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The Charles Williams Quarterly

No. 126 Spring 2008

www.charleswilliamssociety.org.uk

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 magazine and may attend the Society's meetings which are held twice a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at The Centre for Medieval Studies in Oxford.

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Reading groups

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

The Charles Williams Quarterly

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From the Editor

As this issue contains a lengthy paper by me I suspect that I have already said enough elsewhere. The last time this happened I got around it by filling the editorial slot with a passage from *The Forgiveness of Sins*, prompted by our war with Iraq. As I write this in the 5th anniversary of that event I feel it might be appropriate to do something similar. However, having been concentrating on Arthur Machen for a possible paper I have no suitable passage from Williams to hand and those that I found in Machen may be a little too sharply phrased.

This issue includes a substantial review essay of the book, finally published, that grew out of Gavin Ashenden's Doctoral thesis and I am grateful to David Llewelyn Dodds for taking so much effort over it. To an extent, therefore, this number of the Quarterly dwells – some may think overmuch – on Williams's esoteric interests and activities. While we obviously don't want to labour this aspect of CW's life and thought too much, if anyone has any further input I would be pleased to see it.

Meanwhile, preparations for the conference are continuing apace and if anyone intended booking a place but has so far let the matter drift, I should act soon.

Edward Gauntlett.

Society News & Notes

New Members

The Society extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

Paul Blair
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Charles Williams Society Conferences

- **4 – 6 July 2008** (Friday to Sunday)

Charles Williams and his Contemporaries at St. Hilda's College, Oxford

The conference will be opened by Grevel Lindop on the evening of Friday 4 July and end after lunch on Sunday 6 July. Among the topics being offered are papers on '*Dorothy L Sayers and Charles Williams', 'Charles Williams as Publisher', 'The Place of the Lion', 'C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams and Poetry',* and '*Charles Williams and the Nuptial Mystery.*

If time allows we hope also to use the occasion to honour three of the Society's most distinguished literary figures: Anne Ridler, John Heath-Stubbs and Stephen Medcalf – two of whom died within the last year.

There will also be a small exhibition of items from the Reference Library and, if permission can be obtained, Saturday evening will be given over to the playing of a recording of a programme on Charles Williams produced by Ruth Spalding for the BBC in 1961.

- **18 October 2008** (Saturday – St Matthews, London)

In the morning Stephen Barber will give a talk on Charles Williams's Literary Criticism and this will be followed in the afternoon by a reading of *The Myth of Bacon*. Full details will follow in the next issue.

Council Meeting

The Council of the Charles Williams Society met on Feb. 2nd 2008 at the Chairman's flat

Apologies were offered by the Editor for the late appearance of the Winter issue of the Quarterly. With what would be coming in from Conference, there should be plenty of material for some time and it was decided that the summer number should form a Stephen Medcalf memorial issue.

Transferring the back issues of Quarterly and Newsletter to CD Rom is continuing, delayed by a small gap that still needed to be filled. The appearance of some of the early issues would not be up to the standard of the later ones, as they are being scanned from the (sometimes smudged) originals.

The Secretary's main work recently had been receiving and forwarding messages about papers for the Conference. A problem had arisen over the Society's new website with regard to officers' email addresses. It was agreed, therefore, that the new website should display their personal e-addresses for the time being at least.

In the media, Mr Todd Brown of Toronto is planning a film of *Descent into Hell*, and has a director and (he hopes) finance lined up. Mr Martin Anderson of Toccata Records is issuing a CD of music by Robin Milford, to include a setting of CW's poem "Sleep" (from *Divorce*). Mr Nigel Sustins is issuing a set of five "Inklings Archives" CDs. It was agreed that we should have a set for the Library.

The memorial service for Stephen Medcalf and the 50th anniversary memorial service for Dorothy L. Sayers were both attended by the Chairman.

Charles Williams, Love and Shekinah

An expanded text of a talk given at Treadwell's Bookshop, Covent Garden, in May 2007.

Edward Gauntlett

Charles Williams was born on 20 September 1886 and died on 15 May 1945. He saw himself primarily, as his gravestone says, as a poet. It would, therefore, be of interest to compare him with his contemporaries amongst the modernist poets with whom he shared certain characteristics. He could be said to inhabit a similar world to that of Fernando Pessoa, the great Portuguese poet whose dates (1888 – 1935) make him a close contemporary. Like Williams, Pessoa is linked intimately with the city in which he lived for most of his life; also like Williams, Pessoa never had the freedom to give up the day job, but created mythic worlds for himself and his heteronyms. And Pessoa, of course, had a profound interest in Magic, meeting and corresponding with Crowley, whose *Hymn to Pan* he translated. Another comparison that might be usefully made is with the Greek poet Constantine P Cavafy, similarly inextricably bound up with a great city and never giving up his job as a clerk. One of the recurring themes of Cavafy's poems, that of the Roman Empire during and following the reign of Constantine as Christianity gained ascendancy over paganism, matches the setting of Williams's two volumes of Arthurian poems *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars* which, unlike most of his other books, sold out almost as soon as they were published and were regarded by him as his most important works.

However, while there are points of comparison to be followed up, particularly, perhaps, Pessoa's occult leanings, where these poets differ markedly from Williams is in their relationships with women. Pessoa never married and generally kept women at arm's length, while Cavafy was homosexual. They did not, therefore, enter into the mystery of sexual polarity as Williams did.

Williams was also an almost exact contemporary of Dion Fortune (1890 – 1946) and, progressively less closely, of Aleister Crowley (1875 – 1947), Arthur Machen (1863 – 1947) and A E Waite (1857 – 1942). These place Williams in the

context from which I have always approached him and also within the context of those who (with the possible exception of Machen) were concerned for much of their lives with the mystical and magical potential hidden within sexuality and sexual polarity. Crowley, in particular, had relationships with a number of women who fulfilled the role and took on the office within his system of Scarlet Woman, without whom he was unable to function as *To Mega Therion* - the Great Beast. It seems to me that Williams similarly required to be constantly in a close relationship with a woman in order to fulfil his role as Taliessin.

Williams was, emphatically, a Christian, but it is becoming more recognized and accepted that he was also profoundly influenced by occult doctrines of one sort or another. A few decades ago his contacts with esotericism were dismissed as entirely peripheral and of no significance. His wife even told Alice Mary Hadfield, Williams's first biographer, that he had never joined any esoteric order (in this she was being, as they say, economic with the truth).

Of the magically inclined contemporaries I mentioned, we know that Machen read Williams, I would guess at Waite's request or suggestion since, in a letter to Waite dated 1930, Machen dismisses Williams's first published novel – *War in Heaven* - as "of little value". Williams had an abiding interest in Arthurian myth and probably the first of Waite's books that he read was *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal*, published 1909. He subsequently became a member of The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross and found inspiration in another of Waite's books: *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*. At the time of Machen's letter Williams was still in touch with Waite but had ceased to be an active member of his order. Waite was working on his huge study *The Holy Grail* (1933) and doubtless scouring every last bit of literature connected with it, though perhaps he was using Machen as a research assistant to give him a line on Williams's novel. Dion Fortune never mentions Williams in print, but Gareth Knight told me she read him, and there were (and still are) copies of his novels in the Society of the Inner Light's library.

When Williams and Waite first met in 1915 CW was an editor at the OUP (where he remained, unpromoted, until his death) and a very minor poet with one published volume. He was helped in Waite's direction through his work for

the Press on the *Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*, the named editors of which – A H E Lee and D H S Nicholson – had both been members of the Independent and Rectified Rite of the Golden Dawn under Waite, some of whose poems appear in the book, along with others by Waite's GD contemporaries W B Yeats and Aleister Crowley.

By way of introducing himself Williams sent Waite his own first book of verse, *The Silver Stair*. Whether Waite read *The Silver Stair* is not certain. The diary entry for Williams's second visit reads "He came and I returned his poems. We had a long talk." When I called up three volumes of early Williams poems from the bowels of Sussex University's library I found the pages still uncut after 80 years or so. But then again, my set of Waite's *Collected Poems*, which has a personal inscription by him, was in a similarly previously unopened state when I acquired it, so perhaps nobody ever read either of them.

The genesis of Williams's *Silver Stair* poems highlights something of his personality and is relevant to the way I propose taking this talk. In 1908 he met Florence Conway, whom he would later marry. She says:

> For the first five minutes of our meeting I thought him the most silent withdrawn young man I had ever met. For the next five minutes I thought him the nicest young man I had ever met. For the rest of the evening I thought him the most talkative young man I had ever met, and still the nicest…
>
> One January night, in the kind of weather usually associated with Good King Wenceslaus, I had been to a lecture. On my homeward way … Charles overtook me. He put a parcel in my hands, saying he had written a Sonnet Sequence called *The Silver Stair*. Its theme was Renunciation. Would I read it and tell him my opinion? And he fled. I thought "Oh dear! Is he going to enter a monastery?" and wondered about visiting days at such places.
>
> I read them again and yet again. Comprehension dawned and I cried aloud "Why, I believe they are about me!" I read them again to make

quite sure.

Nothing particularly unusual in this except, perhaps, the number of poems involved: 84. Eighty four classically formed, scanning, rhyming sonnets probably belted out in only a month or two following their initial meeting. After that she really had no choice except marry him or take out a restraining order. The renunciation he was referring to – following meeting her - was of a "rash oath of virginity". A rather intense young man then, but also, I think, an idealistic one.

With reference to the number of poems, Williams did everything in his life quickly, especially writing. A friend (Fred Page) once witnessed him dash off a sonnet while timing himself on a stop-watch.

He followed this volume with *Poems of Conformity* and (interestingly given he hadn't been married more than three years when it was published) a collection entitled *Divorce* (1920). The early poems are, naturally enough, a bit old fashioned by today's standards, though I understand they make interesting theological points and, as he claimed in a letter in 1945, they are "proof that I developed my own view of romantic love by myself, and not through reading Dante."

