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Abstract

Argues that Williams, in recasting the Grail legend into his own Christian metaphysics, used the three Grail knights to represent the three forms of love.

Additional Keywords

Williams, Charles. Arthuriad—Moral and religious aspects; Williams, Charles. Region of the Summer Stars—Treatment of love; Williams, Charles. Taliesin Through Logres—Treatment of love

Eros, Philia, and Agape in Charles Williams' *Arthurian*

Judith Kollmann

Although he based his two Arthurian lyric cycles, *Tales asin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, on Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Charles Williams' prose works make clear that he was familiar with the entire spectrum of Arthurian materials, from the historical documents through Victorian poetry.¹ And, having examined the various treatments of the legend as a whole, he chose to fix his version of the story on the Grail because he saw a potential in that that had been overlooked by all previous writers. He was convinced that the Grail stories were "mostly unsatisfactory ... [because] none of these poets had the full capacity of the mythical imagination" (*Image* 187). He considered Malory and Tennyson the greatest of the English writers, but felt they too had failed. Of Malory he observed "[t]here is ... a certain suggestiveness which Malory does not seem altogether to have understood" in spite of the fact that *Le Morte D'Arthur* contains "the whole grand Myth — or at least much of it" (*Image* 187).² Tennyson's "chief trouble" was, according to Williams, one he shared with all Victorians — namely, that the Victorian "metaphysic could not present nor its withdrawing poetic imagination conceive an end sufficient to the means." Therefore, "[i]n the *Idylls Arthur* ... does not reject the Quest of the Graal merely from an artistic necessity, but from the necessity of an inadequate metaphysic" (*Image* 2-3), as, for example, when "Balin, in the Grail Castle, instead of wounding the King with the Sacred Lance, uses it as a jumping pole. This is a serious lapse" (*Image* 187). When he composed his cycles Williams determined to succeed precisely where he was convinced the others had failed; he would invest the myth with an adequate metaphysic. For him the term "mythical," as he defined it in his essay, "Malory and the Grail Legend," is that which has "a profound spiritual relevance" (*Image* 187); and, since Williams was a committed Christian, for him the potential of the Arthurian Grail materials lay in developing a comprehensive Christian myth that would embrace everything, not only in the legends, but human history, the earth, and the cosmos itself. In that would be embedded a profound spiritual significance, a metaphysic possessing an end sufficient to the means.

The Grail itself, as it is found in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, is imbued by New Testament influences, and is definitely not a pagan Celtic cup. Rather, it is either the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper to consecrate wine into His blood or it is the cup in which Joseph of Arimathea caught drops of Jesus' blood at the crucifixion. In either case the Grail represents the height of Christian love, the *agape* of

Christ, absolute and utterly without self-interest. All who would achieve the Grail must imitate Christ and renounce self. In Malory, as in his source, the Cistercian *La Queste du Saint Graal*, the height of such renunciation is to be found in sexual purity. Thus, virginity becomes the apogee of all Christian virtue; Galahad becomes its exemplar, and everyone else is rated according to the degree of his sexual purity. So Percivale comes next, as he is also a virgin (but is a little too foolishly innocent to achieve real spiritual maturity), and Bors comes third because he experienced a sexual liaison once.

Charles Williams did not eliminate the virtue of sexual purity entirely but he nevertheless completely re-evaluated and recast Malory's set of spiritual priorities in terms of three forms of love, all of value, all requiring self-renunciation to some degree, and none demanding virginity as a *sine qua non*. He represented these three forms of love by means of the three Grail Knights, referred to them as "three degrees of love" (*Image* 193), and refused to give them specific names. For convenience' sake, I will call them by their conventional names: *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*. For Williams, each of these forms of love is of great value, because each is a reflection of deity.

