

Enchanting the Disenchanted: The Role of Charles Williams' Talisman Novels in the
Formation of Romantic Theology

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the direction of Randall G. Styers)

Written during the interwar years in Europe, when such modernist authors as Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and Huxley were active, Charles Williams' Christian novels, with their unshakable faith in the power of Christian love, stand in sharp contrast to the disillusioned and disenchanted themes of literary modernism. In this thesis, I offer a close reading of three of Williams' early novels, *War in Heaven* (1930), *Many Dimensions* (1931), and *The Greater Trumps* (1932), and explicate the complex literary imagery Williams uses to convey his simple Christian maxim that Love (i.e., Christ) is the ultimate force at work within an enchanted and animistic universe. Ultimately, I argue that these three novels, known as the "talisman novels," form an intertextual trinity through which Williams evolves his three principles of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence into his mature doctrine of Romantic Theology.

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I

INTRODUCTION

If this principle of exchange, substitution, and co-inherence (inhering in each other) is at all true, then it is true of the whole nature of man. If it is true, then we depend on it altogether—not as a lessening of individuality or moral duty but as the very fundamental principle of all individuality and of all moral duty.

Charles Williams, *The Way of Exchange*

In recent decades, the themes of enchantment and re-enchantment have re-emerged in scholarly conversations over secularism, echoing and building upon the earlier contributions of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Secularization, or the retreat from religion as indicative of humanity's progression into the modern world, has been much debated, particularly as religion and religious faith continue to influence world affairs, cultural paradigms, and individual expression. Despite the violent conflicts of the early twentieth century, the march toward a secular modernity wherein religious notions are antiquated and quaint, has been undermined by the efforts of individuals and groups seeking to re-energize religious faith across the globe.

The World Wars seemed to reflect Weber's theory that the capitalist industrialization of Europe and America, driven by the work ethic of Protestant Christianity, had resulted in a mechanized view of the universe and threatened to destroy the last vestiges of supernaturalism in Christianity. As such, Weber's pronounced "disenchantment" echoed the disillusionment with existing Christian paradigms felt by

avant-garde artists and writers in the early twentieth century, giving rise to the fragmented and fractured subjectivity portrayed in modern art and literary modernism.¹

Such “disenchantment” has been countered by reassertions of “enchantment” that has taken many forms, including religious fantasy fiction. To be enchanted is, as Jane Bennett suggests, “to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday.”² Enchantment is to view the world with childlike wonder, finding joy and magic in daily encounters. Despite the brutal conflicts that characterized the twentieth century, artists and novelists continued to work with magical and supernatural themes. Such enchantment is not an anomaly, but an important addition to the discussion over secularization and the power of religious faith into our own century, and we must broaden the conversation to consider the work of alternative and minor authors and artists working outside of what would eventually be termed “literary modernism.”

One such author is the British poet, novelist, and lay theologian Charles Williams (1888-1945). In this thesis, I argue that Williams promoted an enchanted world view and advocated a lay theology that called Christians back to believing in an animated, magical universe accessible through his doctrine of Romantic Theology and its three main principles: Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence, which will be discussed at length in this paper.³ Using fiction to both develop and disseminate Romantic Theology, Williams serves as a case study for re-envisioning the disillusionment and disenchantment of the religious world-view in the arts of the modernist period as he sought to create an active and participatory theology that every person could emulate.

In so doing, Williams used an artistic medium, the novel, to fill a gap in religious authority at a time when religious authority was not engaging with the populace. Williams' "talismán novels," *War in Heaven* (1930), *Many Dimensions* (1931), and *The Greater Trumps* (1932) each revolve around a magical object and present ordinary individuals confronting a supernatural world for which they are ill prepared. Triumph comes when these mundane humans become channels for God's love, draw upon innate Christ-like abilities, and overcome supernatural forces unleashed by self-aggrandizing occultists seeking knowledge and power. Three of his earliest novels, these talismán novels serve as allegories by which Williams asserts a place for Romantic Theology in a modern, urban world. Re-evaluating the Christian novels of Charles Williams challenges scholars of religion, literary critics, and historians to find a place for alternate texts within conversations of secularization, disenchantment, and enchantment.

Williams chose the novel as his medium and carefully crafted his literary devices to serve his overall theological program. Through them, he criticized what he considered gaps in Church doctrine and constructed his Romantic Theology in a consumable form for his audience. For an author writing in the interwar period of the twentieth century, Williams' novels, which advocate a mystical surrendering to God, diverge considerably from the modernist authors of his time. Literary modernists such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, Upton Sinclair, and William Faulkner, were dealing with new themes such stream-of-consciousness, progress and regress, psychoanalysis, authenticity, industrialization, women's rights, etc., in their prose. The literary modernists were not calling their audience back to Christian faith in

God's progressive plan for humanity. Yet, Williams' talisman novels were contemporary with the literary modernists.

Unlike his modernist peers, Williams never shed his Christian Romanticism. His mystic purview derives primarily from an almost medieval understanding of the nature of the cosmos. We know that Dante's *La Vita Nuova* and *La Divina Commedia* as well as Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* profoundly influenced Williams' theological perspective.⁴ His theology derives from an intuitive poetic understanding of the nature of reality, rather than a secular grasp of the materialist forces at work in the world.

Williams wrote during the most turbulent war years known in history, yet never lost his Christian faith or his childlike belief that the spiritual world lied just behind a material veil. Despite losing two friends in World War I and being evacuated from London during the German air raids of World War II, Williams continued to believe in God's ultimate goodness and victory over evil. Although Williams had close ties to the Church of England, his writings do not reflect traditional theological interpretations of Christianity. Instead, Williams contends that mere humans can participate in Christ-like divinity, in what he came to call "the Mystery of Love," through acts of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence. In what follows, I explore Williams' enchanted worldview through an assessment of the literary images and themes in his three early novels, *War in Heaven* (1930), *Many Dimensions* (1931), and *The Greater Trumps* (1932). Further, through an analysis of the intertextuality of the three talisman novels, I deconstruct the devices that Williams uses to relay his Romantic Theology, demonstrate the evolution of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence that support Romantic Theology, and suggest that the literary work of Williams is not simply an anomaly, but is indicative of the

continuation of Protestant Enchantment during the most violent conflicts of the twentieth century.

The Birth of Romantic Theology

Prior to his novels, Williams wrote his first serious attempt at theology between 1924-1925 that came to be known as *Outlines of Romantic Theology*, and which I believe Williams abandoned as he matured as a thinker. Though Williams was wildly enthused about the possibilities of *Outlines'* impact on the theological discourse of his day, Nonesuch Press rejected it for publication in 1925. Another press, Faber & Gwyer (later Faber & Faber) considered it, but only if Williams agreed to make substantial revisions. Though a reluctant Williams agreed to make the required changes, it was not published during his lifetime. Williams' earliest biographer and critic, Mary Alice Hadfield, suggests that the economic situation in England intervened and Williams ultimately lost interest in the text. Hadfield tells us that Williams never did make the required changes, since the only extant manuscript was in John Pellows' possession, which she reproduced in the published version of 1990. Hadfield does not speculate on what changes needed to be made to satisfy Faber & Gwyer, nor does she address directly the contents of the treatise.⁵

Mary McDermott Shideler, another of Williams' friends and students, does not discuss *Outlines* in her *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (1962). Evidently, the treatise was unavailable to Shideler at the time she wrote her monograph. In formulating her detailed exposition of Williams' Romantic Theology, Shideler drew upon Williams' later works, including his novels, histories,

poetry, published articles, reviews, novels, and later theology. In so doing, Shideler reads Williams' mature thought back into his early literary endeavors.⁶ Shideler's text is incredibly dense, sprinkled through with direct quotations taken from Williams' various writings, but pays no attention to the developmental formulation of Williams' theological doctrines through his fictional works. It is unfortunate that Shideler did not have access to *Outlines*, for this text serves as an important window into the maturation of Williams' Romantic Theology through his early novels.

Certainly, Williams' *Outlines* provides valuable context for the worldview he presents in the novels. *Outlines* is exuberant and poetic, innocent and fantastical, and reflects a literary mind highly influenced by the Romantic poets. Initially, Williams had hoped his presentation of Romantic Theology would change how the Church viewed the role of conjugal relations. As Williams's writing matured, however, he expanded his Romantic Theology to include Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence—missing from the *Outlines*—thereby enhancing the simplistic original model. It is through the talisman novels that these doctrines are developed and exemplified. Though dismissed outright by most of Williams' critics as a mark of his immaturity as a novelist, the talisman novels demonstrate an important stage in the formulation of Romantic Theology as it develops from a conceptually naïve thought experiment on the role of conjugal relations, to the sophisticated doctrines of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence through which, Williams suggests, all humans can participate in the Mystery of Christ.

But what precisely does Williams mean by “Romantic Theology”? In *Outlines*, Williams presents Romantic theology as apprehending Christ—experienced as Love—when conjugal lovers, in selflessly giving themselves to one another, realize the mystical

Love of Christ. Unlike the Eucharist and Incarnation, which have received immeasurable attention by theologians, Williams criticizes the Church for its lack of theological reflection upon marriage. Consequently, he seeks to redress this lacuna in the inventory of acceptable spiritual practices within the Protestant Church tradition in an attempt to restore marriage as a full sacrament alongside Baptism and the Eucharist. He even goes so far as to redefine marriage “to cover the whole process of love from the first appearance between two people to its remote and indefinable end.”⁷

Williams’ mystical foundation for marriage sees God as accessible through the giving of married partners to each other, mirroring Christ’s unselfish sacrifice upon the Cross.⁸ Williams himself tells us:

The Principles of Romantic Theology can be reduced to a single formula: which is the identification of love with Jesus Christ and marriage with his life.⁹

It is a theology as exact as any kind, but having for cause and subject those experiences of man, which, anyhow in discussions of art, are generally termed Romantic.”¹⁰

To make his points, Williams often replaces “Christ” or “Lord” with “Love.”¹¹ Further, Williams sees Mary as the divine feminine example of Love. Unfortunately, however, he fails to acknowledge that Mary’s role in the church and in dogmatic theology is unconsummated and sexless. Thus, she cannot serve as an example of married love for that reason. Williams’ presentation of Mary’s role is not fully developed in this early piece. It is amorphous; Mary is figurative and archetypal rather than an active. Williams romanticizes Mary as the unselfish bearer of Love, but denies her participation in the experience of Romantic Theology as he himself conceived it. This tendency is evident in William’s early novels as the female characters have little agency. They are

either rescued by male agents, or must come to accept their role as channels for divine Will (Love). By the time he writes *The Greater Trumps*, however, the two main female protagonists in this novel recall the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene in the gospel tradition, yet point the way toward an actualized Romantic Theology.

In *Outlines*, other figures of the New Testament serve as personified metaphors. In contrast to the selfless Christ and the Virgin Mary, Williams presents Herod as the archetype of selfish desire, while John the Baptist serves as the archetypal teacher for the way of Love (Christ). Williams abstracts Mary, Herod, John the Baptist, and the disciples in much the same way that C.G. Jung did the Greco-Roman gods, seeing in them representations of human qualities. Poetically transforming the historical New Testament figures into archetypes, Williams manipulates them metaphorically and poetically for his own theological purposes by combining Platonic ideals with literary tropes.¹² Christ is Love, and marriage becomes the Eucharistic Mass. Ultimately for Williams, the union of Christ and Church expressed in the Mass can be achieved through conjugal union between husband and wife.¹³

Given that Williams' interest and exposure to theology at this phase in his life was literary and biblical rather than academic, it is unsurprising that he considers Dante, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Coventry Patmore as experts in romantic love along with the medieval female mystics, including Lady Julian of Norwich. Therefore, at this early stage, Williams' theology derives primarily from literary sources. His theology is steeped in poetics and cannot be separated from it, as he tells us:

For the exactest statements of the birth of love and the beginning of marriage we have to go to the poets; it is they who have most truly expressed a general experience.¹⁴

Though a great deal has been written on the subject especially the great love poets, the author does not know of any book which attempts to make a beginning of it as a scientific theological study.¹⁵

The poetic response to Christianity is not new. Williams stands within a long lineage of Christian poets. Indeed, Williams never discusses either the patriarchy or misogyny that has characterized the Christian church. His Romantic Theology is a poetic and literary explication of marriage as an expression of union with Christ written during the time in his life when he himself had fallen in love. Yet, Williams cannot universalize this theology, nor implement it among individual couples. In *Outlines*, Romantic Theology is only a romantic vision of how married partners can express the perfect love of Christ. But like any mystical or ecstatic state, it is not readily accessible to individual Christians, and remains transitory. I believe that Williams realized this, and his move to fiction indicates the process in formulating a more sophisticated Romantic Theology for all Christians. To fully appreciate Williams' use of allegory and imagery in his novels, a reading of his *Outlines of Romantic Theology* becomes necessary, as his later fictional characters echo the theological ideas with which Williams was working in the early treatise. Reading Williams' talisman novels illuminates them as the means through which he worked out his mature and systematic doctrine of Romantic Theology. Williams' later Romantic Theology moved beyond conjugal expression to demonstrate how everyday, individual, working class, city-dwellers might participate in Christ as Love.

What follows then is an exegesis of Williams' three talisman novels as the medium through which Williams formulates his doctrine of Romantic Theology through its individual elements, Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence. Williams carefully imbues the literary elements with symbolic and allegorical importance, appropriating

historical figures for character names, inventing or reinventing occult traditions, and referencing imagery between the three novels. In so doing, Williams disavows modern notions of secularism while writing in a subjective style that mixes genres, critiques traditional religious authority, and calls the reader back to simple faith in an enchanted universe under God's sovereign direction.

The Development of Romantic Theology in the Talisman Novels

Charles Williams was a published poet and critic before undertaking the role of novelist. A lecturer on poetry as well as proofreader and editor employed at Oxford University Press for most of his life, Williams was deeply invested in studying and employing figurative language. Thus, all of his novels are purposefully literary, drawing particular attention to the language and what is signified. Readers must plow their way through visionary expositions of the numinous experiences that Williams attempts to convey in ways that Roland Barthes refers to as “writerly.”¹⁶ By leading the reader through a seemingly ordinary plotline, Williams gradually reveals the central message of each novel that Love is the ultimate universal power that binds and interconnects all things in creation, which becomes his principle of Co-inherence.

In each talisman novel, the protagonist must make a decision. As I will demonstrate, that decision ultimately results in some kind of sacrifice, which exemplifies the Substitution principle of Williams' Romantic Theology. Williams' protagonists' self-sacrifice and willingness to take up the burdens of others, mirrors Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross. The Incarnation of Christ and Christ's sacrificial death (Substitution), as well as Christ's taking up humanity's burden of sin (Exchange) thereby redeeming

humanity, stand as the pinnacle of Williams' principle of Co-inherence. Co-inherence is the interdependence of all things—spiritual, physical temporal, spatial—which emanate from God. Consequently, Williams advances his belief that the choice to follow Christ's example is available to every individual. Humans, however, are free only insofar as they actively and consciously accept their role as conduits of God's Love in an interconnected web of mutual dependence. Through Substitution and Exchange, humans proceed to understand that everything in creation is an expression of God's Unity. Co-inherence emanates from this Unity. Creation, motion, matter, spirit, life—all revolve around mutual co-dependence in a series of correspondences where everything is interconnected and emanates from the Christian Trinity. Humans participate in Co-inherence whether or not they are aware of it. For Williams, Co-inherence is the force, which both forms and surrounds created order.

