

## Dialectics of Motherhood-based Existence - Focusing on *Charlotte's Web* -

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- ABSTRACT

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### 초 록

『살롯의 거미줄』은 주요 등장인물들이 모성성을 바탕으로 한 관계 맺기를 통해 서로를 성장시키면서 새로운 생명으로 이어지도록 돕는 이야기이다. 또한 삶과 죽음의 교차는 우리가 살아가는 세계의 법칙을 직접적이면서도 상징적으로 암시하고 있다.

이러한 작품의 분석을 위해 크리스테바의 기호계, 상징계, 코라의 개념을 차용하였다. 크리스테바는 기호계와 상징계의 변증법적 관계와 언어의 의미화 과정에 있는 주체의 사회적 상황과 관계들에 주목했다. 이에 이 작품에 등장하는 인물들의 특성을 상징적으로 크리스테바의 주요개념들과 연관시켜 이들이 어떻게 성장해 갔는지 분석하였다.

또한 주요 등장인물들의 관계의 바탕에 있는 모성성은 여성주의적인 관점에서 모든 생명에 대한 보호와 배려, 관심 등을 통해 상호 발전할 수 있는 사회적 관계 혹은 인간으로서 갖추어야 할 미덕이라는 넓은 범위로 상정하였다.

『살롯의 거미줄』은 이러한 모성성을 바탕으로 하여 각각의 존재들이 가진 기호적 특성과 상징적 특성이 서로 상호작용하면서 발전적인 변화를 이끌어내고, 풍부한 의미를 만들어내고 있음을 보여준다.

세상은 서로 대립적인 요소로서 배타적으로 구성되어 있는 것처럼 보이지만 그 요소들은 서로 결합되어 있으며, 그러한 요소들의 상호작용을 통해 얼마나 아름답고 조화로운 세계가 만들어지는지를 문학적으로 형상화하고 있다.

또한 주요 등장인물의 특성을 한 인간의 내면에 있는 두 가지 양상으로 간주하여 작품 전체적으로는 인간의 성장과정으로도 이해할 수 있음을 제시하였다.

주제어 : 살롯의 거미줄, 크리스테바, 기호계, 상징계, 코라

## I. Introduction

Featuring a pig named Wilbur, Fern, a girl, a spider named Charlotte and other farm animals, *Charlotte's Web* (published in 1952), shelved as fantasy, presents how different types of species mature and stabilize through relationships—mostly based on motherhood—and illustrates the cycles in life.

Though motherhood is usually interpreted as mother's love toward their child, the term 'motherhood' has been expanded in modern society. *Charlotte's Web* speaks of motherhood as not only the preserve of women and not only the exclusive bond between mother and child. Standing in the place of Charlotte, Wilbur, a male pig, provides sincere care for her spiderlings.

Born a runt, Wilbur faces a life-threatening start. Charlotte is about to complete her full life's cycle. Wilbur's relations with Fern, Charlotte and Charlotte's offspring demonstrate the cycle of life and metaphorically represent the influence of reciprocal action on dialectical growth. Motherhood is placed in the central part of their respective ties.

This research aims to observe their dialectical relationships by adopting Kristeva's ideas of the semiotic, the symbolic, the chora and the subject in process.

Relying on linguistic capabilities, Lacan formulates psychological development into three realms: the imaginary and the symbolic and the real. He points out that the replacement of a homologue for mother and child—the imaginary—by the law of the father—the symbolic—is a desirable procedure. "The real is what is outside of both

the imaginary and the symbolic.”<sup>1)</sup>

Following Freud and Lacan, Kristeva puts more emphasis on the pre-linguistic realm and clarifies the aid of the mutually constraining dialectic between the semiotic, which is related to Lacan’s imaginary, and the symbolic in being an independent person.

Within this theoretical framework, the Wilbur-Fern and Wilbur-Charlotte ties are reviewed for the purpose of tracing how they grow. The composition of characters and settings also hints at the messages the writer would like to convey.

Elwyn Brooks White (1899-1985) worked at a magazine and was a noted author of *Stuart Little* (published in 1945), *Charlotte’s Web* and *The Trumpet of the Swan* (published in 1970).

In A Letter from E.B. White, he states, “I like animals and my barn is a very pleasant place to be, at all hours.”<sup>2)</sup> He felt sorry for the fate of pigs as an edible animal and was impressed with spiders, which are clever web-spinners. His elaborate depiction of nature and warm-hearted attitudes towards animals reflect his experience and thoughts.

