

ISSN 1478-0186



The
**Charles
Williams**
Society



Newsletter

No. 104

Autumn 2002

The Charles Williams Society

The Society was founded in 1975, thirty years after Charles Williams's sudden death at the end of the Second World War. It exists to celebrate Charles Williams and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive a quarterly newsletter and may attend the Society's meetings which are held three times a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at King's College London.

Officers of the Society

President: **John Heath-Stubbs OBE**

Chairman:

Mrs Eileen Mable
28 Wroxham Way
Harpenden
Herts, AL5 4PP
01582 713641

Secretary:

Revd Dr Richard Sturch
35 Broomfield
Stacey Bushes
Milton Keynes MK12 6HA
01908 316779

Treasurer:

Mr Stephen Barber
Greystones
Lawton Avenue
Carterton
Oxon OX18 3JY
01993 841219

Membership Secretary:

Mrs Lepel Kornicka
15 King's Avenue,
Ealing
London, W5 2SJ
020 8991 0321

Librarian:

Dr Brian Horne
Flat 8, 65 Cadogan Gardens
London, SW3 2RA
020 7581 9917

Newsletter Editor:

Mr Edward Gauntlett
21 Downsway,
Whyteleafe
Surrey, CR3 0EW
020 8660 1402
Edward.Gauntlett@down21.freeuk.com

Web site: http://www.geocities.com/charles_wms_soc/

Contents

Newsletter No. 104

Autumn 2002

Officers of the Society	2
Reading Groups	3
From the Editor	4
Society News & Notes	5
Forthcoming Meetings	6
Striving to Achieve Harmony	<i>Olga</i>
<i>Markova</i>	7
A Note on the Text of the Taliessin Poems	
<i>Stephen Barber</i>	18
Letters	21
Treasurer's Report	24
Editorial Policy and Copyright	27

Reading groups

For information about the **Oxford** reading group please contact Brenda Boughton, tel: 01865 515589.



The
Charles
Williams
Society

No 104 Autumn 2002

From the Editor

As I'm off to Russia (tomorrow as I write) I decided to print Olga Markova's paper on *The Greater Trumps* that she kindly sent me; the paper was read at the Institute of World Literature in Moscow last year. Ms Markova has also made a Russian translation of CW's essay *The Cross* and written an article for "Voprosy Literaturny" magazine – *The Works of Charles Williams: Christian Canon and the Space of Imagination*. She believes this to be the first paper on Williams published in Russia.

You will note a new feature: a letters page. This probably won't become a permanent fixture as I may have been over enthusiastic – publishing my entire mailbag in this issue. However, if anyone else feels moved to write I shall be glad to hear from you.

There have been some slight changes to next year's meeting schedule, primarily the shifting of the AGM to October so that we can have an all day meeting in Oxford in June. The intention, as Eileen Mable says in her notice in *Society News*, is to allow members more space to chat informally, though there will be at least one paper to give a focus to the day. We hope this will provide members who may not wish to attend solely a lecture the opportunity to meet old friends & / or make new friends within the Society.

Edward Gauntlett

Society News & Notes

The Charles Williams Family Grave

Members who have visited the grave in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford, will know that it is impossible to keep it in decent order. A very large overhanging yew tree means that nothing will grow on the grave except a few weeds and encroaching ivy. The memorial tablets to Michal and Michael Williams are marred by green stains caused by general dampness. The grave is not in a condition befitting the resting place of CW and those dearest to him.

Before his death in 2000 Michael Williams gave the Society authority to look after the grave. After considerable thought the Council decided that the grave should be covered with stone that matches well the original headstone and foot-stone which will remain in place. The memorial tablets for Michal and Michael Williams will be affixed to the flat covering stone. The stonework will be cleaned yearly.

The cost of the new stone and the work involved will be a little over £1,500 (including VAT). The yearly cleaning

work will be extra. We hope that the grave will be in good order before winter.

The Council felt that some members might wish to make a contribution towards the cost of the stone and its installation. A sum of £10 is suggested as a guideline but members may, of course, give as little or as much as they wish. Please send donations to the Treasurer.

Oxford – Saturday 21 June 2003

An all-day meeting of the Society is planned for Saturday 21 June next year, to take place in Oxford.

Our usual afternoon meetings do not allow much time for members to meet and talk informally in a leisurely way so, although our day in Oxford will include a speaker (Bishop Kallistos Ware) and also a second session yet to be planned, it will be arranged to allow free time when we can enjoy the company of friends.

Details of the programme will be given later but, in the meantime, make a note of the date.

This should be an enjoyable occasion

and we hope that as many members as possible, including some who do not come to the afternoon meetings, will be there; it would be good to meet you.

