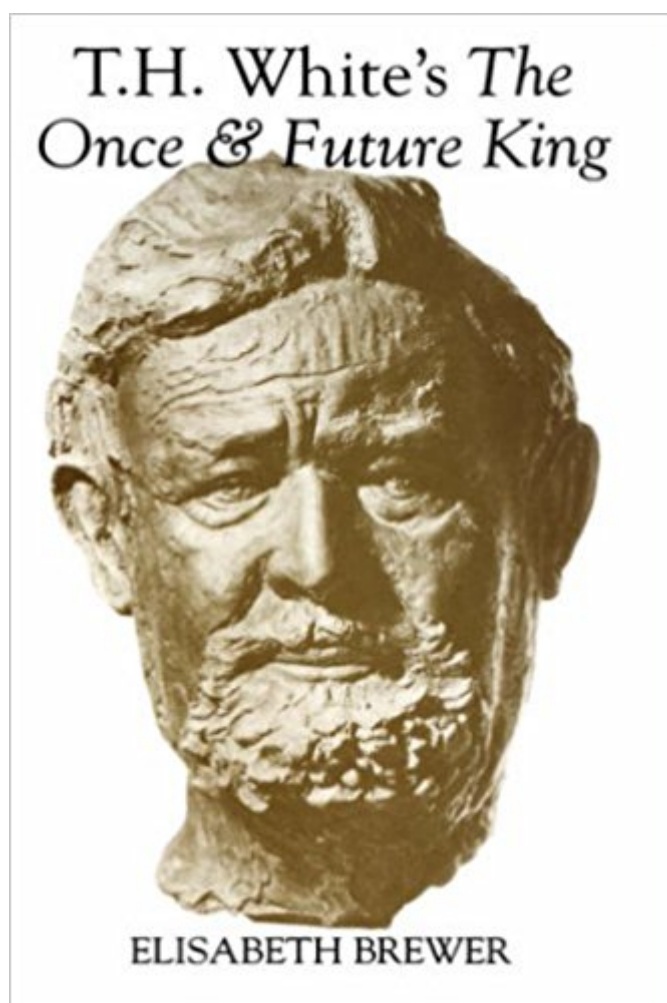


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# T.H. White's *The Once And Future King* (Arthurian Studies)



## Synopsis

The Once and Future King defies classification. Is it for children, or for adults? Is it fantasy or a psychological novel? In its great range, it encompasses poetry and farce, comedy and tragedy -and sudden flights of schoolboy humour. White's 'footnote to Malory' (his own phrase) resulted in the last major retelling of the story based on Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and Elisabeth Brewer explores the literary context of White's finest work as well as considering his aims and achievement in writing it. White's story of Arthur begins with his 'enfances', set in an imaginary medieval England, but it is far removed from the conventional historical novel. White was writing in wartime England, a country increasingly absorbed by a need to find an antidote to war. Through the medium of the Arthurian story he found his own voice, his unique contribution to keeping alive the flame of civilisation. Malory's chivalric virtues are rejected in favour of White's own twentieth-century values; the love affair of Lancelot and Guenever is interpreted in terms of modern psychology. The books which eventually made up *The Once and Future King* of 1958 appeared in distinctly different editions. In discussing these, Elisabeth Brewer looks at some of the ways in which White drew on his own personal experience at a deep psychological level, while also incorporating into his story material inspired by his antiquarian pursuits and by his years as a schoolmaster. She completes her study with an account of White's use of historical material, and the relationship of *The Once and Future King* to the *Morte Darthur*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Once and Future King is one of the works most frequently studied on literature courses in American universities, yet it has received astonishingly little criticism: Elisabeth Brewer...throws down a gauntlet on behalf of one of the most significant of mid-century authors. --Yearbook of English Studies[EB] comes to her subject as a distinguished medievalist. She is especially good at sorting out the relationship between the various texts of the novel and commenting on the significance of the multifarious revisions. --Notes and Queries

ELISABETH BREWER lectured in English at Homerton College, Cambridge. She is the author of books and articles on Chaucer and the Arthurian legends

The Once and Future King is one of my favorite works. This critical view of the work provided excellent in-depth background about its evolution through various versions, about its sources and inspirations, and about the ways it reflects the author's life. Ms. Brewer has made a real contribution to understanding one of the most under rated contributions to 20th Century English literature.

Elisabeth Brewer is a Medieval scholar and a White specialist. This work is chronologically arranged, so that she gives in depth information "by the book." Her research is impressive and illuminating. As a high school teacher, I find the work invaluable as a source of my lecture information. Her book is as much a psychological study of the author as an explanation of the text.

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