The Charles Williams Society

Newsletter

No. 82. Autumn 1996

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

15 February 1997: Glen Cavaliero will speak on "Two Readings of Merlin" (on CW and John Cowper Powys) in the Church Room of St Matthew's Church, St Petersburgh Place, Bayswater (nearest Underground stations Queensway and Bayswater), starting at 2.30 pm. N.B. There is not much heating in the Church Room - if the weather is cold, dress warmly.

31 May 1997: The Society will hold its Annual General Meeting in St Matthew's Church Room, commencing at 12.00 noon. This will be followed after an interval for lunch by an address given by Charles A. Huttar at 2.30 pm.

8 November 1997: The Hon Secretary Gillian Lunn will speak on a subject to be announced. The meeting will start at 2.30 pm in St Matthew's Church Room.

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MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

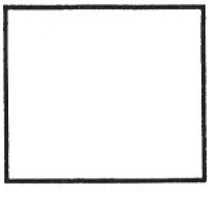
If a cross appears in the box below, we have not yet received your subscription for the year 1996-1997, which fell due on 1 March.

The current subscription rates are as follows:

UK members:	individual £10;	joint £15.
Concessions:	individual £6;	joint £9.
Overseas (sterling):	individual £12;	joint £17.
Overseas (US $):	individual $22;	joint $30.

(Joint membership is for two or more members at one address sharing Newsletters; concessions are offered for senior citizens, students, or unwaged who cannot afford the full rate.)

Please send your remittances to the Membership Secretary, Mrs Lepel Kornicka, whose address is listed inside the back cover.



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MEMBERSHIP LIST

It is planned to issue a new edition of the Society's Membership List in the new year. If there are any alterations you would like to make to your entry, please let the Newsletter Editor know as soon as possible. (There seem to be quite a few members with e-mail addresses: I should be happy to include these if desired.)

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Miss Margaret Helps, 40 The Gresleys, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire. HR9 5JN.

Rev Mark Woodruff, 143 Fordwych Road, London. NW2 3NG.

MASTERMIND 1996

Our hearty congratulations go to Richard Sturch on his surviving three gruelling rounds of the BBC quiz *Mastermind* to emerge triumphant with the title of 'Mastermind 1996'.

SOCIETY CONFERENCE 18/19 JULY 1997

Here is the latest news about Conference plans. The Revd Huw Mordecai will speak on 'The Continuing Relevance of Charles Williams'. We look forward to welcoming the Revd Roma A. King, Jr who will read from and talk about Charles Williams's wartime letters to his wife. Dr Brian Horne will explore some aspects of the Co-inherence. We also hope to enjoy a reading of one of CW's shorter plays and, by request, there will be a short introductory talk about Charles Williams's life and work.

The Royal Foundation of St Katharine accommodates 27 people, mostly in single rooms. Application forms will in the next Newsletter. In the meanwhile, make a note of 18/19 JULY 1997 in your diaries.

CHARLES WILLIAMS AND THE ALTERNATIVE SERVICE BOOK

I wrote in the Autumn 1995 Newsletter about the revision of the Church of England's Alternative Service Book and the possibility that Charles Williams's name might be included in an enlarged list of Lesser Festivals and Commemorations. I am very sorry to report that this will not be so.

The long provisional list was first shortened by the removal of all those who had died less than fifty years ago. Further names, including that of Charles Williams, were then removed because 'it was felt that these particular people did not seem to have sufficient significance to merit a place in a national calendar'. Some of you will doubtless recall the words of Jesus that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country.

There may at some future time be an opportunity for the inclusion of further names in the Calendar: if so, Charles Williams's name could again be submitted for consideration. I should be surprised if more changes were made in the foreseeable future.

Eileen Mable.

A NEW BOOK ON CW

An important new book, *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams*, edited by Charles A. Huttar and Peter J. Schakel, with a foreword by John Heath-Stubbs, has just been published (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press and London: Associated Universities Press. £32.50 in the U.K.). This will be reviewed in a subsequent issue of the Newsletter.

GILLIAN LUNN WRITES:

I visited a fascinating exhibition at The British Library (sadly now over). Called *The Mythical Quest*, its introductory leaflet begins:

> Tales have always been told of heroes embarking on perilous quests in search of lost loved ones, the secret of immortality, earthly paradise or simply great riches. Many of these stories have features in common such as

clashes with monsters, battles with the elements, interventions by the gods and tests of moral character, mental cunning and physical strength. These tales have been expressed in songs, literature, art and dance for thousands of years, and are still being reinterpreted today....

