a single room, learning to fight, joust, and fence. This may seem extreme to some, but for Lancelot, it was all he had. ?Three years may seem a long time for a boy to spend in one room,…unless you realize from the start that…this rather sullen and unsatisfactory child, with the ugly face, did not disclose to anybody that he was living on dreams and prayers.?(p.320) While this single-minded seclusion would make him a great knight, it also kept him alone. He had no childhood friends, nobody to relate to, nobody to tell him that he was a good person. Consequently, his misgivings about himself took a firm root. Finally, Lancelot was filled with terrible, hateful thoughts toward himself and his face. The only job he could succeed in would be the knighthood, a profession in which a man is measured not by his looks, but by his strength. He was clinging to the dream that he would be able to become the best of them all and conquer his fears. Lancelot worked for a goal that he had to attain in order to prove to himself that he was not impure. He wished to become a heroic miracle worker. ?He supported himself mainly on daydreams. He wanted to be the best knight in the world…, and he wanted one other thing which was still possible in those days. He wanted, through his purity and excellence, to be able to perform an ordinary miracle…?(p.323) Lancelot had to prove to himself that he was not evil. He knew that only the pure of heart could work miracles. If he could be pure and work miracles, then he would know that any inherent evilness he might have had would be taken away, and he would have nothing to be insecure about. In conclusion, Lancelot?s childhood was a seedbed for his wretched self-image, but also a seedbed for his skills. Indeed, if he had not been so unconfident, he would not have worked as hard as he did, because the only reason he wanted to be a knight was to show that he was more than just a repugnant, vile-looking ape.

Although his body grew since his childhood days, the adult Lancelot was still concerned with trying to overcompensate for his feelings of insecurity. When he became an adult, Lancelot did indeed become a great knight. He was the strongest in the land, and the noblest. Yet he still thought that he had not done enough. He was still trying to overcompensate. He tried to be the best, and tried almost too hard. From childhood, he had worked toward this goal. ??I had spent all my childhood, when I might have been chasing butterflies, learning to be your best knight. Afterwards I was wicked, but I had one thing. I used to feel so proud, inside myself, because I knew that I was top of the averages. It was a base feeling, I know. But I had nothing else to be proud of.??(p.463) In this statement we learn definitively that Lancelot was only proud of his deeds. He was proud not of himself, not of his thoughts, but of his deeds. We must ask why this pride? It seems the only true answer is that Lancelot was ugly. He thought that his ugliness stemmed from an inherent evilness, so he could not be proud of himself. He could only take pride in his deeds, for they were the only truly good things that he had, and once they were gone there was nothing left. Another example is Lancelot?s affair with Guenever. In the beginning of their love, Lancelot felt badly about it. He felt that their relationship was making him impure, and so he went out to be a hero. Lancelot thought that his inclinations toward Guenever were coming from his evil soul. These thoughts added to his insecurity and compounded his belief that he was a sinner with no hope of redemption except by his good works. So he went forth to go questing, hoping that the good deeds he would do would balance out his impurity and flagitiousness. Finally, Lancelot flat out states that the only reason why he performed great deeds was to make up for his troubled soul. ??You see, Arthur, I had a lot of troubles on my mind which being a famous fighter seemed to make up for, a little, and when that was gone it felt as if there was nothing left to me.??(p.463) This proves that the reason Lancelot was so keen on being a champion was to make up for his troubles. He felt that his good deeds would counteract his malfeasant nature. All in all, Lancelot?s golden years were spent trying to contain his insecure spirit by being a Superman and failing, for supermen are found only on the pages for comic books, and not in real life.

When Lancelot was in the final stages of his life, he still could not lose his uncertainty, his self-depreciating mentality. For example, when he killed Gareth and Gaheris, he could not admit that it was an accident. Instead, he put the blame directly on his own shoulders. He blamed it on his wickedness. ?He was in his customary religious misery. ?It was my fault. You are right that it was unlike me. It was my fault, my fault, my grievous fault.??(p.589) In the preceding quotation, Lancelot denigrates himself as he always does. He thought that he had subconsciously wantereams. He wanted to be the best knight in the world…, and he wanted one other thing which was still possible in those days. He wanted, through his purity and excellence, to be able to perform an ordinary miracle…?(p.323) Lancelot had to pstakes up to his demonic soul. With every mistake comes the realization that he is imperfect, and will no longer be able to perform miracles, which just makes him more insecure. Another example comes before Mordred seizes control of the kingdom. Lancelot, Arthur, and Guenever are together in a room, and Arthur is about to talk about the time when he drowned all the baby boys. Arthur asks them not to blame him, and Lancelot says, ??We are not in a position to blame people, King.??(p.546) This quote, pure and simple, shows Lancelot?s base feelings about himself. He feels that he has been an evil person in his life, and that he is not qualified to blame Arthur for anything. In other words, he feels that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. Lancelot cannot understand that the good deeds he has done cancel out his supposedly wicked nature. A final example comes again from the Gareth/Gaheris affair. While reflecting on what he has done, Lancelot condemns not only himself, but the whole human race in a scathing soliloquy. ??I killed him…because he refused to wear his armour against me. What horrible creatures humans are. If we see a flower as we walk through the fields, we lop off its head with a stick. That is how Gareth has gone.?? As we have seen so many times, Lancelot has a very heavy heart. He is guilty about his terrible mistake, and chalks it up to his wickedness. He then condemns the whole human race, judging them all to be murderous tyrants. Seeing as how he is a member of the human race, he is condemning himself as well. He cannot find solace in the good deeds he has done. He prefers to dwell on the negative aspects instead. He is insecure, unconfident that he could ever overcome his negative inclinations and do good works. In conclusion, During Lancelot?s older years, instead of finding joy and comfort in his good deeds of the past, he can only see his evilness and his insecurity about himself.

Lancelot longed all of his life to be a hero as a result of his insecurity. He always thought that he did not measure up to what he should be. He always considered himself a failure. His childhood was spent dreaming about what he must do to overcome his fears, his adulthood was spent counterbalancing those fears several times over, and his later years were spent reflecting on what a bad person he had been. He always considered himself a failure. He was set in his idea that his ugliness made him evil, and that he could never be good. Lancelot lived his entire life under these assumptions. He could never see what a truly good man he was. Lancelot always considered himself the Ill-Made Knight. What he failed to realize was that he was a man, a mortal man. Knights are men, with frailties and failings like everybody else. If he could have realized how much alike he was with the others, then he would have seen that he was not the Ill-Made Knight, but truly the Well-Made Knight. Alas, though, his vision was only skin deep. For if he could have known how much his need to succeed had helped other people, if he had known how much better he really was than everyone else, then he would have finally come to the conclusion that his homeliness was not a curse, but a blessing.

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