In order to understand how these loves operate in the world, one must first understand Charles Williams' perception of God and the cosmos. First, everything in the universe is an image, to some degree, of God: that is, everything is at once itself, possessing its own identity and reality, and it is also a symbol of the Godhead Who created it. God has created by means of love because God is love, and everything, particularly humanity, becomes an image of this love; moreover, humanity has three means by which to manifest love. Williams calls these exchange, substitution, and coinherence, and they are terms with which any student of Williams' work quickly becomes familiar. People can also choose one of two paths of salvation; one is called the Affirmation of the Images; the other is the Rejection of Images. The Path of Affirmation is the most popular. It affirms the created world as good and its follower chooses one or more ways with which he or she will follow it. Marriage and poetry were Williams' favorite expressions of it, but any active form of life, conducted ethically, is expressive of it. The Path of Rejection is the path of the ascetic who rejects the world in order to pursue a more direct mode of spiritual life in his or her search for God. Excellent studies of the two Paths, and of the concepts of exchange, substitution and coinherence have been done,

and to avoid unnecessary duplication I will not discuss them further here.³ Instead, this paper will examine the degrees of love that are unquestionably present in Williams' Arthurian cycles and that are vital to our understanding of these complex poems.

Williams did not name these three degrees for several excellent reasons. One of them is that they are common, even trite, terms found everywhere in theological discussions, and Williams was acutely aware of the human tendency to use important words so often in casual conversation that the words become meaningless. In *Descent into Hell* the poet Peter Stanhope gently corrects Myrtle Fox, who has just commented that "Nature's so terribly good." He responds: "... you must forgive me; it comes from doing so much writing, but when I say 'terribly' I think I mean 'full of terror,' a dreadful goodness" (16). In *The Figure of Beatrice* Williams explains why he "preferred the word *image* to the word *symbol*": "because it seems to me doubtful if the word *symbol* nowadays sufficiently expresses the vivid individual existence of the lesser thing" (7). In *He Came Down from Heaven* he criticized the phrase, "God is love": "[t]he word 'love' has suffered even more heavily [than 'faith', 'pardon', and 'glory']. The famous saying 'God is love', it is generally assumed, means that God is like our immediate emotional indulgence, and not that our meaning of love ought to have something of the 'otherness' and terror of God" (11).

Charles Williams wished to expand the reader's sense of the potential within these modes of love, and not to constrict each form to conventional expectations or automatically to compartmentalize each one in isolation from the others. He avoided these problems by simply avoiding the terminology. However, that he was aware of them is clear from the following passage, found in his essay, "Malory and the Grail Legend." In it Williams explains why he made a change among the three Grail Knights; he made Sir Bors a married man:

if we allow Sir Bors his marriage and his work in the world and his honest affections, see how perfect the companionship of the three lords becomes! There is the High Prince, wholly devoted to his end in the Grail; and there is Percivale with his devout and self-less spiritual sister; and there is Bors with his wife and child. These are functions each of the others. The High Prince is at the deep centre, and the others move towards him; but also he operates in them towards the world. These are three degrees of love. (Image 193)

Making Bors a family man may seem a trivial detail, but it shifts the focus of the entire hierarchy. Galahad has become the exemplar of the Path of Rejection, for he is not concerned with the Quest or even with the Grail, but, rather, with his *end* in the Grail — a mystic union with the deity that will include, in all probability, his death. Percivale becomes a representative of the Path of Affirmation in his filial love for his sister, a kinship that may not be a

blood relationship at all, but rather one of spirit (Image 192). Bors, also a member of the Path of Affirmation, represents erotic love as it is sanctified by Christian marriage. This hierarchy was of such importance to Williams that he described it, with minor variations, in at least three places — in "Notes on the Arthurian Myth," "The Making of Taliessin," and in "Malory and the Grail Legend".

Williams' objective was to re-examine all three forms of love in ways that are nothing less than radical, controversial, and, possibly, subversive. "*eros*," of course, means sexual love. Williams makes clear that the creative force of God as Father is phallically erotic in "Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn." "*agape*" is selfless, total love. Williams suggests that human males can achieve *agapeic* love most completely when they assume the characteristic Christ shared with women: nurturing. "*philia*" love is not applied in such controversial ways, but is applied across the spectrum of the Greek and English meanings: the Greek word, *philein*, meant simple human friendship; the modern English derivative, "filial," means brotherly love. Williams uses *philia* in both contexts; Taliessin's informal "company" consists of a group of people of all classes brought together in the joy of each other's company. Percivale's love for his sister is the purest example of filial love.