Romantic love is of central importance in Williams's thought and life. From the very beginning he raises it to theological significance and a great deal of his output is concerned with working out exactly what the consequences and ramifications of its importance are. For instance, in the first flush of love, when one sees the other as a perfect being who can do no wrong, Williams says one is seeing the real being as he or she was before the Fall. Thus you don't project your anima or animus onto the other and wander about in a disconnected daze as is popularly supposed, but your eyes are opened to the mystical truth about the other person and in that contemplation you are raised above the common, fallen, material world and, albeit briefly, lose some of your ability to function in the realm of mundane illusion. In effect, you get a taste of salvation through being in love. This salvation, he came to realise (and justify theologically) had to include the physical body. This relates directly to the Qabalistic tradition regarding Shekinah.

The theory makes a tentative appearance in the first novel that he wrote: *Shadows*

of Ecstasy. (Fortunately not published under his original title for it – *The Black Bastard*). This book has caused a bit of a problem for some commentators as its villain, Nigel Considine, isn't really a villain at all, though basically opposed to Christianity, and its hero becomes one of Considine's followers. I think the key to Considine is to see him as inspired (to an extent) by the philosophy of Nietzsche through the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and take it from there. However, to try to stick to the point, two of the lesser characters in *Shadows*, Philip and Rosamond, are young lovers, and they are juxtaposed with the married couple, Roger and Isabel. Roger, being a poet and professor of literature (and, basically, Williams), knows his poets and teases Philip, his younger brother, with quotes. Williams writes of Philip thus:

> Unlike Roger and, fortunately for him, like Rosamond, he had no particular use for the masters of verse. He was therefore ignorant of the cloud of testimony that had been borne to the importance and significance of the passion that was growing in him. He had certainly heard of Dante and Beatrice, of Tristram and Iseult, of Lancelot and Guinevere, but there he stopped. He had hardly heard, he had certainly never brooded over, that strange identification of Beatrice with Theology and of Theology with Beatrice by which one great poet has justified centuries of else doubtful minds. But by that secular dispensation of mercy which has moved in the blood of myriads of lovers, he had felt what he did not know and experienced what he could not formularize. (*SoE* p 46 (Faber ed))

Throughout the novel Philip is forever going off into a distracted state on contemplating the eternal importance and significance of Rosamond's ear or her elbow. In the context this state of love is compared with the pronouncements made by Considine wherein we find:

> The High Executive offers salute and recognition ... to all who owe their devotion to music, to poetry, to painting and sculpture, to the servants of every more than rational energy; greater than those and more numerous, to all who at this present moment exist in the exchanged or unexchanged

> adoration of love … These visionaries are already initiate; they know in themselves the prophecy of the conquest of death. (*SoE* pp 41-42)

To which all the representatives of the Christian church can say is: yes, but "these things are so often deceptive; they change or they become familiar. One can't trust one's own vision too far; that's where religion comes in." (p 48)

Considine, the leader of a pan African uprising and of an esoteric sect devoted to ecstasy and the conquest of death, is already several hundred years old when the novel opens, though apparently in his forties. As the story progresses, Roger decides to become a follower and opts to go with Considine to Africa via Jerusalem. In this Roger is supported by his wife, though she believes him to be making a mistake. She tries to explain that she wanted him to go because he wanted to, and because he had to think of her and she didn't. She says "I just want it. And then, since I haven't myself to think of, I'm not divided or disturbed in wanting, so I can save him trouble.… It's the way things happen, if you love anyone."

Now, I may be reading too much into this, but it seems to me that the ideal of mature love between a married couple as outlined here was something of an aspiration that his own marriage never lived up to. Indications are that Florence (or Michal as she was invariably known) was distinctly unimpressed with CW's esoteric interests. It is unclear how much she was aware of his membership of Waite's order, but likely that Williams found he could tell her very little about his activities within it. This fed into the long standing position maintained by Williams's followers until Bob Gilbert produced documentary evidence to the contrary, that Williams's connection with Waite and esotericism was so half-hearted and short-lived as to be utterly unimportant when analysing his work – never mind that *Taliesin* is full of Qabalistic references and his novels saturated with Magic. Neither does Michal seem to have been inclined to enter into his literary world; he tried to involve her in a project to publish a book on church iconography, but ended up doing it by himself. One can argue, then, that all was not well in the Williamses' marriage, possibly from as early as 1922 when their son was born, and the image of Isabel's selfless love for Roger whatever he did may indicate how CW wished his own life had turned out.

But it also indicates the fulfilled state of marriage in which the couple, as far as

their devotion to one another extends, enact and in some way promote the mystical marriage of the fallen world with the divine. Generally, as wars and other disasters indicate, the connection between the two is not close, and the greater the divorce the worse life is in the world. This theme is central to Waite's *The Secret Doctrine in Israel.*

In early Jewish thought Shekinah was God as immanent (from shakan = "to dwell"), but the concept was later transformed by Qabalists into a separate aspect of God: His daughter who dwells in the world. This arises from the tradition regarding the Tetragrammaton in which each letter is an aspect of God: Yod is the Father, Heh the Mother, Vau the Son, and Heh (final) the Daughter, or Shekinah. The transcendent God, represented by Yod Heh is located Qabalistically in the inaccessible higher Sephiroth of Chokmah and Binah on the Tree of Life. These cannot be known directly by humanity, but may be perceived to a degree through Shekinah, located in the lowest Sephirah, Malkuth.

> Malkut, the tenth Sefirah, elicits a special fascination for Kabbalists. It is the vessel that gathers the essence that has been transmitted through the other Sephirot and channels it outward. It is, for the Kabbalists, the symbol of God's presence in the world and the aspect that is most readily accessible to mankind. The function of the tenth Sefirah is called Shekinah (divine presence). (Ariel p 89.)

> The Jewish mystics believed that everything in the terrestrial world has its roots in the divine realm. Since femininity must have its roots in God, there must indeed be a feminine aspect of God. This doctrine elevates human sexuality to a divine principle and thereby legitimates human sexuality. At the same time it humanizes God. (Ariel p 97)

Shekinah is the Daughter who should be married to Tiphareth (the sixth, central Sephirah on the Tree), the Son. This divine marriage - unlike that of the supernal Sephiroth Chokmah and Binah (Father and Mother) which union is indisoluble – is always in danger of failing. Part of the mystic quest is to facilitate and promote the union of Malkuth and Tiphareth. "Marriage between male and female on earth is considered one of the mystic techniques for influencing the holy marriage above." (Ariel p 97).

The man should rejoice with his wife,
Attaching himself to her with affection.
So joined they make
One soul and one body.
A single soul through their affection.
A single body –
For only when male and female are joined
Do they form a single body.

(*Zohar* quoted in Ariel p 98)

It is to be noted that Waite thought the Jewish secret tradition, as contained in the *Zohar*, held the keys to one great mystery: that of sex. In *The Secret Doctrine in Israel* Waite says "At the apex of the union between male and female – which is to be understood only in a spiritual sense – the sex distinction has ceased." But he goes on to say that "she [Shekinah] does not abide except with him who is united to a woman." (Waite p 194). Importantly for Williams's view on the Fall and the way back to the redeemed state, Shekinah was God who walked with Adam in Eden and when he was driven out she went with him into manifestation. But she resides only where a man is united to a woman. Some would argue that if a man stops sleeping with his wife she departs; but it is said that she united with Moses in a new and more intimate manner after he had separated from his wife, something that may be a justification for some of CW's behaviour. The appeal for Williams may lie the fact that part of the Divine willingly entered into humanity's exile at the time of the Fall in order to facilitate the return to the redeemed state, and the way to this redeemed state seemed most readily accessible through romantic love..

However, returning to Williams's domestic situation, in his next novel, *War in Heaven*, he goes so far as to consign the wife, Barbara, of his character (Lionel Rackstraw, an editor in a publishing house), to a sojourn dancing uncontrollably at the Sabbath of the dark forces on the edge of the pit of Hell - purely for the amusement of one of the black magicians. Their young son is also used by the magicians as a seer, so at this point Williams may have been wishing his whole family to the Devil. One critic objected to the scene in which Barbara, having had the flying ointment maliciously rubbed into a scratch, rips off her clothes in front of three men and has to be subdued and sedated, as gratuitously sadomasochistic prurience;

but added a qualification saying this sort of thing was fashionable in the thirties. It does have a certain air of adolescent fantasy about it, the loved one suffering in some more or less explicitly sexual way but being saved and restored to the legitimised sexuality of a formal relationship. Barbara is, therefore, rescued and returned to sanity and each of the bad guys gets a specific, bespoke comeuppance at the end. But the good guys suffer horribly along the way.

War in Heaven was published in 1930, though actually finished in 1926 under the title *The Corpse*. It is notable that in December 1926 Williams was complaining that nothing ever happened to him but domesticities. Williams was still, at the time he wrote it, an active member of the FRC, though he ceased to attend rituals after his initiation into the Portal of the fourth order in 1927. He had been gaining significant experience of ritual within the FRC, spending two periods of six months each (in 1921 and 1924) as Master of the Temple, working all the grade rituals of the first and second orders.

The higher grades into which he was initiated directly related to the symbolism of the female aspect of divinity, Shekinah, as discussed in Waite's *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*. Gilbert is of the opinion that Williams felt he might not be able to handle the higher grades, dealing, as they did, with sexual energy and requiring "such an exalted state of consciousness on the part of each of the participants that their working was … virtually impossible." Because of this, according to Gilbert, Williams withdrew shortly after his first encounter with these rites. Yet long after this Williams recommended *The Secret Doctrine in Israel* to Anne Ridler, so he can't have felt too badly burned by the experience and I believe it informed certain of his practices within the context of his own subsequently founded 'order' – The Companions of the Coinherence. After 1927, if not before, Shekinah becomes, I think, of central importance to Williams and in the absence of any cooperation from Michal he sought union, if only "in a spiritual sense", with some of the young women who crossed his path. But Williams also had to find room for the physical within this doctrine and endeavoured to accommodate it without being, in the usual sense, unfaithful to his wife.

