

# A TRIDENT SCHOLAR PROJECT REPORT

NO. 241

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**"THE ARTHURIAN POEMS OF CHARLES WILLIAMS:  
A CRITICAL ANNOTATED EDITION"**

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**UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND**

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave Blank)	2. REPORT DATE 1996	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Arthurian poems of Charles Williams: a critical annotated edition			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Mihal, Jay A.				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Naval Academy Annapolis, MD 21402			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER USNA Trident Scholar report; no. 241 (1996)	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Accepted by the U.S.N.A. Trident Scholar Committee				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE UL	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) <p>This project entails compiling a critical edition of Charles Williams's Arthurian poems. Williams is the third and least well known member of the Inklings, the group of Christian friends (largely academics) who met at Oxford University during the 1930's and '40's. Currently there is no edition available of Williams's Arthurian poems in the United States. This project involves two stages: first, establishing a text of the poems; and , second, writing a critical introduction and notes. Williams's two Arthurian collections, <i>Taliessin Through Logres</i> and <i>The Region of the Summer Stars</i>, and no longer in print in the United States. In light of this fact, a major goal of this project is to create an edition that could conceivably be published. In order to achieve this goal several steps were necessary. First, an examination of both the original manuscripts and the previously published editions of the poems was required. Next, the project demanded an examination of Williams's life and work and research into the Arthurian tradition, especially the works of Malory's <i>Le Morte D'Arthur</i>, Tennyson's's <i>Idylls of the King</i>, and de Troyes's <i>Arthurian Romances</i> – works that significantly influenced Williams's poetry. Then began research into the criticism and scholarship on Williams's Arthurian poems themselves. Finally, with this background, the process of editing a new edition of Charles Williams's Arthurian cycles began. Within this edition, a critical introduction and extensive notes were also included to help: 1) relate the man and his life to his theological and literary ideas as they are expressed throughout his Arthurian poems; and 2) aid with understanding the complexity of Williams's poetry.</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Charles Williams; Arthurian tradition; <i>Taliessin through Logres</i> ; <i>Region of the Summer Stars</i>			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 347	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

U.S.N.A.---Trident Scholar project report; no. 241 (1996)

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by

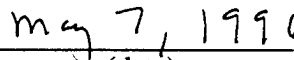
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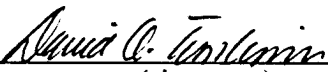
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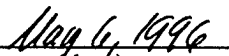
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USNA-1531-2

## ABSTRACT

### *THE ARTHURIAN POEMS OF CHARLES WILLIAMS: A CRITICAL ANNOTATED EDITION*

This project entails compiling a critical edition of Charles Williams's Arthurian poems. Williams is the third and least well known member of the Inklings, the group of Christian friends (largely academics) who met at Oxford University during the 1930's and '40's. Currently there is no edition available of Williams's Arthurian poems in the United States. This project involves two stages: first, establishing a text of the poems; and, second, writing a critical introduction and notes.

Williams's two Arthurian collections, *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, are no longer in print in the United States. In light of this fact, a major goal of this project is to create an edition that could conceivably be published. In order to achieve this goal several steps were necessary. First, an examination of both the original manuscripts and the previously published editions of the poems was required. Next, the project demanded an examination of Williams's life and work and research into the Arthurian tradition, especially the works of Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and de Troyes's *Arthurian Romances*--works that significantly influenced Williams's poetry. Then began research into the criticism and scholarship on Williams's Arthurian poems themselves. Finally, with this background, the process of editing a new edition of Charles Williams's Arthurian cycles began. Within this edition, a critical introduction and extensive notes were also included to help: 1) relate the man and his life to his theological and literary ideas as they are expressed throughout his Arthurian poems; and 2) aid with understanding the complexity of Williams's poetry.

*Keywords:*

Charles Williams  
Arthurian tradition  
*Taliessin through Logres*  
*Region of the Summer Stars*

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## FOREWORD

Throughout this last year, my goal has been to create an edition of Charles Williams's Arthurian poetry that would help introduce a reader who is unfamiliar with the Arthurian tradition and Williams's style to the beauty and wisdom found in *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*. Compiling, editing, analyzing, and annotating the Arthurian poems of Charles Williams has not only been the pinnacle of my undergraduate studies, the works of Charles Williams have changed my life.

This project grew out of my love for the Inklings (J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams) and the Arthurian myth. Beginning in May, I starting this project with background reading. This background reading included: Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Chretien de Troyes' *Arthurian Romances*, Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Charles Williams's novel about the Holy Grail, *War in Heaven*, and finally, all the poems Williams wrote concerning the Arthurian tradition. The order of this reading proved to be extremely valuable, for it allowed me the opportunity to understand exactly where Williams expounded upon a hint in Malory, deviated from Malory, and disagreed with Tennyson.

After this reading and my summer training were accomplished, I spent two weeks at the Marion E. Wade Center in Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. This time was used to establish the text for Williams's two Arthurian cycles and to gather information concerning all the criticism dealing with *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*.

With the text established and the criticism gathered, the next stage of my project began. This stage was the reproduction of the text of two poems and their respective notes per week. My notes at this point were basically made up of the definitions of persons, places, or things that I felt the average college student would be unfamiliar with as well as relevant references to Malory, Tennyson, or the Bible. For the references to Malory, I used the Penguin Books Caxton edition of *Le Morte D'Arthur*. For the references to Tennyson, I also used the Penguin Books edition of *Idylls of the King*. And for the references from the Bible I used the Zondervan's New International Version. Each week I would also receive detailed comments and criticism from Professor Wooten on the notes and



poems I had done the previous week, and part of my work each week was going back over my old notes with his suggestions. None of Williams's or Lewis's comments as well as the supplemental notes from the Charles Williams society were included at this stage because, in the case of the comments of Williams and Lewis, I had not yet studied the works which contained these future notes and, in the case of the supplemental notes, I did not obtain a copy until the second semester. In hindsight, I recognize now that the project would have gone a lot more efficiently if I had researched Williams's and Lewis's comments and obtained a copy of the supplemental notes sooner. During this stage, I also found that I was incorporating many notes which were not needed because I felt I was interpreting many of the poems for my reader. Many of these notes were discarded before the final draft was printed. During the course of this first semester, I was also reading three biographies on Williams, hoping to find any helpful notes to his poems by studying his life: *The Inklings* by Humphrey Carpenter, *An Introduction to Charles Williams*, and *Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work*. both by Mary Alice Hadfield.

By the end of the first semester, I had completed the first draft of the text of *Taliessin through Logres* with the rough drafts of the notes for these twenty-four poems as well.

During the Christmas break my work on the summaries as well as the revisions of the notes for the first volume began. I also started researching Lewis's criticism of the poems as well as Williams's theological works and his own specific comments on his poems. I soon discovered that the prose summaries of each poem were going to take much more time to write than I had originally planned, and I did not actually finish all thirty-two until days before the deadline for the final draft. It was also during this break that I first began to realize the magnitude of my project.

My work second semester began by finishing the text and notes for the last eight poems which comprise the second volume of Williams's Arthurian poetry. This was done within the first two months. During this time I was also adding many extremely valuable notes from Lewis's *Arthurian Torso*, Williams's *The Figure of Arthur* and his essays in *The Image of the City* and *Essential Writings in Spirituality and Theology*, and the supplemental notes from the Charles Williams Society. These notes were so valuable because they shed the brightest light on Williams's complex poetry for they were either Williams's own thoughts or the thoughts of those who were closest to him during the time of the

poems' composition. I also began researching much of the criticism I had gathered from the Wade Center.

Although the first draft of the text had been completed since January, it was not until the last week in March that any suggestions were made on how the final version of the text should appear. These textual suggestions, combined with the massive quantity of notes and that I had added since the first semester, made the final two weeks before the final draft deadline extremely stressful.

The finishing touches began with the completion of my introduction, the textual revisions, and the insertion of the illustrations I had also discovered at the Wade Center during my two weeks of research. The last few days were spent frantically trying to revise the notes and put the finishing touches on the summaries.

## TABLE OF DATES

- 1886 September 20: Charles Walter Stansby Williams is born at 3 Spencer Road, Holloway, London, the first child of Richard Walter and Mary Wall Williams.  
November 7: C.W. is christened in St. Anne's Church, Finsbury Park.
- 1894 The family moves to St. Albans and opens a stationery shop.  
C.W. begins his schooling at St. Albans Abbey School.
- 1898 C.W. wins a Junior County Scholarship to St. Albans Grammar School.
- 1901 March 27: C.W. is confirmed an Anglican in St. Albans Abbey by Bishop Wogan Festing. Later, he wins an Intermediate Scholarship to University College, London.
- 1902 May: C.W. begins attending University College. After two years, the family can no longer afford to keep him in school, and he leaves to find work.
- 1903 C.W. takes the Civil Service examination for a Second Division Clerkship but is not successful.
- 1904 C.W. begins work as a clerk in the Methodist Bookroom; attends the Working Men's College at night.
- 1908 The Bookroom closes down. C.W. lands a job as proofreader at the London office of the Oxford University Press. Later, he meets Florence Conway, and they become engaged.
- 1912 Publication of C.W.'s first book, a sonnet sequence called *The Silver Stair*.
- 1914 World War I begins. C.W. tries to enlist but is turned down.
- 1917 April 12: C.W. and Florence (called Michal) are married at St. Albans Abbey. C.W. is initiated into the Mystical Order of the Golden Dawn.  
*Poems of Conformity* (poetry)
- 1920 *Divorce* (poetry)
- 1922 Birth of C.W. and Michal's only child, a son, Michael.  
C.W. begins lecturing on English poetry for many literary institutes around the city.
- 1924 *Windows of Night* (poetry)
- 1925 C.W. writes his first novel, *Shadows of Ecstasy*, but no publisher will take it.

- 1927 *The Masque of the Manuscript*, written by C.W., is performed at Amen House.
- 1928 *A Myth of Shakespeare* (verse drama composed for C.W.'s evening classes)
- 1929 *The Masque of Perusal*
- 1930 *War in Heaven* (fiction)  
*Heroes and Kings* (poetry)  
*Poetry at Present* (criticism)
- 1931 C.W. meets T. S. Eliot.  
*Many Dimensions* (fiction)  
*Three Plays*  
*The Place of the Lion* (fiction)
- 1932 *The Greater Trumps* (fiction)  
*The English Poetic Mind* (criticism)
- 1933 C.W.'s health is in danger, and he undergoes an intestinal operation at University College hospital.  
*Shadows of Ecstasy* (fiction)  
*Bacon* (biography)  
*Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind* (criticism)  
C.W. edits the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.
- 1934 *James I* (biography)
- 1935 *Rochester* (biography)
- 1936 C.W. meets C.S. Lewis.  
*Queen Elizabeth* (biography)  
*Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* (verse drama)
- 1937 *Descent Into Hell* (fiction)  
*Henry VII* (biography)  
*Stories of Great Names* (biography)
- 1938 C.W. is invited to lecture at the Sorbonne.  
*He Came Down From Heaven* (theology)  
*Taliessin Through Logres* (poetry)
- 1939 World War II breaks out; the staff of the London office of the Press remove to Oxford. C.W. begins to meet regularly with the Inklings, especially Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. C.W. is invited to lecture on literary topics to the Oxford University undergraduates.  
*Judgement at Chelmsford* (verse drama)  
*The Descent of the Dove* (theology)
- 1940 C.W. edits the English poems of John Milton, and the first edition in English of Kierkegaard.
- 1941 *Witchcraft* (history/theology)  
*The Way of Exchange* (theology)

- Religion and Love in Dante* (theology)
- 1942 *The Forgiveness of Sins* (theology)
- 1943 Oxford University awards C.W. an honorary Master of Arts degree.  
*The Figure of Beatrice* (criticism)
- 1944 *The Region of the Summer Stars* (poetry)
- 1945 May 15: C.W. dies following surgery. He is buried in Oxford.  
*All Hallows' Eve* (fiction)  
*The House of the Octopus* (verse drama)
- 1946 *Flecker of Dean Close* (biography)
- 1948 C. S. Lewis publishes *Arthurian Torso*: the two volumes of Taliessin poems, the unfinished *The Figure of Arthur*, with Lewis' own introduction and commentary. Williams had planned a *Figure of Power*, about Wordsworth, and had drafted some pages of it.

## INTRODUCTION

C.S. Lewis says of Charles Williams's mature volumes of Arthurian poetry--*Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*:

They seem to me, both for the soaring and gorgeous novelty of their technique and for their profound wisdom, to be among the two or three most valuable books of verse produced in the century. Their outstanding quality is what I call glory or splendour; a heraldic brightness of colour, a marble firmness of line, and an arduous exaltation. (Cumberlege vi-vii)

Yet of these same two works, Lewis also writes in his commentary on them:

Obviously by far the greatest danger of extinction which threatens this poem will come from its obscurity. And that danger will increase with time: not because the poem itself will become harder--it may, for a very considerable time, become easier--but because the extreme indulgence towards obscurity which characterizes the taste of modern readers is not very likely to last. (Lewis 187)

Indeed, another friend and patron of Williams, T.S. Eliot, reveals similar mixed feelings in a statement he makes about a year after the first cycle was published: "[It] contained some beautiful poetry, but also some of the most obscure poetry that was ever written" (Carpenter 109).

The charge of obscurity is repeated by Glen Cavaliero in his remarks about the poetry: "They call for an intuitive reading, not mere passive receptivity. They also demand a response in keeping with their premisses, a blend of perceptive wit and imaginative reason" (172). However, although many modern poets, Eliot not the least, have made this demand of their readers, Charles Williams would disagree that this was ever his intent. Commenting on the accusation that detailed knowledge of the great Arthurian work of Malory is needed to read his cycles, Williams writes:

It has sometimes been said that it is necessary to know Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* in order to follow *Taliessin*. I very much hope that this is not so, both because I should think it improper in principle for any poet to require from his readers the knowledge of another work and also because the chance of any interest in *Taliessin* would thereby be considerably decreased. (Ridler 179)

In defense of Charles Williams's poetry, editor and critic David Dodds writes that no excessive requirements need to be demanded: "For the poems prove immediately enjoyable and rewarding to anyone who refuses to worry about the difficulty (rumoured or even experienced) and simply reads them" (1). The inside dust jacket for the first edition of *Taliessin through Logres*, partly written by Williams puts the issue this way:

These poems are the product of Mr. Williams's maturity. The progress which he has been following through his prose and verse up to "Cranmer," "Seed of Adam," and "He Came Down From Heaven" is in these new poems at once summed up and mapped out ahead. The matter and the style require and reward attention. The poems do not so much tell a story or describe a process as express states or principles of experience. The names and incidents of the Arthurian myth are taken as starting-points for investigation and statement on common and profound experience. Different poems are thus applicable in each man as occasion arises. They need to be all read before any individual one is pronounced obscure, and it is unlikely that to the widening public who read and study Mr. Williams's other work any of these poems will remain finally obscure. (*Taliessin*)

The point is that "they all need to be read." Unfortunately, even this has not happened. The man, his ideas, and his mythic cycles of Arthurian poetry have remained largely neglected, and that is why for any who wish to become better acquainted with the writer of the only "imaginative, full-scale literary treatments of the Grail theme after Tennyson's 'Idyll of the Holy Grail'" and understand the purpose for his treatments of the Grail, certain facts need to be set down (Brewer 55).

On the 20th of September, 1886, Charles Walter Stansby Williams, the first child of Richard Walter and Mary Williams, was born on the first floor of No. 3 Spencer Road, Holloway. He was christened on the 7th of November in St. Anne's Church, Finsbury Park. Both his parents were deeply religious and constant church-goers, and there was little surprise that their son developed their same passion for the spiritual. At about three and a half years old, he started to attend church regularly, and even demanded it at times. "He used to march into church," his mother said, "as if he owned the place" (*Introduction 13*).

When Williams was eight, his father was forced to move his family to St. Albans due to the liquidation of his firm and the worsening of his eye sight. The cleaner air and country surroundings of their new home provided ideal walking conditions, and the father and son soon made their walking excursions together regular and important pleasures. During this time, Williams also began to attend the Abbey Day School. In 1898, he won a Junior County Scholarship to St. Albans Grammar School, which afforded him the opportunity to continue his education at a time when his parents were beginning to worry about expenses. Never a great lover of cricket, football, or hockey, he soon began to spend his time avoiding sports in order to read and write poetry and drama. Meanwhile, his passion for church and religious life continued to grow, and, in 1901 on the 27th of March, Williams was confirmed in the Church of England of St. Albans Abbey by Bishop Wogan Festing.

Williams never showed any reaction against religion as he grew up. In a passage closely resembling the pattern of his own life, Williams wrote in his biography *Flecker of Dean Close*:

He had grown up in a tradition against which...he had never revolted. Like the great doctors of Alexandria, he grew at once in the graces of his world and the grace of another; he breathed heaven in with the common air. He had to make no violent retrogression in order to find Christ; he had not to agonize as Augustine and others of the "twice-born" did. It was a fortunate and blessed fate. (*Introduction 22*)

With his Confirmation, Williams was now introduced to the sacramental life, and this direct experience was where his imaginary,



poetic world touched reality, became flesh and blood. His fascination with the Eucharist had begun.

In 1901, Williams won an Intermediate Scholarship to University College, London. Unfortunately, although the scholarship brought great pride to his family, they were unable to supplement the scholarship for more than two years. As a result, in 1903, Williams took a Civil Service examination for a second division clerkship, and finally, in 1904, he found a job in a bookroom belonging to the Methodist New Connexion.

Williams continued his education while working at the bookroom by attending the Working Men's College. He also joined a debating society, as well as a group called the Theological Smokers. In 1908, the Bookroom was closed, and, through an acquaintance, he soon managed to find a job proof-reading a 17-volume edition of Thackeray for the Oxford University Press and found a place in the Paper, Printing and Proof-Reading Department. This year was also the year that he met Florence Conway for the first time. Both these experiences were to have a profound affect on him throughout the remainder of his life.

The size and ancient majesty of the Oxford University Press were quite impressive compared to the Bookroom, and, when Humphrey Milford succeeded as Publisher, Williams found in him a source of inspiration so significant that he later dedicated his first cycle of Arthurian poetry to him. Williams had found a permanent place with the Press, and it was here where he came to be known as simply "C.W." Due to a lack of nervous coordination that made him physically unfit for service, Williams would remain with the Press during both World Wars until his sudden death in 1945.

The other profound effect on Williams's life was his discovery of romantic love. This experience was due to his introduction to the youngest of the five Conway daughters, Florence, while she was helping out at a parish children's Christmas party. Her effect on Williams was immediate. She soon became the inspiration for many of his poems, included the series of eighty-four sonnets called *The Silver Stair*. This collection also happened to be the first book Williams ever published. Although many years passed, they were eventually engaged and married on the 12th of April 1917.

Although at first a little fearful of the thought of marriage, Williams never regretted his decision. During their period of engagement, he had jestingly begun to call his fiancée Michal. In those years, Williams's exaggerated gestures and manner of speech must have sometimes "bordered on the grotesque," embarrassing his

fiancée, especially his habit of chanting verse aloud in public places. "Because of her protests he called her Michal, after Saul's daughter who mocked David when he danced before the Lord; and the name replaced her own" (Ridler xvii-xviii). However, all protests aside, when they were asked by an old friend about their marriage, Williams responded quickly after his wife commented that it was not in the least what they thought it would be like: "We should have been married years and years ago" (*Exploration* 41). Williams was both strengthened and challenged by marriage, and so was his wife. Their faithfulness to each other was even more remarkable given the "great period" during which Williams found himself "falling in love" with the Press's first librarian, Phyllis Jones. In 1922, Williams and his wife had their only child, a son whom they named Michael.

During the first year of his marriage, Williams also became involved with A.E. Waite's Order of the Golden Dawn--a semi-magical branch of Christianity known as Rosicrucianism. Rosicrucianism is a system of occult beliefs which combines the symbolism of Christianity with the terminology of alchemy, and has the Rosy Cross as its central image. Waite had a remarkable influence on Williams. R.A. Gilbert describes the attraction of the order for Williams when he writes, "Although he had been brought to Waite by way of the Holy Grail, Williams was most interested in Waite's kabbalistic doctrines" (149). Waite called Williams to his first significant contemplation of the Holy Grail as well as kabbalistic doctrines, both themes which run throughout Williams's later Arthurian poetry. The significance of Waite's influence even left one critic wondering, "If Charles Williams had never encountered A.E. Waite and his work, would he ever have written *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*?" (Brewer 54).

In 1931, Williams met another important influence on his life, T.S. Eliot, at one of Lady Ottoline Morrell's London tea parties. Eliot recalled the occasion:

I remember a man in spectacles who appeared to combine a frail physique with exceptional vitality....He appeared completely at ease in surroundings with which he was not yet familiar, and which had intimidated many; and at the same time was modest and unassuming to the point of humility....One retained the impression that he was pleased and grateful for the opportunity of meeting the company, and

yet that it was he who had conferred a favour--more than a favour, a kind of benediction, by coming. (ix-x)

Although Williams harboured a slight natural envy of Eliot's greater fame, which he laughed at himself for feeling, Williams and Eliot felt a warm affection for each other and approached each other's poetry with mutual caution and respect. In a memorial broadcast which he gave in 1946, Eliot said of Williams, "Williams...seemed to me to approximate, more nearly than any man I have ever known familiarly, to the saint" (Ridler xxviii).

During the few years before and after his encounter with Eliot, Williams lectured on English literature for the Evening Institute all around the city and published whatever he could, which was mostly novels and criticism. His motivation was often money, and "indeed he believed strongly that this was an excellent motive" (Carpenter 95). Eliot also remarked on the amazing amount of work that Williams accomplished during this time:

How, with his exacting daily work in a publisher's office, with his evening lectures and with his economic anxieties, he managed to write so much and so well as he did, remains incomprehensible to me....And besides what could be considered (if it had been less well done) merely hack-work, and besides the financial lash on his back in writing even what he wanted to write, much of his work, especially for the theatre, was done without expectation of adequate remuneration and often without expectation of payment at all....Yet he left behind him a considerable number of books which should endure, because there is nothing else that is like them or could take their place. (xii-xiii)

Critic Alice Mary Hadfield also commented on the extensive output of Williams when she wrote, "His activity was deeper and more vigorous than any other man's" (*Introduction* 59).

During this time, Williams's work also began to bring him "disciples." Many were a result of his lecturing for the Evening Institute. He lectured like a man possessed. C.S. Lewis described the process to his friend Arthur Greeves by saying:

He is of humble origin (there are still traces of Cockney in his voice), ugly as a chimpanzee but so radiant (he emanates more

love than any man I have ever known) that as soon as he begins talking he is transfigured and looks like an angel. He sweeps some people quite off their feet and has many disciples. Women find him so attractive that if he were a bad man he could do what he liked either as a Don Juan or a charlatan. (Carpenter 101)

Williams's life continued in this fashion for many years, with a few notable interruptions. In 1933, Williams found his health in danger and underwent an intestinal operation. He recovered in a few weeks, and, except for this illness, he was never ill or ailing until his death. In 1936, Williams and C.S. Lewis coincidentally exchanged letters for the first time within twenty-four hours of each other, both praising the other's work. Soon afterwards, they met when Lewis traveled to London, and their relationship grew from that point. In the following years, they continued to profess enthusiasm for each others writings. In 1938, Williams's *Taliessin through Logres* was published; however, it went largely unnoticed. Then came the second World War, and the removal of the staff of the London office of the Oxford Press to Oxford itself.

Immediately upon Williams's arrival in Oxford, Lewis persuaded him to join the Inklings, the group that J.R.R. Tolkien, another famous member, called "our literary club of practising poets" (Carpenter 115). The group met in Lewis's Magdalen rooms on Thursday evenings to read their "work in progress" aloud to each other. The Inklings included, in addition to Tolkien, Professor of Anglo-Saxon, Gervase Mathew, a Roman Catholic priest and University lecturer, Owen Barfield, Hugo Dyson, Lewis's brother W.H. ("Warnie") Lewis, and other literary men. This group proved to be extremely valuable to Williams, and he later commented on their influence:

Much was possible to a man in solitude, but some things were possible only to a man in companionship, and of these the most important was balance. No mind was so good that it did not need another mind to counter and equal it, and to save it from conceit and bigotry and folly. (Carpenter 117)

This group's stimulus was exactly what Williams needed, for he found himself having to defend his opinions more strenuously than

he had done for years. In a letter to his wife, C.W. wrote, "They are good for my mind" (Carpenter 117).

During his stay at Oxford, Lewis also helped arrange an invitation for Williams to lecture on literary topics to the Oxford University undergraduates. Remarking on a lecture Williams gave on Milton in January 1940, Lewis wrote, "I have at last, if only for once, seen a university doing what it was founded to do: teaching wisdom" (*Exploration* vi). In recognition of his efforts in both teaching and writing, especially with the publication of *The Figure of Beatrice* which conferred a true academic respectability on him, Oxford University awarded Williams the degree of Honorary Master of Arts in early 1943.

The abrupt end of Charles Williams's life came not long after the successful publication of his second volume of Arthurian verse, *The Region of the Summer Stars*, in 1944. Within a month, eight hundred copies out of the first printing of one thousand had sold, and the publishers of the book said that they would like more poems, hoping a further *Taliessin* volume could be published. Upon hearing of the attraction of his verse, Williams expressed his delight to his wife: "This selling of and passion for my verse is something altogether new, and I want to cry a little. I don't say it's much--but we have waited so long. Kiss me; you were the first to believe, and you always have" (Carpenter 196). Williams had planned a third volume, but it was never to be started. Shortly after the formal end of the war, Williams never recovered consciousness after a surgery on the 15th of May 1945. Describing the effect of Charles Williams's death on his own faith, C.S. Lewis wrote:

No event has so corroborated my faith in the next world as Williams did simply by dying. When the idea of death and the idea of Williams thus met in my mind, it was the idea of death that was changed. (Cumberlege xiv)

The ideas which governed Charles Williams and thus his works are just as much a part of his biography, if not more, as the events of his life. Commenting on the importance of Williams's written works, especially as a means of communicating his ideas, Anne Ridler wrote that "certain facts should be set down while memories are still alive--bearing in mind that the history of a poet's life is in his work: not that he writes his biography, but that the most important part of his biography *is* his writing" (ix). T.S. Eliot also

conveyed his own convictions about best method of acquainting oneself with Williams's ideas when he observed:

There are some writers who are best known through their books, and who, in their personal relations, have little to give beyond what more commonplace, uncreative minds can give; there are others whose writings are only the shadow of what the men have given in direct intercourse. Some men are less than their works, some are more. Charles Williams cannot be placed in either class. To have known the man would have been enough; to know his books is enough; but no one who has known both the man and his works would have willingly forgone either experience. I can think of no writer who was more wholly the same man in his life and in his writings. What he had to say was beyond his resources, and probably beyond the resources of language, to say once for all through any one medium of expression. (x-xi)

Unfortunately, to know the man is now impossible, but certainly his works, although some are scattered and hard to find, can still be known and can still convey the essential thoughts of this interesting man.

At the foundation of all of Williams's works was his steadfast faith in Christ. Like the priest in his novel *War in Heaven*, Williams would probably respond to questions about his belief in Christianity by saying: "There is no uncertainty in my own mind....I have decided in my own mind that I will believe that. No-one can possibly do more than decide what to believe" (113). In a lecture he delivered to the Christian School of Sociology, he not only defined the true nature of a champion of Christianity, he identified himself as one:

My chief objection to the champions of Christianity is that the objections to Christianity do not come from them. You may really sympathize with the other fellow, but you never *sound* as if you really felt the force of his argument....Why should the objections to Christianity be left to outsiders? Let us see them, see where they are, feel them, almost create them: and then we may have the energy that belongs to Christianity....It is a very doubtful thing whether in fact either the Divine City itself, or that pale and feeble image of it about which we

dream, can function and thrive except by in some sense including its opposite. (Ridler xxi)

Perhaps because Williams was just such a “champion” of Christianity, many of his personal beliefs would not be considered orthodox. In describing Williams’s unconventional morality, for example, T.S. Eliot wrote:

He sees the struggle between Good and Evil as carried on, more or less blindly, by men and women who are often only the instruments of higher or lower powers, but who always have the freedom to choose to which powers they will submit themselves. (xvi)

Eliot also pointed out that Williams’s belief in the influence of the supernatural on everyday human behavior was also a result of Williams’s unique perspective:

To him the supernatural was perfectly natural, and the natural was also supernatural. And this peculiarity gave him that profound insight into Good and Evil, into the heights of Heaven and the depths of Hell. (xiv)

Living with a vision that made little distinction between the worlds of the natural and supernatural also made the works of Williams unique and his message in them hard to define: “What it is, essentially, that he had to say, comes near to defying definition. It was not simply a philosophy, a theology, or a set of ideas: it was primarily something imaginative” (Eliot xiii).

Although rendering an exact definition of the nature of Charles Williams’s works would be nearly impossible, there are certainly two clearly presented “master-themes” which govern all his works (Hefling 1). Williams, also a great phrase-maker, summarizes these themes with the words: “co-inherence” and “the Affirmation of Images” and “the Rejection of Images.” Early Church Fathers first used the word “co-inherence” to describe the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ, and later to describe the mutual indwelling of the three Persons of the Trinity; however, for Williams’s purposes, “co-inherence” embodies the interdependency of every aspect of human experience and the “play of interaction

among separate identities" (Cavaliero viii). Although obviously not everyone acknowledges the reality of "co-inherence," it nonetheless exists and does indeed effect everyone to a certain extent. Those who not only believe in the existence of "co-inherence," but actively accept it, obey the Pauline precept "bear ye one another's burdens" and enter into the highest level of "co-inherence": the level of "exchange" or "substitution." The greatest divine example is, of course, Christ the Savior, who, because His nature is love and mercy, accepted the "clothing" of humanity, lived a life without sin, and accepted the punishment of sin in order to reunite God and His fallen children sacrificially. The greatest human example is the Virgin Mary, who, in complete humility, responded to the angel Gabriel: "I am the Lord's servant" when she was told of her calling to conceive and bear the Son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The second theme pervading the works of Williams is the "absolute relativity of all human apprehensions of truth" or "the Affirmation of Images" and "the Rejection of Images"; and its paradoxical maxim is another phrase of Williams: "This also is Thou; neither is this Thou." Dependent upon each other, the Ways of Affirmation and Rejection of Images are simply ways of apprehending transcendence by either affirming an image as a revelation of God ("This also is Thou") or, because an image conceals even as it discloses, rejecting an image as a revelation of God ("Neither is this Thou") (Hefling 15). The Affirmative Way is the formula of the Romanic Way: an experience in which the "pattern of the glory" of a loved one reflects the pattern of the Incarnation of Love. When one has fallen "in love," the beloved becomes an image that may be affirmed as an image of God. For Dante, Beatrice "was, in her degree, an image of nobility, of virtue, of the Redeemed Life, in some sense of Almighty God himself"; and for Charles, Michal was this image (*Beatrice* 8). Belonging to the Way of Rejection or the Ascetic Way, are the practices of "asceticism and self-denial, wordless, imageless prayer, and the mystical assent to a 'cloud of unknowing'" (Hefling 15).

Although the man and his ideas are certainly present in all of Williams's works, "his own verse, however, is what he would have wished to be remembered for, and 'CHARLES WILLIAMS: POET' is inscribed on his tombstone" (Hefling 2). Williams expresses his profound love for poetry when he writes:



No pains are too great for poetry; it is sad that the pains do not always produce the poetry. One can but do what one can, and let the result be, carefully dissociating one's mind from any sense of personal importance in that to which one must give all one's personal energy. The more that dissociation can be managed, the greater the pleasure in the whole arduous business. (Ridler 183)

Williams lived for his poetry, and he often felt the pain of rejection when others did not value his verse, or "that to which one must give all one's personal energy," as highly as he did. In the case of a poet with lesser talent, this pain would be considered a symptom of vanity; however, in Williams's case, his rejection then and now was and is truly tragic and painful, for there is true greatness in his verse. Comparing Williams's talents to those of Dante, no less a poet than W.H. Auden told him, "You are the only writer since Dante who has found out how to make poetry out of theology and history" (Cavaliero 171).

Williams's mature poetry, his two cycles of Arthurian verse, encompass the finest expression of the man and his thought. In her introduction to Williams's essays, Anne Ridler writes: "...his most important work, the one by which he would have wished to be remembered, was...the cycle of *Taliessin* poems" (xxx). Also speaking of the autobiographical nature of Williams's Arthurian poetry, Critic Alice Mary Hadfield writes: "*Taliessin* is Charles's poetic vision of his life and work. *Summer Stars* is his experience consciously searched and found again in poetry" (73). In his commentary on Williams's Arthurian poems, C.S. Lewis even goes so far as to identify Taliessin as William's autobiographical "mark" and to declare that both Logres and romantic poetry have benefited from their poetic evolutions:

We become aware of one aspect in which Taliessin is the symbol of his creator. He comes out of Wales and legend and old Druidic poetry into the geometric world of Byzantium and only by so doing becomes useful to Logres. Something of the same sort has happened to romantic poetry itself in the person of Williams; for he starts from the very depth of the romantic tradition and, without ceasing to be romantic, advances to the acceptance of all that is at first sight furthest from romanticism. In him the poetic tradition which had begun in Pantheism, antinomianism, and revolt, ends in Nicene

theology, moral severity, and the celebration of restraint. His ideal poetry is that which can 'grow mature with pure fact'. (Lewis 106-107)

Just as Taliessin develops into a poet with a "vision of the empire," Williams develops into romantic poetry, and, in many ways, he even redeems it through his use.

Not only do Williams's volumes of Arthurian verse represent the man, they also embody Williams's complete thought on the Arthurian myth in general. Williams engaged the tradition with many other works: *The Masque of Perusal* (1929); *The Advent of Galahad* (never published); *Three Plays* (1931); *Heroes and Kings* (1930); *War in Heaven* (1930); and *The Figure of Arthur* (1948); and in several other pieces, both poetry and prose, during his sadly truncated career (McClatchey 54). Although he also planned at least a third volume, which was to concentrate on the Dolorous Blow, both *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars* remain self-sufficient, while containing the culmination of his thought on the tradition as a whole (Cavaliero 99).

Although Williams's Arthurian cycles embody his essential treatment of the tradition, the source for Williams's view of the Arthurian myth are "the hints of profound meaning" scattered through Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, specifically relating to the Grail. Williams felt that the main theme of the tale of Arthur in English literature was "the coming of two myths, the myth of Arthur and the myth of the Grail; of their union; and of the development of that union not only in narrative complexity but in intellectual significance" (Lewis 93). However, Williams also felt that this theme was never adequately fulfilled by Malory and subsequently misconstrued by later poets, especially Tennyson. Commenting on the beginning of his first volume, Williams writes:

It is true that *Taliessin*, did in a sense, begin with certain things in Malory. It began also, perhaps even earlier, in a vague disappointment with the way in which Tennyson treated the hallows of the Grail in Balin and Balan. I am not attacking Tennyson as a poet; I am only saying that in this particular respect his treatment of the Sacred Lance as a jumping-pole left a good deal to be desired and even to be done. I may perhaps be allowed to say that my readers must be asked to treat such sentences with goodwill. I am not claiming to be better than Tennyson. It was clear that the great and awful

myth of the Grail had not been treated adequately in English verse. (Ridler 179-180)

Williams's frustration with the--to him-- degrading treatment of the Holy Grail by the later Victorian poets is what inspired and motivated him. He later acknowledges that "there is, however, no need to explain this by dragging in religion; it is much more easily and truly explained by saying that none of these poets had the full capacity of mythical imagination" (Ridler 187). Williams. In fact, in his *The Figure of Arthur*, Williams sees the matter in these terms:

It is in fact here that the centre of the myth must be determined. The problem is simple--is the king to be there for the sake of the Grail or not? It was so the Middle Ages left it; but since then it has been taken the other way. The Grail has been an episode. This may be so, but it can no longer be accidentally so. Tennyson, in that sense, was right; he meant to make the Grail an episode, and he did. He said it was only for certain people, and he modified the legend accordingly. If it is to be more, it must take the central place. Logres then must be meant for the Grail....This indeed must be the pure glory of Arthur and Logres....It is the central matter of the Matter of Britain. (Lewis 83)

This refashioning of the myth around the Sangrail is precisely the purpose for Williams's Arthurian cycles: "It is the *weight* of the myth which we have to recover; no myth has been more dreadfully thinned by familiarity" (Cavaliero 97).

But why the Grail? Recall the way Williams describes the main theme of the tale of Arthur: "...the coming of two myths, the myth of Arthur and the myth of the Grail; of their union; and of the development of that union not only in narrative complexity but in intellectual significance." In his preface to the second volume, Williams explains the nature of this union:

But in general the argument of the series is the expectation of the return of Our Lord by means of the Grail and of the establishment of the kingdom of Logres (or Britain) to this end by the powers of the Empire and Broceliande.

The union of the Grail myth and the Arthur myth is, in its fullest significance, the union of "Christianity and civilization, of spirit and flesh, of form and matter" (Moorman 83). The union is the Parousia, the second coming and the establishment of the body of Christ on earth in the kingdom of Logres. Although the sinful kingdom of Logres still ultimately fails to achieve this unity and order, and humbly remains on earth as Britain, these very opportunities and consequences could not exist and this myth would have no true significance without the myth centering on the Sangrail.

"One thing you must remember about Charles Williams, he was a prophet--nobody taught him what he knew, he got it from no teachers, it came straight up through him, from only God knows where" (Hadfield 62). Given the scope of his insight into the Arthurian tradition, one certainly begins to wonder from where his inspiration came. Even C.S. Lewis concludes his commentary on Williams's Arthurian poetry remarking on Williams's uniquely profound penetration of the myth of Arthur:

It is in one way a wholly modern work, but it has grown spontaneously out of Malory and if the king and the Grail and the begetting of Galahad still serve, and serve perfectly, to carry the twentieth-century poet's meaning, that is because he has penetrated more deeply than the old writers themselves into what they also, half consciously, meant and found its significance unchangeable as long as there remain on earth any attempt to unite Christianity and civilization. (Lewis 199-200)

"The king and the Grail and the begetting of Galahad" will always serve Williams's meaning because he has discerned a fundamental truth in the myth, the truth of the significance of the Sangrail. In light of this, the best introduction to Charles Williams's *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars* is given by the author of *Le Morte D'Arthur* himself:

And here followeth the noble tale of the Sangrail. that called is the holy vessel; and the signification of the blessed blood of Our Lord Jesu Christ, blessed mote it be, the which was brought into this land by Joseph of Arimathea. Therefore on all sinful souls blessed Lord have thou mercy. (Malory xii 14)

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

After carefully reviewing the manuscripts of Charles Williams found at the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, I determined that no manuscripts for the poems existed. In view of this fact, I decided to use the first edition of each book of poems as the copy text because it represents the best source of the works.

I still encountered minor textual problems with the first editions. They were mainly problems dealing with the spacing of the text (i.e., one space before semicolons, spaces inside quotation marks, one space after end punctuations, etc.) and the inconsistent spacing of the page numbers. These problems were probably attributed to the letter press type used in setting of the book.

To provide an edition that is easy for the reader to use, I not only regularized the spacing according to normal usage, I also put all the page numbers in the same location and added line numbers for every five lines of each poem (counting small indented lines as part of the previous line and large indented lines as part of the following line). I also added the wood engravings of Norman Janes from Charles Williams's limited edition of *Heroes and Kings*.

Finally, I included in the notes for each poem (if applicable) references to any previous versions which exist. Although these versions remained (until recently) unpublished, they reflect the earlier thought of Williams and help demonstrate Williams's personal development of the Arthurian tradition. These previous versions are found in Williams's formerly unpublished *Advent of Galahad* cycle and intermediate poems.

### Survey of previous editions:

*Taliessin through Logres*, by Charles Williams; first published in 1938, by Oxford University Press, London, New York, and Toronto; second impression 1948; third impression 1954.

*The Region of the Summer Stars*, by Charles Williams; first published by Editions Poetry London, 1944; reset by Oxford University Press, 1950; reprinted 1952 and 1960.

*Taliessin Through Logres/ The Region of the Summer Stars*, by Charles Williams and *Arthurian Torso*, by Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis; first published by Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974, by special arrangement with Oxford University Press; facsimiles of first editions.

*Arthurian Poets: Charles Williams*, edited and introduced by David Llewellyn Dodds; first published by The Boydell Press, 1991; reset reproductions of the first editions of *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very grateful to the author of the following two volumes of poetry, *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, the late Mr. Charles Williams. Without his brilliant work on the Arthurian myth, this edition could never have been possible.

I also gratefully acknowledge Oxford University Press and Editions Poetry London for their publications of the 1938 first edition of *Taliessin through Logres* and the 1944 first edition of *The Region of the Summer Stars*. These publications served as the copy texts for my edited versions of Williams's poems.

TALIESSIN THROUGH LOGRES



FOR  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
UNDER WHOM WE OBSERVED  
AN APPEARANCE OF  
BYZANTIUM.

Unde est, quod non operatio propria propter  
essentiam, sed haec propter illam habet ut  
sic.

*De Monarchia, I, iii.*

*The Arthurian Poems of Charles Williams:  
A Critical Annotated Edition*

Charles Williams: 1886-1945



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## *Prelude*

### I

Recalcitrant tribes heard;  
orthodox wisdom sprang in Caucasia and Thule;  
the glory of the Emperor stretched to the ends of the world.

In the season of midmost Sophia  
the word of the Emperor established a kingdom in Britain; 5  
they sang in Sophia the immaculate conception of wisdom.

Carbonek, Camelot, Caucasia,  
were gates and containers, intermediations of light;  
geography breathing geometry, the double-fledged Logos.

### II

The blind rulers of Logres 10  
nourished the land on a fallacy of rational virtue;  
the seals of the saints were broken; the chairs of the Table  
reeled.

Galahad quickened in the Mercy;  
but history began; the Moslem stormed Byzantium;  
lost was the glory, lost the power and kingdom. 15

Call on the hills to hide us  
lest, men said in the city, the lord of charity  
ride in the starlight, sole flash of the Emperor's glory.

### III

Evil and good were twins  
once in the alleys of Ispahan; the Moslem  
crying *Alla il Alla* destroyed the dualism of Persia. 20

Caucasia fell to the Moslem;  
the mamelukes seized the ancient cornland of Empire.  
Union is breached; the imams stand in Sophia.

*Good is God*, the muezzin  
calls, but lost is the light on the hills of Caucasia,  
glory of the Emperor, glory of substantial being. 25

*Taliessin's Return to Logres*

The seas were left behind;  
in a harbour of Logres  
lightly I came to land  
under a roaring wind.  
Strained were the golden sails, 5  
the masts of the galley creaked  
as it rode for the Golden Horn  
and I for the hills of Wales.

In a train of golden cars  
the Emperor went above, 10  
for over me in my riding  
shot seven golden stars,  
as if while the great oaks stood,  
straining, creaking, around,  
seven times the golden sickle 15  
flashed in the Druid wood.

Covered on my back,  
untouched, my harp had hung;  
its notes sprang to sound  
as I took the blindfold track, 20  
the road that runs from tales,  
through the darkness where Circe's son  
sings to the truants of towns  
in a forest of nightingales.

The beast ran in the wood 25  
that had lost the man's mind;  
on a path harder than death  
spectral shapes stood  
propped against trees;  
they gazed as I rode by; 30  
fast after me poured  
the light of flooding seas.

But I was Druid-sprung;  
I cast my heart in the way;  
all the Mercy I called 35  
to give courage to my tongue.  
As I came by Broceliande  
a diagram played in the night,  
where either the golden sickle  
flashed, or a signalling hand. 40

Away on the southern seas  
was the creaking of the mast;  
beyond the Roman road  
was the creaking of the trees.  
Beyond the farms and the fallows 45  
the sickle of a golden arm  
that gathered fate in the forest  
in a stretched palm caught the hallows.

At the falling of the first  
chaos behind me checked; 50  
at the falling of the second  
the wood showed the worst;



at the falling of the third  
I had come to the king's camp;  
the harp on my back 55  
syllabled the signal word.

I saw a Druid light  
burn through the Druid hills,  
as the hooves of King Arthur's horse  
rounded me in the night. 60  
I heard the running of flame  
faster than fast through Logres  
into the camp by the hazels  
I Taliessin came.

## *The Vision of the Empire*

α

The organic body sang together;  
dialects of the world sprang in Byzantium;  
back they rang to sing in Byzantium;  
the streets repeat the sound of the Throne.

The Acts issue from the Throne. 5  
Under it, translating the Greek minuscula  
to minds of the tribes, the identities of creation  
phenomenally abating to kinds and kindreds,  
the household inscribes the Acts of the Emperor;  
the logothetes run down the porphyry stair 10  
bearing the missives through the area of empire.

Taliessin walked through the hither angels,  
from the exposition of grace to the place of images.  
The morn brightened on the Golden Horn;  
he heard behind him the chariots' clatter 15  
that bore a new matter to all the dialects;  
he saw the nuntii loosened on the currents  
over the sea, in the mechanism of motion,  
rowers' arms jointed to the imperial oars.  
Chariots and galleys sprang from the shores; 20  
the messengers were borne over sea and land.  
The king's poet gazed in the mirror of the Horn.

β

The morn rose on the Golden Horn.  
I saw the identities imaged in a sapphire sea:  
beyond Sinai Ararat, beyond Ararat Elburz-- 25  
light-sprinkling, flaked-snow-sparkling,  
chastities of ranged peaks of Caucasus,  
snow's glow on the world's brows  
changed with deep vales of verdure.  
The missives of identity came from the scribes 30  
where the tribes gather and keep holiday  
on the name-day and birthday of their father the Emperor.  
The Empire's sun shone on each round mound,  
double fortalices defending dales of fertility.  
The bright blades shone in the craft of the dancing war; 35  
the stripped maids laughed for joy of the province,  
bearing in themselves the shape of the province  
founded in the base of space,  
in the rounded bottom of the Emperor's glory.  
Spines were strengthened, loves settled; 40  
tossed through aerial gulfs of empire  
the lost name, the fool's shame,  
fame and frame of lovers in lowlands of Caucasia,  
rang round snowy Elburz.  
The organic body sang together. 45

γ

Elburz rose in the Golden Horn.  
South from the sea-bone, Thule, the skull-stone,  
herbage of lone rock,  
the scheme of Logres, the theme of the design of the Empire,

rose in balance and weight, freight of government with                   50  
     glory.  
 Merlin, time's metre, climbs through prisms and lines;  
 over near Camelot and far Carbonek,  
 over the Perilous Sell, the See of union,  
 the phosphor of Percivale's philosophical star shines.  
 Lancelot's lion, bewildered by the smell of adoration,                   55  
 roars round Guinevere's lordly body.  
 Merlin defines, in blazons of the brain,  
 shield upon shield, station upon station;  
 and the roads resound with the galloping lords.  
 The swords flash; the pirates fly;   60  
 the Table stands rigid in the king's hall,  
 and over their seats the plotted arms of the soul,  
 which are their feats and the whole history of Logres.  
 Down the imperial highroad the white nuntius rides  
 to heighten the hearts of Lateran, Gaul, and Logres.                   65

δ

The milk rises in the breasts of Gaul,  
 trigonometrical milk of doctrine.  
 Man sucks it; his joints harden,  
 sucking logic, learning, law,  
 drawing on the breasts of *intelligo* and *credo*.                         70  
 I, Taliessin, born of the Druids by the sea,  
 drank also in the schools of Gaul;  
 I have drunk at the tables of all the doctors;  
 I have modulated song to the waters of Logres,  
 the running of Thames, the tidal basins.                                 75  
 I heard the iron chariots on the roads of Gaul,

but the fleets took me, distances of the sea;  
the dialect of Logres was an aspect of Byzantium;  
the grand art was taught in the heart of the harbours of Arthur.

ε

The mist rolled down the edge of an old sun; 80  
mammoth and bear prowled on the broad ledge of the  
shoulders.

Strength articulated itself in morals  
of arms, joints, wrists, hands;  
the planes of palms, the mid-points of hid cones,  
opened in Lombardy, the cone's point in Rome, 85  
seminal of knowledge, pontifex of the Arval college  
of spiralling instincts, all roads (active and passive) from Rome,  
to be bridge-builders in Gaul, clerks of audience in Byzantium.

Finger-nails, weaklings of seedtime, scratched the soil  
till by iron nails the toil was finished in the time of our need, 90  
the sublime circle of the cone's bottom, the seed-springing  
surrender:

hands of incantation changed to hands of adoration,  
the quintuple psalm, the pointing of Lateran:  
active and passive in a single mystery,  
a single sudden flash of identity, 95  
the heart-breaking manual acts of the Pope.

ζ

Why moves the Pope in the marches of the Empire?  
why do the golden palaces pale to the Papal  
vesture, flesh and bone of reparation?  
what was the crossing of the will of the Emperor? 100

η

The Adam in the hollow of Jerusalem respired:  
softly their thought twined to its end,  
crying: *O parent, O forkèd friend,*  
*am I not too long meanly retired*  
*in the poor space of joy's single dimension?* 105  
*Does not God vision the principles at war?*  
*Let us grow to the height of God and the Emperor:*  
*Let us gaze, son of man, on the Acts in contention.*

The Adam climbed the tree; the boughs  
rustled, withered, behind them; they saw 110  
the secluded vision of battle in the law;  
they found the terror in the Emperor's house.