Membership Secretary

The Society needs a new Membership Secretary as soon as possible. After many years of quiet and efficient work, Lepel Kornicka now wishes to

hand over to someone else. We are much indebted to Lepel for all she has done and we offer her sincere and grateful thanks.

The work requires accuracy but is not onerous. Anyone interested should contact Lepel or the Chairman for full details of what is involved.

Charles Williams Society Meetings

- ◆ **Saturday 2 November 2002**
Canon Donald Allchin will speak on 'Charles Williams and Anne Ridler' in the Church Room, St Matthews Church, St Petersburg Place, Bayswater, London W2 at 2.30 pm.
- ◆ **Saturday 22 February 2003**
Edward Gauntlett will speak on 'Charles Williams and Magic' in the Church Room, St Matthews Church, St Petersburg Place, Bayswater, London W2 at 2.30 pm.
- ◆ **Saturday 21 June 2003** (All-day meeting – see Notes)
Bishop Kallistos Ware will speak on 'Heaven and Hell in Charles Williams' in Pusey House, St Giles, Oxford.
- ◆ **Saturday 25 October 2003** (Annual General Meeting – 12 noon)
Revd. Dr. Richard Sturch will speak, title to be decided, in the Church Room, St Matthews Church, St Petersburg Place, Bayswater, London W2 at 2.30 pm.

STRIVING TO ACHIEVE HARMONY: Thoughts on the symbol of Androgyne in *The Greater Trumps*.

By Olga Markova.

Charles Williams was a man who immolated mind and body in the cause of achieving an infinitely delicate and accurate balance of opposites, not in theory, not the abstract, but in *himself*.

Lois Lang-Sims

In the 1930s, when Charles Williams wrote *The Greater Trumps*, there was a tendency in society reflecting a dangerous approach to life and art. Spiritual values were being more and more levelled or exposed to degradation. A sense of harmony was becoming a fragile and unsteady, almost unattainable condition. In his book *The Will to Believe: Novelists of 1930s* R. Johnstone analyzes the atmosphere in society and in literature, writing about the attempt of the young generation to overcome the increasing absurdity of modern life, which had appeared after the First World War. The search for positive values was, in Johnstone's opinion, manifested in two ways: through Catholicism and Marxism. For the young intellectuals of this time, however, these two systems were not mutually exclusive. They were only a remedy against a common malady – a lost completeness of existence.ⁱ

While Charles Williams's search for his way in the world was conducted in the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, where he studied Alchemy, Qabalah, and other areas of the occult, it was in a strictly Christian, Catholic context.ⁱⁱ The problem of a profound explanation of the relationships between Man and the World, to form a whole picture of this world, was the main focus of Williams's writings. The dichotomies of Spirit and Body, Heaven and Hell, were correlated in his novels with freedom of choice.

Overcoming the insufficiency of *this* Being and understanding *another* Being – the

balance of rationalism and intuitive perception of different dimensions – is the essence of such freedom. Jung noted that many things have already been tried and many of them depend upon the personality of each individual. In this case it is possible to regard the problem of balance and the recognition of internal harmony as the key, not only to Williams's writings, but to modern culture in general.

In his works Williams demonstrates that everything in the World exists within the confines of the unseen law of harmony, the visualization of which has its own specific characteristics at all different levels of our being. Therefore, striving to achieve balance is connected with a sense of dissonance found in the normal condition of human existence. Almost any of Williams's writings can be used to illustrate this point, but I will consider just one: his novel *The Greater Trumps* (1932) where the writer most clearly expresses his idea of divine completeness.

Williams describes a synthesis between the mysterious and the usual, the rational and the emotional, the fantastic and the real, the concrete and the symbolic in the image of the main heroine, Sybil Coningsby. All this is reflected in the myth of androgyne and the first Christian studies on *Agape* as the highest form of love.

Androgyne was one of the basic symbols of Alchemy, ancient and medieval Hermeticism, and it later gained an expression in literature as well. Androgyne means a return to original wholeness, to harmonious and complete being. Mircea Eliade thinks that the secret of divine perfection lurks in the Androgyne idea, the sense of which can be expressed as “a total unity” (“une unite-totalite”). He, moreover, regards androgyne as the “original archetype”.ⁱⁱⁱ

The androgyne (from Greek *andros*, “man”, and *gune*, “woman”) is a creature that is half male and half female. In mythology such a creature is usually a god and is sometimes called a hermaphrodite, after Hermaphroditus, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, who is said to have grown together with the nymph Salmacis (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.347 – 388). Plato depicts Aristophanes as the author of a complex myth of the primeval androgyne (*Symposium* 189e – 191e).

In religious parlance, androgyne is a much more comprehensive and abstract concept than is implied by the literal image of a creature simultaneously male and

female in physical form. Thus, the *midrash* on *Genesis* 1:27 explicitly states that when God created the first man He created him androgynous: Adam gave birth to Eve.^{iv} It is also important to remember here Williams's habit of speaking about Adam and Eve together as "The Adam" (see his *Heroes and Kings*).

