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"Courtesy" in Charles Williams' *The Greater Trumps*

Abstract

Describes the tradition of courtesy in medieval court and monastic communities. Refers to these traditions and Williams's writings to define courtesy as he saw it. Notes the different levels of courtesy as defined by Williams.

Additional Keywords

Courtesy (medieval tradition) in *The Greater Trumps*; Williams, Charles. *The Greater Trumps*

"Courtesy"

in Charles Williams' *The Greater Trumps*

Charles Beach

Courteous it is to give;
high courtesy, to take;
but nobly, nobly shall he live
whom Love at last shall make
of his own revelation free. ("Percivale's Song" 346)

Much has been said about Charles Williams' view on love, especially his theology of romantic love, but these discussions have focused primarily on Dantean or biblical influences as they appear in Williams' novels, poems, and essays. However, one additional influence has been overlooked: the courtesy tradition. "Courtesy" permeates Williams' views on relationships between God and man, between neighbors, and between lovers. Perhaps there has been little critical discussion of "courtesy" in Williams' writings because he does not consistently use the term when he portrays courteous speech or actions. Or perhaps the omission has occurred because, as Jonathan Nicholls notes, the term sometimes remains vague and imprecise even in its medieval and Renaissance origins (7). Also, the meaning of "courtesy" in a particular written context often depends on the author's "intended significance" of the word, and, according to W. O. Evans, an understanding of this intention requires a study of the background from which the author worked (145). But once we arrive at a working definition of courtesy, we can examine Williams' use of the idea in a representative novel, *The Greater Trumps*.

Although courtesy has been diluted through common usage to mean politeness and well-mannered behavior, for his purposes Williams relies primarily on two separate but related medieval settings, the secular court and the monastery. Both sources of the courtesy tradition blend together to shape Williams' views on love (whether divine, neighborly, or romantic) and his views on human relationships.

Although Evans identifies the medieval association of "cortaysye" with both chivalry and courtly love (146-51), Williams has not restricted his use of the term to these contexts. Had he done so, courtesy would have been merely a by-product of the romantic experience. Certainly, Williams indicates that courtesy should accompany romantic love, as seen in a poem he wrote to his beloved wife Michal:

Nor I the less salute you that no face
Hath sent these heartbeats quicker, that no hand
Hath e'er touched mine save in due courtesy.
(*Silver Stair* 6)

Instead of relying on the courtly love tradition, Williams draws on the wider application of "courtesy" to the whole of life as described in "courtesy books" that, as John E. Mason suggests, in the later Middle Ages identified the proper conduct, education, and social role of the courtiers. In this definition, "courtesy" could be described "as a code of ethics, esthetics, or peculiar information for any class conscious group..." (Mason, 4). D.R.M. Wilkinson traces courtesy literature to its roots in early Greek philosophy, especially in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Focusing on its practical nature, Wilkinson defines the literature as "sets of rules or of maxims for the moral and/or social improvement of specific individuals or classes" put into writing, forming a kind of synthesis of "philosophy and theology...and the practical instruction given in a school" (Wilkinson 1-2).

The writings commonly called "courtesy books" originated in Italy during the late medieval period and quickly spread throughout Europe. At first, such courtesy books as Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Erasmus' *Instruction of a Christian Prince* were directed at rulers and their children, the future rulers. Baldesar Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* expanded the intended audience of courtesy literature by focusing not on the ruler but rather on the other members of the court. Castiglione's work prompted many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century imitators, such as Sir Thomas Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour*, which sought to educate young gentlemen and ladies on proper behavior (Thompson 137-38). But instruction on manners and social obligations was not limited to the aristocratic classes: guidebooks such as the anonymous fifteenth-century *A Generall Rule to Teche Every Man to Serve a Lorde or Mayster* instructed servants on the proper order of courses for each meal, the expected role each servant was to play within the household, and the improper actions - "fightyng, oreble chydng, maykng of debates, drawing of knyves and stelynges, affrayes and such other" (15) - which would draw punishment. In any case, Frank Whigham believes that, whether applied to a ruler, his courtiers, or other servants, courtesy was always "a systematic activity," a daily ritual (4).