The frontispiece of *The Secret Doctrine in Israel* is an illustration of "The Sacred Tree of the Sephiroth" with the naked figure of Adam Kadmon superimposed

upon it. In a letter written in the thirties, in response to a question about Manichaeism, Williams writes:

> I have disliked my body often enough … And when I was half your age … I disliked it a great deal more. Then it was merely fastidiousness; now, it is a darker knowledge. But disliking it is one thing and calling matter evil is quite another … Our bodies go wrong; they torment us with diseases and irritate us with desires. They are subservient to our minds but not obedient. But …. [Matter] ought to be the significant presence of God. … (Why does) to many people romantic love seem so intolerably significant? There are many loves … but this one shining meaning occurs very rarely – once in a life perhaps … But that is what all matter ought to be, everywhere and at all times… (Hadfield 1983 p 107)

The end papers of Williams's first volume of Arthurian poetry, *Taliessin through Logres*, are illustrated with a map of Europe – the Christian Empire – on which is superimposed the naked body of a woman. This symbolises the identity of microcosm and macrocosm as in Waite's Qabalistic image, but accentuates the importance of the body and its various parts corresponding to specific lands in Christendom: the head, intelligence, lies on Britain with the mouth at London / Camelot; the hands cover Rome; and the genitals are situated over Jerusalem, the holy city. The woman may be seen as Shekinah.

By 1926 / 27 Williams had spent 15 years honing his writing skills, and 10 being initiated through the grades of one version of the western esoteric tradition and officiating at its rituals. He was also a lecturer at LCC evening classes, covering any aspect of literature that appealed to him (often whatever he was working on at the OUP). It seems that about this time, for whatever reason, there was a change in him. The exact nature of this change is hard to define, but it manifested in his becoming more magnetic and able to draw colleagues, students and acquaintances into his own private mythology or, perhaps, impose his vision on them. It coincided with two events, either or both of which may have been contributory factors: his initiation into the some of the highest grades of the FRC and the development of his relationship with Phyllis Jones.

In 1924, the OUP had moved to larger offices in Amen House where there was

room for a spacious library. At that time, therefore, it was necessary to hire a librarian, and the young Phyllis Jones was given the position. In one version of the mythology Amen House was the Court of Arthur and Charles Williams was Taliessin, the King's poet. Initially, however, the Court's inspiration came from Virgil and everyone in it was given a new name by Williams, mostly drawn from the *Eclogues*. Sir Humphrey Milford, the Publisher, was known as Caesar and others were given names such as Dorinda, Alexis and so on. Williams wrote odd bits of verse about their doings and these were circulated round the offices for general amusement. They became very popular. The culmination of this came in the form of some *Masques*, verse plays with songs and music, written by CW and a friend in the music department, which were put on as entertainments by and for the staff (and an invited audience).

The first of these, performed in April 1927, was *The Masque of the Manuscript* in which a dishevelled creature turns up at the press and is transformed into a book. When the MS first appears the librarian checks it has been purified by water and fire and then traces a pentagram over it with a sword. The whole play centres on the tidying up and unifying of the 'first matter' of the MS and, therefore, takes the form of a Neophyte initiation. And at rehearsals Williams was insistent that the banishing pentagram was drawn correctly. Although light in tone these operettas fed directly into Williams's mythmaking and he seems to have deliberately incorporated magical elements into their structure. The part of librarian was, naturally, taken by Phyllis Jones under her myth name of Phillida.

Though they had not had much chance to meet when Phyllis first started working at Amen House, the death of her father in 1926 freed up her evenings and she began to attend CW's lectures. Gradually they formed a bond and Williams, a little slower than before, wrote her a series of poems - 100 this time – over some months in 1926 – 27. A student observed him with Phyllis walking up the road to a lecture one evening and saw "a radiance rising round them into the air, almost a golden mist."

So when he comes to his next novel, *Many Dimensions*, he has discarded the wife and child completely. The main character (arguably Williams again) is Lord Arglay, the unmarried Lord Chief Justice, and his young secretary – Chloe Burnett –

is Phyllis Jones. Williams didn't necessarily see himself as Arglay, but we know that Chloe was drawn from Phyllis because he told her so in a letter.

In the chapter entitled *The Tale of the End of Desire* we find Chloe meditating on desire and fulfilment.

> It seemed to her that all things did just so much and no more. As, lying awake that night, she reviewed her activities and preoccupations, there appeared nothing that consumed more than a little part of her being, or brought her, by physical excitement or mental concentration, more than forgetfulness. Nothing justified her existence. The immortal sadness of youth possessed her, and a sorrow of which youth is not always conscious, the lucid knowledge of her unsatisfied desires. … [she reflects on devotion] … And was there any devotion beyond the sudden overwhelming madness of sex? And in that hot airless tunnel of emotion what pleasure was there and what joy? Laughter died there, and lucidity, and the clear intelligence she loved, and there was nothing of the peace for which she hungered." (*MD* pp 50 – 51 Faber)

According to Berdyaev "The mortal void of the sexual act lies in this – that in its impersonality the mystery both of lover and beloved is smothered and cast away. The sexual act leads down into the whirlpool of impersonal nature." (N Berdyaev *The Meaning of the Creative Act* quoted in Trinick p 63) For so many physical sex lies at the end of desire, being its aim, but Williams was seeking a way through and beyond that to something greater. This aim, the intensity, the Magic and the odd sexual dynamic that begins to manifest as sadomasochism all come together and find a vehicle for expression in the acting out of the myths CW created. He wrote to Phyllis in 1930 "I am sadistic towards you, but within the sadism is mastery, and within the mastery is government, within the government is instruction, within the instruction, service, and within the service? Answer that."

Hadfield, in her first biography, published in 1959, refers to the 19th century background from which Williams had emerged. She mentions Nietszche, Freud and Jung and goes on:

> These psychological dogmas were matters for the learned few during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in the mid nineteen-twenties they reached the general public. The result was twenty years of sex, out of which we are with relief emerging. In the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties no book … could do without sex, and mostly in quantities that outweighed all other ingredients…
>
> CW was of that age, and he used the same themes. Power, personality and sex fill his novels (Hadfield 1959 pp 79-80).

They also appear to fill the man himself. Phyllis / Phillida / Celia as she was also known, was the second great love of Williams's life. Years later, in one of his letters to a follower he makes a significant remark underlining her importance and indicating how he had viewed their relationship. His son had seen a middle aged lady with Sir Humphrey in Blackwells, Oxford, one day and asked who she was. Williams wrote nostalgically: "Only she who was Shekinah … when he was three."

In the Taliessin poems Phyllis appears as Dindrane, the lover of the poet and in that context Taliessin loses her to a nunnery, which is, perhaps, more bearable than the mundane facts. Phyllis had a love affair with Gerry Hopkins, a colleague at OUP, behind CW's back. And just when Williams found out about this, another colleague, Fred Page, told Florence Williams what everyone connected with CW except his wife knew: that her husband was in love with another. Charles Williams, thus suffering from two heavy blows, had the discomfort of continuing seeing Phyllis at work every day until 1934 when she married and left the Press, and enduring his wife's martyrdom and opprobrium by night. Florence / Michal was, after all, a woman in her mid-forties, aware that she had married socially beneath her and against her family's wishes after a long, possibly frustrating, engagement (10 years). She now found that her husband had, for some reason, suddenly blossomed into something of a 'babe magnet' mixing with young women by day in the office and by night at his lectures, while she looked after their home and child. It didn't matter that he wasn't actually physically having sex with these women; it did matter exceedingly that he had really fallen in love with one.

For his part Williams had found in Phyllis something he required, both for his life and his work, and he continued to look for it, and exploit it, in certain other girls. Much of the evidence for this, of which I shall have more to say shortly, comes from later testimony of events on Oxford, but Alice Mary Hadfield includes this in her 1983 study:

> There were times of burden and exhaustion when Charles Williams sought for days to achieve a conclusion in poetry, or for an essential word that was eluding him. The rituals he had shared in the meetings of the Golden Dawn had been concerned with developing power in oneself, and whether he had believed in these or not they had remained in his mind. One of his young women students, from the Balham Commercial Institute at Tooting Bec, worked in an office not far from Amen House. Her path to her office met with Charles's every day. He walked along with her, and embarrassed her by his vigorous unselfconscious talk and manner. She could not take it easily or superficially and told him so. Here was a glint of contest. He suggested she should come to Amen House after work and sit in his room until he was free to go to his lecture, then they would pick up other students and go along together….
>
> In a cupboard in his office there was a ceremonial sword, remaining probably from Golden Dawn days. In silence Charles cleared a space and brought it out. He once called it a hazel wand … the image in his poetry for measurement or training. He taught her to bend over, in silence, and in silence he took the sword and made smooth strokes with it over her buttocks. He did not hit, nor touch her with his hand. She was fully clothed. All was in silence. Afterwards, she said he did not like it. He replied, "This is necessary for the poem", and refused to allow the episode to be mentioned. Sometimes he would write on her hand or arm with the tip of a metal paper knife or darning needle, or he would slightly prick or make circular movements or patterns, but causing no pain. All was done in silence. After he had finished he went on with the conversation as before the ritual. He at no time showed any sign of tension, pleasure, climax. She behaved as a victim, with eyes shut; he knew this and was con-

> tent. She herself thought that the writing on the flesh was symbolic of a union of word and flesh. The same thing happened every subsequent meeting, became more insistent in later years but led to nothing more. (Hadfield 1983 p 106)

We should note that Hadfield was hopelessly uninformed about esotericism and magical orders, assuming that the FRC and the GD were one and the same. But also that she specifies that he owned a ceremonial sword, because swords do not feature in FRC rituals. Of course, CW's Arthurian *alter ego* Taliessin would own a sword. But the reference to the hazel wand is interesting too as in the poems although it is, as Hadfield says, used for measurement, it is also used to beat the slaves. Michal, one assumes, had no inclination to indulge her husband in his sublimated sexual rites, even presuming he ever had the courage to suggest such things to her, which is unlikely. It may also be the case that the women who were to fulfil this role for Williams had to have certain specific characteristics (as is the case in Tantric rites) which may have been lacking in Michal. In the Hindu Tantras the physical and other characteristics of the women are described in intimate detail and it has been argued that these passages are not merely poetic flourishes but precise, almost scientific, descriptions of the necessary requirements for the female participants in the rites.

A question which has not previously been considered as far as I know (though I assume Gavin Ashenden's study must go into it) is how far Williams took on Alchemical ideas since these, as well as Qabalism (and, to a degree Magic, though he may have derived his magical knowledge elsewhere) were prominent in Waite's take on the Secret Tradition. As John Trinick (another member of the FRC) wrote in his *The Fire-Tried Stone* (1967)

> There is … no doubt that the Alchemists believed themselves to be in possession of a secret which concerned *man and woman* … as psychical and spiritual beings: in other words, *immortal souls*. … the masculine spiritual soul is to be united to the feminine spiritual soul.