In *Taliessin through Logres* God manifests Himself in more than one way — the Emperor in Byzantium, for example, is an image of God as Ruler through Justice, Law, Peace and, in essence, civilization. But in "Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn" God manifests Himself as Creator, specifically in an erotic context. This poem, and the image contained in it, precedes all the poems whose theme is love, and it is absolutely no accident that the next poem celebrates Bors' marriage to Elaine; that he two following ("Taliessin in the School of the Poets" and "Taliessin on the Death of Virgil") are concerned with Taliessin's filial bond to Virgil, a bond that transcends six hundred years; that "The Coming of Palomides" deals with Palomides' erotic response to the sight of Isault's arm; that "Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney" culminates in the incest of Morgause and Arthur; or that the final poem in the group, "Bors to Elaine; on the King's Coins" returns once more to a celebration of married love. The group as a whole deals with issues of passion — sometimes intellectual passions, sometimes of the bonds of the poets' brotherhood, but, most often, of the passion of *eros*. And the poem that establishes this theme is "Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn".

The first section of the poem appears to be describing the standard unicorn of tradition. A "shouldering shape" in the sky above Broceliande, the unicorn is a fabulous beast that comes to a virgin. But he is "to her no good" because a human girl cannot be sexually aroused by "such a snorting alien love." Moreover, the unicorn is a beast; it is dumb, having "no voice / to explain" or plead for her love, while his horn, although beautiful, is "a ghostly threat but no way to rejoice / in released satiation." Con-

sequently the human hunter is quite right in killing the unicorn, for the man thereby "sets the maid free, / and she lies with the gay hunter and his spear flesh-hued." In the final section of the poem, however, the direction changes. If an extraordinary virgin should happen to be "cunning" enough "to call the grand beast" and who should then have the courage to accept, voluntarily, impalement by the unicorn's horn, she will become "the Mother of the Unicorn's Voice," and her son will be

... the new sound that goes
surrounding the City's reach, the sound of enskied
shouldering shapes.

In the latter part of the poem, Williams not only described the Immaculate Conception by means of phallic imagery, but he combined a crucifixion with it as well — crucifying not Christ, but the Virgin:

and she to a background of dark bark, where the wood
becomes one giant tree, were pinned, and plied
through hands to heart by the horn's longing: ...

God as Unicorn has become the Virgin's "paramour". The unicorn has frequently symbolized Christ.⁴ So far as I am aware, this is the first time in literature that the unicorn has become a symbol for God the Father. Williams has made this relationship not only because of the unicorn's association with phallic symbolism, but also because the beast is famous for its beauty, its untameability, and its unconquerable strength. All these are expressive of Williams' sense of God as a terrible good, as an alien force.

Above all, *eros* has become an image of God in these cycles. Like God, *eros* is seen as beautiful, wild, and strong. As it manifests itself in the lives of fallen human beings, it is the form of love most potentially dangerous — not because it is evil, but precisely because it is a terrible good. The Arthurian materials gave Williams a spectacular source for examples of *eros* gone wrong; however, he not only avoided the most famous tales of sinful passion (the Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot and Mark-Iseult-Tristram triangles), but also dealt with the subject in far more complex ways than had hitherto been the case. He examined three instances in which *eros* went awry, and one in which it proceeded along lawful paths; but of all these, only in one circumstance did *eros* result in catastrophe. It did so because of other factors and not simply because the situation was erotic. The three mis-directed cases are: Morgause's incest with Arthur; Lancelot's unintentional night with Galahad's mother, Helayne; and Palomides' love for Iseult. The fulfillment of erotic love is presented in Bors' love for his wife, Elayne.

Williams makes Morgause and Arthur not only siblings, but twins: "Balin had Balan's face, and Morgause her brothers," as Merlin points out in "Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney" (58). The reader is never informed whether Arthur or Morgause are conscious of their relationship, but we are informed that they were utterly blinded by

pride and lust to the obvious fact that their faces were mirror images of one another. The possibility that they were closely related should have been immediately evident to at least one of them. The effect of making them twins is to intensify both parties' culpability for the multiple sins of pride, lust, adultery and incest. Moreover, twins in the Arthurian cycles have greater potential for being images of God, or of schism from God, than do individuals, since, in their filial love for one another, they can also reflect an essence of Christian divinity: they reflect the mystery of being several (or, at least, two) and yet being one. This potential becomes even stronger in the case of twins of opposite gender, because the two can then image forth another mystery of the Godhead — the fact that, according to Genesis 1:27, God is androgynous:

God created man in the image of Himself,
in the image of God He created him,
male and female He created them.

