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## Imagery in the Novels of Charles Williams

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Imagery in the Novels of Charles Williams

Honors Paper

Lynda L. Van Horn

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program at Longwood College.

Department of English

Longwood College

1972

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## Imagery in the Novels of Charles Williams

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A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program at Longwood College.

By

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1972

I. Charles Williams' Novels of Imagery

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Regardless of his reason for writing the novels, it cannot be overlooked that most of his ideas and concepts take form in each of them. He is often accused of resorting to sensationalism and science fiction to sell his books, but, as will be discussed later in this paper, this thrilling style was employed for a purpose.

The novels of Charles Williams can be looked at as the growth of his thought and writing. Almost without exception one senses where its immediate predecessor has stopped until competence in the organization of several themes into one is reached in his last novel All Hallows' Eve. Shadows of Ecstasy does not fit into this pattern and must be considered separately.

I. Charles Williams' Novels of Imagery

Though not primarily known as a novelist, the novels of Charles Williams are a unique and significant aspect of a literary career which contributes to almost every literary genre. There is no one way to describe Williams' contribution to the novel form. His novels have been labeled mysteries, thrillers, and theological works, but not one of these labels is sufficient in itself.

Charles Williams, who died in 1945, left behind him an enormous amount of literary work ranging from Arthurian poetry to literary criticism. He is sometimes called a theologian and playwright since he also contributed work in these areas. According to Mary Alice Hadfield, he spoke of himself as a poet and admitted to having written his seven novels simply as "pot-boilers."<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of his <sup>a</sup>reason for writing the novels, it cannot be overlooked that most of his ideas and concepts take form in each of them. He is often accused of resorting to sensationalism and science fiction to sell his books, but, as will be discussed later in this paper, this thrilling style was employed for a purpose.

The novels of Charles Williams can be looked at as the growth of his thought and writing. Almost without exception one continues where its immediate predecessor has stopped until competence in the organization of several themes into one is reached in his last novel All Hallows' Eve. Shadows of Ecstasy does not fit into this pattern and must be considered separately.

Patricia Spacks has called Williams "a novelist with limited thematic repertoire"<sup>2</sup> but this statement is true only because each of his novels is a conscious effort to improve on its predecessor. True, Williams deals with no more than five major themes, but the variations on these themes are unique within each novel. This uniqueness is achieved primarily through the employment of imagery. Charles Moorman in The Precincts of Felicity effectively states one meaning of the word "image," and it is his definition of the term that will be used throughout this paper. "The term 'image', we are invariably told, is both psychological and literary, sensuous and rhetorical. On the one hand, it introduces items of particularity--smells, tastes, sights, sounds--in order to engage the reader's senses; and on the other, it makes implicit analogies and comparisons. . . ." <sup>3</sup> Imagery, then, includes, at least partially, other terms such as "symbol" and "allegory." Imagery in Charles Williams is also directly linked with characterization and theme. All of these terms will be used in a discussion of the novels.

Williams did not, as did Spenser and Bunyan, deliberately set out to write a work in which a study of the underlying meanings and tones of the work was necessary for an understanding of it. Williams instead used imagery as a tool through which he could convey his themes and show the lives and moral qualities of his characters. This is not to say that imagery was incidental to the novelist. In fact, as Charles Huttar says, imagery was central for him.<sup>4</sup> He did not work to reveal the meaning of his images but let the images work for him to reveal his meanings and purposes for writing. Surely Williams' novels can be read without the least consideration to imagery, but it is then that they seem only "supernatural thrillers" and are most difficult to understand. According to Christopher Fullman it is important then to look upon his use of imagery not as a literary

"device," but as a key to understanding Williams' outlook of reality.<sup>5</sup> This is the only way in which we can avoid looking at the supernatural aspects of the novel simply as a gimmick.

In Shadows of Heaven, Gunnar Urang sums up Williams' use of symbols and imagery completely. "Williams names a thing briefly, then later implicitly indicates that the name is meant to stand for some larger conception. He uses his symbols as icons, as reminders of truths already believed in."<sup>6</sup> That is, he is not simply grasping an image and arbitrarily joining it with some meaning to fit his purposes, but he "discovers things in the actual world of his experience which suggest meanings beyond themselves."<sup>7</sup>

Since Williams shies away from any arbitrary assigning of meanings to images or vice-versa, he must latch upon some way to fuse subtly his imagery with his themes so that there can be no mistake as to his meanings. He hits then upon myth and Christian symbolism as the vehicles whereby his themes are transmitted to the reader. Moorman says of Williams' use of myth, "Myth in the novels thus becomes a medium of approach by which a modern situation is given depth in time and in universality and so gains in weight and significance."<sup>8</sup> The same is true of Christian symbolism, which of course can also be placed in the myth category, although Williams certainly would not have thought so. Frederick Wandall discusses the importance of what he calls "myth symbolism" in Minor British Novelists: "By the use of myth symbolism, the meaning of the past and present, the coexistence of natural and supernatural events, the use of stream of consciousness technique and the allegorical method Williams created complex and vivid works of fiction designed to catch and hold our attention with a good story while presenting the beliefs of Christianity."<sup>9</sup>

Williams does not bore his reader, though he often uses age-old myths that are used over and over again in literature, since within this framework of common myth, he injects images of his own making. His skill in the fusion of the two gives him a double advantage, as W. R. Irwin states "the unfamiliar material retains the charm of novelty while it is rendered intelligible and persuasive by its coalescence with the familiar."<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned before, it is because of this expert use of imagery that the supernatural--and there is an abundance--can be merged with the natural. An understanding of this merger is necessary for an understanding of the style of the novels. Though many critics including George P. Winship, F. R. Leavis, and Gunnar Urang, scoff at the use of the supernatural and speak of it as a destroying factor in the books, there are others including Christopher Fullman and Charles Moorman who feel that the use of the supernatural is vital to the success of the novels. Williams, after all was much involved in mysticism and witchcraft. He had written one book on the subject, Witchcraft (1941), and was for a time a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn. (His actual membership is a controversy but there is no doubt as to his affiliation with the group.) The Golden Dawn, a secret Rosicrucian order, was founded in 1888 to study the tradition of Kabbalistic magic and encouraged members to as Richard Ellmann writes, "demonstrate their power over the material universe."<sup>11</sup> There is nothing then, to indicate that Williams' use of the supernatural was a "sales gimmick," but rather that it was part of his life and therefore should be part of his novels. This view is held by many of his critics but is perhaps best voiced by Christopher Fullman. "And when he wrote, it seemed to me he was not attempting to 'do' a 'supernatural thriller,' or a novel of the theological genre, but rather to portray a slice of life as he saw it and experienced it."<sup>12</sup>



The use of the supernatural and what George Winship calls "obscene occultism"<sup>13</sup> is just one of the problems critics encounter in reading these novels. Williams is criticized because of his style which Urang calls "at times turgid and unclear"<sup>14</sup> and because of faulty characterization, flawed plots, and over-all lack of unity. Some critics, including Robert Conquest and Gunnar Urang, also suggest that he should not have swayed from poetry since it is here that his true genius lies. Truly, many of these complaints are justified, but no fault or combination of faults in the novels is drastic enough so that the work should be labeled "poor fiction." As says Geoffrey Parsons in "The Spirit of Charles Williams": "Imperfection is inevitable in such production. The writing is uneven. There are flaws of plot; the characters are too often lay figures. The end of a tale never seems to interest him. But, on the way, in my judgment, the reader will happen upon some of the most noble and moving pages in English Literature. If the voyage is at times difficult, the rewards are beyond price."<sup>15</sup>

The study of Charles Williams has invariably caused a grouping of similar novels though few critics have been able to agree as to exactly how the books should be grouped. Most critics agree that Williams experienced an "early" period and a "late" period in his writing, but just where the line of division is drawn is hard to say. Barbara McMichael places The Place of the Lion with Descent Into Hell and All Hallows' Eve as the later and best group of his novels.<sup>16</sup> W. R. Irwin places The Greater Trumps with the last two novels as the best.<sup>17</sup> Wherever the line is drawn, it is always so that at least Williams' last two novels, Descent Into Hell and All Hallows' Eve, are considered his best.

Gunnar Urang categorizes the novels according to their treatment of the power theme which is used throughout Williams' work.

In the first novel, Shadows of Ecstasy, the concern is with the power within man. In his next four novels--War in Heaven (1930), Many Dimensions (1931), The Place of the Lion (1931), and The Greater Trumps (1932)--power is concentrated in objects or ideas which participate in some greater power and are amenable to the human imagination. Finally--in Descent Into Hell (1938) and All Hallows' Eve (1945)--the locus of power shifts from the human relationships, which in turn participate in the power of being itself.<sup>18</sup>

This seems to be a most logical way to group them and will be employed in a discussion of the novels in this paper with one alteration.

The Place of the Lion and The Greater Trumps will be handled together but separate from War in Heaven and Many Dimensions. This separation is being done since I feel the differences in characterization and types of images used are sufficient to warrant separate categories. Rather than using the one Christian image used in War in Heaven and Many Dimensions, The Place of the Lion and The Greater Trumps employ groups of interlinking images and character strengths to reveal their themes.

Shadows of Ecstasy, Williams' first novel, is a conglomeration of themes and characters, none of which are presented effectively. Perhaps the best thing one can say for this one is that it is unique in plot and style and a good reason to read other Williams' novels. The reader is introduced to a barrage of new ideas that can only be examined through careful reading of his other novels. Parsons claims that according to reports Shadows of Ecstasy was Williams' favorite<sup>19</sup> though no reason has been given for this favoritism. Perhaps this novel, his first, holds a special place in his heart as the first child often does. This book seems to be Williams' experimentation with this genre and is indeed inferior to the others. It lacks depth of characterization, and the images used are obscure and not adequate to reveal the theme.

War in Heaven and Many Dimensions, though in many ways flawed, hold a place much above their predecessor. Both have as their center a physical image around which all action takes place. The Holy Graal (a favorite subject of Williams' poetry) serves as the center of conflict in War in Heaven and the Stone of Solomon acts as the center in Many Dimensions. Action centers around acquisition or loss of these objects and the characters are presented only in terms of the relationships with these mythic images.

The value of these early novels cannot be overlooked, however. Even in these novels one can see hints of greatness, and revelation of Williams' basic themes can also be accomplished through study of them. Though these books lack depth, they do act as a sign of what is to come and are also an excellent introduction to the study of Williams. It is through reading and studying these early novels that intensification seen in the later ones can be fully appreciated.

The Place of the Lion was the next novel written and in this one Williams merges the real with the imaginary. The center of it is the Platonic Archetypes which emerge from reality, become a form of reality, and then merge back into reality. Again, all action and characterization center around the central images, but the characters assume more shape and experience a greater amount of change than in the other novels.