For the operation of the *coniunctio*, he goes on

> A certain manner of intercourse, however, is clearly meant to be under-

> stood, but it is of a kind neither deliberately willed, nor sought, nor in any sense 'intended' by the two parties themselves. It is, so far as their own wills are *not* concerned, an *accident* – and it consists in nothing more than this: namely, their mutual conscious awareness of their own close contact. For their union itself – for their actual *coniunctio* – they have been taught to *wait* … it is something which, in a certain sense, is to *happen* to them. (Trinick *The Fire-Tried Stone* pp 76 – 77)

The production of gold (or, in this case, poetry) depends upon the presence of a suitable woman, one who meets certain very definite criteria. Waite, in an article on 'Woman and the Hermetic Mystery', says that "an unknown master … had not proceeded with the work because he had failed to meet with an elect woman who was necessary thereto." (ibid.)

Hadfield notes the change in Williams in the mid twenties even in her earlier book (1959), though she sees no connection with esotericism nor, particularly, with sex, sublimated or otherwise. "In CW's life the sense of mystery was growing. He no longer felt, after the *Masques* and the opening of the flow of power in writing, that he was … never to make his mark in the world. He felt his power, but beyond that and even making nought of it, he felt a greater power moving in an unknown direction through him, using his life…" (Hadfield 1959 p 87)

Achieving some success as a novelist he bashed out two more – *Place of the Lion* (Platonic archetypes emerging into the material world) and *The Greater Trumps* (the original models for the Tarot reunited with catastrophic consequences). It is notable, incidentally, that in *The Greater Trumps* the men are all hopelessly inept and it is the women who save the world. One may also note that at the end Nancy is recognized as Messias and so is the manifestation of Shekinah. The MS of *Shadows* was recovered from the drawer in which it had lain some years, and finally appeared. Then there was a pause before the appearance of what is his finest novel, *Descent into Hell* (1937). This 'pause' as I call it, is only in relation to novels; six other books were published in the mean time and between it and his last novel (*All Hallows' Eve* 1945) a further nine, including all his significant theological works, his study of Dante and both volumes of the Taliessin poems.

In *Descent into Hell* we find Williams himself once more, in his idealisation of

the reality, as the distinguished (and unmarried) poet / playwright Peter Stanhope, who takes a young woman, Pauline Anstruther, under his wing and initiates her into the mysteries of the by now developed doctrine that arose out of his Romantic Theology, that of substituted love, which finds formal expression in his theological study *He Came Down From Heaven*. Very basically, this arises from Christ's example of substituting himself for mankind on the cross. We, for our part, are obliged to carry the burdens of others and offer ourselves up to God to do so. In the novel Pauline is haunted by her doppelganger and frightened by its appearances; Stanhope offers to carry her fear and feel it for her, and she finds she is no longer afraid. It later transpires that the doppelganger is part of herself, split off somehow in the interaction over centuries because she reaches back in time and alleviates the painful burden of one of her ancestors as he is martyred by Bloody Mary. This practice, as I suggested in an earlier article, is more like Magic than theology: it sets a specific result to its operation. In literature the same process appears in Kipling's story 'The Wish House', though in that it isn't God who is appealed to, but some shuffling elemental inhabiting a derelict house. And in real life Williams's friend C.S.Lewis tried to take some of his wife Joy's pain and asserted that it did actually work: he felt the pain and she didn't.

This practice was fundamental to the order that Williams created to accommodate his acquaintances, who by now (i.e. the late 1930s) had become followers. The order was called The Companions of the Coinherence, aka the "household" of the poet Taliessin, and its members were, to a degree, bound by an oath of loyalty to Williams.

One of its members was Lois Lang-Sims whose memoir, *Letters to Lalage* (her name within the Williams mythos) is revealing as to how this obedience worked (for the girls who took on, knowingly or otherwise, the role of Shekinah at any rate). Lois came in for a certain amount of stick over its publication (in 1989) and, prior to that, over her revelations about her relationship with CW in her autobiography, as there were aspects of CW thus exposed that his followers would rather had stayed hidden. Any rumours of the sort of goings-on she described had previously been dismissed as exaggeration, and various accusations were levelled at her. Fortunately Williams scholarship has now moved on and the esoteric side is being explored properly. In her introduction to the *Letters* she

writes about meeting Williams's circle after his death (she never met anyone within it during his life) and has this to say about their attitude towards the esoteric.

> Tentatively, I tried to discover if Charles had at any time been involved with the practices of ritual magic within a fellowship established for that purpose, since even my own slender knowledge of the subject suggested that this must have been the case…. It was in this context, I felt, that one should look for the key to his experiments. However, it became clear that, whether or not my guess was correct, his friends knew nothing about it, and were not particularly pleased with the suggestion. (Lang-Sims pp18 – 19)

At the beginning of World War 2 the OUP was moved to Oxford, and Williams with it. Here he flourished in the company of the other Inklings – Lewis, Tolkein, Barfield etc.; he was introduced by Lewis who had been impressed by *Place of the Lion* and become a bit of a fan. It was in Oxford that Lois met him, in October 1943. From the beginning he set her various tasks, largely involved with the work of substitution. In December he wrote, apropos her next visit, "You do better every day; we will have you a terrible glory yet. See that we talk of your knowledge of literature as well as of sanctity; remember to report yourself for your two lapses; and enjoy being admired."

She comments:

> I had been wondering whether or not he was seriously proposing to carry out the "punishments" he had several times promised to inflict upon me for my various lapses in obedience. The slave girl in the household of the King's poet is lovingly beaten with the hazel rod when she commits a fault; but I was not really expecting this poetic image to be carried over into actual life, until Charles picked up the heavy ruler from his desk and demanded that I should stand before him and hold out the palm of my hand. I did so at once. He struck the palm of my hand with the ruler, courteously and ceremoniously, but hard so that it hurt.

> "What have you to say now?" he asked.
>
> I stood quite still and looked him straight in the eyes. "Thank you," I said…. (Lang-Sims p 47)

As for the practice of substitution or exchange, Lois had some difficulty . Alice Mary Hadfield was to return from Bermuda, across the U-boat infested Atlantic and Williams told Lois to present herself "shyly to Almighty God in exchange for her" and so alleviate any sufferings she might otherwise have to endure on the voyage. Lois just didn't know how to go about this and, secretly, wondered just why she should. No doubt she had problems enough of her own.

For a couple of months Williams wrote to her frequently, setting her tasks and including poems and fragments of verse he'd written about his slave-girl, Lalage. The setting of tasks and meting out of punishments for failures may indicate that Williams was engaged in training Lois for the role he required her to fill. In February she had once more failed in some way and was promised a thrashing. In the event he had her bend over a chair and lift her skirt, striking her on her bottom with his ruler as before – hard enough to hurt. He then held her close "in a strange stillness, a silence that could not have been more unlike his usual excitement." (Here again, perhaps, we have Williams being still, passive, and waiting for some alchemical process to occur.)

Lois, in later years, thought this was analogous to tantric practices. She goes on:

> Since then I have come gradually to a partial understanding of what it was that Charles was trying to do. Somewhere on the borderlines of religion and magic there exists a traditional methodology concerned with the achievement of power through sexual transcendence. This idea is not – or not necessarily – a part of the cult of romantic love in the Dantean sense, although there is clearly a strong association between the two. The practitioner enters into an intimate physical contact with a woman … without sexual arousal taking place beyond a certain predetermined point. (In Hindu and Buddhist Tantra this point is almost incredibly far advanced, resulting in what seem to us bizarre practices of supreme restraint and sexual acrobatics.) … At the highest level of all, where the goal sought is the state of unification with Divine Love, the theme blends imperceptibly into the mysticism of the Sufis and the flowery ecstasies of St John of the Cross… He once confessed … that his work demanded such practices:

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>
> He imposed also considerable stresses upon the chosen partners of these experiments. (Lang-Sims pp 69 – 70)

Lois returned home after this encounter and immediately collapsed into a serious illness that lasted some weeks. At the end of it she withdrew from her obedience to Charles and the household. This strain may reflect that imposed on the participants in the performance of the higher grade FRC rituals, as alluded to by Gilbert. It may also indicate that, as with Crowley and his Scarlet Women, the training did not fully equip Lois for the part and she was unable, therefore, to bear the pressure he put her under.

Aside from these experiments, Williams was, during the war, largely apart from his wife, but wrote to her every day. Those letters have now been published as *To*

Michal from Serge. The editor, Roma King, insists that these are love letters and that they demonstrate the lasting influence of Michal on CW's poetic and theological inspiration. Having said that, there is some question as to how far King has abridged the letters to suit his views and doubt has been cast on the reliability of the edition. Even so it is clear Williams is still having to apologise for Phyllis and his effusive over the top declarations of love to Michal have to be seen in juxtaposition with his doing strange things in his office with young women.

However, in his final novel, *All Hallows' Eve*, the hero is once more married. As the novel opens we find Lester waiting for Richard, her husband, on Westminster Bridge. Richard finally turns up but seems surprised to see her, then he vanishes and she realises that she is dead; Lester has been killed by a plane crashing into the Embankment at the very end of the war. Nevertheless it is largely through her eyes, as she drifts through a version of the City of London as seen and experienced by the souls of the dead, that we watch the novel unfold. Here we return, to an extent, to the landscape of *Shadows of Ecstasy* and some have seen it as a reworking of the same themes. Superficially, perhaps, for we meet another adept of dark arts who has already lived several hundred years. But this man is not engaged in raising humanity in ecstasy, but in gaining political and spiritual domination. Hadfield summarises the important aspect of the book: "Among the magical operations runs the relationship of an ordinary husband and wife growing more perceiving and more loving." Here is the principle difference with *Shadows*: there is far more development in Richard and Lester than there is in Roger and Isabel; the latter are fully formed and barely change at all through all the strange events that they witness.