Williams orbits around these themes in his early poetry and experiments with them in his three talisman novels before discussing these principles in his later theological treatises.¹⁷ Williams, however, never fully articulates the difference between Substitution and Exchange in his theological treatises. Instead, he demonstrates Substitution and Exchange in the novels, which is why critics like Hadfield and Shideler must look to his fiction for explicating these two principles of Romantic Theology. In the talisman novels, Williams' characters experience Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence when a magical object disrupts the daily life of the characters. This "talisman" is both spiritual and material at once. The magical talisman opens the channel to the divine world by effecting sacrifice, surrender, and Love within the protagonists.

I hope to show that Williams' talisman novels are not only metaphysically engaging, but are theologically complex. They are also delightfully witty and stamped with Williams' particular brand of ironic, playful humor. As we will see, each talisman novel is a field of intertextual play, in dialogue with each other as well as classical literature, ecclesiastical history, Christian legend, occult traditions, and literary modernism. The action is presented as suspense, but the talisman novels bear little resemblance to the typical format of the suspense genre. Instead, the prose vacillates between the mundane language of daily life and esoteric descriptions of the numinous realm, which, for Williams, lies just behind the phenomenal world.

Williams was never widely read, either in his own lifetime or later. Perhaps this was because his novels have a mystical Christian message that was lost against the realities of post-war Europe. Williams' message to call readers back to the Christian fold, and provide them with a paradigm for participating in Christ failed to reach an audience struggling to grapple with the wholesale devastation and destruction across Europe. Despite this failure, Williams' talisman novels serve as allegorical models through which Williams laid the foundations for the more fully developed Romantic Theology that eventually emerged in his last two novels *Descent Into Hell* (1937), and *All Hallow's Eve* (1945) as well as his later theological works. Through the talisman novels, Williams not only expresses a resistant enchantment against the brutal realities being faced by Europeans during the period of World Wars, but also develops the three key principles of his doctrine of Romantic Theology to promote that enchanted world-view.

In section two, I discuss the setting, plot, and characterization in *War in Heaven* to argue that Williams uses this novel as the mechanism through which he formulates his

principle of Substitution. In section three, I explore how Williams expands Substitution to include Exchange in *Many Dimensions*. In section four, I analyze his last talisman novel entitled *The Greater Trumps*, in which the three principles come together for the first time and Co-inherence emerges fully formed. Finally, I suggest that Williams' Romantic Theology serves as an example of enchantment as a direct response to the threatening fragmentation of the human subject reflected in literary modernism against the interwar and postwar conditions Europe. Ultimately, I argue that Williams' talisman novels, long neglected in scholarly conversations of religion and secularization, offer an important case study in the use of the novel as an art form to renew an enchanted Christian theology, during a period of history when Christian expression in the arts was being eclipsed by literary modernism.

II

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSTITUTION IN *WAR IN HEAVEN*

Of material things still discoverable in the world the Graal had been nearest to the Divine and Universal Heart. Sky and sea and land were moving, not towards that vessel, but towards all it symbolized and held.

Charles Williams, *War in Heaven*

Context

In this section, I argue that *War in Heaven*, Williams' first published novel, serves as an instructive allegory that advocates a self-less surrender to God through its literary imagery, symbols, and themes. Williams not only demonstrates Substitution as self-sacrifice, he also gestures toward Exchange, both require giving oneself over to God's will. In this first novel, however, the principles of Substitution and Exchange are not completely distinct, nor firmly established as principles. The novel's other themes—chaos and order, human verses divine power, and divine Love and salvation—support Substitution by bringing about the willing self-sacrifice of the main protagonists.

By the time he published *War in Heaven* in 1930, Williams had been working as a proofreader at Oxford University Press for nearly twenty-two years, had already published one verse drama and four volumes of poetry. In addition, Williams lectured regularly at a London college for working adults on literary criticism and poetic discourse. His association with the famous occultist and Rosicrucian A.E. Waite (begun in 1915) had introduced him to the mystical systems of alchemy, hermeticism, and

Kabbalah. Williams studied occultism under Waite, becoming a member of the latter's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross (FRC) after 1917. Williams, however, left the FRC in 1927 for unknown reasons.¹ Along with Williams' scholar Gavin Ashenden, I believe that Williams' poetic temperament absorbed the imagery and symbolism he was exposed to during his period of studying occultism with Waite.² Certainly, Williams draws upon a wide variety of sources to create the literary imagery in the talisman novels. Williams' immersion in the literary world of Oxford University Press and the esoteric systems offered by Waite, transformed Williams into an adept rhetorician conversant in literary symbolism and allegory. His later studies of church history, theology, and literature were fueled by his own desire to capture the poetic essence of the literary word. Williams sought a revealed Christian "truth" in verse imagery. This is apparent in his own poetry as well as in his interpretation of poetic forebears.

Deconstructing Williams' imagery reveals the primary binary with which he was deliberately working: spiritual verses material priority. Williams had for a long time been interested in reconciling the two ways: *via affirmativa* (way of affirmation), which follows the physical/material world, and *via negativa* (way of negation), the ascetic renunciation of the physical world in favor of spiritual pursuits.³ This binary emanates throughout the novels as Williams seeks to reconcile it. He does so by imbuing a magical object with both spirit and matter at once, in the same way that Christ was both divine and human at once, but this is just one element of Williams' rhetorical imagery. Williams' intertextual use of place and character names evokes specific images that enhances his rhetorical strategy.

In his novels, Williams never fully articulates what constitutes his principle of Substitution. He alludes to it in his chapter, “The Practice of Substituted Love,” in a later theological treatise entitled, *He Came Down From Heaven* (1938):

Among the epigrams of the kingdom which Saint John arranged in his Gospel immediately before the triumph of the kingdom, he attributed to Messiah [Williams’ term for Christ] the saying, ‘Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ It is, on a second glance, a doubtful truth.... ‘It is no more that I live, but Christ that liveth in me’ is the definition of the pure life which is substituted for both.⁴

Substitution is directly connected to Christ’s *willing* self-sacrifice, not simply the act, but the selfless motivation behind it. Individuals can participate in Christ by following his example through their own willingness to sacrifice themselves for others. Hadfield tells us that this notion first dawned in Williams mind when he lost two of his close friends on the battlefield during World War I. Williams himself, never served in the military. He had been denied entry into the service because of his eyesight and neuralgia, and felt the loss of his friends not only as mourning. This sorrow becomes for Williams a theological insight into God’s will. Hadfield remarks:

He suffered greatly through not being able to share the risks and sacrifice of his friends, while consenting to the war which caused them. He was not a pacifist in 1914 nor in 1939. It would have been easier for him to be a soldier than an ‘unfit’ civilian benefiting from the pains of his friends.⁵

Affected by the war, but not able to directly participate in battle, no doubt Williams turned to his writing as means for expressing loss and sacrifice. In *War in Heaven*, Williams first demonstrates his nascent idea of Substitution, but not on the battlefield of World War I. Instead, it occurs in a small parish town outside of London.

Analysis of the Novel

Contemplating this novel, one must begin with its title, which establishes the central theme of the narrative: order and creation (Heaven) verses chaos and destruction (War). For Williams, that which emanates from God supports created order; hence God's material world is ultimately good. In this novel, it is the nature of evil to destroy created order through chaos. As the narrative progresses, the main characters are caught up in this conflicting duality. Eventually, a lone human (the Archdeacon) gives over his will to God. Consequently, chaos and its agents (Persimmons, Dmitri Lavradopolous, and Manasseh) are defeated by God's omnipresent and omnipotent Love (Prester John/Christ).

Williams writes from the omniscient point of view and creates a distance between the characters and the readers. Williams is purposefully frugal with details. He offers little physical description of his characters, suggesting that they are allegorical figures, stand-ins for everyday people his readers might know and could imagine having to face similar circumstances. I suggest, that Williams, as a poet first, paid particular attention to nomenclature in his novels. Interestingly, Williams often renamed his friends and business associates in accordance with his particular interpretation of their character.⁶ In his later book of poetry *Taliessin through Logres*, Williams draws the names of his characters from a wide array of sources, paying particular attention to naming his characters and seeking to establish characteristics and identity through nomenclature.⁷ But this tendency was already apparent in the talisman novels. The importance attached to his character's names varies; while some character's names have layers of meaning, others are commonplace with little or no significance.

The novel begins in the everyday business world of London. I believe that Williams chose the publishing house as the setting of this novel simply for its familiarity; himself having been employed at Oxford University Press since 1908. The real action, however, takes place in the country village that Williams named “Fardles,” discussed below.

Suspense and humor mingle as the novel opens at Persimmon’s publishing house with minor editor Lionel Rackstraw’s discovery of a prone body lying under his desk. Exasperated and inconvenienced, Lionel calls his colleagues Mornington and Dalling into his office to determine the status of the poor chap under the desk. This chorus of editors determines that the man is, in fact, dead and a murder investigation ensues.

The murder investigation, however, is tangential to the main action of the plot, which revolves around the rapacious antiquarian Sir Giles Tumulty’s recent rediscovery of the current location of the Holy Graal. Tumulty just happens to be having his book, *Historical Vestiges of Sacred Vessels*, published by the Persimmons firm, with Kenneth Mornington in charge of Sir Giles account. The day after the murdered man is discovered, Mornington has a meeting with a local vicar over routine business, and he is introduced to Julian Davenport, the Archdeacon of Castra Parvulorum (Fardles). During this meeting, Mornington mentions Sir Giles’ text to the Archdeacon. With this information, Archdeacon is alerted to Sir Giles’ research into current location of the Holy Graal, which just happens to be his very parish in Fardles.

In the meantime, Gregory Persimmons, occultist and retired owner of Persimmons publishing house, conspires with Sir Giles to acquire the Graal. Spurred on by arch villains and agents of chaos Manasseh “The Jew” and Dmitri Lavrodopolous “The

Greek,” Persimmons eventually steals the Graal from the Archdeacon. This theft sets off a series of events that leads to the relocation of the Catholic Duke of North Ridings, Lionel Rackstraw, his wife Barbara Rackstraw, and their four year-old son Adrian Rackstraw to Cully—Persimmons’ house just outside Fardles. The Archdeacon, the Duke, and Mornington steal the Graal back, but must return it to Gregory Persimmons in order to save Lionel’s wife Barbara Rackstraw, who is poisoned by Gregory Persimmons. Gregory had secured an ointment from Dmitri and Manasseh, which had allowed him to have an ecstatic mystical experience of Hell. When he poisons Barbara with the cursed concoction, she is cast into a torturous mental chaos. Re-obtaining the Graal from the Archdeacon in exchange for Barbara’s sanity, Persimmons, Manesseh, and Dmitri then seek Lionel and Barbara’s son Adrian, and attempt to bind the spirit of the murdered man (who we later learn had been killed by Gregory Persimmons) to the Archdeacon in a black magic ritual. The danger to the Graal and the innocents surrounding it, however, evokes the appearance of Prester John, the eternal protector of the Graal. The novel closes with Prester John’s banishment of chaos and restoration of order, but not without sacrifice. Mornington dies at the hands of the sorcerers, while the Archdeacon dies during the Mass just as Prester John transforms into Christ. Williams writes:

On the instant, as they gazed, the church, but for them and the prostrate form, was empty. The sunlight shone upon an altar as bare as the pavement before it; without violence, without parting, the Graal and its Lord were gone.⁸

Williams moves from describing a numinous religious experience to provoking the ordinary, mundane world at the very close of the novel. The move indicates that Williams was aware that the heightened religious experience cannot be maintained and brings the reader back to trivial everyday concerns.

Early on in the novel, the Archdeacon takes some time to explain the name of the Fardles parish, which we are told derives from the Latin *Castra Parvulorum*. Williams explains through the Archdeacon that *Castra Parvulorum* or the “camp of the children” was so-named by Julius Caesar, when he was in Britannia. The Latin *parvulorum* has multiple meanings, however. It also refers to those ‘of little significance, and “short amount” as well as “little ones,” meaning children. The term “fardel “comes from the Old French word for burdens and is known primarily from Shakespeare’s famous “To Be or Not to Be” soliloquy from *Hamlet*

...Who would fardels bear?
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that dread of of something after death
(The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveler returns) puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of? ⁹

Williams deploys the same meaning of the term, but spells it as Fardles.¹⁰ Just in naming his setting, Williams has already established three key sub-themes. The Archdeacon considers the Graal itself an insignificant object.¹¹ That it resides in *Castra Parvulorum*, the place of “the very little,” or of “little ones,” leads readers to perceive that it is not the object itself which has value, but what the Graal signifies. Hence, the Archdeacon ‘of insignificance’ takes upon himself the burden of becoming the human guardian of the Graal, itself insignificant as a material object. The Archdeacon’s willingness to serve the vessel of Christ *qua* a vessel of Christ is Williams’ concept of Substitution. In the Archdeacon, however, we also glimpse the Williams’ related concept of Exchange. The Archdeacon of Fardles willing takes upon the fardels (burdens) of others, by serving as guardian of the Graal.

Guardianship and childhood echo in Williams' child character, the four-year-old Adrian, who is able to see visions in the Graal and speak to Prester John in ancient languages. I suggest that Williams names this character for the only Englishman to rise to the papal office. Pope Adrian IV (reigned 1154-1159) was from St. Albans, the same burg which Charles Williams' family moved to after leaving London in 1894.¹² Further, our historical source for Pope Adrian IV, William of Newburgh came from the North Riding district of Yorkshire. This connection is solidified as Williams gives his third Graal protector the name of Ridings, as the Duke tells us

I am Aubrey Duncan Peregrine Mary de Lisle D'Estrange, Duke of the North Ridings, Marquis of Craigmullen and Plessing, Earl and Viscount of the Holy Roman Empire, Knight of the Sword and Cape, and several other ridiculous fantasies.¹³

The character is henceforth known in the novel as either "The Duke," or simply "Ridings." The Duke is Roman Catholic, and along with the Archdeacon and Kenneth Mornington, he strives to protect the Graal.

Kenneth Mornington, publishing clerk and poet, is the second protector of the Graal. He is the character that most serves as Williams alter-ego.¹⁴ Mornington has an easy humor and references all things literary. Mornington is the cynical poet, who eventually loses his cynicism and sacrifices his life in service to the Graal. For the first seven chapters, Williams refers to the character simply as "Mornington," but by chapter eight, he is henceforth referred to primarily by his Christian name, "Kenneth," indicating that this character accepts his Christian duty to God by fulfilling his role in God's plan by serving the Graal. In chapter eight, Kenneth meets fellow poet, the Duke of Ridings. This clandestine meeting launches their friendship and binds them as poets to a religious

purpose: assisting the Archdeacon's mission to protect the Graal. Williams' trio of an Anglican priest, a poet, and a Catholic British nobleman, who serve as the Graal's human protectors is an interesting device linking the Protestant and Catholic churches through poetry.