The same is true of The Greater Trumps. All action revolves around the ancient Tarot cards which control the powers of the universe. The central image in this instance has been the cause for Fullman's labeling the book a "mere display of esoteric erudition."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps, though, this claim is not as justified as it once may have been since this is an age

where interest in the supernatural and astrological is at a peak. In any case, as in The Place of the Lion, the strengths of the book lie in the growth of the characters.

With Descent Into Hell the reader is introduced to a new side of Williams. Considered by some to be Williams' best achievement in this genre, Descent Into Hell does not center on a physical image throughout the novel. (Gunnar Urang and Mary McDermott Shideler are two who feel Descent Into Hell is Williams' best.) Instead, the book is a concentrated study of character. One of Williams' basic ideas, the doctrine of substituted love, is first stated in this novel, though hinted at in the earlier ones. Also, it is in this novel that the process of damnation is so clearly shown. Geoffrey Parsons speaks of the success of the novel; "The culmination of Williams' career came six years later in Descent Into Hell, the masterpiece of the series. Here the skill is at its peak; and while gravity of the thought is at times over-whelming, the interplay of character between hero and the heroine is brilliant."<sup>21</sup>

Just as damnation is the main concept described in Descent Into Hell, even so salvation serves as the center of All Hallows' Eve. As in the other novels, mysticism plays an important role in the study of this novel. All Hallows' Eve is according to Fullman almost a tract against occultism<sup>22</sup> since Father Simon, the main practitioner of the occult, is portrayed as evil and damned. It is in this novel that Williams' characterizations are at their best. The characters here are the most real in all of Williams, and it is for this reason it holds its top ranking among all of the novels. Also, the simplicity of style and language in All Hallows' Eve compared to that in Descent Into Hell is overwhelming. Williams is able to achieve basically the same thing without resorting to flowery or overly-intellectual language.

Williams' concept of the "City" is the main image in All Hallows' Eve. The idea is a culmination of Williams' thought, and thus this novel is the culmination of his writing in this form. This concept along with the other major concepts expounded by Williams will be discussed in detail in the body of this paper through an extensive study of his imagery.

The novels of Charles Williams are not basically allegorical although these qualities are seen within. Rather than representing one character trait or problem, however, Williams presents his characters as images of real people who respond to unreal situations. This presentation is especially seen in the last two novels. Alice Hadfield expresses this in her biography of Williams: "In his novels he was more interested in what people became than in what they were before they felt the contact of mighty powers."<sup>1</sup>

There is no way the images the characters present can be separated from the characters themselves. The characters then cannot simply be labeled allegorical in that they do not simply represent ideas or concepts. It is also questionable, as Patricia Spacks suggested, that Williams attempts to create an equivalent twentieth-century form for the great medieval allegories.<sup>2</sup> Williams characters are not presented only in relation to the action and themes of the novels. They are meant to represent real people whether inside or outside of literary confines.

Just as they cannot be labeled strictly allegorical, even so neither can they be labeled as true types. No character is purely all bad or good or completely static. Perhaps Clerk Simon comes closest to being a true type in his role as a villain, but even his motives are pictured as misguided, and he has helped in the healing of the afflicted regardless of his reasons for doing so.

Edmond Fuller suggests that Lester and Evelyn are true types in that one assumes the role of goodness and the other evil,<sup>3</sup> but even these characters have traits both good and bad and are forced, as is man in life, to choose one or the other.

## II. Allegory and Characterization

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Edmond Fuller suggests that Lester and Evelyn are true types in that one assumes the role of goodness and the other evil,<sup>3</sup> but even these characters have traits both good and bad and are forced, as is man in life, to choose one or the other.

This freedom of choice is the key to understanding the characters in Williams' novels. They have the ability to affirm the images of love and goodness and be saved, or they can choose to negate these images and be damned. Christopher Fullman links the characters in Williams to the characters in life who must eventually face this change. "In each of them [the novels] the reader is given a glimpse of the abyss of the void, and the characters who people the pages of these books, like the people with whom we live and associate each day, in their several ways embody those attitudes of affirmation or negation or indifference or hostility in reference to the central mystery of life we encounter in our casual acquaintance each day."<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, since Williams continues to present the problem of choice to his main characters, the plots might begin to stale, and the characters tend to lose their individual identities. I do not think this is the case, however, since each choice is in some way unique and each character suffers a little differently because of his actions.

This is not to say that because of one choice a person chooses his salvation or damnation. To the contrary, Williams is eager to give his characters many chances to save their souls. These repeated chances are seen most vividly in the case of Lawrence Wentworth in Descent Into Hell. One should not assume that a character grows from bad to good nor that he falls from good to bad. Fullman expresses the idea that Williams' characters are either good or bad and that in the novels they simply

undergo "a process of intensification" in goodness or in evil,<sup>5</sup> One need only consider Gregory Persimmons in War in Heaven or Lady Wallingford in All Hallows' Eve to see salvation taking place for the basically wicked. It is true that no "good" character ever is shown to be losing his goodness but this is because of his ability to live which, as will be shown in detail later, is one big step through the door of salvation.

Regardless of the fact that there are no true types, there are categories presented by Williams into which his characters may be temporarily placed until they make their choices and experience change. Douglas Carmichael suggests that these categories number five. "Morally it might be said that Williams divides the human race into five categories: the saints like Betty and Sybil, the good who are sure of themselves like Stanhope, the unsure but generally good Lester and Pauline, the unsure but generally bad like Wentworth and Evelyn, and the deliberately wicked like Persimmons."<sup>6</sup> Noticeably Carmichael has left out many of the major characters in Williams. It would be interesting to see where he would place such confusing characters as Roger Ingram and Nigel Considine. It is also difficult to justify the position of some of the characters he has placed. For example, I cannot justify his placement of Betty in the "saint" category when Stanhope is good but a little less. Stanhope is not a major character in Descent Into Hell as is Betty in All Hallows' Eve but he is certainly no less "good" and sure of himself and this alone in Williams eyes is enough to place him in sainthood.

If this categorizing is faulty, how can the characters be grouped? There are those characters who can be labeled as saints or nearly saints. Sybil Coningsby, who because of her seemingly perfect nature is probably one of the least effective characters in the novels, and Margaret Anstruther are the most notable members of this group. These are the characters who



know their position in life, who love freely, and who are willing to guide others to the path of salvation. Margaret Anstruther is the most forceful character because she refuses to use force. Unlike Sybil Coningsby, she does not interfere with the actions of others but controls simply through her love. In Williams' hierarchy of character images, it is the saint that rates the highest.

The next group contains both good and bad characters and can be labeled the intellectuals. Their amount of goodness is relative to their attitudes toward their intelligence and their work. This group contains Roger Ingram of Shadows of Ecstasy, Damaris Tighe in The Place of the Lion, Peter Stanhope in Descent Into Hell, and Jonathan Drayton in All Hallows' Eve. The last two are the notably better characters.

The next major group of Williams' characters include Chloe Burnett in Many Dimensions, Nancy Coningsby in The Greater Trumps, Pauline Anstruther in Descent Into Hell and Lester Furnival and Betty Wallingford in All Hallows' Eve. This group has been labeled the pilgrims since it is through them that salvation is achieved and goodness prevails. Frederick Wandall has interestingly pointed out that all the pilgrims in Williams' novels are women and all the evil characters are men.<sup>7</sup> There is no apparent reason for this. Perhaps Williams felt more comfortable creating goodness personified in women, or perhaps he simply regarded this situation as reality.

The evil characters, of course, form another group. This group includes Nigel Considine in Shadows of Ecstasy (although his position is debatable), Gregory Persimmons in War in Heaven, Giles Tumulty in War in Heaven and Many Dimensions, and Clerk Simon in All Hallows' Eve. It is Simon who is the most truly villainous character, and it is somewhat of an enigma why this purely allegorical figure waited until the last novel to emerge.

There are of course many other characters who have not been grouped, and it is from these the most notable characterizations can be found. There are characters in every novel who come close to being strictly allegorical but who in any case project some image to the reader. This is especially true in Many Dimensions, The Greater Trumps, The Place of the Lion, and Shadows of Ecstasy as will be shown.

Lord Arglay in Many Dimensions is just one of these examples. He is seen as the symbol of justice throughout the novel. He functions toward the Stone as the law directs. "His own belief in God was still small, but his feeling for Organic Law was very strong, and his dislike of any human being pretending to be above the Law was stronger still."<sup>8</sup>

It is the love of justice that signifies Lord Arglay as a basically good character. He is the stabilizing force behind Chloe Burnett, and it is because of him that her salvation is guaranteed. "Whatever was coming, it was good, and she was fortunate that her work had entered into the Chief Justice's attempt to formulate once more by the intellect the actions of men; she was fortunate to have ever so small a part in the august labor" (p. 254).

The sacrifice that Chloe makes with the help and strength of Lord Arglay images the sacrifices all men must make. Fullman sees this sacrifice as one similar to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. "It would seem in describing the role of Chloe in Many Dimensions Williams is presenting her as a Christ-figure, for Chloe literally takes on herself the burden of making herself a 'path' through which the spiritual forces of the Stone may pass in restoring it to the unity whence its powers are derived."<sup>9</sup> Truly, the sacrifice made by Chloe is a major one, but it is closer to ranking with the sacrifices men make for God and salvation than with that Christ made for man. Robert Peckham presents a strong case for

Chloe's being a symbol of Mary the mother of Christ. "Chloe Burnett, Arglay's secretary, then is symbolically the Mother of God, as her action in allowing the types of the Stone to be unified in her illustrates."<sup>10</sup>

This is a more justified interpretation of this character imagery and can be supported directly from the text of the novel. If Chloe is a Theotokos then Arglay is an image of Joseph, an emblem of Justice:

"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 tempestuous past than the Virgin-Mother is believed to have either endured or enjoyed, so Lord Arglay considered, as far as it was clear to him, his friend's progress towards the End of Desire" (p. 194). The Mary-image is also substantiated by the fact that nine months pass between the time that the Stone is unified within her and the time she dies or gives birth to a new life outside that shown in the novel.

Character imagery is also seen in The Greater Trumps. In this novel the characters emerge as real entities regardless of, or in spite of, the unreal situation in which they are forced to exist. Mary McDermott Shideler says this book "shows an advance in construction, character-drawing, and narrative force."<sup>11</sup>

The two most outstanding characters from the standpoint of imagery are Joanna Lee and Sybil Coningsby. Sybil, as has been stated before, is a saint figure. In The Greater Trumps she is directly linked with the Fool, the center of the Tarot cards. Though perhaps not as all-powerful as the Fool, Sybil serves as the definite center around which all of the other characters "dance." Williams in this way links the lives of the characters

to the lives represented by the cards. Sybil is the center, the all-knowing as her name suggests. Williams does not often use name imagery, but it cannot be thought that the link here with the mythological sibyl was accidental. She is the only character in the book that knows what the world holds and is totally self-composed. "As her body swayed and let itself move aside under the blast, she surrendered herself to the only certain thing that her life had discovered; she adored in this movement also the extreme benevolence of Love. She sank before the wind, but not in impotence; rather as the devotee sinks before the outer manifestations of the God that he may be made more wholly one with that which manifests."<sup>12</sup> She is then, as Williams has shown her, an image of the God-like but certainly not a god herself.