Maybe Charles and Michal were coming closer together at the end, even though they hardly saw one another (symbolised by the novel's device of the wife being dead). Perhaps he had worked something out and was drawing her back into the myth. Certainly he was surprised and overjoyed when he found she had been reading *Taliessin*. Perhaps he had managed to regain the divine vision originally experienced through his love for her as it burst out in those 84 sonnets written so long before. And just possibly, rather than through the training of other women, he found that Shekinah had dwelt in Michal all along and he need only have been still and realized this. Possibly, but whatever the case, the greater forces working

through him may also have worked themselves out. He was busy in his office in Oxford on VE day, but the next day he fell ill; a couple of days later it became apparent that his condition was serious; he was admitted to hospital and Michal was sent for; and on 15 May 1945 he died: - a reflection of the opening of *All Hallows' Eve*.

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Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration
by the Reverend Dr. Gavin Ashenden:

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A Review Essay By

David Llewellyn Dodds

A new period in Williams scholarship began thirty years ago with the publication of Humphrey Carpenter's *The Inklings*.[1] While I fear I am not sufficiently master of all articles and academic dissertations up to 1978 to speak categorically, I hope I am accurate in saying that *The Inklings* was the first work published since Anne Ridler's masterly introduction to her selection, *The Image of the City* (1958), and Alice Mary Hadfield's much fuller *Introduction to Charles Williams* (1959), not only to offer new interpretations of Williams and his work, but to make extensive use of primary material and of personal reminiscences of those who knew him, and to bring important new facts to light for a broad public, in doing so. New, too, was that, unlike Mrs. Hadfield and Mrs. Ridler, Carpenter was not personally acquainted with Williams, and not (if I may so express it) in the same sense a guardian of his memory or champion of his works. Among the matters brought out of high seclusion was Williams's relationship with Phyllis Jones.

The following major contribution to this new period was Mrs. Hadfield's new book (of 1983) grown (as she put it) "from the old one" thanks to "very much new material". In it she revealed to the world that Williams, long after his formal 'secret society' membership was ended, was a practising magician (though not precisely in those words: p.106). The same year saw the first accurate account of Williams's relations with A.E. Waite and his membership in the latter's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (F.R.C.), in R.A. Gilbert's *The Golden Dawn: Twilight of the Magicians*. (Also important is his biography, *A.E.Waite: Magician of Many Parts*, which followed in 1987.)

Letters to Lalage: The Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims, with her commentary and an introduction by Glen Cavaliero (1989) – the first edition of any of his letters to be published – gives us a good deal of further acquaintance

with the "more problematical aspects of his personal life", not least the magical practices he continued to his last year.

In his commentary on Williams's late Arthurian poems in *Arthurian Torso* (1948), C.S. Lewis had pointed out the importance of a knowledge of the Kabbalistic Sephirotic Tree to an understanding of Williams's poems – but had then said no more about it! Dr.Roma King's *The Pattern in the Web* (1990) was, I believe, the first book to essay giving detailed attention to Williams's use of "occult lore" and imagery – something he continued in his contribution to *The Rhetoric of Vision* collection of essays edited by Charles Huttar and Peter Schakel (1996); his extensive selection of Williams's wartime letters to his wife, *To Michal from Serge* (2002), is, by its making such a body of primary material available, yet another major contribution to this new period. Mrs. Hadfield's edition of Williams's first major prose work, *Outlines of Romantic Theology*, finished in 1925 but only published in 1990, also deserves mention here. Of books (like Humphrey Carpenter's) casting a wider net, *The Magical World of the Inklings* (1990) by 'Gareth Knight' ought not to go unmentioned. As I am not attempting an exhaustive historical survey, I probably run the greater risk of serving vanity more than mere accuracy by concluding it with a reference to two lesser known articles of my own in which I also draw on new material in attempting new interpretation, "Magic in the Myths of J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams" in the *Inklings Jahrbuch* 10 (1992) and my contribution on Williams (considered especially as a novelist) in volume 153 of *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1995).

Nonetheless, such a survey, noting many of the major landmarks of this period making new material available and/or attempting to take account of it, especially with reference to Williams considered as (in one sense or another) an "occult writer" and to the interrelations of the "more problematical aspects of his personal life" with his work and thought, is the appropriate setting from which to approach the Reverend Dr. Gavin Ashenden's book, C*harles Williams: Alchemy and Integration*. (The binding, which might surely be described as porphyry, embossed with "Percivale's" silver in twy-form and trine figures, seems too happy to be fortuitous.) In his "Introduction", Dr. Ashenden observes that the "questions that arose from his immersion in Rosicrucian and hermetic culture and

ideology remain provocatively unexplored." He has allowed himself to be provoked to take up the challenge and undertake that exploration, in, if I am not mistaken, the first book devoted to it.[2] One has only to imagine attempting something of the scope, complexity, and care both to the architecture of exposition and to detail, oneself, to admire humbly and heartily his accomplishment. Especially when one considers that his book, very appropriately, further "attempts to relate these elements to the unpublished letters to his platonic lover, 'Celia', written toward the end of his life."

For, prominent among other important things, Dr. Ashenden's book (in its tenth and final chapter, more than 40 pages in length) presents, and analyzes, new primary materials: a number of letters written by Williams to Phyllis Jones between 1938 and 1943 which she had kept secret from Mrs. Hadfield, however generously and candidly she had helped her otherwise while she was writing *Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work* (1983),[3] and also quite a number of poems from the unpublished "Century of Poems for Celia" Williams wrote for and to Jones in the late 1920s, with, so far as I know, the fullest consideration of any of these poems published to date.[4] In the process Dr. Ashenden makes a careful case for re-dating the chronology of certain important events in Williams's life. But the ambition of the chapter is not slight: its "central task", writes Dr.Ashenden, "will be to analyze the hermetic influence that functioned to give coherence to Williams's pattern of thinking in mythical terms" (p. 189). Readers so fortunate as to be familiar with the version of this chapter read to the Society in June 2001 and published in *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter*, No. 102 (Spring 2002) and No. 103 (Summer 2002), will be interested to learn that while the substance might be described as the same, it has clearly been carefully revised in detail, and includes significant additions – for example, an extensive footnote drawing on an interview with Joan Wallis (n. 69, pp. 264-65). Such interviews, not least with the late Phyllis Jones McDougall, but also, for instance, with R.A. Gilbert, are a further source of new information, in addition to unpublished writings of Williams.[5]

Dr. Ashenden devotes his first three chapters (filling fifty-five pages) largely to A.E. Waite, his work and thought, and to Williams's relationship with him and (possible) debts to them. His emphatic, detailed attention to Williams's member-

ship in the F.R.C., is, even after all that R.A. Gilbert has written on the subject, as Dr. Ashenden makes clear, far from superfluous.[6] In his second chapter, he quotes extensively and very interestingly from Waite's "The Hidden Life of the Rosy Cross – The Ceremony of Consecration on the Threshold of Mystery", provided by Mr. Gilbert. In the context of another quotation from Waite, Dr. Ashenden aptly observes, "As so often in esoteric literature, there is as much obscurity as clarity"(p. 46). His extensive wrestling (so to call it) with Waite's works, especially in his third chapter, "The Q'abalah, *The Secret Doctrine in Israel*, and the Influence of A.E. Waite" strikes one who has read what seems like lots of Waite with a feeling of very varied success, as admirable and fruitful, though, not surprisingly, much obscurity remains. (I would not have objected if he had occasionally speculated more boldly still, in the face of Waite's tantalizing obscurity, but that is not something one can demand of a scholar: his caution here is, in fact, admirable.) In these first chapters, he also ventures further into the earlier and broader history of hermeticism, Q'abalism,[7] and Rosicrucianism, followed by that of alchemy (and, as a section heading puts it, "The Language of Alchemical Transmutation in Williams") in chapter five, while in chapter six, "The Goetic, Theurgic, and Wisdom Traditions", he considers, in further comparison with Waite's, Williams's own attention to some of the history and nature of these and other things in *Witchcraft* (1941), and in chapter seven looks (as he summarizes it) "at conceptual influences from the Q'abalah that find a voice in his essays".[8]

I so enjoyed Dr. Ashenden's detailed reading of *Shadows of Ecstasy* and *War in Heaven* as part of chapter five, "Alchemy as Metanarrative", and *Descent into Hell* and *All Hallows' Eve* in chapter eight, "The Second Phase of Maturation", that, when I reflect on his words at the outset, "Sadly it is outside the scope of this book to work through each novel in close detail" (p. 84), I find 'sadness' an apt word for what I feel: I would gladly have heard more. Even for someone very familiar with the novels, these chapters might prove an intellectual correlative of 'slow food' (which is, I think, no bad thing: readers completely unfamiliar with these novels could do worse than taking their time going back and forth between reading them and nibbling away at these chapters as a sort of (partial) commentary). To enjoy heartily is not, of course, to say 'to agree thoroughly'. I feel very much 'in discussion', even fairly constantly (and fruitfully) with Dr. Ashenden's

readings.[9]

Dr. Ashenden writes that the novels "offer an opportunity to chart the ideological evolution of the development of Williams's schema from the Rosicrucian world-order of Waite, with its notions of gnostic adeptship and alchemical aspiration, to a wider and more mature Doctrine of Correspondence that Williams names co-inherence" (p. 84). If I had a general cautionary note to add in this context, it would be that I do not think we know enough about the composition history of the individual novels, and especially of *Shadows of Ecstasy* and *Descent into Hell*, to speak too positively about the details of their exhibition of the development of Williams's thought between August 1925 and September 1937, or January 1945. It gives me pause, for example, to think that Williams delivered the finally (much-) revised form of *Shadows of Ecstasy* to Gollancz on 28 July 1932 and was already writing *Descent into Hell* in August 1933. (While we are on the subject, Mrs. Hadfield had access to the Gollancz archives: has anyone looked into them since 1983? – all my attempts at correspondence to that end failed! Sarah E. Thomson read a very interesting paper at Mythcon 32 (in August 2001), "Preparing for Descent", about two draft versions of *Descent into Hell* which survive in the Wade Center collection, from a stage at which the novel featured a Mr. Samiel, folklorist, spiritual healer - and drug-peddler, who is more emphatically active as a magician in the plot than Lily Sammile is in the final version (e.g., explicitly 'creating' the image of the woman of Wentworth's desires for him, while he sleeps): I have not been able to discover that it has been published in any form – does anyone know more?)