There were displays of the stories of Sinbad, Cupid and Psyche, Alexander, Rama and Sita, Jason, the Chinese 'Journey to the West' and the final section was on the Quest for the Holy Grail. This included, among much else of great interest, an illustrated page of Charles Williams's *Heroes and Kings* and a page of *War in Heaven*. I also attended a talk, one of a series of Lunchtime Lectures relating to the exhibition, on *The Holy Grail* by Richard Barber. He gave much fascinating, detailed information on the earliest stories and legends, then moved on to Wagner, Tennyson and other 'moderns'. I wish I had noted the exact words of his conclusion but it was something like: 'I want to end by reading from the poet who has done most to bring the Holy Grail into the twentieth century, Charles Williams...' and he finished by reading passages from 'The Calling of Taliessin'. The lecture hall was packed and a sort of pleased sigh breathed for a moment, before the clapping began!

CHARLES HADFIELD

Charles Hadfield died peacefully in hospital in Cirencester on August 6th, the day after his 87th birthday, and members of the Charles Williams Society, which he helped to found, must be glad for him as he was more than ready to go: indeed, since the death of his beloved Alice Mary seven years ago, he was hoping for the time when he could join her.

Two biographies of Charles could be written, a public and a private. The public one has been well covered in obituaries - I have seen those in *The Independent* and *The Times*: they chronicle the remarkably varied career he led, from his early days before the 1914 war at the Oxford University Press and as a Labour Councillor for Paddington, through the war years as a fireman in the London River Service, to the Central Office of Information as Overseas Controller,

and as partner in his own publishing firm (David & Charles); and all the time, from his first researches as a schoolboy, as an explorer and historian of inland waterways. The books he wrote (beginning with *English Rivers and Canals* in 1945, followed by the classic *British Canals* in 1950 and others till the time of his death) and the canal societies he founded, are the achievements for which the world will remember him. But our Society will remember him first for the his devotion to the ideas and personality of Charles Williams, and his practical application of those ideas in his life.

Charles owed his meeting with the two most important people in his life, Alice Mary and CW, to his sojourn with the Oxford University Press, which he joined in 1936. He often alluded with amusement to his interview with Humphrey Milford, a couple of years after he had entered the firm, in the course of which he discovered that he was to succeed Mr L'Estrange in charge of Children's Books, although he had no previous experience in that department. It may have seemed an eccentric choice, but in face it showed great shrewdness, for Charles was a superlative organizer, and soon introduced some valuable reforms, before the war took him away from Amen House.

Charles had made a youthful marriage, the result of an engagement while he was still a boy, but neither of the obituaries I have referred to mention this first marriage, and I imagine that it was emotionally ended before he encountered Alice Mary Smyth (soon to become Alice Mary Miller), who had succeeded Phyllis Jones as Librarian and as a co-ordinating editor of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. She was an ardent admirer of CW, and believed passionately in his teachings on Romantic Theology. Whether it was first through her influence, or entirely of his own volition, Charles Hadfield too became a faithful adherent.

The war separated Charles and Alice Mary, who went with her baby daughter to America after her husband was killed (I think at the time of Dunkirk), and they were reunited under the shadow of CW's

death: I met them together at his funeral at St Cross in May 1945. They married soon afterwards, and set up house in London, where their family increased by a son and a daughter, and one adopted son. Another son died in babyhood. The remarkable powers of organization which had attracted the notice of Humphrey Milford now enabled Charles to combine the busy life of an administrator and committee man with the writing of many books, the enjoyment of London culture and the happiness of family life. The marriage relationship was underpinned by the ideas of CW on Co-inherence and the Way of Exchange, in which Charles Hadfield believed as passionately as did Alice Mary. In a memoir which I have read in typescript, Charles has given his own lucid account of their marriage, and has described their way of disciplining their children - more Biblical, this, than Caroline, as it involved being given tit for tat in any transgression. They were active from the first in promoting knowledge of Williams's work: offering hospitality to those who were ready to meet to read and discuss his books, and sharing their knowledge of him. Alice Mary's first biographical book came out in 1959, and, in 1975, after a week-end devoted to Williams at St Katharine's, Limehouse, organized by Fr Mark Tweedy, she and Charles initiated the founding of the Charles Williams Society.

Alice Mary had a deep love of her native South Cerney and its surrounding Gloucestershire countryside, and she and Charles moved to live there for several years, both active in village affairs. They returned for a further London sojourn in a fascinating house near the Regent Canal, and here she worked on her second biography of CW, which was still unfinished when they decided to move back to Cerney for their final years. Soon after the move, Alice Mary's mind began to fail, and the final checking of the biography was completed with Charles's help. He further helped her to finish her edition of *Outlines of Romantic Theology*, and saw it through the press for publication in 1990, a year after her death. A last canal book, *Thomas Telford's Temptation* (1993) showed Charles's great qualities of scholarly

accuracy and refusal to take for granted accepted opinions which he considered ill founded.

This realistic approach could make him appear brusque to some people, but he showed unbounded loyalty and generosity to those whom he trusted. He had, moreover, a delightful sense of humour, which is well shown in the talk he gave to an AGM of the Society in the summer of 1980. In it he describes Amen House and its surroundings, and the office life there as he knew it. The closing paragraph gives the flavour of the whole.