The tree about them died undying,  
the good lusted against the good,  
the Acts in conflict envenomed the blood, 115  
on the twisted tree hung their body wrying.

Joints cramped; a double entity  
spewed and struggled, good against good;  
they saw the mind of the Emperor as they could,  
his imagination of the wars of identity. 120

He walked slowly through his habitation  
in the night of himself without him; Byzantium slept;  
a white pulsing shape behind him crept,  
the ejection to the creature of the creature's rejection of  
salvation.

Conception without control had the Adam of the error; 125  
stifled over their head, the tree's bright beam  
lost in the sides of the pit its aerial stream;  
they had their will; they saw; they were torn in the terror.

θ

Elburz sinks through the Golden Horn:  
the feet of creation walk backward through the waters. 130

The single galley hardly moves,  
the stiffening mechanic of arms and oars fails;  
patched with undyed canvas the purple sails  
drag at the flagging hands of man;  
the sea's unaccumulated distance drags at the sailor's hearts. 135

The sea-borne Asian mine,  
stuff of Caucasia fashioned in Byzantium,  
earth's gold sprinkled over the sea  
and plated round the poop of the visionary spirit,  
shines no longer nor lustily gleams. 140

On the brazen deck blasts of hot ashes  
fall from unseen volcanoes; harsh birds,  
stabbing at sea-broods, grating their mating calls,  
cover it; down their flight gusts drove once the galley.

Phosphorescent on the stagnant level 145  
a headless figure walks in a crimson cope,  
volcanic dust blown under the moon.

A brainless form, as of the Emperor,  
walks, indecent hands hidden under the cope,  
dishallowing in that crimson the flush on the mounds of  
Caucasia. 150

His guard heaves round him; heaven-sweeping tentacles  
stretch, dragging octopus bodies over the level;  
his cope by two is lifted from his body,  
where it walks on the sinking floor of antipodean Byzantium.  
Let us gaze, son of man, on the Acts in contention. 155

Phosphorescent gleams the point of the penis:  
rudiments or relics, disappearing, appearing,  
live in the forlorn focus of the intellect,  
eyes and ears, the turmoil of the mind of sensation.

Inarticulate always on an inarticulate sea 160  
beyond P'o-l'u the headless Emperor moves,  
the octopuses round him; lost are the Roman hands;  
lost are the substantial instruments of being.

↓

The organic body sang together;  
the Acts of identity adored their Lord; 165  
the song sprang and rang in Byzantium.

O you shoulders, elbows, wrists,  
bless him, praise him, magnify him for ever;  
you fittings of thumbs and fingers,  
bless ye the Lord; 170



sockets and balls in knees and ankles,  
bless ye the Lord;  
hips, thighs, spine in its multiples,  
bless him, praise him, magnify him for ever;  
bless him in Caucasia, bless him in Lateran, 175  
bless him in the blazons of London-in-Logres,  
if there be worlds of language beyond Logres,  
bless him, praise him, magnify him for ever;  
if there be wit in the rolling mass of waters,  
if any regimen in marshes beyond P'o-l'u, 180  
if any measurement among the headless places,  
bless him, praise him, magnify him for ever.

### *The Calling of Arthur*

Arthur was young; Merlin met him on the road.  
Wolfish, the wizard stared, coming from the wild,  
black with hair, bleak with hunger, defiled  
from a bed in the dung of cattle, inhuman his eyes.

Bold stood Arthur; the snow beat; Merlin spoke: 5  
Now am I Camelot; now am I to be builded.  
King Cradlemaas sits by Thames; a mask o'ergilded  
covers his wrinkled face, all but one eye.

Cold and small he settles his rump in the cushions.  
Through the emerald of Nero one short-sighted eye 10  
peers at the pedlars of wealth that stand plausibly by.  
The bleak mask is gilded with a maiden's motionless smile.

The high aged voice squeals with callous comfort.  
He sits on the bank of Thames, a sea-snail's shell  
fragile, fragilely carved, cast out by the swell 15  
on to the mud; his spirit withers and dies.

He withers; he peers at the tide; he squeals.  
He warms himself by the fire and eats his food  
through a maiden's motionless mouth; in his mood  
he polishes his emerald, misty with tears for the poor. 20

The waste of snow covers the waste of thorn;  
on the waste of hovels snow falls from a dreary sky;  
mallet and scythe are silent; the children die.  
King Cradlemaas fears that the winter is hard for the poor.

Draw now the tide, spring moon, swing now the depth; 25  
under the snow that falls over brick and prickle,  
the people ebb; draw up the hammer and sickle.  
The banner of Bors is abroad; where is the king?

Bors is up; his wife Elayne behind him  
mends the farms, gets food from Gaul; the south 30  
is up with hammer and sickle, and holds Thames mouth.  
Lancelot hastens, coming with wagons and ships.

The sea-snail lies by Thames; O wave of Pendragon,  
roll it, swallow it; pull the mask o'ergilded  
from the one-eyed face that blinks at the comfort builded 35  
in London's ruins; I am Camelot; Arthur, raise me.

Arthur ran; the people marched; in the snow  
King Cradlema died in his litter; a screaming few  
fled; Merlin came; Camelot grew.  
In Logres the king's friend landed, Lancelot of Gaul. 40

### *Mount Badon*

The king's poet was his captain of horse in the wars.  
He rode over the ridge; his force  
sat hidden behind, as the king's mind had bidden.  
The plain below held the Dragon in the centre,  
Lancelot on the left, on the right Gawaine, 5  
Bors in the rear commanding the small reserve:  
the sea's indiscriminate host roared at the City's wall.  
As with his household few Taliessin rode over the ridge,  
the trumpets blew, the lines engaged.

Staring, motionless, he sat; 10  
who of the pirates saw? none stopped;  
they cropped and lopped Logres; they struck deep,  
and their luck held; only support lacked:  
neither for charge nor for ruse could the allied crews  
abide the civilized single command; 15  
each captain led his own band and each captain unbacked;  
but numbers crashed; Taliessin saw Gawaine  
fail, recover, and fail again;  
he saw the Dragon sway; far away  
the household of Lancelot was wholly lost in the fray; 20  
he saw Bors fling  
company after company to the aid of the king,  
till the last waited the word alone.

Staring, motionless, he sat.  
Dimly behind him he heard how his staff stirred. 25

One said: "He dreams or makes verse"; one: "Fool,  
all lies in a passion of patience--my lord's rule."  
In a passion of patience he waited the expected second.  
Suddenly the noise abated, the fight vanished, the last  
few belated shouts died in a new quiet. 30  
In the silence of a distance, clear to the king's poet's sight,  
Virgil was standing on a trellised path by the sea.  
Taliessin saw him negligently leaning; he felt  
the deep breath dragging the depth of all dimension,  
as the Roman sought for the word, sought for his thought, 35  
sought for the invention of the City by the phrase.  
He saw Virgil's unseeing eyes; his own,  
in that passion of all activity but one suspended,  
leaned on those screened ports of blind courage.  
Barbaric centuries away, the ghostly battle contended. 40

Civilized centuries away, the Roman moved.  
Taliessin saw the flash of his style  
dash at the wax; he saw the hexameter spring  
and the king's sword swing; he saw, in the long field,  
the point where the pirate chaos might suddenly yield, 45  
the place for the law of grace to strike.  
He stood in his stirrups; he stretched his hand;  
he fetched the pen of his spear from its bearer;  
his staff behind signed to their men.

The Æneid's beaked lines swooped on Actium; 50  
the stooped horse charged; backward blown,  
the flame of song streaked the spread spears  
and the strung faces of words on a strong tongue.  
The household of Taliessin swung on the battle;

hierarchs of freedom, golden candles of the solstice 55  
that flared round the golden-girdled Logos, snowy-haired,  
brazen-footed, starry-handed, the thigh banded with the  
Name.

The trumpets of the City blared through the feet of brass;  
the candles flared among the pirates; their mass broke;  
Bors flung his company forward; the horse and the reserve 60  
caught the sea's host in a double curve;  
the paps of the day were golden-girdled;  
hair, bleached white by the mere stress of the glory,  
drew the battle through the air up threads of light.  
The tor of Badon heard the analytical word; 65  
the grand art mastered the thudding hammer of Thor,  
and the heart of our lord Taliessin determined the war.

The lord Taliessin kneeled to the king;  
the candles of new Camelot shone through the fought field.

### *The Crowning of Arthur*

The king stood crowned; around in the gate,  
midnight striking, torches and fires  
massing the colour, casting the metal,  
furnace of jubilee, through time and town,  
Logres heraldically flaunted the king's state. 5

The lords sheathed their swords; they camped  
by Camelot's wall; thick-tossed torches,  
tall candles flared, opened, deployed;  
between them rose the beasts of the banners;  
flaring over all the king's dragon ramped. 10

Wars were at end; the king's friend stood  
at the king's side; Lancelot's lion  
had roared in the pattern the king's mind cherished,  
in charges completing the strategy of Arthur;  
the king's brain working in Lancelot's blood. 15

Presaging intelligence of time climbed,  
Merlin climbed, through the dome of Stephen,  
over chimneys and churches; from the point of Camelot  
he looked through the depth to the dome of Sophia;  
the kingdom and the power and the glory chimed. 20

He turned where the fires, amid burning mail,  
poured, tributaried by torches and candles,  
to a point in a massive of colour, one  
aureole flame; the first shield's deep azure,  
sidereally pointed, the lord Percivale. 25

Driving back that azure a sea rose black;  
on a fess of argent rode a red moon.  
The Queen Morgause leaned from a casement;  
her forehead's moon swallowed the fires,  
it was crimson on the bright-banded sable of Lamorack. 30

The tincture changed; ranged the craft  
of the king's new champion in a crimson field;  
mockery in mockery, a dolphin naiant;  
a silver fish under bloody waters,  
conquered or conquering, Dinadan laughed. 35

A pelican in golden piety struck well  
the triple bloody drops from its wound;  
in strong nurture of instinct, it smote  
for its young its breast; the shield of Bors  
bore its rich fervours, to itself most fell. 40

Shouldering shapes through the skies rise and run,  
through town and time; Merlin beheld  
the beasts of Broceliande, the fish of Nimue,  
hierarchic, republican, the glory of Logres,  
patterns of the Logos in the depth of the sun. 45

Taliessin in the crowd beheld the compelled brutes,  
wildness formalized, images of mathematics,  
star and moon, dolphin and pelican,  
lion and leopard, changing their measure.  
Over the mob's noise rose gushing the sound of the flutes. 50



Gawaine's thistle, Bedivere's rose, drew near:  
flutes infiltrating the light of candles.  
Through the magical sound of the fire-strewn air,  
spirit, burning to sweetness of body,  
exposed in the midst of its bloom the young queen Guinevere. 55

Lancelot moved to descend; the king's friend kneeled.  
the king's organic motion, the king's mind's blood,  
the lion in the blood roaring through the mouth of creation  
as the lions roar that stand in the Byzantine glory.  
Guinevere's chalice flew red on an argent field. 60

So, in Lancelot's hand, she came through the glow,  
into the king's mind, who stood to look on his city:  
the king made for the kingdom, or the kingdom made for the  
king?  
Thwart drove his current against the current of Merlin:  
in beleaguered Sophia they sang of the dolorous blow. 65

Doom in shocks sprinkled the burning gloom,  
molten metals and kindling colours pouring  
into the pyre; at the zenith lion and dragon  
rose, clawed, twisted, screamed;  
Taliessin beheld a god lie in his tomb. 70

At the door of the gloom sparks die and revive;  
the spark of Logres fades, glows, fades.  
It is the first watch; the Pope says Matins in Lateran;  
the hollow call is beaten on the board in Sophia;  
the ledge of souls shudders, whether they die or live. 75

*Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn*

Shouldering shapes of the skies of Broceliande  
are rumours in the flesh of Caucasia; they raid the west,  
clattering with shining hooves, in myth scanned  
centaur, gryphon, but lordlier for verse is the crest  
of the unicorn, the quick panting unicorn; he will come 5  
to a girl's crooked finger or the sharp smell  
of her clear flesh--but to her no good; the strum  
of her blood takes no riot or quiet from the quell;  
she cannot like such a snorting alien love  
galloped from a dusky horizon it has no voice 10  
to explain, nor the silver horn pirouetting above  
her bosom--a ghostly threat but no way to rejoice  
in released satiation; her body without delight  
chill-curdled, and the gruesome horn only to be  
polished, its rifling rubbed between breasts; right 15  
is the tale that a true man runs and sets the maid free,  
and she lies with the gay hunter and his spear flesh-hued,  
and over their couch the spoiled head displayed--  
as Lesbia tied horned Catullus--of the cuckold of the  
wood;  
such, west from Caucasia, is the will of every maid; 20  
yet if any, having the cunning to call the grand beast,  
the animal which is but a shade till it starts to run,  
should dare set palms on the point, twisting from the least  
to feel the sharper impress, for the thrust to stun  
her arteries into channels of tears beyond blood 25  
(O twy-fount, crystal in crimson, of the Word's side),

and she to a background of dark bark, where the wood  
becomes one giant tree, were pinned, and plied  
through hands to heart by the horn's longing: O she  
translucent, planted with virtues, lit by throes, 30  
should be called the Mother of the Unicorn's Voice, men see  
her with awe, her son the new sound that goes  
surrounding the City's reach, the sound of enskied  
shouldering shapes, and there each science disposed,  
horn-sharp, blood-deep, ocean and lightning wide, 35  
in her paramour's song, by intellectual nuptials unclosed.

*Bors to Elayne: The Fish of Broceliande*

The king is building Camelot; he has bidden his host  
depart to their homes, the wards only of the towns  
pricked for weapons; and each lord to his own land.

He has sent me to be his lieutenant on the southern coast,  
over ships in the harbours and sheep flocks on the downs; 5  
to define the kingdom--from unpathed Broceliande

to the eastern forelands. In the great hall's glow  
Taliessin sang of the sea-rooted western wood;  
his song meant all things to all men, and you to me.

A forest of the creatures: was it of you? no? 10  
monstrous beasts in the trees, birds flying the flood,  
and I plucked a fish from a stream that flowed to that sea:

from you? for you? shall I drop the fish in your hand?  
in your hand's pool? a bright-scaled, red-tailed fish 15  
to dart and drive up the channel of your arm?

the channel of your arm, the piercing entry to a land  
where, no matter how lordly at home is set the dish,  
no net can catch it, nor hook nor gaff harm?

but it darts up the muscles of the arm, to swim  
round the clear boulder of the shoulder, stung with spray, 20  
and down the cataract of the backed spine leaps

into bottomed waters at once clear and dim,  
where nets are fingered and flung on many a day;  
yet it slides through the mesh of the mind and sweeps

back to its haunt in a fathomless bottomless pool; 25  
is there a name then, an anagram of spirit and sense,  
that Nimue the mistress of the wood could call it by?

None but a zany, none but earth's worst fool,  
could suppose he knows; no name was thrown thence;  
some say a twy-nature only can utter the cry 30

(what? how?) to bring it from the stirred stream,  
and if—inhumanly flashing a sudden scale,  
aboriginally shaking the aboriginal main.

Double tracks then their dazzled eyes seem  
to follow: one, where the forked dominant tail 35  
flicks, beats, reddens the smooth plane

of the happy flesh; one, where the Catacomb's stone  
holds its diagram over the happy dead  
who flashed in living will through the liquid wish.

Will you open your hand now to catch your own 40  
*nova creatura*? through stream and cataract sped,  
through shallow and depth? *accipe*, take the fish.

Take; I have seen the branches of Broceliande.  
Though Camelot is built, though the king sit on the throne,  
yet the wood in the wild west of the shapes and names

45

probes everywhere through the frontier of head and hand;  
everywhere the light through the great leaves is blown  
on your substantial flesh, and everywhere your glory frames.

*Taliessin in the School of the Poets*

Through Camelot, which is London-in-Logres,  
by Paul's and Arthur's door,  
Taliessin came to the school of the poets;  
through an exposition of song,  
over a glamour of golden-work, 5  
his shadow fell on the floor.

Phœbus there in mid-mosaic  
on a mud-born Python trod;  
his beams about him enmeshed the world,  
London, Rome, and the underseas; 10  
the moving shadow over all  
lapped the edge of the god.

Dusk deepened in the work's width;  
from rituals and prophecies,  
from skins of runes and vellums of verse, 15  
the children of song to the brass of a man,  
searching the dark of Phœbus' style,  
turned attentive eyes.

Their hearts ached, their thoughts toiled,  
with sorrows and young loves; 20  
within verse they were teased by verse;  
Taliessin stood by the chair of the poets;  
in the court beyond the lattice  
cooed the king's doves.

Butterfly fancies hovered 25  
     round the edged Phœbean shape.  
 `Fortune befall,' the king's poet said,  
 `the weighed gold of butterflies' wings,  
 the measure of the swaying hazel's shade,  
     or of light in the neck's nape. 30

`Skeined be the creamed-with-crimson sphere  
     on a guessed and given line,  
 skeined and swirled on the head-to-heel,  
 or the radial arms' point-to-point;  
 reckoned the rondures of the base 35  
     by the straight absolute spine.

`Swung be the measuring hazel wand  
     over thighs and shoulders bare,  
 and grace-pricked to gules the field  
 by the intinctured heart's steel; 40  
 but best they fathom the blossom  
     who fly the porphyry stair.

`At the huge and heavy stair's head  
     all measures, to infinite strength,  
 from sapphire-laced distances drawn, 45  
 fill the jewel-joint-justiced throne;  
 adored be God and the Emperor  
     for the gathering of the nth.

`From the indulged Byzantine floor  
     between right and left newel 50  
 floats the magnanimous path of the stair



to a tangle of compensations,  
every joint a centre,  
and every centre a jewel.

`Each moment there is the midmost 55  
of the whole massive load;  
impulse a grace and wonder a will,  
love desert, and sight direction,  
whence the Acts of Identity issue  
in the Pandects and the Code; 60

`while in the opposite shires of Logres  
the willows of the brook sway  
by the tribal tracks and the Roman roads  
in the haze of the levels and the lengthening lines,  
and the nuts of the uncut hazel fall 65  
down the cut hazel's way.'

Taliessin's voice sharpened  
on Virgil's exact word;  
he uttered Italy seen from a wave;  
he defined the organisms of hell. 70  
Blindfold on their perches  
the king's falcons stirred.

The darkened glamour of the golden-work  
took colour from each line;  
dimly the gazing postulants saw 75  
patterns of multilinear red  
sprinkled and spreading everywhere,  
and spaced to one design.

The king's poet stood by the sovereign chair;  
in a harsh voice he cried 80  
of the stemming and staling of great verse,  
of poetry plunged into the void  
where Virgil clutched at clumps of song  
when that master of poets died.

*Tendebantque manus*--there 85  
in the broad Phœbean ground  
they saw the macrocosm drawn;  
they heard the universal sigh  
in the balance of changing levels  
and complemented sound. 90

Infinite patterns opened  
in the sovereign chair's mass;  
but the crowned form of anatomized man,  
bones, nerves, sinews,  
the diagram of the style of the Logos, 95  
rose in the crimson brass.

Breathless explorers of the image,  
innocent, lucent-eyed,  
the young poets studied precision;  
Taliessin remembered the soul: 100  
*Sis salvator, Domine,*  
the king's poet sighed.

*Taliessin on the Death of Virgil*

Virgil fell from the edge of the world,  
hurled by the thrust of Augustus' back; the shape  
he loved grew huge and black, loomed and pushed.  
The air rushed up; he fell  
into despair, into air's other. 5  
The hexameter's fullness now could find no ground;  
his mind, dizzily replete with the meaningless sweet sound,  
could found no Rome there on the joys of a noise.  
He fell through his moment's infinity  
(no man escapes), all the shapes of his labour, 10  
his infinite images, dropping pell-mell; above,  
loomed the gruesome great buttocks of Augustus his love,  
his neighbour, infinitely large, infinitely small.  
In the midst of his fall others came, none to save.  
While he was dropping they put him in a grave. 15  
Perpetual falling, perpetual burying,  
this was the truth of his Charon's ferrying--  
everlastingly plucked from and sucked from and plucked to  
and sucked to a grave.

Unborn pieties lived.  
Out of the infinity of time to that moment's infinity 20  
they lived, they rushed, they dived below him, they rose  
to close with his fall; all, while man is, that could  
live, and would, by his hexameters, found  
there the ground of their power, and their power's use.  
Others he saved; himself he could not save. 25

In that hour they came; more and faster, they sped  
to their dead master; they sought him to save  
from the spectral grave and the endless falling,  
who had heard, for their own instruction, the sound of his  
calling.

There was intervention, suspension, the net of their loves, 30  
all their throng's songs:

*Virgil, master and friend,*  
*holy poet, priest, president of priests,*  
*prince long since of all our energies' end,*  
*deign to accept adoration, and what salvation 35*  
*may reign here by us, deign of goodwill to endure,*  
*in this net of obedient loves, doves of your cote and wings,*  
*Virgil, friend, lover, and lord.*

Virgil was fathered of his friends.  
He lived in their ends. 40  
He was set on the marble of exchange.

*The Coming of Palomides*

Talaat ibn Kula of Ispahan  
taught me the measurement of man  
that Euclid and Archimedes showed,  
ere I took the Western road  
across the strait of the Spanish seas. 5  
Through the green-pennon-skirted Pyrenees,  
from the sharp curved line of the Prophet's blade  
that cuts the Obedience from the Obeyed,  
I came to the cross-littered land of Gaul.  
Gospels trigonometrical 10  
measured the height of God-in-man  
by the swinging hazels of Lateran  
on the hill where Cœlius Vibenna's lamp  
twinkled amid the sorcerers' camp  
when the Etruscan spells were thrown 15  
over flesh and over bone,  
to prevent the City and the See  
by the twisted malice of Goetry.  
Earth shattered under them, but therethrough  
Cæsar rose and the Gospel grew, 20  
till, lit at the star of God-in-man,  
burned the candles of Lateran.  
But between the magic and the mystery  
Julius Cæsar heard of the sea  
where trembling fishers are called to row 25  
shadowy-cargoed boats, and know  
friction of keels on the soundless coasts.

Julius pierced through the tale of ghosts,  
and opened the harbours of the north.  
I too from Portius Iccus forth 30  
sailing came to the Logrian land:  
there I saw an outstretched hand.

In the summer-house of the Cornish king  
I kneeled to Mark at a banqueting,  
I saw the hand of the queen Iseult; 35  
down her arm a ruddy bolt  
fired the tinder of my brain  
to measure the shape of man again;  
I heard the king say: `Little we know  
of verses here; let the stranger show 40  
a trick of the Persian music-craft.'  
Iseult smiled and Tristram laughed.  
Her arm exposed on the board, between  
Mark and Tristram sat the queen,  
but neither Mark nor Tristram sought 45  
the passion of substantial thought,  
neither Mark nor Tristram heard  
the accent of the antique word.  
Only the uncrossed Saracen  
sang amid the heavy Cornish men; 50  
only, a folly amid fighting lords,  
I caught her arm in a mesh of chords,  
and the speech of Moslem Ispahan  
swung the hazels of Lateran.

Blessed (I sang) the Cornish queen; 55  
for till to-day no eyes have seen  
how curves of golden life define

the straightness of a perfect line,  
till the queen's blessed arm became  
a rigid bar of golden flame 60  
where well might Archimedes prove  
the doctrine of Euclidean love,  
and draw his demonstrations right  
against the unmathematic night  
of ignorance and indolence! 65  
Did, to this new-awakened sense,  
he or some greater Master sweep  
his compass? fiery circles leap  
round finger-point and shoulder; arc  
with arc encountering strikes a spark 70  
wherefrom the dropping chords of fire  
fashion the diagram of desire.  
There flames my heart, there flames my thought,  
either to double points is caught;  
lo, on the arm's base for a sign, 75  
the single equilateral trine!

Blessed for ever be the hour  
when first the intellectual power  
saw triple angles, triple sides,  
and that proceed which naught divides 80  
through their great centre, by the stress  
of the queen's arm's blissful nakedness,  
to unions metaphysical;  
blessed the unity of all  
authorities of blood and brain, 85  
triplly obedient, each to twain,  
obedience in the mind, subdued

to fire of fact and fire of blood;  
obedience in the blood, exact  
to fire of mind and fire of fact; 90  
to mind and blood the fact's intense  
incredible obedience,  
in the true equilateral ease.

And O what long isosceles  
from finger-point and shoulder flies 95  
towards me, and distant strain my eyes  
along the twin roads, there to prove  
the doctrine of Euclidean love;  
let the queen's grace but yield her hand  
to be by such strong measure spanned----- 100

In the summer house of the Cornish king  
suddenly I ceased to sing.  
Down the arm of the queen Iseult  
quivered and darkened an angry bolt;  
and, as it passed, away and through 105  
and above her hand the sign withdrew.  
Fiery, small, and far aloof,  
a tangled star in the cedar roof,  
it hung; division stretched between  
the queen's identity and the queen. 110  
Relation vanished, though beauty stayed;  
too long my dangerous eyes delayed  
at the shape on the board, but voice was mute;  
the queen's arm lay there destitute,  
empty of glory; and while the king 115  
tossed the Saracen lord a ring,



and the queen's pleasure, smiling still,  
turned to Tristram's plausible skill,  
three lines in a golden distance shone,  
three points pricked golden and were gone. 120  
Tristram murmured by Iseult's head.

Coelius Vibenna over the dead  
cast the foul Chthonian spells,  
on ghost and bone and what lingers else;  
Cæsar heard of the ghostly sea 125  
that masks the ports of the unity;  
the Pope in white, like the ghost of man,  
stood in the porch of Lateran;  
and aloof in the roof, beyond the feast,  
I heard the squeak of the questing beast, 130  
where it scratched itself in the blank between  
the queen's substance and the queen.

*Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney*

Hued from the livid everlasting stone  
the queen's hewn eyelids bruised my bone;  
my eyes splintered, as our father Adam's when the first  
exorbitant flying nature round creation's flank burst.

Her hair was whirlwind about her face; 5  
her face outstripped her hair; it rose from a place  
where pre-Adamic sculpture on an ocean rock lay,  
and the sculpture torn from its rock was swept away.

Her hand discharged catastrophe; I was thrown 10  
before it; I saw the source of all stone,  
the rigid tornado, the schism and first strife  
of primeval rock with itself, Morgause Lot's wife.

I had gone in summer at the king's word to explore 15  
the coast of the kingdom towards the Pole; the roar  
of the ocean beyond all coasts threatened on one hand;  
on the other we saw the cliffs of Orkney stand.

Caves and hollows in the crags were filled with the scream 20  
of seamews nesting and fleeting; the extreme theme  
of Logres rose in harsh cries and hungry storms,  
and there, hewn in a cleft, were hideous huge forms.

I remembered how the archbishop in Caerleon at a feast  
preached that before the making of man or beast  
the Emperor knew all carved contingent shapes  
in torrid marsh temples or on cold crookt capes.

These were the shapes only the Emperor knew, 25  
unless Coelius Vibenna and his loathly few,  
squat by their pot, by the twisted hazel art  
sought the image of that image within their heart.

Sideways in the cleft they lay, and the seamews' wings 30  
everywhere flying, or the mist, or the mere slant of the things  
seemed to stir them; then the edge of the storm's shock  
over us obliquely split rock from rock.

Ship and sculpture shuddered; the crags' scream  
mingled with the seamews'; Logres' convulsed theme 35  
wailed in the whirlwind; we fled before the storms,  
and behind us loosed in the air flew giant inhuman forms.

When from the sea I came again to my stall  
King Arthur between two queens sat in a grim hall,  
Guinevere on his right, Morgause on his left;  
I saw in her long eyes the humanized shapes of the cleft. 40

She sat the sister of Arthur, the wife of Lot,  
four sons got by him, and one not.  
I heard as she stirred the seamews scream again  
in the envy of the unborn bastard and the pride of canonical  
Gawaine.

I turned my eyes to the lords; they sat half-dead. 45  
The young wizard Merlin, standing by me, said:  
`Balin had Balan's face, and Morgause her brother's.  
Did you not know the blow that darkened each from other's?

`Balin and Balan fell by mistaken impious hate.  
Arthur tossed loves with a woman and split his fate. 50  
Did you not see, by the dolorous blow's might,  
the contingent knowledge of the Emperor floating into sight?

`Over Camelot and Carbonek a whirling creature hovered  
as over the Adam in Eden when they found themselves  
uncovered,  
when they would know good as evil; thereon it was showed, 55  
but then they must know God also after that mode.'

The eyes of the queen Morgause were a dark cavern;  
there a crowned man without eyes came to a carved tavern,  
a wine-wide cell, an open grave, that stood  
between Caerleon and Carbonek, in the skirts of the blind 60  
wood.

Through the rectangular door the crowned shape went its  
way;  
it lifted light feet: an eyeless woman lay  
flat on the rock; her arm was stretched to embrace  
his own stretched arm; she had his own face.

The shape of a blind woman under the shape of a blind man: 65  
over them, half-formed, the cipher of the Great Ban,  
this, below them both, the shape of the blatant beast matched;  
his mouth was open in a yelp; his feet scratched.

Beyond them a single figure was cut in the rock;  
it was hewn in a gyration of mow and mock; 70  
it had a weasel's head and claws on hand and feet;  
it twirled under an arch that gave on the city's street.

The child lies unborn in the queen's womb;  
unformed in his brain is the web of all our doom,  
as unformed in the minds of all the great lords 75  
lies the image of the split Table and of surreptitious swords.

I am the queen's servant; while I live  
down my eyes the cliff, the carving, the winged things drive,  
since the rock, in those fleet lids of rock's hue,  
the sculpture, the living sculpture, rose and flew. 80

*Bors to Elayne: on the King's Coins*

I came in; I saw you stand,  
in your hand the bread of love, in your head lightness of law.  
The uprightness of the multitude stood in your figure;  
my fieldsmen ate and your women served, 5  
while you watched them from the high seat.  
When you saw me a southern burst of love  
tossed a new smile from your eyes to your mouth,  
shaping for that wind's while the corn of your face.  
It was said once that your hair was the colour of corn;  
he who said so was capable only to adorn 10  
the margin of parchments drawn in schools of Gaul;  
their doctrine is your hands' main. I am come again  
to live from the founts and fields of your hands;  
colour is art, but my heart counts the doctrine.

On the forms of ancient saints, my heroes, your thumbs, 15  
as on a winch the power of man is wound  
to the last inch; there ground is prepared  
for the eared and seeded harvest of propinquant goodwill,  
drained the reeded marches, cleared the branched jungles  
where the unthumbed shapes of apes swung and hung. 20  
Now when the thumbs are muscled with the power of good-  
will  
corn comes to the mill and the flour to the house,  
bread of love for your women and my men;  
at the turn of the day, and none only to earn;  
in the day of the turn, and none only to pay; 25

for the hall is raised to the power of exchange of all  
by the small spread organisms of your hands; O Fair,  
there are the altars of Christ the City extended.  
I have ridden all night from organization in London,  
ration and rule, and the fault in ration and rule, 30  
law and the flaw in law, to reach to you,  
the sole figure of the organic salvation of our good.

The king has set up his mint by Thames.  
He has struck coins; his dragon's loins 35  
germinate a crowded creaturely brood  
to scuttle and scurry between towns and towns,  
to furnish dishes and flagons with change of food;  
small crowns, small dragons, hurry to the markets  
under the king's smile, or flat in houses squat.  
The long file of their snouts crosses the empire, 40  
and the other themes acknowledge our king's head.  
They carry on their backs little packs of value,  
caravans; but I dreamed the head of a dead king  
was carried on all, that they teemed on house-roofs  
where men stared and studied them as I your thumbs' 45  
epigrams,  
hearing the City say *Feed my lambs*  
to you and the king; the king can tame dragons to carriers,  
but I came through the night, and saw the dragonlets'  
eyes  
leer and peer, and the house-roofs under their weight 50  
creak and break; shadows of great forms  
halloed them on, and followed over falling towns.  
I saw that this was the true end of our making;  
mother of children, redeem the new law.

They laid the coins before the council.  
Kay, the king's steward, wise in economics, said: 55  
`Good; these cover the years and the miles  
and talk one style's dialects to London and Omsk.  
Traffic can hold now and treasure be held,  
streams are bridged and mountains of ridged space  
tunnelled; gold dances deftly across frontiers. 60  
The poor have choice of purchase, the rich of rents,  
and events move now in a smoother control  
than the swords of lords or the orisons of nuns.  
Money is the medium of exchange.'

Taliessin's look darkened; his hand shook 65  
while he touched the dragons; he said `We had a good  
thought.  
Sir, if you made verse you would doubt symbols.  
I am afraid of the little loosed dragons.  
When the means are autonomous, they are deadly; when  
words  
escape from verse they hurry to rape souls; 70  
when sensation slips from intellect, expect the tyrant;  
the brood of carriers levels the good they carry.  
We have taught our images to be free; are we glad?  
are we glad to have brought convenient heresy to Logres?'

The Archbishop answered the lords; 75  
his words went up through a slope of calm air:  
`Might may take symbols and folly make treasure,  
and greed bid God, who hides himself for man's pleasure  
by occasion, hide himself essentially: this abides--  
that the everlasting house the soul discovers 80



is always another's; we must lose our own ends;  
we must always live in the habitation of our lovers,  
my friend's shelter for me, mine for him.  
This is the way of this world in the day of that other's;  
make yourselves friends by means of the riches of iniquity, 85  
for the wealth of the self is the health of the self exchanged.  
What saith Heracleitus?-- and what is the City's breath?--  
*dying each other's life, living each other's death.*  
Money is a medium of exchange.'

I have come now to kiss each magnanimous thumb, 90  
muscles of the brain, functions of the City.  
I was afraid the Council had turned you into gold,  
as was told of Midas who had ass's ears.  
What can be saved without order? and how order?  
Compact is becoming contract; man only earns, and pays, 95  
the house outside the City burns but the house within is  
enslaved.  
What without coinage or with coinage can be saved?  
O lady, your hand held the bread  
and Christ the City spread in the extensor muscles of your  
thumbs.

Say-- can the law live? 100  
can the dead king's head live?  
Pray, mother of children, pray for the coins,  
pray for Camelot, pray for the king, pray.

### *The Star of Percivale*

By the magical western door in the king's hall  
the Lord Percivale harped; he added no voice;  
between string and string, all accumulated distance of sound,  
a star rode by, through the round window, in the sky of  
Camelot.

Taliessin stood in the court; he played 5  
a borrowed harp; his voice defined the music.  
Languid, the soul of a maid, at service in the hall,  
heard, rose, ran fleetly to fall at his feet.

Soft there, quiescent in adoration, it sang: 10  
*Lord, art thou he that cometh? take me for thine.*  
The music rang; the king's poet leaned to cry:  
*See thou do it not; I too am a man.*

The king's poet leaned, catching the outspread hands:  
*More than the voice is the vision, the kingdom than the king:* 15  
the cords of their arms were bands of glory; the harp  
sang her to her feet; sharply, sweetly, she rose.

The soul of a serving-maid stood by the king's gate,  
her face flushed with the mere speed of adoration.  
The Archbishop stayed, coming through the morning to the  
Mass,  
*Hast thou seen so soon, bright lass, the light of Christ's glory?* 20

She answered: *The light of another, if aught, I bear,*  
*as he the song of another; he said: I obey.*  
And Dubric: *Also thy joy I wear; shall we fail*  
*from Percivale's world's orbit, we there once hurled?*

The sun rose, bringing cloud; 25  
the day-star vanished; the king's household in the court  
waited; their voices were loud; they talked of their fights  
the altar centred between lights; the lords entered.

The nuntius of Byzantium there, the Emperor's logothete,  
angelic, white chlamys crimson-girdled, saw in a vision 30  
a new direct earth of sweet joy given  
and its fusion with a new heaven, indirect joy of substitution.

The household kneeled; the Lord Balin the Savage moved  
restless, through-thrust with a causeless vigil of anger;  
the king in the elevation beheld and loved himself crowned; 35  
Lancelot's gaze at the Host found only a ghost of the Queen.

### *The Ascent of the Spear*

Taliessin walked in the palace yard;  
he saw, under a guard, a girl sit in the stocks.  
The stable-slaves, lounging by the gate,  
cried catcalls and mocks, flung roots and skins of fruits.  
She, rigid on the hard bench, disdained 5  
motion, her cheek stained with a bruise, veined  
with fury her forehead. The guard laughed and chaffed;  
when Taliessin stepped near, he leapt to a rigid salute.  
Lightly the king's poet halted, took the spear 10  
from the manned hand, and with easy eyes dismissed.  
Nor wist the crowd, he gone, what to do;  
lifted arms fell askew; jaws gaped;  
claws of fingers uncurled. They gazed,  
amazed at the world of each inflexible head.

The silence loosened to speech; the king's poet said: 15  
'Do I come as a fool? forgive folly; once more  
be kind, be faithful: did we not together adore?  
Say then what trick of temper or fate?' Hard-voiced,  
she said without glancing, 'I sit here for taking a stick 20  
to a sneering bastard slut, a Mongol ape,  
that mouthed me in a wrangle.  
Fortunate, for a brawl in the hall, to escape,  
they dare tell me, the post, the stripping and whipping:  
should I care, if the hazel rods cut flesh from bone?'  
'Ah lady,' the king's poet murmured, 'confess yes, 25  
except in the stress of a sin worse than the rage.

Though the High Steward's needful law punish the flaw,  
 wrong not us with pride of guilt or no guilt.  
 Be witness, Virgil, I too have been rash  
 to curse the praters and graters of verse. 30  
 Engage the flash of thy pardon, Omnipotence, there!  
 But here before this crowd,  
 do we amiss? are we proud?' Burning red,  
 with the laugh half-sob, she said:  
 'We do amiss--if we---': and he: 35  
 'You whose arrogant hands would not cast one skin,  
 beloved, will you be wroth with your own poor kin?  
 Though the Caucasian theme throb with its dull ache  
 make, lady, the Roman motion; undo  
 the fierce grasp from the bench; lay on the spear-shaft; 40  
 climb gently; clasp  
 the massive of light, in whose point serene and severe  
 Venus, Percivale's planet, phosphor and hesper, is here.'  
 She obeyed; she made assent and ascent:  
 she laid below his her hand on the shaft: 45  
 under the Direction she denied pride;  
 her heart flowed to the crowd.

By Taliessin's side a demure chamberlain spoke:  
 'The High Steward to the king's poet: the lord Kay to the  
     lord Taliessin:  
 if who sits here be his friend, 50  
 her fetter is his to keep or end.'  
 'Nor mine,' the king's poet said, 'to prefer. Sir,  
 she is, of force, at hand: ask her,  
 and do, either way, a grace of thanks to my lord.'  
 The messenger glanced. Celestially the word, 55

her colour a deference still,  
 her voice adored and implored: `Lord, what choice?  
     Who:  
 `True; yet if the king's servant and yours could speak,  
 he might hold it for heaven's best skill  
 to treat the world's will but as and at the world's will.' 60  
 `They will say----' she began; and he:  
 `--either way; they will use to call either side  
 pride (to stay) or fear (to go).  
 Do they--do we--know? Love, and do what you choose.'  
 She said: `I will take the Steward's grace: 65  
 do I well?' `Is it I then,' the king's poet said, `whose face  
 Christ beholds now suffused and sufficed with his brilliant  
     blood?  
 whom the feline guile of Omnipotence lures?'  
 The chamberlain with a sly smile offered the keys.  
 Taliessin signed them away. `Release? 70  
 Let come the fellow whose duty unlocks the stocks' bar:  
 is it ours to undo  
 the fetter whereto the world's order consigned  
 its own disordered mind?'

Aching, stiff, she rose, stumbled, fell; 75  
 the king's poet caught her. `So are the guilty taught,  
 sweet friend, who sit in the pass of the Perilous Sell.'  
 She said, `I was wrong from beginning----' `Not to an end.  
 O new Pheilippides, that stumble was Marathon won.  
 Remains but the triumph's race to run.' 80

### *The Sister of Percivale*

The horizon of sensation ran north at the back of Gaul;  
Taliessin lay on the wall; a bright fork  
from the sky of July flicked hall and horizon.

He lay between both in a morn's mist of making;  
idleness cured sloth; his voice 5  
rove and drove words to the troth of ambiguous verse.

In the yard below him a slave's back bent to a well;  
it was scarred from whip or sword; the mark  
flickered white in the light; hard she swung the handle.

The scar lightened over a curved horizon, 10  
a flash, even in daylight, beheld by heightened eyes,  
over the back, a track brightened by boundary peaks.

Jura, Alp, Elburz, Gaul to Caucasia,  
eastward; the hall westward cut the sky;  
beyond it Percivale's duchy, Wales, and all Broceliande. 15

She swung from the hips; the handle hard-creaking  
cut the voice of Lancelot speaking to the nuntius.  
The horizon in her eyes was breaking with distant Byzantium.

Taliessin saw the curved bottom of the world;  
his heart--swollen with wonder--swerved on the smooth 20  
slopes,  
reserved always the ride through the themes and Hesper for  
guide.

A round plane of water rose shining in the sun;  
she steadied the handle, the strain ceased; her arm  
balanced the line of the spine and reached for the gain.

Taliessin, watching, played with a line: `O 25  
Logres centre, can we know what proportion  
bear the radii so to the full circumference everywhere?'

A trumpet's sound from the gate leapt level with the arm,  
round with breath as that with flesh, to a plan 30  
blown as that bone-patterned, bound each to a point.

The sound sprang aloft from the western gate;  
a new fate had ridden from the hidden horizon;  
its luck struck as her shoulders took the weight of the water.

In her other outflung arm the sound doubled; she cast 35  
one look at herself in the drawn flood and passed;  
blent as she went with the blast was the voice of Percivale.

As she at her image Taliessin at the double grace  
gazed in the yard; hemispheres altered place;  
there first and then he saw the rare face of Blanchefleur.

She stood between her brothers, the lords Percivale and 40  
Lamorack;  
horizon had no lack of horizon; the circle closed;  
the face of Blanchefleur was the grace of the Back in the Mount.

Her gown was marked with a curve of gold on each breast;  
from a golden brooch the mid-gold ran down to the hem;  
the red track of the back was shown in a front of glory. 45



Percivale saw his verse-brother lying alone,  
rapt on the just glory of the sacred Throne,  
the lore of the Emperor patterned in the blast and bone.

Percivale called, saying: 'Sir, speak;  
or is the king's poet weak from Caucasian journeys? 50  
does the stress of the Empire tire the study of Greek  
    minuscula?'

Taliessin leapt from the wall to greet the princess,  
saying: 'Bless me, transit of Venus!'  
The stress of the scar ran level with the star of Percivale.

'Scars and lightnings are the edge of the spun wheel; 55  
spun is the reel to the height; the plane revolves;  
the peal breaks from the bone and the way of union speaks.

'Blessed is the eyed axis of both horizons,  
and the wheel that taxes the hips and generates the sphere,  
and illumination that waxes in the full revolution.' 60

Proportion of circle to diameter, and the near asymptote  
Blanchefleur's smile; there in the throat her greeting  
sprang, and sang in one note the infinite decimal.

### *The Son of Lancelot*

The Lupercalia danced on the Palatine  
among women thrusting under the thong; vicars  
of Rhea Silvia, vestal, Æneid, Mars-seeded,  
mother of Rome; they exulted in the wolf-month.  
The Pope's eyes were glazed with terror of the Mass; 5  
his voice shook on Lateran, saying the Confiteor.  
Over Europe and beyond Camelot the wolves ranged.

Rods of divination between Lupercal and Lateran:  
at the height of the thin night air of Quinquagesima,  
in Camelot, in the chamber of union, Merlin dissolved 10  
the window of horny sight on a magical ingress;  
with the hazel of ceremony, fetched to his hand--cut,  
smoothed, balsamed with spells, blessed with incision--  
he struck from the body of air the anatomical  
body of light; he illustrated the high grades. 15  
In the first circle he saw Logres and Europe  
sprinkled by the red glow of brute famine  
in the packed eyes of forest-emerging wolves,  
heaped fires in villages, torches in towns,  
lit for safety; flat, frozen, trapped 20  
under desecrated parallels, clawed perceptions  
denounced to a net of burning plunging eyes,  
earth lay, at the knots the protective fires;  
and he there, in his own point of Camelot,  
of squat snow houses and huddled guards. 25

Along the print of the straight and sacred hazel  
 he sent his seeing into the second sphere:  
 to the images of accumulated distance, tidal figures  
 shaped at the variable climax of temperatures; the king  
 dreaming of a red Grail in an ivory Logres 30  
 set for wonder, and himself Byzantium's rival  
 for men's thuribled and throated worship--magic  
 throws no truck with dreams; the rod thrust by:  
 Taliessin beneath the candles reading from Bors  
 letters how the Moslem hunt in the Narrow Seas 35  
 altogether harried God and the soul out of flesh,  
 and plotting against the stresses of sea and air  
 the building of a fleet, and the burning blazon-royal  
 flying on a white field in the night--the hazel  
 drove, slowly humming, through spirals of speculation, 40  
 and Merlin saw, on the circle's yonder edge,  
 Blanchefleur, Percivale's sister, professed at Almesbury  
 to the nuns of infinite adoration, veiled  
 passions, sororal intellects, earth's lambs,  
 wolves of the heavens, heat's pallor's secret 45  
 within and beyond cold's pallor, fires  
 lit at Almesbury, at Verulam, at Canterbury, at Lateran,  
 and she the porter, she the contact of exchange.

Merlin grew rigid; down the implacable hazel  
 (a scar on a slave, a verse in Virgil, the reach 50  
 of an arm to a sickle, love's means to love)  
 he sent his hearing into the third sphere--  
 once by a northern poet beyond Snowdon  
 seen at the rising of the moon, the *mens sensitiva*,

the feeling intellect, the prime and vital principle, 55  
the pattern in heaven of Nimue, time's mother on earth,  
Broceliande. Convection's tides cease  
there, temperature is steady to all tenderness  
in the last reach of the hazel; fixed is the full.  
He knew distinction in three abstractions of sound, 60  
the women's cry under the thong of Lupercal,  
the Pope's voice singing the Glory on Lateran,  
the howl of a wolf in the coast of Broceliande.  
The notes of Lupercal and Lateran ceased; fast  
Merlin followed his hearing down the wolf's howl 65  
back into sight's tritosphere--thence was Carbonek  
prodigiously besieged by a feral famine; a single  
wolf, grey and gaunt, that had been Lancelot,  
imbruted, watching the dark unwardened arch,  
crouched on the frozen snow beyond Broceliande. 70

Pelles the Wounded King lay in Carbonek,  
bound by the grating pain of the dolorous blow;  
his flesh from dawn-star to noontide day by day  
ran as a woman's under the moon; in midsun  
he called on the reckless heart of God and the Emperor; 75  
he commended to them and commanded himself and his  
land.

Now in the wolf-month nine moons had waned  
since Lancelot, ridden on a merciful errand, came  
that night to the house; there, drugged and blurred  
by the medicated drink of Brisen, Merlin's sister, 80  
he lay with the princess Helayne, supposed Guinevere.  
In the morning he saw; he sprang from the tall window;

he ran into a delirium of lycanthropy; he grew  
backward all summer, laired in the heavy wood.  
In autumn King Pelles' servants brought him news 85  
of a shape glimpsed on the edge of Broceliande,  
a fear in the forest, a foe by the women's well.

Patient, the king constrained patience, and bade  
wait till the destined mother's pregnancy was done.  
All the winter the wolf haunted the environs of Carbonek; 90  
now what was left of the man's contrarious mind  
was twinned and twined with the beast's bent to feed;  
now it crept to swallow the seed  
of love's ambiguity, love's taunt and truth.  
Man, he hated; beast, he hungered; both 95  
stretched his sabres and strained his throat; rumble  
of memories of love in the gaunt belly told  
his instinct only that something edible might come.  
Slavering he crouched by the dark arch of Carbonek,  
head-high howling, lusting for food, living 100  
for flesh, a child's flesh, his son's flesh.

And infinite beyond him the whole Empire contracted  
from (within it) wolves, and (without it) Moslems.  
The themes fell back round separate defensive fires;  
there only warmth dilated; there they circled. 105  
Caucasia was lost, Gaul was ravaged, Jerusalem  
threatened; the crescent cut the Narrow Seas,  
while from Cordovan pulpits the iconoclastic  
heretical licentiates of Manes denounced union,  
and only Lupercal and Lateran preserved Byzantium. 110

Helayne, Lancelot's bed-fellow, felt her labour.  
 Brisen knelt; Merlin watched her hands;  
 the children of Nimue timed and spaced the birth.  
 Contraction and dilation seized the substance of joy,  
 the body of the princess, but in her stayed from terror, 115  
 from surplus of pain, from outrage, from the wolf in  
 flesh,  
 such as racked in a cave the Mother of Lupercal  
 and now everywhere the dilating and contracting Empire.  
 The child slid into space, into Brisen's hands.  
 Polished brown as hazel-nuts his eyes 120  
 opened on his foster-mother; he smiled at space.  
 Merlin from the hazel's divination saw  
 the child lie in his sister's hands; he saw  
 over the Empire the lucid flash of all flesh,  
 shining white on the sullen white of the snow. 125  
 He ran down the hazel; he closed the window; he  
 came  
 past the royal doors of dream, where Arthur, pleased  
 with the Grail cooped for gustation and God for his glory,  
 the æsthetic climax of Logres, softly slept;  
 but the queen's tormented unæsthetic womanhood 130  
 alternately wept and woke, her sobs crushed  
 deep as the winter howls were high, her limbs  
 swathed by tentacles, her breasts sea-weighed.  
 Across the flat sea she saw Lancelot  
 walking, a grotesque back, the opposite of a face 135  
 looking backward like a face; she burst the swollen sea  
 shrieking his name; nor he turned nor looked,  
 but small on the level dwindled to a distant manikin,  
 the tinier the more terrible, the sole change

in her everlastingness, except, as Merlin passed, 140  
once as time passed, the hoary waters  
laughed backward in her mouth and drowned her tongue.