In discussing *Descent into Hell*, Dr. Ashenden says, "Mrs. Sammile is a practitioner of Goetia, and Stanhope a magus of the Affirmative Way" (p. 154) and, of the contrast between Wentworth and Stanhope, that "Wentworth has few features that would attract the sympathetic identification of the reader. […] He works only a magic of his isolated imagination to create his succubus, whereas it is Stanhope who takes on the role of a magus of the new co-inherence. He has elements in his character that invite the reader to make connections with Williams himself. […] He is presented as poet, and as both magician and magus and these amount to his functioning as an adept of his art. Adeptship is no longer confined to the artistry of hermetic manipulation, as it had been with Considine" (p. 155-56).

In speaking of "sympathetic identification" Dr. Ashenden is, I take it, letting his accent fall on what might attract to emulation, and so on, but it strikes me that what C.S. Lewis famously wrote to Arthur Greeves about *The Place of the Lion* -

> The reading of it has been a good preparation for Lent as far as I am concerned: for it shows me (through the heroine) the special sin of abuse of intellect to which all my profession are liable, more clearly than I ever saw it before. I have learned more than I ever knew yet about humility[10]

is applicable in its degree to Wentworth as well: one can "identify" all too well and uncomfortably with him (something underlined in the way in which he becomes an 'Adam'- figure?). A particular aspect of this to which Dr. Ashenden has helped direct my attention by his quotation of the characterization of Stanhope as "while never negligible, […] often neglected" and "everyone's second thought, but no one's first" (p. 156) and the notice he gives to Wentworth's response to Moffat's knighthood (p. 151), is the pointed contrast in the responses of Wentworth and Stanhope to such opportunities of humble acceptance (or jealous resentment). Dr. Ashenden is, I think, right when he notes the elements that invite the reader to make connections between Stanhope and Williams himself. We might add, however, that there is a further connection that would only have invited the notice of some of Williams's intimates before 1978: the connection of the jealousy of Wentworth where Adela and Hugh are concerned with that of Williams where Phyllis Jones and Gerard Hopkins, and indeed others, are concerned. The strength of the appeal of Wentworth's sins was surely something Williams knew as intimately as he lucidly rejected it, in the novel and otherwise.

Dr. Ashenden is attentive to the fact that the "obvious parallels between the figure of Stanhope and Williams the author" (p. 147) are not without their dangers. So, "the reader may evaluate the suggestion that 'when she [Margaret Anstruther] was dead she might be able to say Stanhope's poetry properly' as something of a lapse from the best standards of literary taste" (p. 148). And he judges that although "Williams is careful not to deify Stanhope, he comes close" on one occasion (p. 156).

But there are (plausibly potential) dangers and problems he does not address (at

least, not with sufficient clarity), that are already long part of the public discussion. Referring to a book which I believe I am indebted to Dr. Ashenden for first bringing to my attention here, *Steps toward Salvation* (1991), he says that the author, Dr. Dennis Weeks "perpetuates the mistake of the Order of the Golden Dawn connection and claims Williams wrote occult studies and dabbled in magic. […] It is to be hoped that this book will contribute to a change in the tenor of these misreadings of both fact and interpretation" (p. 257, n. 31). I do not know what Dr. Weeks might be referring to as "occult studies", but as far as "dabbled in magic" goes, the only thing I see he could be faulted for is the weakness of the verb, "dabbled".

To an excellently careful sentence of Dr. King's, "We do not know how deeply Williams was involved in occult studies before he met Waite" (in *Rhetoric of Vision*, p. 166), we might add, "or if he was engaged in practices Waite would reject as 'magical' before he left the F.R.C." For it is quite clear, on the basis of extant letters and testimony, that, after leaving the F.R.C., Williams was a practising magician, variously practising, modifying, inventing, and prescribing diverse rituals, nearly all involving, individually, a variety of young women, over a period of a number of years until the last year of his life, quite apart from any 'substitutions' involving 'Companions of the Coinherence'.[11]

For all his care in treating the history of the Order of the Golden Dawn (G.D.), and the details of Williams's certain membership in the F.R.C. as distinct from the G.D., and correcting clear errors on this point, Dr. Ashenden nowhere addresses the fact that the "ceremonial sword" Williams used in the (not in)frequent "ritual" continuing into his Oxford years wherein "he took the sword and made smooth strokes with it over her ["one of his young women student"'s] buttocks" could not have, in Mrs. Hadfield's words (*Exploration*, p. 106), been "remaining from his Golden Dawn days", unless he indeed had "Golden Dawn days" in addition to F.R.C. days, since the "Ceremony of Reception into the Grade of Neophyte" by which Williams was initiated into the F.R.C. on 21 September 1917 clearly specifies "There is no Sword in a Temple of the Rosy Cross" (Gilbert, *Waite*, p. 186: cf. my *Arthurian Poets* ed., p. 160). Dr. Ashenden informs us that Williams "retained his [F.R.C.] robes with him in Oxford until his death. Joan Wallis carried out his wishes by burying his regalia in the garden after his

death" (p. 238 n. 32). Was his "ceremonial sword" (and/or any other non-F.R.C. ('magical') "regalia", etc.) included in this burial?

In *Women Among the Inklings*: *Gender, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams* by Candice Fredrick and Sam MacBride (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), if I recall correctly (I read its discussion of Williams four years ago, and unfortunately do not have it to hand) the matter is raised of whether we are to imagine Peter Stanhope, offstage, also rubbing a ceremonial sword over the buttocks of one or another of the young women of Battle Hill for the sake of *his* poetry. Whatever one may think of literary criticism in the line of "how many children had Lady Macbeth?", this strikes me as a cogent matter for consideration. One might create a fictional character as impressive and attractive as Stanhope, who, as the story unfolded, also proved to be so disquietingly active a practising magician. Probably not surprisingly, we have no evidence that Williams ever attempted to do so (though it is interesting to consider both Simon Leclerc as apparent healer and preacher of love in *All Hallows' Eve* and Anthony in *The House of the Octopus* in this context). Presumably, few people beyond a certain number of young women would have found Stanhope insofar as he resembled Williams an ironic figure, perhaps even bitterly so, in the eight years from the novel's publication until the author's sudden death, or even until 1971 or 1983.

It seems worth asking if Stanhope, at least during Williams's lifetime, might not sometimes be a more dangerously attractive figure than Nigel Considine in *Shadows of Ecstasy*, precisely because of the absence of any obviously intentional ambiguity in the treatment of his character. Dr. Ashenden quotes a letter of 3 December 1944 of Williams to his wife where he observes, "Every so often one of my indistinguishable pupils emits a sudden remark" revealing familiarity with his fiction and its effects on their thinking: "such as one last night who said of symbolism in literature that it was like the rope in *Descent into Hell*. Perhaps it's not a bad thing that there is another novel coming out; Perhaps after the Prose Arthur we will do another novel and do it better" (p. 140). I am glad to have *All Hallows' Eve*, and would be glad if Williams had lived to produce another novel, "a straightforward one" (as his wife recalled his intention), perhaps "also about death" but "this time with some idea of touching on the Eucharist", as he wrote on 5 July 1944, while telling a friend about Eliot's approval of *All Hallows' Eve*

(see *DLB*, 153: pp. 327-28). But it is not too implausible to imagine circumstances in which it would be a bad thing, if a young woman came to Williams expecting someone like Peter Stanhope, or even the King's Poet, Taliessin, and found herself ('indistinguishably'?) involved with a significantly different sort of magician.

When, for example, Dr. Ashenden writes, "In Yeats's understanding of magic as artistic enchantment, Williams was to remain a practitioner of magic only in the sense that he was a poet, and poetry was a type of artistic theurgy" (p. 33), the reader familiar with Mrs. Hadfield's *Exploration* may well wonder where rubbing a ceremonial sword over a young woman student's buttocks, as something "necessary for the poem", fits into this account. The 'uninitiated' reader (so to put it) regrettably, will not, I venture, from reading Dr. Ashenden's book alone, have an adequate idea of the nature and scope of the problems involved.

At the end of chapter nine, "Vocabulary and Imagery", Dr. Ashenden turns to the lord Taliessin. He begins the chapter by saying, "Williams's reversion to explicit hermetic imagery in his mature poetry enables him to create a unifying myth and metaphysic that he developed" (p. 166) and writes later, "The poems that Williams wrote are permeated with aspects of the hermetic and occult in its broadest or cultural sense" (p. 177) . For most of the final section of this chapter, "The Hermetic Imagery in the Arthurian Cycle", he candidly relies on Dr. King's essay in the *Rhetoric of Vision* after having similarly drawn on Dr. Schneider's essay in the same volume, aptly selecting from both, and making the selections his own, for example by giving an interesting quotation from Waite's *Secret Doctrine of Israel* at length where Dr. King only quotes a couple words from it directly, with reference to "The Death of Palomides", but also by the accents he gives through what he selects and how he re-expresses it. He builds further at the end the chapter, however, with a contribution, if I am not mistaken, more thoroughly his own. He writes,

> When Taliessin claims that he "was Druid-born and Byzantium trained," Williams's own development is re-presented. "Druid-born" suggests a natural, primal inheritance of the hermetic; "Byzantium trained," the drawing of the hermetic into the culture

> and framework of Christendom, a poetic and theological art fused in a symbiosis of ancient and orthodox, each informing the other.
>
> While the strains of the Druidic in Byzantium have caused the orthodox anxiety, Williams is unequivocal in his perception that the ultimate metaphysic is known in the Incarnation. Williams, through Taliessin, as artistic "Druid" has but set the words of orthodox Christian revelation to a more flexible, accessible, and balanced tune

following this with a quotation from "The Calling of Taliessin" (pp. 188-89).

Dr. Ashenden is, I think, right when he says "Williams is unequivocal in his perception that the ultimate metaphysic is known in the Incarnation", but this strikes me as an otherwise far from adequate account. In 1992, I wrote that

> there are ritual actions and magic rites in the public poetry, which benefit the poet or magician characters by enabling the production of poetry, and being a means of visionary experience, even of the heights of mystical vision. And these seem to correspond to actual magical practices of Williams. The public poetry could, therefore, be seen as part of a cryptic celebration and even an advocacy of these actual magical rites.
>
> There is no exploration, or even suggestion, in the poetry of any dangers associated with the "art-magic" of Merlin and Taliessin: Williams's critique of magical power-seeking and manipulation is not obviously extended to this.
>
> Here is an imaginative failing – among others. In this respect, Tolkien's treatment of magic clearly surpasses Williams's.
>
> And there is probably a wilful or wishful element to Williams's imaginative failing: for there is evidence that he was self-serving and manipulative with respect to his magical practices, as in much else of his management of the "Myth" besides (*Inklings*

Jahrbuch 10 (1992), 54-55, q.v. for sources and references).