'Amen House is gone now.... Only a few of us are still alive who once served at Caesar's court. Yet, when the last of us is gone, a Heavenly Amen House will live still, with Caesar on the first floor and CW on the second, to strengthen and encourage all those who try to live as they lived, in imagination and reality withour confusing the two, recognising fact, requiring accuracy, seeing through make-believe, seeking always the truth.'

Anne Ridler.

Charles Hadfield's funeral took place on a bright, sunny afternoon in mid-August. The parish church of South Cerney, near Cirencester, welcomed his family and friends, many of them from that world of canals and waterways in which he was pre-eminent. I was there to represent our Society and also because Charles was my friend.

As well as being a service of commendation and thanksgiving for Charles, this was also a celebration of his and Alice Mary's love for one another. The thought of the reunion of these two lovers was never far away. Charles had, characteristically, planned his own funeral to the last detail. The cortege left for the churchyard to the sound of 'Sarie Marais', a Transvaal song. Charles's notes, included in the order of service, read, 'As I was born in the Transvaal, I would rather like the congregation to step out smartly to it'.

I only knew Charles for a few years. When I bought Alice Mary's copy of *He Came Down From Heaven* I wrote to tell him that it was

now mine and would be treasured. He replied most warmly and so began a friendship which, I believe, was important to both of us. Our meetings were few and very good. We nourished our friendship by letters and long telephone conversations. We shared a great deal, both serious and humorous. Charles had a wonderful laugh: he shook with merriment. When we talked on the phone, he sometimes laughed so much that I would ask, only half humorously, 'Are you all right, Charles? Are you sitting down?'

Charles was such a lucid exponent of CW's thought: he shared his knowledge generously, as he did his memories of CW himself. He extended the same courteous help to all enquirers, be they Williams scholars or diffident new readers.

In recent years Charles was no longer an active participant in Society affairs but he was generous in his support and enthusiasm. He was a great encourager as I found when I became Chairman. New ventures and possible initiatives delighted him. 'Go for it!' he would say, quoting his dear Alice Mary.

I miss him. I shall always be grateful for his friendship.

Eileen Mable.

FRONTIERS OF HELL

At a Society meeting on Saturday 10th February, the Festival Players of Welwyn presented the world premiere of the three-act play *Frontiers of Hell* by Charles Williams, arranged as a 'dramatised reading' under the direction of Ruth Spalding. In a brief introductory talk, she explained that the play was originally written by Williams in 1941 for the Oxford Pilgrim Players, a touring company, but was never performed. The Pilgrim Players circulated flyers in advance of their tours to the intended venues, setting out their repertoire for their hosts to choose from, and none had chosen *Frontiers of Hell* - not from any suspicion of its contents, so far as they were known, but simply because of a pandemic preference for one-act plays. Consequently, the play had not been rehearsed for performance by

the company, and this meant that the usual dialogue between author and cast had not taken place, leaving the script in a raw state, unaccommodated to the practicalities of staging it. The text presented by the Festival Players was essentially this raw text, save that where characters spoke phrases in Latin, it had been deemed expedient to gloss them in English immediately afterwards. An alternative title for the play, apparently rejected by Williams, was *The Devil and the Lady*.

The action of the play takes place over two days, the 23rd and 24th of June, the latter being both St John the Baptist's Day and the Summer Solstice, and the settings of the three acts move progressively away from the outer world: the hall in Lady Endicott's house; Lady Endicott's garden; Lady Endicott's secret garden, beyond the open one.

Both Lady Endicott and the Reverend Oliver Smetham are practitioners of witchcraft, convinced that they have lived before, and planning to sacrifice her daughter Berenice on the night of the solstice for necromantic purposes. At the same ceremony, they plan to induct another girl, Alison Butler, into the cult. In the meantime, they are compelling Berenice to masquerade as a housemaid, 'Phoebe'. Opposing them are Alison's father, Sir Henry Butler, and Berenice's young man, Roger Kendall, led and guided by Dr. Forbes, an agnostic local doctor with an improbably extensive knowledge of the occult. In the final scene, as the ceremony builds to a climax, these three intervene and rescue the girls, while Smetham is brought to acknowledge his sins and admit that the business of 'past lives' is mere deception.

The cast did wonderfully well, both in acting the entire play, and in repeating scenes when requested during the discussion that followed. The standard of acting was very high, the one possible weak link being the portrayal of the 'Little Master' by Ian Matthews, who was, as he freely admitted, unhappy with being called upon to impersonate an entity of pure evil. (I should perhaps add that this was

the one part in the play I should like to have acted myself, so that my evaluation may not be entirely impersonal.) There were one or two times when St Matthew's Church Room was a limiting factor in the performance: the one page of the script I glimpsed contained a stage direction for Smetham confronting Forbes, 'He advances upon him, muttering sacerdotally.' Alas, the presence of a large (prop) sacrificial altar and the narrowness of the room conspired to keep Smetham standing where he was, though his muttering was impressively sacerdotal. Given a larger stage on which to manoeuvre, the last scene might have acquired greater momentum, instead of being, for this member of the audience at least, something that just fell short of the success of earlier parts of the play.