Through London-in-Logres Merlin came to the wall,  
the soldiers saw him; their spears clapped.  
For a blade's flash he smiled and blessed their guard, 145  
and went through the gate, beyond the stars' spikes--  
as beyond palisades to everywhere the plunging fires,  
as from the *mens sensitiva*, the immortal tenderness,  
magically exhibited in the ceremonial arts,  
to the raging eyes, the rearing bodies, the red 150  
carnivorous violation of intellectual love,  
and the frozen earth whereon they ran and starved.  
Far as Lancelot's dwindling back from the dumb  
queen in a nightmare of the flat fleering ocean,  
the soldiers saw him stand, and heard as if near-- 155  
far to sight, near to sound--the small  
whistling breath in the thin air of Quinquagesima  
of the incantation, the manner of the second working.  
Then the tall form on the frozen snow  
dilated to monstrosity, swelling as if power 160  
entered it visibly, from all points of the wide  
sky of the wolf-month: the shape lurched and fell,  
dropping on all fours, lurched and leapt and ran,  
a loping terror, hurtling over the snow,  
a giant white wolf, diminishing with distance, 165  
till only to their aching eyes a white atom  
spiralled wildly on the white earth, and at last  
was lost; there the dark horizontal edge  
of a forest closed their bleak world.

Between the corses on the coast of Broceliande 170  
galloped the great beast, the fierce figure  
of universal consumption, Lupercal and Lateran,  
taunt of truth, love's means to love  
in the wolf-hour, as to each man in each man's hour  
the gratuitous grace of greed, grief, or gain, 175  
the measure pressed and overrunning; now the cries  
were silent on Lupercal, the Pope secret on Lateran.  
Brisen in Helayne's chamber heard the howl  
of Lancelot, and beyond it the longer howl of the air  
that gave itself up in Merlin; she felt him come. 180  
She rose, holding the child; the wolf and the other,  
the wind of the magical wintry beast, broke  
together on her ears; the child's mouth opened;  
his wail was a song and a sound in the third heaven.  
Down the stair of Carbonek she came to the arch 185  
and paused beneath; the wolf's hair rose on his hackles.  
He dragged his body nearer; he was hungry for his son.

The Emperor in Byzantium nodded to the exarchs;  
it was night still when the army began to move,  
embarking, disembarking, before dawn Asia 190  
awoke to hear the songs, the shouts, the wheels  
of the furnished lorries rolling on the roads to the east,  
and the foremost outposts of mountaineers scanning  
the mouths of the caves in snowy Elburz, where hid  
the hungry Christian refugees, their land 195  
wholly abandoned to beast and Manichæan:  
the city on the march to renew the allegiance of  
Caucasia.



A white wolf drove down the wood's path,  
 flying on the tender knowledge of the third heaven  
 out into moonlight and Brisen's grey eyes. 200  
 She called: 'Be blessed, brother'; the child sang:  
 'blessed brother,' and nestled to its first sleep.  
 Merlin broke from the wood and crouched to the leap;  
 the father of Galahad smelt his coming; he turned,  
 swerving from his hunger to the new danger, and 205  
     sprang.  
 The driving shoulder of Merlin struck him in mid-air  
 and full the force of the worlds flung; helpless  
 he was twisted and tossed in vacancy; nine yards off  
 the falling head of Lancelot struck the ground.  
 Senseless he lay; lined in the lupine shape, 210  
 dimly, half-man, half-beast, was Lancelot's form.  
 Brisen ran; with wrappings of crimson wool  
 she bound the child to her crouching brother's back;  
 kissed them both, and dismissed; small and asleep,  
 and warm on a wolf's back, the High Prince rode into 215  
     Logres.

Blanchefleur sat at Almesbury gate; the sleeping  
 sisters preserved a dreamless adoration.  
 Blanchefleur prayed for Percivale and Taliessin,  
 lords in her heart, brothers in the grand art,  
 exchanging tokens; for the king and queen; for Lancelot 220  
 nine months lost to Logres; for the house-slaves  
 along whose sinewy sides the wolf-cubs leapt,  
 played in their hands, laired in their eyes, romped  
 in the wrestle of arms and thighs, cubs of convection,

haggard but held in the leash, foster-children 225  
of the City, foster-fellows of the Merciful Child.  
Suddenly, as far off as Blanchefleur deep  
in exchange with the world, love's means to love,  
she saw on the clear horizon an atom, moving,  
waxing, white in white, speed in snow, 230  
a silver shape in the moonlight changing to crimson,  
a line of launched glory.

The child of Nimue

came, carrying the child of grace in flesh,  
truth and taunt inward and outward; fast  
Merlin ran through Logres in the wolf-month 235  
before spring and the leaf-buds in the hazel-twigs.  
Percivale's sister rose to her feet; her key  
turned, and Almesbury gate opened; she called:  
'Sister,' but the white wolf lay before her; alone  
she loosened the crimson wrappings from the sleeping 240  
Galahad;  
high to her breast she held the child; the wolf  
fled, moving white upon motionless white,  
the marks of his paws dark on the loosening snow,  
and straight as the cross-stamped hazel in the king's house.  
The bright intellects of passion gathered at the gate 245  
to see the veiled blood in the child's tender cheeks;  
glowing as the speed in the face of the young Magian  
when at dawn, laughing, he came to London-in-Logres;  
or the fire built in Carbonek's guest-chamber  
where Lancelot lay tended, housed and a man, 250  
to be by Easter healed and horsed for Logres;

where at Easter the king's whole household  
in the slanting Latin of the launched legions sang

*Gaudium multum annunciamus;  
nunc in saecula servi amamus;  
civitas dulcis aedificatur;  
quia qui amat Amor amatur.*

255

*Palomides Before his Christening*

When I came out of the cave the sky had turned.  
I have climbed since down a dead mountain,  
over fossils of space in the petrification of time,  
by the track at the slant-eyes' edge to the city of astrologers.

Astrologers and astronomers alike would starve here; 5  
the rocks are too hard to give any roots room.  
No earth-shock alters the infinite smooth formation,  
nor anywhere in the monstrous markings are lifting latches.

I determined, after I saw Iseult's arm,  
to be someone, to trap the questing beast 10  
that slid into Logres out of Broceliande  
through the blank between the queen's meaning and the queen.

Having that honour I would consent to be christened,  
I would come then to the Table on my own terms,  
bringing a capture by which Christendom might profit, 15  
which Pelles the wounded master could not recover.

But things went wrong; Tristram knocked me sprawling  
under the tender smile of Iseult; my manhood,  
chivalry, and scimitar-play learned from the Prophet,  
could not gain me the accurate flash of her eyes. 20

Once I overthrew Lancelot by cheating at a tourney,  
whence, enraged, fleeing, I was taken by pirates;  
Lancelot freed me--he rode on to Carbonek;  
Did I smile when I heard that he my saviour was mad?

For bees buzzed down Iseult's arm in my brain; 25  
black gnats, whirring mosquitoes; the cream  
everywhere dissolved into a spinning cloud;  
and I thought if I caught the beast they would cease certainly.

They would vanish; the crowd's mass of open mouths,  
the City opening its mouth, would certainly swallow them. 30  
There would be nothing but to admire the man  
who had done what neither Tristram nor Lancelot did.

In the blank between the queen's meaning and the queen  
first I followed my self away from the city  
up a steep trail. Dinadan rode past me, 35  
calling: 'Friend, the missing is often the catching.'

But I climbed; I bruised my ankles on gaunt shapes,  
knees, wrists, thighs; I climbed up a back;  
my feet jarred on the repetition of shoulders;  
crevasses showed their polished slippery sides. 40

At other times I clambered over house-roofs,  
without doors; on their blank sides  
the king's knights were flat cracks, chinks,  
rubbed patches, their heads grey blobs.

At last, above them all, I came to a cave, 45  
and a heap of twigs some traveller had left;  
I rubbed a fire and sat within; the beast  
lay at the cave's mouth; I was glad of its company.

The fire burned awhile; now I know  
time was petrifying without. I sat and scratched. 50  
Smoke in a greasy thickness rolled round the cave,  
from flames of fierce fancy, flesh-fire-coloured.

Fire of the flesh subsided to ache of the bone;  
the smoke rolled out, faded, died;  
the beast, as the smoke thinned, had disappeared; 55  
starveling, I lay in bone on the cave's floor.

Bone lay loving bone it imagined near it,  
bone of its hardness of longing, bone of its bone,  
skeleton dreaming of skeleton where there was none.  
From the cave the greasy smoke drifted slowly outward. 60

Skeleton dreamed of skeleton it loved to neighbour,  
thigh yearning for thigh, humerus for humerus;  
by infinitesimal jerks on the cave's floor  
it thrust sideways to the shining cates it imagined.

Bones grew brittle; sinews yielded; spirit 65  
hated the air, the moving current that entered,  
movements in the cubical plot of the cave, when smoke  
emptied, and bones broke; it was dull day.

Spirit spread in the cave, hating the air.  
Bat-like, it hung to the roughness of rock; it lay 70  
sucking the hollow cavities, less than a bat,  
in bones where once it had found a nourishing marrow.

At last the bats frightened me; I left  
my pretties; airy currents blew my light  
flimsy ash to the cave's mouth. There 75  
was the track; it went over the mountain to Caerleon.

The sky had turned round; I could not think  
why I should not be christened in the city of astrologers.  
It was true I should look a fool before everyone;  
why not look a fool before everyone? 80

The Chi-Ro is only a scratching like other scratchings;  
but in the turn of the sky the only scratching--  
in a world of rock and one thing other than rock,  
the small, slender, pointed, crimson beast;

the scratching, biting, sliding, slithering thing, 85  
whisking about in unreachable crevasses and cracks,  
in cliffs and boulders; the smooth-backed head-cocked  
snout, and fat rump, and claws on the rock;

the blatant agile beast. The lord Dinadan  
laughed for joy when once I triumphed in the tourney; 90  
he called to the lords: 'This is his day'; to me:  
'Catch as catch can; but absence is a catch of the presence.

'Sir, if ever in a blank between this and that,  
the sky turns on you, and the path slides  
to the edge not the front of the eyes, come and be christened. 95  
I will stand your godfather at the pool in Caerleon.'

Dull, undimensioned, I ride at last to Dinadan;  
he is the only lord without a lady;  
he fights and is not enclosed in fight; he laughs  
but he has not the honour and the irony of the court of culture. 100



### *The Coming of Galahad*

In the hall all had what food they chose;  
they rose then, the king, Lancelot, the queen;  
they led the young man Galahad to Arthur's bed.  
The bishops and peers, going with the royalties, made  
ceremony; they created a Rite. When he was laid, 5  
and the order done, the lords went to their rooms.  
The queen all night lay thinking of Lancelot's son.

At their rising the king's poet alone had gone  
another way; he took the canals of the palace,  
the lower corridors, between maids and squires, 10  
past the offices and fires of the king's kitchens,  
till he came by a door cleft in a smooth wall  
into the outer yards, the skied hall of the guards,  
grooms, and scullions. He looked above; he saw  
through the unshuttered openings of stairs and rooms 15  
the red flares of processional torches and candles  
winding to the king's bed; where instead  
of Arthur Galahad that night should lie,  
Helayne's son instead of the king's, Lancelot's  
instead of Guinevere's, all taken at their word, 20  
their professions, their oaths; the third heaven heard  
their declarations of love, and measured them the medium  
of exchange.

He stood looking up among the jakes and latrines;  
he touched his harp, low-chanting a nursery rhyme:

‘Down the porphyry stair the queen’s child ran; 25  
there he played with his father’s crown . . .’  
A youth came up in the dark, the king’s scavenger,  
large-boned, fresh-coloured, flame-haired,  
Gareth, a prince and a menial, the son of Morgause,  
sent from Orkney and the skull-stone in the sea, 30  
to be for cause of obedience set to the worst work.  
None at Caerleon knew him but his brother Gawaine  
and the king’s poet who saw the profile of his mother,  
in a grace of fate and a face too soon to be dead.  
Hearing him now, Taliessin half-turned his head, 35  
saying: ‘Sir?’ Gareth said, looking at the light:  
‘Lord, tell me of the new knight.’

Taliessin answered, sounding the strings still:  
‘Is it not known he is strange, being nurtured till,  
men say, but yesterday, among the White Nuns, 40  
by the sister of Percivale, the’--his harp sang--‘princess  
Blanchefleur?’

Gareth said: ‘Lord, bless me with more.  
Among the slaves I saw from the hall’s door  
over the meal a mystery sitting in the air--  
a cup with a covered fitting under a saffron veil, 45  
as of the Grail itself: what man  
is this for whom the Emperor lifts the Great Ban?’

Taliessin stayed the music; he said:  
‘My lords and fathers the Druids between the hazels  
touched poems in chords; they made tell 50  
of everywhere a double dance of a stone and a shell,  
and the glittering sterile smile of the sea that pursues.’

Gareth answered: 'I heard it read from a book  
by a Northern poet, and once I seemed to look  
on Logres pouring like ocean after a girl 55  
who ran in the van, and her hands before her stretched  
shone--bright shell, transparent stone,  
and the sea touched her, and suddenly by a wind was blown  
back, and she mounted a wind and rode away,  
and measurement went with her and all sound, 60  
and I found myself weeping there like a fool.'

'To-day

the stone was fitted to the shell,' the king's poet said;  
'when my lord Sir Lancelot's son sat in the perilous sell,  
if he be Sir Lancelot's; in Logres the thing is done,  
the thing I saw wherever I have gone-- 65  
in five houses, and each house double: the boughs  
of the Druid oak, the cover of gay strokes in the play  
of Caucasia, the parchments of Gaul, the altar-stone  
in Lateran or Canterbury, the tall Byzantine hall--  
O the double newels at the ground of the porphyry stair! 70  
O there the double categories of shell and stone,  
and the Acts of Identity uttered out of the Throne.'

'And I among dung and urine--am I one  
with shell or stone,' Gareth asked, 'in the jakes?'  
But Taliessin: 'And what makes the City? to-morrow 75  
you shall be a prince of Orkney again; to-night  
abandon the degrees of Gawaine your brother; consent  
to be nothing but the shape in the gate of excrement,  
while Galahad in peace and the king's protection sleeps:  
question and digestion, rejection and election, 80  
winged shapes of the Grail's officers, double

grand equality of the State, common of all lives,  
common of all experience, sense and more;  
adore and repent, reject and elect. Sir,  
without this alley-way how can man prefer? 85  
and without preference can the Grail's grace be stored?

A girl said suddenly beside them: `Lord,  
tell me the food you preferred----'; and he: `More  
choice is within the working than goes before.  
The good that was there--and did I well then? yes?' 90  
She said: `Yes; yet has all food one taste?  
felicity does not alter?' He answered in haste:  
`Felicity alters from its centre; but I--free  
to taste each alteration, and that within reach  
then and there; why change till the range twirls?' The girl's 95  
eyes turned to the black palace and back.  
She said: `This morning when the Saracen prince was  
christened  
dimly the lord Percivale's pentagram glistened  
in the rain-dark stones of his eyes: what food there?'

Taliessin answered: `Five cells the world 100  
gave me, five shells of multiple sound;  
but when I searched for the paths that joined the signs,  
lines of the pentagram's frame, the houses fled  
instead to undimensioned points; their content slid  
through the gate of the winged prince of the jakes; pale 105  
they fluttered in an empty fate; the Child lay dead  
in his own gate of growth--and what then,  
lady, for you or me or the Saracen,  
when the cut hazel has nothing to measure?' `I have known,'

she said, with the scintillation of a grave smile, 110  
`the hazel's stripes on my shoulders; the blessed luck  
of Logres has a sharp style, since I was caught free  
from the pirate chaos savaging land and sea;  
is the shell thus also hidden in the stone?'  
`Also thus,' he said, `if the heart fare 115  
on what lies ever now on the board, stored  
meats of love, laughter, intelligence, and prayer.  
Is it thus?' and she: `Who knows?--and who does not care?--  
yet my heart's cheer may hope, if Messiah please.  
Is this the colour of my lord Galahad's eyes?' 120

He said: `The eyes of my lord are the measure of intensity  
and his arms of action; the hazel, Blanchefleur, he.  
The clerks of the Emperor's house study the redaction  
of categories into identity: so we.  
Give me your hand.' Lightly she obeyed, and he 125  
as lightly kissed: `O office of all lights  
from the king's scavenger to the king's substitute, mean  
of the merciful Child, common of all rites,  
winged wonder of shell and stone, here  
a shoot of your own third heaven takes root in Logres.' 130

Gareth said: `Lord, before the meal,  
when he washed his hands, the water became phosphorescent;  
did you not see?' and he: `Sanctity  
common and crescent! I have seen it flushed anew  
in each motion and mode of the princess Blanchefleur; 135  
who walked dropping light, as all our beloved do.  
It is the shell of adoration and the grand art.  
But I looked rather to-night at the queen's hand

lying on her heart, and the way her eyes scanned  
the unknown lord who sat in the perilous sell. 140  
The bone of the fingers showed through the flesh; they  
were claws  
wherewith the queen's grace gripped: this was the stone  
fitting itself to its echo.'

He turned to the gate  
into the outer air; she let cry:  
'Lord, make us die as you would have us die.' 145

But he: 'Proofs were; roofs were: I  
what more? creeds were; songs were. Four  
zones divide the empire from the Throne's firmament,  
slanted to each cleft in each wall, with planets planted:  
Mercury, thinning and thickening, thirsting to theft; 150  
Venus preference--though of the greatest, preference;  
O Earth between, O seen and strewn by the four!  
Jupiter with a moon of irony and of defeated irony,  
and Saturn circled, girdled by turned space.  
The moon of irony shone on Lancelot at Carbonek, 155  
the moon of defeated irony on Blanchefleur at Almesbury;  
her hands and head were the shell bursting from the stone  
after it has bred in the stone; she was bright with the moon's  
light  
when truth sped from the taunt; well she nurtured Galahad.  
Logres is come into Jupiter; all the zones 160  
circle Saturn, spinning against the glory,  
all the Throne's points, themes of the Empire.'

Emeralds of fire, blank to both, his eyes  
were points of the Throne's foot that sank through Logres.

### *The Departure of Merlin*

The Pope stands at Lateran's stone; man's  
heart throbs from his vicarious hands.  
The themes are pointed with a new device of brightness,  
Trebizond with sun, Archangel with ice.

The blessing of Byzantium befriends the world's ends; 5  
the great heretical doctors, Moslem and Manichæan,  
fly; in time-spanned Camelot the Table changes;  
the method of phenomena is indrawn to Broceliande.

Merlin bore Lancelot's child to a moon of white nuns,  
a knot of nurture in a convent of spirits and suns; 10  
thence in the perilous throne is the Child's moon risen,  
pillars of palace and prison changed to the web of a wood.

The joyous moon waxes in the chair;  
the blessed young sorcerer, a boy and less than a boy,  
rose and ran, turning on the roads; he span 15  
into the heart's simultaneity of repose.

Joseph of Nazareth, Joseph of Arimathea,  
came dancing through the coeval-rooted world's idea.  
They saw Merlin descending: they met him in the wood,  
foster-fathers of beatitude to the foster-father of Galahad; 20

twin suns of womb and tomb; there no strife  
is except growth from the roots, nor reaction but repose;  
vigours of joy drive up; rich-ringed moments  
thick in their trunks thrive, young-leaved their voices.

Moons and suns that rose in rites and runes 25  
are come away from sequence, from rules of magic;  
here all is cause and all effect; the laws  
of Merlin's boyhood are unknown in Nimue's wood.

I saw from the deck of a galley becalmed in the seas  
Merlin among the trees; the headless form faded; 30  
throngs of trunks covered the volcanic waters;  
only the flat djongs float into alien P'o-l'u.

The sailors stared at the thick wood; one,  
ghastly and gaping, despaired of joy; he yelled  
for horror and leapt from the deck to the phosphorescence, 35  
to the wreck of wisdom, the drowned last of love.

The purple sail moved in the wind of Broceliande;  
the sailors sprang to the oars; the sea-call sang  
bidding tack--near and far infinite and equal--  
on the visionary ocean track to the port of Byzantium. 40

More than the fable of Dryads is troth to the Table  
in the growth of hazel and elm, oak and bamboo;  
voice of all moments covers who hears as he goes  
rich-ringed, young-leaved, monstrous trunks rejoice.

Time's president and precedent, grace ungrieved, 45  
floating through gold-leaved lime or banked behind beech  
to opaque green, through each membraned and tissued ex-  
perience  
smites in simultaneity to times variously veined.



She who is Nimue, lady of lakes and seas,  
articulation of limbs, accumulation of distance, 50  
brings all natural becoming to her shape of immortal being,  
as to a flash of seeing the women in the world's base.

Well has Merlin spoken the last spell,  
worked the last image, gone to his own: 55  
the moon waxes and wanes in the perilous chair,  
where time's foster-child sits, Lancelot's son.

## *The Death of Palomides*

Air strives with wings, wings with air.  
In the space of the glory the stresses of power contend;  
through the kingdom my heart's revolutions ascribe to the  
power  
quicken the backward wings of passages and paths.

Once, when the Prophet's shout had taken Cordova, 5  
north I rode through a moon of Spanish winter,  
and lay for a night in a lodging of ancient Israel,  
twins of Levi, under the height of Monsalvat.

Sea-grey was one and sea-wrinkled, 10  
one burned sun-black, with clawed hands;  
guttural, across the charcoal fire, their chant  
dropped into pauses, poured into channelled names.

The first mathematics of Ispahan trembled  
before the intoned formulæ; their smiles cast 15  
totals from a myriad intricate calculations,  
while the screams of eagles in conflict shook the Sierras.

I sat and heard, aloof in my young seed-mail,  
scornful of my secret attention; the hut shook,  
the air span, with titles of cherubim and seraphim;  
the voices rose into clearness; they pronounced *Netzach*. 20

Sharply I shouted into the sound: *Netzach?*  
*What is Netzach?* Together and deeply they answered:  
*Netzach is the name of the Victory in the Blessing:*  
*For the Lord created all things by means of his Blessing.*

One now, sea-grey and wave-wrinkled, 25  
calls through all my body to the sun-blackened:  
*The Lord created all things by means of his Blessing,*  
and they float upwards; the paths open between.

Once the paths were interminable; paths were stations. 30  
Unangelical speed loitered upon them,  
supposing the everlasting habitations had received it;  
only the dolphin Dinadan swam and smiled.

Then Iseult was living; then was the tournament;  
then I longed, feared, fought, was angry.  
Now if still I fight, fear, am angry, 35  
I know those terminable paths are only paths.

Loneliest of lords, Dinadan smiled; I feared.  
Now no sound is near but aerial screams,  
no soft voices, nothing except the harsh  
scream of the eagle approaching the plateau of Netzach: 40

its scream and its passage approaching its primal station  
backwards; about me a scintillation of points,  
points of the eagle's plumes, plumes that are paths;  
paths and plumes swoop to the unbelieved symbol.

I left the Prophet; I lost Iseult; I failed  
to catch the beast out of Broceliande; 45  
Lancelot forgave me; if I was christened in that pardon  
it was half because I was a greater fool so.

I have gone back, down the road of Logres, the arm  
of Iseult, the pass of Monsalvat, into the hut; 50  
I sit with the old men, as they were; we sing:  
*The Lord created all things by means of his Blessing.*

I utter the formula; the formula is all that lives:  
sharply the Prophet, Iseult, Lancelot, Dinadan,  
call to me this at my dying, and I to them: 55  
*The Lord created all things by means of his Blessing.*

If this is the kingdom, the power, the glory, my heart  
formally offers the kingdom, endures the power,  
joins to itself the aerial scream of the eagle . . .  
That Thou only canst be Thou only art. 60

### *Percivale at Carbonek*

In the rent saffron sun hovered the Grail.  
Galahad stood in the arch of Carbonek;  
the people of Pelles ran to meet him.  
His eyes were sad; he sighed for Lancelot's pardon.

Joy remembered joylessness; joy kneeled 5  
under the arch where Lancelot ran in frenzy.  
The astonished angels of the spirit heard him moan:  
*Pardon, lord; pardon and bless me, father.*

Doubtfully stood the celestial myrmidons, scions 10  
of unremitted beauty; bright feet paused.  
Aching with the fibrous infelicity of time,  
pierced his implacability, Galahad kneeled.

The passage through Carbonek was short to the house of  
the Grail;  
the wounded king waited for health; motionless  
the subdued glory implored the kingdom 15  
to pardon its power and the double misery of Logres.

Under the arch the Merciful Child  
wept for the grief of his father in reconciliation;  
who was betrayed there by Merlin and Brisen  
to truth; he saw not; he was false to Guinevere. 20

Between the Infant and Bors and myself on each hand  
under the arch I heard the padding of paws,  
woven between us, and the faint howl of the wolf.  
The High Prince shivered in the cold of bleak conjunction.

His hand shook; pale were his cheeks; 25  
his head the head of a skull, flesh  
cleaving to bone; his dry voice rattled;  
`Pardon, Lord Lancelot; pardon and blessing, father.'

He knelt silent among the circles of the wolf.  
Until the lover of Guinevere acknowledged his son 30  
a bitter frost crept in the bones of Galahad.  
The Host in the Lateran lay in a hid sepulchre.

Stiffly the Child's head turned; the drawn engine  
slewed to his left, to Bors the kin of Lancelot.  
He said `Cousin, can you bear pardon 35  
to the house of Carbonek from the fallen house of Camelot?'

Bors answered: `What should we forgive?'  
`Forgive Us,' the High Prince said, `for Our existence;  
forgive the means of grace and the hope of glory.  
In the name of Our father forgive Our mother for Our 40  
birth.'

`Sir,' Bors said, `only God forgives.  
My lord Sir Lancelot my cousin is a lover and kind.  
I assent to all, as I pray that my children assent  
and through God join with me in bidding their birth.'

The Infant said: 'Go, cousin.' Bors  
stepped from the arch; the angelic household met him.  
The High Prince stepped in his footprints; into the sun  
Galahad followed Bors; Carbonek was entered.

45

### *The Last Voyage*

The hollow of Jerusalem was a ship.

In the hall of Empire, on the right wall from the stair,  
Solomon was painted, a small city and temple  
rose beyond, reaching the level of his knee;  
all on a deck floated in a sea of dolphins. 5  
His right hand, blessing, whelmed the djinn  
who sank impotently around and drowned in the waters.  
Rigid his left arm stretched to the queen Balkis;  
where her mouth on his hand tasted effectual magic,  
intellectual art arm-fasted to the sensuous. 10  
Solomon was the grand master of all creaturely being  
in sublime necromancy, the rule and road of seeing  
for those who have no necessity of existence in themselves;  
On the opposite wall, in a laureate ceremony,  
Virgil to Taliessin stretched a shoot 15  
of hazel--the hexameter, the decasyllabic line--  
fetched from Homer beyond him; by the king's poet  
were the poets of Logres, Britain, and the ninefold isles:  
the isles floated beyond them in a sea of dolphins.  
But the actual ship, the hollow of Jerusalem, 20  
beyond the shapes of empire, the capes of Carbonek,  
over the topless waves of trenched Broceliande,  
drenched by the everlasting spray of existence,  
with no mind's sail reefed or set, no slaves at the motived oars,  
drove into and clove the wind from unseen shores. 25  
Swept from all altars, swallowed in a path of power



by the wrath that wrecks the pirates in the Narrow Seas,  
now in the confidence of the charge, the thrust of the trust,  
seizing the sea-curve, the shortest way between points,  
to the point of accumulated distance, the safe tension 30  
in each allotted joint of the knotted web of empire,  
multiple without dimension, indivisible without uniformity,  
the ship of Solomon (blessed be he) drove on.

Fierce in the prow the alchemical Infant burned,  
red by celerity now conceiving the white; 35  
behind him the folded silver column of Percivale,  
hands on the royal shoulders, closed wings of flight,  
inhaled the fine air of philosophical amazement;  
Bors, mailed in black, completing the trine,  
their action in Logres, kneeling on the deck to their right, 40  
the flesh of fatherhood, unique as they in the Will,  
prayed still for the need and the bliss of his household.  
By three ways of exchange the City sped to the City;  
against the off-shore wind that blew from Sarras  
the ship and the song flew. 45

An infinite flight of doves from the storming sky  
of Logres--strangely sea-travellers when the land melts--  
forming to overfeather and overwhelm the helm,  
numerous as men in the empire, the empire riding  
the skies of the ocean, guiding by modulated stresses 50  
on each spoke of the helm the vessel from the realm of Arthur,  
lifted oak and elm to a new-ghosted power.  
The hosted wings trapped the Infant's song;  
blown back, tossed down, thrown  
along the keel, the song hastening the keel 55

along the curve of the sea-way, the helm fastening  
the whole ship to the right balance of the stresses;  
as the fine fair arm of pine-changed Cymodocea,  
striking from the grey-green waters of tossed Tiber,  
thrust the worshipful duke to the rescue of Rome; 60  
as the arm of the queen, finger-latched to Solomon's,  
matched power to purpose and passion to peace.  
The wonder that snapped once in the hollow of Jerusalem  
was retrieved now along the level of the bulwark  
to where the hands of Galahad were reeved on the prow: 65  
the hollow of Jerusalem was within the hollow of his  
shoulders,  
the ban and blessing of the empire ran in his arms,  
from his feet the deck spread that was fleet on the sea.  
The ship of Solomon (blessed be he) drove on.

Before the helm the ascending-descending sun 70  
lay in quadrilateral covers of a saffron pall  
over the bier and the pale body of Blanchefleur,  
mother of the nature of lovers, creature of exchange;  
drained there of blood by the thighed wound,  
she died another's death, another lived her life. 75  
Where it was still to-night, in the last candles of Logres,  
a lady danced, to please the sight of her friends;  
her cheeks were stained from the arteries of Percivale's  
sister.

Between them they trod the measure of heaven and earth,  
and the dead woman waited the turn and throe of the dance 80  
where, rafting and undershafting the quadruplicate sacrum,  
below the saffron pall, the joyous woe of Blanchefleur,  
the ship of Solomon (blessed be he) drove on.

Dinadan was lord of something more than irony,  
 he died in the deep schismatic war, when Gawaine 85  
 hewed the Table in twain, by a feud with his fellows  
 making peace with his doctrine: he pursued Lancelot  
 for the Throne's honour, by a side-path with his own.  
 His brother Agravaine caught the king's dolphin  
 on the sea-shore, in a track of the bewildered wood, 90  
 when by an ambush Lamorack was shot in the back  
 by the sons of the queen Morgause who slew their mother,  
 to clean their honour's claws in the earth of her body.  
 They drew Dinadan to broil on a bed of coals;  
 their souls were glad to destroy the pertinence of curiosity; 95  
 the merciful heaven drove the thick smoke to choke him.  
 But the Infant's song was thick with a litany of names  
 from the king and the king's friend to the least of the slaves.  
 He was borne through the waves to his end on a cry of  
 substitution.  
 When he uttered Agravaine's name a light low 100  
 covered with flame the spread saffron veil;  
 the heart of the dead Dinadan burned on the sun,  
 and gathered and fled through the air to the head of Percivale,  
 flew and flamed and flushed the argentine column.  
 The ship of Solomon (blessed be he) drove on. 105

Through the sea of omnipotent fact rushed the act of Galahad.  
 He glowed white; he leaned against the wind  
 down the curved road among the topleless waters.  
 He sang *Judica te, Deus*; the wind,  
 driven by doves' wings along the arm-taut keel, 110  
 sang against itself *Judica te, Deus*.  
 Prayer and irony had said their say and ceased;

the sole speech was speed.  
In the hollow of Jerusalem the quadrilateral of the sun  
was done on the deck beyond Broceliande. 115  
In the monstrem of triangular speed,  
in a path of lineal necessity,  
the necessity of being was communicated to the son of  
Lancelot.  
The ship and the song drove on.

In Logres the King's friend landed, Lancelot of Gaul. 120  
Taliessin at Canterbury met him with the news  
of Arthur's death and the overthrow of Mordred.  
At the hour of the healing of Pelles  
the two kings were one, by exchange of death and healing.  
Logres was withdrawn to Carbonek; it became Britain. 125

*Taliessin at Lancelot's Mass*

I came to his altar when dew was bright on the grass;  
he--he was not sworn of the priesthood--began the Mass.  
The altar was an ancient stone laid upon stones;  
Carbonek's arch, Camelot's wall, frame of Bors' bones.

In armour before the earthen footpace he stood; 5  
on his surcoat the lions of his house, dappled with blood,  
rampant, regardant; but he wore no helm or sword,  
and his hands were bare as Lateran's to the work of our Lord.

In the ritual before the altar Lancelot began to pass;  
all the dead lords of the Table were drawn from their graves 10  
to the Mass;  
they stood, inward turned, as shields on a white rushing deck,  
between Nimue of Broceliande and Helayne of Carbonek.

In Blanchefleur's cell at Almesbury the queen Guinevere  
felt the past exposed; and the detail, sharp and dear,  
draw at the pang in the breast till, rich and reconciled, 15  
the mystical milk rose in the mother of Logres' child.

Out of the queen's substitution the wounded and dead king  
entered into salvation to serve the holy Thing;  
singly seen in the Mass, owning the double Crown,  
going to the altar Pelles, and Arthur moving down. 20

Lancelot and Arthur wove the web; the sky  
opened on moon and sun; between them, light-traced on  
    high,  
the unseen knight of terror stood as a friend;  
invisible things and visible waited the end.

Lancelot came to the Canon; my household stood                   25  
around me, bearers of the banners, bounteous in blood;  
each at the earthen footpace ordained to be blessed and to  
    bless,  
each than I and than all lordlier and less.

Then at the altar We sang in Our office the cycle of names                   30  
of their great attributed virtues; the festival of flames  
fell from new sky to new earth; the light in bands  
of bitter glory renewed the imperial lands.

Then the Byzantine ritual, the Epiclesis, began;  
then their voices in Ours invoked the making of man;  
petal on petal floated out of the blossom of the Host,                   35  
and all ways the Theotokos conceived by the Holy Ghost.

We exposed, We exalted the Unity; prised shone  
web, paths, points; as it was done  
the antipodean zones were retrieved round a white rushing  
    deck,  
and the Acts of the Emperor took zenith from Caucasia to                   40  
    Carbonek.

Over the altar, flame of anatomized fire,  
the High Prince stood, gyre in burning gyre;  
day level before him, night massed behind;  
the Table ascended; the glories intertwined.

The Table ascended; each in turn lordliest and least— 45  
slave and squire, woman and wizard, poet and priest;  
interchanged adoration, interdispersed prayer,  
the ruddy pillar of the Infant was the passage of the porphyry  
stair.

That which had been Taliessin rose in the rood;  
in the house of Galahad over the altar he stood, 50  
manacled by the web, in the web made free;  
there was no capable song for the joy in me:

joy to new joy piercing from paths foregone;  
that which had been Taliessin made joy to a Joy unknown;  
manifest Joy speeding in a Joy unmanifest. 55  
Lancelot's voice below sang: *Ite; missa est.*

Fast to the Byzantine harbour gather the salvaged sails;  
that which was once Taliessin rides to the barrows of Wales  
up the vales of the Wye; if skill be of work or of will  
in the dispersed homes of the household, let the Company 60  
pray for it still.

## THE REGION OF THE SUMMER STARS



## *Preface*

These poems are part of a series of poems which began with *Taliessin through Logres*<sup>1</sup>, but these, generally, are incidental to the main theme.

That theme is what was anciently called the Matter of Britain; that is, the reign of King Arthur in Logres and the Achievement of the Grail. Logres is Britain regarded as a province of the Empire with its centre at Byzantium. The time historically is after the conversion of the Empire to Christianity but during the expectation of the Return of Our Lord (the Parousia). The Emperor of the poem, however, is to be regarded rather as operative Providence. On the south-western side of Logres lies the region of Broceliande, in which is Carbonek where the Grail and other Hallows are in the keeping of King Pelles and his daughter Helayne. Beyond the seas of Broceliande is the holy state of Sarras. In the antipodean seas is the opposite and infernal state of P'o-l'u.

Nothing more is, I think, necessary to these poems. But in general the argument of the series is the expectation of the return of Our Lord by means of the Grail and of the establishment of the kingdom of Logres (or Britain) to this end by the powers of the Empire and Broceliande. Logres, however, as distracted by its own sins, and the wounding of King Pelles (the Keeper of the Hallows) by the Lord Balin the Savage was the Dolorous Blow which prevented the union of Carbonek and Logres and therefore the coming of the Grail. There followed, by a heavenly substitution, the begetting of Galahad by Lancelot on the Princess Helayne in an enchantment. Galahad is brought up in a Convent of White Nuns under the care of Dindrane, Percivale's sister. Afterwards he goes to the court of Arthur and then departs, together with Percivale and Bors, for Carbonek and Sarras where he finally achieves the Grail. Meanwhile wars break out between Arthur and Lancelot through which, and through the treachery of Mordred the King's bastard son, Logres is overthrown and afterwards becomes the historical Britain, in which the myth of its origin remains.

<sup>1</sup>Oxford University Press, 1938.

## *Prelude*

Irony was the Fortune of Athens; Rome came  
to pluck the Fortune of Athens, and stand embattled  
as in arms, so in mind against evil luck.  
A few wise masters devised for the heart  
a road from the universe into dematerialized spirit, 5  
but most prattled cunning preventive doctrine;  
till on a day from a hill in the middle of Athens  
where men adored Irony the unknown lord,  
Paul sent over Athens and Rome his call:  
'Whom ye ignorantly worship, him I declare.' 10

The crooked smiles of the Greeks  
fled from their faces while thorned-in-the-flesh the Apostle  
against their defensive inflections of verb and voice,  
their accents of presaged frustration, their sterile protections,  
named in its twyfold Nature the golden Ambiguity. 15  
Then for the creature he invented the vocabulary of faith;  
he defined in speech the physiological glory  
and began to teach the terms of the work of glory.  
The young Church breakfasted on glory; handfasted,  
her elect functioned in the light. But the ancient intellect 20  
heard, delaying and playing with its archives, and demurred  
that pain was easy, and completeness of belief costly,  
and flesh too queasy to bear the main of spirit.  
The converted doctors turned to their former confessions,  
the liminary heresiarchs feared the indiscretions of matter, 25  
and the careful Nestorius, coming to befriend peace,  
preached in Byzantium. Before the sermon was at end  
the metaphysicians, sitting to note him, heard  
from the City the roar of burning and bundled torches  
rise through the fixed stars: *Theotokos, Anthopotokos;* 30  
his disciples shrank from the blood-stream where the full torches  
ruddily poured round the eikon of Mary-in-blessing.  
Professing only a moral union, they fled  
from the new-spread bounty; they found a quarrel with the Empire

and the sustenance of Empire, with the ground of faith and earth, 35  
the golden and rose-creamed flesh of the grand Ambiguity.

Fast as they, the orthodox imagination  
seized on the Roman polity; there, for a day,  
beyond history, holding history at bay,  
it established through the themes of the Empire the condition of 40  
Christendom  
and saw everywhere manumission of grace into glory.  
Beyond the ancient line of imperial shapes  
it saw the Throne of primal order, the zone  
of visionary powers, and almost (in a cloud) the face  
of the only sublime Emperor; as John once 45  
in Patmos, so then all the Empire in Byzantium:  
the Acts of the Throne were borne by the speeding logothetes,  
and the earth flourished, hazel, corn, and vine.

The Empire, in the peace of the Emperor,  
expected perfection; it awaited the Second Coming 50  
of the Union, of the twy-natured single Person,  
centuries-belated, now to be; but how  
only a few saints knew, in Apennine  
or Egypt or Cappadocia, monk or nun,  
slave or princess or poet, or, white in Lateran, 55  
like the ghost of man awaiting his body, the Pope.  
Hope, as by night the first of the summer stars  
in the universal sky high hung,  
in them looked on the sea, and across the sea  
saw coming, from the world of the Three-in-One, 60  
in a rich container, the Blood of the Deivirilis,  
communicated everywhere, but there singly borne,  
and the morn of the Trinity rising through the sea to the sun.

The Empire lay in the imposed order; around  
the Throne the visionary zone of clear light 65  
hummed with celestial action; there the forms  
of chamberlains, logothetes, nuncios, went and came,

diagrams of light moving in the light; they lacked  
the flesh and blood, the golden cream and the rose  
tinctures; these dwelled in Byzantium; they were held 70  
in men and women, or even (as named qualities)  
in the golden day and the rose-gardens of Caucasia.

But also in the mind of the Empire another kind  
of tale lay than that of the Grail; those 75  
who worked in the ports heard shipmen say

that in the antipodean ocean was a sight  
known only to the Emperor's lordliest admirals  
who, closeliest obeying command, passed  
near to the harbour and vile marshes of P'o-l'u;  
there on the waves a headless Emperor walked 80  
coped in a foul indecent crimson; octopods  
round him stretched giant tentacles and crawled  
heavily on the slimy surface of the tangled sea,  
goggling with lidless eyes at the coast of the Empire.

This, fable or truth, none knew 85  
except the high sea-lords; enough

that in the stuff of the Empire the quality of irony  
flickered and faded before the capacity of faith;  
all the peoples awaited the Parousia, all  
the themes vibrated with duty and expectation 90

of the coming of the vessel where, ere the Deposition,  
the blood of the golden single-personed Ambiguity  
fulfilled its commission and was caught; then for a season  
was hidden in its own place, till at last (bidden  
by ultimate Reason) it deigned at last emerge 95

out of the extreme verge of the west and the east;  
priest and victim. Only the women of earth,  
by primal dispensation, little by themselves understood,  
shared with that Sacrifice the victimization of blood.

## *The Calling of Taliessin*

By some it was said that Taliessin  
was a child of Henwg the saint, bred in Caerleon,  
and thence come, miracle-commissioned; by some  
that he sprang from the bards, the ancient guards of the cauldron  
called of Ceridwen; she goddess or priestess, 5  
Tydeg Voel's wife, whose life was legend,  
and he if her son then so by magic: none  
knew; no clue he showed when he rode down the Wye  
coracle-cradled, and at the weir was seen 10  
by Elphin the son of Gwyddno and drawn to shore.  
The men with Elphin then could only stare  
at the bright forehead of the lonely river-fugitive,  
the child coming from the wild Druid wood.  
Could they believe in the light that lived from his brow?  
decision, there as here, was the mind's election, 15  
the arbitration of faith, the erection of the City.  
But Elphin was a man of the tribes, his vocation the blood's,  
nor could feel, in more than a chorus after a meal,  
verse; vainly Taliessin's first song  
through river-mated rhythms while he smiled at the sky 20  
pulsated; only in the song a recurrent code  
showed the child already initiated  
in the changes of the cauldron of Ceridwen, from the fish to the  
frog,  
from the frog to the crow, from the crow to the leaping roe,  
from the roe to the kindled fire, from fire to wheat, 25  
from the wheat to the cooked loaf, from shapes that eat  
to shapes that are eaten, and then to the fish split  
to be at once on the dish and again in the sea - -  
the fated cycle communicated in heathen secrets;  
for the Lord God had not yet set him at liberty, 30  
nor shown him the doctrine of largesse in the land of the Trinity.

In Elphin's house he grew and practised verse;  
striving in his young body with the double living

of the breath in the lung and the sung breath in the brain, 35  
the growing and the knowing and the union of both in the  
    showing,  
the triune union in each line of verse,  
but lacking the formulae and the grand backing of the Empire.  
Yet then his heart, ears, and eyes were wise  
from Druid secrets in the twilight and the sun-dawn;  
his hearing caught each smallest singular cry 40  
of bird and beast; almost he talked their talk;  
his sight followed each farthest flight, each small  
insect-dance-pattern in the air; he knew  
correspondence and the law of similitudes; he had seen the caul-  
dron  
of poetry and plenty; he heard now dimly 45  
of the food that freed from the cycle, of the butteries of the monks  
and the baps and beans of hermits in Thule and the Thebaid.  
When Elphin asked him his lineage, he sang riddling:  
‘My heritage is all men’s; only my age is my own.  
I am a wonder whose origin is not known. 50  
I carried in battle a banner before Lleon of Lochlin,  
and held in the sleeping-chamber a mirror for his queen.  
I am more than the visions of all men and my own vision,  
and my true region is the summer stars.  
I suffered in dreams derision for the son of a virgin, 55  
yet I stood in the Galaxy at the throne of the Distributor  
and flew over the waves when the world was in flood.  
I rose to the third heaven with her of the penitence  
and was tangled through every sense by the hazel bush;  
I was mangled for a night and a day by black swine, 60  
yet my true region is the summer stars.  
I was thrall to Ceridwen and free in the manger of an ass.  
Before speech came to pass, I was full of the danger of loquacity.  
It is a doubt if my body is flesh or fish,  
therefore no woman will ever wish to bed me 65  
and no man make true love without me.  
All the doctors come to stand about me,  
yet I shall never have any near me to need me.

Every king shall call me Taliessin,  
and till the doom I am handfast with all the dead.' 70

Before Wye from his father Henwg, or else  
from a wandering priest among the vales of Wye  
Taliessin heard a word of the Empire; he heard  
tales of the tree of Adam, and the rare superfluity  
of moral creation, till the will of the superfluity 75  
turned the tree to a rood for itself and Another  
and envenomed its blood with mood; then the will of its Origin  
shared the blood and fared forth well from the tree.

Dim and far came the myth to Taliessin  
over the dark rim of the southern sea. 80

Poor, goetic or theurgic, the former spells  
seemed beside the promise of greater formulæ;  
poor -control or compact -the personal mastery,  
the act of magic, or the strain of ancient verse  
beside the thickening dreams of the impersonal Empire 85  
and the moulded themes of the Empire; and they all  
from Gaul to Jerusalem enfolded in the infinite hall  
of the Sacred Emperor at operative Byzantium.  
His heart turned to know more than could be learned  
by Wye of that white healing metaphysic; 90  
he sought the sea and the City; he was caught by a rumour.

On his shoulder a covered harp, and he cloaked  
over his tunic; laced boots of hide  
on his feet, and a sword of Rome slung by his side,  
he turned to the towns of the coast; shipping had failed, 95  
yet sometimes a vessel sailed to the ports of Gaul  
from the southern edge of the Isle of the Sea; there  
he looked to find passage and then to forage  
in holy luck -by singing verses, by writing  
letters or carrying, by script-copying or fighting, -  
nay, if need were, by currying horses 100  
for the dukes of the Empire whose courses took them to  
Byzantium.

As he came on the third day down the way to the coast  
he saw on his left a wilderness; Logres lay  
without the form of a Republic, without letters or law, 105  
a storm of violent kings at war - smoke  
poured from a burning village in the mid-east;  
transport had ceased, and all exchange stilled.  
On the other hand was the wood of Broceliande.

Dangerous to men is the wood of Broceliande. 110  
Hardly the Druid, hardly a Christian priest,  
pierced it ever; it was held, then as now,  
by those few who in Britain study the matter of the marches  
that there the divine science and the grand art,  
if at all below the third heaven, know 115  
their correspondence, and live in a new style -  
many a mile of distance goes to the making:  
but those fewer, now as then, who enter  
come rarely again with brain unravished  
by the power of the place - some by grace dumb 120  
and living, like a blest child, in a mild and holy  
sympathy of joy; but the rest loquacious with a graph  
or a gospel gustily audacious over three heavens.

Between the anarchy of yet unmade Logres  
and the darkness of secret-swayed Broceliande 125  
Taliessin took his way; his way curved  
on that stormy day so near the wood that he saw  
a dark rose of sunset between tree and tree  
lie on the sea, the antipodean ocean  
beheld there in thrusting inlets; his heart 130  
beat lest dread or desolation wrecked his mind  
so that he fell from his kind, and the grand art failed -  
control lost and all sense crossed;  
or else he quit no more for a thrilling rhyme,  
fulfilling a time of attention, but O pledged 135  
beyond himself to an edged anguish dividing  
word from thing and uniting thing to word -



each guiding and each fighting the other.  
'It is a doubt if my body is flesh or fish,'  
he sang in his grief; 'hapless the woman who loves me, 140  
hapless I -flung alive where only  
the cold-lipped mermen thrive among staring creatures  
of undersea, or lost where the beast-natures  
in a wood of suicides lap at the loss of intellect.'  
Obscurely his future -the king's poet's future- 145  
shook in his blood; his look was held by the flood  
angrily rose-darkened down the inlets of the wood.