This sense of courtesy - the ritualistic, proper manners and conduct of an individual according to the position he or she occupies within the social hierarchy - was important to Williams. He links courtesy to the details of daily existence, defining it as a simple act such as when "meeting a lady, instinctively rais(ing) one's hat" (*Windows* 50) or as

simply saying or doing something so someone else "might not feel displeasure or be enraged" (*Henry VII* 80). At various times in his correspondence with Lois Lang-Sims, Williams suggests that in her actions she demonstrates "high courtesy" (*Letters to Lalage* 57), that she resembles a royal figure whose "courtesy" may "stretch a hand of pardon" (46), and that she is "in all things courteous..." (51). In turn, Lang-Sims describes the ritualistic way Williams acted during their meetings: how he "courteously dismissed" her (32); how he seemed, as he exited a building, to move through the doors "as if they were the curtains of the royal chamber to be swept ceremoniously aside for our exit and entrance" (34-35); and how he kissed her hand at parting "with a combination of ritual solemnity, old-fashioned courtesy, and whimsical playfulness that no one but he could have produced..." (35).

Even though Williams established a hierarchy of courtesy, he never reduced courtesy to a list of things to do and things not to do. In his later years, when he accumulated a number of followers - the informal, generally unorganized group he called the "Companions of the Co-Inherence" - Williams drafted the "Promulgation of the Company," a brief, seven-part list of guidelines intended to form the basis of the members' interaction with each other, and, more importantly, their interaction with Williams. The promulgation is a statement of common purpose, a "concern [with] the practice of the apprehension of the co-inherence both as a natural and a supernatural principle." As such, the promulgation serves as the company's courtesy book, not by emphasizing specific rules but by urging the companions to contemplate the spiritual relationships within the Trinity and between God and the Church, as well as related spiritual matters. It also emphasizes human relationships, especially in "methods of exchange" (*Letters to Lalage* 30), though Williams never prescribes the specific ways in which each member must act. The guiding principle of the members' interrelationships is the heart of the theory of co-inherence itself: "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2).

In recalling Williams' actions, Lang-Sims comments on the emotional and spiritual overtones of the courtesy rituals. She suggests that the ritualistic behavior, with its emotional symbolism, confused her at first into thinking Williams loved her (*Letters to Lalage*, 32). It is easy to understand her confusion since Williams states that "love is always courtesy" (42), whether the love is directed toward God, a neighbor, or a lover. He does not establish a simple equation (love = courtesy), but rather produces something similar to C.S. Lewis' suggestion that "only the courteous can love, but it is love that makes them courteous" (2). Thus, there is an inherent connection between the two terms in that courtesy may be defined as the attitude and actions that develop out of love.

Note that courtesy does not require or necessarily involve the passion or illumination that accompanies love, especially romantic love. Courtesy is an act of the will that

may not engage the emotions of the individual because the will cannot, "by itself, create emotions" (*Image* 150). But courtesy has at its center a deeper, transcendent love that reveals its presence in the individual through the routine actions of everyday life. In Williams' thought, the transcendent love is divine: "God is Love, the gentle breeze/ touching the hot cheeks of the weary world" (*Three Plays* 74). In Williams' play *The Chaste Wanton*, when the Duchess asks the Bishop about romantic love, he replies with a definition that echoes Williams' descriptions of courteous actions:

A duteous carriage and a simple heart,
a ministering patience, a sedate control,
a temperate bearing and a frugal mind
caring for others more than for itself,
a gentle living by a spiritual rule,
a flying from temptation, a complete
passionless evacuation of the will. (*Three Plays*, 74)

Although the Duchess remains somewhat skeptical about romantic love, she recognizes in those external actions the presence of divine love: "This is the kingdom of heaven that comes within!" (74).