Williams establishes several sets of twins in the poems in order to make this potential clear. Only one set of twins, Balin and Balan, is to be found in Malory. Williams makes additional twins from Adam and Eve; Arthur and Morgause; and Merlin and Brisen. In every case except that of Merlin and Brisen, twins deny their potential and twine away from unity, becoming exemplars of sin — which is expressed in terms of dis-union. They usually abuse erotic love and inevitably betray *philia*. The problem originates with the archetypal twins, "the Adam," who at creation were one (which is why Williams refers to them by means of the collective noun), but they chose separation:

the good lusted against the good,
the acts in conflict envenomed the blood,
on the twisted tree hung their body wrying
... a double entity
spewed and struggled.

("The Vision of the Empire," 28)⁵

In "Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney," Lamorack identifies Morgause with the storms and cliffs of her home, the island of Orkney. She is as primal, as blind, as rigid:

I saw the source of all stone,
the rigid tornado, the schism and first strife
of primeval rock with itself, Morgause Lot's wife.

The ultimate "heart of stone" is egotism, and she attracts Arthur because they are the same persons and the same egos; their incest is merely a representation of that ego, and that is the real sin. As Williams observed in his "Notes on the Arthurian Myth," Arthur

and his two sisters — Morgause and Morgan — are man loving himself and hating himself. This — and not mere incest — is the reason that Mordred is born of Arthur and Morgause. And Mordred is entire egotism, Arthur's self-attention carried to the final degree. (*Image 176*)

Lancelot's affair with Helayne, Pelles' daughter, is devastating for Lancelot, but with supreme cosmic irony directly fulfills the divine plan. Since Williams felt the story of Lancelot's delusion "by a courtesy of terrible condescension" (*Image* 189) had been effectively told by Malory, he did not dwell upon the tale of Galahad's begetting except to suggest the richness of the irony and the paradox: Lancelot is tricked into Helayne's bed by Brisen, who, as Merlin's twin, is a Druid priestess and a magician. She came from the sea-forest of Broceliande specifically to make this moment possible. The affair becomes, then, the betrayal of a man who is trying to be true to a false situation in his fidelity to Guinevere. The betrayal drives Lancelot insane, an insanity expressed in the form of lycanthropy, for he metamorphoses into a werewolf.⁶ But the result of this erotic deception-upon-deception is the most nearly perfect manifestation of human agapic love during the Arthurian era in the person of Galahad.

Palomides is a character whom Williams felt to have been largely overlooked but of immense possibilities; three of the twenty-four poems in the *Taliessin* cycle are devoted to him. A Moslem, he exemplifies the heresy of oversimplified monotheism. He himself is dissatisfied with the constriction of Islam, although he does not consciously recognize the source of his dissatisfaction. Searching for truth, in "The Coming of Palomides," he arrives in Cornwall at the court of King Mark. A musician and mathematician, he gains access to the monarch and falls in love with Iseult at first sight. He immediately perceives that a paradox exists where earlier he would have dismissed the phenomenon as a ridiculous contradiction. This is the paradox inherent in identifying a purely abstract concept with an entirely sensuous entity: the Queen's beautiful arm, "curves of golden life," bent to support her chin, becomes a geometrical form, a triangle of "triple angles, triple sides". Suddenly Iseult appears to be truth, perfection, the sum of all things. But Palomides is an idealist who desires perfection, and when he discovers Iseult is engaged in adultery with Tristram, the integrity of the union between the intellectual process and the concrete body is lost in the immorality of the queen:

division stretches between
the queen's identity and the queen.

Relation vanished, though beauty stayed.

("The Coming of Palomides," 54)

His perception is correct; the queen is false and unity is destroyed. But Palomides is an idealist, who responds by swinging from one extreme to the other. Rather than trying to find a true woman, he rejects erotic love, and, in the impetus of his rejection, takes the wrong path in his own form of egotism. This is expressed in his determination to succeed in his ventures by himself. In his second poem, "Palomides before His Christening," he informs us that he had been determined to conquer, first, all the knights of the Round Table in chivalric combat, and second, his own lust. Then, he says,

I would consent to be christened,

I would come then to the Table on my own terms....

But things went wrong. (82)

Things went wrong on the chivalric field, for he made a most awful fool of himself. Then he retired to a mountain cave to conquer lust, which is represented by a weasel-like questing beast that Williams develops into a phallic image. In the cave Palomides attempted to conquer the beast by a severe ascetic life. The result was that he wore himself into a set of Ezekiel-like dry bones. Anorexic in body and soul, half dead, totally humble, Palomides gave up and went down the mountain to Camelot to be baptized under any terms.