The Judeo-Christian myth and theology of the androgyny of the primal man were reinterpreted by Jacob Boehme (1575 – 1624). For this great mystic Adam's sleep represents the first fall: Adam separated himself from the divine world and "imagined himself" immersed in nature, by which act he lowered himself and became earthly. Later the androgyne, as the primal and final perfection, became extremely popular with the German Romantics. Thus J. W. Ritter (1776 – 1810), a well-known doctor and friend of Novalis, wrote that "Eve was engendered by man without the aid of woman; Christ was engendered by woman without the aid of man; the androgyne will be born of the two. But the husband and wife will be fused together in a single flesh."^v Such was the description of the perfect, "total" human being of the future.

In our day androgyny has again become fashionable, particularly in gender research circles; but they take only one (physical) side. In his introduction to the memoirs of H Barbin, M. Foucault pointed out the ironic contrast between the Romantic idea of androgyne and the barbarism with which actual androgyne was treated. This paper is aiming to show the Christian response to the myth of androgyne in Charles Williams's novel through his view of love.

Sybil, who demonstrates androgyne attributes, is of interest because she belongs to *this* world and lives on Earth as the embodiment of Love.

When the word Love had come to mean for her the supreme greatness of man she could hardly remember: one incident and another had forced it in her mind – the moment when her mother, not long before death had said to her, "Love, Sybil, if you dare; if you daren't, admit it"; the solemn use of the name in the great poets, especially her youthful reading of Dante; a fanatic in a train who had given her a tract: *Love God or go to Hell*. It was only after a number of years that she had come to the conclusion that the title

was right, except perhaps for *go to* – since the truth would have been more accurately rendered by *be in Hell*. She was doubtful also about *God*; *Love* would have been sufficient by itself...^{vi}

It is hardly accidental that Dante is mentioned in this context. Williams regarded *La Vita Nuova* and *The Divine Comedy* as the greatest texts in literature. In Williams's own writings, mentions of allegory, religion, womanhood and "high" Love refer, above all, to the Italian poet. Moreover, from the late XIII to the early XIV century a sect known in literary Italian as "*I fidei d'Amore*" ("worshippers of love") was active in Italy. Its followers believed in the mystic power of Love, whether divine, neighbourly, or romantic. J. Papini (1886 – 1956)^{vii} linked this sect with some trends in Italian poetry and with the name of Dante in particular.^{viii} The poetry of minstrels could be regarded in the same way. The title "The Great Master of Love" which was given to Arnaut Daniel by Petrarch, following Dante, could be a title in a sect.^{ix} Charles Williams, having studied occult lore for many years, would certainly have known about such sects and, probably, used this knowledge in his writings.

Love is, for Sybil, a universal, polyhedral notion. It is divine in its nature. Through love man returns to his original state, joining the divided polarities. A person who reaches such a state can unite with God.^x One of the interpretations of the ritual value of love, through which man forgets himself for the sake of his neighbour, springs from Christian ideas, including the myth of androgyne,^{xi} and is developed by Williams in his doctrine of substituted love. The accumulation and preservation of this sacred experience opens the realm of happiness for Sybil. But the break-through to divine lightness and the recognition of the completeness of Being only comes to her after a long time.

Days of pain and nights of prayer had passed while her lonely soul escaped; innocent joys as well as guilty hopes had been starved. There had been a time when the natural laughter that attended on her natural intelligence had been hushed, when her brother had remarked that "Sybil seemed very mopy". She had

been shocked when she heard this by a sense of her disloyalty, since she believed enjoyment to be a debt which every man owes to his fellows, partly for its own sake, partly lest he at all diminish their own precarious hold on it.^{xii}

The discovery of the “debt” of “every man to his fellows” as the principle of inter-relationships gives Sybil the opportunity and power to serve love (“Bear ye one another’s burdens” Gal: 6.2).

The rejection of desire reflects the androgyne self-completeness of Sybil and, although only implicitly, her androgyny encompasses a spiritual level as well. The clash between the physical and the mental, the subconscious and the conscious sides of her nature gives rise to an aspiration for another type of synthesis, combining these different facets of the united being. The attempt to find cosmos within the chaos of the empirical universe through the comprehension of life in the wholeness of its essence helps Sybil understand her own absolute inner harmony and its place in the outer world, which has a positive effect on her surroundings in the novel. Henry Lee characterizes Sybil as

“A maiden aunt-” he began and stopped abruptly. Then he went on with a note of wonder in his voice, “That’s it, you know; that’s exactly it. You’re strange, you’re maiden, you’re a mystery of self-possession.” ... “Aunt Sybil – Sibyl – your very name means you. You’re the marvel of virginity that rides in the Zodiac.”^{xiii}