E. B. White introduces his characters within the reality of an authentically described working farm. His human characters have no unusual powers. They do not treat animals like people, and White does not give his animals human characteristics.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) McAfee, N., *Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, 2004, p.33.

2) Google, <http://www.google.co.kr>, serch word: Charlotte’s web, White, E. B., “Dear Reader”, 2016. 3. 9., <http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Kids/AuthorsAndIllustrators/AuthorNote.aspx?CId=10499>.

3) Norton, D. E. · Norton, S. E., *Through the Eyes of a Child: An introduction to Children’s Literature*, Merrill, 1995, p.354.

With deep roots in reality, a fantasy story unfolds as soon as animals begin to talk.

From this point on, White develops the animal characters into distinct individuals, consistent in speech, actions, and appearance.<sup>4)</sup>

Animal characters display their traits through their use of words and interacts dialectically. The growth of Wilbur can be read in the context of his connections with Fern and Charlotte. Kristeva' s concepts—the semiotic, the symbolic, the chora and the subject in process—are useful to explain this.

## II. Kristeva' s Key Concepts

In the Lacanian arena, the imaginary is the period when infants joyfully recognize their reflections as themselves. Although this primary identification is just a fantasy, it is the formative stage of ego development before the symbolic begins.

Upon coming to the symbolic, children become conscious of themselves as a unique entity through language. By distinguishing between self and other, they are separated from their mother and have nervousness and unattainable desires.

Lacan says, “Imaginary effects, far from representing the core of analytic experience, give us nothing of any consistency unless they are related to the symbolic chain that binds and orients them.”<sup>5)</sup>

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4) Norton, D. E. · Norton, S. E, Ibid., p.355.

Nevertheless, I posit that it is the law specific to this chain which governs the psychoanalytic effects that are determinant for the subject-effects such as foreclosure(Verwerfung), repression(Verdrängung), and negation(Verneinung) itself-and I add with the appropriate emphasis that these effects follow the displacement(Entstellung) of the signifier so faithfully that imaginary factors, despite their inertia, figure only as shadows and reflections therein.<sup>6)</sup>

Underlain by the imaginary, the symbolic plays a decisive role in symbolization. Children suppress their urges and start using language to express their desires and needs. They discover something unfulfilled and unfulfillable.

Kristeva asserts that there are two intertwined modes in signification: the symbolic and the semiotic. The former is defined “as an expression of clear and orderly meaning” and the latter, “as an evocation of feeling or, more pointedly, a discharge of the subject’s energy and drives.”<sup>7)</sup>

Revisiting Lacan’s work, she analyzes that children establish a separation between themselves and their mother earlier than the symbolic proposed by Lacan. During the pre-linguistic phase, they learn the rules and dictates of the symbolic from their mother. In this way, the semiotic and symbolic aspects of language are isolable.

We shall call the first “the semiotic” and the second “the

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5) Lacan, J., Fink, B., trans., “Seminar on “The Purloined Letter” ”, *Écrits: A Selection*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, p.11.

6) Lacan, J., *Ibid.*, p.11.

7) McAfee, N., *Ibid.*, pp.15-16.

symbolic.” These two modalities are inseparable within the signifying process that constitutes language, and the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called “natural” language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic.<sup>8)</sup>

Even after entering the symbolic, subjects continue to oscillate between the semiotic and the symbolic. The interplay between the semiotic and the symbolic allows for easier communication.

Another of Kristeva’s main terms is the chora: “a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated.”<sup>9)</sup> The chora is derived from Plato; Plato likens the chora to a mother. Kristeva believes that children are completely satisfied within their emotional closeness to their mother. She sometimes refers to the chora as the semiotic chora. Children use gestures and sounds to reveal themselves as well as to discharge unconscious drives and energy. As they segregate themselves from the world around them, they advance into the symbolic, the dimension of language and social norms.

Nonetheless, the semiotic, which is dominated by a mix of instincts and feelings, does not disappear and still contributes to orderly communication, having a dialectic of mutual contradiction with the symbolic in signification. In articulation, speaking subjects are in process and form organic relations with their surroundings.

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8) Kristeva, J., Waller, M., trans., *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Columbia UP, 1984, p.24.

9) Kristeva, J., *Ibid.*, p.25.