Three scenes proved particularly effective in the performance of the play and prompted much of the discussion afterwards. The first was the opening, where Smetham, a clergyman, is admitted to Lady Endicott's presence by the maid, and all expectations of how what seems a stock scene will develop are instantly subverted as the conversation launches us straight into unmitigated diabolism. (In discussion, Ruth Spalding said that it would have been possible to play the scene in other ways - something closer to drawing-room comedy - but the decision to play it seriously plainly paid dividends.) The second was a scene in which Alison looks into Phoebe's eyes, the "mirrors of the Little Master", and sees a bleak road that runs through a place of stones where there are a number of big-headed, nodding children, and feels herself becoming a stone as well. In strong contrast to the earlier 'reminiscences' of past lives exchanged by Smetham and Lady Endicott, these images of idiocy and lost humanity provide some hint of the reality behind the lies.

The third scene was at the end of Act Two, when Alison is is told by the Little Master that she has been chosen to be the mother of the Antichrist. The character of the Little Master is something of a puzzle: this was the first time he had appeared on stage, although he had been mentioned earlier, both in the phrase quoted above and

when Forbes had said that he knew better than to trust the Little Master's promises. Although the Little Master speaks so convincingly of the Devil's hunger for incarnation that it was suggested in the discussion that he could have been better represented by darkening half the stage than by an actor, this latter reference is perhaps the key. Alison is being promised one thing, but offered another. The rigmarole about engendering Antichrist is obvious eyewash: it had failed in the case of Merlin, and even Old Scratch remembers his mistakes. It seems possible that the Little Master is that officer of the coven whose job it is to personate the Devil and couple with the female devotees. His only other onstage appearance, presiding in an animal mask over the ceremony (and taking himself off smartly when it is interrupted), seems to support the suggestion, though it is far from explicit in the text.

The quality of the actual writing is somewhat uneven, and Williams is guilty of occasional careless phrases such as 'the desecrated dagger' (singled out for comment by John Heath-Stubbs during the discussion), presumably meaning 'the dagger consecrated to evil'. Moreover, given the effectiveness of the initial subversion of the audience's expectations, it is disappointing to find some of the minor characters obviously drawn from stock - Roger Kendall in particular is written as little more than a walking plot-element rather than a rounded character. Perhaps Williams could have got away with this in 1941 (just), but it jarred somewhat on a modern audience.

Frontiers of Hell as we have it is an intermediary work, drawing on Williams's research for *Witchcraft* and in its turn quarried for *All Hallows Eve* (the parallels between Berenice/Phoebe and Betty/Bettina being particularly marked). It is curious to reflect that, had three-act plays been more popular in 1941, *All Hallows Eve* might have been a very different book, perhaps not even written at all. For those who wish to pursue the matter further, Ruth Spalding has generously donated a copy of the script to the Society's Reference Library.

THE CAST (in order of appearance)

Lady Ruth Endicott (otherwise Anais).....Catherine Jupp
Phoebe (otherwise Berenice).....Caroline Harper
The Revd Oliver Smetham..... Michael Clarke
Sir Henry Butler.....Derek Nash
Alison Butler..... Susie Johnston
Dr. Forbes.....Hugh Croydon
Roger Kendall.....Carl Lawson
The Little Master.....Ian Matthews

REVIEW

Glen Cavaliero: *The Supernatural and English Fiction*, Oxford University Press. 288pp. £18.99. ISBN 0-19-212607-5.

The first thing to say about this book is that it is an indispensable guide for anyone who is interested in supernaturalistic fiction. Perhaps it would be better to call it a map, since it is concerned with establishing the relations and heights and depths of the fictions it explores. Every reader will find new books to become acquainted with, pungent observations on books already known, and a whole language for talking about them, and for relating them to modern critical theory. There is a friendly feeling about it in particular for readers of Charles Williams, since he is almost its beginning, its centre and its end. Quite close to the beginning Cavaliero quotes Sibyl's vision of the Fool in *The Greater Trumps*, dancing 'as if it were always arranging itself in some place which was empty for it', to symbolise his own sense of how the element of the supernatural, and in it whatever is the final resting place of human values and preoccupations, adapts itself to all the various fictions that contain it, and continually transcends any attempt to identify it with any particular ideology. Near the centre he has an admirable, and admirably balanced, account of Williams' novels as the paradigm, almost, of supernaturalistic fiction in their interweaving of occultism, scepticism and theology. And he ends with a quotation from *The House of the Octopus* which he says enunciates the paradox for both writers and philosophers of saying anything about mystery and the supernatural:

> Will God dispute over words? No, but men
> must, if words mean anything, stand by words,
> since stand he must, and on earth protest to death
> against what is at the same time a jest in heaven.