Williams’s name for his heroine is rich in symbolism. “Sibyl”, as Henry once refers to her, is a prophetess in ancient Greek and Roman mythology. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, when a dreadful hurricane throws the prophecies around the Sibyl’s sanctuary, she is still able to foretell the future despite this confusion. The same situation can be seen in Williams’s novel in the scene in which an unnatural snowstorm, conjured by the play of the Tarot cards, bursts into the house and scatters the cards. The breath of death and chaos portend the downfall and destruction of all living. Sybil’s wise love and her mediation between the lovers – Nancy and Henry – are made conditional on the androgyny of this situation and open up the heroine’s mythopo-

etic and symbolic side. She helps reunite the lovers and the blizzard stops. Chaos is changed to harmony by the balancing principle of universal love embodied in Sybil which finds its expression in love between the sexes. Regardless of the cataclysms and the chaos, the characters regain the desire to love and can return to the original completeness of life. The Tarot cards here become both a representation of the forces of the universe and an incarnation of love.

The German theologian F. von Baader (1765 – 1841) thought that “the aim of marriage as a sacrament is the restoration of the celestial or angelic image of man as he should be.” Sexual love should not be confused with the instinct of reproduction; its true function is “to help man and woman to integrate internally the complete human image, that is to say the divine and original image.”^{xiv} In this sense, Sybil’s androgyne nature is projected onto the relationship of her niece and her niece’s fiancé, giving a hue of sacrality to their feelings. A search for reunion with a beloved “part of the whole” permits reconstruction of the original state of the world, before one individual was split into two. This is another aspect of androgyne: the wholeness and absoluteness of being before the Fall.

By giving Sybil high spiritual qualities Williams contests the traditional Christian point of view that limits woman with only material substance. His heroine exists on an axis of dichotomy between the material and non-material dimensions. The phrase “that rides in the Zodiac” used to describe her, can be interpreted both figuratively and concretely; both as an astral journey and as daily existence, because the word “zodiac” carries the figurative meaning of ‘circle of days’. Moreover, in his essay “The Index of the Body” Williams writes about “the houses of the Zodiac” exhibiting “the mystery by which spirit becomes flesh, without losing spirit.”^{xv} As Virgil’s Sibyl accompanied Aeneas in the Kingdom of Death, Williams’s Sybil is able to overcome death by means of love.

The ontological conflict of *The Greater Trumps* is intensified by Sybil’s antipode – Joanna. Her lack of spiritual experience and her mental bankruptcy balance the portrayal of these two characters. Joanna’s life has failed.

“She married a man who was reckoned knowledgeable, but he led

an evil life and he was a plaything compared to Joanna. She longed to adore him, and she could only mock at him and herself. Yet she was fierce for him after the flesh, she made him her child's father and hated him for his feebleness. She would strike and taunt him while the child was in her womb – for love and anger and hate and scorn and fear. The child was a seven-months' child and it died. [...] But Joanna, when she heard that the child was dead, screamed once and her face changed, and the Tarot cards that she sought (as we have all done), and the myth of gods that she studied, and the child that should have been a lord of power and was instead a five-hours-old body of death – these tangled themselves in her brain for ever; and for fifty years she has sought the thing that she calls Osiris because it dies and Horus because it lives...^{xxvi}

Joanna's search for Osiris, her striving to find wholeness, expresses her unconscious thirst for eternal harmony: in Egyptian mythology Osiris and Isis rule together in a period of stability and happiness. Joanna, however, cannot attain such happiness and peace. Since she has no idea of what true love is she is subjected to the power of destructive Eros. The Russian philosopher B. P. Vysheslavtsev (1877 – 1954) deemed that “for a person who prefers death to life, all sensible reasons and enchantments of life are lost [...] The strivings of perverted Eros are negative values. Perverted Eros is always a malady, pathology (an approach to non-existence), but with such a character, that becomes a fault.”^{xxvii}

While the characters see Sybil as a saint, they view Joanna as insane. If Sybil sinks in her understanding of Universal Love, Joanna embodies the process of the conscious destruction of any kind of love. As a result she engenders a “homelessness complex” and is highly aggressive to everyone and to herself. The inner world of the character (her microcosm) is deformed. Sybil's vital energy and poly-coloured ego forms one side of the opposition created by Williams; the other side is the necrophile weakness and dull ego of Joanna. The latter's problem is that she is locked within the circle of her physical world and is a prisoner to the power of her libido: her aspiration was lured away by a physical inclination, even an obsession, to pos-

sess and subordinate another. Joanna comprehended the world through the satisfaction of her desires, so the world rejected her and her life descended into conflict and tragedy.