According to Nicholls, a strong connection exists between biblical teaching and medieval courtesy, especially as concerns "social behavior..." (21). Evans suggests that, in its English usage, courtesy came to include the details and principles of the Christian life (156-57). Early medieval monastic orders anticipated later secular courtesy writings with documents such as the *Benedictine Rule* that set guidelines for the monks' individual daily actions and their obligations to the community as a whole (Nicholls 23-24). These monastic rules were at first brief "outlines," but during the Middle Ages they came to include details about every function of daily life - a historical progression of general-to-specific Nicholls believes carried over into the secular court and its development of courtesy books beginning in the twelfth century (25).

This monastic heritage remains evident in Williams' writings, especially through the influence of Lady Julian of Norwich, a fifteenth-century anchoress from whom Williams obtained much of his understanding of the spiritual side of courtesy.¹ In her *Showings*, Julian describes sixteen revelations that she was granted by God - visions that revealed qualities of God's nature as shown through the suffering and Passion of Christ. She believes God sent her the visions out of "his courteous love" (191). Indeed, she perceives courtesy as the central divine characteristic: in the sixth revelation, Julian sees God as the master of a house who hosts a banquet to which he has invited his friends. She goes on to say,

Then I did not see him seated anywhere in his own house; but I saw him reign in his House as a king and fill it all full of joy and mirth, gladdening and consoling his dear friends with himself, very familiar and courteous... (203)

The picture of God is that of a medieval lord who always acts according to the principles of courtesy, a practice that involves giving himself to his friends, both formally according to pre-established social rules and informally according to his familiar relationship with his companions. It is important to note that this divine courtesy does not depend on the individual's personal merits or on the individual's response to God: the divine courtesy is extended toward all of creation (245). But, according to Julian, courtesy is not limited to God the Father: it is the character of Christ's sacramental and motherly giving to the Church, especially in the Eucharist (298, 301), and it is the motivation behind the working of the Holy Spirit toward the Church (294). Courtesy is also present in the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity. In the fifty-fifth chapter of the *Showings*, Julian speaks of Christ's presentation of the Church to God the Father, who, in turn, "courteously" returns the gift to the Son - a transfer which "is joy to the Father and bliss to the Son and delight to the Holy Spirit..." (286). After observing this divine example, Julian stresses the believer's need to respond to God's courtesy in a similar manner:

For our courteous Lord wants us to be as familiar with him as heart may think or soul may desire; but let us beware that we do not accept this familiarity so carelessly as to forsake courtesy. For our Lord himself is supreme familiarity, and he is courteous as he is familiar, for he is true courtesy. (331)

God alone is able to balance the formality of the courtesy rituals with the informality suggested by the word "familiarity." In doing so, he sets before his Church the model for personal conduct and relationships.

As a writer for whom the various elements of the Christian faith were of utmost importance, Williams sees in courtesy a means to communicate an individual's faith through his whole life. As a spiritual function, courtesy becomes a necessary vehicle for forgiveness and repentance (*Divorce* 46); it also becomes "chastity," the vibrant and living quality of purity that is "the reflection of the Divine Word" directed "towards men" (*Forgiveness* 25-26); and it becomes "our whole business towards our neighbors; it is indeed spiritual self-preservation..." (*Forgiveness* 70). In principle, courtesy is that love which a person directs toward his fellow humans in obedience to Christ's commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Williams' interpretation of courtesy therefore remains faithful to its roots in Christian belief, as described by the Pearl Poet:

In courtesy we are members all
Of Jesus Christ, Saint Paul doth write:
As head, arm, leg, and navel small
To their body doth loyalty true unite,
So as limbs to their Master mystical
All Christians belong by right. (Tolkien, 93)

From the poet's presentation, it is clear that courtesy is the means by which the bond between the members of the

Christian community - described using St. Paul's analogy of the human body in I Corinthians 12:12-27 - is maintained and strengthened. So when he describes an individual's conscious attempts to love another person and thus participate in the community, Williams is revealing the nature of that character's courtesy. Williams thus uses "courtesy" in the sense that, as Evans suggests, is the primary English meaning: "action intended to please or help others, or the spirit from which it springs" (143).