He forced his eyes again to the road; far  
before him, on to the road from the wood's mass,  
he saw a form pass; it hovered and turned 150  
towards him along the road, as if to challenge,  
check, or wreck his journey. The sun had sunk,  
the rose vanished from the under-sea- -and he  
banished there between Logres and Broceliande  
to feel before him the road threaten ravage 155  
and the power of universal spirit rise  
against him to be wild and savage on his lonely spirit;  
all things combined, and defined themselves in that moment  
hostile to him and the burning homes of Logres.  
He saw draw towards him a faint light 160  
clearer and sharper than sun or moon; nearer  
as it drew it grew double; his hand found  
his sword, his heart sang an invocation  
of the woman whose name he had heard in a tale of the myth,  
of Mary Magdalene who had charity for Christ- -she 165  
to him in his grief as he to her in her sin.  
Bright-keen at first, the light grew soft;  
the double aureole was entwining a double shape,  
gently-shining- -as in the days to be  
the king's poet himself at the court of Camelot 170  
might seem (could his heart have guessed) to his true lovers.  
The double shape divided to a man and a woman,  
pricking his eyes with the quiet shining of their skin,

tall, slender, black-haired; they spared a width  
between themselves and him, coming to a pause, 175  
and he also, prepared for any chance.

Time and space, duration and extension, to a child  
are in the father's voice, the mother's face,  
and to us in things passing or pausing in passing,  
amassing themselves in that pause to a new energy 180  
for or against the soul's motion; Taliessin  
felt before him an accumulation of power  
tower in the two shapes, so deep in calm  
that it seemed the word of the heart and the word of the voice  
must find, in each and in both, correspondence there 185  
more than even the grand art could know or show  
for all similitudes; he heard speech flow  
out of the masculine mouth of the twinned form  
as the south wind, stirring the tiny waves, shows  
and shakes the stillness of the wide accumulated air. 190  
'Whither, Taliessin- -whither, son of the bards- -  
moves the song that blows you along our marches?'  
Taliessin said: 'Who asks?' and the other: 'Merlin  
am I; she Brisen my sister; we are free  
of the forest, parthenogenetical in Broceliande 195  
from the Nature, from Nimue our mother; sent are we  
to build, as is willed, Logres, and in Logres a throne  
like that other of Carbonek, of King Pelles in Broceliande,  
the holder of the Hallows; my sister shall stand in his house  
to tend his daughter in the day of her destiny, but I 200  
make haste to Logres, to call and install King Arthur;  
at whose board you and I, lord, again may meet.'  
Taliessin said: 'Are you mortal? are you a friend?  
I do not know Arthur; I go from Wye  
to find beyond sea a fact or a fable.' 205  
Merlin answered: 'A friend, mortal or immortal,  
if you choose; we bear no arms; and for harms spiritual  
we two can placably receive the Names spoken  
in Byzantium, which shall be by Thames; it is ordered that soon

the Empire and Broceliande shall meet in Logres, 210  
 and the Hallows be borne from Carbonek into the sun.  
 Therefore Nimue our mother directs in Carbonek  
 the maidenhood of Pelles' daughter Helayne, and I  
 go to prepare Logres for the sea-coming  
 from Sarras.' Taliessin said: 'Where is Sarras?' 215  
 But Merlin: 'Hush; formulæ and rhymes are yours  
 but seek no more; fortunate the poet who endures  
 to measure in his mind the distance even to Carbonek;  
 few dare more-enough. The Peace be with you.'  
 Taliessin gazed at the twins and his heart was stilled; 220  
 he said: 'And with you be the Peace.' Then Brisen: 'Sleep  
 we three here to-night and wait for the day.'

Done was the day; the antipodean sun  
 cast earth's coned shadow into space;  
 it exposed the summer stars; as they rose 225  
 the light of Taliessin's native land  
 shone in a visible glory over him sleeping.  
 Rarely through the wood rang a celestial cry,  
 sometimes with a like reply, sometimes with none.  
 The trees shook, in no breeze, to a passage of power. 230  
 Under the ground was the sound of great waves  
 breaking round huge caves, ancient sepulchres,  
 where Ocean, a young child of making, held  
 talk with the first mother of making, Nimue:-  
 or so might seem to the dream of the young poet; 235  
 or else the noise gave voice to the image in his brain,  
 an image springing from a tangle of ringing names--  
 Thames, Camelot, Carbonek, Pelles and Arthur,  
 Logres, Wye, Helayne, Broceliande,  
 Byzantium, the Empire . . . the Empire . . . 'this', the voice 240  
 sang, 'is the Empire; what serves the Empire?' The youth  
 was caught by a pulse of truth in the image; he saw  
 Merlin and Brisen rise from their sleep and kiss.  
 He saw in the light of the stars above him Merlin  
 draw near and stoop; he felt the black-haired wizard 245

breathe on his eyes, saying: 'Do not wake, king's poet.  
Fate is for you to find but for us to make.  
Dream - or see in dream. The rite opens.  
Lie you still to-night, as in vales of Wye.'

The cone's shadow of earth fell into space, 250  
and into (other than space) the third heaven.  
In the third heaven are the living unriven truths,  
climax tranquil in Venus. Merlin and Brisen  
heard, as in faint bee-like humming  
round the cone's point, the feeling intellect hasten 255  
to fasten on the earth's image; in the third heaven  
the stones of the waste glimmered like summer stars.  
Between wood and waste the yoked children of Nimue  
opened the rite; they invoked the third heaven,  
heard in the far humming of the spiritual intellect, 260  
to the building of Logres and the coming of the land of the Trinity  
which is called Sarras in maps of the soul. Merlin  
made preparation; on the ground he drew the pentagram,  
at four corners he dropped the sacred herbs,  
sharp odours; under his hands they became 265  
flame of potential intellect becoming actual,  
allaying the mortal air with purification.  
At the fifth angle, naked in the hypnotic trance,  
hands caught behind her at the base of sense  
as at the centre of space, Brisen stood, 270  
the impassioned diagram of space; her shadow fell  
east into Logres, cast by the fourfold fire.  
The abstract gaze of Merlin overlooked  
his sister, as time space; the elementals became  
the magical continuum, where Merlin saw the place 275  
to prepare, and himself to fare to the preparation.  
He lifted the five times cross-incised rod  
began incantation; in the tongue of Broceliande  
adjuring all the primal atoms of earth  
to shape the borders of Logres, to the dispensation 280  
of Carbonek to Caerleon, of Caerleon to Camelot, to the union

of King Pelles and King Arthur, to the sea-coming of Sarras  
which beneath the Throne is shown in mosaics to Byzantium.

The weight of poetry could not then sink  
into the full depth of the weight of glory. 285  
For all the codes his young tongue bore  
Taliessin could not think in Merlin's style,  
nor his verse grow mature with pure fact.  
Many a mile of distance in the Empire was to go  
to the learning, many a turn of exchange in the need 290  
of himself or others or the Empire, much speed  
in chariots and ships by the Golden Horn, and the high  
cliffs and gardens of Caucasus, and the sky of Rome  
where the hands of the Pope are precise in the white sacrifice.  
The operation of Merlin passed through his sleep 295  
by accidents, not by events; nor could his heart  
elect and effect the full purpose of formulæ.  
But the accidents hinted the events. He saw the pillared  
back of Brisen ruddy in the fires' glow,  
and the fires' glow reddening the snow of mountains 300  
where his track ran - no more a back, but himself  
climbing from meadow-grasses to the rough passes  
of frosty heights, crossing Apennine, or tossing  
under forked lightning on Caspian below Caucasus.  
Everywhere his road ran ranging the themes, 305  
and near a clear city on a sea-site  
in a light that shone from behind the sun; the sun  
was not so fierce as to pierce where that light could  
through every waste and wood; the city and the light  
lay beyond the sun and beyond his dream, 310  
nor could the weight of poetry sink so far  
as the weight of glory; on the brink of the last depth  
the glory clouded to its own covering and became  
again the recapitulatory body of Brisen,  
the engine of the First Mover, fit to his wit 315  
that works in earth the birth of superfluous good:  
fair let the creature follow that Nature. Taliessin

began then to share in the doctrine of largesse  
 that should mark in Camelot the lovers of the king's poet;  
 he saw again the wide waste of Logres 320  
 under the dark and mighty shadow of Brisen,  
 cast by the clear assuaging fires; in the shadow  
 the stones of the waste glimmered like summer stars;  
 he heard again the presaging spell of Merlin  
 foretell and furnish the lofty errand of Logres. 325

The stars vanished; they gone, the illumined dusk  
 under the spell darkened to the colour of porphyry,  
 the colour of the stair of Empire and the womb of woman,  
 and the rich largesse of the Emperor; within was a point,  
 deep beyond or deep within Logres, 330  
 as if it had swallowed all the summer stars  
 and hollowed the porphyry night for its having and holding -  
 tiny, dark-rose, self-glowing,  
 as a firefly's egg or (beyond body and spirit,  
 could the art of the king's poet in the court of Camelot, 335  
 after his journeys, find words for body or spirit)  
 the entire point of the thrice co-inherent Trinity  
 when every crown and every choir is vanished,  
 and all sight and hearing is nothing else.  
 It burned for a moment as short as itself tiny, 340  
 and inturned to its disappearing, as the voice of Merlin  
 sang: 'Go, son of the bards; king's poet,  
 go; propolitan are the porphyry chambers; see  
 and know the Empire; fulfil then an errand;  
 rescue the king at Mount Badon; stand by the king, 345  
 Arthur, the king we make, until the land  
 of the Trinity by a sea-coming fetch to his stair.  
 Sarras is free to Carbonek, Carbonek to Camelot;  
 in all categories holds the largesse of exchange,  
 and the sea of Broceliande enfolds the Empire.' 350

The shadow of Brisen lay on the whole of Logres,  
 but the shadow was a flight of dark stairs, from the brain

to the base; the pavement of the base, below all,  
 lay in the trees and seas of Broceliande.  
 But in the visionary sleep, at the height of the flight, 355  
 where the brain of Logres opened in the main of space,  
 grew a golden throne, of two dragons twined,  
 where a king sat crowned, around him figures  
 of great lords; Taliessin saw himself  
 stand on the king's left hand among the lords. 360  
 His own voice had just sung and ceased.  
 All were gazing, and he, near the king's chair,  
 down the stair; they waited and watched for a coming,  
 for the sea-coming of the Trinity through Broceliande.  
 So full were they fixed that his sleeping eyes pricked 365  
 to see and feel their gaze; at once, with the pricking  
 he swung to the waves on the deck of a moving ship,  
 drawing to the watchers: but whether the king's poet's style  
 and desire for verse palpitated in the young Taliessin  
 to more than his function, and rated himself in sleep 370  
 higher than any crude folly, waking, could;  
 or whether Brisen and the operation of the rite  
 wrought in his brain to an emanation of Nimue,  
 the mother of all operation; or whether some true  
 foreboding grew of Dindrane the sister of Percivale, 375  
 she who was called Blanchefleur in religion, and to be  
 farther from and closer to the king's poet  
 than any, the eidolon of his beatitude, his blood's bounty;  
 or whether Merlin among all the phantasmagoria  
 showed him the final term and the firm purpose 380  
 of heaven, and the errand of Helayne the daughter of Pelles  
 - there, on the deck above the flood, stood  
 the daughter of a king, holding an unseen thing  
 between her hands, but over her hands a veil,  
 the saffron veil of the sun itself, covered 385  
 all; her face was pale with stress of passion  
 as the ship ran - and even in a sleep within a sleep  
 Taliessin trembled; terrible was the form of the princess,  
 the covered shape terrible; as the stupor loosed

he saw himself below himself asleep 390  
 deep within the protective pentagram, where burned  
 the four fires, and Brisen self-fiery,  
 at the five angles, and the tree-tangles beyond  
 in the first beginning, in the spinning of Merlin's spells  
 when the wise twins came from the wood; but all that stood 395  
 at the height of the brain faded into the space  
 again of a starry night; through the reach of Logres  
 the stones of the waste glimmered like summer stars,  
 as if the king's poet's household of stars  
 shone, in a visible glory, on the dreaming Taliessin. 400  
 The spells of Merlin worked in each episode of time,  
 each code of initiation, each vocation and rule,  
 each school of power, the foundation of Camelot, the bond  
 of the two kings in Carbonek, Caerleon, and Camelot,  
 of the Holder of the Hallows and the new-designed house 405  
 of the Hallows in the Empire. Taliessin's brain lost  
 again the vision of Imagination at the full;  
 he heard the final voice of Merlin lull  
 once more his body and mind to deep sleep:  
 'Son of the bards, go; go, Taliessin; 410  
 take the track of the Empire; go to Byzantium.  
 Thereafter you shall buy souls in many markets,  
 low be the purchase or high - all's low,  
 so the show of summer stars be thereby heightened.  
 If in the end anything fail of all 415  
 purposed by our mother and the Emperor, if the term  
 be held less firm in Camelot than in Carbonek,  
 as well my sister and I may guess now  
 and prepare the ambiguous rite for either chance  
 in the kingdom of Arthur; if cease the coming from the seas 420  
 at the evil luck of a blow dolorously struck,  
 it may be that this gathering of souls, that the king's poet's  
 household  
 shall follow in Logres and Britain the spiritual roads  
 that the son of Helayne shall trace westward through the trees  
 of Broceliande; they who shall be called and thrall'd 425



by Taliessin's purchase and their own will  
from many a suburb, many a waste; say  
that they are a wonder whose origin is not known,  
they are strown with a high habit, with the doctrine of largesse,  
who in his house shall be more than the king's poet 430  
because of the vows they take; but now haste  
all we three on the roads - Brisen to Carbonek,  
I to Camelot, and Taliessin to Byzantium.'

In the morning, they rose, ate, blessed each other,  
bade farewell, and parted - Brisen to Carbonek, 435  
Merlin to Camelot, and Taliessin to Byzantium.

### *Taliessin in the Rose-Garden*

The king's poet walked among the queen's roses  
(all kinds all minds taking),  
making verse, putting distance into verse,  
cutting and trimming verse as the gardeners the roses. 5  
He turned, at a path's end, between two bushes  
of cabbage-roses, scions of Caucasia, *centifoliae*,  
hearts folded strong in a hundred meanings.  
Along the level spinal path Taliessin,  
his eyes abused by the crimson, confused saw 10  
for a moment in the middle distance a rush of the crimson  
shaping at the garden's entrance to a triple form,  
to three implicit figures of the mind; his eyes  
cleared; appeared three women of Camelot --  
the feminine headship of Logres, the queen Guinevere, 15  
talking to Dindrane, Percivale's sister; beyond,  
as the ground-work she was and tended, a single maid  
hardened with toil on the well-gardened roses:  
what was even Dindrane but an eidolon of the slaves?

The air was clear, as near as earth can 20  
to the third heaven, climax tranquil in Venus.  
Only (what lacks there) it breathed the energy  
from Broceliande that ever seethed in Logres,  
the variable temperature of mastering Nature; Taliessin's  
senses under Nimue's influences stirred and trembled 25  
with the infinite and infinitesimal trembling of the roses.  
At the entrance to the long rose-path he saw  
the sensuous mode, the consummate earth of Logres,  
the wife of Arthur, the queen of the kingdom, Guinevere.  
Hazel-lithe she stood, in a green gown; 30  
bare against the green, her arm was tinged  
with faint rose-veins, and golden-flecked  
as the massed fair hair under the gold  
cirlet of Logres; on one hand was the ring  
of the consort of Logres; deep-rose-royal

it drew the rose-alleys to its magical square. 35  
 There, in the single central ruby, Taliessin  
 saw, in the sovereign gem of Logres, the contained  
 life of Logres-in-the-Empire; till the flush of the roses  
 let seem that the unrestrained rush of the ruby  
 loosed a secular war to expand through the land, 40  
 and again the shore of Logres - and that soon -  
 felt the pirate beaks in a moon of blood-letting;  
 and within, yet encircling, the war, the sacred stone  
 shook with the infinitesimal trembling of the roses  
 and melted inwards into the blood of the king 45  
 Pelles, belted by the curse of the Dolorous Blow;  
 so rich was the ring and by Merlin royally runed.  
 The path of the garden was a verse into the wound,  
 into the secrets of Carbonek and the queen's majesty,  
 in the king's poet's mouth; he heard himself say: 50  
 'The Wounded Rose runs with blood at Carbonek.'

Making the poem he made, he heard himself  
 say in the rose-garden to the queen of Logres -  
 she? he spoke low; she talked and laughed;  
 under her brow she looked for the king's friend 55  
 Lancelot. Taliessin heard himself say:  
 'Tristram and Mark were in love with the Queen Iseult.  
 Palomides studied her more; so I  
 everywhere study and sigh for the zodiac in flesh -  
 scandal to men, folly to women! but we, 60  
 Palomides and I, see everywhere the hint,  
 in a queen's shape or a slave's; we bid for a purchase;  
 the purchase flies to its aim in the heart of another;  
 our fame is left us darkling, and our mind to find  
 a new law; bitter is the brew of exchange. 65  
 We buy for others; we make beauty for others;  
 and the beauty made is not the beauty meant:  
 shent is pride while the Rose-King bleeds at Carbonek.

'Scandal to the pious Jews, folly to the sly Greeks!

But I was Druid-born and Byzantium-trained. 70  
 Beyond Wye, by the cauldron of Ceridwen, I saw  
 the golden sickle flash in the forest, and heard  
 the pagans mutter a myth; thence by the ocean  
 dreaming the matter of Logres I came where the hierarchs  
 patter the sacred names on the golden floor 75  
 under the Throne of Empire; I saw how the City  
 was based, faced fair to the Emperor as the queen to the king,  
 slaves to lords, and all Caucasia to Carbonek.  
 The magnanimous stair rose in the hall of Empire.  
 The Acts of Identity issued from the Throne; there 80  
 twelve images were shown in a mystery, twelve  
 zodiacal houses; the sun of the operative Emperor  
 wended through them, attended by the spiritual planets,  
 attributing to the themes their qualities of cause and permanence:  
 in each the generation of creation, in each the consummation. 85  
 All coalesced in each; that each mind  
 in the Empire might find its own kind of entry.  
 Aquarius for me opened the principle of eyes  
 in the clearness above the firmament; I saw below,  
 patterned in the stellar clearness, the rosed femininity 90  
 particed out of the universe, the articulated form  
 of the Eve in the Adam; the Adam known in the Eve.  
 To visionary eyes the path of man began  
 to pass through the themes and the houses; can I recall  
 all? shall even the queen be seen in the full 95  
 glory now in Camelot outside Byzantium?  
 Nay, say only that the Twins ran in the arms  
 and laired in the hands, in the queen's hands, in Rome  
 the City of Twins, wolf-twins, cubs  
 humanized to labour, making muscles and thumbs, 100  
 that each might neighbour the other to instruments and events.  
 The Scorpion-contingency, controlled and ensouled in Jerusalem,  
 held its privy place; the Acts of Identity  
 furnished with danger the anger of the laden tail.  
 Earth and the queen's body had base in Libra. 105  
 Glorious over Logres, let the headship of the queen

be seen, as Caucasia to Carbonek, as Logres to Sarras.

'Within and without the way wove about the image,  
about the City and the body; I followed the way  
from the eyes; it was swallowed in the sweet dark pit 110  
of the palms - lit how? lit by the rays  
from the golden-growthed, golden-clothed arms,  
golden-sheathed and golden-breathed, imperially  
shining from above toward instruments and events,  
rays shaken out towards the queen's hand stretched 115  
to welcome the king's friend, or a slave's to trim  
the rose or pluck a nut from the uncut hazel,  
or the princess Dindrane's to the fair conclusion of prayer.  
Under the flashes, down a steep stair, I came  
to a deep figure; I came to the house of Libra. 120  
Libra in the category of flesh is the theme of Caucasia,  
the mesh of the net of the imperially bottomed glory;  
and the frame of justice and balance set in the body,  
the balance and poise needful to all joys  
and all peace. I studied universal justice 125  
between man and man, and (O opposite!) between man and  
woman  
by their own skill and the will of the Throne; light  
compact in each fitting act of justice in the City,  
and support-in-the-flesh of the sitting body of beauty.  
Scandal to the Jews, folly to the Greeks! let the hazel 130  
of verse measure the multifold levels of unity.

'Under the rays I studied arch-natural justice.  
Suddenly at a moment the rays ranged wild  
and the darting light changed. The roseal pattern  
ran together, and was botched and blotched, blood 135  
inflaming the holy dark; the way of return  
climbed beside the timed and falling blood.

'The zodiac of Christ poorly sufficed the Adam;  
they bade the Scorpion sting; they looked wildly

on the crookt curves of identity; venom is hereditary, 140  
 and the Adam's children endure the Adam's blood.  
 Cain, seeking a cure, was driven farther  
 into the pit; at a blow he split the zodiac.  
 He called into being earthly without heavenly justice,  
 supposing without his brother, without the other, 145  
 he solely existed: fool! the rosed shape  
 vanished; instead, the clearness of Aquarius was bloodshot,  
 the Twins for very nearness tore each other:  
 the way climbed against timed and falling blood,  
 by a secular stair of months, deep-rose-royal. 150  
 And I there climbing in the night's distance  
 till the clear light shone on the height's edge:  
 out of the pit and the split zodiac I came  
 to the level above the magnanimous stair, and saw  
 the Empire dark with the incoherence of the houses. 155  
 Nay, there, as I looked on the stretched Empire  
 I heard, as in a throb of stretched verse,  
 the women everywhere throughout it sob with the curse  
 and the altars of Christ everywhere offer the grails.  
 Well are women warned from serving the altar 160  
 who, by the nature of their creature, from Caucasia to Carbonek,  
 share with the Sacrifice the victimization of blood.  
 Flesh knows what spirit knows,  
 but spirit knows it knows--categories of identity:  
 women's flesh lives the quest of the Grail 165  
 in the change from Camelot to Carbonek and from Carbonek  
 to Sarras,  
 puberty to Carbonek, and the stanching, and Carbonek to death.  
 Blessed is she who gives herself to the journey.

'Flesh tells what spirit tells  
 (but spirit knows it tells). Women's travel 170  
 holds in the natural the image of the supernatural,  
 the shed metrical of the shed anthropometrical.  
 Truth speeds from the taunt, and Pelles bleeds  
 below Jupiter's red-pierced planet; the taunt

yields to the truth, irony to defeated irony. 175  
The phosphor of Percivale's philosophical star  
shines down the roads of Logres and Broceliande;  
happy the woman who in the light of Percivale  
feels Galahad, the companion of Percivale, rise  
in her flesh, and her flesh bright in Carbonek with Christ, 180  
in the turn of her body, in the turn of her flesh, in the turn  
of the Heart that heals itself for the healing of others,  
the only Heart that healed itself without others,  
when our Lord recovered the Scorpion and restored the zodiac.  
Blessed is she who can know the Dolorous Blow 185  
healed in the flesh of Pelles, the flesh of women;  
and hears softly with touched ears in Camelot  
Merlin magically prepare for the Rite of Galahad  
and the fixing of all fidelity from all infidelity.

'This I saw in a chamber of Byzantium; the princess 190  
Dindrane again opened my eyes in Aquarius.  
Let the queen's majesty, the feminine headship of Logres,  
deign to exhibit the glory to the women of Logres;  
each to one vision, but the queen for all.  
Bring to a flash of seeing the women in the world's base.' 195

Taliessin saw the queen from the Throne, again  
from the rose-garden; she talked sideways to Dindrane.  
The king's poet came to the entrance; the queen said,  
with the little scorn that becomes a queen of Logres:  
'Has my lord dallied with poetry among the roses?' 200

### *The Departure of Dindrane*

The household waited in the court; the day was curst  
with a rain that had not abated since first dawn.  
Hoods and cloaks covered helms and gowns.  
An armed escort was in the van and the rear  
more for parade than precaution; little chance 5  
that any pirate should raid the realm's best.  
In the centre a few girls talked, and squires  
held horses ready for the two lords--  
Taliessin riding with Dindrane to the convent at Almesbury.

Logres kept the old Levitical law; 10  
each slave, at the end of seven years,  
was freed, in the change of flesh, from the mesh of bondage.  
The jubilee came: and he free or she  
before the king's bailiff was called to make choice  
with his own voice--either to be landed oversea 15  
by a Government ship, crowns in purse, at the nearest  
port to his own dearest land: or in Logres  
to be given--for a woman a dowry, for a man a farm  
or a place in a guild or the army; or, last,  
to compact again with a free heart's love 20  
in what household was sweet alike to past and future.

One of the company, a girl bought in Athens,  
for some trick of Taliessin's judgment or tenderness, and brought  
thence to Logres, silently sat her horse.  
Now near freedom, she brooded on choice-- 25  
this her last errand, but where to cast  
her future in seven days' time eluded purpose:  
whether with a passport under the King's seal  
to return safe to Athens through the themes;  
or whether with a dowry to wed some friend; 30  
or to swear herself still of the household, and leave  
what end would to come--and then to grieve  
perchance for all forgone; the king's poet



lightened no heart except when the heart heightened,  
and what heightening was sure to endure such doom? 35

The gloom of the day hung over the porch;  
there the doors swung: the princess Dindrane  
came from the house between her two friends,  
Elayne and Taliessin, Bors's wife and the king's poet.  
Her nature was sweet to all: no call in vain 40  
reached her, but these two she loved--these,  
the mistress of a household and the master of verse--held  
her heart's world's testimony; her best arts  
changed toils with Elayne and studies with Taliessin.  
These, her labours and neighbours, brought her that day 45  
to the court of separation, affirmation into rejection.  
Vocation before her, Percivale's sister paused,  
contemplating the road and the household in waiting.

The slave-girl looked; well she knew the princess,  
who in a year and a day had grown dear 50  
to the king's poet's house; she knew the vows  
Dindrane rode to take, for the sake of Christ;  
she guessed the sword of schism that pierced her lord,  
dew-bright as the chrism of dedication  
shining already there in Dindrane's brow. 55  
She measured herself against her, in a suddenly now  
new-treasured servitude; she saw there  
love and a live heart lie in Dindrane  
and all circumstance of bondage blessed in her body  
moving to a bondage--to a new-panoplied category. 60  
The cell of her own servitude was now the shell  
of the body of the princess; therefore, closer, of hers.  
The jointed and linked fetters were the jointed bones,  
manacles of energy were manipulations of power.  
The hazel of the cattle-goad, of the measuring-rod, 65  
of the slaves' discipline, of Logres' highway, of Merlin's  
wand of magic, of her lord's line of verse,  
of the octave of song, of the footpace under the altar,

straight and strong, was in Dindrane's bare arm,  
 fair measure in the body of the body's deeds. 70  
 Love and a live heart lay in Dindrane;  
 love and a live heart sprang in the slave,  
 while the clang of the escort's salute rang in her ears  
 as she saw moving down the steps the two presences,  
 Taliessin and Dindrane; rigid were the squires below, 75  
 rigid the whole household; at once, in her heart,  
 servitude and freedom were one and interchangeable.

Servitude is a will that obeys an imaged law;  
 freedom an unimaged - or makes choice of images.  
 Dindrane mounted; Taliessin, mounting, said: 80  
 'I will ride through the suburbs beside you. Advance, companions.'  
 His voice lifted the household; they broke to a canter.  
 As the slave's horse moved beneath her, she saw the lords  
 riding before her, the Ways upon the Way,  
 cloaked in the dim day, on the highroad of the hazel 85  
 between city and convent, the two great vocations,  
 the Rejection of all images before the unimaged,  
 the Affirmation of all images before the all-imaged,  
 the Rejection affirming, the Affirmation rejecting, the king's poet  
 riding through a cloud with a vowed novice, 90  
 and either no less than the other the doctrine of largesse;  
 two centaur shapes, cloaked to the haunches;  
 everywhere centaurs round her on the road, the bush  
 of hazels everywhere; all rose in the rush  
 of the company of the household changing to centaur shapes 95  
 ranging among the hazels: centaur or hazel  
 she? slave or free? no centaur; that  
 for eyes other, if ever - of a child, of a lover,  
 of the First Mover, of adoration, of a joined future  
 that should see her new-personal as the king's poet impersonal 100  
 had seen her and stated to God - her single future  
 now her own statement, her statement her function.  
 The flush of the sap rose within, as without  
 the rush of the centaurs plunged about her; she grew

to the impersonality of the hazel; before her eyes 105  
the hands of the great personalities linked as they rode,  
as they rode fast, close-handed, oath-bonded,  
word-in-the-flesh-branded, each seconded  
to the other, each in the crowd of Camelot vowed  
to the other, the two Ways, the Ways passing 110  
over and through the swelling heart of the hazel,  
all the uncut nuts of the hazel ripening to fall  
down the cut hazel's way; and it she.

Was there before the king's bailiff a choice?  
a voice to return in nostalgia to Athens? to be 115  
free - call it - in Logres? or else to be  
compact in an act? to follow the household's heart  
in a twin freedom and servitude, an impersonal  
time come, the slave made free, the free  
bound, Dindrane in a convent, till the whole ended, 120  
ending itself, not she ending it: choice?  
no choice then or ever for the king's poet's slave.  
She heard in the air, above the centaurs, a voice  
drop from the third heaven - fixed is the full.  
It was toned to a sweetness of note disowned by the world 125  
while the world was self-owned; as in Merlin's glass  
the *mens sensitiva*, the feeling intellect, opens,  
and the future comes to pass in a fleeting light,  
so, over the galloping household, sang  
in the third heaven, overheard above the hooves, 130  
the foster-ward of Dindrane before his birth:  
'Fair lord, salute me to my lord Sir Lancelot my father,  
and bid him remember of this unstable world.'  
The grand Rejection sang to the grand Affirmation;  
itself affirming, itself honouring, its peer: 135  
'Salute me, salute me, to my lord Sir Lancelot my father.'

Untie! untie! the two-handed shape  
disbanded before her into the two princes.  
Taliessin had cried a halt; the air's sound

sang so high it split into his voice, 140  
 the voice that followed the art of poetry in Logres,  
 and another part that fled away singing  
 into the third heaven; the companions drew rein.  
 The last villas of Camelot lay behind.  
 Before her the lords' cloaks shifted as they turned 145  
 in their saddles: the king's poet kissed Dindrane's hand.  
 He said: 'Blessed one, what shall I wish you now  
 but a safe passage through all the impersonalities?'  
 And she: 'Most blessed lord, what shall I wish  
 but the return of the personalities, beyond 150  
 the bond and blessing of departure of personality?  
 I will affirm, my beloved, all that I should.'  
 And he: 'I will reject all that I should--  
 yes, and affirm; the term of Camelot, my adored,  
 lies at the term of Almesbury. The Grace be with you; 155  
 which, as your face made visible, let your soul sustain.'  
 He turned his horse aside; he burned on the household,  
 crying: 'All, with the princess to Almesbury!  
 and again to me at Camelot. Dindrane, farewell!'  
 She cried: 'Taliessin, farewell;' the shell of her body 160  
 yearned along the road to the cell of vocation.  
 Under her hazel's stroke her horse woke  
 to the gallop; her escort broke to an equal pace;  
 and her face fixed on the road, only  
 the other horse the king's poet bestrode 165  
 tossed its head in the pause, snorting an answer.

Seven days afterwards, before the king's bailiff,  
 the slave-girl said: 'I will swear to what I serve,  
 the household and its future; may God pluck it fair,  
 for I give my heart to the luck of the hallows: write 170  
 that now I am quits with those two jangling bits.  
 They only can do it with my lord who can do it without him,  
 and I know he will have about him only those.'

## *The Founding of the Company*

About this time there grew, throughout Logres,  
a new company, as (earlier) in Tabennisi  
or (later) on Monte Cassino or in Cappadocia  
a few found themselves in common; but this, less -- 5  
being purposed only to profess a certain pointing.  
It spread first from the household of the king's poet;  
it was known by no name, least his own,  
who hardly himself knew how it was grown  
or whether among the readers or among the grooms  
it took source from doctrine or toil, but among his own 10  
it was first nobly spoken as a token of love  
between themselves, and between themselves and their lord.  
Grounded in the Acts of the Throne and the pacts of the themes,  
it lived only by conceded recollection,  
having no decision, no vote or admission, 15  
but for the single note that any soul  
took of its own election of the Way; the whole  
shaped no frame nor titular claim to place.  
As the king's name held the high lords  
in the kingdom's glory, so the Protection this, 20  
but this was of the commons and the whole manner of love,  
when love was fate to minds adult in love.  
What says the creed of the Trinity? *quicumque vult*;  
therefore its cult was the Trinity and the Flesh-taking,  
and its rule as the making of man in the doctrine of largesse, 25  
and its vow as the telling, the singular and mutual confession  
of the indwelling, of the mansion and session of each in each.

Grounded so in the Acts and pacts of the Empire,  
doctrine and image -- from rose-lordly Caucasia  
to the sentences sealing the soul through the whole of Logres 30  
by the mouth of London-in-Logres; from the strong base  
of maids, porters, mechanics, to the glowing face  
of Dindrane (called Blanchefleur) and the cells of the brain  
of the king's college and council -- were the wise companions.

The king's poet's household opened on the world 35  
 in a gay science devised before the world  
 and prized by (however darkened) the very heathen.  
 They measured the angle of creation; in three degrees  
 along the hazel they mounted the mathematics of the soul, 40  
 no wisdom separate but for convenience of naming  
 and the claiming by the intellectual art of its part  
 in the common union. So, at the first station,  
 were those who lived by a frankness of honourable exchange,  
 labour in the kingdom, devotion in the Church, the need  
 each had of other; this was the measurement and motion 45  
 of process- -the seed of all civil polity  
 among Esquimaux or Hottentots, and in any turbulent tribe  
 the ceasing of strife; only rejected in P'o-l'u,  
 but only by a nightmare could the household know P'o-l'u.  
 This the Acts of the Emperor decreed to the world, 50  
 losing or loosing none, of the heathen without  
 or the slaves within; nay, servitude itself  
 was sweetly fee'd or freed by the willing proffer  
 of itself to another, the taking of another to itself  
 in degree, the making of a mutual beauty in exchange, 55  
 be the exchange dutiful or freely debonair;  
 duty so and debonair freedom mingled,  
 taking and giving being the living of largesse,  
 and in less than this the kingdom having no saving.

The Company's second mode bore farther 60  
 the labour and fruition; it exchanged the proper self  
 and wherever need was drew breath daily  
 in another's place, according to the grace of the Spirit  
 'dying each other's life, living each other's death.'  
 Terrible and lovely is the general substitution of souls 65  
 the Flesh-taking ordained for its mortal images  
 in its first creation, and now in Its sublime self  
 shows, since It deigned to be dead in the stead of each man.  
 This to be practised the hidden contemplatives knew  
 throughout the Empire, and daily slew and were slain; 70

this to be practised the whole Company believed  
and gently and sweetly received in the shining air  
even at Camelot; at Caerleon it became common  
there when they removed they loved easier.  
This now out of the cells of contemplatives 75  
walked for a little in the sun; none of the Company  
in marriage, in the priesthood, in friendship, in all love  
forgot in their own degree the decree of substitution.  
Wary of much chatter, yet when they kissed  
or pressed hands, they claimed and were claimed at once, 80  
neither ashamed of taking nor chary of giving,  
love becoming fate to dedicate souls.

Few and that hardly entered on the third  
station, where the full salvation of all souls  
is seen, and their co-inhering, as when the Trinity 85  
first made man in Their image, and now restored  
by the one adored substitution; there men  
were known, each alone and none alone,  
bearing and borne, as the Flesh-taking sufficed  
the God-bearer to make her a sharer in Itself. 90  
Of the lords Percivale, Dindrane, Dinadan, the Archbishop;  
of the people a mechanic here, a maid there,  
knew the whole charge, as vocation devised.  
More rarely, at a moment, the king's poet saw  
in the large vision of verse, at once everywhere 95  
the law willed and fulfilled and walking in Camelot;  
as from a high deck among tossing seas  
beyond Broceliande he had seen afar  
a deep, strange island of granite growth,  
thrice charged with massive light in change, 100  
clear and golden-cream and rose tintured,  
each in turn the Holder and the Held as the eyes  
of the watcher altered and faltered and again saw  
the primal Nature revealed as a law to the creature;  
beyond Carbonek, beyond Broceliande, 105  
in the land of the Trinity, the land of the perichoresis,

of separateness without separation, reality without rift,  
where the Basis is in the Image, and the Image in the Gift,  
the Gift is in the Image and the Image in the Basis,  
and Basis and Gift alike in Gift and Basis. 110

On a Sunday, on a feast of All Fools, Dinadan came  
to the rose-garden where Taliessin walked.  
The king's poet ached with belated verse;  
he took part against himself; his heart waited  
for his voice, and again his voice for his dumb heart. 115

He dreamed of the face of Dindrane; the face of Dinadan  
suddenly before him was compact of trifold light,  
as by an analogical substitution  
for Dindrane or the vision of verse - truth from the taunt,  
and the proof, for those who will, of the vaunt of the doctrine. 120

Dinadan said: 'Well encountered, lieutenant  
(they call you) of God's new grace in the streets of Camelot.'  
Taliessin answered: 'What should I do, calling  
myself a master, and falling so to P'o-l'u? 125

I should rue the boast there among the marshes,  
a lieutenant of the octopods for ever.' Dinadan said:  
'Sir, God is the origin and the end God;  
cause is comfort and high comfort is cause.

Catch as catch can - but the higher caught in the lower,  
the lower in the higher; any buyer of souls  
is bought himself by his purchase; take the lieutenancy  
for the sake of the shyness the excellent absurdity holds.' 130

Taliessin said: 'Must I be once more superfluous?  
as to Dindrane and the kingdom, so to the Company,  
verse is superfluous, and I even to verse.' 135

Dinadan answered: 'Sir, in the charge at Badon  
and the taking of Camelot, though you were chief, you were still  
superfluous; could relief ever have come with forsaking  
the masculine hearts of your house, who on each side  
cried as they rode: "Taliessin! and charge, Logres!"? 140  
Labour without grudge is without grief,  
and the dayspring will have its head where it bids.



Any may be; one must. To neighbour  
whom and as the Omnipotence wills is a fetch  
of grace; the lowest wretch is called greatest 145  
--and may be--on the feast of fools. The God-bearer  
is the prime and sublime image of entire superfluity.  
If an image lacks, since God backs all,  
be the image, a needless image of peace  
to those in peace; to you an image of modesty. 150  
This purchase of modesty is nothing new;  
in the cause is your comfort, in your comfort also the cause.  
Take the largesse; think yourself the less; bless heaven.'

Therefore in Camelot and Caerleon the king's poet  
was rated then, by the unformulated Company, 155  
as, beyond the principle and the rule, their single bond.  
Unvowed, they allowed the lieutenancy in Camelot, but on feasts  
served it in Caerleon with such a delicate smile,  
such joyous and high-restrained obeisance of laughter  
as (more than in all households of the great lords) 160  
ordained through all degrees an equality of being.  
The Company throve by love, by increase of peace,  
by the shyness of saving and being saved in others--  
the Christ-taunting and Christ-planting maxim  
which throughout Logres the excellent absurdity held. 165

## *The Queen's Servant*

The lord Kay wrote to the lord Taliessin:  
'Now the queen's majesty has need of a maid  
for certain works - to read Greek and translate,  
to manage the building of rose-gardens, to wait  
about her in actions of office; one who knows 5  
the rhythms of ceremony, also of the grand art.  
The house of Your Sublimity, besides its name in battle,  
sends forth a fame of such knowledgeable creatures; please  
the king's poet to sign this warrant I send,  
adding what name he choose to bear it back.' 10

Taliessin sent for one of his proved household,  
proper to the summons, near his thought. She came;  
he exhibited the warrant, saying: 'Now be free.  
The royalties of Logres are not slavishly served,  
nor have you deserved these years less of Us 15  
than to go to the queen's meinie.' She said: 'So.  
Freedom, I see, is the final task of servitude.  
Yet buy, sir, still what was bought in your thought -  
myself with a clear sum purchased from the world.  
Though I pay the ransom now, it is but with your gold; 20  
hold well now to the purpose of the purchase.  
How shall I serve else?' He said: 'The spells  
of Merlin were mighty in time, but rhyme trebles  
the significance of time. Where once did We buy you?'  
She answered: 'In a shire of Caucasia, when my lord, 25  
growing in glory of song, passed from Byzantium  
eastward through Caucasia.' He said: 'The lambs  
that wander among roses of Caucasia are golden-lamped.  
I have seen from its blue skies a flurry of snow  
bright as a sudden irrepressible smile 30  
drive across a golden-fleeced landscape.'  
'Nay,' she said, 'though I was bought there,  
have I ever seen such a place? Sir, what shire  
is noted for such fair weather?' He answered: 'Read

the maps in Merlin's books or Ours or the one 35  
 small title We brought by the Emperor's leave from Byzantium.  
 Or even learn it a quicker way. Unclothe.  
 We who bought you furnish you. As was Our thought,  
 so be the truth, for Our thought was as the truth.  
 Know by Our sight the Rite that invokes Sarras 40  
 lively and lifelong. O We most unworthy!  
 She cast her garments from her; shining-naked  
 and rose-flushed she stood; in that calm air,  
 fair body and fair soul one organic  
 whole--so the purchase, so the purpose, 45  
 the prayer of Dindrane in the convent at Almesbury so  
 and the benediction (unspoken yet) of Galahad  
 on all the derivations. The lord Taliessin  
 said: 'And so, in a high irenical shire,  
 are flashing flaunts of snow across azure skies, 50  
 golden fleeces, and gardens of deep roses.  
 There, through the rondures, eyes as quick as clear  
 see, small but very certain, Byzantium,  
 or even in a hope the beyond-sea meadows  
 that, as in a trope of verse, Caucasia shadows. 55  
 Uncurtain the roses.' He named a blessing from Merlin,  
 and she stretched her open hands to the air; there  
 they were full at once of roses; again and again  
 she gathered and flung them at Taliessin's feet--  
 brushing off buds that clung to her, crimson, centifoliae, 60  
 Caucasian roses gently falling in Camelot.  
 Art-magic spiritual, they neither faded  
 nor vanished; so holy, over all wizards, was Merlin,  
 The whole room was shaded crimson from them.  
 Taliessin lifted his hand; she stayed; he sang 65  
 a sweet borrowed craft from Broceliande,  
 and the room grew full at once of the bleat of lambs.  
 Visibly forming, there fell on the heaped roses  
 tangles and curds of golden wool; the air  
 was moted gold in the rose-tinctured chamber-- 70  
 as in the land of the Trinity those few

who have seen say that the light is clear or roseal  
 or golden-cream, each in each and again in each.  
 Taliessin said: 'Thus the gathering through Broceliande  
 of the riches of Caucasia; but We -did We not see 75  
 a poet in Italy do more for a beggar  
 by the grace of our Lord? neither wizard nor saint  
 are We, yet something perhaps -Let the Flesh-taking  
 aid Us now for the making of Your Excellency's coat,  
 if it please the Mercy.' Thrice he genuflected, 80  
 thrice he murmured inaudible Latin, thrice  
 with blessed hands he touched the roses and the wool.  
 The roses climbed round her; shoulder to knee,  
 they clung and twined and changed to a crimson kirtle.  
 The wool rose gently on no wind, 85  
 and was flung to her shoulders; behind her, woven of itself,  
 it fell in full folds to a gold-creamed cloak;  
 hued almost as the soft redeemed flesh  
 hiding the flush of the rich redeemed blood  
 in the land of the Trinity, where the Holy Ghost works 90  
 creation and sanctification of flesh and blood.  
 Taliessin fastened the cloak with his own brooch  
 at her throat; only he drew round her the old  
 leathern girdle, for a bond and a quiet oath  
 to gather freedom as once she gathered servitude. 95  
 Shoes he fetched her from the household's best store,  
 to wear still the recollection of her peers,  
 under whatever election she graced them still.  
 Clothed and brilliant, she faced the king's poet.  
 He said: 'So bright? yet be seen now in Camelot.' 100  
 The colour's height about her a little quenched  
 its power; she, still drenched by the power,  
 murmured: 'Let my lord end this hour with a gift  
 other than the Rite; that the Rite be certain, let  
 my lord seal me to it and it to me.' 105  
 Gravely, considering the work, the king's poet said:  
 'As the Roman master sets his bondman free?  
 or the bishop in the Roman rite the instructed neophyte

at his proper confirmation?' She said: 'To choose  
 were insolence too much and of too strange a kind; 110  
 my lord knows my mind.' Her eyes were set  
 upon him, companion to companion, peer to peer.  
 He sent his energy wholly into hers.  
 'Nay,' he said, 'henceforth, in the queen's house,  
 be but the nothing We made you, making you something.' 115  
 Lightly he struck her face; at once the blast  
 of union struck her heart, the art-magic  
 blended fast with herself, while all she  
 burned before him, colour of cloak and kirtle  
 surpassed by colour of flesh and blood and soul 120  
 whole and organic in the divined redemption  
 after the kind of Christ and the order of Logres.  
 He said: 'Till death and after,' and she: 'Till death,  
 and so long as the whole creation has any being,  
 the derivation is certain, and the doom accomplished.' 125

In his room at Camelot the king's poet signed  
 the warrant; he gave it to the queen's free servant,  
 saying: 'Carry this to the lord Kay, companion.  
 Be as Ourselves in Logres; be as Dindrane  
 under the Protection, and in the Protection prosper. 130  
 Depart, with God.' She said: 'Remain, in God.'

### *The Meditation of Mordred*

The king has poled his horsemen across the Channel  
on the torn fragments of letters from the Pope Deodatus:  
setting private affairs in front of public,  
he has left to me the power of the kingdom and the glory.

He has dragged up all his elms; they were the poles. 5  
Now they stand immobilized round Lancelot in Benwick;  
lest, having one illegal son by his sister my mother,  
the king should be cheated with another by his wife the queen.

He ravages Gaul; I rest on his palace roof,  
and watch the elms bud in steel points 10  
with which Gawaine and my uncanonical father  
prod Lancelot's walls; Lancelot sits safe.

The queen hides at Almesbury among the nuns.  
If I pulled her out and paraded her through Camelot,  
the towns would laugh and howl in a mania of righteousness, 15  
casting missiles visible and invisible, words and stones.

Camelot is apt to maintain a double poise  
of Catholic morals and another kind of catholic mockery.  
It is laidly alike to be a wittol and a whore,  
and wittoldom and whoredom are alike good cause for war. 20

The elms top the Gallic sky; the Pope  
bade Arthur be friends again with his friend, but the king  
tore the pontifical letters; would not the Pope  
(the thing done) be pleased if his seal were avenged?

London is become a forest; voices and arms 25  
throw a dementia of hands, tossed caps,  
towzled shouts, bare grinning leaves,  
a whole wood of moral wantons, whose spines

are tree-stretched up towards me, their hope.  
Arthur had his importance; why not I? 30  
Like son, like father; *adsum*,  
said the steel trap to the wolf when the trap sprang.

The nit-witted wittols of worldly wisdom tear  
their throats at the abolition of the Byzantine tribute,  
now the coined dragons stay in their pockets at home. 35  
Kin to kin presently, children; I too am a dragon.

My father dwelled on the thought of the Grail for his luck,  
but I can manage without such fairy mechanism.  
If it does prove to be, which is no likely thought,  
I will send my own dozen of knights to pull it in. 40

My cooks would be glad of such a cauldron of Ceridwen  
to stand by their fires - magic; but, come to magic,  
at a rubbing genii might slide into my room,  
delicately, as in the kitchen of Ala-ud-Din.

Ala-ud-Din . . . he dwelled beyond miles of bamboo, 45  
of bamboo moving with waving tops in the wind,  
beyond the isles and the lands whose names I heard  
from Zemarchus the trader who travelled the turn of the seas;

by water beyond the islands of Naked Men  
and the province of the Five Senses; beyond P'o-l'u 50  
he told of another Empire, beyond the bamboos,  
where a small Emperor sits, whom his women fan

in the green palace among his yellow seas.  
He watches his tiny-footed, slant-eyed wives  
creep in and out; he deigns 55  
a rare caress to any he cares to praise.

Once or twice in each seven years  
he relieves himself by softly breathing a name;

if with the music, they bear her to his silken bed;  
if against, they carry her in a coffer of bamboo bars

60

to lie on the edge of a swamp till thirst or the flood  
or the crocodiles end her, but the coolies slink away  
from her caged there, and crawl with prostrations  
back under the curved eaves of the palace of jade.

Here, as he in the antipodean seas,  
I will have my choice, and be adored for the having;  
when my father King Arthur has fallen in the wood of his elms,  
I will sit here alone in a kingdom of Paradise.