Serving as a basis of comparison is Joanna Lee. Like Sybil she too is very powerful and influential but unlike Sybil she has not found inner peace. "The other threw up her head and sniffed the air. 'It's coming,' she said. 'I've smelt it for days and days. They're bringing him together; the winds and waters are bringing him. Go your way, stranger, and call me if you find him. I must be alone. Alone I am and alone I go. I'm the goodness" (p. 69). Joanna says she is the Egyptian goddess Isis looking for her son Horus. She can find no peace and is doomed to loneliness because she is unable to give her love but must keep it within her. She looks only for a being which will accept her love. Joanna is pictured as an Egyptian goddess by Williams to further link her with the cards that originated in Egypt. She is Isis because of her direct contrast with the Christian Sybil, and Williams says in this book that through love religion

becomes a unity. Peckham speaks of Joanna as an image of Eve. "Joanna then is the primeval grief of all things human, Eve weeping for her last paradise, and all suffering without meaning asking the gods for a reason and getting none".<sup>13</sup> She is certainly a symbol for grief and the reference to Eve is perhaps valid since Joanna is Isis the universal mother.

In The Place of the Lion Williams further uses his characters to represent mankind. In this novel the fate of the characters depends entirely upon their acceptance or rejection of the archetypal images. Each is identified with one of the anima images and possess the attributes of such. Peckham speaks of how the characters assume the personalities of the creatures they most resemble. "The three tragic figures are almost pure types. Damaris's father succumbs to the angel of beauty and is thus identified with the archetypal butterfly; Foster adores strength and is crushed by the Lion while Dora Wilmot submits to the demon subtlety and in time becomes the gate whereby the material serpent enters creation."<sup>14</sup> The placement of Mr. Tighe among the tragic figures is debatable. Mr. Tighe looks at life realistically and knows what he has seen of the butterflies: "See the kingdom and the power and the glory." Mr. Tighe answered. "O what a day this has been!" He looked round at the tall young man pacing by his side. "You know, I did believe it."<sup>15</sup> He is, then, an affirmer of the images and according to Williams' views must be saved rather than destroyed and tragic.

Probably the best example of an affirmer of images is Anthony Durrant. Anthony knows what the images can do and knows his duty to the world. He then becomes the archetypal man-or Adam. "Anthony--Adam--whatever giant stood before her between the trees of an aboriginal best--was calling as

he had called in the streets of the town. But now he uttered not one word but many pausing between each, and again giving to each the same strong summons . . . . By the names that were the Ideas he called them, and the Ideas who are the Principles of everlasting creation who are the Cherubim and Seraphim of the Eternal" (pp. 201-202).

This novel then comes very close to being a true allegory. Each character assumes the identity of an archetypal creature and his fate depends on the manner in which he accepts this. He can place ego above all and be damned as was Foster, or he can accept himself as a part of the entire world of images and be saved as was Durrant.

Probably the most confusing of Williams' novels, Shadows of Ecstasy, is one novel where the characters are central rather than the action. The range of characterization is great and the main characters are not easily typed. If this story were to be read as a strict allegory, as Huttar suggests,<sup>16</sup> Considine becomes a Christ figure, Roger an apostle, Ian Caithness a Judas, and Isabel and Inkamasi non-believers. This scheme cannot easily be followed, though, since Considine is not a sacrificial, godly being. Neither can he be termed strictly evil. It cannot be certain whether Considine was a forerunner of Clerk Simon or of Peter Stanhope. He certainly has characteristics of both and probably fails as a character because of this quality. It has been suggested by Peckham that he is a "high-priest of the imagination" and in this respect god-like since he is much removed from the other characters.<sup>17</sup> Truly, he does not seek anything for himself directly. He wants all men to become eternal, but he is willing to kill thousands to obtain his goal. Charles Huttar suggests that Considine's one flaw is "his failure to acknowledge that what he seeks to do has been done

already in the resurrection of Christ."<sup>18</sup> If this then is his only fault, perhaps Considine was created as a tragic hero. But another important consideration is that Considine has sacrificed all feelings and emotion for his position. Without emotion he cannot love, and without love he cannot be considered a hero, at least not in the eyes of Charles Williams.

Fullman, also baffled as to the image this character projects, has made an interesting comparison. "Perhaps Nigel Considine is the portrait of a member of the Hermetic Society of the Golden Dawn whose name we shall never know. Or perhaps he is the incarnation of one phase of Williams' development, an expression of the tremendous mystery of the unknown which lies beyond the range of human perception and which never ceased to fascinate him though he learned to control it."<sup>19</sup> Since Williams tends to shy away from autobiography in his works, it is not likely that he would create such a complete character as an image of himself or his friends unless it represents a repressed stage of his development. More likely, Williams was experimenting with characterization and tried putting different aspects together in one character, resulting in the confusing character of Considine.

In the character of Roger Ingram we see an intellectual who lives outside his knowledge rather than within. This character is most likely the forerunner of Damaris Tighe in The Place of the Lion, but Alice Hadfield insists that it is Shadows of Ecstasy that "shows most clearly of them all his protest against using literature and not living it."<sup>20</sup> This statement is probably true since Damaris is allowed to find redemption but Roger is as lost in the end of the novel as in the beginning. These two characters says Wandall are images then of the romantic idealist who longs only to live in literature and become servant to a false god.<sup>21</sup>

Though Roger and Damaris both attempt to love, neither face this love relationship as a reality. It is only through an acceptance of this reality that Damaris is converted and we can only guess whether or not Roger ever encounters this acceptance.

Perhaps, then, Williams should be viewed only as an allegorist. Perhaps he becomes so involved with making his characters images that he fails to give them personality. Perhaps Gunnar Urang was right when he wrote: "But the overemphasis on fantasy at the expense of the everyday, the dominance of allegorical idea over image, the lack of conflict and suffering, the decreasing importance of sequential time--all these tendencies make the divine action so preeminent, the power of grace so overriding, the opposition so futile that all seems over at the beginning and reading the novel, too, is simply seeing the necessary ceremony played out before us."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps this is true, but I think not. True, some of the characters seem blessed or damned from the beginning, but it is all of the other characters upon whom we must focus our attention. As Peckham promotes, the characters do not serve as symbols of their characteristics but as symbols of their functions.<sup>23</sup> They do serve as images and Williams' ability to write imagery into his characters grows with the writing of each novel. He does not reign over his characters making them mold to his specifications. As Frederick Wandall says: "More than any other fact, this emphasis on the freedom of the will distinguishes Williams from other allegorical writers."<sup>24</sup>



### III. Archetypal Images

In the first five of Williams' novels, he concentrates upon a central image. The use of these images usually stems back into Christian lore or mythology. None of the images he uses are unique to him. What is unique is the way in which he allows these images to function, controlling characters and conveying theme.

In these novels, Shadows of Ecstasy, War in Heaven, Many Dimensions, The Place of the Lion, and The Greater Trumps, the success or failure of the book is directly related to the success or failure of the central image. Spacks says that Williams is trying to symbolize his own conception of the nature of the universe and man, and the structure of the work is completely related to this conception.<sup>1</sup>

All of these novels make use of some supernatural personages, objects, and events. War in Heaven, Many Dimensions, and The Greater Trumps make use of mythical objects, the Holy Graal, a stone from the crown of Suleiman (Solomon), and Tarot Cards, respectively. In The Place of the Lion the action centers around Platonic ideals which have been successfully brought to life. And, in Shadows of Ecstasy the central image is the conflict between the dark and light worlds of Africa and England.

It is because of the difference in imagery that Shadows of Ecstasy is rarely handled with the other early novels which employ supernatural objects. In this novel it is the disorder of the world that has become central. Patricia Spacks views this disorder as an attempt on the part of Williams to explain his main character Considine and thus analyze man.

"The embodiment of encroaching chaos in this work is an invasion from Africa, the Dark Continent, representing as Williams clearly points out, the mysterious force of the human subconscious."<sup>2</sup> Viewing this chaos in the Freudian sense then, we are concerned here with the problem of the repressed libido. It is Considine who tries to release this energy, and in this sense he could be called a hero. He seeks to free the world of its inhibitions and its fear of death. "Roger said, 'But How?' Considine answered, 'By the transmutation of your energies, evoked by poetry or love or any manner of ecstasy, into the power of a greater ecstasy.'"<sup>3</sup> Here we find hints of the theme of strength of character to be found in later books.

The near failure then of Shadows of Ecstasy is due to Williams' failure to employ his image to the fullest. If the book is to be read as a Freudian allegory we wonder at the failure of Considine and the subconscious. Perhaps we are only to assume that the book is incomplete and that there will be further revolts of the subconscious. Williams leaves us in the last paragraph to ponder on this problem.

If he returned, if he carried out the experiment of his vision, the purpose of his labours. If, first among his peers, when all believed him lost, he thrust himself from the place of shades back into immortal and transmuted life, if he held death at his disposal . . .

If now, while the world shouted over the defeat of his allies and subjects, while it drove its terror back into its own unmapped jungles, and subdued its fiercer desires to an alien government of sterile sayings, if now he came once more to threaten and deliver it, if--ah beyond, beyond belief! --but if he returned . . . (p. 224).

In War in Heaven and Many Dimensions we leave the subconscious to enter the world of mythology. These novels could be considered

as twin novels and are so close in structure and theme that after reading one the reader can guess the plot of the other.

War in Heaven uses the Holy Graal as its central image and leans heavily on the mythology which surrounds it. The entire plot of this novel centers around a quest for the Graal not unlike the medieval quest for the same item. Williams does not choose this image arbitrarily. He wrote two volumes of Arthurian poetry, Taliessin Through Logres and The Region of the Summer Stars, in which the Graal is also central.

Significantly, the Graal itself holds no power. It is important only in the manner in which it is used by man. It is not thought of primarily by the Archdeacon as a consecrated object used by Christ at the Last Supper but rather as a symbol of the Eucharist and of its meaning in the Christian Church. "It interests me very deeply," the Archdeacon agreed. In one sense of course, the Graal is unimportant--it is a symbol less near reality now than any chalice of consecrated wine. But it is conceivable that the Graal has absorbed, as material things will, something of the high intensity of the moment when it was used, and its adventures through the centuries."<sup>4</sup>

Mary McDermott Shideler suggests that the novel goes off in two directions. First it can be read as a detective story centering around the murder in the first chapter. Secondly, it can be considered as an adventure story concentrating on the fight over the Graal. "Corresponding to these two strands of the plot are the two types of power which the characters employ: the natural powers of bodies, minds, and machines--all the physical, social, and psychological energies that are available in nature and can be used for good and evil; and the divine and demonic powers of supernature that are imaged by the Holy Graal and by witchcraft."<sup>5</sup>

There is a murder in the first chapter but this event loses significance when the second plot strain begins. Williams does use the murder, though, as a kind of springboard, from which he can jump into the story of the Graal with its relevant theme.