The ‘child’ that Joanna sought is rooted in the study of a “mystery of union” (mysterium coniunctionis^{xviii}) in alchemy, and also serves to express the idea of androgyne in the novel. Alchemists believed that the result of a union between Mercury (a female symbol) and Sulfur (a male symbol) would be a child (often bisexual, androgyne) associated with a state of harmony and a return to the original completeness of being.^{xix} We can see the same in Charles Williams’s novel. After the snowstorm (that might be regarded on a symbolic level as people’s passions, which can lead them to spring to their deaths) was calmed, Joanna finally found peace and rest.

“She has found her child.”

“Has she?” Mr. Coningsby said. “Where?” [...]

“She thinks Nancy is her child,” Sybil said.

[...]

“But...but, I mean, what about the age?” [...]

“She’s looking at something immortal,” Sybil said. “Age...” She delicately shrugged it away.

[...] “But,” he began again, and suddenly remembered a single simple fact,

“but I thought her child was a *boy*. I’m sure someone told me it was a boy.

She doesn’t think Nancy’s a boy does she? Don’t you mean Henry?”

“No,” Sybil said, “I mean Nancy. I don’t think it much matters about girl or boy. She thought her child was Messiah.”^{xx}

In this single discreet image of Joanna, Williams manages to encode a secret of human nature, of which the union between spirit and body and the androgyne nature of Messiah in this novel are a model. This includes the Nancy/Joanna relationship. As Dr. Charles Huttar notes, in the theme of apocalypse “looming” in the magical snowstorm, “only the sacrificial acts of Nancy Coningsby [...] can evoke the divine power which rescues the world.”^{xxi}

Joanna's search for "something immortal", in other words: for eternal life, can be regarded as the idea of salvation by means of rejoining the two opposites intrinsic to one being. This is the intersection of the eschatological theme and the theme of salvation in *The Greater Trumps*. The symbol of androgyne becomes immortality, because androgyne includes within itself both the creative power of being and its fore-essence. To reconstruct the lost harmony in herself, Joanna needed a whole life. The child, which she eventually finds is the completeness that she was striving for, helping her to overcome earthly attraction and her physical dependence on it, and confirming her co-participation in the eternal nature of the world.

From this point of view, the problem of the interrelationship between spirit and body unfolds against a background of cosmos. This, seen in the reverse perspective, is reflected in one character, permitting Williams to show the theme of universal love more completely by projecting the macrocosm into a single person.

In his book *Shadows of Heaven*, Gunnar Urang considers the ontology of love in Williams's novels. He says that "right knowledge of the great Principles of things is possible by friendship and love; that whereas much is possible to a man in solitude, some things – especially that 'balance' which includes the virtues of humility and lucidity – are possible only in companionship."^{xxii} So, with Sybil's help, the characters of the novel learn that true love is substitution and, through it, salvation (Joanna accepts Nancy in place of both her dead son and his temporary replacement, Stephen. This change in Joanna's response to Nancy suggests the possibility that she will start to move toward the upward path of sacred love).

The theme of the redeeming power of Love, studied by Charles Williams, gives his novel modern yet classic fulfilment. Contrary to post-modern ideas about the age of lost innocence, when a declaration of love is perceived as someone's quotation,^{xxiii} in *The Greater Trumps* Williams states the opposite, because "he has come out on the other side of our present confusions and agonies, and found that dimension of existence where intelligence and the heart serve each other, and where love is all [...] because human love is never all there is."^{xxiv}

© Olga Markova, 2002

Endnotes

-
- i Johnstone, R. (1982) *The Will to Believe: Novelists of 1930s*. OUP p3.
- ii Coloumbe, Ch A.(1995) ‘Hermetic Imagination’. *Proceedings of the J. R.R. Tolkien Conference 1992*. The Mythopoieic Press p 347.
- iii Eliade, M. (1995) *Mephistopheles et l’androgyné*. Gallimard.
- iv *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (1987) Vol. I, Macmillan, New York p 277.
- v *Ibid* p 279.
- vi Williams, Charles (1976) *The Greater Trumps* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan pp 124 – 125.
- vii Papini was an Italian writer and translator, follower of Nietzsche’s philosophy and later convert to Catholicism.
- viii Eliade, Mircea (1998) *Asian Alchemy* p 552.
- ix Gekertorn, C. W. (1995) *Secret Societies of all centuries and countries*. TERRA p 100.
- x See Krappe A. Haggerty *The Birth of Eve*. Gaster Anniversary Volume pp 312 – 313.
- xi Eliade, Mircea (1998) *Asian Alchemy* p 318.
- xii *The Greater Trumps* p 124.
- xiii *Ibid* pp 53 – 54.
- xiv *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (1987) Vol I. Macmillan, New York p 279.
- xv *Charles Williams Selected Writings* ed. Ridler, A. (1961) OUP p 116.
- xvi *The Greater Trumps* pp 33 – 34.
- xvii Vysheslavtsev B. P. (1994) *Ethic of Transfigured Eros* p 54.
- xviii cf Jung, C. G. *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (Collected Works Vol 14).
- xix Eliade, Mircea (1998) *Asian Alchemy* p 503.
- xx *The Greater Trumps* p 230.
- xxi Huttar, C. (2001) ‘Myths of the End Time in Charles Williams’s Fiction.’ Charles Williams Society Newsletter No. 98 p 11.
- xxii Urang, Gunnar (1971) *Shadows of Heaven* SCM p 55.
- xxiii See Umberto Eco: “‘I love you madly.’ He said self-consciously”. *The Fontana Post-modernism Reader*, Anderson, T. L. (ed.) (1996).
- xxiv Walsh, Chad. (1974) ‘Charles Williams and Contemporary Mutation of Consciousness’ *Myth, Allegory, and Gospel* Minneapolis p 77.
-