In the final poem of the triad, "The Death of Palomides," Palomides has at last found what he sought. He has returned to the ascetic life, or the Path of the Rejection of the Images, but this time he is not alone or without guidance. He has lived with two Jewish devotees of the Kabbalah. His baptism was also accomplished through Dinadan, who had encouraged him, advised him, and, evidently, sponsored him. Thus, embraced by both Christian and Jewish forms of *philia*, he shows us that he has been taught agapic love. His understanding is summed up in two phrases derived from his study of Kabbalistic metaphysics: one, that all things are *Netzach*, or "the name of the Victory in the Blessing;" for the Lord created all things by means of his Blessing." The second is his affirmation that only God exists: "That Thou only canst be Thou only art" (97-98). Palomides had arrived in Britain searching for God; he thought he had found it in the intellectual marriage of mathematics and sensuality, only to discard this concept as wrong; yet at the end of his life he finds it in a metaphysical system that unites intellectual discipline with sensuousness.

For humanity, *eros* has its safest place within the controlled environment of Christian sacramental marriage. There *eros* and *philia* merge. It is to demonstrate this that Williams marries Bors to Elaine. Two poems deal with the subject: "Bors to Elaine; the Fish of Broceliande," and "Bors to Elaine; on the King's Coins". "The Fish of Broceliande" focuses more directly on the loves inherent in a true marriage, while "On the King's Coins" moves beyond the domestic center, incorporating the effects of the marriage within a discussion of *philia* in a socio-economic context.

"The Fish of Broceliande" is placed, in *Taliessin through Logres*, directly after "Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn," and thereby becomes an emphatic demonstration of the way in which *eros* should be assumed into human life. Bors comes home from court, bringing a metaphorical fish from the magic forest, Broceliande. He releases the fish in Elaine's hand and watches it swim through her body. The fish is both an ancient pagan symbol for fecundity and for Christianity, and Bors observes that the fish becomes Elaine's nova creature, an appropriate image taken from Dante to

express the one perfect wife in these cycles.

"Bors to Elayne; on the King's Coins" employs the same technique of combining a pagan symbol of abundance with a Christian image to describe Elayne. Bors now sees her as a Christian corn-goddess or Demeter: "I came in," Bors says, "I saw you stand, / in your hand the bread of love, in your head lightness of law. . . . you, / the sole figure of the organic salvation of our good" (60). She has also become the bearer of the Eucharist and of the Law; she represents the perfection of both the New and Old Testaments as she is engaged in helping her people directly, literally obeying the injunction, "Feed my lambs." Elayne is not only the perfection of erotic love, but she also represents a significant form of filial love in her immediate concern for her fellow human beings.

In the cycles *philia* becomes the most diverse of all the forms of love, and I can only begin to suggest the ways in which Williams explores it. In *Taliessin*, which is primarily a masculine cycle, *philia* is mainly found in masculine endeavors (although Elayne's activity is a notable exception). Masculine roles are those, Williams suggests, that create states, fight wars or generate ideas or poetry. *Summer Stars*, mainly feminine, tends to express *philia* in ways involving nurturing. The lines of demarcation are not simplistic, of course; there are overlaps because an essential concept in the cycles is that nothing in the universe can be complete or perfect without the presence of both genders. *Taliessin* also describes cases of failures in *philia*, and "On the King's Coins" contrasts Elayne's fitting personal role in caring for her people with the King's desire to put distance between himself and his people. Arthur has decided to institute coinage. Bors disapproves, convinced that money is an abstraction of the human exchange of goods and services. Money is therefore a debasement of *philia*. When one exchanges goods for goods, or services for services, or simply gives a good or a service, one deals immediately with people and is involved in the exchange of something of real value—that is, care. Coins are symbols for this exchange, and consequently they separate the acts of love from the human beings. Bors is also aware that this abstraction stems from the King's pride, which manifests itself here in the assumption that he can do as he likes. The kingdom exists for him, rather than he for the kingdom. It is this failure to extend love on his part that will contribute heavily to the fall of his reign.