The primary protagonist in the novel is Julian Davenport, most often referred to as the Archdeacon, but occasionally as simply "the priest." His name likely reflects back upon Julius Caesar linking it again to *Castra Parvulorum*. However, I suggest that in naming his protagonist "Julian" Williams also recalls Cardinal Julian (1398-1444), whose name in Italian is Guiliano Cesarini. Cardinal Julian was one of the reformist Cardinals who opposed the Greeks at the Council of Florence over the divisive doctrinal debate over the *filioque* ("And the Son"), which the Roman and Anglican Church follow, but the Eastern Orthodox Church did not. The *filioque* controversy eventually led to the final split between the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054 CE. The Roman Church maintained that the Holy Spirit issued from both God the Father and the Son; whereas the Eastern Orthodox held that the Holy Spirit issued forth only from God the Father. For Williams, who authored later theological treatises on both the Holy Spirit and Christ, the *filioque* was an important element of faith. His talisman novels reflect the unity and power of God. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit merge and issue forth from each other as a unified, single divinity. This unity appears as Prester John in *War in Heaven*.

For this character, Williams draws upon medieval legends surrounding an eastern Christian priest-king and crusader named Prester John, who saved Jerusalem. In *War in Heaven*, Prester John is the Holy Spirit, who transforms into Christ during the Mass

scene that closes the novel, invoking the *filioque* and indicating Williams' belief in the Trinitarian unity. This Trinitarian unity will be seen again in *Many Dimensions* and *The Greater Trumps*. The question remains as to why Williams chose the legendary figure of Prester John for this story. Though he adapts the figure of Prester John for his own purposes, I believe Williams draws upon the legendary priest king from a variety of sources.

One of these sources, I believe, is John Buchan's *Prester John* was published in 1910 under the title *The Great Diamond Pipe*. It was serialized in *The Captain*, a boy's magazine as "The Black General." Buchan's adventure tale tells the story of John Laputa, a westernized Christian preacher who believes he is the reincarnation of Prester John. Buchan transformed the Christian Priest-King into a conqueror and unifier of Africa.¹⁵ Buchan's *Prester John* recasts the legendary figure in a secular manner by aligning him with particularly political concerns in a tense drama propelling European colonialist fears of African nationalism. Williams' enchanted and poetic Christian perspective rescues this secularized Prester John and equates him with the Holy Spirit.

For Williams, Buchan's story would not have been a palatable presentation of Prester John. Buchan strips away Prester John's Christian role as guardian of the Grail, turning him into nothing more than a conquering hero for a unified Africa. Capitalizing on the fear that Buchan evinces in *Prester John*, Williams' first written novel, composed earlier than *War in Heaven*, was originally entitled *The Black Bastard* and immediately recalls Buchan's "The Black General." Williams' controversial title was rejected for publication, but the novel was eventually re-edited and published in 1933 as *Shadows of Ecstasy*.¹⁶ *Shadows of Ecstasy* reworks Buchan's *Prester John* antagonist John Laputa

into Nigel Considine, a power-hungry esotericist bent on unifying Africa and achieving personal immortality. *Shadows of Ecstasy*, however, does not engage with the Prester John legend.

In *War in Heaven*, Williams redeems Prester John as the immortal Grail guardian *qua* Holy Spirit. Prester John morphs into Christ celebrating the Eucharist in the final Mass scene, which closes the novel. By placing Prester John at the center of his theological drama, Williams restores Prester John's Christian role in the Grail saga by elevating the Priest King to Paraclete, issuing from God and Christ as in the *filioque*.

No doubt, Williams is drawing from A.E. Waite's *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal* for his conception of Prester John as Waite discusses Prester John and aligns this figure with tradition of St. John the Divine's immortality, charged by Christ to walk the earth until the Second Coming.¹⁷ In *War in Heaven*, Prester John often appears out of thin air and approaches the characters in mysterious ways. Further, he reveals himself to the most innocent characters and offers cryptic messages to his less innocent interlocutors, much like Christ in the Gospel of Mark. As the Paraclete, Prester John comforts Lionel, Adrian, and Barbara Rackstraw, and directly intercedes to rescue Barbara and Adrian from Perimmons' evil. In addition, Prester John rescues the Duke from Manesseh and Dmitri Lavordopolous, releases the spirits of Kenneth Mornington and murder victim James Montgomery Pattison from chaos' dark control, and forces Persimmons to confess to Pattison's murder. Through Prester John's victorious actions, Williams reveals that God controls all human events and that nothing lies outside of God's plan. Ultimately, Prester John/Paraclete morphs into Christ at the Mass, before accompanying the Archdeacon's soul heavenward.

The villain of the novel is, of course, Gregory Persimmons. As I suggested earlier, Williams took particular care with naming his characters. Like Adrian and Julian, I argue that Williams reached into ecclesiastical history to draw upon another important Vatican figure, this time Gregory VII, whose papal reign lasted from 1073-085. Gregory VII was much maligned for expanding papal powers beyond those of his predecessors. Gregory VII excommunicated then emperor Henry IV until Henry IV begged for forgiveness. It was Gregory's fight for priestly celibacy, however, that I believe doomed him in Williams' view. As noted earlier, Williams was firmly against this sort of celibacy as it goes against his Romantic Theology. Williams, a proponent of the *via affirmativa* over and above the *via negativa*, denounced the asceticism and celibacy required of holy men. Gregory VII serves as an apt example to Williams, as a misguided pontificate forsaking God's created order and marital joys while lusting after power that only God can wield. Gregory Persimmons personifies this lust for power in his attempts to possess the Graal. The power of the Graal eludes him because he seeks to control it. The Graal allows the Archdeacon to protect it because he seeks only to serve it. Gregory Persimmons turns himself in to the police at the end of *War in Heaven*, mirroring Gregory VII's death in exile. By naming the villain in *War in Heaven* Gregory and imbuing this character with negative traits reminiscent of Pope Gregory VII, Williams denounces the elevation of celibacy in the Church.

Along with Gregory Persimmons, Manasseh "the Jew," and Dmitri Lavrodopolous "the Greek," form the unholy trio who seek to destroy order, capture the Graal, and serve chaos in a reversal of the three protagonists. Manasseh's story is told in 2 Kings 21:1-17. He is, of course, the ancient monarch of Judah famous for "forgetting"

the ways of the Yahweh by allowing idol worship to infiltrate his kingdom and for doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 21:2). In 2 Chronicles 33, we learn that Yahweh punished and humbled Manasseh by having him captured and brought to Babylon, where he repented and was eventually restored to Jerusalem to finish out his reign. Despite his repentance, however, Manasseh is not held in high esteem. That Williams names his evil Jewish character Manasseh suits his rhetorical strategy to replace secular concerns with Christian faith. Williams' characterization of Manasseh reveals his attitude, not only toward secular material concerns, but also his opinion of the Jewish religion. Williams believed that the Jews were in error in not realizing Jesus as the Messiah, and he incorporates this by characterizing a villain not only as simply Jewish, but by associating the character with idolatry and wickedness.¹⁸

Williams names his third antagonist Dmitri Lavrodopolous. Though Dmitri derives from the Greek Demeter or follower of Demeter, the earth goddess, and usually spelled "Dimitrios" or "Dimitris" in Greek usage. "Dmitri" is generally the Russian form. Further, "Lavrodopolous" is not a known Greek surname, and it is possible that Williams coined it. Despite this, the question remains as to why Williams so adamantly creates a *Greek* villain, as he refers to Dmitri Lavrodopolous as "the Greek," far more often referring to Manasseh as 'the Jew.' Is it possible that Williams, as an Anglican following Catholic theology and often evoking Rome in this novel, is commenting on the split between the Eastern Orthodox (Greek) Church with the Roman Church, echoing the *filioque* controversy here as well? It seems strange that he would vilify the Eastern Orthodox tradition, when he himself embraced many of the same tenets such as

a married clergy, mystical theology, and denial of the Pope's authority. It seems unlikely it is the Eastern Orthodox Church that Williams condemns here.

Therefore, I suggest that Williams may be sniping at the occultists of his day who were reclaiming the pagan Greco-Roman deities in magical rites. The linking of Dmitri, (as a derivative of Demeter) with the king known for allowing idolatry in Judah does indicate an association with false gods. Though Williams held the Romantic Poets in high esteem, he held that Christianity was the supreme faith. The classical deities with whom the Romantic poets worked influenced the neo-pagan traditions growing up around the occult societies in England during the 1920s-30s.¹⁹ Likely, as Williams left Waite's FRC and used occultism as a foil against which Christian truth shines forth, he associates Greek deities with idolatry and chaos. Williams uses this same analogy in *The Greater Trumps*, where he contrasts the superstition of Egyptian paganism with the "truth" of Christianity, as we will see in section four.

Williams presents both "the Jew" and "the Greek" as agents of chaos in *War in Heaven*. As such, they are forever distanced from Christ. Williams' contrasting trios—the Archdeacon, Mornington, and the Duke who serve the Graal (divine order), with the Jewish Manasseh and pagan Dmitri, who want to either control or destroy it—suits the rhetorical Christian message in the novel.

Summary

Throughout the novel, Williams has the Archdeacon say "Neither is this Thou" as a variant of Williams' precept, "This is Thou, neither is this Thou." This seeming contradiction points to the unknowable Christian God and that all binaries reconcile in God. But as Williams tells us in the preface to his *The Descent of the Dove*:

A motto which might have been set on the title-page but has been, less ostentatiously, put here instead is a phrase which I once supposed to come from Augustine, but I am informed by experts that this is not so, and otherwise I am ignorant of its source. The phrase is ‘This also is Thou; neither is this Thou.’ As a maxim for living it is invaluable, and it—or its reversal—summarizes the history of the Christian Church.²⁰

Because Williams believed that everything spiritual and material was a reflection of God’s unity, he was always working to reconcile binaries. His maxim, “This is also Thou; neither is this Thou” exemplifies his understanding that all binaries, all contradictions, dissolve in God’s unity. Indeed, what humans perceive as contradictory forces is simply the scission of the divine essence, whose unity we can know only through its reflection in the spiritual and material realms. Imagery—poetic, symbolic, visual— all point to God. Thus, Williams’ use of Christian divinity against occult forces folds into a mystical indication of God’s reconciliation of all oppositions. Williams’ revises the Graal allegory in *War in Heaven* to serve as the means through which we begin to see Romantic Theology at work in the characters. We see Substitution in the sacrifice of Mornington. We see nascent Exchange with the Archdeacon accepting the burden of protecting the Graal, and we see the amorphous doctrine of Co-inherence through Williams’ intertextual mingling of legend with history in his characters’ names, as well as his play upon the spatio-temporal fields of the spiritual and material realms.

Williams’ principle of Co-inherence derives originally from the doctrine of the Trinity as determined by the Athanasian Creed, whereby the three persons of the Trinity are co-eternal and co-equal.²¹ For Williams, the term Co-inherence comes to mean the interdependence and interconnectedness of all things through his maxim ‘This is Thou, neither is this Thou,’ but it must be remembered that he did not have Co-inherence as a theological principle established at the time he wrote *War in Heaven*. The principle of

Co-inherence emerges only fully in *The Greater Trumps* (1932). After *The Greater Trumps*, Williams deploys Co-inherence in his last two novels, *Descent into Hell* (1937) and *All Hallows Eve* (1945) as well as in his actual theological treatises (*He Came Down from Heaven* (1938), *The Descent of the Dove* (1937), and *The Forgiveness of Sins* (1942)).

In *War in Heaven* the doctrine of Co-inherence is incomplete as is his notion of Exchange, which will be considered in the next section. However, in this first talisman novel Williams, develops his notion of Substitution through his characters' sacrifices in protecting the Graal, the vessel into which Christ's sacrificial blood flowed.

That the Graal legend serves as the framework for Williams' allegory of coming to Christ through self-sacrifice perfectly suits his rhetorical purpose in the story.²²

Williams was intimately familiar with Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* as well as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* since he was immensely interested in the Grail legends and Arthurian romances. His later poetical works *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars* draws directly upon the Arthurian sagas. But in *War in Heaven*, Williams revises the Grail legend, dispensing with King Arthur, the Knights Percival, Gawain, Lancelot, as well as the physical quest altogether. In the novel, the only legendary figure associated with the Graal is Prester John, who Williams turns into the Paraclete and eventually Christ. Several of the characters in *War in Heaven* meet Prester John as "man in grey." He seems to appear out of nowhere and disappear the same way. To those who meet Prester John in the story, he seems familiar to them, yet they simply do not realize how they know him. To the innocent, Prester John brings peaceful contentment; to the agents of chaos, he invokes anger and anxiety. In the final scene,

when Prester John/Christ and the Graal disappear taking the soul of the Archdeacon with them, the spiritual and the material merge—all binaries collapse. Williams writes:

But the Archdeacon, hearing these words, trembled a little as he knelt. The thoughts with which he approached the Mysteries faded; the Mysteries themselves faded. he distinguished no longer word from act: he was in the presence, he was part of the Act which far away issued in those faint words, “Let us make man”—creation rose and flowed out and wheeled to its august return—“in Our image, after Our likeness”—the great pronouns were the sound of that return. Faster and faster all things moved through the narrow channel he had before seen and now himself seemed to be entering and beyond it they issued again into similar but different existence—themselves still, yet infused and made one in an undreamed perfection The sunlight—the very sun itself—was moving on through the upright form before the altar, and darkness and light together were pouring through it, and with them all things that were. He saw, standing at the very edge of that channel the small figure of Adrian, and then he himself had passed the boy and was entering upon the final stage of the Way. Everything was veiled; the voice of the priest-king was the sound of creation’s movement; he awaited the exodus that was to be.²³

The Graal as the chalice used at the Mass by Christ himself initiates the Archdeacon’s mystical vision into the nature of Reality: there are no divisions in God; there is only unity. The whole narrative of *War in Heaven* leads up to this scene where Williams presents his vision of the unity of the spiritual and material realms, which lies just outside our field of consciousness, available only to those select few who give themselves over completely to God’s will. For Williams, just as Christ sacrificed himself by assuming the burden of Original Sin and dying on the Cross, the Archdeacon’s selfless service to the Graal, condemning himself to the burden of protecting it, culminates in Christ’s presence.

The others who watch Prester John/Christ and the Graal during the Mass are also affected by it. Lionel, Barbara, and the Duke bear witness to the Mystery, while the child Adrian assists Prester John/Christ. Once the priest-king and the Graal are gone, the moment has passed and the characters are cast back into the ordinary world, typified by

the now bored four year-old Adrian's request to go home. The characters have come to know Christ, but the moment can't be held; the supernatural is veiled once again.

War in Heaven is an allegory for reaching Christ through willing self-sacrifice. Williams' deft use of imagery, symbolically named characters, and exposition support a Christian rhetoric working its way toward specific doctrines. This narrative finally leads to the Archdeacon and Mornington's willing self-sacrifices, which in turn mirrors Christ's. And it is here that Williams demonstrates his twin concepts of Substitution and Exchange. They are not yet fully articulated, but still bound together. As we turn next to Williams' second talisman novel *Many Dimensions*, we see Exchange expressed through the character of Chloe Burnett.