Each action of acceptance or rejection of the Graal is significant for it is these actions which determine the destiny of the characters involved. The book itself is an image of that war in heaven which is discussed in the last book of the Bible. Each character who comes into contact with the Graal, though, has a different feeling toward it.

The easiest way to explain Williams' use of the Graal is through his image for the image--the young man in grey who says, ". . . I am Prester John, I am the Graal and the keeper of the Graal. All enchantment has been stolen from men, and to me the Vessel itself shall return" (p. 189). Again Williams uses mythologically connected imagery to explain his image. Also, Williams uses Prester John to voice his idea of the co-inherence of man which is to be echoed so often in his later novels. This passage is simply restating the "This also is thou; neither is this thou" that Williams uses over and over again in his works. Even Manasseh the Greek who seeks only to destroy the Graal understands its meaning. "The Greek answered, his eyes fixed on the Graal: 'All things are indivisible and one. You cannot wholly destroy and you cannot wholly live, but you can change mightily and forever as any of our reckoning goes'" (p. 212). Gregory Persimmons, a cohort in evil, retorts: "And there is a way by which it may be done. I have tried it, and I know. This is the circle of all souls, and I will gather them and marry them as I please. I will bring them from this world and from another and I will bind the lost with the living till the living itself be lost" (p. 212). Williams, then, shows the power of the image even

through the eyes of those who seek to destroy it.

It is important also to examine the actions of those who are fighting on the other side of the war, for none of these allies are fighting for exactly the same thing. The Duke is fighting for a symbol of the Roman Catholic Church and for all it stands for. Also he is fighting for his ancestry and nobility: ". . . all these things, not so formulated but certainly there, drew his mind into a vivid consciousness of all the royal and sacerdotal figures of the world adoring before this consecrated shrine. 'Jhesu, Rex et Sacerdos,' he prayed . . ." (p. 136).

Kenneth Mornington looks at the Graal as an intellectual stimulus much as would Roger Ingram in Shadows of Ecstasy. The major difference comes when Kenneth rather than taking refuge behind his intellectualism opens himself to it and through the intellectual process comes to know the meaning of the Graal.

The Archdeacon is not a little amused by the attitudes of his young friends. He is the only one to see the chalice for what it is. "'Neither is this Thou,' he breathed and answered, 'Yet this also is thou.' . . . Of all the 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 had held" (p. 137). Williams, then, shows that the Graal and indeed the belief for which it stands have different meanings to different individuals. Perhaps he chose this particular image because it was one that was so familiar to him, or perhaps as Robert Peckham suggests, he wanted to show that "all effective power resides in the divine and is communicated to man through concrete images such as the Graal."<sup>6</sup>

Williams continues to rely on just such a concrete image in his novel Many Dimensions. In this novel the Stone from the Crown of Suleiman becomes the central image. Williams again reaches back into religious history and mythology for his image. Like the Graal, the Stone has no power itself except through its use by man. It is the center of the universe or as it is called in the novel "Prime Matter." The Stone was supposedly conceived through the unity of nature and its laws. A. E. Waite writes of the Stone:

It concerns a mysterious stone called Schethlys which was originally in the Throne of God--that was to say, it was a precious stone or jewel--and was cast by him into the abyss, so to form the basis of the world and give birth thereto . . . in a sense it fell from heaven like the stone from the crown of Lucifer, and again it was overturned by the iniquity of men, until Jacob restored it to an upright position, Solomon was also one of those who restored it, and thereon he built the sanctuary . . . . Creation resides in the fact that this stone was inscribed with the Divine Name before it was cast into the abyss.<sup>7</sup>

The stone then according to legend is a talisman from God and its powers are linked to the letters embedded in the stone. "'They are the four letters of the Tetragrammation, the Divine Name,' Chloe said still more nervously. 'Yod, He, Vau, He'" (p. 26). Williams does not go into detail concerning the chanting of the Tetragrammaton until his last novel All Hallows' Eve.

Now then, why does Williams choose such an image when its history is so embedded in legend? Again the only purpose for using the Stone which becomes a symbol for power and justice is to show how the various characters react to its appearance. The Stone is sought after by basically three types of people. There are those who want to use the Stone for personal wealth and gain. This group consists of Reginald Montague, Frank Lindsay, and the Sheldrakes. Sir Giles Tumulty can also be included

in this group since he seeks to exploit the Stone for his own special scientific knowledge. Then there is the Mayor of Rich who is the only member of the second group who wants to use the Stone to cure his sick villagers. In the final group are Lord Arglay, Chloe and the Hajji who seek to preserve the unity and send it into the Transcendence.

It is only Chloe, though, being totally willing to give of herself in exchange for nothing, who is able to act as the Path for the Stone. Charles Moorman suggests that in this manner of freely giving her life for her beliefs she is similar to Christ.

. . . The temptations of Chloe Burnett to use the miraculous Stone for her own benefit gain importance once the reader realizes that they roughly suggest the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. Chloe refuses to use the Stone to gain any personal wealth (the refusal of the kingdom of earth); she refuses to let her fiance use it to pass an examination or to let the Mayor of Rich use it to cure the sick (the turning of the stones into bread); and she refuses to use the stone for her own protection (Christ's refusal to hurl himself from the Temple).<sup>8</sup>

I do not think Chloe can be a symbol for Christ however. Rather her actions hint of the Doctrine of Substituted Love which was a favorite theme of Williams and is especially important in the last two novels. Thus she is an image of the Christian rather than of Christ himself.

Williams does not present any themes in this novel that were not already presented in War in Heaven. Both novels are concerned with power and both have characters who are good and evil. The only difference in the novels is the image the author picks to reveal his themes. Though both images are linked to Biblical legends it is probably the Graal that is the more successful image simply because it is the image more recognized by the reading public. In Many Dimensions he comes close

to writing for only a select body that is familiar with the central image and its history. It is not necessary, however, to understand the image completely in order to grasp the meaning of the novel.

In his next two novels Williams concentrates on the power of celestials. Both novels center around the action that takes place because of the unleashing of these powers. "The Place of the Lion is an anatomy of the nature and meaning of the world of abstraction, while The Greater Trumps is concerned chiefly with the power and the action of the images in relation to the Divine love which regulates them."<sup>9</sup> Peckham oversimplifies here but his statement is basically sound. The power loosed through the images in The Place of the Lion is also at issue but the power is of a very different kind. Much like Shadows of Ecstasy, The Place of the Lion is concerned with the internal struggle of man and it is only a handful of characters who actually experience the strength of the physical images that embody this internal power. Here the obvious mechanical plotting of War in Heaven and Many Dimensions is gone instead as Spacks states, "the symbolic embodiments of potential chaos dominate the course of the novel almost completely."<sup>10</sup>

Williams turns from Biblical myths to Plato for his imagery in The Place of the Lion. Unlike the images seen in the cave in Plato's Republic,<sup>11</sup> these images come to life and begin to gather together those of its kind into unity. It is only through the efforts of Anthony Durrant that the world is restored. Gunnar Urang calls the book "a parable of creative and miscreative--knowing a fictional embodiment of Williams' interpretation of the myth set forth in the first three chapters of Genesis."<sup>12</sup> Man's dominance over the animals does not occur until the

Yet, the lion takes on still another aspect in those like Barringer's



end of the novel. Besides the Bible and Plato, Williams seems to have relied on a bestiary, an early Latin rendition of the power of man and animals through God. (Waite's is typical of this genre.)

Again, as in the other novels, the characters' fates are determined according to their relationships and acceptances of their images. Instead of centering upon only one central image, Williams employs five major beasts as images in this novel. The lion, the butterfly, the snake, the eagle, and the unicorn all take on symbolic properties and are all represented by one of the characters.

The first image to be released into the world is the Archetypal Lion. "Anthony and Quentin saw before them the form of a man lying on the ground, and standing over him the shape of a full-grown and tremendous lion, its head flung back, its mouth open, its body quivering" (p. 14). The lion here is the fierceness and means destruction to those who are most like it in personality. Thus, Mr. Berringer who was responsible for giving the images life is destroyed through his lack of understanding of the meaning of the archetypes. Foster, who seeks the strength of the lion, assumes its attitude. However, it is Quentin Sabot, professed nonbeliever, who is chased by the lion.

According to the Bestiary: "What creature dares declare himself an enemy to this beast, in whose roar there is much natural terribleness that many animals, which could escape its charge by their speed, fail to get away by the very sound of its voice--as if dumbfounded and overcome by brute force!"<sup>13</sup> Williams uses the lion, then, as an image of the danger in the world, as the strength of the world, and as a destructive force. His obvious reference to the lion of Saint Mark also expounds this view (p. 46). Yet, the lion takes on still another aspect to those like Berringer's

housekeeper's granddaughter who saw the lion as "lovely." Perhaps Williams is showing that strength and fierceness can also be beauty and majesty when looked upon in the correct attitude.

The second image Williams uses is the Snake. Like the serpent of Biblical lore the snake is the embodiment of evil. Dora Wilmot, who sought acceptance through deception becomes the form for the Serpent.

" . . . she was in the queerest manner, gathered up in her chair--her eyes were half closed--her head every now and then swayed slightly--Nothing seemed less like what he had supposed the 'good simple' creature of Mrs. Rockbotham's eulogy would be" (p. 82). Dora Wilmot is absorbed into the type which she closely represents just as Mr. Tighe is overcome by the emergence of the butterfly, Williams' image for beauty. Williams then, seems to acquire his concept of archetypes from C. G. Jung. That is, Williams' characters are controlled by the unconscious and its correlates the archetypes.<sup>14</sup>

The third realm of the Circle of the Celestials from which according to Richardson the archetypes are emerging is that of the eagle.

"The first circle is of the lion; the second circle is of the serpent; the third circle--" O what, what was the third? What sinister fate centuries ago had mutilated that volume of angelical lore as to forbid his discovery now? "The wings of the eagle"--well, if that was what was needed then so far as he could, he would enter into that circle of the eagle which was the--what had the sentence said?--"The knowledge of the Celestials in the place of the Celestials." (p. 111).

Anthony is willing to become the master of the Types and it is only through his knowledge of them that this is possible. Damaris Tighe has devoted her life to a study of Celestials, yet she is almost destroyed by the eagle which Anthony comes to represent. She is saved from destruction only when she admits that she did not really understand the power represented by the Types or the power of love. She is saved

then only when asking for help and in giving help to the distressed Quentin. Here again is seen early hints of Williams' theme on the doctrine of substituted love.