Intellectuals, especially poets, function as the transmitters of *philia* in their work. Nowhere is this more clear than in the fact that, of the thirty-two poems in the two cycles, eighteen are either formal compositions by Taliessin (the King's poet), informal narrations by him, or, in part or wholly, poems about him narrated by others. He is the King's poet, and it is appropriate for us, the readers, to observe events at court largely through his eyes and mind; he is the transmitter of the legend, the history, and the identity of his people. But because of his poetic capacity he becomes much more. He becomes an effective leader of

cavalry at the Battle of Mount Badon; he becomes the person to whom everyone speaks and who, upon occasion, helps those who have been overlooked—who the slaves and servants. And finally he becomes the leader of an informal Company of Friends. Having no pretensions toward fortune or glory, composed of all social classes, this Company endures after the debacle of the Round Table because it is based on *philia* uncontaminated by personal aggrandizement and because it is kept true to that foundation by its selfless leader, the man who demonstrates that, unlike the lyric from *Brigadoon*, poets are not men who "just write about the things they cannot do."

Agape, of course, is everywhere. *Taliessin Through Logres* is dominated by God the Emperor and Creator, Who manifests Himself rarely, but when He does is either frightening, as an alien erotic force in "Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn," or triumphant, as in "The Vision of the Empire" at the beginning of the cycle. Although at the end of each cycle the Table is destroyed, Arthur killed and Logres dissolved, the effect is not tragic. The cycles do not begin or end in defeat, even though humanity makes a mess, because a God Who created by means of Victory in the Blessing overarches the whole. Moreover, the ends for which Arthur and the Table were made are accomplished. Those ends were not the establishment of Logres or the conquest of Europe, but the making of Galahad, the achievement of the Grail, the healing of Pelles and the establishment of a new state called Britain. All this is achieved, and nothing is lost, not even on the individual level. Guinevere repents. Lancelot, not a priest but consecrated by a final, genuinely selfless act in his return to help Arthur, celebrates a Mass to which come all the survivors and, in a general resurrection, Arthur as well as "all the dead lords of the Table."

Region of the Summer Stars is overshadowed by Christ the Twy-Natured and therefore by *philia agape*, the nurturing love of the triune God that is most suitably expressed by women and by male intellectuals. It is only now, in this second cycle, that Williams insists intellectuals must partake of the "feminine" aspect of Deity in order to fulfill their functions: when they create, they participate in the nature of God-Creator; when their works nurture humanity, they express Christ. There are four main female characters in *Summer Stars*: Guinevere; an unnamed Circassian slave; Percivale's sister (Blanchefleur in *Taliessin Through Logres* but Dindrane in *Summer Stars*); and Briesen. There are three men who partake of Twy-Nature: Taliessin; Merlin; and Deodatus, the Pope. In addition, Mordred has been given one short poem, a dramatic monologue ("The Meditation of Mordred"), which functions as an abrupt contrast to everything the intellectual males represent. The cycle in essence retells the entire Arthurian story but with totally different foci: it stresses the feminine and the intellectual perspective on events, particularly as these are manifested in philosophical issues such as the relationship among all organic bodies (specifically of women's bodies to the geography of Europe and to the planets of

the Zodiac), and the relationship between fate and freedom of will. Each woman is given very limited choices regarding how she will spend her life, and each right choice involves service. Guinevere's is to oversee her "Rose-Garden," which is simultaneously a garden within the castle but also the kingdom of Logres.⁷ She performs this task grudgingly and inadequately by farming it out. The slave accepts her fate by means of free choice. When she is given her opportunity to choose between liberty and servitude she chooses, freely, perpetual servitude. Dindrane has the choice of marrying Taliessin or entering a convent; she chooses the convent. Brisen, a magician, must serve the princess, Helayne, as a ladies' maid. The ideal feminine role is one of acceptance, service and self-sacrifice.

So, too, is the role of the intellectual. Taliessin, in love with Dindrane, must escort her to the convent and willingly give her up. Merlin's primary function is not to help Arthur but to save Galahad when Lancelot, insane, attempts to slaughter and eat his son. The Pope waits throughout both cycles. The reader sees only his hands, until at last, in the concluding poem, his prayer invokes the "Mercy" (Williams' customary term for Christ the Intercessor) to save civilization in the final cataclysmic winter when not only Arthur's kingdom goes down but all Europe is overcome by barbarians, necromancy, famine and wolves. This cycle does not end as triumphantly as does *Taliessin Through Logres*, but it does conclude on a note of quiet hope — the region of the summer stars is hope. Therefore everyone

felt the Empire

revive in a live hope of the Sacred City.