III

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXCHANGE IN *MANY DIMENSIONS*

It was a circlet of old, tarnished and twisted gold, in the centre of which was set a cubical stone measuring about half an inch every way, and having apparently engraved on it certain Hebrew letters.

Charles Williams, *Many Dimensions*

Context

Many Dimensions is a multifaceted novel with numerous thematic threads welded to its theological aims. In this section, I consider the theological objective of the work through Williams' use of legend, imagery, and allegory. By the end of this section, I hope to demonstrate that Williams has evolved his concept of Substitution to include a differentiated concept of Exchange, and moves toward their integration with Co-inherence in last talisman novel *The Greater Trumps*, discussed in section four.

Many Dimensions opens with Sir Giles Tumulty in his Ealing home. Sir Giles has only recently returned from Baghdad, which was his travel destination at the close of *War in Heaven*. Accompanied by his nephew Montague and the Persian Prince Ali, the three men discuss an artifact that Sir Giles obtained while in Baghdad. It is the crown of Suleiman ben Daood, the legendary King Solomon, which has been protected by Ali's family for centuries. Sir Giles obtained the artifact from an unscrupulous member of Prince Ali's court in Baghdad, and Ali has come to demand its return. Under discussion, however, is a particular "Stone" in the crown, which has the peculiar ability to replicate

itself. Embossed within the Stone are certain Hebrew letters. As Prince Ali explains, “They are the letters of the Tetragrammaton.... The letters are not engraved on the Stone; they are in the center—they are, in fact, the Stone.”¹ Sir Giles refuses to return the crown to Ali. Instead, he plans to divide the Stone, study it, and use it for his own gain.

Subsequently, Sir Giles and Montague divide the Stone, creating several “Types.” Two such Types end up in the possession of the Chief Justice, Lord Christopher Arglay, and his young secretary, Chloe Burnett.

We meet Arglay as he argues with Montague over the telephone. Arglay is uncle to Montague and brother-in-law to Sir Giles, whom he despises. Montague attempts to persuade Arglay to invest in the Stone by telling Arglay that the Stone is “the best thing there ever was.”² This is Williams’ satirical irony, since the character Montague has no idea of the divine origin of the Stone in his possession. Arglay flatly refuses and hangs up, but not before Montague decides to come for lunch. Chloe overhears the luncheon conversation as Montague explains the Stone and its connection to Sir Giles. Arglay is immediately suspicious, since he knows Sir Giles well. In order to dispel such suspicion, Sir Giles gives Arglay a Type from the original Stone, while a second Type is given to Chloe.

Chloe is in awe of the Stone because of its sacred and supernatural origin. She immediately feels the need to protect the Stone. Arglay, however, views the Stone through the lenses of justice and wisdom, while the third protagonist, the elderly Persian Hajji Ibrahim, apprehends the religious implications of the Stone. Hajji Ibrahim educates Chloe and Arglay concerning the Stone’s divine origins. Arglay, Chloe, and Hajji

Ibrahim eventually recover each of the various Types that Sir Giles creates, and ultimately restore the Stone to God.

To contrast his protagonists, Williams creates several characters that embody greed, selfishness, and capitalism. Chloe's boyfriend Frank Lindsey pressures her to lend her Type to him so he can pass an exam. Wealthy American industrialists Angus and Cecilia Sheldrake seek the Types in order to monopolize the airline travel industry. The Mayor of Rich hopes to obtain a Type to use in healing the infirm to get re-elected, while Members of Parliament (Theophilis Merridew and Lord Birlesmere) seek the Types to further national interests. As word of the Stone's powers fans out from London to the surrounding countryside, the fate of various local politicians become entwined the Stone. With a playful insight, Williams contrasts the will of the Mayor of Rich who wants the stone to heal his constituents, to that of the General Secretary of National Transport Union and the Home Secretary, who wish to divest the mayor and other believers in the powers of the Stone of their faith in order for the government to possess the Stone for national interests.

The Stone's three guardians, Arglay, Chloe, and Hajji Ibrahim, understand the inevitable harm which will come if the Stone is used for secular interests. Their efforts are enhanced by the Stone, which is, of course, God acting through the Stone. Because it has Will, the Stone can protect itself and its bearer. It can lose itself, or be found by particular individuals, if it so wishes. Eventually, Arglay, Chloe, and Hajji reverse the damage that Sir Giles and his fellow experimenter Palliser do while testing the Stone's powers, and are helped by the Stone itself. When Prince Ali attempts a violent attack upon Chloe to retrieve her Type, she refuses to use the Stone to defend herself. The Stone

responds by casting Ali from her window to a fiery death. Yet, the novel closes with the death of Chloe Burnett embodying “the End of Desire,” and becoming the channel by which the Types are reunited and returned to God.

Analysis of the Novel

Like *War in Heaven*, Williams’ enigmatic title only tangentially refers to the plot. Further, Williams is working with the same overall themes as *War in Heaven* (chaos and order, human verses divine power, divine love and salvation), but this novel focuses on unity and plurality. Williams reconciles the binary of unity and plurality by grounding multiple “dimensions,” within the Stone itself. As Hajji explained, the Stone is the “First Matter,” and in *Many Dimensions* Williams traces this Stone from Lucifer’s fall from heaven, to Adam’s possession of it upon exiting Eden, to its eventual resting place in the crown of King Solomon.³

Again, Williams situates his narrative in and around greater London, with a few forays into the countryside. The setting is not of particular importance in *Many Dimensions* simply because one of the powers of the Stone is its ability to transport its holder anywhere through space and time. Consequently, the location for the story is both local and universal. One can reach God anywhere as God is everywhere, existing in a unified physical and spiritual dimension at once. Williams refers to God in *Many Dimensions*, as “the Permission,” “the Omnipotence,” “the Mercy,” and as “the Unity.” Since Unity is in time and space, the characters affected by the Stone are never far from the center of creation, since the Stone is itself the First Matter created by God. Like the Graal in *War in Heaven*, the Stone is an aspect of God and possesses Will. Both talismans

illustrate Williams' view of an animated and divinely imbued physical world. But this is not the only connection between the Graal and the Stone.

It is likely that "arglay" is an anagram of "graal" as it is not a common surname in England.⁴ Further, Williams is clearly drawing upon the thirteenth century author Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, where Eschenbach presents the Holy Grail as a stone, rather than a dish or vessel. Williams also follows Eschenbach's description of the origin of the stone as well as its lineage of protectors.⁵ That Williams provides his main protagonist with a Christian first name enhances connections to the distinct Christian Grail themes in *War in Heaven*, as "Christopher" derives from the Greek form of "Christ-bearer." The Christian associations continue in the female protagonist Chloe.

Chloe Burnett brings together many of Williams' theological tenets. I believe he constructs her character with great care, particularly when describing her transfiguration at the novels' climax, when she embodies the moment of Exchange. Chloe, another Greek derivative, means a youthful, green shoot. The name is familiar from I Corinthians 1:11, where Paul addresses "Chloe's people" in the Christian community at Corinth. Paul's letter is occasioned by the need to redress claims made by some members in the Corinthian church to special knowledge and superior spiritual gifts. Williams' Chloe possesses no claim to special knowledge, willingly defers to Arglay on all matters, and is most Christ-like in her willingness to serve the Stone (God). Chloe fears the Stone. She recognizes its sacredness, and it evokes her willing protection of it.

In turn, Arglay becomes Chloe's protector. Williams likens the relationship between Arglay and Chloe to Joseph and Mary. He writes:

Arglay, at once in contact and detached, at once faithless and believing, beheld all these things in the light of the fastidious and ironical goodwill, which

outside mystical experience is the finest and noblest capacity man has developed in and against the universe. And now this itself was touched by a warmer consciousness, for as far as might be within his protection and certainly within his willing friendship, there was growing the intense secret of Chloe's devotion to the Mystery. As if a Joseph with more agnostic irony than tradition usually allows him sheltered and sustained a Mary of a more tempestuous past than the Virgin-Mother is believed to have endured or enjoyed, so Lord Arglay considered, as far as it was clear to him, his friend's progress toward the End of Desire.⁶

Chloe's dedication in protecting the Stone and her refusal to give into the temptation of using it for her own ends, indicates her strength to carry the burden entrusted to her, recalling the Archdeacon in *War in Heaven*. After Chloe reunites and absorbs the Stone, she is left in a coma. Arglay watches over Chloe during this period, again serving as her guardian. She dies nine months after the event, and with her death those affected by the Stone are restored.

It is here, of course, that Williams demonstrates his principle of Substitution. Just as the Archdeacon accepted his role in service to the Graal, Chloe serves the Stone by willingly sacrificing herself for its reunification. Chloe's nine month incapacitation must be considered a period of gestation, preparing her for her ultimate return to the Unity, a reflection of Mary as redeemer of Eve. Chloe's determination to protect the Stone fuels Arglay's own service to the Stone and to Chloe. Their combined efforts restore the Stone to its Unity and ultimately lead to the destruction of Sir Giles Tumulty.

Probably the most colorful figure of Williams' talisman novels is the narcissistic antagonist Sir Giles Tumulty. Williams names this character particularly well with the quality which most defines him, tumultuousness. Sir Giles is a nasty character that is a joy to read and Williams gives him some of the most humorous lines in the two books. Sir Giles, however, serves other purposes beyond humorous interludes. He is Williams'

quintessential villain, who arrogantly seeks powers that rightly belong only to God. In both novels, his motives are mercenary, but in *Many Dimensions* he carries out sadistic “experiments” on human subjects with an insatiable curiosity to learn the Stone’s powers. Liberally sprinkling his descriptions of Sir Giles experiments with dark humor, Williams’ evil character eventually gets his due, just as Prester John had warned Sir Giles in *War in Heaven*:

I warn you that one day when you meet me you shall find me too like yourself to please you. It is a joyous thing to study the movements of man as you study insects under a stone, but you shall run a weary race when I and the heavens watch you and laugh at you and tease you to go a way that you would not. Then you shall scabble in the universe as an ant against the smoothness of the inner side of the Graal none shall pick you out or deliver you forever. There is a place in the pit where I shall be found, but there is no place for you who do not enter the pit, though you thrust others in.⁷

Just prior to Giles demise in *Many Dimensions*, Williams has him curse both the Stone and Chloe, after which the Stone begins to change. Sir Giles screams, tormented and confronted with his evil deeds. He is torn apart and his soul gets pulled into the Stone itself. Prester John’s prophecy is fulfilled and a careful reader will note the connections between Prester John’s admonishment of Sir Giles’ “studies” and “experiments” as well as the manner of Sir Giles death. Sir Giles feels himself torn apart before falling into “an infinite depth,” just as Prester John had prophesied in *War in Heaven*.

The last character we must consider is the Persian Hajji Ibrahim, who assists Arglay and Chloe in their mission to restore the Stone. Hajji Ibrahim informs Arglay and Chloe of the Stone’s real nature and its history. He perceives the Tetragrammaton written across Chloe’s forehead and realizes her salvational role. Hajji Ibrahim sees that only those who seek the Stone, but do not wish to use it can restore it to God. He assists

Arglay and Chloe because he recognizes that Arglay sees the reunification of the Stone to be a matter of necessity and that Chloe's motives are pure. It is through Hajji Ibrahim's descriptions of God and the Stone that we see the underlying thematic grid that holds the novel together. Hajji Ibrahim counsels Chloe that the Stone is "the End of Desire" and the "Way to the Stone is the Stone itself." Certainly, the elderly Hajji Ibrahim is the cryptic wise man from the East, but it is through this character that Williams voices his principle of Exchange. Hajji sees that Chloe Loves purely. Hajji encourages Chloe as she willingly takes into herself all of the Types in order to unite them in God. She bears the burden of the many and is ultimately reconciled with the Unity.

Despite entitling the novel *Many Dimensions*, its foremost theme is Unity, which is, of course, God. Williams plays with his titles for irony: just as there can be no war in heaven, there are not many dimensions, there is only one. In *Many Dimensions*, Williams draws attention to modern humanity's limited vision, which cannot see that the material world is only part of a greater spiritual world that surrounds it, encompasses it, and dwells within it. For Williams, categories of physical and spiritual, time and space, human and divine, all Co-inhere in the Unity. The Stone is of God, but not God. It replicates itself but does not diminish. It reabsorbs itself but does not expand. It has no weight, but is material. It has no organs, but it possesses will and can act. As Hajji explains to Arglay:

"I think it is the First Matter," the Hajji told him, "from which all things are made—spirit and matter."

"Spirits?" Arglay said. "But this is matter;" he press a finger on the Stone.

"Matter to matter," Ibrahim answered, "but perhaps mind to mind, and soul to soul. That is why it will do anything you ask it—with all your heart."⁸

The Stone and Graal are symbols of the divine substance while *being* the divine substance at the same time. This is why the Archdeacon and Chloe immediately and intuitively recognize their role as protectors and become saviors. Both characters are pure of heart and purpose, willing to give themselves over to God's will. Whereas the Archdeacon joins God at the close of *War in Heaven*, Chloe Burnett joins God after embracing "the End of Desire," indicating that she has willingly surrendered to God. In so doing, Chloe takes upon herself the fears, burdens, and sins of others. For Williams, Exchange does not mean replacing or returning one object for another, but a process by which Love transforms the heart of an individual. In *Many Dimensions* when Exchange takes place, Chloe is transfigured before Arglay and Hajji Ibrahim. In a lengthy, yet particularly expressive passage, Williams describes the event:

Only the justice of Lord Arglay, in the Justice of the Stone which lay between himself and the woman he watched, beheld the manifestation of that exalted Return. He had seen the Types come together and pass through her form, coloring but never confusing it, till they had entered entirely into the Type upon her hands. But scarcely had the last vestige of entwined light and dark grown into the One which remained, scarcely had he seen her in herself standing again obedient and passive than he saw suddenly that the great process was reversing itself. As all had flowed in, so now all began to flow out, out from the Stone, out into the hands that held it, out along the arms and into the body and shape of which they were part. Through the clothes that veiled it he saw that body receiving the likeness of the Stone. Translucency entered it, and through and in the limbs the darkness which was the Tetragrammaton moved and hid and revealed. He saw the Mystery upon her hands melting into them; it was flowing away gently but very surely; it lessened in size and intensity as he watched. And as there it grew less, so more and more exquisitely and finally it took its place within her—what the Stone had been she now was. Along that path, offered it by one soul alone, yet it passed on its predestined way—one single soul and yet one not solitary. For even as she was changed into its nature her eyes shone on her mortal master with an unchanged love and in the Glory that revealed itself there was nothing alien to their habitual and reciprocal joy. The Stone that had been before them was one with Stone in which they had been from either side its virtue proclaimed itself in her. At last the awful change was done. She stood before him; her hands, still outstretched, were empty, but within her and about her light as of a lovely and clearer day grew and expanded. No violent outbreak or dazzling

splendor was there; a perfection of existence flowed from her and passed outward so that he seemed both to stand in it and to look on it with his natural eyes. With such he saw also, black upon her forehead, as if the night corresponding to that new day dwelled there for a while apart, the letters of the Tetragrammaton. She stood so withdrawn, as the Stone sank slowly through her whole presented nature to its place in the order of the universe, and that mysterious visibility of the First Matter of creation returned to the invisibility from which it had been summoned to dwell in the crown of Suleiman the King. As in the height of his glory the Viceregent of the Merciful One had sat, terrific and compulsive over spirits and men, and the Stone had manifested above, so now from the hands stretched to grasp it and the minds plotting to use it, from armies and conspiracies, greed and rapine, it withdrew through a secluded heart. She stood, and the light faded and the darkness vanished; she stood, one moment clothed in the beauty of the End of Desire, and then swiftly abandoned. She was before him, the hands stretched not to hold but to clasp, the eyes wide with an infinite departure; she exclaimed and swayed where she stood, and Lord Arglay leaping to her as she fell, caught a senseless body in his arms.⁹

The “End of Desire” is, of course, death. All desire ceases when one surrenders to God during “the journey without space.”¹⁰ Throughout the novel, Hajji Ibrahim had counseled Chloe “the Way to the Stone, which is in the Stone,” and his prophecy foreshadows Chloe’s transfiguration at the very moment of Exchange.¹¹

Hajji is the only character able to access the interrelatedness of all events, persons, things, matter and spirit, because he professes and serves the Unity. Because of his honorary title, “Hajji” we know that Ibrahim has made the pilgrimage to Mecca and has seen another divine stone, the Ka’Ba—the manifestation of Allah. Arglay, Chloe, and the other characters only partially understand this interconnectedness (Unity) because they had not devoted themselves to the spiritual way. Hajji, the spiritual leader, brought them to this knowledge just as Prester John had done for the protagonists in *War in Heaven*.