A NOTE ON THE TEXT OF THE TALIESSIN POEMS

By Stephen Barber

In ‘The Coming of Palomides’, Palomides describes his journey to Britain, following the route travelled earlier by Julius Caesar. Lines 30-2 read:

I too from Portius Iccus forth
sailing came to the Logrian land:
there I saw an outstretched hand.

The ‘Logrian land’ is Logres, Arthurian Britain, but what or where is Portius Iccus? In the language of textual criticism it is a *vox nihili*, a nonsense word. There is no Latin word Portius and no place called Iccus. If Williams had looked up the place from which Julius Caesar set sail in R.G. Collingwood’s *History of Roman Britain* (OUP 1936), a book we know he used (*The Figure of Arthur*, 8), he would have found it given simply as Boulogne. However, he wanted the Latin, which he could have found in Caesar’s own account in *de bello Gallico*, the *Gallic War*. This names the place twice (5.2 and 5) as Portus Itius. (Williams could have consulted the Loeb Library edition, edited with translation by H. J. Edwards (Heinemann, 1917, 234 and 238).) Portus is the normal Latin word for port or harbour. Lewis and Short’s large *Latin Dictionary* (OUP, 1879), the then standard work, gives no direct translation of Itius but gives Iccius as an alternative form. I think it is evident that Williams meant to write Portus Iccius. Unfortunately, neither his other reference to Caesar’s expedition (*The Figure of Arthur*, 80), nor the earlier version of this poem (Dodds’s edition, 179), mentions the place.

How did this mistake arise? Williams looked the place up but inadvertently transposed the letter ‘i’ when he came to write it in the poem. When it came to reading the proofs, there may have been no proof reader other than himself, as *Taliessin through Logres* was published by the Oxford University Press, for which he worked. Writers notoriously find it difficult to correct their own proofs, as they

read what they expect to see rather than what is there, and they are not always reliable or consistent about details of spelling. Yeats relied heavily on a proof reader at his publisher, and there are problems in the text of Eliot's poems, although he, like Williams, worked for the company that published them.

In fact there is other evidence of oversights by Williams in the text of the Taliessin poems. The name Blanchefleur, derived from Chretien's Blancheflor, is spelled thus throughout *Taliessin through Logres* (seven mentions) and also in his early *Notes on the Arthurian Myth* reprinted in *The Image of the City*. He then seemed to change his mind after he renamed her Dindrane (*Arthurian Torso* 138). For its one occurrence in *The Region*, which was not first published by OUP, it is Blanchfleur without the first 'e'. Similarly in the unfinished and so unrevised *Figure of Arthur*, it is Blanchfleur five times (63 and four times on 69). Similarly he wavered among P'o-lu (two references), P'o-Lu (one reference, also his *Notes for C. S. Lewis*) in *Taliessin through Logres*, and P'o-l'u (five references in *The Region*, one of them in the *Preface*). These inconsistencies are trivial in themselves, but demonstrate Williams's oversights. Another is more important, indeed a crux. It concerns the name Cradlemas, which occurs three times in 'The Calling of Arthur'. In his *Notes for C. S. Lewis* Williams writes: 'Yes. The name was meant for Cradlement; that was a pure slip'. Lewis must have queried Cradlemas, as a departure from Malory's Cradelment [*sic*, Malory I. 14, Caxton's text]. Given these oversights, it is not surprising that Williams overlooked Portius Iccus. I am more surprised that C. S. Lewis did not query it, but the place is not significant in the symbolic geography of the poems. Neither Arthurian volume was reprinted in Williams's lifetime, so he did not have the opportunity to correct the text.