Cavaliero's central aim is illustrated very well by his use of Williams. It is to show how well supernaturalistic fiction fits with the extreme scepticism of presentday post-modernist and post-structuralist theory, surprising as that might seem to anyone who connects the supermatural with religion, and religion with dogma in any simple way. Post-structuralist theory and supernaturalistic fiction alike for Cavaliero conduct an assault on the commonsense, conventional and ultimately materialistic assumptions about life which govern realistic fiction, and despite its scepticism even post-structuralism may end by pointing to the subject of supernaturalistic fiction, that is what he calls the mysterium, which is above below and within us, and in which all our thought ends.

Within these terms, I do not think the book could be bettered or adversely criticised except in small details. There is, I think, one major omission, William Mayne, who as a writer for children is often neglected (yet Cavaliero includes the similar case of Alan Garner, who seems to me a much less original genius than Mayne) but whose powers of language and narration at times challenge the best writers of our time. A friend of mine (now a professor of English at Oxford) once remarked when I'd lent him *The Incline* that it was 'like D.H. Lawrence, only more chastely written': and one reviewer of *A Game of Dark*, in which a boy lives alternately two lives, in one of which he is a squire trying to kill a monster, and in the other has problems with his father, his school and his church, and between which he must choose, that it was like 'the story of St. George and the dragon as written by William Golding'. And the only critical judgment on which I would fundamentally disagree with Cavaliero is in his treatment of William Golding himself, whom he sees, as I do not, as fundamentally like Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark, a player of 'God-games'. But that disagreement is connected with differing approaches to supernaturalistic fiction, to which I will return.

For what I now want to do is to relate Cavaliero's book to two other books covering the same subject matter which he might have written but has chosen not to.

The first such book would have been less rigorous in its circumscription to fiction, would therefore have been more historical in suggesting the movement of thought about religion through the various interactions of poetry, drama and fiction, and would have begun earlier. Even in the book as it stands, which begins with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) after an introductory theoretical chapter, there is a historical shape, and Cavaliero has to allow in brief references to Wordsworth, since every writer who finds the numinous in landscape owes something to him, and Coleridge, whose understanding of what a symbol is governs much of the relation between inner

and outer in George MacDonald and many later writers (including Charles Williams) in relation to both. A friend of mine, who was brought up in Hertfordshire, has recently pointed out to me what a part the landscape of Hertfordshire plays in, for example, *The Place of the Lion* - and the emergence of the lion and other beasts from that landscape perhaps owes something to both poets). But Cavaliero, as I have said, is ultimately centred on modern theories of fiction.

Yet it would have been enlightening to begin with *Hamlet* and beyond that with mediaeval ghost-stories. The real differences and similarities between the literature of our day, which fundamentally describes the world under a carapace which excludes God, and literature before the seventeenth century which describes a universe constructed round God, would then appear more clearly. The supernatural today, as Cavaliero's central thesis maintains, appears only through the cracking of the carapace: it walked abroad in the Middle Ages. But this is not because fiction in the Middle Ages concerned itself with God: on the contrary, if He appears in anything one could call fiction, like the *Divine Comedy*, it is at the boundaries, either by implication as the foundation of all, or glimpsed at the end as the revelation of what is beyond everything. Modern supernaturalistic fiction is not the successor to the Bible, but to stories of saints, ghosts, devils and angels.

But all these beings, particularly ghosts, were understood differently because they were ordered under God. If one met a ghost in the fourteenth century (M.R. James edited twelve mediaeval ghost stories in the *English Historical Review* in 1922, trnaslated in Peter Haining's *M.R. James - Book of the Supernatural*, which demonstrate that point) one knew that it had a need, some unpaid for sin or other unresolved business which held it in Purgatory or on the earth, and that it wanted one to satisfy it. The modern ghost has unknown needs, and is therefore likely to be presumed simply malevolent.

In *Hamlet* the ghost is a mediaeval ghost who declares unequivocally with a directness which shows how little Shakespeare cared for radical Protestantism, that it has come from Purgatory. But Hamlet is a Renaissance or modern man, who is not sure whether there is an afterlife at all, and thinks the ghost may be a devil. The critics of the play are naturally often merely modern: one of them may be Henry James, whose 'Owen Wingrave' presents a 'young scion of a military family' who, to quote Cavaliero, 'even though he rejects its traditions, fights his battle against an ancestral ghost to prove his manhood' and sounds very like a variation on *Hamlet*, though this is not suggested by Cavaliero. yet the ghost is a true mediaeval ghost, and the play therefore a mediaeval play.

In this context, one would remember how T.S. Eliot said that if he ever had

to spend a night in a haunted house, he would have chosen Charles Williams as a companion, because he would know how to greet a ghost: and note that the appearances of the dead to the living in his novels (the suicide and the martyr in *Descent into Hell*, the women in *All Hallows Eve*) are all incidental to their progress from this world to the other, and to the aid the living can give them in their progress. They do not haunt the living in the modern sense - that is reserved for a spirit of unreality, a kind of devil, like Lilith.