According to Kristeva's theory of language, language spoken by subjects has relevance to the body. Physical impulses and energy constitute the semiotic. Immersed in the semiotic chora, children use nonverbal cues based on the primal mother-child union. When they can make a distinction between themselves and others, they are then required to acquire language and access the symbolic. Articulation is also rooted in the semiotic. Organic relationships between semiotic and symbolic constituents make it possible to talk in the right place at the right time.

### III. Wilbur and Fern

Mr. Arable decides to put Wilbur, the runt of his litter, down but Fern pleads with her father to spare him.

“The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?”<sup>10)</sup>

The shadow of death prowls from the beginning. Though Wilbur escapes slaughter, indebted to Fern, nagging anxiety remains unrelieved through the smell of bacon in contrast to a calm morning atmosphere. Life and death are in constant tension throughout the novel.

“White, in fact, had little patience for the objections some critics, librarians, teachers and parents had to the book's protagonist and his choice to tackle the subject of death in a children's book.”<sup>11)</sup> A long-held belief that

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10) White, E. B., *Charlotte's Web*, Harper, 2012, p.3.

11) Google, <http://www.google.co.kr>, search word: Charlotte's web, Popova, M., “E. B. White on Why He Wrote Charlotte's Web, Plus His Rare Illustrated Manuscripts”, 2016. 3. 9., <https://www.brainpickings.org/2013/10/>

children must receive only positive emotions takes away opportunities for them to have a variety of childhood experiences and narrows the width of their reach. For children see, hear and respond to events as adults do, it is therefore inappropriate to limit topics in children's literature.

Fern loved Wilbur more than anything. She loved stroke him, to feed him, to put him to bed. Every morning, as soon as she got up, she warmed his milk, tied his bib on, and held the bottle for him. Every afternoon, when the school bus stopped in front of her house, she jumped out and ran to the kitchen to fix another bottle for him. She fed him again at suppertime, and again just before going to bed.<sup>12)</sup>

Fern devotedly looks after Wilbur as if he were her own son; they create a strong attachment like a mother and a baby.

Traditional motherhood accentuates the role of mothers as nurturers who undertake a great amount of sacrifice and endurance and connotes a form of oppression, whereas modern motherhood from a feminist standpoint has a broader significance and is regarded as one of the most valuable virtues that humans should have regardless of gender with a view to establishing healthy social ties. Beyond the frame of family, motherhood is a driving force for protecting living things in the world as well as co-developing with other people under encouragement and support.<sup>13)</sup>

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15/e-b-white-on-charlottes-web/.

12) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, p.8.

13) Lee, M. S., 「Preliminary Elementary School Teachers of Life and Maternity」, *Elementary Education Research*, Vol. 21, Education Research Institute Busan National University of Education, 2006, pp.148-149.



For Mr. Arable, who views Wilbur as a domestic animal that produces a profit, the weak Wilbur is useless. On the other hand, Fern cherishes even small creatures and gladly serves as a mother to him. In the absence of a biological mother, Wilbur gratifies all his inclinations in the bosom of Fern and is in a state of the semiotic chora.

If she went into the house, Wilbur went too. If she went upstairs, Wilbur would wait at the bottom step until she came down again. If she took her doll for a walk in the doll carriage, Wilbur would get tired, and Fern would pick him up and put him in the carriage alongside the doll. He liked this.<sup>14)</sup>

Wilbur follows Fern everywhere she goes and appreciates her care and attention. When Fern heats milk for him, Wilbur would “stand and gaze up at her with adoring eyes” <sup>15)</sup> or “If he was very tired, he would close his eyes and go to sleep under doll’ s blanket.” <sup>16)</sup> Although Wilbur cannot talk, he displays his intentions and love nonverbally. Like a human, Wilbur stands on his two legs and sleeps under a blanket in a stroller, feeling a sense of belonging to Fern. Connections with Fern give Wilbur the semiotic chora, which fuels growth; unfortunately, however, the Wilbur-Fern relationship cannot last forever.

One warm afternoon, Fern and Avery put on bathing suits and went down to the brook for swim. Wilbur tagged along at Fern’ s heels. When she waded in to the brook, Wilbur waded in with her. He found the water quite cold-too cold for his liking. So while the

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14) White, E. B., Ibid., p.10.

15) White, E. B., Ibid., p.8.