Between the time I spoke those words at the Tolkien Centenary conference organized by the Inklings-Gesellschaft in Aachen and they appeared in print in the *Jahrbuch*, Dr. Ashenden interviewed Phyllis McDougall (née Jones), the fruits of which interview contribute especially to his last chapter, now published in its final form fifteen years thereafter. After all these years, I see no reason to alter what I said then. Even now, with the appearance of Dr. Ashenden's book, the problems I noted then still await further illumination and an adequate accounting for.

While I think it would be more accurate to speak of a continuity of, rather than a "reversion to explicit hermetic imagery" where Williams's mature Arthurian poetry is concerned, I would also say that, if one compares *The Advent of Galahad*, *Taliessin through Logres*, and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, it is fair to say that, the later the date, the more 'magic' in various ways explicitly occupies an ever larger part in Williams's public Arthurian poetry, whatever the explanation for that may be. Might art be imitating life in this? We (or, at least, I) do not know enough to say, or confidently to exclude the possibility.

Considering Williams in the context of Dante, Dr. Ashenden writes, "For Williams, the second vision came in the form of a real woman, […] Phyllis Jones" (p.68), having earlier said, "The critical point in his own life came when he fell in love – twice. While remaining outwardly faithful to his wife, Florence, or 'Michal', he was overwhelmed by adoration for another woman, Phyllis Jones, or 'Celia'" (p. ix). While being admirably wary not "to force Dante's template too crudely on Williams," he sensibly maintains that "the parallel is nonetheless present" (p. 189). This seems quite just.

But a question has long nagged at me, whether Phyllis Jones as well as being "the second appearance" may not also have been the first of the young women upon whom Williams ('magically') imposed in what became an unhappily characteristic way. Humphrey Carpenter gives, as one of two things "in particular [that] made her draw back from him", "his fondness for inflicting pain", specifying spanking "on the hand with a ruler" (*The Inklings*, pp. 90-91). On a December afternoon around fifteen years later, Miss Lang-Sims was unpleasantly surprised

to be submitted to the same experience (*Letters to Lalage*, p. 47). When, in Mrs. Hadfield's *Exploration* one reads both Williams's writing to Phyllis Jones that "Tristram's Song to Iseult" "does derive from your Circassian and inscribed hands" (p. 82) and that, later, he would sometimes "write on her ["one of his young woman student"'s] hand or arm with the tip of a metal paper knife or darning needle, or he would slightly prick or make circular movements or patterns" (p. 106), the question arises whether this might not also be part of what he means by "your […] inscribed hands". Does anyone now living know the answer to these questions? Or, to consider another possibility, was Phyllis Jones only the first of whom we certainly know something of the sort? Whatever the answer, what might the background have been? Who might have contributed what, when (e.g., Waite, D.H.S. Nicholson, A.H.E. Lee, other personal or written sources), and what seems likely to be original on the part of Williams? (Dr. Ashenden's careful attention to Waite, especially in chapter three, is already a significant contribution to this aspect of the matter.) Was there a sudden initial development, or a long-nurtured waxing of aspiration?

There are many questions which may remain unanswerable, and yet be worth formulating as precisely as possible. There may also be questions better left unasked. After stating that, where Williams was concerned, Phyllis Jones "was without doubt a platonic lover" (p. 68), Dr. Ashenden adds a lovely footnote: "Betraying the prurience of our times, I asked her" (p. 247, n. 41). Of the murder of Dinadan by "the sons of the queen Morgause", Williams writes in "The Last Voyage", "their souls were glad to destroy the pertinence of curiosity" (*Arthurian Poets* ed., p. 88). In studying Williams, should we not always be asking ourselves what "the pertinence of curiosity" is, and where does it end, eclipsed by "prurience"? Relevant, too, are the Skeleton's words in *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*, about "the ruinous nonsense of the mind, / that men come […] without morality to believe in morality."[12] How problematical the practice is likely to be, is clear from the very defensibly scholarly "pertinence" of what Dr. Ashenden experienced as "prurience". And there are many among the manners and customs "of our times" unlikely to work against our negligence, our weakness, or our own inclinations to deliberate fault in such circumstances.

Miss Lang-Sims, in a paragraph beginning with reference to the "circle […] of

Charles's friends", characterized as "composed of the original 'Companions of the Coinherence'", says "I was almost universally condemned for the incomplete and restrained account of my relationship with Charles which appeared in my autobiography" (*Letters to Lalage*, pp. 20-21).

Life might seem much easier for many a grateful but critical reader of Williams if what is problematical were clearly a case of simple hypocrisy, as with the sub-Chestertonian figure about whom the protagonist in *The British Museum is Falling Down* is writing his thesis, and if the crucial evidence against him were simply and suddenly destroyed completely, as it is there, as well. But such is not the case. What we should do with what has already been published is a distinct moral problem. I am open to good casuistry on the matter, but my current inclination is simply to be grateful that Miss Lang-Sims has published what she has, that Phyllis Jones granted interviews and permissions variously to Humphrey Carpenter, Mrs. Hadfield, and Dr. Ashenden (as well as depositing papers in the Bodleian Library), and so on. That certain people have done so freely, does not imply others have any moral obligation to do so, as well, or grant a license to pry, or, for that matter, too boldly to assume or speculate publicly about certain things. Salutary in this context, is Miss Lang-Sims's observation in the same paragraph that "Being counted as one of the household did not necessarily, however, involve being privy to all its secrets. As a result of my indiscretions (if such they were) those who had never been involved in Charles's more unusual practices must have suffered a severe shock." While the Williamses and Mrs. McDougall, to name but them, have all passed out of this life, now, there are others, including spouses, children, grandchildren, and so on, still to be considered.

Here, the matter of 'delicacy' deserves attention, not least where the question of what use to make of things already published, and how, is concerned. I am aware, and appreciative, of Dr. Ashenden's delicacy, and am not sure that some of the things I have just been taking him to task for, are not simply instances of his following the promptings of a much, and admirably, finer sense of delicacy than my own. Where the mere naming of certain facts may administer, in Miss Lang-Sims's words, "a severe shock", it is no easy task to decide how to combine sufficient accuracy and clarity with fitting delicacy. Excess, of various sorts, is a constant threat, as is self-indulgence. I fear I have done worse in these few pages,

than Dr. Ashenden in his whole book. Worse still, I balk at assiduous rewriting. ("May one be pardoned and retain th'offence?")

In his paper, "Charles Williams and Magic", Edward Gauntlett, writes, "My attitude to the perceived difficulty in 'facing up' to the fact of Williams's Esoteric activities and interests is this: *What is the problem?* Perhaps simply this: people naturally indulge an interest in the biographies of their favourite authors, pop stars and so on and it is a fact that these biographies often contain details their researchers would rather not have known" (p. 27). This does not seem to go far enough, where Williams is concerned. Nor does the quoted "attitude" of Williams to Yeats exemplified by the question, "But magic and faery, and those other old alchemical wisdoms in which Mr Yeats has found interest, what is their poetic value?" (p. 28), valid as it is, suffice. I am persuaded that, in principle, it is pertinent curiosity to pursue the interrelations between Williams's thought, private ('magical') practices, and (the intentions of) his public work. (Not that I suppose Mr. Gauntlett would disagree with this.) While it is certainly not all there is to say, I think it is true to say, that obvious 'inconsistency' is not, for me (and I do not suppose I am alone in this), as troubling in his case as the possibility that Williams supposed there to be 'consistency'.

Very apt is the second noun in Dr. Ashenden's subtitle*: Integration*. He ends the second paragraph of his last chapter, "The Quest for Integration", "Since his thought and art were directed toward an ultimate co-inherence, the question of whether some kind of integration was achievable in Williams's own fractured romantic and marital experience presents itself" (p. 190). In his "Conclusion", besides very much else, we read, "By the end of his life Williams had performed his own journey of intellectual integration and achieved much at the level of personal resolution" (p. 232). It is for each of his, and Williams's, readers to judge how true this is, and in what ways.

Terry Barker has described "the progressive collapse of Christendom as an order over the last three centuries and, more recently, of its Enlightenment successor" as "the basic problem for which New Age politics is a proposed solution".[13] A main theme of Dr. Ashenden's book is expressed by him in his "Conclusion", immediately before the sentence just quoted above, in this way:

> Williams's neo-Rosicrucian culture was not incompatible with the essentials of Christian theology, rather it provided the antidote to a prevailing tendency toward dualism. Williams's journey of maturation allowed him to escape the paraphernalia of the esoteric and draw from it a means of recalibrating the theology of mainstream Christianity.

He goes on to say (p. 234), "Williams is a visionary who, far from being secluded in a hermetic subculture, becomes a prophet of potent social and political significance." These seem just, and important contexts in which to see Williams, not only of cultures and ideologies especially prominent in the West during the last 500 years (though not always widely recognized as so), considered in terms of their compatibilities and incompatibilities with Christianity, but of how his interaction with these may have "enabled him […] to speak remedially from within Christian culture" (p. viii), and very significantly so. Once again, it is for the reader to judge how justly Dr. Ashenden has conducted his exploration. If that means embarking on a vast undertaking for readers who here first encounter such things, I would be surprised if they do not feel stimulated and encouraged to do so by this book, while any readers even more reminded than instructed by the encounter will not lack for something to get their teeth into.

While I realize how impossible it would be briefly to give an adequate sketch of so complex and detailed a book as Dr. Ashenden's, much less to provide a correspondingly brief but detailed critical response (the memory of hearing of Ibn Taymiyah's 1500-page answer to Paul of Antioch's hundred-page long "Letter to Some of His Muslim Friends" flits through my mind), I am guiltily aware of how far I have failed of anything like the former of these two tasks. If, instead, I try to say anything succinctly, it would be that Dr. Ashenden has aspired to, and succeeded in, advancing both the scholarship, and (broader) discussion, of Williams's works, without any unwarranted pretensions to definitiveness. (One of his last footnotes in fact invites us to look forward to Professor Grevel Lindop's "forthcoming biography of Williams": p. 265, n. 80). In particular, no one who wants to know everything of importance that has been published about Charles Williams and Phyllis Jones can do without this book.