Anthony, then, accepts the challenge to control the archetypes. He is at once the eagle with its power and the unicorn which is instrumental in the salvation of Damaris. The unicorn is the highest image and linked directly with Christ. According to the Bestiary, the Unicorn is of the highest realm. "Our Lord Jesus Christ is also a Unicorn spiritually . . . he is very swift because neither principalities, nor Powers, nor Thrones, nor Dominations could keep up with him, nor could Hell contain him, nor could the most subtle Devil prevail to catch or comprehend him, but, by the sole will of the Father, he came down into the Virgin womb for our salvation."<sup>15</sup> Anthony Durrant then momentarily is a Christ image, but Williams is not content to let this image stand and substituted Adam for Christ. Anthony becomes the archetypal man in order that he can name the animals and restore order in the universe. Regardless of what image Anthony assumes he remains in the novel the "exponent of the way of Affirmation"<sup>16</sup> and it is only through him that the images can be controlled and the world can arrive at that which they image.

The fire that consumes Berringer's house is also an image which Anthony and later Damaris realize. Speaking to Richardson of the fire Anthony says, "I can't see but what the images have their place" (p. 194), and it only after the naming of the beast that the raging fire ceases. Peckham says of the fire: "The fire, then, images the chameleon shapes and the passion which is the union of love and truth, the Seraphim and Cherubim."<sup>17</sup>

The Place of the Lion is definitely the most scholarly attempt of Williams thus far. It is also his most concentrated effort at Christian imagery. In his next book The Greater Trumps he handles similar types of images and the power they invoke again heavily concentrating on Christian imagery in perhaps a less scholarly attempt. Williams uses as his central image in The Greater Trumps the mystical Tarot cards. Like the images of The Place of the Lion the cards themselves have no power until wielded by human manipulation.

The history of the Tarot deck is somewhat sketchy just as their meaning has remained an enigma. Common knowledge places the origin of the cards in ancient Egypt and they were supposedly brought to man by the gypsy bands. Like the Platonic images of The Place of the Lion the Major Arcana or Greater Trumps are also symbolic of the ideal. Waite writes of the Tarot: "The Tarot embodies symbolical presentations of universal ideas, behind which all of the implicits of the human mind, and it is in this sense that they contain secret doctrine which is the realization by the few of truths imbedded by the consciousness of all . . . ." <sup>18</sup> Williams tries through this image to merge the images of his other books or perhaps to explain them. The Holy Graal can be seen as the power of the suit of Cups, and the character of the Archdeacon of War in Heaven is much like the man of divinity called the King of Cups. The Stone of Solomon is represented by the seventh card, the Chariot or warrior. The Stone is the strength behind the great early kings--Nimrod, Suleiman and Caesar Augustus--as well as a means of escape as the Hajji explains in Many Dimensions (p. 44). According to Waite the four letters of the Divine name (the Tetragrammaton) which was the center of the Stone are represented by the four suits. <sup>19</sup>

Eliphas Levi has directly linked the Stone to the Tarot in Kaballastic belief. "The number seven represents magical power in all its fullness; it is the mind reinforced by all elementary potencies; it is the soul served by Nature; it is the Sanctum Regnum mentioned in the Keys of Solomon and represented in the Tarot by a crowned warrior, who bears a triangle on his cuirass and is posed upon a cube . . . the cube is the philosophical Stone . . . ."20

It is perhaps in this novel then that Williams is making his greatest attempt at imagery through his merging of images into one. Not only is there a fusion of images but also a fusion of theme. The problem arises in that Williams attempts to simplify his thought through complexities. Patricia Spacks says that ". . . the symbols largely destroy."<sup>21</sup> I would agree that on the first reading the reader may become too involved in imagery and forget the story, but the images of the book can only intensify the story through study.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Williams merges his characters in the cards for a double imagery. He uses the cards to personalize his characters while at the same time using his characters to explain the meaning of the cards. In addition to the mythical interpretations of the cards, Williams finds a Christian symbolism therein. There are twenty-two cards of the Greater Trumps almost all of which are used by Williams sometime during his novel. The main cards he uses as images are the Hierophant, the Empress, the Hermit, the Lovers, and the Fool as represented by Lothair Coningsby, Joanna, Aaron Lee, Nancy and Henry, and Sybil, respectively.

The Hierophant or Pope is traditionally in the words of Arthur Waite, the "Order and the Head of the recognized hierarchy, which is the

reflection of another and greater hierarchic order; but it may so happen that the pontiff forgets the significance of this, his symbolic state, and acts as if he contains within his proper measures all that his sign signifies or his symbol seeks to show forth."<sup>22</sup> This definition gains in significance when viewed in the light of Mr. Coningsby's personality. He tries to be a father-figure, the head of the household. Indeed, he cares about his children, but he can take his position as protector too seriously. "Each year that Mr. Coningsby succeeded in keeping Nancy and Ralph by him for Christmas postponed either unwelcomed change, and enabled him to enter the New Year with the pretense that it was the old year beginning over again" (p. 47). Also, it is due to his protective attitude toward the Tarot cards that he is almost destroyed.

The Empress card is presented in the character of Joanna. Waite expands this view. "Joanna is the Empress Isis. She is above all things universal fecundity and the outer sense of the word. This is obvious, because there is no direct message which has been given to man like that which is born by woman; but she does not herself carry its interpretation."<sup>23</sup> Joanna longs as Isis for her son Horus, yet she is not a real mother as is exemplified by her adopted son Stephen. Williams also allots Joanna a Christian mother-image. This mother-imagery seems impossible when considering the pain suffered under the power of Joanna, but Williams does not fail to show the goodness also and as Sybil points out, "She thought her son was Messiah" (p. 221).

The Hermit is represented by Aaron Lee, and so that there is no mistake Williams devotes a whole chapter to this image. The Hermit is depicted carrying a lantern much like Diogenes in a search for something. He is a solitary figure who cannot rest until his quest is ended. In

Aaron's case he is searching for the key to the power of the Tarot. "An old man was sitting alone in a small room. He was at a table facing the door; behind him was another door. The walls were bare of pictures; the table was a large one, and it was almost completely covered with a set of Tarot cards" (p. 35). Just as the Hermit lacks meaning except through searching, even so Aaron had no meaning except through his searching.

The Lovers although relatively unimportant in the whole Tarot, hold special meaning for Williams because he considered love the way to salvation. Nancy and Henry assume the parts of the Lovers, but they are far from perfect in their roles. The figures on the cards "suggest youth," says Waite "virginity, innocence and love before it is contaminated by gross material desire,"<sup>24</sup> but Williams depicts Nancy and Henry as debased by the world and then growing purer through their love. Before their conversion their love lacks depth and meaning, and they are really strangers. When they find the true meaning of love they are complete in each other. Lois Thrash states that they are "imperfect lovers who do not transcend their selfish concerns,"<sup>25</sup> and this statement is true until their union through love in the final chapter of the novel. "She looked back at him and laughed, and beckoned him by throwing out her hands toward him; and in simultaneous movement both she and Henry took a few running steps and came together on Joanna's left" (p. 214).

At the center of all the images is the Fool. The Fool is the controlling factor of the Tarot cards just as Sybil is the controlling factor of the characters in The Greater Trumps. The Fool acts as a link to an understanding of the other cards though traditionally as Grillot DeGivry points out the unnumbered card has no determined purpose.<sup>26</sup> For Williams the "0" card

is tied to the other cards, and they are linked to it in the perpetual dance. The Fool for Williams comes close to representing his concept of Christian love and Co-inherence. Douglas Carmichael explains this: "The Fool, then, represents Williams' concept of deified love, acting here as a metaphysical principle. Though there are the Lovers, there is no card for Love in the deck, and this concept seems to fit all Williams says of the Fool."<sup>27</sup>

Sybil, then, becomes Christ-like in her machinations over the other characters. She is not a Christ-image, rather a Christian image and an early proponent of the Doctrine of Substituted Love. Williams does not wish to give supernatural qualities to this character, but rather to present her as a perfected example of man. Also, the Fool is not simply a Christ image as Charles Huttar discusses: "The Juggler, card 1, who represents the beginning of all things is clearly the Creator . . . what Sybil realizes . . . is that he is also the Fool, card 0. Here we have the Alpha and the Omega, the God-Man, who in the role of the Fool sustains all."<sup>28</sup> The Fool is not only the beginning and the end, but the middle as well. This is shown by the Fool's relationship with the other cards and the dance. It is all encompassing or as Williams would have stated it, "This also is Thou."

Sybil's understanding of the Fool stems from her understanding of Love. As Nancy learns, it is through love that peace and safety are won. Williams adeptly describes this power of love through the imagery involving hands. Just as the Fool uses his outstretched hands to control, even so Sybil is able in the final chapter to calm the storm and the people through the power of her hands. As Nancy approaches salvation, she too sees the power of the hands. "It was no doubt a thing to wonder at, the significant power of man's hands. She thought of the unknown philosopher who



had wrought the Tarot images; his hands had been filled with spiritual knowledge; they had perhaps guided his mind as much as his mind his hands" (p. 188). The hands symbolize the power of love and action. Peckham calls the hand: ". . . symbol of action based in thought and will. It is the sacrament; the outward sign of the dance, that movement change, flux, which flows from the contemplative, of flux and permanence, of Juggler and Fool, love and thought which is both thematic and formal point upon which the dance of the novel turns."<sup>29</sup> This hand imagery is one of Williams' best thus far, and it is interesting to note the elaboration into body imagery which is found in Descent into Hell.

In addition to the hand imagery Williams introduces light and mist imagery which are of major importance in All Hallows' Eve as well as in this novel. At first the light surrounding the cards is a dull glow, but as the powers are unleashed the glow becomes a golden mist which surrounds all and almost suffocates some. Like the hands, the mist too represents the power of love and those that fear it are those to whom love is a strangler. This idea is similar to that presented with the archetypes in The Place of the Lion. "The mists were revolving around him or he in them; which--was it? Wheels within wheels--there had been some phase of glory, angels, or something, wheels full of eyes, cycles in cycles all vigilant and intelligent, revolting. These weren't eyes; if the eye of body was dark, if the hand had no power--a vague wheel of innumerable hands, all intertwined and clasping and turning faster and faster, turning out of mud and into the mist, hands falling from it, helplessly clutching . . . ." (p. 199). Williams links the hands and the mists then to the Wheel of Fortune card which symbolizes the flux of man.

Always present somewhere in the mist is the cat Sybil brings in from the storm. The cat is said to resemble the tiger always ready to attack behind the Fool, and like the Fool, Sybil has no trouble in controlling her sometimes vicious cat. The implications go further to suggest that Sybil through love can control everything, an implication she made explicit in the final chapters.

In addition to the theme of the power of love through the Affirmation of the Images, there is another theme central to the interpretation of the novel. This, too, concerns love but instead of simply the power of love, the reconciliation of man to love. This reconciliation is seen primarily in the church scene where Nancy is faced with the "mystery of love." She listens to the Athanasian Creed and wonders why she has never heard the words or felt their meaning before. This awareness, then, is her first step toward becoming a true lover.