16) White, E. B., Ibid., p.10.

children swam and played and splashed water at each other, Wilbur amused himself in the mud along the edge of the brook, where it was warm and moist and delightfully sticky and oozy.<sup>17)</sup>

Though he still spends his days in a pleasant way like a baby boy, Wilbur is also regaining his natural instincts as a pig. He detects that he is somewhat different from Fern, which means she may no longer offer fullness for him. He needs language to indicate his wants. Wilbur is about to step into the symbolic, passing through the semiotic chora. At that time, Mr. Arable sells Wilbur to Mr. Zuckerman, Fern's uncle as well as neighbor. The expectation that she will visit Wilbur often brings comfort to Fern.

#### **IV. Wilbur and Charlotte**

Moved near a warm manure pile at the Zuckerman farm, Wilbur suffers a physical and psychological separation from Fern.

But he told Fern that she could sit on the stool and watch Wilbur as long as she wanted to. It made her happy just to be near the pig, and it made Wilbur happy to know that she was sitting there, right outside his pen. But he never had any fun-no walks, no rides, no swims.<sup>18)</sup>

Since Mr. Zuckerman does not permit Fern to enter the pigpen, all she can do is to look quietly at Wilbur, sitting on a stool. Maintaining maternal bonds, Wilbur and Fern could communicate and share with each other without using

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17) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, pp.10-11.

18) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, p.16.

words; however, Wilbur now must speak out loud and has no choice but to fall within normative orders in a bid to quench his thirst.

“There’ s never anything to do around here,” 19)

Wilbur reveals what he wants at that moment by uttering his first sentence. He begins to take an interest in other animals and is inclined to associate with them. Interaction with them becomes a desperate urge for Wilbur. He is, however, unprepared to accept social norms and is merely full of drive and energy.

He gave a jump in the air, twirled, ran a few steps, stopped, looked all around, sniffed the smells of afternoon, and then set off walking down through the orchard. Pausing in the shade of an apple tree, he put his strong snout into the ground and began pushing, digging, and rooting. He felt very happy. He had plowed up quite a piece of ground before anyone noticed him.<sup>20)</sup>

Getting out of the pen through a loose board, Wilbur is entirely at a loss with his new-found liberty and gets chased by the farmhands. As Mr. Zuckerman lures Wilbur with food, he obediently returns to his position, quite misunderstanding Mr. Zuckerman and Lurvy’ s compliments to him for being “quite a pig” and “a good pig.” <sup>21)</sup> He is not capable of discerning hidden messages.

“No-no-no!” said the goose. “It’ s the old pail trick, Wilbur.

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19) White, E. B., Ibid., p.16.

20) White, E. B., Ibid., p.18.

21) White, E. B., Ibid., pp.23-24.

Don' t fall for it, don' t fall for it! He' s trying to lure you back into captivity-ivity. He' s appealing to your stomach.”

Wilbur didn' t care. The food smelled appetizing. He took another step toward the pail.<sup>22)</sup>

Unaware of the meaning of ‘freedom,’ Wilbur depends upon his cravings and endeavors to make up for his deficiency.

After all, Wilbur was very young pig-not much more than a baby, really. He wished Fern were there to take him in her arms and comfort him.<sup>23)</sup>

Though Wilbur hopes for help from Fern, she cannot do that anymore. He needs other companions. “Wilbur felt queer to be outside his fence, with nothing between him and the big world.”<sup>24)</sup> His depression reaches its climax in chapter 4: Loneliness.

Wilbur didn' t want food, he wanted love. He wanted a friend-someone who would play with him.<sup>25)</sup>

Wilbur is snubbed by his animal neighbors—the goose, the lamb and Templeton, the rat. Templeton, the odd one out, says he does not know how to play. Even though Wilbur becomes conscious that he is going to be slaughtered soon, the barnyard animals are not concerned about him at all. It is a lady spider called Charlotte who answers Wilbur when he expresses his extreme distress and isolation. Charlotte,

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22) White, E. B., Ibid., pp.22-23.

23) White, E. B., Ibid., p.22.

24) White, E. B., Ibid., p.17.

25) White, E. B., Ibid., p.27.

herself on death row, looks deliberate and composed but later discloses her yearning for life.

“A little tired, perhaps. But I feel peaceful. Your success in the ring this morning was, to a small degree, my success. Your future is assured. You will live, secure and safe, Wilbur. Nothing can harm you now. These autumn days will shorten and grow cold. The leaves will shake loose from the trees and fall. Christmas will come, then the snows of winter. You will live to enjoy the beauty of the frozen world, for you mean a great deal to Zuckerman and he will not harm you, ever. Winter will pass, the days will lengthen, the ice will melt in the pasture pond. The song sparrow will return and sing, the frogs will awake, the warm wind will blow again. All these sights and sounds and smells will be yours to enjoy, Wilbur—this lovely world, these precious days...” 26)

Charlotte remembers the beauty of nature that she has overlooked on her web in the corner of the doorway. Her wish to live involves eagerness in the face of mortality. Charlotte is keen to spend the rest of her life doing things that are worthy by making friends with Wilbur.