Kneeling after the Eucharist, the Pope said,
for the riches of loss, *Magnificat*; prostrate, he prayed:
'Send not, send not, the rich empty away.' (179)

And with these lines Charles Williams concluded his Arthurian cycles, having, to his mind, accomplished what he had set out to do: to infuse the legends with what they had always lacked — a profound spiritual significance that would invest them with the full capacity of the mythical imagination. And, in the end, what happens with the three degrees of love is that they are revealed to be one form: they flow into one another. *Eros* is merely one manifestation of divine love; so, also, is *philia*. As Williams observed in "The Making of *Taliessin*," the three Grail Knights form ... a significant hierarchy; and yet the hierarchy was one, for all three reached Sarra, and if Galahad alone achieved, yet it might be held that the Galahad-in-Born achieved as much as did the individual High Prince. (*Image* 180)

I think he felt that this was a metaphysics possessing an end sufficient to the means.

Notes

1. See *Arthurian Torso* in *Taliessin through Logres, The Region of the Summer*

- Stars, *Arthurian Torso*, ed. C. S. Lewis (rpr. 1976; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), and also *The Image of the City*, intro. and selections by Anne Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), several essays in Section VI, "On the Arthurian Myth," pp. 169-194.
- Williams felt Malory's main contribution was in his sense that Lancelot's and Guinevere's love for each other was so passionate and permanent that, in order to arrange a liaison with Helayne, Malory had to overcome the impossible. He did so "by holy enchantment and an act of substitution" (*Image* 189).
- See, for example, Kathleen Spencer, *Charles Williams* (Mercer Island: Starport, 1986); Robert J. Reilly, "Charles Williams and Romantic Theology," in *Romantic Religion: A Study of Barfield, Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), pp. 148-89; or Mary McDermott Shideler, *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1962).
- Malcolm South, "The Unicorn," in *Mythic and Fabulous Creatures: A Source Book and Research Guide*, ed. Malcolm South (N.Y.: Greenwood, 1987), p. 14.
- "The Vision of the Empire," *Taliessin through Logres*. All citations from the two poem cycles are taken from the Eerdmans edition, as it remains the most generally available, and numerical references are to page numbers.
- Interestingly, psychologists today recognize lycanthropy as a form of schizophrenia. Several cases have been recorded in recent decades. See "A Case of Lycanthropy," by Harvey A. Rosenstock and Kenneth R. Vincent, and "Lycanthropy Revisited," by Frida G. Surawicz and Richard Banta in *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture*, ed. Charlotte F. Otten (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 31-40.
- One is reminded of Shakespearean references to England as a garden and to his use, in the history plays, of a queen in a garden — notably Richard II, III, iv; also in Sir Laurence Olivier's production (and film) of Henry V. The red rose is a symbol of the Virgin's love for earthly concerns. This is an image Williams also uses in *All Hallows' Eve*.

MYTHOPOEIC CORE READING LIST

MYTHLORE frequently publishes articles that presuppose the reader is already familiar with the works they discuss. This is natural, given the purpose of this journal. In order to be a general help, the following is what might be considered a core reading list, containing the most well known and frequently discussed works. Due to the many editions printed, only the title and original date of publication are given.

J.R.R. Tolkien

The Hobbit, 1937; "Leaf by Niggle," 1945; "On Fairy-Stories," 1945; *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* 1954, *The Two Towers* 1954, *The Return of the King* 1955; *Smith of Wootton Major* 1967; *The Silmarillion* 1977.

C.S. Lewis

Out of the Silent Planet 1930; *Perelandra* 1943; *That Hideous Strength* 1945; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* 1950; *Prince Caspian* 1951; *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* 1952; *The Silver Chair* 1953; *The Horse and His Boy* 1954; *The Magician's Nephew* 1955; *The Last Battle* 1956; *Till We Have Faces* 1966.

Charles Williams

War in Heaven 1930; *Many Dimensions* 1931; *The Place of the Lion* 1931; *The Greater Trumps* 1932; *Shadows of Ecstasy* 1933; *Descent Into Hell* 1937; *All Hallows' Eve* 1945; *Taliessin through Logres* 1938, and *The Region of the Summer Stars* 1944 (the last two printed together in 1954).