After writing a novel such as The Greater Trumps, which is the embodiment of all his earlier imagery, Williams foregoes the use of physical, mythological imagery to a great extent and begins to center on his major ideas in his next two novels. These ideas are basically the Christian conceptions of salvation and damnation.

Charles Williams' conception of hell is precisely patterned after Dante's in the Divine Comedy. Like Dante, Williams sees hell as an image of spiraling concentric circles. For both Dante and Williams the damned were those who had refused the images and the intellect; thus as Spacks states "the ultimate damnation is that in which all becomes meaningless."<sup>2</sup>

#### IV. Damnation and Rejection

Throughout his work Williams is concerned with the power of his images and the relationships of his characters to these images. For man there are two roads in life to choose between according to Williams. He may choose to acknowledge the presence of a superior being and the images which link man to it--the Way of the Affirmation of the Images--or he may choose to follow the guidelines set down by his ego and acknowledge nothing but himself--the Way of Destruction.

The passages describing this destruction in Williams' novels are probably the most vivid and the most frightening, for it is here that he is describing the damnation of man's soul. Primarily Williams views the process of damnation as an intensification of self. Barbara McMichael explains that "Hell is composed of those who will not admit reality. From insistence upon oneself as the center of all things, one moves into the final illusion that only self exists. The insistence on the aloneness of self leads to the agony of hell, the complete void."<sup>1</sup> Damnation, then, is achieved through a total turning inward to self.

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Williams does not concentrate on damnation as a principle theme until Descent Into Hell, but damnation and rejection are seen to some extent in all of his novels. In Shadows of Ecstasy damnation takes form or is imaged by destruction. Nigel Considine is never actually damned. He is destroyed, but we are left at the end of the novel uncertain as to the fate of Considine. Williams assures us, though, that Considine will not raise from the dead. He has been totally taken from life. "Nigel Considine was dead; the treachery he had despised had taken him; the final dereliction had swallowed him" (p. 216).

This destruction is more carefully imaged in War in Heaven. Because of his greed and failure to reason, Gregory Persimmons approaches hell. "A sickness crept within him; was this the end of victory and lordship and the Sabbath, and this the consummation of the promises and of desire? The sudden action had precipitated him down a thousand spirals of slow descent, and he hung above the everlasting void" (p. 217). This is the first time Williams refers to the "spirals" in relation to his concepts of hell and damnation, and this passage becomes more meaningful after reading Descent Into Hell. Williams shows Gregory Persimmons approaching the spiraling circles which in this novel Wandall calls "perverted reason."<sup>3</sup> It is only through the power of the central image, the Graal, that he escapes damnation.

In Many Dimensions Williams basically neglects the damnation theme because of his preoccupation with mythology. He does show personal destruction caused by greed and dependence on the Stone, and to Williams this self-want is a step toward damnation. Sheldrake, Reginald Montague, and Frank Lindsay are all defeated individuals because of their desire for the End of Desire which they misinterpret as worldly power and riches. Perhaps it is Sir Giles Tumulty who comes closest to being damned since it is he who

In order to concentrate on the damnation theme in Descent Into Hell more fully, it will be discussed after All Hallows' Eve instead of using

distorts the powers of the intellect and uses the Stone only as a device for satisfying his own learned curiosity.

Williams shows three characters doomed to damnation in The Place of the Lion. This time the process is imaged through the physical. Berringer, Foster, and Wilmot are destroyed by that which they seek, but the difference in this novel is that they physically assume their burdens of damnation. The theme in this book remains the same as that of the others, but it is the presentation that is different. For the first time in Williams we see damnation shown physically.

The use of physical imagery to express the concept of damnation is carried into The Greater Trumps. This time destruction takes form both externally and internally and is imaged by the storm and the mist, and the powers of the cards. The powers of evil unleashed by Henry Lee through the cards envelope the house, but it is only those selfish, ego-centered characters who need fear it. For the first time in this novel, Williams shows the powers of the internal evils in man as imaged by the golden mist. The mist is beautiful to those who understand it and who love, but it is poisonous to the others. "The mist rolled into and over them; it possessed and maddened them. Life strove with life, and life poured itself into them to maintain the struggle. In such unseeing obedience, at that very moment, in the wider world, armies poured to battle, for causes as obscurely known. They battered and struck; they had no hope but destruction and no place but war" (p. 205). The mist, then, not only images the internal struggle with ego of these characters but also the same struggle that goes on within every man. Self-love, then, is the mist that chokes the power to give and to love, leading to damnation.

In order to concentrate on the damnation theme in Descent Into Hell more fully, it will be discussed after All Hallows' Eve instead of using

the original published order. The damnation theme in the last novel is secondary.

Williams concentrates on salvation in All Hallows' Eve, but the damnation of Simon and Evelyn is also important in this novel. As said before, Williams almost blatantly denounces witchcraft and its practitioners. In this novel Clifford Davidson says "the principal symbol which Williams draws upon to illustrate evil is Goetia, the selfish and obscene pursuit of magic or witchcraft in order to wrest power away from Heaven."<sup>4</sup> In this sense then, Simon is much like Milton's Satan. In any sense he is an anti-Christ figure whose powers mimic the powers of Christ. Edmond Fuller says that Simon grew into evil. "He (Simon) was no more evil once than any other man, but consciously, culmulatively he chose evil until he reached something like total depravity in the sense of passing beyond his own capacity to change, retract, and repent before his own acts unto him."<sup>5</sup> This growth into evil is shown in the third chapter as Simon remembers his boyhood, his education, and his choosing of the evil way. He becomes, in a sense, the leader of men toward evil. He says, "It is simply I who have come. I shall give all those little people peace because they believe in me" (p. 60). His leadership ability is imaged by Jonathan's painting of him. The painting shows Simon as a controller and his followers as beetles, but it is only these beetle-like people he is able to control. His power then as Jonathan has seen is only an illusion of power. Davidson suggests that essentially Simon is impotent<sup>6</sup> as symbolized by his merely temporary healing of the sick.

As in Many Dimensions the use of the Tetragrammaton is important. The difference in this novel comes in the use of the Divine Name. "The debased Tetragrammaton drew them with its spiritual suction; the syllables passed out, and swirled, and drawing their captives returned to their speaker.

Some went a little way and fell; some farther and failed; of them all only she, at once the latest, the weakest, the nearest, the worst, was wholly caught."<sup>7</sup> Simon repeats the JHWH of the old Hebrew script backward for his evil purposes. In this novel, then, the reversed Tetragrammaton is an image for evil just as is Simon.

Simon's damnation comes about through the self-destruction of evil. His illusions melt with the saving rain and he is destroyed. "It beat on him and he could not think; it drove against him and he could not see. He went on against it, but the growing roseal light confused him still more. It bewildered him and he lost sight of the shapes until suddenly they loomed out of it very close to him. He unexpectedly thought, 'this is death,' and knew himself weaken at the thought" (p. 265). In addition to the damnation of Simon, Williams shows the damnation of Evelyn, the near destruction of Lady Wallingford, and the choice against damnation of Lester. Lester is seen throughout the novel, but especially in the first few chapters, throwing her hand in front of her face as she approaches something unpleasant. This early gesture is an image for Lester's rejection of the world of her husband and friends. As she grows in love, she ceases to use this gesture. In life Lester was a partially selfish individual and it is this selfishness that has her on a hell-directed path at the beginning of the novel. She is rescued from damnation through her love.

Lady Wallingford is little more than a puppet for Simon. She is, as Peckham says, an image of love perverted.<sup>8</sup> She sacrifices all for the one she loves and even though this love is perverted it is her capacity for love which saves her in the end. Only at Simon's death is she released from her illusionary love. She lies almost destroyed and only through Betty's love and help will she ever function again.

The story Williams tells of Evelyn is much like the story of Lawrence Wentworth in Descent Into Hell. Like Wentworth, Evelyn has no one. She hates her mother, and any friendship she assumes is a convenience. She is damned because she refuses all others for her own selfish desires. She is imaged by the dwarf woman created by Simon. The grotesque image is known in Jewish folklore as a golem. Edmond Fuller explains "The word denotes a lifeless image shaped from dust, clay, and other matter, to which life is imported by cabalistic rites culminating in the pronouncing of the Tetragrammaton."<sup>9</sup> The destruction of the figure by the melting rain symbolizes the destruction and damnation of Evelyn. "When her shelters had melted round her, she had not known in her despair what she would do; and now she only knew that she would not let herself be caught" (p. 268). But, she is caught by her own selfishness and she is destroyed.

Damnation and rejection reach a thematic peak in Williams' Descent Into Hell. Again Williams relies on both mythology and Christian symbolism to relay his themes to his readers. The damnation of Lawrence Wentworth is like nothing in any of the author's other novels. This damnation is of course explained through imagery. The images of the succubus, Gomorrah, and Lilith tell us Williams' attitudes toward his subjects. Moorman talks of Williams' use of imagery: "That Lawrence Wentworth keeps an unholy tryst with a self-made and obscene image of Adela Hunt means nothing in terms of the ordinary man's experience; when, however, Charles Williams labels Wentworth's situation as Gomorrah and his hell-born mistress as Lilith, he embraces another layer of meaning through myth used as metaphor and so involves the reader in what is generally accepted and thus universal, level



of experience."<sup>10</sup> Gomorrah becomes for Williams a symbol of the self-love that leads to damnation. It is according to Moorman "the turning in of all desire until the real world falls away."<sup>11</sup> Within his Gomorrah Wentworth creates a symbol for his own lust and ego-mania. He cannot have the real Adela, so he creates an image that succumbs to his every desire. She is "many Eves to many Adams; one Eve to one Adam; one Eve to each, one Eve to all" (p. 85), yet she is Eve only at the beginning of the relationship. As Wentworth draws farther and farther into himself, the Adela-Eve image becomes the opposite, the Adela-Lilith image.

Williams adeptly describes Wentworth's descent into hell in two ways. He speaks of Wentworth's descent into himself and uses the body as an image of the terrible. Also, of course, there are the recurring dreams and the descending of the rope which become more poignant as he approaches the bottom. His succumbus leads him through what Moorman calls "the road that was Adam and down symbolically into his body. Unlike the power of the hands in The Greater Trumps the body here has no power. It is symbolic only of the descent into himself and into hell. The rope, then of his dream is his intestine which leads him down into the pit of himself."<sup>12</sup>

The first mention of Wentworth's dream is very early in the novel before we are aware of his decline. The dream of course becomes reality, and the rope which Wentworth descends represents his life which he is also descending. He stops on the rope three times and each time represents a choice he must make. He has to choose whether or not to fight for Adela, whether or not to fix the costumes, and whether or not to help Adela after her graveyard experience. Each time he chooses not to be bothered, and each time he symbolically slides down the rope.

Williams shows Wentworth's demise as the coming to the end of his rope. Wentworth's last rational act is going to the historical dinner, and Williams says of it, "It would be the last supper; he would not go and meet Aston Moffatt again."<sup>13</sup> Thus, this supper becomes ironically a symbol of the Eucharist, but instead of saving this act confirms his damnation.