65



## *The Prayers of the Pope*

Early on the feast of Christmas the young Pope  
knelt in Lateran - Deodatus, Egyptian-born,  
slender, white-haired, incandescent,  
seeming in his trance of prayer a third twin  
of Merlin and Brisen, masculine touched with the feminine, 5  
except for their black hair strangely bleached  
as if time's metre were smitten by sacred grief.  
Over the altar a reliquary of glass held  
an intinctured Body; the Pope waited to pass  
to sing his tri-fold Eucharist; meanwhile he prayed 10  
alone and aloud in the candled shroud of the dark.  
Sweet his voice sounded in the new Latin  
founded on Virgil but colloquial, capable of rhyme,  
fastening in a time of genesis Lupercal and Lateran  
and hastening by measure the flood of the soul in the blood. 15  
The young Pontiff's meditation set to *Magnificat*,  
to the total Birth intending the total Death,  
to the Love that lost Itself, nor only an image  
nor only all the images but wholly Itself.  
The Pope prayed: 'But each loss of each image 20  
is single and full, a thing unrequited,  
plighted in presence to no recompense, no  
purchase of paradise; eyes see no future:  
when the Son of Man comes, he brings no faith in a future.  
Send not, send not, the rich empty away.' 25

A tale that emerged from Logres surged in Europe  
and swelled in the Pope's ears; it held nothing  
of fulfilment of prophecy and the sea-coming of the Grail  
but only of bleak wars between Arthur and Lancelot,  
Gawaine set to seek his heart's vengeance, 30  
the king's son gone whoring with fantasy,  
and mobs roaring through Camelot; the Pope's letters  
had brought no staying of the slaying nor ceasing of the sin  
nor healed the dichotomy of battle. The tale spread,

till the governors of the themes knew it in their own dreams; 35  
 forsaking the Emperor, they chose among themselves,  
 here one and there one, foes  
 among themselves, puppets of reputation,  
 void of communicated generation of glory;  
 clouds covered the Imperial Throne in Byzantium; 40  
 and the Acts of the Throne were let by infidels; none  
 cared how men were shaped in body or mind,  
 nor pined for the perfect Parousia; all gave  
 their choice to the primal curse and the grave; their loves  
 escaped back to the old necromantic gnosis 45  
 of separation, were it but from one soul.  
 Frantic with fear of losing themselves in others,  
 they denounced and delivered one other to reprobation -  
 Mordred or the Khan of the Huns or the Khalif of Asia  
 or any neighbour they envied in labour or love. 50  
 They rejected the City; they made substitutes for the City;  
 mutes or rhetoricians instead of the sacred poets,  
 cheating for charity, exposition for experience,  
 braggadocio or burlesque for faith and hope.

The Pope prayed before the Body in Lateran: 55  
 'Rich in sorrow, rich in heart's heaviness,  
 blessed are we, bearing soul's wealth now,  
 and cannot anyhow part with that wealth, laden  
 with loss, and the loss always an affirmation,  
 double affirmation - image and the opposite of image - 60  
 which our wit, as courteously thine, O Blessed, carries,  
 but thine thyself only and the lack of thyself;  
 send not, send not, the rich empty away.'

The line faltered along the Danube and the Rhine;  
 pale in London and Lutetia grew the tale of peace, 65  
 and bloody the Noel-song; the towns of Logres  
 felt the sliding planes of the raiders' sails,  
 and Gaul all the push of the Northern woods,  
 savage growths, moods infinitely multiplied

across the bleak plains, under rains and snows 70  
of myths bitter to bondage, where in race  
by sullen marshes separated from race  
virtue is monopolized and grace prized in schism.  
The consuls and lords fought for the fords and towns,  
but over the Rhine, over the Vistula and Danube 75  
pressed the grand tribes; the land shook  
as band after band stamped into darkness cities  
whose burning had lamped their path; their wrath grew  
with vengeance and victory; they looked to no returning.

The Pope prayed: 'Where is difference between us? 80  
What does the line along the rivers define?  
Causes and catapults they have and we have,  
and the death of a brave beauty is mutual everywhere.  
If there be difference, it must be in thy sense  
that we declare - O Blessed, pardon affirmation! - - 85  
and they deny - O Blessed, pardon negation! - -  
that we derive from them and they from us,  
and alive are they in us and we in them.  
We know how we have sinned; we know not how they.  
Intend for us the double wealth of repentance; 90  
send not, send not, the rich empty away.'

Now within the frontiers, the evil wizards,  
the seers of the heathen, with thumbs instead of fingers,  
marked on the earth the reversed and accursed pentagram;  
they lit and fed the flickering spectral flames 95  
of the rituals of necromancy; they poured on the fires  
mastic and gum-aromatic; they uttered invocation  
of smouldering deities whose very names were lost,  
but the half-broken and half-spoken syllables  
wrought resurrection in the Pit; yet even those wizards 100  
hid their eyes where some few, their chief,  
the beastliest and chilliest in blasphemy, called farther  
on the powers of P'o-l'u, on the antipodean octopods,  
on the slime that had been before the time of Merlin

and below the trees and seas of Broceliande. 105  
 Then, in that power, they called and enthralled the dead,  
 the poor, long-dead, long-buried, decomposing  
 shapes of humanity; the earthy shapes stirred,  
 all whom the governors of the themes had once slain,  
 the uneyed images of old blockade and barricade, 110  
 children starved in sieges, prostituted women,  
 men made slaves or crucified; before the Parousia,  
 before the Redemption made manifest, the poor bodies  
 were drawn again slowly up through the earth,  
 and, held steady on their feet, stood and answered. 115  
 With rods of desecrated hazel the sorcerers  
 touched them and bade them walk; bloodless, automatized,  
 precursors of the tribes in a necromancy of justice,  
 those mechanized bodies stalked across the fords,  
 and the hordes of the heathen followed the corpses to battle. 120  
 Consuls and lords felt the cold coming  
 and the drumming of the earth under the tribes, but they shrank  
 only before the ghosts of the past - from graves  
 drawn by maleficent spells, but too-veritable ghosts  
 before those hosts moving in a terrible twilight. 125

The Pope saw himself - he sighed and prayed -  
 as a ruin of the Empire; he died in a foreboding.  
 He felt within him the themes divide, each  
 dreadfully autonomous in its own corporal place,  
 its virtue monopolized, its grace prized, in schism, 130  
 and the little insane brain whimpering of pain  
 and its past; before the Parousia, before the Redemption,  
 all his unredeemed deeds and words  
 rose as once they had been, fire in his body,  
 chill in his mind, and everywhere in mind and body 135  
 the terrible schism of identity into the categories  
 the miserable conquest of the categories over identity  
 split all, and fatally separated the themes  
 which in the beginning were mated with identical glory.  
 Such is death's outrage; so the Pope 140

died in a foretasting; only, hasting  
still to the salvaged and re-engaged Body,  
he prayed: 'And for me, in that new day, O Blessed,  
send not, send not, the rich empty away.'

Against the rule of the Emperor the indivisible 145  
Empire was divided; therefore the Parousia suspended  
its coming, and abode still in the land of the Trinity.  
Logres was void of Grail and Crown, but well  
had Mordred spelled his lesson from his father King Arthur.  
The prince had hungered; he had waited to-morrow and to- 150  
morrow  
till the sorrow of his waiting, satiating his blood,  
drove him to change the double wealth of loss  
for the single having; his craving refused itself.  
He sought his vision by mere derision of the vision.  
He drew into the ordained place of the Table 155  
the unstable pagan chiefs; all personal  
griefs in Logres burst and curst the impersonal  
formulae of glory; he assuaged his own image  
with the image of the Throne, setting both against the Empire,  
and begetting by the succubus of his longing, in a world of 160  
pagans,  
the falsity of all images and their incoherence.

The Pope prayed: 'O Blessed, confirm  
not thee in thine images only but thine images in thee.  
Bestow now the double inseparable wonder,  
the irrevocable union: set in each thy term. 165  
The formulae of glory are the food of intellectual love,  
from the rose-gardens to the wardens of the divine science,  
and so to the sacred Heart; the Flesh-taker  
with the God-bearer, each the off-springing of other,  
the Maker a sharer only and the making as much. 170  
Let the chief of the images touch the Unimaged, and free  
the Love that recovered Itself, nor only an image,  
nor only all the images, but wholly Itself;

free It that we, solely the rich, may pray  
send not, send not, the rich empty away.' 175

Taliessin gathered his people before the battle.  
'Peers of the household,' the king's poet said,  
'dead now, save Lancelot, are the great lords  
and the Table may end to-morrow; if it live,  
it shall have new names in a new report. 180

Short is Our time, though that time prove eternal.  
Therefore' - he lifted his hands to the level of his brow,  
the hands that had written and harped the king's music;  
there the ageing began ere the hair was grey,  
or the tongue tired of song, or the brain fey; 185  
O but the Bright Forehead was once young!

'Therefore now We dissolve the former bonds- -'  
the voice sounded, the hands descended- -'We dissolve  
the outer bonds; We declare the Company still  
fixed in the will of all who serve the Company, 190  
but the ends are on Us, peers and friends; We restore  
again to God the once-permitted lieutenancy;  
blessed be Dinadan by whom the lieutenancy began  
when he called Us on the day of fools, on his own day.

We restore it to God in each singly and in all. 195  
Receive it in God.' One of the household said,  
shining through grief, the king's poet's steward,  
a strong star: 'This is the last largesse;  
give we freely, companions; but first, lord,  
let us live again the moment of ratification, 200  
a superfluous necessity; let us lay our hands again  
between my lord's, and swear that the household endures  
for ever, and we yours in it.' Taliessin

answered: 'What skill have We had but to be the will  
of the whole Company?- -We a needful superfluity, 205  
the air in which the summer stars shine,  
nay, less- -the mode only of their placing and gracing.  
It is a command; swear.' While it was done,  
lightly each in turn and each with the other,

and each with the king's poet, the least of his household, 210  
all the household exchanged the kiss of peace.

The Pope prayed: 'Keep thy own for thyself.  
When the Thrones vanish--the imperial Throne hidden,  
the vassal thrones changed--and forbidden lives  
floating about the headless Emperor in P'o-l'u-- 215  
keep thy word in thine unknown elect:  
no wise their supernatural parts sundered  
from their natural hearts; little shall those hearts suffer--  
so much shall the healing metaphysic have power upon them--  
from evil and mischief and the crafty assaults of the devil. 220  
Purely their souls shall go and their bodies securely,  
whether in body or soul they drink deadly,  
or handle malice and slander as they handle serpents,  
by the magnificence in modesty, the modesty in magnificence  
that the doctrine of largesse teaches; what recovers 225  
lovers in lovers is love; let them then  
go into every den of magic and mutiny,  
touch the sick and the sick be healed, take  
the trick of the weak devils with peace, and speak  
at last on the coast of the land of the Trinity the tongue 230  
of the Holy Ghost. O Blessed, for ever bring  
thine own to thyself and for ever thyself to thine own.'

Jupiter rode over Carbonek; beyond Jupiter,  
beyond the summer stars, deep heaven  
centrally opened within the land of the Trinity; 235  
planetary light was absorbed there, and emerged  
again in its blissful journeys; there the three  
lords of the quest landed from the vessel of the quest,  
Bors, Percivale, and Galahad the High Prince--  
the chief of the images, and the contemplation of the images, 240  
and the work of the images in all degrees of the world.  
They lay for a year and a day imprisoned in a trance,  
waiting among moving rocks and granite voices  
the dawn-hour of the trine-toned light

and they in fine drawn to the canon of the Grail. 245  
 Whereof afterwards Bors should bear to Logres  
 the tale in his heart and the last largesse of Galahad.  
 He should follow the sun; which now behind the lords  
 rose from the saffron veil that, on the deck,  
 covered the body of Dindrane, Percivale's sister, 250  
 Taliessin's love, Galahad's foster-warden.  
 The sun outward ran a year's journey;  
 the earth span around the sun for a year;  
 for a year and a day the lords lay entranced.  
 The sun ran; it saw, and shuddered as it ran, 255  
 the bounds of the Empire breaking; beyond P'o-l'u  
 it saw the giant octopods moving; their tentacles  
 waving, stretching, stealing souls from the shores,  
 feeling along Burma, nearing India,  
 appearing above ocean, or sinking and slinking 260  
 and spreading everywhere along the bottom of ocean,  
 and heading inward. But there they touched and clutched,  
 somewhere in the deep seas, something that invited  
 holding- -and they held, enfolding- -and the tentacles folded  
 round long, stretched limbs, like somewhat of themselves 265  
 but harder and huger; the tentacles were touched and clutched,  
 flung and were clung to, clung and were not flung off,  
 brainlessly hastened and brainfully were hastened to.  
 The roots of Broceliande fastened on them  
 length lying along length and gripping length; 270  
 in the ocean where near and far are infinite and equal  
 the hollow suckers of the vast slimy tentacles  
 were tautened to Nimue's trees through the seas of P'o-l'u,  
 and fixed to a regimen; held so for ever  
 to know for ever nothing but their own hypnotic 275  
 sucking at the harsh roots; the giant octopods  
 hung helpless; the wizards and gods of the heathen  
 far along the Northern line, beyond Rhine and Danube,  
 helpless dwindled; helpless, the headless Emperor  
 was loosened, and sank and dissolved in the uncoped seas, 280  
 a crimson tincture, a formless colour, the foul



image of the rose-gardens of Caucasia now  
 losing itself, drifting in the waters, and none  
 to know what was real and what unreal  
 or what of sense stayed in the vagrant phosphorescence 285  
 save the deep impassable Trinity in the land of the Trinity,  
 uttering unsearchable bliss. The lords stirred  
 as the triple-toned light broke upon them  
 and they heard in their mode the primal canon of the Grail.  
 The roses of the world bloomed from Burma to Logres; 290  
 pure and secure from the lost tentacles of P'o-l'u,  
 the women of Burma walked with the women of Caerleon.

The Pope prayed: 'Thou hast harried hell, O Blessed,  
 and carried thence the least token of thyself.  
 Thou hast spoken a word of power in the midst of hell, 295  
 and well are thine Acts everywhere qualified with eternity.  
 That Thou only canst be, Thou only  
 everywhere art; let hell also confess thee,  
 bless thee, praise thee, and magnify thee for ever.'

The Pope passed to sing the Christmas Eucharist. 300  
 He invoked peace on the bodies and souls of the dead,  
 yoked fast to him and he to them,  
 co-inherent all in Adam and all in Christ.  
 The magical march of the dead by Rhine and Danube  
 and the tread of the necromancers who affirm only 305  
 vengeance and value of victory he lonely  
 received; he sheaved there the corn of his prayer.  
 The gnosis of separation in the Pope's soul  
 had become a promulgation of sacred union,  
 and he his function only; at the junction of communion 310  
 he offered his soul's health for the living corpses,  
 his guilt, his richness of repentance, wealth for woe.  
 This was the Pope's prayer; prayer is substance;  
 quick the crowd, the thick souls of the dead,  
 moved in the Pope's substance to the invoked Body, 315  
 the Body of the Eucharist, the Body of the total loss,

the unimaged loss; the Body salvaged the bodies  
in the fair, sweet strength of the Pope's prayer.  
The easement of exchange led into Christ's appeasement  
under the heart-breaking manual acts of the Pope. 320  
Before the host on the rivers, the automatized corpses  
stopped, dropped, disintegrated to dust;  
and the lust of the evil magicians hung in the air  
helpless; consuls and lords within the Empire,  
for all the darkening of the Empire and the loss of Logres 325  
and the hiding of the High Prince, felt the Empire  
revive in a live hope of the Sacred City.

Kneeling after the Eucharist, the Pope said,  
for the riches of loss, *Magnificat*, prostrate, he prayed:  
'Send not, send not, the rich empty away.' 330

## NOTES

## NOTES

Although given the complex nature of his poetry, Charles Williams ended his edition of *Taliessin Through Logres* with relatively few expository notes; and in his edition of *The Region of the Summer Stars*, only the preface provides explanatory comments. Fortunately, Williams also wrote two expository essays which can be found in the posthumous *Image of the City* and many invaluable notes responding to questions put to him by C.S. Lewis which exist in typescript form. In an attempt to provide the reader with helpful guidance through the poems, the following notes have been compiled. They largely consist of the forementioned notes from Williams as well as notes from a few of his other prose works, a supplement of the Charles Williams Society, C.S. Lewis's *Arthurian Torso*, and personal criticism.

In his notes responding to Lewis's inquiries, Williams does discuss his general scheme for the poems as follows:

The empire then is (a) all Creation -- with logothetes and what not as angels and such (b) Unfallen (c) a proper social order (d) the true physical body. I left it female in appearance because the Emperor must be masculine, but this is accidental. The Empire is the pattern; Logres the experiment. The Emperor is (i) God-in-operation or God-as-known-by-man (ii) Fate (iii) operative force -- as and according to the person concerned, but mostly here the God relation. Islam is (a) Theism (b) Manichæanism (c) heavy morality (d) Islam. The themes are the divisions of the Empire -- Caucasia, Gaul, Logres, etc. Caucasia is the physical fundamental -- (a) the buttocks (b) basic senses (c) direct sex (d) village society. Gaul is 'fruitfulness' (a) the breasts (b) traditional organization (c) scholastic debates and doctrines (d) theology. Byzantium is rather the whole concentration of body and soul than any special *member*. (The Lady Julian, I found last night, says that the City is built at the meeting-place of 'substance' and 'sensuality'.) The pirates are barbarous and chaotic instincts and uncivil ideas. The slaves are (I think) the pirates' kindred or captives or captives from the other themes (cf. Circassian girl in the *Arabian Nights*). Taliessin is the

poetic imagination in this world and Percivale the imagination of the other and of the universe; he is the brother of Blanchefleur = substitution. (*Answers*)

The poems of Williams's two Arthurian cycles also have no systematic arrangement. In his commentary on Williams's poems, *The Arthurian Torso*, C.S. Lewis comments on this order, "I do not know whether he would so have arranged them if he had lived to complete the cycle, but a mere commentator must get the imaginary chronology clear." Lewis then proceeds to arrange the poems in the following order with an instruction to the novice to take them in the same order as well\*:

From <i>The Region</i> :	The Calling of Taliessin.
From <i>Taliessin</i> :	The Calling of Arthur.
	The Vision of the Empire.
	Taliessin's Return to Logres.
	Mount Badon.
	The Crowning of Arthur.
	Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn.
	Bors to Elayne: the Fish of Broceliande.
	Taliessin in the School of the Poets.
	Taliessin on the Death of Virgil.
	The Coming of Palomides.
	Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney.
	Bors to Elayne: on the King's Coins.
	The Star of Percivale.
	The Ascent of the Spear.
	The Sister of Percivale.
From <i>The Region</i> :	The Founding of the Company.
	Taliessin in the Rose Garden.
	The Departure of Dindrane.
	The Queen's Servant.
From <i>Taliessin</i> :	The Son of Lancelot.
	Palomides before his Christening.
	The Coming of Galahad.
	The Departure of Merlin.
	The Death of Palomides.
	Percivale at Carbonek.
From <i>The Region</i> :	The Meditation of Mordred.
From <i>Taliessin</i> :	The Last Voyage.
From <i>The Region</i> :	The Prayers of the Pope.

From *Taliessin* : Taliessin at Lancelot's Mass.  
(95-96)

\*Other critics have suggested that this arrangement does less justice to the author's sense of design (Cavaliero 99).

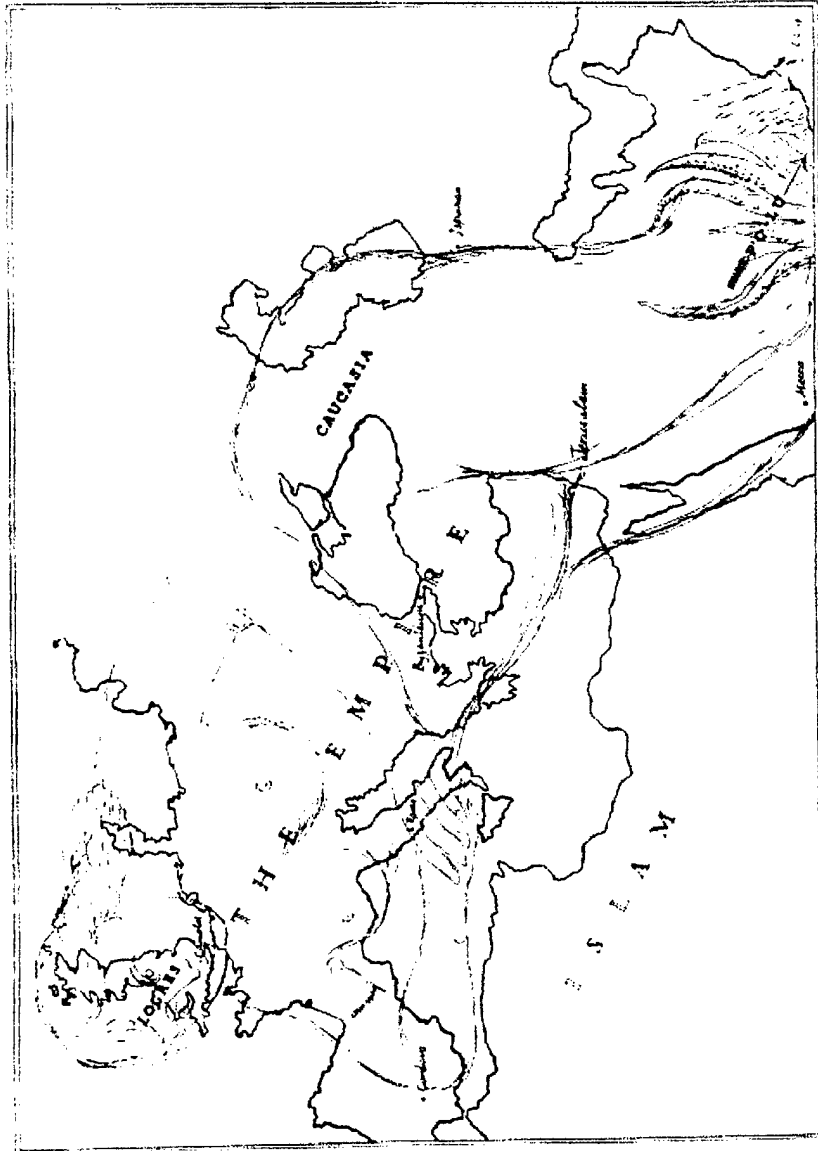
The first edition of *Taliessin Through Logres* also has an endpaper map (drawn by Lynton Lamb) of "The Empire." Superimposed on the territories of Islam, Logres, Caucasia, and P'o-l'u is a woman's body. A reproduction of this map can be found here on the following page. Williams also makes a few comments on the map himself:

As far as the Images are concerned, I suppose one of the most important is the identification of the Empire of Byzantium (in one significance) with the human organism. (*Image* 181)

Some time ago, in the course of writing certain poems concerned with one of the great myths, I invented a relevant smaller myth. In that pre-war myth there was imagined a union of geography, physiology, and metaphysics. The boundaries of the ancient Roman Empire under Byzantium were conceived as forming the shape of the human body, and also of more than the body--of the whole structure of man. Byzantium itself was the informing soul; and the head, with the conscious brain, lay in the realm of King Arthur--which was called Logres, and afterwards Britain.

The other provinces, or themes, of the Empire were consistent; and the odd thing was that, given the smallest pressure on the map, so they were. Taken in the feminine (as opposed to the masculine of the Emperor himself), the breasts were in Gaul (and the great historical development of Christian doctrine), the hands lay in Rome (whether for the armies and roads or for the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice by the Pope), and the buttocks were in Caucasia. Caucasia has not been frequently mentioned in English verse; outside the 'frosty Caucasus' of Shakespeare I do not remember it, except that Prometheus was bound there by Shelley, following tradition. It meant also, in the poem, a kind of free natural life -- primitive society, unromanticized sex. (MS. of *Notes by the Way*)

# MAP OF THE EMPIRE



In the notes, the following abbreviations have been used:

C.W.	= Charles Williams
<i>Le Morte</i>	= Malory's <i>Le Morte D'Arthur</i>
<i>Idylls</i>	= Tennyson's <i>Idylls of the King</i>
<i>First edition</i>	= C.W.'s endnotes from <i>Taliessin</i>
<i>Figure</i>	= C.W.'s <i>The Figure of Arthur</i>
<i>Answers</i>	= C.W.'s answers to C.S. Lewis's questions (MS.)
<i>Image</i>	= Anne Ridler's <i>Image of the City</i>
<i>Essential</i>	= Charles Heffling's <i>Essential Writings</i>
<i>Torso</i>	= C.S. Lewis's <i>Arthurian Torso</i>
<i>Notes</i>	= C.W.'s Society's <i>Notes on the Taliessin Poems</i>
PT	= Prelude ( <i>Taliessin</i> )
TRL	= Taliessin's Return to Logres
VE	= The Vision of the Empire
CA	= The Calling of Arthur
MB	= Mount Badon
COA	= The Crowning of Arthur
TSU	= Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn
BFB	= Bors to Elayne: The Fish of Broceliande
TSP	= Taliessin in the School of the Poets
TDV	= Taliessin on the Death of Virgil
CP	= The Coming of Palomides
LQM	= Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney
BKC	= Bors to Elayne: on the King's Coins
SP	= The Star of Percivale
AS	= The Ascent of the Spear
SOP	= The Sister of Percivale
SL	= The Son of Lancelot
PBC	= Palomides Before his Christening
CG	= The Coming of Galahad
DM	= The Departure of Merlin
DOP	= The Death of Palomides
PC	= Percivale at Carbonek
LV	= The Last Voyage
TLM	= Taliessin at Lancelot's Mass
PR	= Prelude ( <i>Region</i> )
CT	= The Calling of Taliessin
TRG	= Taliessin in the Rose-Garden
DD	= The Departure of Dindrane
FC	= The Founding of the Company
QS	= The Queen's Servant
MM	= The Meditation of Mordred
PP	= The Prayers of the Pope



## TALIESSIN THROUGH LOGRES

(Oxford, 1938)

“These references are not intended to help the poems as poems. All that comes from Malory is, I think, familiar, but though he provided many hints in his images he does not seem to trouble to work out the possibilities of relation. I have summarized a few as they are used here, and made what other acknowledgements are due” (*First edition*).

*Title.* This was not taken from Tennyson, but it was confirmed later by a line in *The Holy Grail* :

Taliessin is our fullest throat of song.  
(*First edition*)

### *Dedication*

“Humphrey Milford was publisher to the University of Oxford and head of the University Press London branch at Amen House, where C.W. worked as editor from 9 June 1908 to 4 September 1939, during which time these poems were written. Byzantium was from A.D. 330 the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, and since C. 6 the Patriarch of Constantinople, as Byzantium was then called, was head of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Logres (later Britain) is imaged as a member of the Empire, but of Western Christianity. C.W. chose the name and office of Byzantium as an image of a relationship of love exchanged between men in public, religious, working, or private life, and within man (as a little state) himself. A hierarchical order and wisdom develop an exchange of love, art, growth, and ability. (See notes on first poem)” (*Notes*).

“Humphrey Milford, who became Caesar to this poet, was a man of fine literary judgement and a quick and acute intelligence: his combination of authority and benevolence helped to give life to Williams’s conception of the ideal ruler. He was laconic in utterance (especially in writing--the brevity of his memoranda was proverbial, as was his eye for a misprint and his love of teasing his staff); he had an unexpected and deep humility; he had also a dislike of unpleasant scenes which caused Williams to give him the further title of *Deus Absconditus*” (*Image xvi*).

*Epigraph*

“The proper operation (working or function) is not in existence for the sake of the being, but the being for the sake of the operation”  
(*Beatrice*40).

## Prelude

*The Emperor reigns in Sophia. His glory spreads across the world. The Logos is made manifest in Carbonek, Camelot, and Cacausia.*

*The Emperor establishes a kingdom in Britain, but the rulers of Logres are blinded by "the fallacy of rational virtue." The Round Table reels, even as the promise represented by Galahad quickens into life.*

*The struggles of history begin. Byzantium is attacked by the Moslem enemy. Caucasia falls to the heretics as the "glory of substantial being"--make possible by the "immaculate conception"--is temporarily lost.*

Textual note: A previous version of this poem occurs in the *Advent* and in an intermediate form, both entitled "Prelude."

"The Empire of the poem exists as the substance of the actual Empire, and (like Logres) it half withdraws and half becomes history, because Logres has fallen, and our understanding has diminished...I add that the holy Empire does become continually visible, even in its theme of Caucasia; it renews itself to our sight. The fall of Logres has made everything difficult. But we can at least recognize the Empire--at Amen House or a score of other places--when we see it. Or we can feel the Emperor riding in the skies and see the flung stars--flashes of perception. It is at such moments that we begin again on the building up of Logres (C.W.)" (*Notes*).

l. 1: *Recalcitrant*: obstinately defiant of authority or restraint.

l. 2: *Caucasia*: a region of Russia between the Black and Caspian seas. C.W. comments on his use and development of the word "Caucasia" in *Image* 181:

The word was originally 'Circassia'; it came, of course, from the harems of the *Arabian Nights*, and I had used it lightly in certain allusions to frank non-significant sex affairs. But presently the use of that word became impossible for several reasons; it refused to bear the weight with which I wished to charge it. Fortunately the other word *Caucasia* offered itself. It was more historic, it had larger scope, it (like Byzantium) was capable of *meaning* more. That it referred (anatomically) more particularly to the buttocks was a late development. I can never see why the buttocks are funnier than any

other part of the body; they support us when we sit, they are balance and (in that sense) justice...“The repose of any royal or sacerdotal figure, throned, depends of them...All uses of the word ‘sit’ from ‘He that sitteth upon the throne saith: “Behold, I make all things new”’ downward, depend upon that image, or else there is no image” (MS. of *Notes by the Way*). They are erotic, it is true, and that was an advantage for the poem; but they are plainly and naturally so; they are not mixed up, as eyes or hands may be, with the active moral question.

*Thule*: the ancient name of an island or point of land six days north of Britain. It is also considered the northernmost part of the habitable ancient world. The name is first found in the account by Polybius (c150 BC) of the voyage made by Pytheas in the late 4th Century B.C. Ultima Thule means the end of the world.

l. 3: *Emperor*: “In one or two earlier poems of my own, the Emperor was a kind of sacerdotal royalty. But gradually he became--I would not simply say God but at least God as active, God as known in Church and State, God as ruling men” (*Image* 181).

l. 4: *Sophia*: Greek~σοφωσ - “wisdom.”

l. 6: *immaculate conception*: a Roman Catholic doctrine decreed by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854, stating that when ““The Holy Spirit will come upon you[Mary], and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. To the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God””--Luke i 35--The Virgin Mary was sinless.

l. 7: *Carbonek*: “place, or state, or life in the spirit, of dedicated lives; here King Pelles whatched over the Hallows” (*Notes*). The castle containing the Holy Grail (*Le Morte* xviii 16 and *Idylls*, “The Holy Grail” l. 810). “Carbonek itself must be, if not in, at least on the borders of Broceliande. It is the castle of the Hallows; there are in its chapel the Grail and the Spear. The Spear is that which pierced the heart of Christ; the Grail is the vessel used at the Last Supper, in which also the blood from the wounded heart was caught” (*Figure* 81).

*Camelot*: “place, or state, of intelligence, of government, business, daily being and doing” (*Notes*). One of King Arthur’s two court capitals, the other being Caerleon. Each is appropriate to certain times of the year, Camelot being the place where the court went for the celebration of Christmas (*Le Morte* iii 14 and *Idylls*, “Gareth and Lynette”).

l. 8: *gates*: “openings--eyes, ears, perceptions” (*Notes*).

*containers*: “citites, buildings, skull, thorax, pelvis” (*Notes*).

*intermediations*: “lucidity going between, interpreting”

(Notes).

l. 9: *geography*: “natural shapes of earth’ surface and the body”

(Notes).

*breathing geometry*: “(i) definition of shape and size ‘for resemblance and communication’ (*Greater Trumps*) (ii) the mind; the two living by the Logos double-fledged as everything is two-in-one, itself coinhering with its opposite; here winged for swiftness” (Notes).

*double-fledged*: fledged: reared until ready for flight or independent activity.

*Logos*: (Greek~λογος - “speech, word, or reason”): the divine wisdom manifest in the creation, government, and redemption of the world, and often identified with the second person of the Trinity. John i 1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

l. 10: *Logres*: in Chretien de Troyes’s *Lancelot*, “the name of Logres seems to be first used for King Arthur’s land; its derivation is said to be from the Welsh Lloegr, a land of faerie which was also Britain or within Britain” (*Figure 53*). “It is...Britain in an enlarging world--Britain and more than Britain. It is more like that mysterious Albion of which Blake wrote in another geography” (*Figure 80*). The Empire and Broceliande are to meet in Logres--see CT II. 209-210.

l. 11: *fallacy of rational virtue*: “The fallacy of virtue thought out by man for useful results. Arthur organised might for right, but failed to inculcate rightmindedness” (Notes).

l. 12: *seals of the saints*: “Arthur rejected Papal Bull (with Pope’s seal on it) forbidding him to go to war with Lancelot for love of the Queen” (Notes).

*Table*: the Round Table: the table had 150 seats, and to prevent any jealousy on the score of precedency, it was circular. The table was also a wedding gift from Guinevere’s father, King Leodegrance along with 100 knights (*Le Morte* iii 1 and *Idylls*, “The Coming of Arthur” l. 17). “The knights are capacities of man and modes of being (but also knights)” (*Image 176*). The table is first introduced into the Arthurian myth by an Anglo-Norman clerk, born in Jersey, named Wace, who ‘published’ his *Geste de Bretons* or *Roman de Brut* in 1155 and Layamon (*Figure 39*). “Wace mentions its making, but only briefly: ‘it was ordained that when this fair fellowship sat to meat, their chairs should be alike high, their service

equal, none before or behind his companions; and none could brag that he was exalted above any, for all alike were gathered round the board, and none was alien at the breaking of Arthur's bread" (Figure 41-42). In Figure 73, C.W. continues his description of the Round Table with reference to de Borron's account:

The story of the Round Table was already in existence, but de Borron, if he knew of it, would have nothing of so ordinary a convenience merely for civil peace. The First Table (Merlin said) had been established by Christ himself; the Second by Joseph of Arimathea, at the bidding of Christ himself; the Third was to be by Uther, at the bidding of Merlin. This alteration gives the myth a new stress, for the idea of a spiritual relationship is immediately present, circles of sanctity. The Apostolic company is the first institution; the company of true believers the second; the third is the chivalry of the Table...Logres and the Grail are to come together, and the king is to preside at the union.

1. 13: *Galahad*: in the later legends of King Arthur, he is the purest and noblest knight of the Round Table. He is the illegitimate son of Sir Lancelot and the princess Elaine and the last descendant of Joseph of Arimathea. He alone is qualified to fill the Siege Perilous at the Round Table, and he alone with Sir Percivale and Sir Bors achieves the quest for the Holy Grail. He also heals the Fisher King, and brings back fertility to his land. His career ends in Sarras, the Holy City and land of the Trinity, where he finally sees the uncovered chalice and renounces the world, asking God to release him from his material existence. The name of Sir Galahad has become synonymous with the perfect knight. He is best known from *Le Morte* xiii-xvii and *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail."

C.W., in *Image* 187/176, describes his conception of Galahad and his history:

One main fact, however, must be mentioned. There are, in the history of the European imagination, a few moments when a superb invention of the very first importance takes place. I doubt whether there has ever been one of more real power than that of the invention of Galahad....

Galahad (who is not exactly Christ, but rather man's capacity for Christ, or--to avoid dogma--let us say, for divine things). He must be of the blood of Pelleas, and therefore his mother must be Helayne, Pelleas's daughter. But his father?

...The Destined Knight is born of Lancelot who is (a) eighth in succession from Christ (8 is the number of the Christhood), and of his blood; (b) the strongest and greatest knight alive (person as distinguished from office); (c) much more than Arthur concerned with love as a thing of dolour and labour and vision. (Arthur at first just thinks Guinevere would be a convenient adjunct of his royalty.) Lancelot then is to be brought to Helayne. And how? In the parts of Carbonek Nimue begins to work. Nimue is holy undefiled Nature-- Creation outside man--and she sends her two servants Briseis and Merlin, the one to Carbonek to attend on the destined Mother, the other to Logres to help establish the Kingdom, build Camelot, and bring Lancelot to Carbonek.

l. 14: *Moslem*: variation of Muslim: an adherent to Islam. Islam: the religion of Muhammed. The word means "resignation" or "submission to the will of God." Moslems believe that every child is born in Islam and would continue in the true faith if not led astray. Islam emphasizes five duties: (1) bearing witness that there is but one God and one prophet, Muhammed; (2) reciting daily prayers; (3) giving appointed and legal alms; (4) observing the Ramadan, a month's fast; and (5) making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

*Byzantium*: a city on the European shore at the mouth of Thracian Bosphorus. Under Roman rule, it was chosen by Constantine the Great to be the new capital. "At that time the centre of the Roman *imperium* lay in Byzantium. The Empire was not only Christian but orthodox and Trinitarian" (*Figure 79*). "That I did choose Byzantium was due, perhaps, to a romantic love of the (then) strange, but it was a little due to the sense that the Byzantine Emperor was a much more complex poetic image than the Roman" (*Image 181*).

l. 16: *Call on the hills to hide us*: Hosea 10:8: "The high places of wickedness/ will be destroyed--/ it is the sin of Israel./ Thorns and thistles will grow up/ and cover their altars./ Then they will say to the mountains,/ "Cover us!"/ and to the hills, "Fall on us!"

l. 20: *Ispahan*: (Isfahan): a city west of central Iran; it was the former capital of Persia. "In the map this is the place of rejection (i) Moslem rejection of matter as holy (ii) body's ejection of waste through rectum. Before the Moselms, Zoroaster had taught that Good (Ormuz) and Evil (Ahriman) were twins but Ormuz would certainly conquer Ahriman" (*Notes*).

l. 21: "*Alla il Alla*": Islamic - "God is one God."

*dualism of Persia*: a doctrine that the universe is under the dominion of two opposing principles, one of which is good and the other evil. Both Moslem monism and Persian dualism in C.W.'s view are in error; one separates what is a unity (i.e., spirit and matter are not warring opposites--dualism); the other (Islam) denies matter's power altogether. The central Moslem objection to Christianity is the scandalous Christian claim that God (Allah) took on flesh (a body, matter) and becomes Man.

l. 23: *mamelukes*: a military, landholding aristocracy, long figured prominently in Middle Eastern history. They were originally recruited from non-Arab slaves imported to serve various traditional Moslem rulers as soldiers and officials. Typically, the erstwhile slaves assumed power themselves in time and continued to replenish their ranks by importing more military slaves. Between the 13th and 19th centuries Mameluke regimes appeared throughout the Moslem world, including India, Iraq, and most notably Egypt. Until 1382, the dominant Mamelukes were mostly of Turkish ethnic origin; after that date, the majority was generally of Circassian origin.

l. 24: *Union*: C.W. is again stressing the importance of the union between spirit and matter, god and flesh.

*imams*: the prayer leaders of the mosque. Moslem leaders of the line of Ali held by Shiites to be the divinely inspired leaders of the community of believers.

*Sophia*: The Church of Hagia Sophia, or Santa Sophia, in Istanbul, for nearly 1000 years the most important church of the Byzantine Empire, remains one of the world's greatest architectural achievements. The name Hagia Sophia is Greek for "Holy Wisdom"--although to the Byzantines, Hagia Sophia was generally known simply as the Great Church, since it far surpassed all others in grandeur, richness of decoration, and religious and political significance. The present structure stands on the site of the 4th-century cathedral of Constantine, which was burned to the ground in 404. The cathedral was rebuilt (415) by Theodosius II; this church was destroyed by fire in the great Nika riot of 532. Emperor Justinian I immediately set out to erect an even more splendid cathedral.

l. 25: "*Good is God*": Mark x 18: "...No one is good--except God alone."

*muezzin*: a Moslem crier who calls the hour of daily prayers.

l. 27: *glory of substantial being*: *glory*: C.W. complained that the word 'glory' in English tended to mean a 'hazy bright blur' whereas



‘the maze should be exact and the brightness should be that of a geometrical pattern’ (*Heaven 39*).

*substantial*: “It is imparted to one’s whole system for the benefit of body and soul” (*Figure 15*).

## *Taliessin's Return To Logres*

*Taliessin lands in Logres. He has returned from his journey to the Emperor, and he is now ready to assume his position as King Arthur's poet. The ship that carries Taliessin to Logres sails back to the harbor of Istanbul while Taliessin journeys through the wood of Broceliande, ultimately arriving in the King's camp.*

**Title:** *Taliessin's*: Taliessin: (Welsh - "Radiant Brow"): a quasi-mythical figure traditionally said to be the greatest of early Welsh bards. C.W. reveals his origins in CT ll. 1-10. Taliessin is said to be the first bard to acquire the secret of prophetic poetry; according to legend, he could divine the future and strike less gifted poets dumb. In the *Mabinogion*, he is a poet and a spell-binder:

Well, thye took up the leather bag, and he  
who opened it saw the forehead of the boy, and  
said to Elphin, "Behold a radiant brow!"  
"Taliessin be he called," said Elphin.

He is briefly mentioned by King Arthur in *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail" ll. 300-301: "Taliessin is our fullest throat of song/ And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing."

l. 7: *Golden Horn*: an inlet of the Bosphorus, Turkey; a harbor of Istanbul.

l. 8: *Wales*: a principality in southwestern Great Britain; a division of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

l. 9: *In a train of golden cars*: "Glory of Providence operating on his bedhalf seen above him 'in patines of bright gold' (*Merchant of Venice* V i)" (*Notes*).

*golden*: gold: symbolic colour of perfection.

l. 12: *seven golden stars*: "The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round..." (*Idylls*, "The Holy Grail" l. 681). Tennyson also notes that the seven stars represent "The Great Bear."

l. 15: *seven times the golden sickle*: C.W. uses the "golden sickle"--the group of six stars in the constellation Leo-- to measure the duration of Taliessin's voyage.

l. 16: *Druid wood*: oak grove. Druid means "knowledge of the oak" or "great knowledge": member of the pre-Christian Celtic class of priests, religious teachers, and sorcerers. The rites of the Druids

were conducted in oak groves, and they regarded the oak and mistletoe with particular veneration. They also studied the stars and nature generally; they believed in the transmigration of souls, and they dealt with magic. Because of the significance of religion in Celtic culture, the Druids were the most important class among the Celts. They helped identify the king's successor, they advised the king, and they were arbitrators in all kinds of disputes.

ll. 17-32: "The images in the third and fourth stanzas are those used of a particular state of being in *Comus*, the *Nightingale Ode*, the *Prelude*, and the *Divine Comedy*" (*First edition*).

l. 22: *Circe's son*: the shape-changing *Comus*.

l. 23: *truants*: those who shirk duty or responsibility.

ll. 25-26: *The beast ran in the wood/ that had lost the man's mind*: Dante's *Inferno*, Canto I ll. 49-54: "And now a she-wolf came, that in her leanness/ seemed racked with every kind of greediness/ (how many people she has brought to grief!)/ This last beast brought my spirit down so low/ with fear that seized me at the sight of her,/ I lost all hope of going up the hill."

l. 37: *Broceliande*: a forest of both metaphysical and physical character, a "place of making" from which both good and evil may come. "It is rather what the Greeks called the *Apeiron*--the unlimited, the formless origin of forms" (*Torso* 101). Mentioned in *Idylls*, "Merlin and Vivien" l. 2: "And in the wild woods of Broceliande...." Tennyson remarks on its location saying, "The forest of Broceliande in Brittany near St. Malo." C.W. also personifies Broceliande in his character of Nimue, "time's mother on earth"--see SL ll. 56-57. C.W. describes Broceliande in *Answers* 179:

Broceliande is somewhere round Cornwall and Devon, to the west of Logres. It is regarded both as a forest and as a sea--a sea-wood; in this sense it joins the sea of the antipodes which lies among its roots. Carbonek is beyond it: or at least a certain part of it; C[arbonek?]. stands between B[roceliande?]. and the full open sea, beyond which is Sarras.

Mystically it is the 'making' of things. Nimue is the Nature of Creation as the mother of Merlin (Time) and Brisen (Space): she is the source of movement and of distance. She is almost the same state represented by the Emperor's Court, but more vast, dim, and aboriginal. The huge shapes emerge from B(roceliande), and the whole matter of the form of the Empire, and all this is felt in the beloved.

C.W. also remarks on his conception of Broceliande in *Figure* 81-82:

It is, after all, one of the great forests of myth--greater because of its hidden mysteries than Arden or Birnam or Westermain. The wood of Comus may be compared with it; and indeed is poetically a part of it, except that it is a holy place and uninhabited by such sorcerers. But some of the outlying parts might be given up to him--until the Judgement. A nobler comparison is with that forest which Dante found at the foot of the Mount of Purgatory and where he came again to himself, or that other on the height of the Mount where Beatrice came again to him. But it is not proper to do more than shyly observe comparisons between such myths. It is a place of making and of all the figures concerned with making.

l. 38: *diagram*: a graphic design that explains rather than represents; especially a drawing that shows arrangement and relations (as of parts). A diagram is geometry ("geography breathing geometry"); C.W. is stressing the idea that there is a design at work, especially in nature. The world is not just a random mass.

l. 48: *hallows*: hallow: to make holy or to set apart for holy use.

l. 52: *the wood showed the worst*: "Tanto è amara, che poco è piu morte"--*Inferno* Canto i l. 7 (*Notes*).

l. 59: *King Arthur's*: King Arthur: the hero of a great cycle of medieval romance. There was a historical Arthur, a Celtic chieftain who lived in Wales during the 6th century. Little is known of him except that he was mortally wounded (according to the *Annales Cambriae*) in the battle of Camlan and was taken to Glastonbury, where he died. However, while elements of the historical Arthur have been infused into the medieval romances, evidence indicates that there was an earlier, mythical Arthur, possibly a Celtic deity, whose origins are unknown. In telling and retelling the story of Arthur and in attempting to produce a coherent narrative out of diverse sources, the medieval romancers introduced Christian and other elements, not originally Arthurian, thus further confusing its origin.

By the time the Arthurian legends are given permanent shape in *Le Morte*, the figure of Arthur as a legendary hero has become fairly distinct. He is the natural son of Uther Pendragon and Igraine--*Le Morte* i 2--and is raised by Sir Ector. By pulling the sword

Excaliber or “Cut-steel” from a block of stone, he proves his right to the throne of England. He subdues twelve rebellious princes, of whom Lot, King of Norway, is chief, and wins twelve great battles against the Saxon invaders. About his Round Table, he gathers a group of knights whose deeds of daring and chivalry win his court high renown. Arthur himself becomes known far and wide as a mighty warrior and a just and generous ruler. His wife is Guinevere, his most valiant knight Lancelot. In the earlier romances, the ruin that finally overtakes Arthur is due entirely to Guinevere and the traitorous Mordred; the story of her illicit love for Lancelot and its demoralizing effect on the court is added later. In distinct contrast to Malory and the older romancers, who say that Arthur’s sons, Borre and Mordred, are born out of wedlock, Tennyson in his *Idylls* makes Arthur a man of the highest morals, not only absolutely loyal to Guinevere but requiring that his knights “cleave to one maiden only.” The treason that brings an end to his kingdom is hatched while he is away on conquest. After his return and grim triumph in a final terrible battle, the mortally wounded king is borne away to the island of Avilion by the chief lady of the lake, Nimue, and three queens: his sister Queen Morgan le Fay, the Queen of Northgales, and the Queen of the Waste Lands. Some accounts say he is buried there, while others say that he dwells with his sister. Malory has this to say about Arthur’s mysterious ending in *Le Morte* xxi 7:

Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of Our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say that it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS.

In *Figure 5-11*, C.W. relates his conception of the historical Arthur:

The point at which the myth of Arthur begins does not, in its first appearance, hold any mention of the king...It occurs in the pages of a treatise by a monk writing in the middle of the sixth century; his name was Gildas, and the name of his book *De Excidio Britanniae*...That name occurs for the first time four centuries later, and is still not that of a king. In the ninth century another monk called Nennius, wrote a similar history, but in more detail...: “Then Arthur fought with the

Saxons, alongside the kings of the Britons, but he himself was the leader in the battles.” Another document, a century later than Nennius, the *Annales Cambriae*, also has entries concerning Arthur. These are the early records....History, however, has of late inclined to let us believe in the reality of Arthur...The Saxon invaders, after a period of almost complete victory, had been checked by a chieftain, local but still notable among the British chiefs, of Romano-British descent. For some time after his success, the war hung level. There then came into prominence a man with a capacity for seeing and seizing military advantages. His name was Arthur; he too may have been of Roman descent, since the name Arturus blongs to a Roman *gens*...Many names, so streaming, have not been re-imagined in poetry or even convincing prose. This name seems first to have been reailed to royalty about 1075 (as far as our records go), in a *Legenda Sancti Goeznovii*, or rather in the historical prelude to the life of the saint. There the pride of the Saxons (‘pagans and devilish men’--soon after the Norman Conquest) is crushed ‘per magnum Arturum Britonum regem’, a precursor, as it were, of the Conqueror.

In *Figure 40-41*, C.W. also reveals the mythical aspects of Arthur:

In *Layamon* also, and first, the elves take charge of him[Arthur]. ‘They enchanted the babe with strong magic; they gave him might to be the best of knights; they gave him a second boon, to be a rich king; they gave a third, to live long; they gave him good virtue, so that he was the most generous of living men. These things the elves gave; well throve the child.’...At *Badon*, in both *Wace* and *Layamon*, the king wore a sword forged in *Avalon*, almost a faerie place--forged ‘with magic craft’, says *Layamon*, who calls it *Caliburen*, but *Wace* names it *Excalibur*. *Layamon* adds that his helmet was called *Goshit*, and his shield *Pridwen*, on which was engraved in tracings of reddish gold, the image of the blessed and glorious *Mary*. Both poets add that the name of his spear was *Ron*.