Summary

Many Dimensions is essentially a sequel to *War in Heaven*, and it contains several connections to the Graal. Drawing on Wolfram von Eschenbach's thirteenth century romance *Parzival*, Williams transforms the Graal into a stone in *Many Dimensions*. This Stone possesses unique powers; it can replicate itself without diminishing, transport humans in space and time, cause unique visions, heal the infirm, and aid the noble in their quest to restore its sovereignty. "Many dimensions" refers to these powers as well as to the revelation that time and space are simply illusory categories. "Many dimensions" also reflects the diversity of human motivation in every dimension of activity, including the political, social, medical, psychological, and spiritual.

This interconnectedness opens the way to the path of Exchange. Mary McDermitt Shideler succinctly summarizes Williams' concept of Exchange as "We are continually borne by others. Therefore, willingly or unwillingly we are perpetually in debt to God and to the whole creation."¹² For Williams, Exchange is the willing assumption of another's fears, burdens, and sins done not simply through charity or generosity, but through and by the power of Love alone. In "The Way of Exchange," Williams explains:

If our lives are so carried by others and so depend upon others, it becomes impossible to think very highly of them. In the second place there arises within one a first faint sense of what might be called 'loving from within.' One no longer merely loves and object; one has a sense of loving precisely from the great web in which the object and we are both combined.¹³

Williams wrote this essay for a church pamphlet in 1941, at least ten years after writing *War in Heaven* and *Many Dimensions*. In it, he conflates Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence, using the terms interchangeably as he often did in his later theological writings. But the twin principles of Substitution and Exchange, though intertwined and

bound to Co-inherence, do have separate and distinct meanings as demonstrated in the talisman novels. In the last section, I demonstrated how the principle of Substitution worked through willing self-sacrifice. In *Many Dimensions*, I showed how the principle of Exchange operates when a young, single female protagonist Loves for the sake of loving, assumes the burden of saving humanity from its own folly, and surrenders her life to God.

Like the Graal in *War in Heaven*, the Stone of *Many Dimensions* is not made of any known substance and can transform, have Will, and return to God. Though the divine object serves the same purpose in both stories, in *Many Dimensions* Williams actually has his protagonist physically absorb the sacred object, mingling spiritual and physical form. Through Hajji's knowledge, through the Stone's power to control, interrupt, and punctuate time and space, through Chloe's devotion to Arglay and his devotion to her, and through the desires of each person who came into contact with the Stone, Williams exemplifies the interconnections of all aspects of reality. All of this is "the Unity."

For Williams, humans come close to seeing the Unity when they accept the mantle of Christ through Substitution and Exchange and actively realize their interconnection to all other things in creation. This is his principle of Co-inherence, as it emerges in his last talisman novel, *The Greater Trumps*.¹⁴ In the next section, I explore how Williams demonstrates Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence in their final form as Romantic Theology in *The Greater Trumps*.

IV

THE EMERGENCE OF ROMANTIC THEOLOGY IN THE GREATER TRUMPS

Perfect Babel!

Charles Williams, *The Greater Trumps*

Context

“Perfect Babel!” opens Charles Williams’ third supernatural novel entitled *The Greater Trumps* (1932), and immediately introduces the novel’s most predominant theme: chaos. Both humorous and ironic, Williams’ “Perfect Babel” recalls the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11 when God punished the hubris behind humanity’s attempt to build a tower to reach God by turning the previously mono-linguistic inhabitants of Babylon into poly-linguists, whereby they could no longer understand one another. Williams purposefully invokes “Babel” to highlight the major themes of chaos, hubris, and incomprehension, which appear throughout the novel in symbolism and imagery.

The plot of *The Greater Trumps* is simple enough. Two families come together for the Christmas holiday, and face a supernatural experience that shows the characters (and the reader) the interconnectedness of the divine and material worlds. The action begins when the ancient “original” deck of Tarot cards resurfaces after being lost for centuries. The deck corresponds to a set of animated Tarot figures, which have been held in secret for generations by the Lee family. The reunion of the Tarot images with their

corresponding figures sets off supernatural mayhem causing matter and spirit to merge into what Williams' describes as "Golden Mist," or "the Great Dance." The novel ends as hubris is countered by Love, and order is restored through the selfless actions of the two female protagonists: Nancy Coningsby, who embodies Substitution, and her maiden aunt Sybil Coningsby, who embodies Exchange.

In *The Greater Trumps*, Williams offers a profound interpretation of the origin and power of Tarot images and harnesses their imagery to allegorize reality into "the Great Dance." Williams deploys this imagery with distinctive care, using the symbolism of individual Tarot cards as well as the whole deck to illuminate particular traits of individual characters. In what follows, I examine Williams' literary imagery in *The Great Trumps* to demonstrate that Williams' principles of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence emerge fully as components of his mature Romantic Theology.¹

Once again, the novel opens in London, but moves to the "Downs" outside of London. What Williams means by "the Downs" is not specified and he may be referring to the Southern Downs along the southern shore of England. Either way, in choosing "the Downs" I believe that Williams implies something more than simply a geographic location in Britain, particularly as this is where he locates his antagonists.

The first character we meet is Lothair Coningsby, the current patriarch of the Coningsby family. A self-important, befuddled curmudgeon, Lothair's vocation, Williams tell us, is a "warden in lunacy." In other words, Lothair is the warden at a mental institution somewhere near London. His vocation recalls the theme of chaos, while also suggesting that Lothair's own life is plagued by disorder. Lothair is constantly assaulted by his children's lack of respect for his paternal authority, which frazzles his

nerves and destroys his peace. His daughter Nancy is young, self-absorbed, overly romantic, and naïve. Oddly enough, it is his sister, Sybil, who actually serves as the warden in the Coningsby home, since she is able to negotiate her brother's obstinacy through her own cultivated sense of contented stillness. Williams strategically designs his plot around a seemingly ordinary family in the heart of London, opening the story with a domestic scene in the Coningsby home. A recognizable scene, it establishes the mundane nature of the characters' lives. Readers are able to immediately identify with the daily reality of familial relationships.

Nancy's fiancé Henry Lee soon joins the Coningsbys in their home. Henry coaxes Nancy into appealing to Lothair to break out his collection of Tarot cards. Upon seeing the collection, Henry discovers amongst them a set of ancient Tarot cards painted on papyrus and suspects that they are the original images that correspond to a set of dancing Tarot figures held by his grandfather Aaron Lee. Henry Lee and his family are of gypsy descent. Despite there being no evidence that neither gypsies nor Tarot cards originated in Egypt, Williams connects his Lee family to Egypt through the papyrus Tarot cards as well his description of their dark hair, dark eyes, and furtive movements.²

The other two gypsy antagonists are the elderly brother and sister, Aaron and Joanna Lee. Lee was the family name of gypsies in England contemporary with Williams, with which he would have been familiar.³ In the first chapter, Lothair echoes all of the familiar Orientalist assumptions about gypsies, and one gets the impression that Williams shared these assumptions since he does little in the narrative to counter them and everything to reinforce them. Williams describes Henry thus:

Although Mr. Coningsby had known his daughter's fiancé—if indeed he were that—for some months now, he still felt a slight shock at seeing him. For to

him Henry Lee, in spite of being a barrister—a young briefless barrister, but a barrister—was so obviously a gipsy [sic] that his profession seemed as if it must be assumed from a sinister purpose. He was fairly tall and dark-haired and dark-skinned, and his eyes were bright and darting; and his soft collar looked almost like a handkerchief coiled round his throat, only straighter, and his long fingers, with the quick secret movements.⁴

Williams associates the darkness of Henry Lee's complexion with his Arab descent from Egypt through Spain. The contrast with "English" complexion and mannerisms is brought forward in the passage quoted above. Henry's "sinister purposes" are implied by his dark countenance. As Williams establishes the gypsy heritage, he clearly evokes a disdain for a perceived non-British "other." Such foreignness is not to be trusted. Lothair's ire is particularly aroused when he perceives Henry's overt interest in the Tarot cards, which Lothair equates with superstition. Williams' believed that his own view of Christianity was free from superstition. This becomes clearer in the subsequent chapters when Williams contrasts the "Mystery of Love" with the mad Joanna's obsession with the pagan deities of ancient Egypt.

Utterly deluded, Joanna Lee believes she is the goddess Isis incarnate, and frantically searches for her missing child, whom she believes is Horus awaiting resurrection. All the while, Joanna must avoid the evil Set (god of chaos) as he threatens to engulf her hopes of finding Horus. Williams purposely contrasts Christian "truth" with the pre-Christian Osirian Passion narrative to denounce the latter as superstition. Joanna's trinity as Williams writes it—Isis, Horus, Set—is not particularly accurate, but as we have seen in the earlier talisman novels, Williams simply adapts myth and legend for his own rhetorical purposes.

The names of his characters Lothair, Sybil, and Coningsby, derive from three of Benjamin Disraeli's novels. Disraeli was a political and literary figure, as well as twice elected British Prime Minister under Queen Victoria. Originally of Jewish heritage, Disraeli converted to Anglicanism at age thirteen. Disraeli was close with Queen Victoria and took the stance of preserving the British Empire politically over the moral side of emancipating its colonial interests. "Coningsby" is the title of Disraeli's 1844 novel, in which the main character Henry Coningsby is left penniless but eventually comes to prominence as an attorney. In *The Greater Trumps*, attorney "Henry" enhances the intertextual connections between Disraeli's novels and the *The Greater Trumps*. *Sybil* and *Lothair* are also individual titles of Disraeli novels, and all three are political and social commentaries on nineteenth century Britain. It is unsurprising that Williams would invoke Disraeli as he himself held similar views about Empire as Disraeli, seeing Britain as the heir to the Christianized Byzantium.⁵

Delving deeper, I suggest the Williams has named his character "Lothair" in part on Lothar I, the ninth century Holy Roman Emperor known for establishing policy whereby the secular potentate retains authority over the Catholic Church. Emperor Lothar's legacy was plagued with internal familial disputes and ongoing civil wars among his heirs.⁶ A parallel not to be lost upon Williams' portrayal of Lothair Coningsby's troubled relationship with his own family.

Henry, Aaron, and Joanna serve as the novel's antagonists. Aaron is likened to the Tarot card of the Hermit, and he is consumed with studying the figures entrusted to him in an endless quest for knowledge and power. Williams describes Aaron thus: "he was certainly very old—nearly a century one might think, looking at the small wizened figure,

dark skinned and bald.”⁷ Waite’s description the Hermit in his 1910 *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* offers some interesting hints as to Williams’ use of this card for Aaron, particularly that the Hermit suggests, “where I am, you also may be.” Like all of the Tarot’s imagery, this card holds dual meaning. The lantern held by the Hermit can yield correct illumination, or terrifying knowledge one is not prepared to encounter.⁸ Williams portrays Aaron Lee as unable to wield the supernatural powers he inadvertently unleashes.

Aaron’s name, of course, derives from the first High Priest of the Israelites and the keeper of the Holy of Holies. Brother and translator of Moses, Aaron’s ties to Egypt are just as strong. Aaron Lee is a gypsy and hermit, not high priest, but his association with Egyptian temple priests is demonstrated through Williams’ description of him as “bald.” Priests in ancient Egypt shaved their heads bald, while Israelite priests did not (Lev. 21:5). Given Williams’ position that Judaism is mistaken in its refusal to accept the incarnation of Jesus Christ, it is not surprising that he equates the Temple cult of Israel with the pagan superstitions of Egypt.⁹

As the first Israelite High Priest, Aaron was charged with being the keeper of the Holy of Holies. Williams’ description of the room where the Tarot figures are kept recalls an inner sanctuary of a temple, where only the high priest and his successor can gain entry. The inner sanctum where the figures are held also mirrors Aaron’s frame of mind. He has spent a lifetime studying the figures, but he cannot see them for what they are—only mere reflections, a microcosm of God’s magisterial universe. Because he is not Christian, Aaron Lee is denied this vision, suffering a quest for which he is not equipped to complete.

For Williams, the Israelite Aaron's role as cultic High Priest was replaced by the sacrifice of Christ; hence the Jerusalem Temple cult was superseded by the Cross. Any cultic residue is mere superstition. Here Williams critiques both pagan superstition and Judaism. In naming the elder antagonist Aaron, Williams also draws in Rosicrucian alchemical imagery as well, in which Aaron is associated with the Hod Sephiroth of the Kabbalah — the channel through which God's judgment comes down. By the end of *The Greater Trumps*, Aaron's selfish inaction, his refusal to engage in Exchange, brings down the spectacular consequences that erupt within his home. Williams foreshadows this event in an earlier scene when Henry questions Aaron about the images of the papyrus Tarot deck in Lothair's possession. Williams has Henry mention two cards during this conversation, the Chariot and the Death card.

Williams certainly would have been aware of Waite's *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* as it was published in 1910. Williams' description of the Chariot card matches Pamela Coleman Smith's illustration of it for Waite's deck with the Egyptian car driving by black and white sphinxes, but the Death card does not. Williams creates his own image for the Death card, in which as Henry asks, "And Death—is not Death a naked peasant, with a knife in his hand, with his sandals slung at his side?"¹⁰ Williams is drawing attention to the ignominious death that will befall Henry and Aaron for their self-aggrandizing quest for knowledge over faith and their lust for ultimate power.