What is to be done? Williams's own copies of the poems, or Lewis's annotated copies, may turn up, or there may be references in Williams's letters, which resolve these issues. Otherwise, a future textual editor will have to make some decisions. Some editors pride themselves on preserving authors' original mistakes, but I think a more constructive approach is to print, wherever possible, what the author meant, if we can be sure what it is. Williams himself frequently insisted on the importance of accuracy, for example: 'accuracy is fruitfulness – it is the first law of the spiritual life' (*Figure of Beatrice*, 155). (Readers of *Descent into*

Hell will remember Wentworth and the shoulder-knots.) Taking the most trivial issue first, it would be sensible to regularize the spelling of both *Blanchefleur* and *P'o-l'u* thus, in each case to the better attested form, which in the case of *Blanchefleur* is also the more logical. I also believe Williams would have wanted *Portius Iccus* corrected. Fortunately the correct version has the same number of syllables, and, although the stress is moved forward by one syllable, the line still scans. I therefore suggest that a critical edition should emend to *Portus Iccius*.

Cradlemas poses a more difficult dilemma: should it be emended to *Cradlement*? The editor must take a view on when Williams's acknowledged slip occurred. If it occurred during or before composition of the poem, for example by Williams relying on his memory which had transformed the name, then *Cradlemas* would be his preferred form of the name, and Williams would have settled, perhaps unconsciously, on a different version from Malory, whose *Cradelment* does not play a comparable part to Williams's character. Internal evidence supports this form of the name: the sinister contrast between the meaning of the name and the line 'the children die' (23), and the implied comparison with the massacre of the innocents, commemorated as *childermass* in medieval times. Alternatively, Williams meant to write *Cradlement* (not *Cradelment*) and the slip is a simple oversight in drafting or proof reading. I incline towards the first possibility, and for retaining *Cradlemas*, for two reasons apart from the issue of interpretation: firstly, Williams could have written to Lewis: 'Please correct your copy', but did not do so; and, secondly, the name occurs three times and would not be as easily overlooked in proof reading as the other points I have raised. However, an editor should acknowledge the issue, and a decision for *Cradlement* could, on present evidence, certainly be defended.

© Stephen Barber

Letters to the Editor

TO MICHAL FROM SERGE

Dear Sir,

Everyone who admires Charles Williams must be grateful to Roma King, first for his imaginative interpretation of the Taliessin poems *The Pattern in the Web*, and more recently for his edition of Williams's wartime letters to his wife *To Michal from Serge*. However, there are two points about this which Glen Cavaliero did not mention in his review in Newsletter 203, and which readers should be aware of.

First, there are a considerable number of letters for which King has noted [page missing] at the end of the text. At first I thought that the odd page had been lost or mislaid: not surprising in a wartime correspondence over fifty years old and now archived on the other side of the Atlantic. But the number of occasions when this note appears is quite considerable, and I now think it likely that Florence Williams deliberately withdrew and destroyed some pages. King does not mention this in his introduction, but when he says 'there are no shocking revelations such as certain critics savor. Celia's story . . . was in the past' the reader needs to remember that the record is not complete. We also know from Gavin Ashenden's paper also in the Newsletter that Celia's story was not wholly in the past. Personally, I do not think that the lost pages harboured shocking revelations, but evidence of private grief which Florence chose to destroy. But this is speculation.

Secondly, the annotations to the letters on matters outside them are frequently inaccurate. For the record here are some: Williams's start date at OUP given as 1940 rather than 1908 (269); Anne Ridler's maiden name given as Bradley rather than Bradby (272); 'passivist' for pacifist (295); Eliot's second essay on Milton noted as written in 1957 rather than 1947 (it was collected in 1957) (304); *The Crown of Life* by Wilson Knight mis-cited (306). Williams's reference to 'Priestly' (51) is glossed as 'Joseph Priestly' (280) rather than J. B. Priestley, and

King does not realize that Williams's 'Egon Vessley' (24) is a phonetic attempt at Egon Wellesz, the Austrian composer and musicologist who found a haven from the Nazis in Oxford. He was an expert on Byzantine chant, a possible point of contact with Williams. King also wonders (300) whether a reference to a submission by Robert Graves (209) might be to *The White Goddess*. It certainly was: Seymour-Smith in his biography of Graves (Hutchinson, 1982, 397) quotes a letter by Williams to Graves about it written on the same date (23 June 1944) as that to his wife in *To Michal from Serge*. The most surprising omission is that, when Williams quotes 'the still point of the turning world', King gives the source in Eliot's *Burnt Norton* but does not mention its origin in Williams's own *The Greater Trumps* (305). The general absence of dates and bibliographical references also makes the book inconvenient to use.

Of course the main point of the book is not the annotations but the transcriptions of the letters, and these must have been a real labour of love. I am sure we are all grateful that King spent his time on the transcriptions rather than on annotations which anyone can correct, but I regret that the opportunity was not taken to remedy these small points.