It is *Layamon* who tells us of his cry when he is called to the throne by the bishops and lords: “Lord Christ, God’s Son, be to us now in aid that I may in life hold God’s laws.”

l. 63: *hazels*: any of a genus (*Corylus*) of shrubs or small trees of the birch family bearing nuts enclosed in a leafy involucre. In *Answers*, C.W. writes:

The 'cut' hazel is measurement and power -- of any kind, and the 'uncut' and the hazel-nuts are the fruit: it is the measure of doctrine in Lateran and the Church; of morality to the slaves, of 'psychology' to Merlin; it grows everywhere in Logres, and is at once the necessity of abstract statement, commands, and so on, as 'cut', and the actuality of 'natural grace' (so to call it) as 'uncut'.

C.W. also describes the hazel in *Image 182*:

...the rod of a magician is not a toy. It is energy and direction. It occurred to me that in the traditions this rod was normally of haxel, and the dictionary confirmed this. But rods are used for more than magic; as 'goads for cattle, disciplines for offences, measuring-rods, &c.'. So the cut rod of haxel became everywhere an instrument of order and measurement. It corresponded to the arm and to prosody, to anatomy and to law, to all roads and rules. The uncut hazel, with its nuts, is in some sense the fruition of this.

## *The Vision of the Empire*

*α: The Acts of the Emperor are issued from the Throne in Byzantium and translated into the dialects of the world. They are then carried throughout the Empire by imperial messengers. Taliessin is there to witness the manner in which the Emperor's word is spread.*

*β: While Taliessin is gazing on the Golden Horn in the morning, he sees the reflection of the peaks of the mountains of Caucasus which defend the valleys of fertility that lie in-between. He also views when and where the letters of identity come from as well as the stripped maids of the province and the lovers in the lowlands of Caucasia, who welcome the "good news" of the Emperor's glory.*

*γ: Taliessin continues to gaze, and he sees Elburz, Thule, and finally the scheme of Logres--the theme of the design of the Empire. A series of images related to Logres passes before him: Merlin, Camelot, Carbonek, the Perilous Sell, Percivale's star, Lancelot's Lion, Guinevere's body, lords warring with pirates, the Round Table, and a white messenger of the Emperor.*

*δ: Taliessin reflects on his education and the education of Christian man in general. In Gaul, the education of logic, learning, and law is taught, and Taliessin has studied there. However, Taliessin has also sailed distances of the sea where he has learned that the dialect of Logres is an aspect of Byzantium.*

*ε: Taliessin notices that the day is waning as the sun grows old in the Golden Horn's reflection. He next envisions strength expressed in the "morals" of arms, joints, wrists, and hands; and he sees Rome as the seminal of knowledge. He then beholds the hands of the Pope in the act of celebrating the mass.*

*ζ: Taliessin questions the Pope's movement and the superiority of the Papal vesture over golden palaces. Taliessin also wonders what event signalled the beginning of opposition to the Emperor.*

*η: The answer to Taliessin's previous question is envisioned as the temptation, and the fall of the Adam is revealed. This vision conveys the Adam's longing to rise to the height of God and the the Emperor, to gaze on the Acts in contention, to become like God by knowing good and evil. However, the Acts in conflict poison the*



*Adam's blood. The Adam is torn in the terror into warring good and evil.*

*θ: The day has past. Elburz is no longer reflected in the Golden Horn. Yet, on the water, the image of a single, hardly moving galley appears. The ship was fashioned in Byzantium; however, it has since lost the beauty and luster of its original glory. Hot ashes and harsh birds cover it. It has become the vessel of the Satanic antipodean emperor and his evil guard. This anti-pope is a perversion of the true Emperor in everything he is and does.*

*ι: A psalm for the Lord and Emperor of the organic body and His Acts of identity which give being to being.*

l. 1: *organic*: interconnected as well as living.

l. 4: *sound of the Throne*: "for 'sound of the throne', cf. the poem in *Windows of Night* (76) on the lions behind Solomon's throne whose 'reiterant roar' confirms his judgments" (*Notes*).

ll. 5-11: "God is pure Act: a favourite definition from Thomas Aquinas. But the unity of the primal Act is dispersed ('abated') among phenomena, and the agents of this dispersal are the Emperor's household (inscribing, translating) and logothetes" (*Notes*).

l. 6: *minuscule*: one of several ancient and medieval writing styles developed from cursive and having simplified and small forms with no capital letters.

l. 8: *phenomenally*: known through the senses rather than through thought or intuition.

l. 10: *porphyry stair*: Jacob's ladder--Genesis xxviii 12:

"He [Jacob] had a dream in which he saw a stair way resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. The stair in the Emperor's palace in Byzantium, which lead from the entrance hall to the throne room.

*porphyry*: a rock consisting of feldspar crystals embedded in a compact, beautiful, dark crimson or purple groundmass. Also a Greek Neoplatonist (233-c301), the student and biographer of Plotinus.

l. 10: *logothetes*: "in C.W.'s usage is angel, messenger, though its original meaning was auditor, or Byzantine functionary" (*Notes*).

l. 11: *missives*: written communications.

l. 13: *from the exposition of grace to the place of images*: "from the interpreters to the diversity of the created world. C.W. wrote: 'He has gone out of the direct presence of the Emperor into the outer

world, which is precisely a place of images; from the Sacred Palace to the waters of the Golden Horn, from "God in Himself" to "God in his creatures". He has gone from the direct presence of the outer world, as men in love must do" (*Notes*).

*grace*: unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification/ disposition to or an act or instance of kindness or clemency; (archaic): mercy, pardon.

l. 17: *nuntii*: Latin~nuntius - "messenger."

l. 22: *mirror of the Horn*: the reflective quality of the water of the Golden Horn.

l. 25: *Sinai*: a mountain east of Saudi Arabia near the border of Iran on the peninsula extension of Asia, northeast of Egypt between the Red sea and the Mediterranean. "First law and promise" (*Notes*).

*Elburz*: mountain north of Iran and parallel with the southern shore of the Caspian sea. "(a late discovery in C.W.'s development of the myth): a high mountain in Caucasus. C.W." 'The grand type of the mingled lowness and height, fertility and chastity, verdure and snow, of the visible body'. C.W. had read that it was supposed to be the mountain where Prometheus, the fire-bringer, was chained" (*Notes*).

*Ararat*: Genesis viii 3-4: "The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat." "The Ark and first act of salvation, God's pledge to man" (*Notes*).

All these mountains are established "Mountains of God" (or the gods).

*verdure*: the greenness of growing vegetation or such vegetation itself/ a condition of health and vigor.

l. 32: *name-day*: the church feast day of the saint after whom one is named.

l. 34: *fortalices*: (archaic): fortress.

ll. 36-37: *the stripped maids laughed for the joy of the province/ bearing in themselves the shape of the province*: C.W.'s metaphoric way of uniting anatomy and geography. See map for an illustration of "the shape of the province."

l. 48: *herbage*: herbaceous vegetation (as grass) especially when used for grazing/ the succulent parts of herbaceous plants.

l. 50: *freight*: burden, charge.

l. 51: *Merlin*: "time's metre": he is treated almost allegorically by C.W. He is time and the measure of time as well as a child of

Nimue along with his sister, Brisen[space]--see SL II. 112-113. C.W. further characterizes Merlin's purpose in the myth of Arthur by writing, "That last figure of sacred magic, of magic before magic even in art became impermissible, lay to his hand, and he found it--fortunate, and we also. Merlin in this was to be a prophet of the Grail" (*Figure 73*). Merlin's origins seem distinctly Celtic, and he figures prominently in early Welsh writings. Merlin achieved full growth in *Le Morte*, being introduced in book i 1, where he is the force behind Arthur's achievement of the throne and otherwise instructs Arthur, ensuring his continuing invincibility and future greatness as king. Then the great seer and magician proceeds to fall in love with the Lady of the Lake, the sorceress Nimue, who, after learning all she can, soon tires of him, and imprisons him forever under a great stone (*Le Morte* iv 1). He is also a prominent figure of the *Idylls*, most notable in "The Coming of Arthur" and "Merlin and Vivien."

In *Figure 35-36*, C.W. discusses the birth of Merlin:

But the next great development in the myth of Merlin came with Robert de Borron...He imagined a council held in hell after the Redemption, where, sitting 'in their own dimensions, like themselves', the devils plotted to thwart it. They determined that the only method is to follow our Lord's method. There must be an incarnation; flesh must be made amenable to their desires; a pure maiden must conceive and bear a son. One of the demonic powers agreed to make the attempt. He finds a girl who had made but a single slip; once she forgot or neglected to say her prayers. The lightness (so to call it) of the fault marks her real spirituality; grosser natures would not have served. Through that frailty he was enabled to approach her; she miraculously conceived. When she knew it she went at once to a wise and holy man. By his interposition and the rites of the Church there was born at the proper time not Diabolus but Merlin. He inherited his spiritual father's knowledge and power, but without malice.

1. 53: *Perilous Sell*: Siege Perilous: a vacant chair at the Round Table, reserved for the one predestined to achieve the quest of the Grail. It is the death of any other who sits in the chair; this is the wrath of the Grail. At the appointed time, the name of Galahad is found on the Siege Perilous; he takes the chair and later goes on to win the Grail. It is mentioned in *Le Morte* xi 1: "He shall be gotten that shall sit there in that Siege Perilous, and he shall win the Sangrail." Also in *Le Morte* xiii 2: "On the feast of the Pentecost,

these words were written in gold letters upon this Siege: 'FOUR HUNDRED WINTERS AND FOUR AND FIFTY ACCOMPLISHED AFTER THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESU CHRIST OUGHT THIS SIEGE TO BE FULFILLED.' And finally in *Le Morte* xiii 4: "THIS IS THE SIEGE OF GALAHAD, THE HAUT PRINCE."

*See:* a seat of a bishop's office, power, or authority.

l. 54: *the phosphor of Percivale's philosophical star shines:*

*phosphor:* (Greek-φωσφορος - "light bringer"): a substance that emits light when excited by radiation.

"phosphor, the morning star, is Venus when seen before sunrise--i.e. perhaps intellectual, unerotic love" (*Notes*).

*Percivale's philosophical star:* Percivale: "he is the supernatural imagination" (*Notes*). One of the most famous knights of the Round Table, the younger brother of Sir Lamorack and the son of King Pellinor, figuring especially in the quest for the Grail. Percivale's first appearance in literature is in the French poem *Perceval, ou le conte du Graal*, written c.1775, by Chretien de Troyes. Chretien's story begins with Percivale's boyhood in the forest and his complete ignorance of the ways of knights and warriors and courtly manners. His quest for the Grail is the main incident of the story and ends with him being awarded a sight of it. Later versions of the story usually present him as a virgin knight. He was the original hero of the Grail legend, and he always plays an important person in it, though his place was, in the later forms of the story (especially Malory), taken by Galahad. However, even Malory refers to Percivale's earlier status in *Le Morte* x 23, when a maiden from Guinevere's court leads Percivale to the Siege Perilous and says, "Fair knight, take here thy siege, for that siege appertaineth to thee and to none other." Percivale is also found in *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail."

"Percivale is at once Taliessin in his highest degree, and a virginal lover (because he and Blanchefleur have no time for anything else); but also the spiritual intellect concerned with the significance of things and with the Quest" (*Image* 177).

l. 55: *Lancelot's lion:* Lancelot's coat of arms is mentioned in both *Le Morte* xviii 14 and *Idylls*, "Lancelot and Elaine" ll. 658-660: "And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw/ Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,/ Ramp in the field...."

Lancelot: he is the most famous of the knights of the Round Table. In the early Welsh legends of King Arthur, he does not

appear, but almost seems a French innovation since one first finds him in *Lancelot, or the Knight of the Cart* by Chretien de Troyes. He is the son of King Ban of Benwick, and his full title is Sir Lancelot du Lac. In almost all versions, he is the champion and lover of Queen Guinevere and the favorite knight of King Arthur. In *Le Morte*, he begets Sir Galahad by Elaine, when he is deceived into believing that she is Guinevere, and he is then driven into madness for a long period of time by the jealousy of Guinevere. Although he participates in the Grail quest, he only succeeds in barely seeing the chalice, being limited in his success because of his sinful relationship with Guinevere. He is finally exiled by King Arthur, who afterwards goes to war with him at the insistence of Sir Gawain. During this war, Mordred throws England into chaos by seizing the throne and demanding the hand of Guinevere. Lancelot eventually returns to England to find King Arthur dead, the Table dissolved, and Queen Guinevere a nun. He himself then becomes a monk and dies shortly thereafter. He is also a major figure throughout *Idylls*.

“Lancelot, for all the errands upon which he rides, is never merely a knight-errant. He affirms friendship, courtesy, justice, and nobility--in all the references allowed them. He is almost the active centre of that kingdom of which Arthur is, in a sense, the passive...Lancelot then is the chief figure of the Way of Affirmations” (*Figure 87*).

C.W. also describes him in *Image 177*:

But of all these Lancelot has his heart mostly on pure love. It is he who is mostly concerned with choosing necessity (which is the subject of all great poetry). It is, I think, through his courtesy to Palomides who has insulted and injured him, and whom he rides to assist in his danger, that he comes on the road which by Merlin's enchantments leads to Carbonek. It is through his illumination by Guinevere that he is brought to Helayne. But because his devotion to the Queen could not bear to transfer itself to nay other (*could* not--he is in passion, not law), he himself is given magical drink by Briseis, and the Merciful Child is born of pure passion and pure law. Thus, as always, the purpose of God produces salvation after an unexpected and shattering manner. For when Lancelot knows what has happened he falls into madness until the birth of Galahad.

l. 56: *Guinevere's lordly body*: Guinevere's body is described in *Idylls*, “The Coming of Arthur” ll. 3-4: “And she was the fairest of

all flesh on earth, / Guinevere, and in her his [King Leodogran's] one delight." In *Figure 42*, C.W. portrays Wace's and Layamon's description of Guinevere, "In both she comes of Roman blood. Wace has the more princely description; she is 'fair in face, courteous, delicate in person and motion, of a royal bearing, very sweet and of a ready tongue'.

Guinevere: she is the wife of King Arthur. She is illicitly involved with Sir Lancelot in most versions, and Lancelot is often her rescuer. Guinevere ultimately renounces Lancelot after the death of Arthur and takes the veil at Almesbury (*Le Morte* xxi 7 and *Idylls*, "Guinevere" ll. 1-2: "Queen Guinevere had fled the court, and sat / There in the holy house at Almesbury", where she later becomes the Abbess (*Idylls*, "Guinevere" ll. 687-692). After her death, Lancelot buries her next to Arthur at Glastonbury. She is introduced in *Le Morte* iii 1 and is also mentioned in Chretien de Troyes's *Lancelot*.

C.W. discusses her infidelity in *Figure 46*:

From the beginning of the Matter of Britain, the queen seems to have been, as it were, doomed to infidelity. Her husband was not to love, in that kind, at all, and she was to love too much. In a literary sense, indeed, the later Lancelot was to be her salvation, for it was he by whom she was to enure a great passion and to come to some penitence, whereas otherwise she might have remained linked with a score of unknown names. It may be that she was taught to love so because those who wrote of her would not have the queen of Arthur less than Iseult the queen of Mark, whose passion for Tristan was already a theme of song.

l. 57: *blazons*: armorial bearings: coat of arms.

l. 65: *Lateran*: the Pope's own church in Rome--St. John Lateran. St. Peter's is actually not the Pope's particular church. "The Lateran palace on the Caelian hill in Rome came to the Church through Constantine's wife Fausta, and was the official residence of the Popes from the 4th Century till the Avignon separation. It was traditionally the site of Constantine's baptism, and the basilica is still the cathedral church of Rome ('*omnium urbis et orbis ecclesiarum mater et caput*'). In C.W.'s verse Lateran is the fount of Roman doctrine, the hill 'whence shining thoughts have come On Augustinian errand all the Saxon thanes must con' ('A Song of the Myths' in *Three Plays*) (*Notes*).

*Gaul*: an ancient country in western Europe comprising chiefly the region occupied by modern France and Belgium and at one time including also the Po valley in northern Italy.

l. 67: *trigonometrical milk of doctrine*: "trinitarian, divine ('It is not good for God to be alone', an epigram often quoted by C.W.)" (Notes).

l. 70: *breasts of "intelligo" and "credo"*: the twin functions of thought and belief; "*Credo ut intelligam*"--"I believe in order to understand" (St. Anselm). If reversed, one discovers St. Aquinas' argument.

l. 75: *Thames*: a river in southern England flowing from the Cotswolds in Gloucestershire east into the North Sea.

l. 80: *old sun*: pre-history.

l. 84: *cones*: "C.W.: 'The delicate and sensitive palms are conceived as full of points from which cones flow down into the *substance* of our being. The mass of the points makes up the activities and passivities of the hands, for which Rome stands, which is an image of Byzantium as the hands of the whole being'" (Notes).

l. 85: *Lombardy*: a region of northern Italy.

*Rome*: (known as the Eternal City): a city in central Italy and the capital of the Republic of Italy. In ancient times, Rome was the capital and center of the Roman Empire, and, according to tradition, it was founded by Romulus in 753 BC. It then became, through Peter, the first bishop of Rome, the home of the pope and the capital of early Christendom.

l. 86: *seminal*: containing or contributing the seeds of later development. Rome is "seminal." C.W.'s symbolism is almost phallic--"Cone," "seed-springing," etc.

*pontifex*: (Latin - "bridge-maker"): a member of the council of priests in ancient Rome.

l. 89: *Finger-nails*: "are the plough, and amorous sowing, and then the actual nails of the Cross, 'finishing the toil' for man" (Notes).

l. 91: *sublime*: lofty, grand, or exalted in thought, expression, or manner/ of outstanding spiritual, intellectual, or moral worth/ tending to inspire awe usually because of elevated quality (as of beauty, nobility, or grandeur) or transcendent excellence/ (archaic): high in place.

*circle*: "The 'circle' is Christ, and the 'seed-springing surrender' is his Passion. The incantation of the Mass (also of pre-Christian priests) is chanted to hands of adoration at the foot of the Cross" (Notes).

l. 93: *quintuple psalm*: the “psalm” is a song of “adoration.” The “quintuple psalm” is the five fingers of the hand that is ritually raised over the bread and wine: a Williams pun

*pointing*: “of the Psalms, and as pointing to the Mystery”

(Notes).

l. 94: *active and passive in a single mystery*: in *Figure 22*, C.W. writes:

The Flesh and the Blood, invoked by the act of the celebrant, were there in their own full act--and were yet passive. They were carried, and were unmoving; they were eaten, yet they themselves received the eater into themselves; they were separate, yet they were one. They were the visibility of the invisible. They were the material centre of Christendom; and they were the very Act that made them so.

l. 96: *manual acts*: the acts required to celebrate the Eucharist, perform the Mass; but this very holy sacrament is daringly conceived by C.W. as a kind of divine phallic masturbatory ritual as well.

l. 97: *marches*: border regions: frontiers/ districts originally set up to defend boundaries.

l. 99: *vesture*: a covering garment (as a robe or vestment).

*reparation*: the act of making amends, offering expiation, or giving satisfaction for a wrong or injury.

l. 101: *Adam*: both Adam and Eve as well as mankind.

*Jerusalem*: a city in central Palestine northwest of the Dead sea; it was the formal capital of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah. On the map, “the groin, area of the sexual organs which, according to Jewish tradition, were involved in the Fall. The Fall and the Crucifixion which redeemed it are located in the same geographical place” (Notes).

ll. 103-108: The Fall: In *Heaven*, C.W. called it “an alteration of knowledge”:

The Adam had been created and were existing in a state of knowledge of good and nothing but good. They knew that there was some kind of alternative, and they knew that the rejection of the alternative was part of their relation to the Omnipotence that created them...But they knew also that the knowledge in the Omnipotence was greater than their own: they understood that in some way it knew “evil.”

...Man desired to know schism in the universe. It was a knowledge reserved to God; man had been warned that he could not bare it--“in the



day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” A serpentine subtlety overwhelmed that statement with a grander promise--“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Unfortunately to be as gods meant, for the Adam, to die, for to know evil, for them, was to know it not by pure intelligence (as God does) but by experience. It was, precisely, to experience the opposite of good, the slow destruction of the good, and of themselves with the good. (17-18)

- l. 106: “*Does not God vision the principles at war*”: Genesis iii 5: “For God knows that when you eat of it[the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”--or having the ability to “vision the principles at war.”
- ll. 107-108: “*Let us grow to the height of God and the Emperor:/ Let us gaze, son of man, on the Acts in contention*”: Isaiah xiv 13-14: “You said in your heart,/ ‘I will ascend to heaven;/ I will raise my throne/ above the stars of God;/ I will sit enthroned on the mount of/ assembly,/ on the utmost heights of the/ sacred mountain./ I will ascend above the tops of the/ clouds;/ I will make myself like the Most/ High.’” Genesis iii 6: “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”
- l. 109: *tree*: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil--Genesis ii 9.
- l. 111: *battle in the law*: “Acts in contention”--l. 108.
- l. 113: *The tree around them died undying*: the tree dies to the Adam because they will soon be banned from the Garden of Eden, but there has been no record of God’s destruction of the Garden or the tree itself.
- ll. 114-115: *the good lusted against the good,/ the Acts in conflict envenomed the blood*: the “Acts in conflict” poison the Adam’s double entity, and they begin to become what they beheld--“Acts in conflict,” or good and evil.
- ll. 123-124: *a white pulsing shape behind him crept,/ the ejection to the creature of the creature’s rejection of salvation*: the birth of man’s sinful nature.
- l. 131: *galley*: “‘The galley seems like the gold-mine afloat, but all spoiled’(C.W.)” (Notes).
- l. 139: *poop*: a partial deck above a ship’s main afterdeck.
- l. 145: *Phosphorescent*: exhibiting an enduring luminescence without sensible heat.

- l. 146: *cope*: a long enveloping ecclesiastical vestment worn primarily during the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- l. 148: *A brainless form*: "The 'headless figure' is how the emperor appears in P'o-l'u. The image was taken from the tale recorded in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, of the vision of a monk who saw an ape seated on the Emperor Justinian's throne. "Everything there is parodied, and holy intellect is lost" (*Answers*).
- l. 149: *indecent hands*: performing self-absorbed masturbation-- "..."all capacities are reduced to a kind of sensational preoccupation with one thing, and that is why the crimson cope obscenely resembles the first high flush of Causcasian love" (*Answers*).
- l. 154: *where it walks on the sinking floor of antipodean Byzantium*: "The floor seems perpetually to sink away--an image of horror to be found in earlier work, notably the poem called 'Tartarus':

Yet deep within me, wherever I stand or go,  
I feel now the suction, the drag, the desire of the void  
To swallow for ever the spirits of men... (*Notes*)

*antipodean*: the parts of the earth diametrically opposite each other.

- l. 157: *rudiments*: body parts so deficient in size or structure as to be entirely unable to perform its normal function.
- relics*: objects esteemed and venerated because of association with a saint or martyr.
- l. 161: *P'o-l'u*: hell or the "antipodean Byzantium" of a diabolical Anti-Emperor. "Ancient Chinese maps showed, at the point of Java, a harbour named P'o-l'u. It served as the mythical name of the opposite of civilized delight" (MS. of *Notes by the Way*).
- ll. 164-182: Very similar to the Psalms cxlv-cl of David.
- l. 180: *regimen*: government, rule.

## *The Calling of Arthur*

*A wild wizard Merlin meets the young Arthur on the road. It is wintertime.*

*Merlin tells Arthur that the time--and Merlin is time--has come to build Camelot. The effeminate King Cradlemas does nothing but sit in corrupt comfort on the banks of the Thames and cry false tears for the starving poor of his realm. Merlin tells Arthur of the raising of the banner of Bors, a signal that the land is ripe for new leadership. He then commands Arthur to overthrow the fading king and fulfill his destiny--to bring Camelot and the kingdom of Logres into being.*

*Arthur obeys. Lancelot lands in Logres. An auspicious beginning is made.*

l. 7: *King Cradlemas*: "The eleven kings against whom, in Malory, Arthur fought to win his throne, are here reduced to one--Cradlemass, King of London. By a happy and unexpected invention Cradlemas is made not a barbarian but the last feeble, fragile, and sinister representative of Roman civilization. He has (like Nero) an emerald for a monocle and wears a gilded mask..." (*Torso* 104).

l. 10: *Nero*: he is associated with Roman decadence. Nero was an emperor of Rome (54-68), and was adopted by Claudius. To please his mistress Poppaea, he had his wife, Octavia, murdered, and, when Poppaea was pregnant, he killed the mother and child by kicking Poppaea to death. Later, when Rome was burned, Nero blamed the Christians. Some claim Nero himself lit the fire "to see how Troy looked when it was in flames," and played a musical instrument during the event.

l. 12: *The bleak mask is gilded with a maiden's motionless smile*: King Cradlemas is wearing a mask of a maiden. C.W. uses this to emphasize that he is sexually ambiguous or powerless as a maiden.

l. 28: *banner of Bors*: at the advise of Merlin, King Arthur defends his newly established kingdom with the help of King Bors de Ganis and King Ban of Benwick (*Le Morte* i 10-18).

l. 29: *Bors*: one of the knights of the Round Table and nephew of Sir Lancelot. Sir Bors is one of the three knights to be granted sight of the Holy Grail, the others being Percivale and Galahad. Except for his relationship with Elayne, in which he fathers Helin le Blank, he is sexually pure (*Le Morte* xi 4). He is also major figure in *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail." "Bors is the ordinary man, married, with

children, the King's servant. But he is also the spiritual intellect concerned, as it must be, with earthly things" (*Image* 177).

"Bors was the nephew of Lancelot, and the companion of Galahad and Percivale. He had two [this is not in *Le Morte*] children by Elayne, the daughter of King Brangoris, 'and sauf for her syre Bors was clene mayden'" (*First edition*).

l. 31: *hammer and sickle*: "emblems of the labouring poor, and of particular political significance to the 20th Century" (*Notes*).

l. 33: *Pendragon*: an ancient British title, denoting chief leader or king. It was conferred on a chief when he was invested with the supreme power in times of danger and is particularly identified with Uther Pendragon, father of King Arthur (*Le Morte* i 2). The word is derived from the Welsh *pen*, "head," and *dragon* (the reference being to the war chief's dragon standard). It corresponds to the Roman *dux bellorum*.

## Mount Badon

*Taliessin, the king's poet, is made captain of the horse in the king's wars.*

*At the battle of Mount Badon, Taliessin and his force are ordered to hold back, hidden, while King Arthur fights in the center of the battlefield with Lancelot and Gawain to his left and right and Bors in the rear. Although, the pirates lack support, they are fierce opponents nonetheless and are overwhelming the allied troops of Arthur because his captains will not abide "the civilized single command."*

*Taliessin's troops wonder why he continues to wait. Why does he not order them to join the fray? They are clearly needed. One soldier imagines that Taliessin must be dreaming or making poetry. Another corrects him, saying that "all lies in a passion of patience--my lord's rule."*

*At that very moment Taliessin has a vision of Virgil. The Roman poet, the model for all poets, is "civilized centuries away," seeking for a word to complete a line of *The Aeneid*. In a flash of insight, Virgil finds the right word. In a parallel flash of insight, Taliessin--"barbaric centuries" later--sees the point toward which he should launch the attack in aid of Arthur. Words and deeds fuse; poet and action cohere.*

*The victory won, Taliessin kneels to the king. Arthur's triumphant soldiers--described as "candles"--shine on the fought field.*

Title: *Mount Badon*: the last and most decisive battle establishing Arthur's reign: "...and on the mount/ Of Badon I myself beheld the King/ Charge at the head of all his Table Round,/ And all his legions crying Christ and him,/ And break them...." (*Idylls*, "Lancelot and Elaine" ll. 301-304).

"The battle of Mons Badonicus, in which King Arthur finally defeated the invaders. An entry in *Annales Cambriae* quoted by C.W. in *Figure 8*, reads '518. The battle of Badon in which Arthur carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for three days and three nights, on his shoulders, and the Britons were the victors'. Site of battle unknown, somewhere in the S.W. of England, where there are many earthworks" (*Notes*).

l. 4: *Dragon*: King Arthur.

l. 5: *Gawaine*: probably the original hero of the Grail quest. In earlier works, he is known as “the Courteous” and is first represented as the flower of chivalrous knighthood, but later writers downgraded him. He is the son of King Lot of Orkney and Queen Morgause. He avenges the death of his father by killing King Pellinore, and he murders King Pellinore’s son, Sir Lamorack, because he is the lover of Gawaine’s mother. Found throughout *Le Morte*, *Idylls*, and *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight*.. “Gawaine is the kind of man who is very keen on the honour of his house and his own honour and proper dignity. He is a charming creature, so long as everyone looks up to him and gives way to him” (*Image* 176). In *Figure* 48-49, C.W. comments on Gawaine:

It will have been noticed that the first of the knights named is Gawaine, and this holds everywhere in Chretien. Gawaine is the king’s nephew, and is always treated as being next to the king...He is the most notable of all, and the only one who is permanently equal to the various different heroes of the poems...Even in the *Lancelot* itself, Gawaine is ‘the most admired and most famous knight upon whom ever the sign of the Cross was made’. He is the noble friend and champion of lesser knights. He is, in fact, exactly what the chief knight should be and what Lancelot was afterwards to become....

- l. 11: *pirates*: “Pirates are sea-robbers who invaded Britain after the withdrawal of the Roman legions, but C.W. uses the word as ‘chaotic instincts’” (*Notes*).
- l. 14: *ruse*: a wily subterfuge.  
*allied*: King Arthur and his captains.
- l. 16: *unbacked*: lacking support or aid.
- l. 23: *last*: Taliessin and his household.
- ll. 29-30: *Suddenly the noise abated, the fight vanished, the last/ few belated shouts died in a new quiet*: the beginning of Taliessin’s vision.
- ll. 32-39: C.W. at this point refers to the popular idea that Britain was founded by the descendants of Aeneas [and thus Troy]. See, for example, the beginning of the famous medieval romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*:

Since the siege and the assault was ceased at Troy....  
 It was high-born Aeneas and his haughty race  
 That since prevailed over provinces, and proudly reigned  
 Over well-nigh all the wealth of the West Isles.

Great Romulus to Rome repairs in haste;  
 With boast and with bravery builds he that city  
 And names it with his own name, that it now bears...  
 Ticius to Tuscany, and towers raises,  
 Langobard in Lombardy lays out homes,  
 And far over the French Sea, Felix Brutus  
 On many broad hills and high Britain he sets,  
 most fair. (ll. 1/5-15)

l. 32: *Virgil*: Publius Vergilius Maro (70-19 BC): author of the great Roman epic poem, *The Aeneid*. Virgil was popular during the Middle Ages, partly because of his acceptance by the early Christians as an inspired poet and partly because of the medieval habit of making magicians out of the poets and sages of antiquity. In Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, Dante is led through these regions by Virgil, considering him the wisest and most closely Christian of the ancient pagan poets. Taliessin is also using Virgil as a guide to lead Arthur's kingdom through the chaotic state it is in to the proper establishment of the king's rule. Specifically, Taliessin is waiting for Virgil to pronounce the "civilized single command"--see l. 15. "Virgil is--Virgil, but he is (because of that) poetry, wisdom, institutions, the things that in fact he had been in the world when the great organization of the empire was formed: all--except the Incarnation" (*Essential* 82). Virgil is "the poet *par excellence* of 'the city'" (*Torso* 111).

*trellised*: "I suppose 'trellis' is to describe the growing of vines in the locality, the pastoral retreat of the poet, which is to be what Logres will become after Arthur's victory" (*Notes*).

l. 36: *the invention of the City by the phrase*: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"--*A Defense of Poetry* by P.B. Shelley; C.W.'s way of expressing the power of the word. Words make things real; they bring "the City" into being.

*City*: "The Holy Ghost moves us to be, by every means to which we are called, the images of Christ, the types of that Original, in or out of the flesh. It is the intercourse of those free images which is the union of the City. The name of the City is Union" (*Essential* 153).

l. 37: *unseeing eyes*: Virgil's eyes are "unseeing" in the same way Taliessin's are. Virgil no longer literally sees what is before him; neither does Taliessin. They are each having a vision; thus "seeing" in a different way entirely; thus "unseeing" literally.

ll. 40-41: *Barbaric centuries away, the ghostly battle contended./*  
*Civilized centuries away, the Roman moved:* the “ghostly battle” is the battle of Badon, which is “barbaric centuries away” from Virgil; that is, the Dark Ages come between Virgil’s Rome and Arthur’s Logres. It is “ghostly” because it has faded from Taliessin’s mind while he has his vision of Virgil, who is finding the right word for his *Aeneid* “civilized centuries away”—that is, in the past.

l. 42: *flash of his style:* “a small rod for writing on wax” (*Notes*).

l. 43: *hexameter:* a line of verse consisting of six metrical feet.

l. 50: *Aeneid’s:* epic poem by Virgil in which the legendary Trojan origin of the Roman people is glorified. Virgil traces the lineage of the Julii from Iulus or Ascanius, the son of the Trojan hero Aeneas, down to Octavius Caesar (Augustus). It was greeted with enthusiasm by all educated Romans because of its nationalistic purposes. With this allusion, C.W. is also attempting to attach the Trojan tradition to the establishment of King Arthur’s realm.

*Actium:* a promontory and ancient town in western Greece in northwestern Acarnania. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, ll. 278-289, it is also the place where Aeneas and his men rest and stage the Trojan games after they had escaped all the towns of the Greeks. In 31 BC, the Emperor Augustus ultimately defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra there in a decisive sea battle.

l. 51: *stooped:* (archaic): moved down from a height.

l. 55: *hierarchs:* religious leaders in positions of authority.

*solstice:* one of the two points on the ecliptic at which its distance from the celestial equator is greatest and which is reached by the sun each year about June 22nd and December 22nd.

ll. 56-57: *that flared round the golden-girdled Logos, snowy-haired./ brazen-footed, starry-handed, the thigh banded with the*  
*Name:* a description of Taliessin or “Logos”: see Revelation i 12-16:

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands, was someone “like a son of man,” dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.



"C.W. wrote 'The Maid-Mother's son was the foundation of all Cities' ('Vergil' review)" (*Notes*).

l. 62: *paps*: political patronages.

l. 65: *tor*: a high craggy hill.

l. 66: *hammer of Thor*: Thor: in Norse mythology, he is the Aesir god of thunder, second in importance to his father, Odin. Perhaps the most widely worshipped of the gods, Thor was popular as the benevolent protector of man. His most precious possessions are his magic hammer, the thunderbolt Mjollnir, a belt of strength, and a pair of iron gloves.

C.W. is clearest about the hierarchy in battle by revealing how "the grand art"[poetry] "mastered" the "thudding hammer of Thor"[the weapons of war].

## *The Crowning of Arthur*

*King Arthur is crowned. The fighting is over. Peace reigns in Camelot. The banners of Arthur's knighthood are displayed in triumph.*

*During the coronation, Merlin climbs to the dome of St. Stephen. There he has a vision of Byzantium, then of Logres. From his high perch, he looks down to see the heraldic devices of Percivale, Morgause, Lamorack, Dinadan, and Bors--all representative of "the glory of Logres." Taliessin also ponders the significance of the heraldic symbols, even as Lancelot brings Guinevere forward to take her place beside the newly crowned king.*

*The mood changes. Arthur's prideful thought--"the king made for the kingdom, or the kingdom made for the king?"--drives against the "current" of Merlin's wisdom. Future disasters are foretold: the dolorous blow and the war between Lancelot and Arthur.*

*Anxiety and uncertainty descend on everything.*

l. 4: *jubilee*: Leviticus xxv 11: a year of emancipation and restoration provided by ancient Hebrew Law to be kept every 50 years by the emancipation of Hebrew slaves, restoration of alienated lands to their former owners, and omission of all cultivation of the land.

l. 5: *heraldically*: with pageantry/ with devices, blazons, and armorial insignia.

l. 16: *Presaging*: giving an omen or warning of: foreshadowing/ foretelling, predicting.

l. 17: *dome of Stephen*: the church of Camelot (*Le Morte* iii 5).

*Stephen*: he was considered a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit who was one of the seven appointed to look after the distribution of food to the widows. He was also noted for the vision he had of heaven just before he was stoned by the Sanhedrin--Acts vii 55-56: "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'"

ll. 19-20: *he looked through the depth to the dome of Sophia; the kingdom and the power and the glory chimed*: Merlin's vision is similar to Stephen's when Merlin looks through the "depth" of the "dome of Stephen" and sees the "dome of Sophia" or the church of

the Emperor[God]. He not only links St. Stephen and St. Sophia, he also links Camelot and Byzantium.

l. 24: *aureole*: a radiant light around the head or body of a representation of a sacred personage.

*first shield's*: C.W. is about to describe a series of knights' shields and the devices on them (ll. 24-40):

Percivale's = deep azure with a star

Lamorack's = sable with a crimson moon on an argent fess

Dinadan's = crimson with a dolphin naiant

Bors' = golden with a pelican striking itself.

*azure*: the blue color of the clear sky/ the heraldic color blue.

l. 25: *sidereally*: with stars or constellations: astrally.

l. 27: *fess*: a broad horizontal bar across the middle of a heraldic field/ the center point of an armorial escutcheon.

*argent*: (archaic): the metal silver/ the heraldic color silver or white.

l. 28: *Queen Morgause*: King Lot of Orkney's wife and King Arthur's half-sister. She is the mother of Gawaine, Agravain, Gaheris, and Gareth. She also conceives of Mordred after an incestuous sexual encounter with King Arthur. Later, she becomes the lover of Sir Lamorack. She is introduced in *Le Morte i 2* and is killed by her own son Gaheris when he finds her lying with Lamorack (*Le Morte x 24*). She is also known as Bellicent in *Idylls*, "Gareth and Lynette."

l. 30: *sable*: the heraldic color black.

*Lamorack*: de Gales, the son of King Pellinore and the lover of Queen Morgause. He is also the older brother of Sir Percivale. Both his father and he are murdered by Sir Gawaine and his brothers. They kill his father because they thought that he killed their father, King Lot of Orkney. They kill Lamorack because of his relationship with their mother (*Le Morte x 55*). He was also considered the third greatest fighting knight of the Round Table, behind only Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram (*Le Morte x 63*).

"Lamorack was the brother of Percivale and Blanchefleur. He was the lover of the queen Morgause of Orkney, Arthur's sister. The two were killed by her sons, Gawaine and Agravaine, for the honour of the house of Orkney" (*First edition*).

l. 31: *tincture*: a heraldic metal or color.

l. 33: *naiant*: swimming.

l. 35: *Dinadan*: one of the knights of the Round Table. Tristram describes him in *Le Morte x 56* by saying: "...for he is the best boulder and japer, and a noble knight of his hands, and the best

fellow that I know, and all the good knights love his fellowship.” Tristram further describes Dinadan to his love, La Beale Isoud, remarking “how Sir Dinadan held against all lovers.” Lewis also describes Dinadan in *Torso* 164: “He is the happy ironist, the Tumbler of Our Lady, the *jongleur de dieu*: the man who ‘gives himself away’ with both hands, delighted at ‘the excellent absurdity’.”

l. 36: *pelican*: in Christian art, it is a symbol of charity. It is also an emblem of Jesus, “by whose blood we are healed.” St. Jerome gives the story of the pelican restoring its young ones destroyed by serpents, and his salvation by the blood of Jesus. The old popular fallacy that pelicans fed their young with their blood arose from the fact that when the parent bird is about to feed its brood, it macerates small fish in the large bag against its breast and transfers the macerated food to the mouths of the young. Its use as the symbol on Bors shield is found in *Idylls*, “The Holy Grail” l. 633: “The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors....” Bors also witnesses the self-sacrificing nature of the pelican for its young in *Le Morte* xvi 6. l. 43: *fish of Nimue*: Nimue: she is also known as the lady of the lake who Merlin falls in love with and teaches all his magical arts. She later uses these arts in order to trap him under a great stone for eternity (*Le Morte* iv 1). She also is the lover of Sir Pelleas, as well as one of King Arthur’s escorts to the vale of Avilion after he is mortally wounded by Mordred (*Le Morte* xxi 6). In *Idylls*, she is known as the “wily” and sinister Vivien. In C.W.’s poems, Nimue is “time’s mother on earth”—see SL l. 56, the mother of Merlin[time] and Brisen[space]—see also SL ll. 112-113. “So that Nimue is the great mother and lady of Broceliande—Nature, as it were, or all the vast processes of the universe imaged in a single figure” (*Figure* 82). Lewis also explains C.W.’s Nimue or Nature in *Torso* 101:

The sovereign mistress of Broceliande is by Williams named Nimue—a person who has almost nothing in common with Malory’s Nimue. To say that Nimue is an image of Nature is true, but not very helpful since ‘Nature’ itself is a hard word. For Williams, as for Plato, the phenomenal world—the world studied by the sciences—is primarily a reflection or copy or adaptation of something else. Nimue, the ‘mother of making’, is that energy which reproduces on earth a pattern derived from ‘the third heaven’, i.e. from the sphere of Venus, the sphere of Divine Love.

l. 44: *hierarchic*: arranged in a ranked series according to ability or to economic, social, or professional standing.

*republican*: having the characteristics of a body of persons freely engaged in a specified activity.

l. 46: *compelled*: (archaic): driven together.

l. 47: *formalized*: given a certain or definite form: sharpened.

l. 49: *leopard*: a heraldic representation of a lion passant[walking with the farther forepaw raised] guardant[having the head turned toward the spectator].

l. 51: *Bedivere's rose*: Bedivere: *Idylls*, "The Coming of Arthur" ll. 173-174: "Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights/ Knighted by Arthur at his crowning...." He is also the last knight of the Round Table to be with King Arthur before his death. He is tasked to throw Excaliber into the lake and to bring King Arthur to his barge which would carry him to Avilion (*Le Morte* xxi 3-6 and *Idylls*, "The Passing of Arthur").

l. 61: *So, in Lancelot's hand, she came through the glow*: *Idylls*, "The Coming of Arthur" ll. 446-448: "Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved/ And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth/ And bring the Queen...."

l. 63: *the king made for the kingdom, or the kingdom made for the king?*: a key issue for C.W. in his radical re-interpretation of the Arthurian legend is the king's fatal/fateful misunderstanding of his own function/ purpose. Arthur's error becomes the root of all the failures in Logres. Recall C.W.'s epigraph.

l. 65: *dolorous blow*: the name given to the stroke that Sir Balin gave to King Pelles with the holy spear that was used to pierce the side of Jesus Christ when he was crucified--see *Le Morte* ii 15 and *Idylls*, "Balin and Balan". Merlin describes the stroke and its consequences in *Le Morte* ii 8:

"...thou shalt strike a stroke most dolorous that ever man struck, except the stroke of Our Lord, for thou shalt hurt the truest knight[King Pelles] and the man of most worship that now liveth, and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be in great poverty, misery and wretchedness twelve year, and the knight shall not be whole of that wound many years."

C.W. also comments on the blow in *Figure 85*:

The Dolorous Blow consisted in the wounding of the royal Keeper of the Hallows with the Sacred Spear. The Spear was that which had

wounded the side of Christ, and it bled continually at the point. It was then aimed at the central heart. But when Balin le Sauvage used it, he used it for his own self-preservation. It is this turning of the most sacred mysteries to the immediate security of the self that is the catastrophic thing. It is indeed, morally, precisely the wounding of the Keeper of the Hallows which then takes place. Man wounds himself. It is an image of the Fall; it is also an image of every individual and deliberate act of malice, though the deliberation is here but passionate and not coldly angry.

l. 66: *shocks*: colors changing strongly in torch light/ surprises in the future.

ll. 68-69: *...at the zenith lion and dragon/ rose, clawed, twisted, screamed*: a prophesy of the wars between Lancelot["lion"] and King Arthur["dragon"].

l. 73: *first watch*: first division of hours after midnight at sea and in the life of prayer; commonly felt to be the lowest ebb of vitality.

*Matins*: the night office of prayer forming with lauds the first of the canonical hours.

ll. 74-75: *the hollow call is beaten on the board in Sophia;/ the ledge of souls shudders, whether they die or live*: "C.W. said he had learnt that the call to prayer is in some Moslem mosques beaten on a hollow wooden board (or drum) and that (l. 75) some sects held taht souls awaiting judgement cluster on a ledge over an abyss. At the hoolo sound they shudder, both bad and good, at the approach of the spiritual life" (*Notes*).

### *Taliessin's Song of the Unicorn*

*Out of Broceliande come many mythical animals, but the unicorn is the poetic lord. Unfortunately for the unicorn, he is attracted to the maiden who rarely learns to appreciate or love the beautiful animal. Often the hunter who comes to free the maiden from this magical beast's love is rewarded with her virginity and the spoiled horned head of the slain unicorn. But for the virtuous virgin who dares to embrace the beast, she will be called the Mother of the Unicorn's voice, and his song will exalt her.*

C.W.'s Note in Answers:

Not very good. It had originally the notion that most women prefer direct attention to indirect labour; 'the unicorn' (poetry, social things, etc.) is regarded as less attractive than the human fellow; Catullus was a kind of 'catch' for Lesbia, but she much preferred less poetry and more intercourse, so she took up with someone else. On the other hand it is the great ideas by devotion to which we get things done. If a woman could really help poetry, poetry might say something. (Cf. the 'twynature' in BFB)

Title: *Unicorn*: (Latin~*unum cornu* - "one horn"): it is represented by medieval writers as having the legs of a buck, the tail of a lion, the head and body of a horse, and a single horn--white at the base, black in the middle, and red at the tip--jutting from the middle of its forehead; its body is white; head, red; and eyes, blue. The earliest author to describe it is Ctesias (400 BC). The medieval notions concerning it are summarized in the following extract:

The unicorn has but one horn in the middle of its forehead. It is the only animal that ventures to attack the elephant, and so sharp is the nail of its foot, that with one blow it can rip the belly of the beast. Hunters can catch the unicorn only by placing a young virgin in his haunts. No sooner does he see the damsel than he runs towards her, and lies down at her feet, and so suffers himself to be captured by the hunters. The unicorn represents Jesus Christ, who took on Him our nature in the virgin's womb, was betrayed to the Jews, and delivered into the hands of Pontius Pilate. Its one horn signifies the Gospel of Truth.--*Le Bestiaire Divin de Guillaume, Clerc de Normandie* (13th century). (Benet's)

“The poet, if you will, is a unicorn. Virginitly attracts him (as the old Bestiaries said) but he does not attract it. What should a healthy young woman in search of a mate, of children, of an establishment, do with this ‘snorting alien love’ who comes galloping to her from a horizon which even he ‘has no voice to explain” (*Torso* 113-114).

l. 2: *west*: “There lie then near Logres--and they must lie to the west, for to the east we come into history and doctrine and Europe--other places of myth” (*Figure* 80-81).

l. 4: *centaur*: originally a bull-killer, it is also race of creatures fabled to be half horse and half man and to live in the mountains of Thessaly.

*gryphon*: a mythical animal typically having the head, forepart, and wings of an eagle and the body, hindlegs, and tail of a lion.

*crest*: a ridge or prominence on a part of an animal body.

l. 7: *clear flesh*: virginity.

l. 8: *quell*: (archaic): the power of thoroughly overwhelming and reducing to submission or passivity.

l. 10: *dusky*: marked by slight or deficient light: shadowy.

l. 14: *chill-curdled*: curdled: congealed as if by forming curds.

l. 15: *rifling*: the act or process of making spiral grooves.

l. 17: *spear flesh-hued*: penis.

l. 19: *as Lesbia tied horned Catullus*: “Gaius Valerius Catullus (87-?54 BC): a Roman lyric poet, who was born in Verona and went to Rome as a young man. Through his charm and precocious brilliance, he gained easy admittance to the refined and prodigal society of the day; through his ardent susceptibility, he fell disastrously in love with a young Roman matron. She was the beautiful, gifted, and unscrupulous Clodia who became his dark muse, the “Lesbia” of his poetry, and her life and personality are closely intertwined with the life and lyrics of Catullus. Catullus brought many Greek rhythms into Latin literature and was the first Roman poet to exploit fully the classical lyric meters” (*Benet’s*).

l. 22: *the animal which is but a shade till it starts to run*: “C.W. felt the poet is only known when he writes, or, in his writings. C.W.’s poetic criticism is grounded in this view” (*Notes*).

l. 23: *point*: i) the spear which pierced Christ side; or ii) or a the penis of the poet (it also has the nature of a “twy-fount”--l. 26)

l. 26: (*O twy-fount, crystal in crimson, of the Word’s side*): John xix 33-34: “But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the



soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water."

l. 30: *throes*: pang, spasm (i.e., death s~ or s~ of childbirth).

l. 31: *Mother of the Unicorn's Voice*: the woman who can "dare set palms on the point[horn]" or can embrace the "grand beast" and provide him with inspiration should be called the "Mother" of the poet's voice or sound.

l. 33: *enskiéd*: exalted.

l. 36: *paramour's song*: paramour: "C.W. insisted that the old meaning 'by or through love', or 'love' or 'lover' was wider than its modern 'illicit' gloss, and also that 'spouse' or 'husband' were not possible" (*Notes*).