I also think that the novels of Charles Williams are illuminated by their influence on the *Four Quartets* of T.S. Eliot. Eliot avowedly took the image of the dance, in the form in which it runs through the *Quartets*, from *The Greater Trumps*: and to my eye there is something in common between the garden at *Burnt Norton* and Berringer's garden in *The Place of the Lion*, and between the dark streets where Pauline meets her other self in *Descent into Hell* and the dark streets where Eliot meets his other self in *Little Gidding*. These comparisons say much about the whole place of supernatural vision in the myusticism of the twentieth century.

But aside from those who seriously follow mysticism it is curious how much vision in the twentieth century, where it is supernatural, tends to the evil, in Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, for example, which closes Cavaliero's book (though one can partly see why if one puts the four scenes from Williams and Eliot in a universe not ultimately turned to God). Here I wish Cavaliero had gone outside the fiction of Arthur Machen to his one supreme work of genius, his autobiography *Far Off Things*. Cavaliero most unfairly remarks that Machen evoking the Welsh border country 'was too much a product of his time' to be aware of its 'holiness and glory', like Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne. Of his fiction this is true: but Vaughan and Traherne were not writing fiction, and when Machen like them writes directly of his boyhood and youth he rises to their heights: 'everything to me was wonderful, everything visible was the veil of an invisible secret. Before an oddly shaped stone I was ready to fall into a sort of reverie or meditation, as if it had been a fragment of paradise of fairyland. There was a certain herb of the fields that grew plentifully in Gwent, that even now I cannot regard without a kind of reverence; it bears a spire of small yellow blossoms, and its leaves when crushed give out a very pungent aromatic odour. This odour was to me a separate revelation or mystery, as if no one in the world had smelt it but myself, and I ceased not to admire even when a countryman told me that it was good for stone, if you gathered it "under the planet Juniper".'

Machen, moreover, writes sensitively in *Far Off Things* of how he tried to translate this sense of the world into the fictions which Cavaliero discusses: 'I

translated awe, at worst awfulness, into evil'. He does not ascribe his failure to being a child of his age but, humbly, to lack of genius - 'one dreams in fire and works in clay'. It is possible that he was too self-conscious a critic to write fiction that expressed what he wanted: as Cavaliero points out, his wonderful essay *Hieroglyphics* argues that all great literature is implicitly the revelation of another world through ecstasy.

But, although Cavaliero criticises Machen for this tendency to the negative, it seems to me that the same tendency is latent in his own theory, which continually stresses the power of the supernatural to subvert. Charles Williams in the passage of his *Witchcraft* where he gives the two common experiences which he thinks predispose to the belief in magic, similarly remarks that both tend to overthrow the simple belief that phenomena are what phenomena seem. But only one is actually malign - the fear of the unexplained malignant change. The other is more or les the Coleridgean symbol, when a thing, remaining wholly itself, is laden with universal meaning. This, for Williams, may be experienced in many things, but particularly in the human body, and in love, which characteristically perhaps begins with an awareness of someone looking, or even of some part of their body. It is in itself wholly positive. Cavaliero, although he well stresses apropos of the visions in *The Place of the Lion* that in them 'the centrality of spirit as a metaphysical category is here expressed in terms of body', perhaps does not sufficiently recognise how much for Williams these visions relate to experiences common to most people.

Similarly, I think, Cavaliero underrates Chesterton's *The Man who was Thursday* as not attaining 'to the transfiguring uncertainties of a revelation of the numinous'. That book, on the contrary, is rooted in Chesterton's awareness that all things are, to use a phrase of Charles Williams', 'illustrious with being', shown above all in the way in which it is dominated by the red hair of Rosamund, the girl with whom the central figure of the novel, Syme, is falling in love. There is transfiguration here: does it have to be uncertain?

Cavaliero quotes the phrase 'illustrious with being' in the description of Jonathan's painting in *All Hallows Eve* and its effect on the actual sight of London, so that 'however unillumined the houses were, their very mass was a kind of illumination. They were illustrious with being. The sun in the painting had not risen, but it had been on the point of rising, and the expectation that unrisen sun had aroused in him was so great that the actual sun, or some other and greater sun, seemed to be about to burst through the cloud that filled the natural sky.'

It is a description which strikingly reminds me of the light and mass of the most numinous of all Western European painting, Piero della Francesca's fresco

of the Resurrection. And either the fictional or the real painting seems to me to give the lie to what Cavaliero quotes from Rudolf Otto, that Western art has only two methods of representing the numinous, '*darkness* and *silence*'. For all Cavaliero's love of the numinous landscape in Hardy, Lawrence or Cowper Powys, he seems to regard it on the whole as an occultist or pagan thing, preferring even here, as in Lawrence's *St Mawr* 'the New Mexican desert, an image of the total otherness of the absolute'. He does not quote Wittgenstein's 'God does not reveal himself *in* the world', but one feels that he would sympathise with it, modifying it only in a way which Wittgenstein would perhaps not have refused, that God is revealed when the world shows itself not to be self-sufficient or self-explanatory.