Henry and Aaron hatch a scheme to bring the deck and the figures together in order to learn the secret to the "Great Dance," from which they hope to gain control over the elements, divine the future of nations, and unlock the mysteries of the universe. As Aaron hears Henry's original report of the deck in Lothair's possession, he brings Henry

into the room with the figures, and readers are introduced to Williams' reified Tarot figures:

Upon that plate of gold were a number of little figures, each about three inches high of gold, it seemed, very wonderfully wrought, so that the likeness to a chessboard was even more pronounced, for any hasty spectator (could such a one ever have penetrated there) the figures might have seemed like those in a game; only there were many of them, and they were all in movement. Gently and continuously they went, intermingling, unresting – as if to some complicated measure, and as if of their own volition. There must have been nearly a hundred of them, and from the golden plate upon which they went came a slight sound of music – more like an echo than a sound – sometimes quickening, sometimes slowing to which the golden figures kept a duteous rhythm, or perhaps the faint sound itself was but their harmonized movement upon their field.¹¹

The only figure that does not move is the Fool. Indeed, the Fool is in the center, with a cat of some sort by its side, and both the Fool and the cat are poised as if caught running in mid-motion. The Fool is the biggest riddle of all. Its stillness at the center of the other dancing figures puzzles the Lees.

Henry and Aaron agree to invite the Coningsbys to Aaron's house for the Christmas holiday. Henry is hoping that once Lothair sees the Tarot figures he will accept the necessity of giving up the cards in order to reunite them with the figures. Should Lothair refuse, and ultimately Henry knows he will, Henry intends to use Nancy as the means through which he will acquire the cards. By drawing upon "the Lovers" Tarot card, Henry plans to draw Nancy into the "Great Dance" and see what powers can be obtained through experimenting with the cards.

Williams times his novel at Christmas. Christmas, for Christians — one of whom Lothair claims to be—should be a time of celebration, of hope, and renewal in the form of a savior, whose birth ushers in eternal life. Yet, for Lothair, Christmas brings the reminder that only death awaits him after a long unfulfilled life. Lothair's selfish plans

for spending the holiday where he chooses are thwarted. Reluctantly, Lothair agrees that he and Sybil will accompany Nancy to Aaron Lee's home for Christmas.

Sybil and Lothair's dialogue regarding the trip to Aaron's spills over into Williams' commentary on the nature of romantic love. Sybil, an initiate into the great "Mystery of Love," takes it for granted that everything done for Love serves a greater purpose. For Sybil, God is found through Loving, echoing Williams' principle of Exchange, and ultimately Romantic Theology. Lothair, Aaron, and Henry are ignorant of this Love.

Williams likens Henry to "the Charioteer" Tarot card. Henry believes himself to be master of the elements, as demonstrated through his callous regard for the divine nature of the Tarot deck and figures. Such mastery is, as Waite remarked, concerned "with a Mystery of Nature." Henry becomes arrogant in the face of such power, possessing no insight and reflecting Waite's cautionary statement, "the world of Grace, to which the charioteer could offer no answer."¹²

Instead of understanding that his lover Nancy is Grace, Henry sees her as a means to an end. After the experiment with Henry, Nancy's understanding of the natural world has been disrupted. She begins to understand the world in terms of "the Great Dance," as the Tarot archetypes envelope and overlay the everyday world of material forms.

When Lothair refuses to give Henry the cards, Henry uses the Lesser Arcana to call up an unnatural massive snowstorm to kill Lothair. Overcome by the storm, Lothair is knocked to the ground, as elemental forces beat him with disembodied hands. Nancy, looking for Henry, discovers him conjuring the storm and immediately grasps his motive. She knocks all but eight cards from his hands, losing the rest to the storm's wind.

Without the cards, Henry cannot call back the elements and the storm intensifies out of control. Despairing of the loss of the cards, the discovery of his actions, and sense that he has unleashed destruction upon the world, Henry sulks alone in his room. Nancy turns to Sybil, who tells her to go to Henry, forgive him, and assume her role in the Mystery of Love. Nancy does this and convinces Henry to enter the Dance with the golden figures (the Major Arcana) to ask them for help in calling back the Lesser Arcana.

In the meantime, Sybil completely confident in the Mystery of Love braves the storm to find her brother (Substitution). She sees the figures in the storm, but she also sees the Fool, who seems to be guiding her toward Lothair. On the way to Lothair, Sybil finds a lone kitten, which she tucks into her coat. Rescuing both the kitten and Lothair, Sybil manages to get them back to Aaron Lee's house and shuts the door against the storm. When Sybil goes out after Lothair in the storm, she is able to negotiate the elements because she Loves. She understands that the storm is part of God's universal design and does not question it. She does not fight it. She simply accepts it.

Sybil's abilities derive from a calm contentment with her place in the universal order. She can see the Fool move because she is like the Fool herself. She understands the ineffability of the Divine and does not seek to transgress its mysteries. Her inner power lies in stillness, faith, and reception. In other words, Sybil is at peace because she knows that Love is the force that connects all of creation. The three Christian virtues come together in Sybil: faith in God's will; hope, that with God's encouragement, humans will triumph; and charity, in her complete lack of selfishness. These virtues allow Sybil to understand the Great Dance and the Fool's place within it. Sybil's perfection of virtue is so complete that she draws the Fool to her. She meets him in the storm and is protected

by him. The Fool becomes the guiding hand of God who appears when one is ultimately committed to the Mystery of Love. It is the “greater” that trumps everything else, and by the end of the novel, the reader is lead to this conclusion.

Williams draws his Sybil from the classical Greek prophetess and seer at Apollo’s Oracle at Cumae. Apollo granted the Sybil a wish in return for her virginity, and she was granted a thousand year lifespan. But the Sybil forgot to ask for eternal youth and thus grew older and smaller until only her voice was left, eventually kept in a jar.¹³ In *The Greater Trumps*, Sybil, the maiden aunt, is indeed a seer with keen insight and wisdom, but is completely self-possessed and content. Earlier in the novel, Williams has Nancy say, “She’s a saint” and “Aunt’s a perfect miracle,” to emphasize her holy stature.¹⁴ Whereas Nancy is only an initiate in the way of Love, Sybil is master. Later in the novel, Nancy only learns to love after Sybil instructs her, “Try it, darling,” during Christmas Day services during a hymn to the Mystery of Love.¹⁵

Sybil contrasts Lothair in every way. She is unselfishly charitable, whereas Lothair has lost any ability to selflessly give to others. Williams’ associates Sybil with the Tarot card of “the Sun,” naturally linking her to Apollo and enlightenment.¹⁶ For Williams, the Sun is also God’s son, the divine Christ, which for Williams serves as the center “Mystery of Love” in his Romantic theology.

But Williams also plays with the Sybil from the epigraph of T.S. Eliot’s 1922 *The Waste Land*. Eliot himself was a friend and associate of Williams, and wrote an introduction to Williams’ last novel *All Hallows Eve* (1945). There is little doubt that *The Greater Trumps* is in conversation with Eliot. For example, Eliot’s epigraph comes from chapter forty-eight of Petronius’ *Satyricon*, which states

Then the Sybil, with my own eyes I saw her, at Cumae hanging up in a jar; and whenever the boys would say to her, "Sybil, what would you? She would answer, "I would die."¹⁷

The classical Sybil becomes a guardian of the underworld and Eliot's epigraph reflects this pessimism as well as the pessimism of modern consciousness. Williams' characterization of the Sybil is quite the opposite. She will have eternal life because she is a vessel of the Mystery of Love. Indeed, only Sybil can see the Fool move. Sybil as the Sun, illuminates the dark events that surround the Lee's foray into chaos. Williams actually links Sybil with supernatural in chapter three, by noting that, "Nancy had the natural, alert interest of youth, as Sybil had the—perhaps supernatural—vivid interest of age..."¹⁸

In another intertextual play, Williams uses a chessboard as the platform for the dancing Tarot figures in *The Greater Trumps* in an allusion to T.S. Eliot's "A Game of Chess," from *The Waste Land*. Williams reverses the nihilism Eliot's quote in to reject both Eliot's and modernity's pessimism. In the novel, the chessboard serves as the foundation for the Great Dance of God's creation, as earth is the foundation for human action. It serves Williams as a metaphor for an enchanted world, his Co-inherited and universal Great Dance.

When humans overstep their bounds by trying to control what only God can, chaos erupts and blends the two realms. This occurs when the characters in *The Greater Trumps* (Nancy, Henry, Joanna) trespass and interfere with the Great Dance, allowing the Golden Mist, which surrounds the dancing Tarot figures to escape the Dance. The Golden Mist filters into the everyday, material world, threatening to absorb it. In this aspect of the novel, William expresses his contempt for the assumptions of modernity, which

disrupt divine order. Rationalism's approach to God's divine creation, gives humans false hubris that results in chaos. It is little surprise that at the novel's close, order is restored by the "hand" of Nancy (Romantic Theology).

Analysis of the Novel

Like the titles of his other talisman novels, I believe that "Greater Trumps" means far more than simply the Major Arcana of the Tarot deck. Every Tarot deck is made up of two component parts, the Major and Lesser Arcanas. The twenty-two cards of Major Arcana personify human qualities. The seventy-eight cards of the Lesser Arcana symbolize the material elements (earth, air, fire, water), and constitute the interaction between human beings and the material world. For Williams, the "greater" is the all-encompassing unity of God that lies behind what humans perceive as divisions in the material world. Just as the Types in *Many Dimensions* merely *seem* to be separated from the First Matter, the individual Tarot principles and elements make up the Great Dance, which is Williams' allegory for Co-inherence, which will be discussed below. "Trumps" refers to the Major Arcana in the novel, yet also extends the term's meaning to both "trumping" (as in surpassing or excelling) as well as falsely devising or fabricating. Thus the "Greater" (God) trumps (triumphs over) falsely conceived divisions. Hence, Williams' title for his last talisman novel reflects his overall schema of unity, paralleling the same theme from both *War in Heaven* and *Many Dimensions*.

In *The Greater Trumps*, Williams' reconfigures the Tarot as a binary construction. It is both a set of painted images on papyrus cards, and a set of animated dancing figures, to which the images correspond. At the end of the novel, this bifurcation

collapses when both the images and the figures are absorbed back into the divine realm from which they originated. Just as the magical objects in *War in Heaven* and *Many Dimensions* return to God, so do the Tarot images and figures of *The Greater Trumps*. This return occurs at the moment of divine intervention, which Williams places in the last chapter entitled, “Sun Stand Thou Still Upon Gideon.” Williams takes this title from Joshua 10:12, when God supernaturally intervenes and halts time to ensure Joshua’s victory. This moment, like the transformation of Prester John into Christ at the Mass in *War in Heaven*, and the transfiguration of Chloe Burnett in *Many Dimensions*, is the revelatory flash when the divine world manifests before the characters.

As to the origins of the Tarot deck and its figures, we are only told in the novel that an “ancient philosopher” created them, but Williams takes great care to establish links with ancient Egypt throughout this novel. It is likely that Williams had the legendary ancient Egyptian philosopher Hermes Trismegistus in mind, particularly as he constructs his fictional Tarot deck from papyrus. Williams would have been intimately familiar with mystical legends of ancient Egypt as well as Hermeticism from his studies with the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. Further, Williams stands within the long tradition going back to Herodotus that considers ancient Egypt the source of esoteric wisdom and magic. Egypt also offers another link to the chaos theme of the novel. For anyone who studies the iconography of ancient Egypt, the god Set represents chaos. Set was the god associated with death in the red-land, “deshret,” from which derives our English word “desert.” Joanna’s fear of Set (death/chaos) reinforces the theme of chaos throughout the novel by adding an additional layer and connecting chaos to pagan deities. By linking pagan deities with chaos, I suggest that Williams is doing more than simply drawing on

ancient Egyptian mythology. I believe that he is commenting on the occultist movements of his day, such as the Order of the Golden Dawn, which resurrected the deities of classical antiquity and raised them above the Christian Trinity. For Williams, the deities mentioned in the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which the Golden Dawn used in its studies, were superficial and false.

Williams' choice of the Tarot as the magical object for demonstrating Co-inherence was clearly self-conscious. He imagines the material and divine worlds connected through images. The images of the painted deck are the material forms (images) of physical reality. The dancing figures of the tarot are their spiritual counterparts, endlessly enacting God's Great Dance within the Golden Mist (First Matter). Thus Williams uses the Tarot deck, allegedly of pagan origin, to illuminate the reality of his Christian faith and the Unity of the Christian God. The Tarot deck melds material forces in the form of the elements (earth, air, fire, water) with the spiritual journey of the human soul as reflected in the Major Arcana (the dancing figures). Williams reformulates the Tarot's material and spiritual dimensions to demonstrate Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence (the Great Dance) and there is little doubt that Williams invoked the Tarot as Waite, also a Christian, conceived of it:

The true Tarot is symbolism; it speaks no other language and offers no other signs. Given the inward meaning of its emblems, they do become a kind of alphabet which is capable of indefinite combinations and makes true sense to all.¹⁹

Yet, in *The Greater Trumps* Williams boldly recombines and reinvents the Tarot to suit his theological paradigm and demonstrate how Romantic Theology can work in the real world.

In a conversation between Henry and Nancy during a scene where they, together as “The Lovers” (Tarot Card of the Major Arcana) use the cards Suit of Deniers (Lesser Arcana) to manifest Earth in the dining room, Henry explains the Great Dance as, “All things are held together by correspondence, image with image, movement with movement. Without that there could be no relation and therefore no truth,” which is Williams’ principle of Co-inherence.²⁰ Williams’ enchanted view of the universe, where past and present mingle, legend and history merge, and everything emanates from and returns to God is Co-inherence. Co-inherence is the foundation of *The Greater Trumps* (the Great Dance, Mystery of Love), allowing Substitution and Exchange in Nancy and Sybil to issue forth and finally triumph.

But Co-inherence is not only spiritual. It is also material as demonstrated through the Lesser Arcana of the Tarot Deck. Williams has Henry explain to Nancy, who is initially frightened by the cards, that the four suits of the Lesser Arcana (staffs, swords, cups, and deniers) correspond to the elements air, fire, water, and earth respectively. Henry persuades Nancy that to know such power is safe, and that she doesn’t have to fear the knowledge. In a complete reversal of the Adam and Eve story, Williams has Henry urge Nancy in the quest for concealed (forbidden) knowledge of the Great Dance.

But before Williams can offer us a glimpse of the Great Dance, he drives the novel forward with the appearance of Henry’s great aunt, and Williams’ quintessential gypsy, Joanna. Joanna is chaos personified, with white-hair, and a ratty-shawl, who mutters incoherent but prophetic words. Deluded, Joanna believes herself to be Isis. As Isis, Joanna roams the British countryside in search of her dead child, stillborn at seven months, but whom she believes is Horus, awaiting resurrection.

If Henry represents the rational world of control, Joanna is the return of the repressed and the grip of all that is irrational. Joanna, lost in a mythology she has created for herself, represents the delusions humans must suffer until they come to the realization Co-inherence. Humans in this state can often see the connections, but those connections are incorrect or incomplete. In the novel, the loss of Joanna's child led to her estrangement from her brother Aaron and her own delusion. Joanna is terrifying because she is insane and as such, she is on the threshold of power. Joanna can see what others cannot, and Henry, Lothair, Nancy, and Aaron recoil from her. It is only Sybil, master of the Mystery of Love, who can reach Joanna and calm her. Sybil does so by acknowledging Joanna's inner divinity. Sybil's recognition of Joanna's divinity indicates her understanding of Exchange, Sybil loves purely. Like Chloe Burnett in *Many Dimensions*, Sybil is the vessel for Exchange.