“You have been my friend,” replied Charlotte. “That in itself is a tremendous thing. I wove my webs for you because I liked you. After all, what’s a life, anyway? We’re born, we live a little while, we die. A spider’s life can’t help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone’s life can stand a little of that.” 27)

Charlotte is internally and externally a contrast to

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26) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, pp.163-164.

27) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, p.164.

Wilbur. Wilbur gets bigger and bigger while Charlotte is the tiniest animal in the barn. A lack of friendship makes Wilbur unhappy but Charlotte enjoys keeping to herself. Wilbur “screamed” and “burst into tears” 28) (White 49-51) when he perceives that he is in danger of being butchered; Charlotte, however, tries to live a more meaningful life on the verge of death.

Charlotte was naturally patient. She knew from experience that if she waited long enough, a fly would come to her web; and she felt sure that if she thought long enough about Wilbur’ s problem, an idea would come to her mind.<sup>29)</sup>

The fundamental differences between them manifest the properties of the semiotic and the symbolic in signification. Charlotte and Wilbur are distinctive characters and represent two aspects of the human mind. The semiotic and the symbolic can be construed as “nature and culture” , “body and mind” , “the unconscious and consciousness” and “feeling and reason.” 30)

In the history of western thought, these dichotomies are usually taken to be extreme opposites: either one is a savage brute or a civilized human being; either one is acting out of lust or using one’ s head; either one is driven by emotion or steered by reason. The difference kristeva’ s use of these kinds of polarities is that the former pole ( semiotic / nature / body / unconscious, etc) always makes itself felt - is discharged - into the latter ( symbolic / culture / mind / consciousness ). Instead

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28) White, E. B., Ibid., pp.49-51.

29) White, E. B., Ibid., pp.66-67.

30) McAfee, N., Ibid., p.16.

of holding to the dualistic thinking of the West, Kristeva is showing how the poles of these dichotomies are intertwined.<sup>31)</sup>

Semiotic and symbolic modes are not severed but work dialectically. Signification in the semiotic stage operates by means of symbols.

Charlotte and Wilbur are equally necessary to each other. Wilbur, who is too young to overcome solitude, encounters a chance to turn into a self-reliant, independent self. In order to persuade Mr. Zuckerman not to harm Wilbur, Charlotte secretly weaves praise of him into her web: 'SOME PIG', 'TERRIFIC', 'RADIANT' and 'HUMBLE'. 'Wilbur's noble qualities' attract publicity. These messages identify Wilbur and he is determined to live up to all the attributes Charlotte writes about him.

Ever since the spider had befriended him, he had done his best to live up to his reputation. When Charlotte's web said SOME PIG, Wilbur had tried hard to look like some pig. When Charlotte's web said TERRIFIC, Wilbur had tried to look terrific. And now that the web said RADIANT, he did everything possible to make himself glow.<sup>32)</sup>

From Charlotte, Wilbur, a vulnerable and rambunctious pig, learns how to brighten his day, to consider other beings and to act prudently. Charlotte also reaps the fruit of her efforts and feels most alive. Wilbur and Charlotte are engaged based on maternal bonds. In lieu of Fern, Charlotte sings Wilbur a lullaby and tells him a story. She consoles him.

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31) McAfee, N., *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

32) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, p.114.

“You must try to build yourself up. I want you to get plenty of sleep, and stop worrying. Never hurry and never worry! Chew your food thoroughly and eat every bit of it, except you must leave just enough for Templeton. Gain weight and stay well—that’s the way you can help. Keep fit, and don’t lose your nerve. Do you think you understand?”<sup>33)</sup>

Charlotte helps Wilbur foster the ability to control himself. Though Charlotte dies at the fair, Wilbur bears his sorrow and safely carries her sac in his mouth back home. Until the eggs hatch, Wilbur takes as good a care of the eggs as Fern and Charlotte took of him. Wilbur now does not fear death and understands that it also belongs to the cycle in nature. The newborns replace the old. Nature replenishes itself and life goes on in this manner.