Stephen Barber

Owen Barfield

Dear Mr. Gauntlett,

I would like to give a short note to an interesting book by A. Diener *The Role of Imagination in Culture and Society: Owen Barfield's Early Work*, Glienicke/Berlin; Cambridge/Mass, 2002. There is no information about Charles Williams in this book, however, it contains materials on C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot and moves through the field of English (and German) thought over the last two centuries. It might be of interest of the members of the Charles Williams Society not only because Barfield was one of the Inklings, but because this book gives a panoramic view of the epoch in which Charles Williams lived and wrote his books as well. It is also worth to notice that Barfield's alternative (romantic) vi-

sion of the world and his struggle against dualism together with his philosophy of unity and participation (compare to Williams's co-inherence) are as it seems to me very close to Williams's world view too. Moreover, it can be considered as a tendency of that time. Barfield as well as Williams created a philosophy in which an important role is attributed to poetry and imagination. May be this book will open a new realm of research of Williams', C.S. Lewis', O. Barfield's, and J.R.R. Tolkien's literary heritage as philosophical necessity in understanding Inklings and post-Inklings literature.

Olga Markova

CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 15 JUNE 2002

TREASURER'S REPORT

Following the last AGM the bulk of the Society's funds were transferred into two accounts with Cafcash: a current account for day to day expenses and a Cafgold account for reserves; this is a deposit account which attracts a higher rate of interest.

The Society's main source of income is member subscriptions. These have mostly now been transferred to Cafcash, though there were some teething problems in that the account number begins with four zeros, which must be included in standing orders. These were reported in the Newsletter but now seem to have been sorted out. The account with the Royal Bank of Scotland has been kept open for subscriptions that have not yet been transferred, but it is hoped to close this in the near future. There is also a small income from sales of the *Notes on the Taliessin Poems*, noted as book sales below. The tax reclaim system with Giftaid is now operating, with one claim already received and a second one having been submitted.

The Society's largest single expense is the cost of printing and distributing the newsletter. This is in the region of £200 per issue, though some costs, such as printing labels, occur only annually or occasionally. The other main item is room hire for the Society's meetings. There are also some administrative costs due for the honorary officers, but these have not yet been put in hand.

For the ordinary running costs of the Society, the main issue is that of ensuring that the income from membership subscriptions covers our expenses. This it does at present, but costs of printing and distributing the newsletter are bound to rise, and we shall probably need to consider an increase in the subscription for next year if we are to protect our reserves. It would not seem sensible to have an annual increase to reflect the rate of inflation, as this would result in an awkward sum, as well as requiring constant changes in members' standing orders, so a three year increase of a round sum would appear a better approach. Members unable to pay the full rate could be offered a concessionary rate.

The Society's only fixed asset is the computer held by the newsletter's editor. I am advised that this is nearing the end of its useful life, but it will not need replacing as the editor can use his own machine. However, the Society will need to bear a proportion of the cost of consumables.

We have already agreed in principle to make a contribution to the

restoration of Charles Williams's grave in Oxford. The reserves allow for this to be done. If we also accept an annual contract for maintenance, this will become part of the running costs of the Society. Other one-off payments could be made, if the Society wished. But of course the reserves would simply then reduce, unless we were to adopt a policy of building them up from income.

Stephen Barber, Treasurer.

Statement of income and expenditure for the year ended 15 June 2002

<i>Income</i>	£	£
Deposits		2,000
Subscriptions		334
Interest		29
Giftaid		31
Royal Bank of Scotland account		449
Book sales		<u>21</u>
		2,864
 Expenditure		
Newsletter	605	
Postage	15	
Labels	18	
Room hire	120	
Speaker's expenses	60	
Transfer to reserves	<u>1,000</u>	
	1,818	<u>1,818</u>
 Net surplus of income over expenditure		<i>1,046</i>
 Reserves		
Deposit		8,618
Interest		136
Transfer from current account		<u>1,000</u>
 <i>Total reserves</i>		9,754

Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Society's Newsletter and Web site have two functions. Firstly, to publish material about the life and work of Charles Williams. Secondly, to publish details of the activities of the Society.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- ◆ Submissions should be sent to the Editor, preferably on floppy disc; otherwise by email attachment to: Edward.Gauntlett@down21.freeuk.com.
- ◆ Submissions on paper should be typed double spaced and single-sided.
- ◆ All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- ◆ Submissions of just a few hundred words may be hand written.
- ◆ The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission. Usually the main article in any issue will be a paper previously read before the Society; in most cases such papers will be published as received, with little or no editorial input. Other submissions may be edited.

Copyright

Everything in this Newsletter (unless otherwise stated) is the copyright of the Charles Williams Society. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a mechanical retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any other means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Editor.

Quotations from works by Charles Williams are copyright to Mr. Bruce Hunter and printed in accordance with the Society's standing arrangement with him.

© Charles Williams Society 2002

Registered Charity No. 291822