By the time Williams constructed Sybil's character, he had matured his principle of Exchange. Sybil is completely selfless and content. She is able to see the interconnectedness of humanity and God because she herself is actively connected through the power of Love. Joanna mistakes this for acknowledgement of her actual divine status as Isis and blesses Sybil, "The old creature came nearer yet and put out her hand as if to feel for Sybil's. In turn Miss Coningsby stretched out her own, and with those curious linked hands they stood."²¹ The image of hands is invoked at a moment of Exchange: Sybil and Joanna's hands are linked, and Joanna raises her hands in blessing. Exchange has evolved from only taking upon the burdens of others, to bear within oneself all others' burdens at once. Just as Christ is able to bear humanity's burdens at once through Love, so too can Sybil. As the maiden (virgin) aunt, Sybil is the vessel of

Christ, just as the Virgin Mary served God as his vessel. Sybil does not question; she Loves. This is why she can see the figure of the Fool move around the other figures on the chessboard, when all the others cannot. Like Prester John in *War in Heaven*, the Fool is the Holy Spirit, the guiding power of God, working in between the spaces of the Great Dance and demonstrating the ultimate unity of creation.

Williams retains the Fool of Tarot symbolism in *The Greater Trumps*, but changes the image from Waite's. In Waite's deck, the Fool is accompanied by a dog, while Williams goes into detail regarding the catlike creature in his rendition. It is unsurprising that Williams substitutes a cat for the dog, particularly as the cat is associated with women and the three protagonists around whom the story moves forward, Sybil, Nancy, and Joanna are female. Further, given the extended Egyptian connections throughout the novel, the cat recalls Bastet, the ancient Egyptian feline goddess who was the protector of humankind.

The Fool itself is a mysterious card as Waite remarks 'many symbols of the Instituted Mysteries are summarized in this card.'²² Since it is numbered zero, it is the "naught card," but it is not negative. The Fool is the unknown and the unknowable element, stillness and motion at once. He resides both outside the Tarot and within it. Not bounded by any one domain, he dances around and through the various elements, unaffected by earth, air, fire, and water. For those untrained in the ways of Love, the Fool appears still, yet in actuality, he is dancing in between the spaces, exemplifying Williams' doctrine of Co-inherence, and demonstrating his own view of an enchanted universe emanating from God. Like the Stone in *Many Dimensions*, the Golden Mist surrounding the dancing Tarot figures, is First Matter. It is what creation evolved from

and what creation is in danger of returning to if order is not restored. Williams terms the mist, “The cloud of the beginning of things” revealing that hands in the Golden Mist are the tools of God.²³ They make and unmake all created matter. They are the forces behind change and movement. They emanate from the primordial center, i.e., God. As the Golden Mist of the Major Arcana meets the Lesser Arcana elements in the storm, they merge in a burst of white light. Chaos erupts in the midst of Aaron’s household. Of all the characters, only Sybil remains calm during this eruption, while Joanna feeds on the chaos.

Williams presents Joanna as beaten down by sorrow and superstition. A gypsy with ties to Egypt, Joanna naturally conflates herself with Isis and the divine child Horus. Joanna’s search is doomed because it is false. It is a pagan version of the passion story, and for Williams was incorrect. Williams uses Joanna’s quest for her divine child, as a foil for moving Nancy’s toward Love, i.e., Christ. When Nancy finally accepts her role in the Mystery of Love by willingly entering the Great Dance to right Henry’s wrong, she exemplifies Substitution.

When Joanna enters the Dance behind Henry and Nancy searching for her lost child, she comes upon Nancy. Mistaking Nancy for Set, Joanna attacks her, seeking to sacrifice Nancy in order to free Horus, the false “divine child.” In another loop of Substitution, Williams presents Nancy as an actual sacrifice, whom Joanna attempts to kill while inside the Dance. Nancy, like Christ, must die in order for Joanna’s divine son (Horus) to rise. After having received Sybil’s instruction though, Nancy is able to draw upon the Mystery of Love. Nancy Loves Joanna, and in so doing she enters the Mystery of Love, overcoming Joanna’s despair. In the final chapter, Joanna recognizes in Nancy

her lost child. Joanna sees Christ in Nancy and her quest finally ends at having seen the Mystery of Love revealed. Indeed, it is through Joanna that Nancy learns to Love unselfishly.

In Nancy's love for Henry, there remained the residue of self-service. Nancy loves and forgives Henry because he is her future partner. Williams needed to move Nancy beyond this naïve romanticism into Romantic Theology. Both Joanna and Henry's self-interest are the means through which Nancy enters the Mystery of Love upon entering the Great Dance.

When caught in the Dance, Henry feels as if he's spent centuries immobilized. Williams presents Henry as the Hanged Man, but then merges Henry with the Tower. In Henry's ecstatic state within the Dance, he continues to believe he can understand the mysteries of the universe and stand above them. It is only when he realizes that he must become part of the Dance by loving—as experienced through his transformed Love for Nancy—does he understand. Upon reaching this epiphany, Henry is suddenly released from the supernatural force that bound him in place. He is now free to move about in the Dance.

It was raised by hands, which from within the rising walls, came climbing over, building themselves into a tower, thrusting those below them into place, fists hammering them down so that the whole Tower was made up of layers of hands. But as it grew upward they changed; masonry below, thinner levels of masonry above, and, still above, masonry changing into hands, a few levels of moving hands, and (topmost of all) the busy working fists and fingers. And then a sudden spark of sunlight would fall on it from above, and the fists would fall back out of sight, and the hands would disjoin, swiftly, but reluctantly, holding on to each other till the ruin tore them apart, and the apparent masonry, as it was rent by some invisible force, would again change back into clutching and separating hands.²⁴

Connecting the tower to chaos, in a link back to the opening words of the novel, Williams uses the Tarot card of “the Tower” to symbolize the Tower of Babel while also deploying its Tarot symbolism. Henry’s scheme to unlock the secret of the Dance mirrors the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, where humans immersed in prideful folly thought they could reach God. Standing for human pride, and the chaos provoked by that pride, the Tower also echoes the agents of chaos in *War in Heaven* and the self-interest of the greedy from *Many Dimensions*. Yet at the same time, as a Tarot symbol, the Tower is ambivalent, neither negative nor positive. In *The Greater Trumps*, the Tower reflects the outward obstinacy of Henry’s pride while also pointing out the dangerous cracks in its foundation. When Henry sees the Tower in his vision, he sees that it is made up of countless animated and moving hands. The Tower becomes the means of his salvation at the very moment he despairs. Until Nancy forgave Henry, Henry had not learned the Mystery of Love. Nancy, as Substitution and Exchange, was the vehicle through which Henry comes to understand the Mystery of Love (Romantic Theology).

When Nancy forgives Henry, she takes his sin into herself, and together as the Lovers, the willingly enter the Great Dance, hand in hand, in an attempt to halt the storm by appealing to the Major Arcana, the Greater Trumps themselves. Here we have for the first time, in the three talisman novels, the three doctrines merge and emerge as Romantic Theology fully formed. Nancy’s willing acceptance of Henry’s burden demonstrates Exchange. Her willingness to Love Joanna, to the point of sacrifice, exemplifies Substitution, while the Great Dance is Williams’ literary image for Co-inherence.

Accepting her role, Nancy becomes the means through which Love ultimately interrupts the flow of negative energies. Nancy’s naïve romantic love has matured into

theological Love, and fulfills the three principles of Romantic Theology. Into the Great Dance, as the Lovers, hand in hand. Williams writes,

Around them, closing them in, supporting them, were other mighty hands—his. Of his presence otherwise she was by now unaware; she might, but for those other hands, have been alone. But those four hands that by mischance had loosed the winds and the waters on earth were stretched out to recover the power they had inadvertently cast away. The power within her, the offspring of her transmuted love, longed in itself, beating down her own consciousness, for some discovery beyond where mightier power should answer it.²⁵

Inside the dance, Nancy and Henry feel the hands of God, the “his” that Williams specifies. It is God who comes to Nancy’s side to support her in her mission to Love.

Throughout the course of the novel, Nancy learns that the Tarot figures are not any more supernatural or sacred than human beings, and as an initiate in the Mystery of Love, she will be safely guided by God, as Williams states, “Nothing was certain, but everything was safe that was part of the mystery of Love.”²⁶ Williams gives Nancy a long internal dialogue on the nature of hands, with which she eventually halts the Lesser Arcana’s destructive force, “Between that threat and its fulfillment stood the girl’s slender figure, and the warm hands of humanity met the invasion and turned it.”²⁷ Nancy, channels Love through her own raised hands raised in benediction and returns the elemental forces back to their origin. Dispelling the storm, the moon shines through over all the houses on Christmas Night. The Tarot Moon shines above Aaron’s house illuminating the origins of all things. Williams tells us “For there high between two towers, the moon shines, clear and perfect and the towers are no longer of Babel ever rising and falling, but complete in their degree.”²⁸

Like the Unity from *Many Dimensions*, the Great Dance it is what keeps the universe moving toward Love and constantly reconnecting creation back within itself.

Henry explains the Dance to Nancy,

Imagine, then, if you can, he said, “imagine that everything which exists takes part in the movement of a great dance—everything, the electrons, all growing and decaying things, all that seems alive and all that doesn’t seem alive, men and beasts, trees and stones, everything that changes, and there is nothing anywhere that does not change. That change—that’s what we know of the immortal dance; the law in the nature of things—that’s the measure of the dance, why one things changes swiftly and another slowly, why there is seeming accident and incalculable alteration, why men hate and love and grown hungry, and cities that have stood for centuries fall in a week, why the smallest wheel and the mightiest world evolve, why blood flows and the heart beats and the brain moves, why your body is poised on your ankles and the Himalaya are rooted in the earth—quick or slow, measurable or immeasurable, there is nothing at all anywhere but the dance. Imagine it—imagine it, see it all at once and in one.”²⁹

On God, “Is it God then?” Nancy asked, herself more hushed. Henry moved impatiently, ‘What do we know?’ he answered. ‘This isn’t a question of words. God or gods or no gods, these things are and they’re meant and manifested thus. Call it God, but it’s better to call it the Juggler and mean neither God nor no God.’³⁰

Henry could see the steps of the dance, but he did not grasp the whole until Nancy showed him the “truth” of Love. Henry’s earlier belief that he could control the Dance echoes rational scientific and materialistic approaches to the world. For Williams, these views are in error, since they proceed from human arrogance and pride. By the end of the novel, the power of the Great Dance and the Mystery of Love are revealed to Henry, but only after he is shown the “truth” through Romantic Theology.

Summary

In this novel, Williams weaves an intricate allegory for his principles of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence that completes his Romantic Theology and offers it to all Christians, not just married partners. The Great Dance—the dance of the

Tarot figures on the board—is humanity’s strivings in the material world. But when the dancing figures leave the board, they lead beyond the material world to a greater experience of cosmic motion and movement. Eventually, they reveal the divinity of a unified spiritual, material, and cosmic realm.

As Nancy takes Henry’s sin upon herself and Loves Joanna as Joanna tries to sacrifice her, Nancy becomes Substitution. In parallel, Sybil takes Aaron’s pain upon herself and eases his fear. Sybil absorbs all of the fear around her, and asks for nothing in return. Sybil is Exchange. However as Nancy progresses from self-absorbed immaturity, she stands at the center of Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence as separate and differentiated principles. I would also suggest, that the character of Nancy echoes Williams’ own maturation process from what he provides as Romantic Theology in *The Outlines of Romantic Theology* to what he offers as its mature form in *The Greater Trumps*. Certainly, Williams’ *The Greater Trumps* is complex novel filled with self-indulgent Christian pathos. Yet, it is also intelligently humorous and religiously profound. Williams portrays Love as grace— particularly unselfish charity and willing self-sacrifice as the means through which human can participate in the Great Dance of divine Love.

Intertextually driven, Williams creates a poignant novel that refutes scientific empiricism, the pessimism of literary modernism, and the selfish ends of human pursuits. His use of literary, occult, biblical, historical, and mythological traditions is overtly syncretistic; he seeks to place Christian teleology at the pinnacle of his Romantic Theology. As the novel closes, the spell of the Tarot is broken through Sybil and Nancy’s release into the Mystery of Love and the restoration of the Great Dance. The Golden Mist

implodes, leaving only a pile of golden dust and the figures are reduced to ashes through the purifying light of Love. Opposition has been neutralized and all binaries reconciled.

From this novel, Williams goes on to write his last two novels, *Descent into Hell* (1937) and *All Hallows' Eve* (1945) as well as his mature theological treatises. He has demonstrated the evolution of Romantic Theology through his fictional characters in the talisman novels, and had himself come to fully articulate his contribution to Christian faith during a time when the Christian paradigm was being challenged by occult revivals, and the brutal, secular realities of the World War period in Europe.

Conclusion: The Enchantment of Charles Williams and Disenchanted Modernity

In *The Place of Enchantment* (2004), Alex Owens argues that the proliferation of occult and mystical traditions in Britain during the Fin de Siecle, specifically 1880-1914, was an important cultural phenomenon that informs contemporary conversations today about what constitutes modernity. Owens argues that Enlightenment rationalism and its positivist legacy in intellectual circles bred a response from those seeking to restore a balance between rationalism and human spiritual exploration. Orders such as The Golden Dawn and Waite's Christianized Fellowship of the Rosy Cross sought to bring the spiritual dimensions of humans into the rationalist paradigm through experimentation with individual self-exploration and systematic occult experimentation. In other words, practitioners approached the occult in a rational and scientific manner, recording the results of their experiences.

Owens argues that Fin de Siecle occultism merged Enlightenment rationality with a newly minted "modern" subjectivity of self. Occultists were seeking to discover higher levels of human potential and union with the divine on both individual and societal planes. At the same time, such occultists rejected the use of magic for personal gain as well as outmoded Church dogmas of salvation and faith. She writes,

It sought to mobilize a reworked notion of science in the name of religion of the ancients, and represented a paradigmatic shift in which the universe and the place of humankind within it were rationalized and brought back into sharply spiritual focus.”¹

British occultism was a reworking of traditional (medieval, Elizabethan) occult systems for the betterment of the new individual “subject” as well as for humankind in general, categorically distancing itself from traditional Christianity.

These occultists, in general, actively sought to control spiritual and elemental forces through systematized ritual, and initiation to greater levels of knowledge within a rigid hierarchy of higher offices. Though presented as orthodox Anglican by his friends and earliest critics, Charles Williams participated in Waite’s Fellowship of the Rosy Cross for at least five years, possibly a decade.² Certainly, Williams was aware of the Kabbalistic and Hermetic systems used by the British occultists; however, he eventually rejected occult systems as a means for human salvation. Williams later viewed such systems as arrogant attempts to assert human power, when one should instead, surrender to God’s will. Consequently, in the novels Williams uses occultism as a ground upon which to build his views of an active, numinous, spiritual universe for which God remains the teleological center toward which humans are guided to through Christ as Love. At the same time, however, Williams rejects the paradigm used by occultists, that supernatural forces can be contained and wielded by mere humans.