The maternal bonds between Wilbur and Charlotte provide a catalyst for development, thereby setting an example for the aforementioned modern motherhood. Wilbur’s parenting also showcases the essence of motherhood, which is not restricted to women who have given birth.

## V. Conclusion

Set on two small family farms, *Charlotte’s Web* wisely handles the matter of life and death while beautifully describing seasonal change. The main character is Wilbur, a runt piglet; he is rescued from an untimely death and grows into a self-reliant being thanks to the motherhood of Fern and Charlotte.

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33) White, E. B., *Ibid.*, p.64.



Kristeva sees human development as the semiotic chora, the semiotic and the symbolic. The semiotic chora is the pre-lingual stage, in which objectless and nonverbal communication occurs. Infants, who are in a state of wholeness under the affection and care of their mother, think of no one else. When children realize that their mother is unable to give them utmost contentment, they struggle to make use of language to specify their needs and wishes, which is the symbolic.

For Kristeva, these concepts are not in conflict; they engage in dialectical interchange, facilitate signification and ultimately assist in having an autonomous and independent ego. Because this series of procedures are constantly underway, Kristeva favors subjects always 'in process.' She stresses not only language but also speaking subjects and peripheral interaction.

Wilbur and Charlotte embody the semiotic and the symbolic, respectively, and mature together. Wilbur, who simply had fun with Fern, parts with her and feels stuck. He screams and acts wildly, similar to babies, and falls into a deep sadness. After he begins a relationship with the smart Charlotte, he gradually picks himself up and gains enlightenment by the words in Charlotte's web.

Charlotte, who has a premonition of her death, helps Wilbur and can add more value to her life. The words written by her, at last, come to have an immense importance when Wilbur strives to think right and behave decently, which also leaves her feeling rewarded and fulfilled.

Though the young Wilbur and the old Charlotte do not share common characteristics and do not seem to match well, they become true friends. *Charlotte's Web* portrays that

heterogeneous creatures can exist in accord. While Wilbur grows up, Charlotte prepares for approaching death during the subtle transition between summer and autumn. The word that Templeton finds at the dump for his barnyard fellows who are unsure of correct spellings makes Wilbur famous. When Avery, Fern's brother, attempts to catch Charlotte, a rotten goose egg that Avery breaks open saves her life. Without Templeton's cooperation, Wilbur cannot take Charlotte's egg sac with him to the barn. The dialectical relations among various species make the world stable and peaceful. All living things are born, grow, reproduce and die; this is the law of nature.

Every character continues undergoing change. Even the selfish and greedy Templeton becomes able to look beyond himself and to give others a helping hand. By commencing another solid relationship with Charlotte's spiderlings, Wilbur will lead a worthwhile life. Charlotte's babies will also grow nicely like their mother, Charlotte.

*Charlotte's Web* is the story of the semiotic Wilbur and the symbolic Charlotte. As humans are both semiotic and symbolic, its theme can be understood as contemplation about human growth based on Kristeva's notion. The exchange between the semiotic and symbolic in language operation yields depth, richness and meaning.

This presupposes that as a subject in process, every human being includes the possibility of change. Motherhood-based dialectics can thus enrich, enlarge and diversify the world.

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## ABSTRACT

### Dialectics of Motherhood-based Existence

#### - Focusing on *Charlotte's Web* -

Yun, Jeong-Mi · Lee, Soo-Kyung

In *Charlotte's Web*, each character motivates the other and strives for the new generation based upon motherhood. The intersection between life and death is directly and symbolically addressed as a component of the natural life cycle.

Borrowing Kristeva's theory of the semiotic, the symbolic and the chora, this study investigates the dialectical oscillation between the semiotic and the symbolic and the social circumstances of subjects in signification as well as highlights the features of character growth.

From a feminist perspective, herein, motherhood is translated not only as a robust foundation for relations among characters but also as an impetus for developing into a good and influential individual who embraces all organisms with care and consideration.

*Charlotte's Web* clearly shows how the semiotic and symbolic elements of each being, united by motherhood, interact and lead to positive change.

Though the world appears to consist of incompatible ingredients, they are combined. *Charlotte's Web* awakens the fact that their harmony makes a commitment to building a more wonderful place.

It can be suggested that *Charlotte's Web*, where animal characters contain two tendencies of the human mind, exhibits human development proceedings.

Keyword : *Charlotte's Web*; Kristeva; the semiotic; the symbolic; the chora

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