This kind of courtesy can be broken down into three levels or degrees. In his poem "Percivale's Song," Williams suggests that the first level of courtesy "is the heart...which wholly learns to give" in order "to please" the one who is being loved. The second level begins when the now "wiser" person recognizes that he is loved in return and "comes in turn to take from the beloved." The highest of all courtesies, according to Williams, results not from the mechanics of "giving and taking" but rather from the individual's "revelation" that he has become "Love and only Love" - the individual thus being in-dwelt by divine love (345-46). This level is both difficult to achieve and difficult to maintain for human beings, but, according to Williams, it is the level at which God exists. At the first two stages love remains primarily an external concept; in the third it becomes the essence of one's being. Though even at this final stage "love must ... be an act of the will" (*Image* 71), love may become so habitual as to cease to be a conscious act.

As a primary means of maintaining the Christian life, and like the other components of that life, courtesy involves the choice of obedience or disobedience: a person must decide whether to act in a courteous manner in each situation he faces. When a person chooses to love, he opens up to spiritual riches, while rejecting love could allow the individual to "enter [heaven] empty-handed" (*Silver Stair* 51). For Williams, the greatest evil is "the sin of indulging oneself in love instead of devoting oneself to the duty of love" (*Religion and Love* 21). Williams agrees with the orthodox Christian position on sin - that to refuse to do good is a sin in the same manner that doing evil is sinful ("Figure of Arthur" 85). And an inability to love often separates a person from his neighbors. For example, Williams argues that King Henry VII "was not alone, for he had his servants; but he had not given himself to any of them, and therefore he was alone" (*Henry VII*, 107).

Williams states that in the end "there is but one dichotomy: ... those who acknowledge that they live from the life of others, including their 'enemies,' and those who do not" (*Image* 113). By turning away from others and toward themselves, such individuals endanger their standing in the City of God (*Image* 120) and may ultimately find themselves in hell. By this, Williams does not emphasize a physical location: rather, hell is the spiritual state that results when any person consistently and willfully chooses self-love over courtesy, whether in ordinary human relationships, in academic circles, or in the church. Hell is essentially "a place where one lives without learn-

ing,' where no courtesy or integrity could any more be found or clarified," as Lord Arglay discovers in Williams' short story "Et in Sempternum Pereant" (155).

As we have seen, courtesy appears in Williams' thought as the proper means for demonstrating and preserving both the individual Christian life and the relationships within the Christian community. By examining a representative novel, we can have a clearer understanding of the ways in which Williams presents "courtesy" (or "discourtesy") in his characters.

In the novel *The Greater Trumps*, Sybil Coningsby acts with courtesy toward the other characters. She has reached Williams' third level of courtesy, in which there is no conscious awareness of the giving and taking involved in relationships, by learning to give up futile attempts to "enjoy" life and "love" others:

She had tried to enjoy, and she remembered vividly the moment when... it had struck her that there was no need for her to try or to enjoy: she had only to be still, and let that recognized Deity itself enjoy, as its omnipotent nature was. (125)

This sense of participation in the divine joy permeates all of Sybil's relationships, as she demonstrates throughout the novel, beginning in the first episode, when her niece Nancy asks her,

"Doesn't father ever annoy you, auntie?"...

"No, my dear," Miss Coningsby said.

"Don't we ever annoy you?" Nancy asked again.

"No, my dear," Miss Coningsby said.

"Doesn't anyone ever annoy you, aunt?" Ralph took up her chant.

"Hardly at all," Miss Coningsby said. "What extraordinary ideas your children have!