And this brings me to the second alternative way in which this book might have been written. It might have taken as a central theme the ordinary experience of the suprnatural as positive, of God's presence in the world, that is prayer. Instead of beginning, as Cavaliero does, with the contrast of Anne Bronte's *Agnes Grey*, in which the whole world is regarded as supernatural in the Calvinist way, and consequently by having nothing specifically supernatural in it, is indistinguishable from the world of the realistic novel, and the novel originally bound up with it, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* where the supernatural is invasive, subversive and uncanny, it might begin with Jane Austen. For all her repute as a realistic, even secular novelist, Jane Austen presents a number of descriptions of what for her and her religious readers in the influence of supernatural grace through prayer, as when Ann Elliot is reunited with Captain Wentworth. 'An interval of meditation, serious and graceful, was the best corrective of everything dangerous in such high-wrought felicity; and she went to her room, and grew steadfast and fearless in the thankfulness of her enjoyment.'

If one took that gift of being 'steadfast and fearless in the thankfulness of her enjoyment', and extended it to include those redirections of one's emotions to become part of one's better self, or moments of absolute inner silence against all the odds, which everyone who prays in any sense knows something of, and recognised in all of them the positive experience of the supernatural, then I think a number of Cavaliero's evaluations would be changed. Even his use of the vision of the moving Fool as a symbol of the unseizableness of the supernatural is modified when one remembers that it is given not simply as he says to 'those whose inward eye is pure' but to Sibyl, who has made her inward eye pure through a long spiritual self-discipline, which has also made her steadfast in love, and able to recognise therefore that God is not merely aloof and unmoving like the God of Aristotle but always and everywhere active in love.

And his very weak statement that Pauline in *Descent into Hell* 'encounters her doppelgänger and overcomes her fear of it' would become modified into 'finds that her better self is able to utter the cry of intercession which she cannot, "Give it to me, John Strutehr" and is united to it.'

In other writers, Muriel Spark, while remaining the player of God-games subversive of the ordinary assumptions of realistic fiction, would become also the writer of *The Mandelbaum Gate* for whom the real choice is whether the whole of life is or is not unified under God, and the writer who ends the subversions of *Memento Mori* with a single sentence presenting the same thought in the entirely Jane Austen-like description of the prayer of Jean, who 'lingered for a while, employing her pain to magnify her Lord, and meditating sometimes confidingly on death, the first of the Four Last Things to be for ever remembered.'

Most conspicuously of all, William Golding's *Pincher Martin* would be transformed from the description of 'one man's fallacious attempt at all costs to keep his freedom' to a novel where that attempt culminates in the most convincing, and indeed terrific, epiphany of God in fiction, the parabolic or perhaps apocalyptic rendering of what happens when in prayer one's own thoughts are turned back on one transformed, when his own body stands before Pincher and says, addressing him for the only time in the novel by his Christian name, 'Have you had enough, Christopher?' - to which Pincher's response is 'I could never have invented that' - and goes on to question the fundamental instinct of his nature, the ghastly survival of the fittest at the expense of everyone and everything else.

In a roadhouse near Truro, when we were discussing our various attempts to learn Hebrew, I quoted to Golding the Hebrew prayer 'Blessed art thou, Lord God, King of the universe, who hast made the creation', and he remarked 'There's nothing else to say, is there?' But I do not think it is only Golding's frequently expressed belief in God that makes me recognise in the text of all his novels a sense of direction towards the creator which is at its most terrific in *Pincher Martin* but at its most beautiful after all the subversions and discoveries of *The Spire*, when Jocelin cries out on seeing the spire, to build which he has killed himself and indirectly others, and which he believes to be falling, 'It's like the apple-tree!' This is prayer too: and in the silence that follows it before the last sentence when the chaplain interprets Jocelin's cry as 'God, God, God', there is an experience of the supernatural which is quite as transcending as Cavaliero wants, but also answering, reassuring and grounding.

THREE BOOK REVIEWS BY CHARLES WILLIAMS

The Antiquarian Association of the British Isles is not perhaps a name we associate readily with Charles Williams. It appears to have been formed in 1930, and its Advisory Council included (amongst others) the Rev. A.H. Sayce, Oxford Professor of Assyriology (by then very old and frail, but still willing to lend his name), Alfred T. Butler, Portcullis Pursuivant of Arms, and Charles Williams's uncle J. Charles Wall, an assiduous, if minor, writer on antiquarian subjects. The object of the Association, as outlined in the short-lived *Journal* it published quarterly from 1930, was

> to popularise Antiquities of every description; to explain them in non-technical language as far as possible; to illustrate them; to show ancient influence on modern life and conditions; and to create a greater desire to preserve those things of the past ages which remain at the present time. The homeland and foreign countries are now travelled with ease, and if the eye of the traveller is prepared to distinguish the old from the new, it will give greater zest to the journey.