I am saddened by how often I find myself disagreeing with Dr. Ashenden. (I cheer myself with a remark of Martin Bucer's in a little irenical letter in response to the abortive discussion between Luther, Zwingli, and himself in Marburg in 1529 that I encountered for the first time a fortnight ago: "I have never seen two people that think just the same about everything, not even", he adds sweetly, "in matters of religion.") But I would hope that no one, on the basis of my evidently not being convinced by many particulars of his exploration, would refrain from considering his case (so to call it) in all its details for himself. I aspire to take to heart, and believe that Dr. Ashenden does as strongly, the Skeleton's excellent warning in *Cranmer* of the danger "In thinking, though it was important for you to *be* ***right***, / That it mattered at all in the end whether *you* were right" (p. 189: my emphases).

I am grateful to Kent State University Press for this latest example of their dedication to advancing Williams scholarship, as for those examples that preceded it. (I hope more will follow, as well.) And it is by no means my wish to detract from their obviously high production values or Dr. Ashenden's obvious authorial care, if I remark upon the disconcerting (light) patter of *errata* among the leaves, especially, of the "Notes". The gremlins, alas, have struck with their devastating stealth, strewing elusive, and sometimes bewildering, glitches. I mention the matter more to float an idea than even for the sake of thoroughness. Is this something worth a systematic response in the *Quarterly* and/or on the website: the regular provision of a place of record or "bank" for *errata*, *corrigenda*, and *addenda*, (or even conjectural emendations,) in works about Williams, whether spotted and offered by the author or editor or a reader, and, for that matter, in works by Williams?

For all that the last thirty (or thirty-seven) years of what I began by describing as "a new period in Williams scholarship" have brought us, up to and including Dr. Ashenden's book, I cannot help feeling that we are still closer to the beginning of that period than very far advanced into it, at least where Williams considered as (in one sense or another) an "occult writer" and the interrelations of the "more problematical aspects of his personal life" with his work and thought are concerned. How much daylight may follow this *Dämmerung* it is impossible to say. Perhaps we should not hope for much.[14] Meanwhile, however, I look eagerly for-

ward to Mr. Gauntlett's latest paper, elsewhere in this issue, and to Professor Lindop's biography, and also to what as yet unknown but by no means unlikely fruits serious, intelligent discussions stimulated by the reading of Dr. Ashenden's book may be expected to yield.

For the weightier rest, we could do worse that to begin with the words of the king's poet at the end of "Taliessin in the School of the Poets", *Sis salvator, Domine.*

Notes

[1]Unless it is more accurate to place the beginning seven years earlier, with Miss Lois Lang-Sims's autobiography, *A Time to be Born* (1971). It is appropriate to note here, too, the commentaries on Williams's late Arthurian poems by six people who knew him, published as supplements to the *Newsletter* beginning in 1977 and continuing until 1986, gathered and edited by Anne Ridler into *The Taliessin Poems of Charles Williams* "By Various Hands"(1991).

[2]I use the word "book" deliberately: I am not certain what the situation is, where dissertations (etc.) are concerned (though in some lands these are always published as books). Lois Glenn's excellent *Checklist* was not complete with respect to dissertations even up to the date at which it was published (1975), lacking, to mention two significant examples, Linden Huddlestone's 1952 thesis and Brian Horne's 1970 dissertation; I do not know whether any list of (international) Doctoral dissertations, Master's theses, etc., both historically (more) comprehensive and up-to-date, exists anywhere or not; I (alas) have certainly not managed to keep track of such works, or indeed all that has been written about Williams in books or articles, in 'traditional media' or cyberspace, these many years (though it is appropriate to note Dr. Stephen Dunning's work, here: while I visited Cambridge to read his doctoral dissertation in the University Library in 1993, I blush to say I have yet to read the book version) – something to which Dr. Ashenden's book, incidentally, provides a delightful, if partial, remedy: how happy I am to have encountered Dr. Glen Cavaliero's *The Supernatural and English Fiction* (1995) through an extensive quotation (pp. 138-39), for example.

[3]On a personal note, I do not think I could but have written my contribution to the *Rhetoric of Vision* volume differently, had I read these new letters first.

[4]Curiously, Dr. Ashenden makes no reference to the selection of ten of the "Century" poems included in David Bratman's edition of *The Masques of Amen*

House (2000) – reviewed in issue No. 102, and lists the "Masques" in his "Bibliography" only as, variously, "Privately Printed" and "Unpublished"; and, if I think of my edition of the Arthurian poems (p. 157), I must deem his expression "received no critical attention" (p. 190) with reference to the "Century" too absolute, though what I say there is, admittedly, not only brief but exceedingly compact (and allusive: cf., e.g., Williams's references to "Caucasia" in the pieces about his Arthurian poetry collected in *The Image of the City*).

[5]I do not know in what form these interviews are documented, but I would be surprised if they would not prove valuable additional sources in their own right, if Dr. Ashenden could contrive the most appropriate manner of making them further available.

[6]His statement that "only two publications", by Huw Mordecai and Thomas Willard, "accurately reflect the historical position of Williams" (p. 3) is another which is too absolute: cf., e.g., both my *Arthurian Poets* edition and *DLB* article, and Edward Gauntlett's "Charles Williams and Magic", read to the Society in February 2002 and published in *Newsletter* No. 106 (Spring 2003).

[7]That, of the many current spellings, which he has chosen to use.

[8]Edward Gauntlett is, in his Master's thesis, *Frater Qui Sitit Veniat: Charles Williams and the Secret Tradition*, (as one might put it) a very good conversational partner to these chapters (and, indeed, others as well) in his analogous but completely independent exploration of some of the same matter in fewer pages. Curiously (or simply because, unlike myself, they think it unnecessary to state?), if I am not mistaken, neither Dr. Ashenden nor Mr. Gauntlett explicitly identify Williams's order name as quoting Revelation 22:17 in the Vulgate translation.

[9]An enjoyable and valuable addition to the conversation here, and in chapter four, "The 'Two Ways' and the 'Theology of Romantic Love' ", especially where St. Augustine is concerned, there and elsewhere, whom I encountered while reading Dr. Ashenden's book, is Scott McLaren, in "Hermeticism and the metaphysics of goodness in the Novels of Charles Williams", published on internet by *Mythlore* in 2006.

[10]26 Feb. 1936: *The Letters of C.S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves*, ed. W. Hooper (NY: Macmillan, "Collier Books"ed., 1986), p. 479.

[11]There is one instance, during the war, where Williams provided a Christian correspondent with instructions for making a "banishing pentagram" when afraid, where, oddly, if I am not mistaken (always a real possibility, alas), what he actually gave instructions for, at least according to published "Golden Dawn" materi-

als, was an "invoking pentagram" – but why a pentagram ritual at all, and not a 'substitution', or indeed simply intercessory prayer – especially when one, for example, considers the prominence of the latter, explicitly as well as implicitly, in the late Arthurian poetry (is it likely to be "Holy Luck" alone, without an element of conscious authorial intention, that places Bors's impassioned call to Elayne, "Pray, mother of children, pray for the coins, / pray for Camelot, pray for the king, pray", so close to the exact physical centre of the text in the *Taliessin through Logres* volume as first published (on p. 45 of 91 pages)?)? (Cf. the very interesting quotation from a letter to Phyllis Jones of 26 January 1940 which Dr. Ashenden gives, where Williams refers (without further explanation) to "banishing pentagrams" in apparent contrast to celebrations of the Eucharist: p, 245, n. 46.) Prominent among the questions that arise, here and in general, are: Why practical magic? And, how did Williams think it worked? What, in various senses, did he mean by it? How justly might we compare and contrast Williams and Waite, in the sense that Waite closed down even his "Independent and Rectified Rite" of the G.D. in favour of its successor (and in many ways continuation), his (presumably) still less 'magical' F.R.C., while Williams, after giving up being Master of the F.R.C. Temple, began devising and prescribing 'rituals' of his own, etc.?

[12]In *Four Modern Verse Plays*, ed. E. Martin Browne (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 169.

[13]In *Beyond Bethune: People's Poetry and Milton Acorn's Metaphor for the Canadian Fate* (Dewdney, B.C.: Synaxis Press [37323 Hawkins-Pickle Road], 2006), pp. 94-95. Always a lively contributor to both the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society and the Williams reading group during his years there, and, to borrow Lewis's words about Barfield, "wisest and best of my unofficial teachers" in Oxford (and one with whom I have enjoyed 'arguing for truth' *in extenso*) , Terry Barker is here a very good participant in the wider conversation that flows out of Dr. Ashenden's book., however emphatic his particular focuses on recent and contemporary Canadian poetry and politics in this collection of essays. Though there are probably few readers who will not feel they have taken quite a plunge, in embarking on, or even dipping into, *Beyond Bethune*, I think it is one well worth taking. Considering that it was preceded by the chapbook, *After Acorn* (1999), and that the provisional title of its proposed sequel is *Continuing Chesterton: People's Poetry's Immanent Critique of Modern Gnosticism*, my hope is that he may, like a sort of political-philosophical Sue Grafton, long pursue his course through the alphabet.

[14]On the other hand, unpublished material abounds, and some who knew Williams may yet be willing to grant interviews. A list of what, among library holdings, is sealed until what date, where, might be a useful item for the *Quarterly* or

website. I would also invite anyone who knew Williams to consider putting any reminiscences they thought important on paper (or otherwise recording them), naturally with any restrictions as to availability they deemed judicious, for the benefit of future scholarship. Something I could kick myself for not having thought of decades ago, and not pursuing vigorously when once I did think of it, is to discover how Williams himself pronounced all the proper names in his Arthurian poetry: if anyone knows, I would strongly encourage – nay, beg – them to make a sound recording of them for posterity, as soon as possible.

Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Quarterly and the Society's Website 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 Quarterly are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- Submissions should be sent to the Editor in 'Word' format on disc or 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.

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