Why should anyone annoy me?" (8-9)

Sybil's courteous nature allows her to endure patiently her brother Lothair's habitual discontent; it also motivates her to go out into the storm to rescue him, an action that certainly saves his life. But she draws no attention to herself or to her own heroics. Rather, she frames the rescue in such a way that Lothair thinks it is he who is doing the rescuing; this thought gives him the strength to struggle to his feet and, leaning on Sybil's arm (while thinking she is leaning on his), he struggles back to the shelter of Aaron Lee's house (127-30). It is not until some time later that Lothair recognizes that he had been rescued by Sybil, and not the other way around (171-72).

Since courtesy involves strengthening the relationships between members of the community, Sybil shares her knowledge and experience with Nancy in order to help repair the damage done by Aaron and Henry Lee in their attempt to seize Lothair's magical Tarot cards. When Nancy discovers Henry was responsible for calling up the blizzard that threatened her father's life, her feelings for Henry turn to anger, and her heart becomes divided between love and hate (141-42). Nancy is still at the second

level of courtesy, in which she can both give and receive love while at the same time being aware of the actions by which love is exchanged. This awareness causes her to contemplate withholding her love from her fiancé because of his discourteous actions toward her father. But Sybil challenges Nancy to respond to Henry with the proper actions of courteous love:

Nancy, you said it yourself, there's death and there's you. Are you going to be part of death against Henry and against your father? Or are you going to be the life between them? You'll be power one way or another, don't doubt that; you've got to be. You've got to live in them or let them die in you. Make up your mind quickly, for the time's almost gone. (142)

Nancy does not understand exactly what Sybil means, but she understands enough to follow her aunt's advice and reconcile herself to Henry and serve as the means for reconciling him to Lothair. In this newfound willingness to love even when she feels like hating, she moves farther down the path that led Sybil to the highest level of courtesy.

At the beginning of the novel, Lothair Coningsby reveals his annoyance with his family, an attitude which results from their demands on his time and energy (9 - 10). But this annoyance is a symptom of an underlying frustration within him:

Something had always been unfair to him, luck or fate or something. Some people were like that, beaten through no fault of their own, wounded before the battle began; not everybody would have done so well as he had. But how it dogged him - that ghastly luck! (11-12)

Unlike his sister Sybil, Lothair does not perceive the world as a place of courtesy and love. He sets himself and his desires ahead of the needs of others and resists their claims on him - thus taking the first steps toward hell. But once he realizes that Sybil rescued him from the storm, Lothair is able to admit his problem is not caused by other people, nor is it the fault of impersonal "luck": his problem is *himself*. He has been unwilling to give himself to others because he fears that, in taking such steps, "he always seemed having to be reciprocal than anybody else" (172). From the moment of this discovery, he begins to change, first recognizing that "one mustn't be selfish - especially on Christmas Day" (173). Shortly thereafter, he intervenes on Nancy's behalf and rescues her from Joanna's control, just before the old Gypsy was about to perform a magical sacrifice using the girl (213-14). In taking such action, Lothair learns to give of himself to those he loves - and moves into the first level of courtesy.

The characters who act without courtesy stand as sharp contrasts to the courteous. For instance, Henry Lee acts discourteously toward Nancy and her family by seeking to possess the Tarots even at the expense of Lothair's life. He does not consider how his actions will affect his relationship with Nancy; he is shocked when she discovers his spell-making and interrupts him. At that moment, the

illusion of courtesy in which he had clothed his actions is undone, and the two lovers "had been brought into knowledge of each other, and might speak clearly" (122). But his discourteous actions are countered by Sybil's courtesy toward Lothair and Nancy's willingness to return betrayal with cautious love. As a result, Lothair is rescued, and Henry is ultimately restored to Nancy, to her family and to the human community. But his restoration is achieved only by his acceptance of Nancy's forgiveness and love, and through his defeat as a schemer and magician – a defeat he ultimately confesses to Lothair (207-09). Though he believes he loves Nancy, Henry proves by his willingness to endanger her father's life that he does not yet truly love. With Nancy's help, he must begin again by learning first how to receive love, then learn how to give it.