Wentworth himself is an image of all hell-bound men. He refuses love and the affirmative way. He chooses instead to become self-sufficient and damned.

Williams' concept of Co-inherence in time is also seen in relation to Wentworth's damnation. Throughout the novel there are references to the passage of time, but Wentworth seems to be unaware of time. The overwound watch he keeps in his drawer is symbolic of his disregard for time and what Sister M. LaLande calls his "overwound life that is about to stop."<sup>14</sup> What Wentworth fails to realize and Pauline comes to realize is that there is no gap in time; all time is one. This knowledge or lack of knowledge of time is the difference in their outlooks on life. As each is forced to make a decision, there are scurrying footsteps heard nearby. These footsteps, of course, image the passage of time if all time is one, but they also image the passing of lives.

Along with the damnation theme in Williams' work comes the opposite, the salvation theme. Like his other themes, this one runs through all of his novels, but is again found primarily in the last two.

This substitution according to Williams is the Way of Affirmation and the way of salvation. Like his other themes, this one runs throughout his works and is explained through imagery.

## V. Salvation and Substituted Love

One of the primary themes in any Williams' novel is the Doctrine of Substituted Love. This idea is based on the Christian concept of generously giving of oneself to help others. Williams expresses its importance in this way: "The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of largess; the doctrine of the Atonement is the doctrine of largess; the doctrine of the church is the doctrine of the largess; therefore the doctrine of the individual is the doctrine of the largess."<sup>1</sup> Williams calls this giving of oneself, to or for another, part of the Co-inherence. Shideler said "he believed the source of its existence and continuation to be God, its basic principle of activity to be exchange, and its fruits to be joy and love."<sup>2</sup>

Williams expects man to sacrifice himself for other men just as Christ did for man. He explains this necessity in his theological work He Came Down From Heaven: "We are to love each other as He loved us, laying down our lives as He did, that this love may be perfected. We are to love each other, that is, by acts of substitution. We are to be substituted and to bear substitution."<sup>3</sup> The important aspect of this is that we must not only be able to give but also to take in substitution sense.

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Nigel Considine in Shadows of Ecstasy says that he searches for the glory not only for himself but for anyone who is willing to follow as well. He is willing to give of his talents but not of himself. "He flung out his hands and caught Considine's; he poured upon his lord the throbbing triumph of his belief and his desire. Considine's voice, fuller and richer than any of the hearers had known it answered him: 'The will and the right are yours, not mine. I'm here only to purge, not to forbid'" (p. 84). His love, then, is only a shadow or image of the real thing. He does not know how to love or find true ecstasy, so he must be content with his shadows of ecstasy. Isabel Ingram comes close to being an affirmer of images. She is willing to give all for her husband and because of this willingness will probably approach salvation. Though she is rarely seen in the novel, her good traits can be seen as forerunners of Williams' later "good" characters.

In War in Heaven it is the Archdeacon who is the symbol of substitution, and in Many Dimensions it is Chloe Burnett. Both of these characters act as transmitters for the central images. They exchange their earthly lives for salvation. They act as passages for the images, but they do not give directly of themselves for their fellow man as the later affirmers do.

In The Place of the Lion Williams comes closer to presenting a true substitution. Damaris Tighe is the figure for the substitution, but before she can give she must become willing to call for help. She is so involved in her intellectual pursuits that she fails to experience love until it is almost too late. Charles Moorman says, "Only by a great effort does she speak the single word 'Anthony' and so acknowledge her dependence on others."<sup>4</sup> Damaris has to learn to accept love before

she can give. Her act of substitution is not with Anthony but with Quentin Sabot. She is willing to help Quentin just as Anthony has helped her in another act of substitution. She assumes part of the fear Quentin holds, and for Williams this is significant. According to Winship, "Williams maintains that emotions cannot only be confided in others but exchanged with them."<sup>5</sup>

Sybil Coningsby is the only character of Williams in the novels discussed thus far that knows, without having to experience in the time span of the novel, the true meaning of love and substitution. She is an image of the early apostles that traveled about teaching the way to Christ, for it is she that teaches Nancy the Way of Affirmation. Possibly Nancy emerges as the stronger character since she experiences spiritual growth and earns salvation. Sybil is not entirely static, however, since she must, as Thrash writes, "experience the sacrifice of pride represented by the crucifixions, which suggest the Hanged Man of the Tarot, symbol of self-renunciation."<sup>6</sup> Her kneeling down to Joanna is one example of this sacrifice.

It is not until Descent Into Hell that Williams directly states and uses as a central theme the Doctrine of Substituted Love. Fullman says that it is here: "Williams seems bent upon an exposition of his favorite doctrines: the integration of personality through love, the irrelevancy of spatio-temporal distinctions in a world in which the supernatural is also natural, the proper affirmation of images, and the meaning of co-inherence and substitution."<sup>7</sup> The substitution of love which along with the damnation of Wentworth is central in this novel, then, is an image of the Incarnation and Atonement of Christ.

Peter Stanhope closely resembles Sybil Coningsby in his self-assurance and knowledge of the Way of Exchange. Sister LaLande speaks of him as

that which she has feared for so long brought her no harm but good.

a "god-image,"<sup>8</sup> but there is little evidence to support this theory. He acts more as a guide to salvation or a Christ-image since it is said of him: "He was the kind of figure who might be more profitable to his neighborhood dead than alive; dead, he would have given it a shrine; alive, he deprecated worshippers" (p. 10). Probably little is known about him because he acts not only as the voice of the author but serves as an image of the author. This idea gains in credibility when it is considered Williams used "Peter Stanhope" as a pseudonym in the writing of one of his plays, "Judgment at Chelmsford."

Stanhope is significantly a poet, but unlike the writer-intellectuals of the earlier novels, he knows the value of his work in relation to the world and to salvation. Instead of using his play as an intellectual crutch behind which he can hide from reality, he uses the play as a statement of his affirmation and a stimulus for the doubtful Pauline. "It was of no particular time and no particular place, and to any cultured listener it seems to have little bits of everything and everybody put in at odd moments" (p. 12).

Stanhope's primary purpose in the novel is in the instruction of Pauline. Pauline admits when asked by Stanhope that she is plagued with a fear of meeting her doppelgänger--of meeting herself walking in the street. She lives in constant fear of this doppelgänger until Stanhope persuades her to let him carry the burden of her fear. The doppelgänger is the image of the problems man must bear and be willing to reveal and share with others. She does not realize the meaning of the image until she too is faced with the possibility of carrying someone else's burden. As she faces her ancestor, it is her image that speaks to take the burden, and she realizes that which she has feared for so long brought her no harm but good.

The temporal imagery in this section of the novel is at a peak. Pauline is able to reach through the time barriers to assume the fear of her martyred ancestor. Williams prepares us for this shift of time in the preceding scene when Pauline is given directions by her grandmother. After talking to Margaret Anstruther, she hears the clock strike one, yet as she puts on her coat and hat she mentions it is midnight; then, it is one again as she calls Stanhope. This shifting in time cannot be purely a flaw in writing when the greater shift in the next scene is taken in view. The time sequence here becomes an image of the Co-inherence experienced by Pauline. Mary McDermott Shideler says that it is through love that the boundaries of time are bridged.<sup>9</sup>

The actions of Mrs. Anstruther also play a significant role in the salvation of Pauline. Mrs. Anstruther is much like Sybil Coningsby although her part in the conversion is not as major. She is described by Pauline as: "Quiet, gentle, but hardly passive and certainly not fragile. Even now, on that still afternoon, the shut eyes left the face with a sense of preoccupation--translucent rock. She was absent, not with the senility of the spirit wandering in feeble memories, but with the attention of a worker engrossed" (p. 54). Her purpose in the novel is to act as a guide for Pauline to reach salvation though she does not actually instruct her in the Way as Stanhope does. Perhaps because of her closeness to Pauline and her age, Mrs. Anstruther cannot also instruct. More likely, Williams wished to show that substitution and instruction in the way of exchange could take place between individuals who were neither related nor good friends.

In All Hallows' Eve Williams concentrates on the theme of salvation. Each character in the novel must face the choice of salvation or damnation.

Evelyn and Simon as we have already seen choose the path of damnation, and Lady Wallingford is saved only in her final act.

The salvation of Lester and Betty is the primary concern of the novel. Each of the saving experiences occur through imagery. Betty is saved partially because of an early baptism that protects her from the powers of Simon. The water imagery in the novel is central. Betty remembers her baptism only as a dream of being in a great lake and being lifted onto shore by a fish. Once again using biblical and Christian symbolism, Williams shows how this one simple act is instrumental in helping to assure Betty's salvation.

As Betty's memory fails after her incursions into the City, she is protected by visions of rain water. "'The rain! The rain!' Floods of water fell on her it seemed, as if time itself changed to rain and drained everything, or even swept everything away" (p. 119). Again, the rain has a saving quality as it keeps Betty from realizing all that is to come in the world. The final rain causing the destruction of the dwarf woman and of Simon is the climax of the novel since the rain acts as a washing away of the evil and the birth of the good.

Besides Betty's forgotten baptism her willingness to give and love are also instrumental in her salvation. She befriends Lester and Evelyn unselfishly and only once shows any malice when she says she is glad Evelyn is dead. The height of her willingness to give is seen in the final chapter as she tries to save Evelyn and heals the afflicted followers of Simon. "At the end she wavered and nearly fell. Jonathan held her and they turned and came, but she hardly, back toward Richard, who took her other arm, and so she paused, white and worn, supported by her lover and her friend. She murmured, with a last flashing smile, 'That's done!'" (p. 272).



This passage strikingly resembles Christ's last words on the cross. Betty too is almost a Christ-image in her willingness to substitute herself for others. But, still, she has many human qualities such as her joy over Evelyn's death that prevent her from being entirely an image of a god-man.

The imagery surrounding the salvation of Lester is also directly related to Christian imagery. Her salvation is achieved rather than Evelyn's because unlike Evelyn she has the capacity to love. Her relationship with Richard in the beginning is certainly not based on love, but she does not hate nor does she reject love, and it is this that assures her salvation. According to Fuller, "The treatment of human love and the marriage bond as allegories of theological truth was a pattern he [Williams] pursued from the homely aspects of modern marriage to his famous studies of the allegorical values in the Dante-Beatrice relationship."<sup>10</sup> Though Lester and Richard have far from the perfect love, it is this love that helps assure her salvation.

Like Betty, Lester too must experience a kind of sacrifice. She gives of herself in direct substitution for Betty, as Simon tries to kill his daughter. As the death lights emerge through the incantations of Simon, it is Lester who is encompassed by the light and therefore "dies" for Betty. As she gives of herself, she feels the support of a wooden frame. The frame is an image of the Christian cross which Fuller calls "another and constantly available substitution,"<sup>11</sup> and Lester leans on this as she is crucified by Simon. She too can perhaps be seen as a Christ image though her role is closer to that of the Christian man than of Christ Himself.