There seems to be no evidence that the Association ever held meetings, or enjoyed any existence independent of the Journal. Given that the Association's address was 13, Paternoster Row, also the address of J.Charles Wall's publishing firm Talbot & Co., it looks very much like a pet project of Wall's, possibly conceived on seeing the success of O.G.S. Crawford's journal *Antiquity*, first published in 1926. (The format of *JAABI* bears some resemblance to that of *Antiquity*, though the colour of its cover - roughly that of red lentils - is all its own.) A great deal of the matter contributed was written by Wall, who also supplied many of the illustrations. Iterated appeals for existing Association members to be active in enlisting new recruits seem to have fallen on stony ground, and the Journal (together, presumably, with the Association) ended abruptly in 1932.

Charles W. Stansby Williams is listed as President of the Association in the Journal's second and third years of publication. During that time he contributed three book reviews, the first and last of which, at least, seem to be written with the stated object of the Association in mind. These are reproduced below in accordance with the Society's standing agreement with the copyright owners. My thanks to Kerryl Lynne Henderson for providing the initial information about the Antiquarian Association.

EVERYDAY THINGS IN ARCHAIC GREECE. *By* Marjorie and C.H.B. Quennell, *Batsford*. 7s. 6d.

"Archaic Greece" means from Homer to Salamis, from myth to history, from the Siege of Troy to the defeat of the Persians. It means, therefore, the

beginning of Europe, the houses and temples, the trades and occupations, from which all our history and all we are arises. In 150 pages, with 85 illustrations, the authors survey that remote yet familiar world; they have made (as they have done before for other periods) a book which only the expert can do without, and which even he might easily profit by reading. This is, at a certain time, the background of food and furniture, of building and commerce, of country and town, against which all life is carried on. The vivid presentation of that life at a past time is perhaps one of the very few things in which we are more fortunate than the Greeks; they - poor creatures! - had no printing, no line-blocks, and no Quennells. C.W.

(December 1931, Vol. 2:3, p.143)

THE BLECHELEY DIARY OF THE REV. WILLIAM COLE, 1765-67. *Edited by* F.G. Stokes. *With an introduction by* Helen Waddell. *Constable.* 16s.

Mr Cole was a friend of the great Mr Horace Walpole, and Rector of Blecheley, in Buckinghamshire, in the grounds of which he built "an elegant, light, and airy Chinese and Gothic temple." When but in the eighteenth century could an English Rector have built so charming an absurdity? It is charming; there is a picture of it here - from Mr Cole's own sketch; and there Mr Cole painted little coats of arms, or (on 21st August 1766, a "fine but hot day") drank tea and coffee with some friends. The previous Thursday had been his birthday, and he sent Mr Reddall "a Basket of Apricots and Codlins." The following week he had a long interview with the Bishop about a quarrel with Mr Leisertie, the Curate at Fenny Stratford. . . .

And so the charming talk runs on. The affairs of the district, of his acquaintance, of his own life, unfold themselves in the diary of the Rector; and of his own mind - a lucid, amiable, intelligent, attractive mind. He was not a great man, Mr Cole; he had not the genius in language of his friend Mr Walpole. But he had sufficient genius to tell us, two hundred years afterwards, of English life as he knew it, and to exact an immediate and prolonged attention. We linger by "the Chinese and Gothic temple," a little superior, a little kindly, a little wondering, a little - envious? Surely not envious? No, but nevertheless Mr Cole was an enviable man. C.W.

(March 1932, Vol.2:4, p.185)

ARCHAIC TRACKS ROUND CAMBRIDGE. *By* A. Watkins, F.R.P.S. *With 7 plans and 3 illustrations. Simpkin Marshall.* 3s. 6d.

Mr Watkins, who is known to readers of this Journal by his contribution, deserves to be the patron of many walkers as they used to be called - hikers they are called to-day. His imagination has seen across the countryside the old trackways running straight from mark to mark, at present unknown or only partly known, and has made for country-wanderers a new and exciting occupation. Detective work of sorts. Unnoticed markstones buried in the banks of cross-roads, in the field or on a town pavement; the edges of an unrecorded camp; a faint mound almost levelled; or, again on the lay of the land, as the eye looks straight on, the point of a distant beacon-hill as a mark on the sky-line.

This book is to help those who are "striking the trail" in the Cambridge district. C.W.

(September 1932, Vol. 3:2, p.88)

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READING GROUPS:

OXFORD

We have recently started reading *The Region of the Summer Stars*. For more information, please contact either Anne Scott (Oxford 553897) or Brenda Boughton (Oxford 515589).

CAMBRIDGE

For information, please contact Geraldine and Richard Pinch, 5 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PH (Cambridge 311465).

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For details please contact Canon Roma King, 9823 Twin Creek Drive, Dallas, Texas 75228, USA.

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