The behavior of Henry's great-aunt Joanna indicates a greater degree of discourtesy. In her madness she identifies herself with the goddess Isis, who, according to ancient legend, roams about searching for her dead son, Osiris. Though Henry and the others see Joanna's speech as merely the ravings of an "old gypsy-woman," Sybil recognizes here an image pointing to Joanna's ultimate search for Christ. Like Henry and Aaron, Joanna misunderstands the mystical imagery in which she has immersed herself, and she uses the myth for her own selfish purposes. But there is a difference here: Joanna's efforts appear on the surface to involve a desire for power, but Sybil perceives that Joanna's real desire is to be restored to her firstborn, who died shortly after birth. Although she has used her knowledge to manipulate others, Joanna has the opportunity to repent, a possibility that is pictured in the novels' final pages, as she accepts Nancy in place of both her dead son and his temporary replacement, the dull automaton Stephen. She recognizes in Nancy the courtesy and vitality of Christ, qualities she first perceived in her own child (230). Joanna's submission to the love of Nancy shows a transformation from her earlier discourtesies, in which she ordered Stephen to attack Lothair, who was trying to protect the Tarot figures (178), and she attempted to cut Nancy in order to satisfy her grief (198 - 99). This change in Joanna's response to Nancy suggests the possibility that the old woman, too, may begin moving toward the upward path of courtesy.

Henry's grandfather Aaron is first introduced as a solitary figure whose overriding passion is to penetrate the mystery of the Tarots (25), and this isolated lifestyle is the first suggestion that Aaron lacks courtesy. In his desire to manipulate events in his favor, he first extends to the Coningsbys his counterfeit hospitality, then convinces Henry to make the attempt on Lothair's life (87-88). Ultimately, Aaron's lack of courtesy contributes to his spiritual paralysis during the climactic events of the novel. Instead of participating in the revelation of the mystery of the Tarots, he can only stand "stupefied" (182), become filled with "horror" (186), and watch the others act (187). While his self-absorption and potential damnation has not pro-

gressed to the full extent of Lawrence Wentworth's in Williams' *Descent into Hell*, Aaron has consistently chosen self over community because he misunderstood the mystery of the Tarots, thinking it involved power when it instead involved love. As a result, he remains outside the blessing of the Tarots when they come alive in glory: despite his lifetime study of the mystery, he can only watch the dancing Tarot figures as from a distance and be "ashamed" (228).

Thus, in *The Greater Trumps*, Williams has presented characters who, by the end of the novel, stand at each of the levels of courtesy: Lothair begins to give of himself to those he loves; Nancy learns to give and receive love even when she has a legitimate reason to reject love; and Sybil remains in a state of continuous love. In addition, three characters have acted discourteously in order to fulfill their individual goals, even though they endanger their social communal relationships in the process. As a presentation of the differing levels of courtesy and discourtesy, *The Greater Trumps* serves as a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive, "courtesy book." However, this development of courtesy and discourtesy through the actions of characters is not limited to *The Greater Trumps*. Throughout his fiction and poetry, Williams portrays other characters who either practice courtesy in their daily lives or choose to reject their responsibilities to other members of the community. It remains the critic's task to reevaluate Williams' other writings in light of his use of the courtesy tradition.

Notes

1. In *The Passion of Christ* (1939) and *The New Christian Year* (1941), the two anthologies of religious writings he compiles, Williams cites from Julian's *Showings* 93 thirty-one times. The only writers or writings Williams cites more often are John Donne, St. Augustine, William Law, Blaise Pascal, *The Paradise of the Fathers*, and Søren Kierkegaard.