Gavin Ashenden’s *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (2007) is an in-depth study of Williams’ use of Rosicrucian imagery in his poetry and prose resulting from Williams’ membership in A.E. Waite’s Fellowship of the Rosy Cross to suggest

Those who misunderstand or know next to nothing about the nature of Waite’s Rosicrucianism fear that Williams spoke from a position outside the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy. That was not the case. In fact, his use of that tradition enabled him, after developing his own distinctive mythical framework and mythically charged language, to speak remedially from within Christian

culture. It is not too much to claim that he prophetically confronts its contemporary conventions and prevailing ideology.³

Here Ashenden captures the spirit of Williams' novels as they tussle with Romanticism, rationalism, occultism, and superficial Christianity by creating an alternative mystical teleology—that all things derive from God and all things return to God.⁴ Williams' perspective is adamantly Christian, but inherently mystical. He denies occult paths to knowledge as well as modern rationalism and attempts to describe, through the artistic medium of the novel, a religious experience that conveys humanity's absolute dependence on God. Neither the occult nor science can lead to what Williams believed was the true meaning of life, that is the Mystery of Love and Romantic Theology.

Unlike his contemporary peer fantasists, who engage modernity through symbolic forces in their stories, Williams presents both modernity and occult systems as arrogantly mistaken. Though he uses binaries such as good vs. evil and dark vs. light, ambivalence lies beneath the surface and ultimately all binaries are reconciled through Co-inherence. In his novels—love and power, dark and light, the occult and modernity—merge and morph along with other polarities in manner reminiscent of alchemical fusion of opposites. Williams leads his readers, along with the protagonists, to Romantic Theology by demonstrating the how Substitution, Exchange and Co-inherence can be realized in everyday life.

Williams' Romantic theology denotes a radical turn back to Christian faith and away from modern concerns. Rejecting occultism and science as pathways to divine truth, Williams promotes his Christian teleology whereby humans must accept their place in the Divine Plan (exemplified by the Archdeacon, Chloe, Sybil, and eventually Nancy). In do doing, the Mystery of Love opens believers to full participation in Christ. Unlike

arrogant scientists and occultists, who were desperately trying to uncover the “truth” from without, Williams advocates a mystical inner ‘truth’ accessible through Sacrifice, Exchange, and Co-inherence.

Whether conscious that he was doing it or not, Williams developed and tested his Romantic Theology in the talisman novels. *War in Heaven* focuses around Substitution, the willing sacrifice of the self to God’s will. In *Many Dimensions*, the doctrine of Exchange, albeit still tied to Substitution and sacrifice, is expressed through the willing taking within oneself the burdens of the world in service to God. It was not until Williams finished his final talisman novel, *The Greater Trumps* that the three principles emerge as distinct. But like the Trinity, they are interconnected and ultimately reflect the Unity of God. Romantic Theology, like the Christian Trinity, is a matter of mystery and faith, accessible to all believers who understand that “This is Thou, neither is This Thou,” apprehend the Unity of God, and adore the Mystery of Love.

It is a shame that scholars and critics of Williams have not paid more attention to these early novels. For it is here, through an artistic medium that Williams was able to actualize his principles and disseminate them to readers in the interwar period. The talisman novels are allegories for accessing the Mystery of Love, for participating in Christ’s sacrifice, and ultimately understanding the interconnectedness of God’s creation. That Williams wrote these novels during a period of intense change in Europe is a remarkably feat of insularity.

That Williams has remained a marginal author is not surprising. His simple Christian teleology could not be sustained in a world that had seen the Holocaust and the atom bomb. Meant as allegories for a spiritual ascension to Christ, they can only be seen

now as fairy tales reminiscent of a long since lapsed Christian Romanticism that cannot speak to contemporary global concerns. But they offer a glimpse into one authors' attempt to retain an enchanted view of God's universe during a time when others artists were struggling with the horrors of the World Wars, and how to represent a new world order. In the twenty-first century, an enchanted worldview remains strong in American pop culture, and perhaps one day Williams will be rediscovered as a precursor for those able to find sacredness in the mundane.

NOTES

¹ Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 129-156.

² Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4.

³ In this paper, I capitalize Substitution, Exchange, and Co-inherence to distinguish the terms as William's principles, though he himself rarely, if ever capitalized the terms in his own works.

⁴ See Mary McDermott Shideler, *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962; reprint, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005).

⁵ Alice Mary Hadfield, "Introduction: The Writing of "Outlines of Romantic Theology," *Outlines of Romantic Theology*, (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2005), xiii-xiv.

⁶ Williams published theological treatises include *He Came Down from Heaven* (1938), *The Descent of the Dove* (1939), *Religion and Love in Dante* (1941), and *The Forgiveness of Sins* (1942), however he also wrote short essays working out his theology in various periodicals 1938-1945.

⁷ Charles Williams, *Outlines of Romantic Theology; with which is Reprinted Religion and Love in Dante: The Theology of Romantic Love*, edited and introduced by Alice Mary Hadfield, (Berkeley, CA: The Apocryphile Press, 2005).

⁸ Williams, *Outlines*, 17.

⁹ Williams, *Outlines*, 14.

¹⁰ Williams, *Outlines*, 7.

¹¹ Throughout this paper, when "Love" or "Will" are capitalized it refers to Williams' concept of Love as Christ, a sentient force at work within the world, which can be channeled by humans who give themselves over fully to God's will.

¹² Williams, *Outlines*, 20-21.

¹³ Williams, *Outlines*, 15.

¹⁴ Williams, *Outlines*, 15.

¹⁵ Williams, *Outlines*, 7.

¹⁶ “Writerly” literary works require the reader to actively construct meaning from the text, while “readerly” texts passively convey meaning to the reader. Ironically, Barthes reserved the term “writerly” for texts he considered as exemplifying literary modernism. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974).

¹⁷ Williams had finished and published six novels before he published his theological works, *He Came Down From Heaven* (1938), *The Descent of the Dove* (1939), *The Forgiveness of Sins* (1942) and his Arthurian-themed poetry *Taliesson through Logres* (1938), which work out his doctrine of Co-inherence, Substitution, and Exchange.

¹ See R.A. Gilbert, *A.E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts* (Wellsborough, Northhamptonshire: Crucible, 1987), 148-150, as well as Gavin Ashenden’s monograph *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008), which details Waite’s influence on Williams.

² Gavin Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, Ohio: Kent University Press, 2008).

³ Williams’ later theological doctrines as well as his early Romantic Theology are attempts to unite the material with spiritual. The “two ways” that Williams meditates on are the “Way of Affirmation,” i.e., physical love and material reality, with the “Way of Negation,” the denial of physical love and a renunciation of the material world in favor of spiritual pursuits. See Ashenden, *Alchemy*, 71; Mary McDermott Shideler provides a detailed interpretation of Williams’ use of the “two ways” in *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005).

⁴ Charles Williams, *He Came Down From Heaven and The Forgiveness of Sins* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2005), 82-83.

⁵ Mary Alice Hadfield, *An Introduction to Charles Williams* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1959), 54-55.

⁶ Drawing on Alice Mary Hadfield’s initial biography of Charles Williams, Part Two of Humphrey Carpenter’s, *The Inklings* (New York: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1978), focuses on Charles Williams, noting many of the people important in Williams’ life whom he subsequently and poetically renamed, including his wife, Florence who became “Michal”; Sir Henry Milford, the publisher and Williams’ boss at Oxford University Press became “Caesar,” while his platonic lover Phyllis Jones became “Celia.”

⁷ *Taliesson through Logres* offers yet another complex example of the particular care Williams deploys in choosing his the names for his characters. “Logres” was an early

name, possibly of Celtic origin, for King Arthur's realm in Britain from Geoffery of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britannie*, while Taliessin was a sixth century Welsh poet and bard, known from the *Mabinogion*, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* as well as Lord Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

⁸ Charles Williams, *War in Heaven* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 255.

⁹ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Chatham, Kent: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992), 87.

¹⁰ Thomas Howard remarks on Williams' use of "Fardles" as deriving from Hamlet's soliloquy, but does not mention the translation into English of Johannes Boemus' 1520 early first ethnography of Asia and Africa, translated into English by William Waterman under the title *The Fardle of Façons* in 1555. Thomas Howard, *The Novels of Charles Williams* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 85.

¹¹ Williams, *War*, 49-51.

¹² A. Ua Clerigh, "Pope Adrian IV," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01156c.htm> (retrieved August 1, 2009). See also Claudio Rendina, *The Popes* (Santa Ana, Calif.: Seven Locks Press, 2002), 294-297.

¹³ Williams, *War*, 97.

¹⁴ Cavaliero suggests that the character which most reflects Williams is Lionel Rackstraw. See Glen Cavaliero, *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1983), 69.

¹⁵ John Buchan, *Prester John* with an introduction by David Daniell, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ See Glen Cavaliero, *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1983), 63.

¹⁷ A. E. Waite, *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal* (London: Rebman Limited, 1909), 661-667.

¹⁸ Though I do not believe that Williams was virulently or ethnically anti-Semitic, I agree with scholars who maintain that Williams believed that Judaism was incorrect and that he felt that Jews were simply mistaken in their refusal to accept the incarnation of Jesus Christ. See Andrea Freud Loewenstein, *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women: Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams, and Graham Greene* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ Ronald Hutton discusses the relationship between the Romantic poets and the rise of neo-pagan movements in Britain in “Modern Pagan Witchcraft,” *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Twentieth Century*, ed. Engt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 17-36.

²⁰ Williams, *The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church* (Vancouver: Regent Publishing, 2002), viii.

²¹ Glen Cavaliero tells us, “ ‘Co-inherence’ was first used by the Early Church Fathers to describe the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ, and was subsequently adopted to describe the mutual indwelling of the three persons of the Holy Trinity,” and draws upon Mary McDermott Shideler’s exposition of Williams doctrine in her book, *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams*. Cavaliero, *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1983): vii. Shideler herself tells us that the term is of pagan origin but gives no source other than Williams’ later theological treatise *The Descent of the Dove* (1939). Shideler, *Theology*, 47-48.

²² The Grail as "Graal" has a long literary history traceable back to the twelfth century poets, Chretien de Troyes' unfinished *Perceval or Le Conte du Graal* as well as Robert du Borron's *Joseph d'Arimatee or Roman de la estoire dou Graal*. See Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004). A.E. Waite maintains the 'Graal' spelling in his (1909) *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal*, though later editions render it “Grail” and it is most likely Williams source for his spelling.

²³ Williams, *War*, 253-254.

¹ Charles Williams, *Many Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Group, 1931), 7.

² Williams, *Dimensions*, 18.

³ Throughout this chapter, I capitalize “Stone” as well as “Type” when referencing the objects as Williams’ conceives them in the novel. The multiplicity of the “Types” ultimately refers back to the original “Stone” and are used interchangeably—a clever device Williams employs to demonstrate interconnectedness and ultimate unity.

⁴ I would like to recognize my friend and literary interlocutor Edward Schultz for suggesting “arglay” as an anagram for ‘Graal’ from which my intertextual interrogation of the two novels proceeded.

⁵ Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 178-184. Williams would also have been aware of this tradition

from his reading of A.E. Waite's *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal*, if not from a first-hand reading knowledge of Wolfram Von Eschenbach's *Parzival*.

⁶ Williams, *Dimensions*, 194.

⁷ Williams, *War*, 190.

⁸ Williams, *Dimensions*, 56.

⁹ Williams, *Dimensions*, 263-264.

¹⁰ Hajji Ibrahim tells Prince Ali "I think it shall return to the Keepers only when one shall use it for the journey without space...." Williams, *Dimensions*, 17.

¹¹ Williams, *Dimensions*, 45.

¹² Mary McDermott Shideler, *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1962): 158. Williams presented his doctrine of exchange in a pamphlet simply entitled, "The Way of Exchange." See Anne Ridler, *Charles Williams: Selected Writings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 122-131.

¹³ Charles Williams, "The Way of Exchange," *Charles Williams: Selected Writings* chosen by Anne Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 129.

¹⁴ Gavin Ashenden notes Williams' Doctrine of Exchange and its use of time and space but associates it with his later novels, not considering its earliest expression in *Many Dimensions*. Gavin Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, Ohio: Kent University Press, 2008), 175.

¹ My use of the term 'imagery' follows that of Williams' understanding of the term. Shideler explains, "In imagery, however, the symbol is not constructed but discovered. While the allegorist imagine a decision situation that will convey his precise meaning, the imagist begins with the actual world of his experience and finds the persons, events, and things that confront him do in fact suggest meanings beyond themselves." Mary McDermott Shideler, *The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1962), 12.

² A.E. Waite makes a point to counter the reigning view among Tarot scholars and occultists of his time that Egypt was not the origin of either Tarot cards or gypsies in his *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (1910).

³ Deborah Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 3.

⁴ Charles Williams, *The Greater Trumps* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1932; reprint, Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 16 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁵ In his later poetry *Taliessin through Logres*, Williams brings the Graal back to Britannia (i.e., Logres) and Britannia becomes the ideal Christianized realm.

⁶ Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages c. 800-1056* (London and New York: Longman Publishing, 1991), 70-71.

⁷ Williams, *Trumps*, 25.

⁸ A.E. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (London: W. Rider & Son, 1911; reprint, New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1995), 104-106 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁸ See note 14 in Chapter Two.

¹⁰ Williams, *Trumps*, 26.

¹¹ Williams, *Trumps*, 28.

¹² Waite, *Key*, 96.

¹³ Book XIV of Ovid's, *Metamorphoses*, trans., Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1955).

¹⁴ Williams, *Trumps*, 5, 13.

¹⁵ Williams, *Trumps*, 123.

¹⁶ Williams, *Trumps*, 17.

¹⁷ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace, 1997).

¹⁸ Williams, *Trumps*, 44.

¹⁹ Waite, *Key*, 4.

²⁰ Williams, *Trumps* 47.

²¹ Williams, *Trumps*, 67.

²² Waite, *Key*, 155.

²³ Williams, *Trumps*, 217.

²⁴ Williams, *Trumps*, 193-194.

²⁵ Williams, *Trumps*, 190.

²⁶ Williams, *Trumps*, 221-222.

²⁷ Williams, *Trumps*, 225.

²⁸ Williams, *Trumps*, 226.

²⁹ Williams, *Trumps*, 107.

³⁰ Williams, *Trumps*, 111.

¹ Alex Owens, *The Place of Enchantment* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004), 9.

² Establishing Williams as an orthodox Anglican was important to his earliest biographers and critics, who come from his inner circle of devoted friends and students, particularly Alice Mary Hadfield, but also Mary Schideler and Anne Ridler. Gavin Ashenden continues this tendency as well, despite arguing that Williams' exposure to Rosicrucianism's alchemical symbolism underpins his poetry and prose.

³ Gavin Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2008) viii.

⁴ Teleology is the philosophical study of end causes or the final result. In Christian theology, the teleological argument or argument from design holds that the universe is too ordered to be random and this proves the existence of God, an intelligent being behind the creation of the cosmos.

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