*intellectual nuptials unclosed*: "unlimited full attention and developing comprehension of each other's thought, imagination and ability" (*Notes*).

### ***Bors to Elayne : The Fish of Broceliande***

*Writing to his wife, Bors relates recent events of the kingdom. The king is establishing Logres. He has sent his faithful host back to their homelands, and his lieutenants to their stations. For Bors, this means duty on the southern coast, from the western wood of Broceliande to the eastern forelands.*

*Bors then tells of Taliessin's song about Broceliande. He comments on the unique nature of the song, specifically on its ability to mean anything to anybody, and he confesses that he was reminded of his love for Elayne. While the king's poet sings, Bors finds himself dreaming of a fish in a Broceliande stream. He plucks the fish out of the water and wonders what would happen if he gave it to his wife. He has a vision of the fish swimming through her body, never being caught and eventually returning to its pool. He then ponders the name of the fish and what Nimue would call it, but he gives up trying to discover the name because of the impossible nature of the task.*

*He closes with a comment on the double tracks the fish's eyes follow and an entreaty to Elayne to take the fish. Although Camelot is built and the king is throned, Bors asks his wife to embrace the symbolic creature of Broceliande whose "anagram" is ICHTHYS.*

#### **C.W.'s Note in Answers:**

I think the Fish is the strange quality in Romantic Love which comes from Broceliande originally and seems to flash through the beloved; here the beloved's body is seen so and not as the Empire. The Fish is not exactly Christ, but the early Church symbolised Christ by a Fish; so the light of Romantic Love is of Christ. It is something which perhaps could be found by two lovers, though it never is. Caucasia (or sense) is in a way as deep as Broceliande, and the divine *anthropos* is there. Bors offers what he receives; and he is the 'married man'.

The twy-nature = two lovers (and, more extremely, Christ).

Title: *Elayne*: the wife of Sir Bors--see CA l. 29.

*Fish*: as a symbol for Jesus, it was used by the early Christians. The letters of the Greek word for fish, ICHTHYS, form an anagram of the phrase Iesous Christos, Theou Yios, Soter, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour." This word, and the *ichthys*

symbol, two facing curved lines which overlap at one end, are found on many early Christian seals, rings, urns, and tombs.

l. 8: *sea-rooted western wood*: Broceliande.

ll. 13-42: "C.W. once said that when confronted with a choice of apparently mutually exclusive alternatives--an either/or situation--the best response was often 'Neither: both!'; both alternatives were to be seized or followed or experienced with the utmost intensity to their uttermost conclusions. For the rest of the poem Bors is doing this. Elayne is at once his wife *and* a stream that flows through the forest that is Broceliande to the sea that is Brocliande. He looks at her hand, her arm, her shoulder with the passionate attention of all C.W.'s lovers, and that passionate attention sees them as a pool, a channel, a boulder in that stream. The fish is her gift to him *and* his gift to her and yet cannot be summoned or possessed by either of them" (*Notes*).

l. 18: *gaff*: a spear or spearhead for taking fish.

l. 21: *cataract*: waterfall: esa large one over a precipice.

l. 26: *anagram*: a word or phrase made by transposing the letters of another word or phrase.

l. 28: *zany*: "earth's worst fool": a subordinate clown or acrobat in old comedies who mimics ludicrously the tricks of his principle.

l. 30: *twy-nature*: a nature attuned to the union of flesh and spirit.

l. 33: *aboriginal*: being the first of its kind present in a region and often primitive in comparison with more advanced types.

ll. 37-38: *...where the Catabomb's stone/ holds its diagram over the happy dead*: "during the early centuries of the persecution of the Church the outline of a fish was used as symbol of Christ.

Consequently the fish's outline would appear on the tombstones of many of the martyrs who were buried in the Catacombs" (*Notes*).

l. 37: *Catacomb's stone*: catacomb: a subterranean cemetery of galleries with recesses for tombs. During the great persecution of the early Christians by the Romans, many used catacombs as places of refuge.

l. 38: *the happy dead*: the early Christian saints.

l. 41: *novacreatura*: (Latin - "new creature"): 2 Corinthians v 17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

l. 42: *accipe*: (Latin - "accept" or "take"): an act of Communion.

l. 47: *everywhere the light through the great leaves is blown*: In *Torso* 116, C.S. Lewis describes the Beatricean experience:

The Beatricain experience may be defined as the recovery (in respect to one human being) of that vision of reality which would have been common to all men in respect to all things if Man had never fallen. The lover sees the Lady as the Adam saw all things before they foolishly chose to experience good as evil, to 'gaze upon the acts in contention'. Williams believes that this experience is what it professes to be. The 'light' in which the beloved appears to be clothed is true light; the intense significance which she appears to have is not an illusion; in her (at that moment) Paradise is actually revealed, and in the lover Nature is renovated.

### *Taliessin in the School of the Poets*

*Taliessin comes to the school of the poets. As he moves across the room, his shadow falls on the floor, which is decorated with a brass image of Phæbus Apollo, the god of poets. Dusk deepens, and Taliessin begins teaching the students. With doves cooing in the background, he starts his exposition by talking about good and fortunate poetry. This poetry expounds on the gold of butterflies' wings, the swaying hazel's shade, or the neck's nape. Taliessin then explains that the best poetry fathoms the porphyry stair and the throne of God and the Emperor. As the king's falcons stir on their perches, Taliessin's voice sharpens, and he closes his address by condemning the poetry which he finds wrong and disturbing: the poetry plunged into the void, a process that stems and stales great verse. As the sun sets, the students observe the crowned form of anatomized man in the crimson brass and learn precision from its diagram. Taliessin sighs a prayer for salvation.*

#### C.W.'s Note in Answers:

Taliessin says that the right beginnings fo measurement and understanding are easy enough. 'The creamed with crimson sphere' is the body; the centre line of which is given, obviously, and never quite given: what we have is never quite right. The body may be measured (actually or morally or poetically); love may prick the coat of grace, but they best understand the living beauty of love who know the ascent in the Sacred Palace, the stair that leads to God (as the Emperor). The newel--the C.O.D. gives 'post supporting handrail of stair at top or bottom', so there could be two. The Throne is the place of eternity; every moment is equally the centre; and our impulses are themselves holy. To love is to merit; to see is to see rightly. It is the place of principles and of things as they are. The identity of love (for example) differs in the categories of sex, of the City, of religion. In the Throne is the identity; in the themes are the categories; in Logres is temporal understanding. In Logres therefore are the distances and the measurements and the need of precision.

1. 2: *Paul's door*: Acts 14 xiv 27: "On arriving there, they[Barnabas and Paul] gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

l. 7: *Phæbus*: (Greek~φαιβος - "bright"): an epithet of Apollo, particularly in his quality as the god of light. The name often stands for the sun personified. At an early age, he kills the Python, the sacred snake of the Delphic oracle, and takes charge of that oracle, which had previously belonged to a succession of earth goddesses. He has been called "the most Greek of Greek gods," speaking more than once for modern concepts of justice and human relation, as opposed to the more primitive traditions. Phoebus Apollo is also the god of poetry.

l. 15: *skins*: a sheet of parchment made from a hide.

*runes*: the characters of any of several alphabets used by the Germanic people from about the 3rd to the 13th centuries/ mystery, magic/ Finnish or Old Norse poems/ poems.

*vellums*: a fine-grained unsplit lambskin, kidskin, or calfskin prepared especially for writing on or for binding books.

l. 16: *brass*: a brass memorial tablet.

ll. 24/72: C.W. symbolically changes from "doves" to "falcons." This change parallels the change in Taliessin's focus in his lecture. He starts out with what is good and marvelous, but then shifts to what is wrong and disturbing.

l. 25: *Butterfly fancies*: "a story from the second chapter of the *Chuang Tzu* (Chinese - "Master Chuang"). It is a characteristically poetic illustration of the Taoist philosopher's concept of the relativity of reality and illusion. Chuang Tzu awakens from a dream in which he was a butterfly. For a moment, he does not know if he is Chuang Tzu dreaming that he is a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that he is Chuang Tzu. *Chuang Tzu* is a Chinese Taoist text, attributed to and named after Chuang Chou (369-286 BC). Its themes are the primacy of nature over the world of man and his government and the relativity of such concepts as good and evil. It is a work of great poetic and imaginative power" (*Benet's*).

l. 30: *neck's nape*: the back of the neck.

ll. 31-36: "At the bottom of my page note, transcribed from Williams, runs, 'the body, of which the centre line is given, obviously, and yet never quite given'. That is the key to his whole conception of the body: it is an ideal geometry mediated through an actual arrangement of living curves. The 'head-to-heel' line and the line of the outspread arms are as the two intersecting diameters of a sphere: the 'rondures' of the caucasian base derive their significance (as pattern) from the 'absolute' spine. But all this geometry is

flushed with living glory, 'creamed with crimson' and 'greace-pricked to gules' by the heart" (*Torso* 119-120).

l. 31: *Skeined*: wound into a skein, a loosely coiled length of yarn or thread wound on a reel, or something suggesting the twists or coils of a skein--a tangle.

l. 35: *rondures*: gracefully rounded curvature.

l. 37: *hazel*: see note from TRL l. 63.

l. 39: *gules*: the heraldic color red.

l. 40: *intinctured*: intinction--the administration of the sacrament of Communion by dipping the bread in the wine and giving both together to the communicant.

l. 41: *blossom*: a peak period or stage of development.

l. 42: *porphyry stair*: see note from VE l. 10.

l. 46: *jewel-joint-justiced throne* : jewel: see Revelation iv 2-3: "At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne."

joint: common to two or more. See Revelation iv 4: "Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders."

justiced: Psalm lxxxix 14: "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne...."

l. 48: *nth*: extreme, utmost.

l. 49: *indulged*: treated with excessive leniency, generosity, or consideration.

l. 50: *newel*: a post at the foot of a straight stairway or one at a landing.

l. 51: *magnanimous*: showing or suggesting a lofty and courageous spirit.

l. 52: *compensations*: counter-balances.

l. 58: *desert*: (archaic): forsaken.

l. 60: *Pandects*: the digest of Roman civil law (6 AD). A complete code of the laws of a country or system of law.

*Code*: a systematic statement of a body of law, especially one given statutory force.

l. 69-70: *he uttered Italy seen from a wave;/ he defined the organisms of hell*: "Taliessin's voice sharpens; he is thinking of Virgil. More exactly, he is thinking of *Aeneid VI*. He is thinking of Palinurus [the steersman of Aeneas and his companion in all his hardships and wanderings, who was thrown overboard by a god] who died with no more reward for all his wanderings than 'Italy

seen from a wave' (*prospexi Italiam summa sublimis ab unda*). Then, following Virgil deeper into that book, into the lower world, he 'defines the organisms of hell'" (*Torso* 120).

l. 75: *postulants*: Taliessin's students: people admitted to a religious order as a probationary candidate for membership.

l. 79: *sovereign chair*: "the chair of the poets"--see l. 22.

l. 85: *Tendebantque manus*: "'Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore' (*Aeneid* VI. 314) the ghosts of the unburied dead 'stretched out their hands in longing for the further shore' which they were unable to reach. As the young poets study the picture of the macrocosm enmeshed by the beams of Phoebus they hear 'the universal sigh' of all unsatisfied longings" (*Notes*).

l. 87: *macrocosm*: a complex that is a large-scale reproduction of one of its constituents.

l. 93: *anatomized*: cut in pieces in order to display or examine the structure and use of the parts.

l. 98: *lucent*: glowing with light--luminous.

l. 101: *Sis salvator, Domine*: "'Be Thou a Saviour, O Lord'. A universally-known medieval prayer was 'Jesu, Jesu, esto mihi Jesus' -- 'O Jesus, Jesus, be Jesus to me', because, as the Christian church teaches "The holy name "Jesus" means "Saviour"'" (*Notes*).



### *Taliessin on the Death of Virgil*

*This is Taliessin's Virgil elegy. According to Taliessin, Virgil is killed by his Emperor Augustus' looming back. His love pushes him off the edge of the world. And for a long period of time, Virgil perpetually falls and dies. None come to save him, until unborn pieties live. They find Virgil, read Virgil, and learn Virgil's power. Then they intervene for their master and friend. They catch him in the net of their love and give him what salvation they can.*

#### C.W.'s Note in Answers:

It does not depend on his not knowing Christianity; we live, now and hereafter, by others, and the poem would apply equally to Dante. 'Augustus's buttocks' are the experience of good things--friendship, Rome--as horrible and obscene. The good really does *seem* revolting to us. Cf. the headless Emperor's penis in sex and love. ? a kind of dark night of the soul.

#### In Notes, there are excerpts taken from one of C.W.'s letters:

...there is a tale that even the Lord John Milton was saved after death by the myriad wings of his lovers who recovered his spirit when it fell from the edge of the world and in a net of adoration and laughter freed him also in humility to adore. And if you say: 'Whose tale?' the answer is 'mine', but only in a not very good poem which I will re-write concerning the Lord Virgil of Mantua and set among the Taliessin poems...(1934)

- l. 1: *Virgil*: he was also a "king's poet" much like Taliessin--see LV l. 15.
- l. 2: *Augustus' back*: Augustus: (original name Caius Octavius, 63 BC-AD 14) the first Emperor of Rome. He was adopted by his great-uncle Julius Caesar, and succeeded him at age nineteen. After his defeat of the combined forces of Mark Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, he was greeted by Rome as its savior and was the sole sovereignty for forty-four years. His greatest accomplishment was the long periods of peace he was able to maintain through his mastery of the art of statesmanship. It was at his request that Virgil wrote the *Aeneid*.
- l. 9: *his moment's infinity*: Virgil's death.

- l. 11: *pell-mell*: in mingled confusion or disorder.
- l. 17: *Charon's ferrying*: in classical mythology, the ferryman of the Styx. Charon's toll was a coin, about equal in value to a penny, which was placed in the mouth or the hand of the dead by the ancient Greeks to pay him for ferrying the spirit across the river Styx to Elysium. "Aeneas's journey across the Styx (river of death) full of pity and terror" (*Notes*).
- l. 18: *everlastingly plucked from and sucked from and plucked to and sucked to a grave*: Virgil is continually "plucked to and sucked to a grave"[dying]--i.e. he remains unread. Yet he is continually "plucked from and sucked from...a grave"[reborn]--i.e., someone needs him and is changed, influenced.
- l. 19: *pieties*: "...to Virgil would be 'honourable fulfilment of all moral duties--to the gods, one's country, family, friends'" (*Notes*).
- l. 25: *Others he saved; himself he could not save*: Matthew xxvii 41-42: "In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.'"
- "This poet from whose work so many Christians have drawn spiritual nourishment was not himself a Christian--did not himself know the full meaning of his own poetry, for (in Keble's fine words) 'thoughts beyond their thought to those high bards were given' ...he helped to save others, himself he could not save" (*Torso* 121).
- ll. 30-31: *There was intervention, suspension, the net of their loves,/ all their throng's songs*: C.W.'s theology of substitution--see note from l. 41.
- l. 37: *"doves"*: the readers and poets who are Virgil's students.  
*"cote"*: a shed or coop for small domestic animals.
- ll. 39-41: Far from dying in any ultimate sense, Virgil is "set on the marble of exchange." Virgil is set on a marble pedestal (honored), but he is also traded "for"--that is, read--by other human souls.
- l. 41: *exchange*: C.W. describes his conception spiritual exchange and substitution in *Essential* 209-210/218:

In the records of the Thebaid, of the strange ascetic monks of the Egyptian desert, followers of Saint Anthony, the thing was put plainly enough.

A certain old man used to say, 'It is right for a man to take up the burden for those who are akin (or near) to him, whatsoever it may

be, and, so to speak, to put his own soul in the place of that of his neighbour, and to become, if it were possible, a double man; and he must suffer, and weep, and mourn with him, and finally the matter must be accounted by him as if he himself had put on the actual body of his neighbour, and as if he had acquired his countenance and soul, and he must suffer for him as he would for himself.'

So great a business of exchange and substitution fills the phrase "bear ye one another's burdens" with a much fuller meaning than is generally ascribed to it. But that fuller meaning is no less practical than the usual meanings of being sympathetic and doing exterior acts "of kindness and love." It is very proper that they should be done. But that is because we ought to be "members one of another"--*membra*, limbs, not members of the same society. Christians are not members of a club; they are "members" of the church, which is not a club. Men and women are not members of a club; they are "members" of mankind, which is not a club. From childbirth to those (in Dante's phrase) "adult in love," there is but one nature. That nature is not divided from grace; it is indeed (let it be said with submission to the theologians) the nature of grace. The difference, in that sense, is only a difference of power. ...The first canon of substitution had been declared in the myth of origin ages before, when the law of man's responsibility for man had been shaped...The child was Cain, the incarnation of their union outside paradise, and in some sense of the self-desirous spirit which troubles the divine glory in all lovers..."Am I my brother's keeper?" It is a question asked by most people at some moment. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." That answer became a law in the covenants: "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man."

In *Torso* 123, Lewis also summarizes C.W.'s doctrine of Exchange or Substitution in three propositions:

(I) The Atonement was a Substitution, just as Anselm said. But that Substitution, far from being a mere legal fiction irrelevant to the normal workings of the universe, was simply the supreme instance of a universal law. 'He saved others, himself he cannot save' is a *definition* of the Kingdom. All salvation, everywhere and at all times, in great things or in little, is vicarious. The courtesy of the Emperor has absolutely decreed that no man can paddle his own canoe and every man can paddle his fellow's, so that the shy offering and modest acceptance

of indispensable aid shall be the very form of the celestial etiquette. (2)  
We can and should 'bear one another's burdens' in a sense much more  
nearly literal than is usually dreamed of. Any two souls can ('under the  
Omnipotence') make an agreement to do so: the one can offer to take  
another's shame or anxiety or grief and the burden will actually be  
transferred. This Williams most seriously maintained, and I have  
reason to believe that he spoke from experimental knowledge. (3)  
Such 'exchanges', however, are not made only by mutual knowledge or  
consent, as when our god-parents became our substitutes at the font.  
Such is the coinherence of all souls that they are not even limited by  
Time...The present poem means what it says. I think the poet would  
have said in so many words, if asked, that any Christian Virgilian can  
this very night assist in the salvation of Virgil.

## *The Coming of Palomides*

*Talaat ibn Kula teaches Palomides the Euclidean and Archimedean measurement of man before Palomides takes the western road across the Spanish seas, through the Pyrenees to the land of Gaul. Although Cælius Vibenna, leader of the Etruscans and a sorcerer, tries to prevent the invention of the City and the Sea, Cæsar rises, the Gospel grows, and Gaul becomes a land where the Gospels measure the true height of God-in-man. Cæsar also opens the ghostly harbors of the north, and Palomides follows him to the Logrian land where he sees an outstretched hand on a table.*

*He sees this hand in the summer house of King Mark. It belongs to Queen Iseult, who is sitting between her lord Mark and her lover Tristram. A ruddy bolt which travels down her arm inspires Palomides to measure the shape of man again. King Mark interrupts Palomides' thoughts with a request for Persian verse, and as Palomides begins to recite, he reflects on the ignorance of Mark and Tristram and the irony of his own (a Moslem's) understanding.*

*Palomides' song celebrates Iseult's body. On this human diagram, Palomides' heart and thought now flame. His song blesses the hour when the first intellectual power understood the beauty and significance of the geometric body and the metaphysical unions of blood, mind, and fact. Finally, Palomides strains to measure the doctrine of Euclidean love with the queen's hand, but suddenly he ceases his song.*

*Following his glimpse of an angry bolt traveling down the same awesome arm of the Queen, Palomides instantly becomes disillusioned. He recognizes a growing division between the queen's identity and the queen because he suddenly understands that Iseult and Tristram are committing adultery. Her beauty and courtesy remain, but her essential glory has vanished. The king tosses Palomides a ring for payment, while the queen turns to flirt with Tristram.*

*Cælius Vibenna casts spells over the dead; Cæsar hears of the ghostly sea masking the ports of unity; the Pope stands in Lateran; and Palomides hears the squeak of the questing beast while it scratches in the blank that he now understands to exist between the queen's substance and the queen: that is, between her potential to be a Beatrician image and her flawed reality.*

Title: *Palomides*: one of the knights of the Round Table. Both he and his two brothers, Sir Safer and Sir Segwarides, are Saracens and the sons of King Astlabor (*Le Morte* x 83, and they come into King Arthur's kingdom unchristened. Sir Palomides is introduced in *Le Morte* viii 29 at the court of King Mark where he immediately falls in love with Queen Iseult. His renown grows, and he is soon regarded as the fourth greatest knight in the kingdom behind Lancelot, Tristram, and Lamorack. He ultimately accepts baptism into the Christian faith after Tristram (one of his godfathers along with Sir Galleron at the font of Carlisle) defeats him in combat on the feast of the Pentecost, the same Pentecost that Sir Galahad sits in the Siege Perilous (*Le Morte* xii 14). He is also known for his continual search for the Questing Beast, or the Beast Glatisant. In Greek legend, he is also one of the heroes against Troy. He was also the reputed inventor of lighthouses, scales and measures, the discus, dice, etc., and was said to have added four letters to the original alphabet of Cadmus.

C.W. describes him in *Image* 176-177:

Palomides is the knight who begins by believing in good and evil almost (as so many do) as two separate origins and powers. He is, like most of us, a dualist. He then becomes a Mohammedan and believes in one control. He then becomes a Christian and believes in reconciliation, transmutation, and Unity. Also he is especially man combating and overcoming sex (the Blatant Beast). He is in some sense an image and shadow of Galahad, for it is significant that he is baptized (after his conquest) on the day when Galahad comes to the King's hall.

l. 1: *Talaat ibn Kula of Ispahan*: suggests Palomides' Moslem background/ Talaat is Palomides' teacher.

l. 3: *Euclid*: (fl 300 BC) a Greek mathematician. Euclid lived and taught at Alexandria. His *Elements* (of geometry) in thirteen books became the basis of future geometry.

*Archimedes*: (c.287-212 BC) Syracusan mathematician, astronomer, and inventor. Several of Archimedes' treatises, including that on the sphere and the cylinder, are still extant. Archimedes discovered the principle of the displacement of water, which, by means of specific gravity, he used to test the amount of base metal in the crown of Hieron, ruler of Syracuse.

l. 4: *Western road*: Palomides' trip from northern Africa (bastion of Islam) to France (Gaul) by way of Spain.

- l. 5: *strait of the Spanish Seas*: the Straits of Gibraltar
- l. 6: *green-pennon-skirted*: a metaphor for trees.  
 pennon: a long usually triangular or swallow-tailed streamer typically attached to the head of a lance as an ensign.  
*Pyrenees*: mountains along the French-Spanish border from the Bay of Biscay to the Gulf of Lions.
- l. 7: *Prophet's blade*: Prophet: in the Koran, this is the special title of Muhammed (Arab - "the praised one"; also Mahomet or Mohammed, 570-632). He was the founder of Islam, the Moslem religion. Because he claimed to be the last of the prophets and successor to Jesus, he was received with hostility by both Christians and Jews. According to the Moslems, there have been 200,000 prophets, or interpreters, of God's will, but only six of them-- Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed--brought new laws.
- ll. 7-8: *from the sharp curved line of the Prophet's blade/ that cuts the Obedience from the Obeyed*: "Islam was for Williams the symbol (as it is certainly the greatest historical expression) of something which is eternally the opposite of Sarras and Carbonek. Islam denies the Incarnation. It will not allow that God has descended into flesh or that Manhood has been exalted into Deity...It stands for all religions that are afraid of matter and afraid of mystery, for all misplaced reverences and misplaced purities that repudiate the body and shrink back from the glowing materialism of the Grail. It stands for what Williams called 'heavy morality'—ethics of sheer duty and obedience as against the shy yet (in the long run) shameless acceptance of heaven's courtesies flowing from the 'homely and courteous lord'. It is strong, noble, venerable; yet radically mistaken" (*Torso* 124).
- l. 9: *cross-littered*: literally, Gaul (being Christian) has a lot of crosses (crucifixes) scattered about the countryside.
- l. 13: *Caelius Vibenna's lamp*: Caelius Vibenna: "I looked up Mons Caelia on which Lateran stands; it was named after him, who was the leader of those notorious sorcerers the pre-Roman Etruscans...They were said to be great in black magic: hence 'Etruscan spells'" (*Answers*).
- l. 15: *Etruscan spells*: Etruscans: an ancient non-Italic race which established itself in northern Italy some time before the 7th century BC. Modern Tuscany is roughly the center of what was their kingdom, Etruria. The Tusci, as they were called by the Romans, gained great power in Italy and the western Mediterranean, and held sway over Rome until 509 BC, when the last Etruscan king was

expelled from that city. The Romans feared and hated them for many years thereafter, although they were finally absorbed both politically and culturally into the Roman state. Their art shows influences from Greece, Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, and Mesopotamia, and it, in turn, influenced Roman art. Their language remains undeciphered and their origin a mystery, although the Greek historian Herodotus asserts that they came from Lydia in Asia Minor.

l. 17: *City*: Rome.

*See*: the seat of the bishop of Rome: the Pope.

l. 18: *Goetry*: black magic.

l. 20: *Cæsar*: [Caius] Julius Caesar (100-44 BC): a Roman general and statesman. After a brilliant early career in politics, where he distinguished himself in oratory, and in generalship, which he displayed in Spain (61-60 BC), Caesar was elected consul in 59. He joined the First Triumvirate in 60 BC with Pompey and Crassus, and then went to Gaul, where he expanded its boundaries, until he had conquered all of central Europe from the Rhine to the Pyrenees. Pompey and the leaders of the Senate, fearing the prestige of Caesar and the strength of his fanatically loyal legions, ordered him to resign his command and return to Rome without his army. This he refused to do. He eventually secured control of the empire itself after his famous Rubicon crossing during which he said, "The die is cast." His return to Rome in the spring of 46 was marked by lavish public festivals. He was hailed as a demigod; the name of the fifth month (Quintilis) in the Roman calendar was changed to Julius (July) in his honor. During the year that followed, Caesar made many reforms in the senatorial system and in the general management of the empire. His most durable reform, however, was his revision of the calendar. Opposition to Caesar on the part of the Aristocratic party was still seething beneath the surface of Roman politics. On March 15, 44 (the Ides of March), a group led by Cassius Longinus and Marcus Junius Brutus assassinated Caesar. Caesar was also one of the foremost orators of his age; only Cicero was esteemed the more persuasive of the two speakers.

ll. 23-27: "In inquiries made before landing in Britain, Julius Caesar heard that Britain was an island of magic, to which came spirits of the dead and other spirits. Fishermen might become aware of shadowy shapes in the boat, and be compelled to row to shore; or hear unseen boats land and then silence" (*Notes*).

l. 28: *Julius pierced through the tale of ghosts*: "It[Britain] had been discovered by Caesar at some period after the end of the



Etruscan 'magic' and before the exposition of the Christian 'mystery'; discovered as the reality behind old Gallic legend of a land to which dead men's ghosts were ferried westward" (*Torso* 125).

l. 30: *Portius Iccus*: the port from which Julius Caesar sailed when he set out to conquer the British Isles. Palomides is following in Caesar's footsteps: north toward Logres.

l. 33: *Cornish king*: King Mark: the king of Cornwall, husband of Iseult, or La Beale Isoud, and uncle of Tristan, or Sir Tristram. In the medieval legend of *Tristan and Iseult*, he has the misfortune to be in the generally unsympathetic position of cuckold. In *Le Morte* viii-x, he is a base figure intent only on the death of Sir Tristram who is the lover of his wife. In *Idylls*, he is also a corrupt figure intent, not only on destroying Tristram, but also Arthur's kingdom: "For he that always bare in bitter grudge/ The slights of Arthur and his Table..." ("Merlin and Vivien" ll. 6-7). For this purpose, King Mark sends the "wily" Vivien to Arthur's court to see what "snakes" she can stir up concerning Lancelot's adulterous affair with Guinevere. He also appears in "The Last Tournament" in which he also kills Tristram.

ll. 35-38: See note from BFB l. 47.

l. 35: *queen Iseult*: La Beale Isoud: the wife of King Mark of Cornwall and lover of Tristan or Sir Tristram. She is the heroine in *Tristan and Iseult*. Iseult the Fair, or la Beale, is an Irish princess, wooed and won by Tristram for his uncle, King Mark. But in the process of journeying to the court of King Mark, both Iseult and Tristram drink a magic potion that causes them to fall in love with one another, a love which is completely binding, even in the face of death. Ultimately, Tristram is banished and goes to Brittany, where he marries another, Iseult of the White Hands, or la Blanche Mains. Although in *Le Morte*, he can never allow himself to consummate the marriage because of his love for Iseult the Fair. She is depicted to be very beautiful and gifted (among other things, she has great skill in healing wounds). Besides *Tristan and Iseult*, she is found in *Le Morte* viii-xii and *Idylls*, "The Last Tournament."

l. 36: *ruddy*: having a healthy reddish color.

l. 37: *tinder*: something that serves to incite or inflame.

ll. 39-40: '*Little we know of verses here...*': given C.W. stress on the importance of verse for the establishment of a kingdom, King Mark has described his kingdom in the worst possible light.

l. 42: *Tristram*: (or Tristan) de Liones: hero of the great medieval cycle *Tristan and Iseult*, and a knight of the Round Table in the

legends of King Arthur. His father is King Meliodas and his mother is King Mark's sister Elizabeth. His birth causes the death of his mother, who thus names him Tristram, meaning "a sorrowful birth" (*Le Morte* viii 1). *Le Morte* viii also goes on to describe Tristram by saying:

And so Tristram learned to be an harper passing all other, that there was none such called in no country, and so in harping and on instruments of music he applied him in his youth for to learn. And after, as he growed in might and strength, he laboured ever in hunting and in hawking, so that never gentleman more, that ever we heard read of. And as the book saith, he began good measures of blowing or beasts of venery, and beasts of chase, and all manner of vermins, and all these we have yet of hawking and hunting. And therefore the book of venery, of hawking, and hunting, is called the book of Sir Tristram.

Tristram is also generally depicted as a champion dragon killer, excellent seaman, poet, and marvelous teller of tales (some insist that he is an expert liar). In addition, he is superbly handsome. Due to the accidental drinking of a magic potion, his life is governed by an undying love for Iseult the fair, even though she is married to his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall. Malory's Tristram is the second greatest knight of the Round Table behind only Lancelot. Although the one time that these two knights do fight at the grave of Balin and Balan (the place where Merlin prophesied that the two best knights and lovers of Arthur's days would fight), their battle ends in a draw (*Le Morte* x 5). Tristram also appears in *Idylls*, "The Last Tournament," with Iseult.

C.W. describes this knight by saying, "Tristram is also a great lover, but unlike Lancelot, he is out for his own hand. He is an individualist as against the State. Even his fidelity to Iseult and his leaving Iseult of the White Hands are largely dictated by his own ideas of what he wishes to be. His story is therefore of tragedy and death...[and] Because of Galahad, the Tristan story is pagan, the Lancelot Christian" (*Image* 176/184).

l. 48: *accent*: (archaic): utterance.

l. 49: *uncrossed*: unchristian.

*Saracen*: a member of a nomadic people of the deserts between Syria and Arabia: Arab.

ll. 52-54: Ironically, Palomides understands what a miracle Iseult is when those around her (the fighting Christian lords) do not. He

understands what a transcendent being Iseult is (or could be, given her basic nature).

l. 65: *indolence*: inclination to laziness.

l. 76: *trine*: "The trine is fact, emotion, and knowledge" (*Answers*).

l. 83: *unions metaphysical*: they are involved in the geometry of the soul's union with the body.

*metaphysical*: of or relating to the transcendent or to a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses.

l. 88: *fire of fact*: mathematics.

*fact*: "The glory of God is in facts. The almost incredible nature of things is that there is no fact which is not in his glory" (*Essential* 163).

*fire of blood*: love.

l. 90: *fire of mind*: poetry.

l. 100: *spanned*: measured by or as if by the hand with fingers and thumb extended.

ll. 103-104: *Down the arm of the queen Iseult/ quivered and darkened an angry bolt*: this is not at all like the "ruddy bolt" that Palomides sees in l. 36. It is its opposite. He suddenly sees that the arm is not "ruddy" (full of health) but "angry."

ll. 109-110: *...division stretched between/ the queen's identity and the queen*: "The Beatrician experience does not usually last...The glory is temporary; in that sense Beatrice nearly always dies. The precise moment at which the phenomenal Beatrice loses her identity with the real one is a repetition of the Fall, as Palomides discovers...A that moment all sorts of false paths lie open to the lover--rage, resentment, infidelity, or the contented decline into humdrum concupiscence" (*Torso* 117). "And then the Questing Beast begins to do its fell work in us" (*Answers*).

ll. 122-128: C.W. presents another triple pattern: Caelius Vibenna (Etruscan/cthonice Rome), Caesar (Imperial Rome), and the Pope (Christianized Rome). Palomides says that all three have stood over or at the terrible mysteries of life and death, each trying to figure out how to control or understand them. But at this point Palomides suggests that they have failed. Palomides instead hears the "squeak of the questing beast.

l. 130: *questing beast*: the Beast Glatisant: in Arthurian legend, this is the beast that is continually hunted by Sir Pellinore and later Sir Palomides. Its description can be found in *Le Morte* ix 12:

...the Questing Beast that had in shape a head like a serpent's head, and a body like a leopard, buttocks like a lion, and footed like an hart; and in his body there was such a noise as it had been the noise of thirty couple of hounds questing, and such a noise that beast made wheresomever he went; and this beast evermore Sir Palomides followed, for it was called his quest.

Lewis also comments on the nature of the Beast:

The entrance of the Beast is connected with Iseult's husband and her lover...It is primarily a jealous beast...Carnal jealousy awakes. It is the enemy Palomides must henceforth deal with; he has embraced his Quest. (*Torso* 127)

### *Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney*

*As Lamorack, a knight of Arthur's Round Table, gazes upon the stone features of Queen Morgause, he finds himself bruised and splintered. Morgause is the source of all stone and storm, and she discharges catastrophe. Lamorack is thrown down before her.*

*In the summer, the king charged Lamorack with the task of exploring the coast of the kingdom towards the Pole. This journey provides Lamorack with his first glimpse of Morgause's homeland, Orkney. He now recalls its cliffs, seamews, storms, and hideous huge forms; images he thinks only the Emperor and possibly the "loathly" Cælius Vibenna know. Lamorack and his companions flee before the storms and images of Orkney and return to the court.*

*However, when he arrives, he finds King Arthur with his wife Guinevere at his right hand and his sister Morgause at his "sinister" left hand. The images of Orkney he fled surprisingly appear before him again--only this time they are personified by Lot's wife in person. The sister of Arthur has five sons, one of whom is the unborn bastard Mordred, whose father is the king himself.*

*Searching for an explanation of the relationship between Arthur and Morgause, Lamorack surveys the half-dead lords until his neighbor Merlin addresses him. Merlin reveals the nature of the Dolorous Blow: the blow given to the Grail King by the irreverent Balin with the spear which pierced Christ's side. Its effect was to confuse the identities, which leads to the Great Ban: the restriction of the coming of the Grail. Balin mistook his brother Balan, as Arthur mistakes his sister Morgause. The brothers kill each other in hate, and Arthur sleeps with his sister and so splits his own fate. They all have come to know good as evil and can now only know God in the same manner--they have participated in the fall.*

*The affair of King Arthur and Queen Morgause occurs in a dark cavern in an obscure location. The only other creatures present are Palomides' blatant beast and the newly conceived, rock-hewn child Mordred in whose mind the web of Camelot's doom lies.*

*Lamorack closes the poem with a fateful resignation to his life-long devotion to the queen of stone and storm.*

C.W.'s note in *Answers*:

L(amorack)'s love-affair is more a matter of terrible fate than Lancelot's; but I want L(amorack) in because of Gawaine killing his

mother and L. and the feud with Lancelot. Gawaine is to be worldly honour run mad.

- Title: *Orkney*: islands in northern Scotland constituting a region.
- ll. 1-2: *Hued from the livid everlasting stone/ the queen's hewn eyelids bruised my bone*: the "stone" and "storm" of Queen Morgause and her "rocky" Orkney represent "livid everlasting" evil.
- l. 4: *exorbitant flying nature*: "I fear the 'first flying creature' was meant only to be a pleasant comparison" (*Answers*).
- l. 6: *outstripped*: got ahead of: left behind.
- l. 7: *pre-Adamic*: "before the Fall; and then comes the catastrophe through the Queen" (*Notes*).
- ll. 9-12: C.W. fuses stone (fierce hardness, immobility) and storm (fierce motion, activity) images in order to present Morgause and Orkney and their paradoxical chaos.
- l. 12: *primeval*: of or relating to the earliest ages: ancient, primitive.
- Morgause Lot's wife*: Genesis xix 17/26: "Flee for your lives! Don't look back...But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." "The suggestion, in the last words, of that other Lot's wife who became a pillar of salt, is doubtless intended: there is, if I may so put it, a *mineral* quality in Morgause" (*Torso* 129).
- Lot's wife*: King Lot: In Arthurian romance, king of Orkney and one of the kings subdued by Arthur (*Le Morte* i 9-17). King Lot is the husband of Morgause, Arthur's sister, and the father of Gawaine, Agravain, Gaheris, and Gareth. In *Idylls*, "Gareth and Lynette" (ll. 73-80), Lot is a broken, "yet-warm corpse" after his defeat by King Arthur.
- l. 14: *Pole*: the North Pole.
- l. 17: *crag*: steep rugged rocks or cliffs.
- l. 18: *seamews*: sea gull; especially a European gull (*Larus canus*).  
*extreme theme*: "a double meaning; theme: province, and also action/meaning" (*Notes*). "All this is supposed [to be] at the time [of] and because of the dolorous blow, about which there will one day be a poem. It is contingency becoming actual to man" (*Answers*).
- l. 21: *Caerleon*: one of King Arthur's two court capitals, the other being Camelot (see note from P I. 7). Each is appropriate to certain times of the year, Caerleon being the place where the court went for the celebration of Pentecost (*Le Morte* i 19). "Caerleon was a noble city; kings from all parts of the world came sailing to it up the

Severn. In it were two marvelous churches--St. Julius, to which a nunnery was attached which served it with a choir of virgins, and St. Aaron, to which belonged a convent of canons. The city was also renowned for a college of two hundred philosophers, learned in all the arts, who astrologically divined the future and made predictions to the king" (*Figure 30*).

l. 23: *contingent*: likely but not certain to happen/ not logically necessary: empirical.

l. 24: *torrid*: parched with heat, especially of the sun/ giving off intense heat.

l. 39: *his left*: the sinister hand.

l. 42: *four sons*: Gawaine, Agravain, Gaheris, and Gareth.

*one not*: Mordred: the bastard son of Arthur and his half-sister Morgause. C.W. comments on Mordred and his relationship with the Dolorous Blow in *Image 176*:

The fatality, the curse, the result of the Dolorous Blow, has to work itself out through the king. He and his two sisters--Morgause and Morgan--are man loving himself and hating himself. This--and not mere incest--is the reason that Mordred is born of Arthur and Morgause. And Mordred is entire egotism, Arthur's self-attention carried to the final degree. This is why it is he who wrecks the Table.

l. 44: *canonical Gawaine*: "Williams called 'canonical Gawaine' because the canon or code of earthly honour is his only principle" (*Torso 177*).

*canonical*: conforming to a general rule or acceptable procedure: orthodox.

l. 47: *Balin*: le Savage, "the Knight with the Two Swords": in Arthurian legend, he is one of the knights of the Round Table and the brother of Sir Balan. Sir Balin is the unfortunate knight who strikes King Pellles with the dolorous blow (*Le Morte ii 15*). He and his brother also unwittingly kill each other in single combat, neither recognizing the other until just before death. At their request, they are buried in one grave by Merlin (*Le Morte ii 19*). Balin is also found in *Idylls*, "Balin and Balan."

*Balan's face*: Balan: the brother of Balin, found in both *Le Morte* and *Idylls*, "Balin and Balan."

l. 48: *Did you not know the blow that darkened each from other's?*: Malory reveals that this blow is indeed the Dolorous Blow when Galahad makes a statement concerning his sword in *Le Morte xiii 5*:

'Now have I that sword that sometime was the good knight's, Balin le Savage, and he was a passing good man of his hands; and with this sword he slew his brother Balan, and that was great pity, for he was a good knight, and either slew other through a dolorous stroke that Balin gave unto my grandfather King Pelles, the which is not yet whole, nor not shall be till I heal him.'

Yet, C.W. not only links the confusion of identity which causes the death of Balin and Balan to the Dolorous Blow, he also links the confusion of identity between Arthur and his sister Morgause which brings about the conception of Camelot's bane: the bastard Mordred.

"After the dolorous blow struck against King Pelles in Carbonek by Balin the Savage, Balin and Balan his brother killed each other unknowingly, and Arthur unknowingly committed incest with his sister Morgause, who became by him the mother of Mordred" (*First edition*).

l. 49: *impious*: lacking in reverence or proper respect.

ll. 53-54: '*Over Camelot and Carbonek a whirling creature hovered/ as over the Adam in Eden when they found themselves uncovered:*

Genesis iii 7: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked." Merlin reveals to Lamorack that his vision of Morgause and Arthur together is a vision of the original Fall, but this time it is Camelot's.

l. 55: *good as evil*: see note from VE ll. 103-108.

l. 58: *crowned man without eyes*: King Arthur.

l. 60: *blind wood*: Broceliande.

l. 62: *eyeless woman*: Queen Morgause.

l. 66: *over them, half-formed, the cipher of the Great Ban*: Arthur's incestuous relationship with Queen Morgause and the conception of Mordred that results is half of the reason for the Great Ban. The other half being the Dolorous Blow performed by Balin.

*cipher*: a message in code/ a combination of symbolic letters; especially the interwoven initials of a name.

*Great Ban*: see note from CG l. 47. "Yes--prohibition and excommunication" (*Answers*).

l. 67: *blatant beast*: also known as Palomides' questing beast--see note from CP l. 129.

*blatant*: noisy, especially in a vulgar or offensive manner.

l. 69: *Beyond them a single figure was cut in the rock*: Mordred's conception.



l. 70: *gyration*: the oscillation with or as if with a circular or spiral motion.

*mow*: grimace/ to overcome swiftly and decisively: rout.

l. 72: *arch*: C.W. uses two arches to mark the conceptions of both the Fall (Mordred) and the Redemption (Galahad) of the kingdom of Logres--see SL l. 69.

l. 76: *surreptitious*: done, made, or acquired by stealth: clandestine.

### *Bors to Elayne : on the King's Coins*

*Bors returns from London to find Elayne, his wife, serving bread to Bors' fieldsmen. The love between husband and wife is very great, as their looks after long absence demonstrate.*

*With powerful emotion, Bors meditates on the way Elayne's body--her mouth, her face, her hands, even the precision and power of her thumbs--enables him to understand the most profound aspects of the larger love: its ordered beauty and goodwill, as well as its demands for exchange, sharing, and co-inhering.*

*As seen by her husband, Elayne is representative of the "organic salvation" that has already been compromised in London. Specifically, Bors is worried that the new minting of the king's coins has split the material from the spiritual, making the material dangerously autonomous in the process. Kay, the king's steward, has rejected such fears, but Bors remains apprehensive. Taliessin shares Bors' anxieties. The Archbishop preaches that real dangers do exist, and that to keep them at bay, "we must always live in the habitation of our lovers"--that is, in "the self-exchanged." It will do no good--indeed will be harmful--to substitute the giving and exchange of money for the giving and exchange of the self. But Bors is afraid that "contract" is already replacing "compact," thus damaging the moral and spiritual health of the newly secured kingdom.*

*Bors concludes by asking Elayne to pray that his worst fears not be realized.*

l. 2: *lightness of law*: the lightness of Christ's "law" or yoke: cf. Matthew xi 29: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

l. 6: *southern burst of love*: both Bors and his wife are from the south (Gaul)--see CA l. 29.

*corn*: Latin~cornu - "horn, point."

l. 11: *schools of Gaul*: the universities of Paris--the greatest traditions of Catholic theology.

l. 12: *their doctrine is your hands' main*: in *Answers*, C.W. comments:

I don't believe I can explain 'their doctrine' -- etc. The hands always seem to me incredibly significant; and Bors feels that Elaine's hands

have a power of doctrine in them more than the theological schools of Gaul. But cf. the hands in VE. 'The power of man seems to me wound on your thumbs (which are like old heroes and saints to me) as on a winch.'

*main*: physical strength: force/ the chief part: essential part.

l. 18: *propinquant*: near to blood: kinship/ near in place or time: proximity.

ll. 24-26: Using Bors, C.W. is setting up the ideal relationship between people (both high and low) so that when the issue of the King's coins comes, one will have a sense of what is potentially wrong with the notions of "economy" and "economic relationships" that "hard currency" brings in its wake. Everyone works or contributes in Bors' household. Not just the "workers," but the lord and lady as well. No one only earns, and no one only pays. All earn, and all pay. There is an essential sharing in the "power of exchange" then. No one is taking advantage of anyone else because everyone understands that they are in it together.

l. 27: *spread organisms*: fingers.

*organisms*: complex structures of interdependent and subordinate elements whose relations and properties are largely determined by their function in the whole.

l. 30: *ration*: (Latin~ration, ratio - "computation, reason): a share especially as determined by supply.

l. 35: *germinate*: to cause to sprout or develop.

*brood*: the young of an animal or a family of young/ a group having a common nature or origin.

l. 37: *flagons*: large usually metal or pottery vessels (as for wine)with handles and spouts and often lids.

l. 43: *but I dreamed the head of a dead king*: C.W. comments on this section:

'The social order can only be founded on this intense appreciation of exchange as opposed to unilluminated contracts'. So, though Kay says complacently 'Gold dances deftly across frontiers', Taliessin sees the danger. 'When the means are autonomous, they are deadly'--when any medium, any means of expression, is valued most for its own sake (when politicians, for instance, mouth phrases that do not correspond with any reality--a danger that was very apparent in the nineteen-thirties when the poem was written--or when Money is made into a god), we are lost.

- l. 44: *teemed*: (archaic): brought forth: given birth to/ became pregnant: conceived.
- l. 45: *epigrams*: concise poems dealing pointedly and often satirically with a single thought or even and often ending with an ingenious turn of thought/ terse, sage, or witty and often paradoxical sayings.
- l. 46: "*Feed my lambs*": John xxi 15: "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'"
- l. 49: *leer*: to cast a sidelong glance/ to give a lascivious, knowing, or wanton look.
- l. 55: *Kay*: in Arthurian legend, he is King Arthur's seneschal (steward). In the Welsh tale *Kulhwch and Olwen* (c1100), Sir Kay is a great hero--a wound from his sword, no physician might heal. In later tales, such as Chretien De Troyes' *Lancelot*, Malory's *Le Morte*, and Tennyson's *Idylls*, he becomes a rude and boastful knight who has a sharp tongue and who is inept in combat; yet Arthur always defers to him. In *Le Morte*, he is the son of Sir Ector, King Arthur's foster father.
- l. 57: *Omsk*: a city in southwestern Russia at the confluence of the Irtysh and the Om.
- l. 60: *deftly*: with facility and skill.
- l. 63: *orisons*: prayers.
- l. 81: *we must lose our own ends*: Matthew x 39: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
- ll. 82-83: *we must always live in the habitation of our lovers,/ my friend's shelter for me, mine for him*: C.W.'s theology of co-inherence:

The doctrine of the Christian church has declared that the mystery of the Christian religion is a doctrine of co-inherence and substitution. The divine Word co-inheres in God the Father (as the Father in him and the Spirit in both), but also he has substituted his manhood for ours in the secrets of the Incarnation and Atonement. The principle of the Passion is that he gave his life "for"--that is, instead of and on behalf of--ours. In that sense he lives in us and we in him, he and we co-inhere. "I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me" said Saint Paul, and defined the web of universal power towards substitution. To love God and to love one's neighbor are but two movements of the same principle, and so are nature and grace; and the principled is the Word by

whom all things were made and who gave himself for the redemption of all things. I was precisely the breach in that original nature which the new nature entered to fulfill. But either way it is our nature that is concerned. Our natural life begins by being borne in another; our mothers have to carry us. This is not (so far as we know) by our own will. The Christian church demands that we shall carry out that principle everywhere by our will--with friends and with our neighbors, whether we like our neighbors or not. (*Essential* 212)

l. 85: *make yourselves friends by means of the riches of iniquity*: the Archbishop is saying that all are sinners, but therein lies a paradoxical "richness": all are in need of forgiveness, all in need of each other's love.

l. 87: *Heracleitus*: (500 BC): "he was a pre-Socratic natural philosopher belonging to one of the ruling families of Ephesus. Heracleitus' single main work, *On Nature*, from which a good many fragments have survived, was one of the first pieces of Greek prose. It is written in an oracular style, striving to indicate rather than explicate truths. Heracleitus saw that everything in the world is balanced by its opposite. Justice controls the conflicting opposites, hence nature is a unity. Accordingly, 'Men do not understand how what is at conflict is at harmony with itself; it is an attainment of opposites like that of bow and lye.' His most famous fragment, 'It is not possible to step twice into the same river,' expresses his central belief that the only reality is that all things are in constant transition. His views on the mutability and fleeting character of all things led also to his partly humorous epithet, the "weeping philosopher," or the dark philosopher" (*Benet's*).

l. 88: "*dying each other's life, living each other's death*": see note from ll. 82-83.