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TALES NEWLY TOLD

(continued from page 15)

the techno-military establishment, escapes from her hand-drawers and flees to a surrealistically transformed Washington, D.C. The political intrigues of the plot however, take a back seat to Hand's sensuous, wonder-filled evocation of the strange world she has created. Her writing is polished and intensely visual, full of bright colors and suggestive shapes, very much in the tradition of the high-fantasy authors who have been most strongly driven by the need to express their private universes. There is much darkness and horror in her vision, of course — a legacy of the suffering visited upon the world by our civilization in its death-throes; and when, with the decay of Cartesian thinking, a god is again free to incarnate in our midst, it is a god of death and destruction. Yet his coming is a catharsis, a way of cleaning the slate — a weird beauty has, paradoxically, come into being among the ruins.

Æstival Tide depicts the situation in even more archetypal terms. The city of Araboth, which has for long years been sealed off from the war-scarred chaos of the world Outside, is ruled over by the three Orsina sisters, who each typify a different sort of vice. Like the Green Witch in *The Silver Chair*, they have consolidated their power by claiming that their city is all that there is, and instilling in their people a terrified loathing of the natural world beyond the city's walls, periodically reinforcing this with a Feast of Fear, in which a brief glimpse of the sea and sky outside is accompanied by mindless violence and death. Yet the evil of the Orsinate goes far beyond that of an unusually oppressive political tyranny: it has genuinely diabolical, soul-destroying ambitions. Throughout its domain, the symbols and values of religious traditions are systematically derided and robbed of their imaginative power. The nine levels of Araboth are named after the nine choirs of angels,

though the cruelties committed there are in no way angelic. Organized religion is allowed to survive, but only as grotesque parody (e.g. the Church of Christ Cadillac). The Compassionate Redeemer is a horrible monster who kills innocent people during the Feast of Fear. Assailed by so many attempts to numb their sense of humanity, the inhabitants of Araboth have adapted in a variety of ways: some practice the art of "timoring" — i.e., trying to shock themselves into some kind of emotional response by torturing fellow humans.

Yet there are weak points in the defenses of this closed fortress where pain feeds upon pain. The rulers of Araboth have no control over the elaborate technology that sustains the city. A mythology has grown up about the great tidal wave Ucalegon, which will some day bring destruction and retribution. At the lowest level of the city in dreaded contact with the living earth, is the beautiful android Nefertity, a nemosyne — a talking literary archive originally designed by a feminist church — who keeps the healing art of mythopoeia alive by telling stories to an audience of dehumanized outcasts. Zalophus, a huge whale-like creature prophesies the destruction of Araboth and dreams of joining his "sisters" in the world Outside — a seemingly impossible dream, since he is the product of a laboratory. But the focal point of change comes to be Reive, a gynander (one of a caste of hermaphrodites who fulfill the function of soothsayers) who is actually the forgotten child of one of the Orsina sisters, and whose unique psychic talent finally unsettles the hierarchy of Araboth.

Retribution does indeed come, and possibilities are re-defined (even Zalophus' dream comes true), but not before Hand's superbly controlled writing has led the reader on an unforgettable roller-coaster ride of varied emotions and sensations. As the book ends, the remnants of military-technological civilization are still desperately holding on to survival, still trying to maintain power through war. A sequel is evidently planned, in which, one presumes, some of the characters from *Winterlong* will re-appear and join forces with the survivors of Araboth. With these first two volumes her tale, Elizabeth Hand has proven herself as a master of her craft, whether one thinks of it as science fiction or high fantasy, and the third will be awaited with eagerness and high hopes.



ERRATUM OF TALES NEWLY TOLD: in issue 68, page 10, column two, the end of the paragraph should read:

Harry's Turtledove's "The Decoy Duck" is set in the universe of his "Videssos" books, exemplifying the world-building genre of fantasy which, in its most intricate and intellectually demanding form, was certainly instituted by Tolkien. Peter S. Beagle's "The Naga" is feigned to be a lost chapter from Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*, echoing Tolkien's device of giving his works sources in supposed ancient manuscripts.

Apologies for the previous omission of the words in bold type.