Lester becomes a complete image of Williams' Doctrine of Substituted Love as she gives of herself completely in exchange for Betty and achieves

salvation. "She stood, quiet and very real, before them; although she shone on them; then the brightness quivered in the air, a gleam of brighter light than day, and in a flash traversed all the hall; the approach of all the hallows possessed her, and she too, into the separations and unions which are indeed its approach, and into the end to which it is itself an approach, was wholly gone. The tremor of brightness received her" (p. 269). And so, just as Christ ascended in the heavenly light to the Kingdom of God, Lester goes in the same light to the City which is Williams' image for the Christian heaven.

Lester and Betty, then, function as images of the Christian believer, and their salvation is achieved through the Way of Exchange and the Way of Affirmation of the Images. According to Fuller, Williams sums up this belief as he has the nurse say, "I'll do what I can" (p. 208), which is the governing principle of the novel and of Christian thought.<sup>12</sup>

Williams is not the first to use the image of the City in his works. Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, and Wordsworth are a few of those whose ideas were read and shared by Williams, as he wrote in a 1954 essay "The Image of the City."<sup>2</sup> His conception of the City, though, is the embodiment of his two themes of Co-Inherence and Substitution, and it was not until his last novels that he wrote directly of the City in any of his novels.

Though basically found in *All Fallings* and more explicitly in *Descent Into Hell*, the image is to some extent used in a few of his earlier novels. The difference is that in the early novels Williams relies on his central images to project insight into his idea of the City without ever actually naming it as such, while in the last two novels, he deals with the image

## VI. The Image of the City

One major image seen particularly in All Hallows' Eve is Williams' image of the City which is the City of God. But, the City is not only the heavenly City depicted by St. Augustine but also the earthly city of the good. In the preface to He Came Down From Heaven, Williams explains this image.

The presidency of the Holy Spirit over the "holy and glorious flesh" is there exhibited in the height; at the foot of the entombment of the consummate flesh. Beyond the one lies the state known as the Beatific Vision; below the other principle called the Harrowing of Hell. Between the two extreme points appears the great mass of created souls; those on earth, and, beyond, a line of angelic beings, those "in heaven." There are recognizable faces, but they are momentary; they are travellers upon one or other of the Ways. But the painting, above and below, is of the co-inherence of the whole redeemed City.<sup>1</sup>

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directly, Patricia Spacks describes the image in the last two novels as "a total vision essentially the same in both cases . . . ." <sup>3</sup>

Of the early novels, hints of the City are seen only in Shadows of Ecstasy, The Place of the Lion, and The Greater Trumps. Of course, there are aspects of the City in the other two early novels, but there is nothing directly which warrants a discussion of them in this section. In Shadows of Ecstasy the ecstasy itself is symbolic of the City. It is the total joy that is sought after by Considine, but his failure to reach this ecstasy means his failure to reach or understand the image of the City. It is only as an Affirmer of Images that the prizes of the City are won, and Considine falls short of this affirmation. Considine says that "the spirit of man shall go out from his body and return into his body and revivify it" (p. 75). This idea is much like the doctrine put forth in the Bible in the book of Revelations which deals with the City of God. "Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, . . . They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years." <sup>4</sup> Considine vaguely feels the powers of the City, but he cannot find the Way.

In The Place of the Lion Williams again shows glimpses of the City through the restored city of Smetham. Anthony is an Affirmer and knows the Way, and it is through him that chaos is destroyed and order reigns. This order is an important part of Williams' concept of the City, for the City is according to Glen Cavaliero, the "orderly, fully functioning communion of living souls, an image of the Divine Order." <sup>5</sup> Williams calls the City in this novel the "Place of Friendship," but it is the same image as that presented in All Hallows' Eve.

In this Place of Friendship, "Friendships grew closer; intentions of love possessed their right fulfilment. Terrors of malice and envy and

jealousy faded; disordered beauty everywhere recognized again the sacred laws that governed it. Man dreamed of himself in the place of his creation" (p. 204).

The Tarot cards in The Greater Trumps serve as an image of the city that is part of the heavenly City, for the different cards represent the different men and attitudes of the City. The images presented in the Tarot deck are seen according to Moorman "as a kind of symbol for the City, of all sorts and conditions of men, observed here in their natural dance, their natural communion of Exchange."<sup>6</sup> And, as the cards depend on each other for the continuation of their dance, men must depend on each other for the continuation of life and salvation. This property of Exchange is a basic part of Williams' image of the City.

With Descent Into Hell we move into a more refined presentation of the image. In this novel it is Battle Hill that Williams uses as his earthly image for the heavenly City. "He endured the growing invasion with a great deal of good humour, and was content to see the hill of his birth become a suburb of the City, as in another sense it would always be" (p. 10). The hill is only a suburb of the City in the early chapters of the novel, but it becomes the City itself before the termination of the book. Charles Moorman writes, "The Hill itself thus emerges as one of the characters of the novel. Its influence, the accumulation of centuries of human experience, dominates and shapes the action."<sup>7</sup> The Hill has become, then, an image of the Co-inherence and thus an image of the City.

The use of light and weather as imagery is also important to an interpretation of the image of the City. Whenever Pauline approaches salvation and the City, she is surrounded by a roseal light which becomes

the pathway to the City; it is the glory of God. "'Arise, shine; your light is come; the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (p. 173).<sup>8</sup> Just as the hurrying footsteps symbolize a choice to be made, even so the light symbolizes the choice that has been made toward the goodness of the City. Peckham says; "The light, then, is that of judgment which separates the sheep from the goats, and is identical with the cold light on the mountains which is both death and love."<sup>9</sup>

Williams' constant reference to the heat and weather points out the significance of the images. As the novel progresses and the play and Pauline are led closer to the Affirmation, the airs become clearer and the temperatures more pleasant. The weather of the Hill is like the golden mist of the Tarot in that it is pleasant for those close to salvation and almost unbearable to those about to achieve damnation. This use of tactile imagery, like the references to hands in The Greater Trumps, is important in the revelation of Williams' themes and character studies.

In his next novel All Hallows' Eve, Williams uses the term "City" to represent London as well as a metaphor for the Celestial City. In Descent Into Hell Pauline instructed the dead man concerning the way to the City (meaning London), when, of course, she was also showing him the way to the greater City. In All Hallows' Eve this duality of imagery is projected throughout the entire book. Besides this double use of a single image, Edmond Fuller points out that: "In All Hallows' Eve there is a special, localized value to the term 'city' as applied to actual, secular London, for to Londoners that denotes not greater London, but the city's heart, encompassing St. Paul's as well as that most worldly of power concentrations, London's financial district."<sup>10</sup> The term, then has a triple meaning for Londoners, and of course, this includes Charles Williams.

Because of Williams' concentrated effort to present the image inclusive of all images and themes in All Hallows' Eve, this novel may be called his best. Mary Alice Hadfield says the novel is: ". . . a flourish of non-detachment, of committal of every kind and every shade, and an implicit consent to the continuation of life after death."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the novel presents the best in style and imagery of Charles Williams.

Williams does not neglect the concrete imagery of his previous novels in his presentation of the City. The City itself is pictured physically for the first time in the paintings of Jonathan. Jonathan like Peter Stanhope is an inspired character whose salvation comes through in his work. His two paintings represent the worlds of good and evil and the lighting in them points this out. "The light was the most outstanding thing in the painting; presently, as Richard looked, it seemed to stand out from the painting, and almost to dominate the room itself. At least it is so governed the painting that all other details and elements were contained within it" (p. 27). Jonathan unknowingly has captured in his painting of the city of London the City of God, and the light Richard sees is the light of salvation. The portrait of Simon, on the other hand, stands opposite to the painting of the City in that it depicts the Way of Damnation.

Besides the light imagery, Williams uses audio imagery in his presentation of a fight for a place in the City. The world of the newly dead is extraordinarily silent and this silence becomes unbearable to Evelyn as she approaches damnation so that she talks to herself and gives her soul in order that Lester might be trapped in the dwarf woman with her. "She began at once to chatter. After two sentences she found herself opening and shutting her mouth, but her voice had ceased. The pain was

now really bad. She must speak, but she could only tell him what he wished to know" (p. 176). Evelyn is reduced to a puppet who aches because she is forced to be silent. Lester, though, is serene in her new found silence and peace, and for her this silence is only another part of that image of the City.

As discussed before, the water is also an image of salvation and thus a part of Williams' City. The river Thames becomes a symbol of the rivers of that greater City. Peckham feels that: "Thematically this is the richest of the novels: by embodying his vision of the nature of the Christian life in the one symbol of the City, and its waterways, Williams has left the door open for an illustration of all his favorite themes . . . ."12 The river and all the water in the novel helps depict the Way to salvation and the City.

Lester and Betty both co-inhere in the City and are saved regardless of the fact that one of them is physically dead and the other alive. With this image Williams reaches a peak in his novelistic career, and we wonder what might have followed had he lived.

Michall Williams says that he planned to write only one more novel which he proposed to be different from the rest in that it would employ no elements of the supernatural.<sup>13</sup> We can only speculate as to how this novel would be presented and accepted, but we can say that the work he did publish is the work of a man's life and soul. He should not be read as a writer of the unique. As W. R. Irwin said of him: "He intended no innovations; indeed, innovation would be hostile to his purposes. Rather, he wished to reassert Eternal Providence, the nature and working of which have been nearly forgotten in an age which serves Mammon, mistakenly believing that it serves itself or a life-force."<sup>14</sup> Charles Williams will



probably never be a classic author, but there is a group that will perpetuate itself and always be avid readers and fans of this most remarkable author and man.

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<sup>4</sup>Charles A. Hutter, "Charles Willson, Student and Preceptor," *The Gordon Review*, October, 1957, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup>Christopher Pullman, "The Mind and Art of Charles Willson: A Study of His Poetry, Plays, and Novels," *Essays and Lectures of the University of Minnesota*, 1954, p. 424.

<sup>6</sup>Gunnar Urang, *Shadows of Heaven* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 91-92.

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<sup>8</sup>Charles Mooreman, *Archaic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 84.

<sup>9</sup>Frederick S. Wentfall, "Charles Willson," *Charles Willson: A Study*, ed. Charles Hoyt (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957), p. 122.

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<sup>11</sup>Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1948), p. 65.

<sup>12</sup>Pullman, pp. 415-416.

<sup>13</sup>Winship, p. 118.

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## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>15</sup>Geoffrey Parsons, "The Spirit of Charles Williams," Atlantic Monthly CLXXXIV (1949), 78.

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<sup>17</sup>Irwin, p. 140.

<sup>18</sup>Urang, p. 51.

<sup>19</sup>Parsons, p. 79.

<sup>20</sup>Fullman, p. 479.

<sup>21</sup>Parsons, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup>Fullman, p. 504.

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<sup>3</sup>Edmond Fuller, Charles Williams' All Hallows' Eve (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), p. 22.

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