"The quotation from Heracleitus was taken from Mr. Yeats's book, *A Vision*" (*First edition*).

l. 93: *Midas*: he is a legendary king of Phrygia. Midas requests of the gods that everything he touches might be turned to gold. His request is granted, but, as his food becomes gold the moment he touches it, he prays the gods to take this favor back. He is then ordered to bathe in the Pactolus, and the river ever after rolled over golden sands. Another story tells us that, when appointed to judge a musical contest between Apollo and Pan, he gives judgment in favor of the satyr; whereupon Apollo, in contempt, gives the king a pair of ass's ears. Midas hides them under his Phrygian cap, but his barber discovers them, and, not daring to mention the matter, digs a hole

and relieves his mind by whispering in it, "Midas has ass's ears," then covering it up again. The rushes forever after murmur the secret to the winds.

l. 98: *O lady, your hand held the bread*: the word *lady* means loaf-giver.

## The Star of Percivale

Inside the king's hall, the Lord Percivale harps as the "star" of Venus rides across the night sky. Outside, Taliessin, inspired, begins to sing words to Percivale's music. The music and the singing arouse a maid to stunned adoration. She falls at Taliessin's feet, ready to worship him. But Taliessin corrects her. "See thou do it not; I too am a man," he says. More importantly, he adds: "More than the voice is the vision, the kingdom than the king." On his way to celebrate morning Mass, Archbishop Dubric stops, arrested by the joy on the maid's face. Her joy has made him joyful.

But the sun rises, and clouds cover Venus.

Waiting for Mass to begin, members of the king's household talk of their various "fights" in wars and tournaments. Newly come from Byzantium, a messenger of the Emperor has a vision of the bliss that comes from the "indirect joy of substitution."

The household kneels for the start of Mass. But Balin, the unhappy knight who will strike the dolorous blow, is restless and angry. The king sees himself in the Host at the altar. Lancelot sees only Guinevere. Thus the Mass is travestied as the sins that will destroy Camelot all too clearly reveal themselves: Balin's anger, Arthur's pride, and Lancelot's lust.

Title: *Star*: "The star symbolizes the whole heraldic pattern which the City has for those who are native there, for whom law has been sublimated into honour, service into courtesy, discipline into dance" (Torso 139).

ll. 5-6: *...he played/ a borrowed harp*: Taliessin has borrowed his inspiration from Percivale--see l. 22.

l. 9: *quiescent*: marked by inactivity or repose: tranquilly at rest.

l. 12: *See thou do it not; I too am a man*: Acts xiv 15: "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."

l. 14: *More than the voice is the vision, the kingdom than the king*: Taliessin's response to King Arthur's doubts in COA l. 63.

l. 18: *speed*: (archaic): to prosper in an undertaking/ to cause or help to prosper: aid.

- l. 21: *She answered: The light of another, if aught, I bear*: the serving maid bears the light of Taliessin.
- l. 23: *Dubric*: "Dubric the high saint/ Chief of the church in Britain...." (*Idylls*, "The Coming of Arthur" ll. 452-453). Tennyson also notes, "Archbishop of Caerleon. His crozier is said to be at St. David's." The form of the name and epic tag comes from Layamon's *Brut*. "The Archbishop of the City of the Legions, Dubricius, was Primate of England and Legate of the Apostolic See; he was so holy that he could heal any sick person b his prayers." (*Figure 30*).
- l. 24: *Percivale's world's orbit*: Percivale's world: Venus--see AS l.43.
- l. 26: *day-star*: Venus.
- l. 28: *the altar centred between lights*: mid-day.
- l. 30: *chlamys*: a short oblong mantle worn by young men of ancient Greece.
- l. 32: *substitution*: see note from TDV l. 41.
- ll. 33-36: The last stanza forecasts the tragic, fallen kingdom of Camelot. Balin, Arthur, and Lancelot represent the kinds of sins that will wreck Camelot/Logres: Balin = anger; Arthur = pride; Lancelot = lust.



## *The Ascent of the Spear*

Again Taliessin meets the servant girl from "The Star of Percivale." However, this time he finds her in completely changed circumstances. Furious, she sits locked in the stocks as the guard and the crowd mock her. As Taliessin approaches, the guard comes to attention and salutes the king's poet. Taliessin takes his spear. The hostile crowd becomes baffled and confused.

Taliessin begins to question the maid. Without even looking at him, she relates how she is being punished for having beaten "a sneering bastard slut, a Mongrel ape." She is supposed to feel fortunate that she escaped the post, "the stripping and whipping" that she could have received, but she is clearly still angry and bitter.

Taliessin quietly but firmly rebukes her for her false pride. Even her "confession" is full of such pride, he observes. He then holds out the spear to her and asks her to clasp it and renounce such feelings. This she does, at last truly humbled and contrite.

A chamberlain moves toward Taliessin and gives him (by the authority of Kay, Arthur's Steward) the power to free the girl. Taliessin refuses to "prefer," however, resigning the choice to the maid herself. She is caught off guard and becomes once again concerned with the crowd's reaction to and judgment of her. Taliessin mildly rebukes her once more and reminds her that all she can do is love and choose. Restored to her best self, she kindly accepts the Steward's grace.

Stiff and aching, the maid rises, falls, and is caught, symbolic of the "stumble" in her "race" of faith, a stumble which she has--with Taliessin's help--now recovered from.

l. 2: *stocks*: a device for publicly punishing offenders consisting of a wooden frame with holes in which the feet or feet and hands can be locked.

l. 11: *wist*: (archaic): know.

l. 17: *did we not together adore?*: Taliessin is referring to the serving maid of SP l. 18, a member of his household.

l. 18: *trick*: an indiscreet or childish action.

l. 26: *the stress of a sin worse than the rage*: Taliessin defines this himself in l. 28: it is the "pride of guilt or no guilt." Pride is a worse sin than rage since it is the deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins.

- l. 27: *High Steward's needful law*: High Steward: Sir Kay--see l. 49.
- l. 28: *us*: Taliessin's household.  
*pride of guilt or no guilt*: Taliessin reveals that the issue is not whether the girl has guilt or no guilt, or even if she is guilty or not. The issue is her pride.
- l. 30: *praters*: those whose talk is empty and meaningless.  
*graters*: those who utter in harsh or irritating voices.
- l. 36: *You whose arrogant hands would not cast one skin*: John viii 7: "When they kept on questioning him[Christ], he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her[the adulteress]'. "  
*skin*: the life or physical well-being of a person.
- l. 37: *your own poor kin*: everyone in the kingdom. All are sinners and thus of the same family.
- l. 38: *Caucasian theme throb*: "'The Caucasian theme throb' means, *ad hoc*, that, but also the whole ache of the body and all that in the difficult acceptance of the Way of order, morals, discipline, instruction. Caucasia is more than the buttocks[see map]"  
*(Answers)*.
- l. 39: *Roman motion*: repent by following the motion illustrated in ll. 39-43.
- l. 42: *massive*: imposing in excellence or grandeur.
- l. 43: *Venus*: "Percivale's planet"--see note from SL I. 184: in Roman mythology, the goddess of beauty and love. Originally of minor importance, she became, through identification with the Greek Aphrodite, one of the major characters in classical myth.  
*phosphor*: Venus as the morning star.  
*hesper*: Greek~ηεσπερος - "evening": Venus as the evening star.
- l. 48: *demure*: reserved, modest/ affectedly modest, reserved, or serious: coy.  
*chamberlain*: a chief officer in the household of a king or nobleman.
- l. 55: *Celestiallying*: making heavenly.
- l. 64: *Love, and do what you choose*: the words of St. Augustine.
- ll. 66-68: Taliessin affirms the girl's decision, not because it is right or wrong, but because her decision is made out of a posture of love and humility--see l. 64.
- l. 68: *whom the feline guile of Omnipotence lures*: God is a great cat, luring His sinful mice to salvation.

ll. 76-77: ...'So are the guilty taught,/ sweet friend, who sit in the pass of the Perilous Sell.': see note from VE l. 53.

l. 79: A new Pheilippides, that stumble was Marathon won: now that the girl has recovered from her stumble both in l. 75 and her stumble throughout the entire poem caused by her pride, she can continue on with her race for Christ's glory. Her stumble was far from easy, though; it was the equivalent of Pheilippides run from Marathon, and, like Pheilippides, a little of her sinful nature, by God's grace, does "die" from it.

*Pheilippides*: according to tradition, he was sent by the Athenians to solicit Spartan help against the Persians. He covered 150 miles in 2 days. After the victory, he was chosen again to bring back the news of the Greeks' victory over the Persians (490 BC) that ended Darius's Greek ambitions. The exertions of the first run, and of the battle, caused him to stumble, fall exhausted, and die after giving the good news. Pheilippides' feat is commemorated in the modern marathon races, usually fixed at 26 miles, 385 yards.

*Marathon*: a plain in Attica, northeast of Athens. Here the Greeks won the victory over the Persians that Pheilippides runs to report.

l. 80: 2 Timothy iv 7: "I[Paul] have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

### *The Sister of Percivale*

*Taliessin lies reclining on a wall. A flash of lightning from the July sky illuminates both the hall and the horizon. In the yard below him, a slave girl's scarred back is bent to a well. Its marks flicker white in the light of the lightning bolt as she turns the handle of the well. Eastward lies Jura, Alp, Elburz, and Gaul to Caucasia.*

*Westward lies the hall, Wales, and all Broceliande*

*The slave swings from the hips as she raises the bucket, and the handle's creaking shuts out the voices of Lancelot and the Archbishop. Taliessin's vision of the slave is transformed into a vision of Caucasia, "the curved bottom of the world," and his heart swells with wonder. The bucket of water finally rises from the well. The slave reaches for the "gain" of her labor, and Taliessin begins to compose verse.*

*From the western gate, a trumpet blast announces the arrival of Percivale, Lamorack, and their sister, Blanchefleur. The sound of the trumpet, the sight of the slave girl, the horizon, and the new arrivals all fuse in Taliessin's mind. Then for the first time Taliessin sees Blanchefleur. An unexpected "double grace" has been vouchsafed him, the grace of the scarred slave girl and the grace of the approaching princess.*

*Seeing his "verse-brother" lying rapt into immobility at the sight of Blanchefleur, Percivale mockingly chides Taliessin and demands that he say something. Immediately leaping down from the wall, Taliessin greets Blanchefleur and asks for her blessing. She smiles, then replies--singing "in one note the infinite decimal."*

#### **C.W.'s note in Answers:**

The slave with the scar carries on the idea of battle and discipline in honour. The 'bright fork' is summer lightning. T[aliessin]. is between the world of sensation and the world of spirit. He identifies the girl's body and the eastward Empire (as the body), and he knows the Caucasian dangers. But he also sees arm and spine and so on as the radii of--of the half-circle; what is the *full* circle? how do we find it? It must be everywhere, yet...And this kind of thing is felt at such moments as seeing someone drawing water or handling a book or whatever; only water has a suggestion of images and reflections and nourishment and fertility. Her shoulders carry labour (as, in CG, happy discipline). At this moment Taliessin (fortunate fellow!) hears the

trumpet go off, with which he identifies also the movement of her arm. He sees her and Blanchefleur together, as sisters, twins, categories, but the back of sensation changes into the face of exchange-in-love, which is like, say, (the Back of) God himself. The hemispheres change, but he feels that the one half-circle has closed with the other to make a full circle--'the transit of Venus'. Blanchefleur could hardly be perfect to understanding without the slave, though the whole principle is more clear and advanced in her than in the slave...The scar and the star are the same identity in two categories. Hence T.'s outburst. B's greeting (like Beatrice's) is the always-approaching, never reaching relation of the divine part to the divine whole.

"Williams himself wrote for me[Lewis] as a headline to p. 53[corresponds to the poetic text] this sentence: 'The perfect union of sensuality and substance is seen for a moment.' It is plain that the whole poem records the momentary vision of a unity which is more often invisible" (*Torso* 140).

Title: *Sister of Percivale*: Blanchefleur (l. 39) - "white flower": in both *Le Morte xvii* and *Idylls* "The Holy Grail," the sister of Percivale and Lamorack plays a significant role. However, she is never given a name in either work. By giving her the name Blanchefleur, C.W. refers to the account in Chretien's *Conte du Graal*, which dealt with the adventure of a youth named Perceval. At one point in the story, Perceval travels to the town and castle of Beurepair where Gournemant's (Perceval's teacher of chivalry) niece Blanchfleur lives (*Figure 63*).

l. 1: *horizon*: "a hard straight line which at once unites and separates heaven and earth" (*Torso* 141).

l. 2: *bright fork*: lightning.

l. 5: *idleness cured sloth*: Taliessin is idle, not slothful. C.W. is drawing a distinction between the two: one is a sin; the other is only a seeming "laziness," a "stillness" that is the time during which real creative acts are accomplished: "a morn's mist of making"--l. 4.

*idleness*: no occupation or employment/ inactive.

*sloth*: disinclination to action or labor/ spiritual apathy or inactivity--a sin/ a habit become a condition.

l. 6: *rove*: to fasten by passing through a hole or around something.

*troth of ambiguous verse*: "a meeting of two or double meanings in verse" (*Notes*).

l. 10: *scar*: "The scar symbolizes all the violence and suffering by which alone barbarian souls can be brought, against their will, into the confines of the City in order that, a later stage they may, by their will, remain there" (*Torso* 139).

l. 13: *Jura*: the mountains of France and Switzerland extending 200 miles along the boundary.

*Alp*: the mountain system of southern central Europe extending from the Mediterranean coast at the border between France and Italy into northwestern and western Yugoslavia.

*Elburz*: see note from VE l. 25.

l. 15: *duchy*: a special domain/ the territory of a duke or duchess. "Percivale was called 'li Galois' meaning 'from Wales', his duchy" (*Notes*).

l. 36: *blent*: combined or associated to that the separate constituents or the line of demarcation cannot be distinguished.

l. 42: *Back in the Mount*: Exodus xxxiii 17-23:

And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name."

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence...But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."

Then the Lord said, "there is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

l. 45: *the red track of the back was shown in a front of glory*: see note from l. 42.

l. 46: *rapt on the just glory of the sacred Throne*: as Taliessin looks upon Blanchefleur, he sees her much like Adam saw Eve before the fall as portrayed by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, 546-59:

...when I approach  
her loveliness, so absolute she seems  
And in herself complete, so well to know  
Her own, that what she wills to do or say  
Seems wisest, virtouousest, discreetest, best.  
All higher knowledge in her presence falls  
Degraded: Wisdom in discourse with her  
Loses, discount'nanced, and like Folly shows:

Authority and Reason on her wait,  
 As one intended first, not after made  
 Occasionally; and, to consummate all,  
 Greatness of mind and nobleness their seat  
 Build in her loveliest, and create an awe  
 About her, as a guard angelic placed.

About Milton's passage, C.W. writes, "It was certainly a vision, to Adam, and in the poem, of something like the kingdom of heaven on earth; Eve is at once an inhabitant of the kingdom and the means by which the kingdom is seen" (*Essential* 72).

l. 48: *blast*: a formative unit especially of living matter.

l. 51: *Greek minuscula*: see note from VE l. 6.

ll. 53-54: ... '*Bless me, transit of Venus!*' / *The stress of the scar ran level with the star of Percivale*: "Everyman's Encyclopaedia gives: 'Venus's passage across the sun's disc at inferior conjunction, is a rare phenomenon, and occurs about 6 June or 7 December.' Has occurred 12 times since 1631 when first observed in England.

C.W. was delighted with this phrase as an offering to one's beloved. The connection with Venus and the scar suggests that the scar was discipline and the Discipline was Love's. The idea links up with the poem AS l. 43, where the girl is persuaded to obedience by mention of Venus, Percivale's planet. See also l. 45" (*Notes*).

l. 54: *stress*: (archaic): intense effort or exertion.

l. 57: *peal*: a loud sound or succession of sounds.

l. 60: *waxes*: grows toward full development/ increases in phase or intensity.

l. 61: *asymptote*: a line which continually approaches a given curve, but does not meet it within a finite distance/ a straight line associated with a curve such that as a point moves along an infinite branch of the curve the distance from the point to the line approaches zero and the slope of the curve at the point approaches the slope of the line.

l. 62: *Blanchefleur's smile*: her smile is an "asymptote" because it too suggests a geometrical parallel to circle and diameter. It is round, has lines, curves, etc.--just like the literal horizons of the scene in which the whole poem takes place.

l. 63: *infinite decimal*:. Taliessin has seen "eternity in a grain of sand." All--the least decimal of creation--contains eternity, all fuse into one greater reality--the divine one. Nonetheless, some are uniquely beautiful--such as Blanchefleur. "The end, of course, is known by definition of the kingdom: it is the establishment of a

state of *caritas*, of pure love, the mode of expansion of one moment into eternity" (*Essential 73*).



## The Son of Lancelot

On the February night of Quinquagesima, the last Sunday before Lent, the pagan Luperci priests run among women longing for fertility while the Pope performs the "terrifying" Mass as wolves run wild over Europe and beyond Camelot. Although centuries separate the festival of Lupercalia in pagan Rome from the celebration of the Mass in Christian Rome, Merlin, "time's metre," can see them simultaneously in his magical "chamber of union."

With his "hazel of ceremony," Merlin also has the magical power to illustrate "the high grades" of vision. In the first grade, "sight's tritosphere," he reveals the dangers from within Logres: spiritual and physical famine, and wolves. The second grade, or sphere of vision, portrays the threats from without. As King Arthur dreams of "a" grail and of himself as "Byzantium's rival," Taliessin reads from Bors' letters how the Moslems deny the Incarnation while the Emperor builds a fleet to confront them. On the second circle's "edge," Merlin also sees Blanche fleur professed as a nun in Almesbury.

Finally, Merlin sends his hearing down the hazel into the third sphere--"the mens sensitiva," the feeling intellect, heaven's pattern of Nimue and Broceliande. Here in this extreme region of the hazel, Merlin's sight cannot function, and he knows distinction only through sound: specifically, the cry of the women in the Lupercalia; the voice of the Pope on Lateran; and the howl of the famished wolf. Deciding to pursue the wolf's howl, Merlin returns to the realm of normal sight and discovers the image of an "imbruted" Lancelot besieging the castle of the Grail and the birthplace of his son--Carbonek.

Within Carbonek lies King Pelles, who was struck by Balin with the Dolorous Blow and whose resulting wounds continually bleed. Within the castle, the wounded king's daughter Helayne also lies, who conceived Galahad nine months before through deception of a "merciful" Lancelot. Drugged by a draught made by Brisen, Merlin's twin sister, Lancelot lies with Helayne while thinking of Guinevere. To Lancelot's dismay, the morning light displays his infidelity and drives him into "a delirium of lycanthropy" until his madness literally transforms him into a wolf, "a foe by the women's well."

Pelles patiently waits for his grandson's birth, while all winter the wolf Lancelot haunts his castle. The human Lancelot only hates,

while his growing wolfishness only hungers--and only hungers for his own seed, the flesh of his unborn son.

Like the birthpangs of Helayne, the Empire also contracts from its attack from wolves within and Moslems without. The great designs of the Emperor are forced to withdraw to defensive fires, while, through Moslem invasion and Manichæan heresy, Caucasia is lost, Gaul ravaged, and Jerusalem threatened, with only a timeless Rome left to preserve the spirit of the Emperor's Byzantium.

Helayne's labor begins. Acting as Helayne's mid-wife, Brisen aids her delivery while Merlin looks on through his hazel's divination. The child is born. Merlin ends his magical vision and on his way out of the castle passes Arthur and Guinevere. Contemplating the Grail and God, Arthur sees them as useful for his own pleasure and glory, while his queen grieves for her barren womanhood and her lost lover.

Merlin leaves London-in-Logres, blessing its attentive guard, and recites the incantation of his "second working": his transformation into "a giant white wolf." In this monstrous shape, Merlin hurtles over the snow towards Broceliande and Carbonek in order to receive the newborn child and carry the baby to Blanchefleur. Brisen anticipates her twin's arrival as she hears the howl of Lancelot fade into the howl of Merlin, and she descends the stairs and comes to the arch, where she waits with the child. Aroused by the approach of Brisen and the child, Lancelot "the wolf" drags himself nearer in order to devour his son.

Meanwhile, the Emperor signals his lords to begin their counter-attack to reclaim Caucasia from the heretical invaders. The army marches and embarks, while abandoned Christian refugees hide in the caves of Elburz, hoping for the restoration of the Empire.

In the moonlight, Merlin rapidly drives toward Brisen and the sleeping child. Breaking out from the woods of Broceliande, Merlin crouches and leaps, striking Galahad's father in mid-air, knocking him helpless and unconscious. Brisen runs to her wolf-brother and binds Galahad to him with "wrappings of crimson wool." She kisses and dismisses them, and the High Prince rides into Logres on the white wolf.

At Almesbury, Blanchefleur sits and prays: for her verse-brothers, Percivale and Taliessin; for King Arthur and Queen Guinevere; for the lost Lancelot; and the house-slaves, siblings of Galahad the Merciful Child. Her intercessory prayer, her "exchange with the world," is suddenly interrupted with the approach of Merlin and Galahad. She opens the gate and calls for help, but she then

recognizes her duty and removes the child from the submissive wolf as her Sisters of the Convent gather around her. They look upon the child's glowing tender cheeks, which resemble the face of the young Magian or the fire built in Carbonek, where Lancelot the man lies prostrate, recovering from his madness. By Easter, the father of Galahad will be whole and celebrating with the king's household and the legions of the Emperor.

C.W.'s note in *Answers*:

'Nimue' etc. Along 'measurement' Merlin sees the third heaven, which is that of accomplished states of being, and is as far as human understanding can go. Nimue (anthropotokos, but not imagined formally as theotokos)=Broceliande, is the source of time and space and great ideas and images; she is, in the universe, the principle of the 'feeling intellect', which (though I discovered it afterwards) is not unlike Palomides' triangle. When intellect and emotion are proportioned and immediate and lasting and gracious. One might say it is nature, adoration, and madness seen finally. 'There is no variableness'--as they say, there is not in the Spiritual Marriage. Merlin himself only dimly apprehends this--as sound; he has to come back a little way to do his job.

1. 1: *Lupercalia*: in ancient Rome, an annual festival held on February 15, in honor of the wolf that suckled Romulus and Remus, worshipped under the name of Lupercal. The worshipers gathered at a grotto on the Palatine, where Romulus and his twin Remus were supposed to have been suckled by the wolf (Latin~lupus). One object of the festival was fertility, and women struck by the thongs of goat's hide (Latin~februa) which the priests carried were supposedly made fertile. The ceremony survived into Christian times; it was suppressed in AD 494.

*Palatine*: a hill in Rome, Italy; one of seven on which the ancient city was built.

1. 2: *thong*: a strip especially of leather or hide.  
*vicars*: ecclesiastical agents.

1. 3: *Rhea Silvia*: Romulus, the legendary and eponymous founder of Rome (753 BC) and its first king (753-716 BC), and his twin brother Remus were descendants of Aeneas and the sons of Mars and Rhea Silvia. When Numitor, Rhea's father and king, was ousted by his brother Amulius, Amulius made Rhea a vestal virgin. Accordingly, when she gave birth she was put to death and her two

babies were thrown into the Tiber. However, they were washed ashore, suckled by a she-wolf, and found by a herdsman and his wife who brought them up.

*vestal*: a virgin consecrated to the Roman goddess Vesta and to the service of watching the sacred fire perpetually kept burning on her altar.

*Mars-seeded*: Rhea Silvia was literally seeded or impregnated by Mars with her twin sons, Romulus and Remus.

*Mars*: an Italian god of fertility whose month, March, begins the spring season of growth and fruitfulness and who later takes on the aspects of the Greek god of war, Ares. In Roman poetry, the word *Mars* is often used, through personification, as a synonym for war.

l. 4: *wolf-month*: February--see note from l. 1.

l. 6: *Confiteor*: a liturgical form in which sinfulness is acknowledged and intercession for God's mercy requested.

l. 9: *Quinquagesima*: the Sunday before Lent: "...the church of England's collect for this day is well known and was a particular strength to C.W.: 'O Lord, who has taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of Charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee; grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake.' C.W. felt the last sentence 'without which' etc. with intense realism" (*Notes*).

l. 10: *chamber of union*: a room where Merlin performs his magic.

l. 11: *window of horny sight*: a magic observatory.

*horny*: compact and homogeneous with a dull luster.

*ingress*: the act of entering; specifically, the entrance of a celestial object into eclipse, occultation, or transit.

l. 13: *balsamed*: covered with an aromatic and usually oily and resinous substance flowing from various plants; especially, any of several resinous substances containing benzoic or cinnamic acid and used especially in medicine.

l. 14: *anatomical*: having separations or divisions into parts for detailed examination.

l. 15: *high grades*: "higher levels of vision and life, familiar in the learning of the Jewish and other ancient cultures" (*Notes*).

ll. 16-25: "In the first he sees the shrinking of the Empire, the creeping return of chaos, consequent upon the Dolorous Blow and the whole failure of Logres" (*Torso* 161).

- l. 16: *circle*: an instrument of astronomical observation the graduated limb of which consists of an entire circle.
- l. 21: *desecratedparallels*: "C.W. said you could see this as the web of coinherence used for tyranny and gain" (*Notes*).
- l. 24: *he*: Merlin.
- ll. 27-48: "In the second circle he see Logres itself, both the good and evil of it. Taliessin and Bors are still at their posts and Blanchefleur follows her vocation at Almesbury. But the king has surrendered to his egoism, 'dreaming of a red Grail in an ivory Logres'" (*Torso* 161).
- l. 27: *sphere*: one of the concentric and eccentric revolving spherical transparent shells in which according to ancient astronomy stars, sun, planets, and moon are set.
- l. 28: *tidal figures*: "not stable, moved by personal ambitions, suffering" (*Notes*).
- l. 30: *Grail*: (also known as the Holy Grail and Sangreal): the famous talisman (variously represented as a chalice, dish, stone, and cup into which a lance drips blood), the center around which a huge corpus of medieval legend, romance, and allegory revolves. The precise origin and nature of the Grail are unknown and have been the subject of countless scholarly researches; these have attempted to sort out the features of ancient fertility cults, Celtic myth, and Christianity in the Grail romances. The Grail is best known as the object of a quest on the part of the knights of the Round Table in Arthurian legend (*Le Morte* xiii-xvii). It brings healing and food to those who touch it and can be found only by one absolutely pure. The best-known accounts of the Grail are those that give it a Christian origin and generally run along the following lines: it is the vessel from which Jesus made his sacrament at the Last Supper and that afterwards came into the possession of Joseph of Arimathea, through Pilate, who caught in it some of the blood that flowed from the wounds of the crucified Savior. He eventually carried it with him to England after he was freed from his imprisonment in a tower by the Jews, which lasted for forty years. During this period, the grail provided him with food, drink, and spiritual sustenance. It was handed down to his successor and thence from generation to generation, Galahad, in *Le Morte* xiii 3, being Joseph's last descendant. Some now hold that the Grail was originally a female sex symbol in ancient fertility rites used with the bleeding lance mentioned in Chretien de Troyes' *Perceval, ou le conte du Graal*, the first European poem in which an object called 'a grail' certainly appears. Jessie L. Weston's discussion of this theory in *From*

*Ritual to Romance* (1920) was the source used by T.S. Eliot for his poem "The Waste Land," where the Grail theme occurs in this symbolic form. *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail" also deals with the quest for the Grail as an episode of Arthur's Round Table; however, its framework is taken from Malory.

In *Figure 13-23*, C.W. writes of his conception of the Grail:

The point at which the myth of the Grail begins holds in its first appearance the most important account of all. No invention can come near it; no fabulous imagination excel it. All the greatest mythical details are only there to hint at the thing which happens; that which in the knowledge of Christendom is the unifying act, perilous and perpetual, universal and individual. That origin took place in the Jerusalem to which (it was reported) the Captain-General Arthur had gone before his final victory. Its record is in the Gospels; it is taken here from the Revised Version of the Gospel of St. Mark.

'And as they were eating he [Jesus] took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave it to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body, and he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

This is the first mention of that Cup which in its progress through the imagination of Europe was to absorb into itself so many cauldrons of plenty and vessels of magic.

...The identification in some sense of the Eucharist with our Lord was immediate....It was regarded as a sacrifice--by Christ and of Christ; therefore, as a sacerdotal act. It was used, as well it might be, as an argument against the Gnostic doctrines of the unreality of matter and of the evil of the flesh.

...Almost any article connected with the Act served for its symbol. Paten or cup, monstrance or tabernacle, were alike used. The word Grail itself is defined by the dictionaries as coming from the Latin *gradalis* and meaning a shallow dish; thus, the paten; and afterwards, erroneously, the cup But the 'erroneously' is hardly justified. The Grail may etymologically have been a dish. In the poems and romances it was 'chose spirituel'. Even in the Rites there were similarities between the objects used. 'In the Middle Ages there was not a clear distinction in form nor in part (from doctrinal motives) even in function

between the vessel that contained the wine in the Eucharist, and the one that contained the holy wafer. The latter, as well as the former, and the shape of a cup, as it still has in the Catholic Church of to-day, and it was also not infrequently called the "chalice" (*calix*)--indeed, down into the eighteenth century.

...Something perhaps should be said--and may be said here as well as anywhere--about those fabulous vessels, which from Celtic or whatever sources, emerged into general knowledge. There has been much controversy about them--vessels of plenty and cauldrons of magic--and they have been supposed by learned experts to be the origin of the Grail myth. That, in the Scriptural and ecclesiastical sense, they certainly cannot be. Cup or dish or container of whatever kind, the Grail in its origin entered Europe with the Christian and Catholic Faith. It came from and with Christ, and it came with and from none else. The Eucharist, in Europe, was earlier than any evidence of the fables; that is a matter of history. But then it is a matter of history also that the Eucharist, as it came from and with the whole Christ, was meant for the whole man. It was for his eternal salvation, body and soul; and the doctrinal development precisely stressed this. It was therefore, in the very idea of it, greater than any vessel of less intention could possibly be. If it swallowed up its lesser rivals, it did so exactly because it was greater. The poetic inventiveness of Europe found itself presented with the image of a vessel much more satisfying to it--merely as an image--than any other. There is no need to suppose the poets and romancers were particularly devout; it is only necessary to suppose they were good poets and real romancers. A dogmatic anti-Christian opposition would, no doubt, have rejected the Grail image. But it is hard to see what else could. Cauldrons of magic--'dire chimaeras and enchanted isles'--are all very well at first, but maturing poetry desires something more. It desires something more actual to existence as we know it. But the Grail contained the very Act which was related to all that existence. Of course, it absorbed or excluded all else; *sui generis*, it shone alone.

C.W. continues his discussion of the grail's literary development in *Figure 60-63*:

The last poem written by Chretien de Troyes is the first European poem in which an object called 'a grail' certainly appears. The poem was in fact originally called *Le Conte du Graal*; afterwards it became known as *Perceval*...[Finally] there were brought to bear on the subject a number of fresh romantic intelligences, whose name are unknown to us. They altered; they enlarged; they invented. They saw the opportunities their

predecessors had missed; and peculiarly they saw one opportunity--they devised a mythically satisfying Achievement of the Grail; and eventually they brought the whole together in one great work, consisting (as one may say) of five parts--*L'Estoire du Saint Graal*, *L'Estoire de Merlin*., *L'Estoire de Lancelot*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, and *Le Mort d'Artu*...It is impossible...to go in any but the briefest way into the many variation of the myth which lie between the *Conte du Graal* and the *Quest del Saint Graal*, or into the complex question of date, origin, and relationship. They all lie behind Malory, and it is Malory's book which is for English readers the record book of Arthur and of the Grail. It is, however, permissible to note a few of the points of development...:

- (i) The determination of the Grail as a subject, and the invention of its history.
- (ii) The relation of this--at first generally; then definitely through Merlin--with the figure of King Arthur.
- (iii) The invention of the Dolorous Blow.
- (iv) The development of the love of Lancelot and Guinevere.
- (v) The invention of Galahad.

l. 31: *Byzantium's rival*: Isaiah xiv 13-14--(see note from VE II. 107-108. C.W. has gone so far as to compare King Arthur's ambition with Lucifer's.

l. 32: *thuribled*: thurible: censer: a vessel for burning incense; especially a covered incense burner swung on chains in a religious ritual.

l. 35: *Narrow Seas*: the Straits of Gibraltar. Islam is invading up from Spain and across to Constantinople from Asia Minor.

l. 40: *spirals*: advancements to higher levels through a series of cyclical movements.

l. 42: *professed*: received formally into a religious community following a novitiate by acceptance of the required vows.

*Almesbury*: the convent where Queen Guinevere takes the veil and eventually becomes abbess after the reported death of her husband, King Arthur (see note from VE I. 56). Only in *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail" is Percivale's sister depicted as a nun. The convent in which she is professed is never mentioned.

l. 44: *sororal*: of, relating to, or characteristic of a sister: sisterly.

II. 44-45: *...earth's lambs,/ wolves of the heavens*: Matthew x 16: "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."



l. 45: *heat's pallor's secret*: "the passion and intensity found by some who choose the Way of Rejection, of chastity and poverty. fires lit mean convents founded" (*Notes*).

l. 47: *at Almesbury, at Verulam, at Canterbury, at Lateran*: all sanctuaries of worship.

*Verulam*: "Roman name for St. Albans (where C.W. was brought up and educated) the place of the English martyr Alban" (*Notes*).

l. 49: *implacable*: not placable: not capable of being appeased, significantly changed, or mitigated.

ll. 50-51: (*a scar on a slave, a verse in Virgil, the reach/ of an arm to a sickle, love's means to love*): *scar on a slave*: see SOP l. 10.

*verse in Virgil*: see TSP l. 68.

*reach of an arm to a sickle*: see TRL l. 46.

*love's means to love*: see l. 173 and l. 228.

ll. 52-63: "In the third circle Merlin has risen to where he sees things from the point of view of the third Heavenly sphere, the 'feeling intellect', the 'climax tranquil in Venus'" (*Torso* 161).

l. 53: *northern poet*: William Wordsworth.

ll. 53-54: *...Snowdon/ seen at the rising of the moon*: the highest mountain in Wales (Cambria). Wordsworth and Robert Jones climbed it in the summer of 1791, and Wordsworth describes the moonlight in which he saw the mountain in the *Prelude*, Book xiv ll. 38-41: "For instantly a light upon the turf/ Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,/ The Moon hung naked in a firmament/ Of azure without cloud...."

ll. 54-55: *... "mens sensitiva",/ the feeling intellect...*: from the *Prelude*, Book xiv l. 226 (C.W.). "The Feeling Intellect may be attained for moments by human beings; but it exists as a permanent reality in the spiritual world and by response to that archetype Nimue brings the whole process of nature into being. Williams is here (perhaps unconsciously) reproducing the doctrine of the Renaissance Platonists that Venus--celestial love and beauty--was the pattern or model after which God created the material universe" (*Torso* 102).

l. 55: *prime and vital principle*: *Prelude* xiv l. 215: "The prime and vital principle is thine[the feeling intellect's]."

l. 56: *Nimue*: see note from COA l. 43.

l. 57: *Convection's tides*: Convection: the circulatory motion that occurs in a fluid at a nonuniform temperature owing to the variation of its density and the action of gravity.

- l. 60: *abstractions*: compositions or creations in art which are disassociated from any specific instance.
- l. 62: *the Pope's voice singing the Glory on Lateran*: the Pope is "singing" the Mass, specifically, the Gloria ("Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on Earth," etc.).
- l. 66: *tritosphere*: third sphere.
- l. 67: *prodigiously*: prodigious: being an omen: portentous/ (archaic): resembling or befitting a prodigy: strange, unusual, inexplicable.
- feral*: of, relating to, or suggestive of a wild beast: savage.
- l. 69: *imbruted*: sunk or degraded to the level of a brute.
- l. 71: *Pelles the Wounded King*: he is the father of Helayne, the grandfather of Sir Galahad, and related to Joseph of Arimathea. King Pelles is also the keeper of the Grail and the "marvelous spear strangely wrought" that pierced the side of the crucified Christ and is used by Sir Balin to wound Pelles with the Dolorous Blow. C.W. comments on this wound in *Figure 64-65/ 86*:

The first is simply that the wound in the thighs is primarily a wound in the thighs. It is, no doubt, being in the thighs, symbolical of sex or fertility or anything else of that sort. But at least it is a wound which has got to be somehow explained...It may be added that if we assume that Chretien and his successors thought the thighs symbolical of sex, they may have thought sex itself symbolical. Or (to put it less in our modern phrases) that if the wound was to be a wound in virility, it was to be a wound in the whole virility, spiritual as well as physical. We must not force his imagination so far as to say he did, but we can hardly limit it so far as to say he did not.

...For Balin actually to kill an inhabitant of Broceliande can hardly be allowed: the forest and its people are not of a kind that could be overcome in that manner. But the ever-bleeding wound of the Keeper is exactly symbolical, and so is the ruin that falls on Logres.

- l. 72: *grating*: (archaic): abrading: wearing down in spirit: irritating, wearying.  
*dolorous blow*: see note from COA l. 65.
- ll. 73-74: *his flesh from dawn-star to noontide day by day/ ran as a woman's under the moon*: C.W. is comparing the bleeding of Pelles (as a result of the Dolorous Blow) to menstrual bleeding (which was thought to be one of the many consequences/punishments of Eve's fall in Eden). Menstrual bleeding is "under the moon": it is a monthly occurrence, like the coming and going of the full moon.

l. 77: *nine moons had waned*: Nine months had passed in both Helayne's pregnancy with Galahad and Lancelot's period of madness--see ll. 220-221.

*waned*: diminished in phase or intensity.

l. 78: *ridden on a merciful errand*: Lancelot's errand was to save "the fairest lady of that country[Corbin]," who was cursed to boil in scalding water until the best knight of the world had taken her by the hand (*Le Morte* xi 1). On this errand, he also delivered the country from the dragon that terrorized it, thus fulfilling the prophecy found on the tomb of the dragon in *Le Morte* xi 1: "HERE SHALL COME A LEOPARD[Lancelot] OF KINGS' BLOOD, AND HE SHALL SLAY THIS SERPENT, AND THIS LEOPARD SHALL ENGENDER A LION[Galahad] IN THIS FOREIGN COUNTRY, THE WHICH LION SHALL PASS ALL OTHER KNIGHTS."

l. 80: *Brisen*: in *Le Morte* xi 2, Malory describes Lady Brisen as "one of the greatest enchantresses that was at that time in the world living." In Malory's as well as C.W.'s account, Brisen gives Lancelot an enchanted drink which causes him to become "so assotted and mad" that he immediately lies with Helayne, whom he believes to be Queen Guinevere--see l. 81. In C.W.'s version, Brisen is also "Merlin's sister" as well as a child of Nimue--see ll. 112-113--and the personification of space--see l. 119.

l. 81: *Helayne*: she is the daughter of King Pelles and the mother of Sir Galahad. In *Le Morte* and other Arthurian accounts, her name is Elayne, and she shares her name and her love for Lancelot with another Elayne, the "lily maid of Astolat."

ll. 82-84: In C.W.'s account, Lancelot runs "into a delirium of lycanthropy" upon discovering he has slept with Helayne instead of Guinevere. In Malory's version, Lancelot also becomes mad; however, his madness comes after a second episode with Helayne while she stays at Camelot. Lancelot is again deceived into sleeping with Helayne, but this time he awakes with Guinevere standing next to the bed condemning him as a "false traitor knight" (*Le Morte* xi 8):

And when Sir Lancelot awoke of his swoon, he leapt out at a bay window into a garden, and there with thorns he was all to-scratched in his visage and his body; and so he ran forth he wit not wither, and was wild wood as ever was man; and so he ran two year, and never man might have grace to know him.

Commenting on Malory's version of Lancelot's madness in *Image* 190, C.W. writes:

Here, it must be admitted, Malory fell away from what the Myth demanded...There is some very good writing, but it will not do. What must obviously happen is that immediately on waking in the Castle of the Substitution, Lancelot realizes the deception....It is then that his mind should be overthrown....So far as I can see, there is no particular reason for two years; nine months would have been a better time.

l. 83: *lycanthropy*: a delusion that one has become a wolf/ the assumption of the form and characteristics of a wolf held to be possible by witchcraft or magic.

l. 87: *foe by the women's well*: in *Le Morte* xii 4, after Lancelot has run mad for two years, he wanders into the city of Corbin where he is taken into King Pelles' court as a fool and kept in a little house. Later when King Pelles' nephew is knighted, his nephew arrays Lancelot in a "robe of scarlet," and when Helayne sees Lancelot in this clothing, she remarks to her father, "Sir, thus is it: in your garden I went for to sport, and there by the well I found Sir Launcelot du Lake sleeping."

l. 89: *destined mother's pregnancy*: *Le Morte* xi 2:

And fain would King Pelles have found the means to have had Sir Launcelot to have lain by his daughter, fair Elaine. And for this intent: the king knew well that Sir Launcelot should get a child upon his daughter, the which should be named Sir Galahad, the good knight, by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger, and by him the Holy Grail should be achieved.

l. 92: *twinned*: brought together in close association: couple.  
*twined*: twisted together.

l. 93: *seed*: Galahad.

l. 94: *love's taunt and truth*: "The taunt flung at Christ, at the moment of his most spectacular impotency, was: "he saved others; himself he cannot save" (*Essential* 217). See note from TDV I. 25.

l. 95: *Man, he hated; beast, he hungered*: Lancelot is both man and beast. As one, he hates; as the other, he hungers.

l. 99: *Slavering*: drooling, slobbering.

l. 102: *And infinite beyond him the whole Empire contracted*:  
Romans viii 22-25:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

l. 105: *dilated*: expanded normally or abnormally in all directions.

l. 107: *crescent*: the Moslems.

l. 108: *Cordovan*: Cordova: a city, the capital of the province of Cordoba in southern Spain, on the Guadalquivir river.

*iconoclastic*: of, related to, or characterized by the destruction of religious images or opposes their veneration/ of, related to, or characterized by the attack of settled beliefs or institutions.

l. 109: *licentiates*: one who has a license granted especially by a university to practice a profession.

*Manes*: Mani: the third century founder of the religion of Manichæanism. See note from l. 196.

l. 113: *the children of Nimue timed and spaced the birth*: C.W. remarks on the purpose of Nimue's twins by writing:

There is, however, a problem about Merlin. he is so very much a preparation for the Grail that his earlier diabolic birth seems almost improper to so high a vocation, though it might be worked in well enough. On the other hand there is something attractive in a small invention which would be inconsistent with this diabolic conception. The central fact of the conception of Galahad depends partly on the strange drink given to Lancelot by Brisen, the nurse of Helayne. She in fact prepares within Carbonek what Merlin prophesies and prepares (by his calling of Arthur) in Logres. It might be permissible to make them twins, children of some high parthenogenetical birth of Nimue in Broceliande. They would come then almost like Time and Place to their mission, to prepare in Carbonek and Camelot for the moment of the work. (*Image 170*)

Again in C.W.'s *Commonplace Book*, he writes, "Knowledge that Time and Space are only modes of thought. 'is not this the beginning of all magic?' (E. Nesbit.--*Amulet*)" (*Image 171*).

l. 114: *dilation*: the action of stretching or enlarging an organ or part of the body.

l. 117: *as racked in a cave the Mother of Lupercal*: Luke ii 6-7:  
“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” C.W. is comparing Helayne with Christ’s mother, Mary. Not only does he compare their labors, but he also reveals that the births of their sons were both predetermined gestures of Mercy--Christ’s for all mankind and Galahad for the realm of Logres.

*racked*: stretched or strained violently.

l. 122: *divination*: the art or practice that seeks to foresee or foretell future events or discover hidden knowledge usually by the interpretation of omens or by the aid of supernatural powers.

l. 124: *lucid*: suffused with light: luminous.

l. 126: *window*: “the window of horny sight”--see l. 11.

l. 128: *Grail cooped for gustation*: In Malory’s account, the appearance of the Grail is also associated with a feast (*Le Morte xi 2*):

And anon there came in a dove at a window, and in her mouth there seemed a little censer of gold. And there withal there was such a savour as all the spicery of the world had been there. And forthwithal there was upon the table all manner of meats and drinks that they could think upon. So came in a damosel passing fair and young, and she bare a vessel of gold betwixt her hands....

*cooped*: placed or kept in a confined area.

*gustation*: the act or sensation of tasting.

l. 129 *æsthetic climax of Logres*: King Arthur.

*æsthetic*: of, relating to, or dealing with the branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste and with the creation and appreciation of beauty/ appreciative of, responsive to, or zealous about the beautiful.

l. 130: *unæsthetic womanhood*: “I think Williams means to direct our thought to something which is really characteristic of the feminine mind--that monopolistic concentration, for good or ill, on the dominant idea, which brings it about that in a woman good states of mind are unweakened and undissipated, or bad states of mind unrelieved, by fancy and speculation and mere drifting. Hence that tenacity both of good and evil, those chemically pure states of devotion or of egoism, which are hardly conceivable in my own sex” (*Torso* 162).

- l. 131: *crushed*: (archaic): drunk.
- l. 133: *swathed by tentacles*: C.W. is describing the possession of Guinevere by the demons of antipodean Byzantium.  
*swathed*: enveloped.
- l. 141: *hoary*: impressively or venerably old: ancient.
- l. 147: *palisades*: fences of stakes for defense.
- l. 150: *raging*: violent, wild.
- ll. 150-151: *the red/ carnivorous violation of intellectual love*: lust is the “red carnivorous” desire that has overwhelmed Lancelot’s “intellectual” (and thus higher) love for Guinevere.
- l. 153: *dumb*: temporarily unable to speak (as from shock or astonishment)--see l. 142.
- l. 154: *fleering*: laughing or grimacing in a coarse derisive manner: sneering.
- l. 158: *manner*: a mode of procedure or way or acting.  
*second working*: the second change to a wolf performed by a person or the second use of magic, the first being the use of the “rods of divination.”
- l. 164: *loping*: going or moving at an easy usually bounding gait capable of being sustained for a long time.
- l. 170: *copses*: thickets, groves, or growths of small trees.
- l. 172: *universal consumption*: time.
- l. 176: *measure*: an adequate or due portion/ a fixed or suitable limit: bounds.
- l. 181: *wolf*: Lancelot  
*other*: Merlin’s wind.
- l. 184: *third heaven*: the sphere of Nimue--see note from COA l. 43--and the sphere of Venus--see note from SP l. 24; Dante’s *Paradiso* Canto VIII: this is where the souls of the Amorous are found (Ciardi): “Many of them, perhaps all, were so full of the influence of Venus that they were in danger of being lost to carnality. Through the love of God, however, their passion was converted from physical love to true caritas, and so they rejoice in Heaven. Their spokesman is Charles Martel of Anjou.” While in the third heaven with Beatrice, “Dante asks how it is that mean sons can be born of great fathers, and Charles answers with a Discourse on the Diversity of Natural Talents, a diversity he assigns to the influence of the stars, as God provided them for man’s own good as a social being, for only by diversity of gifts can society function. God had planned all these variations to a harmonious end. It is mankind, by forcing men into situations not in harmony with their talents, that strays from God’s plan.”

- l. 186: *wolf's hair*: wolf: Lancelot.  
*hackles*: erectile hairs along the neck and back.
- l. 188: *exarchs*: a Byzantine viceroy, or governors who rule as the representatives of their king or sovereign/ Eastern bishops ranking below patriarchs and above metropolitans; specifically, the heads of independent churches.
- l. 192: *lorries*: large low horse-drawn wagons without sides.
- l. 196: *Manichæan*: a follower of the Oriental dualistic religion of Manichæism, founded by Mani. The principle doctrine concerns the conflict between Light, or goodness, and Darkness, identified with chaos or evil: the spirit of man is the creation of God, hence good, whereas the body is the creation of Satan, hence evil. During the life of man, good and evil are merged, but ultimately, with the aid of a redeemer, man can achieve the subjugation of the body by the soul. Extreme asceticism and sexual abstinence are a means to this end. The system draws on diverse elements of ancient Babylonian and Persian nature worship, as well as aspects of Zoroastrianism and Christianity.
- l. 199: *knowledge of the third heaven*: see note from l. 184.
- l. 210: *lupine*: wolfish.
- ll. 214-215: *small and asleep, and warm on a wolf's back, the High Prince rode into Logres*: Matthew xxi 4-7; 10:

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

"Say to the Daughter of Zion,  
 'See, your king comes to you,  
 gentle and riding on a donkey,  
 on a colt, the foal of a  
 donkey.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them...When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

- l. 219: *brothers in the grand art*: they are both members of the poetic household.
- l. 220: *tokens*: instances of linguistic expressions.
- l. 222: *sinewy*: strong.
- l. 223: *laired*: lair: the resting or living place of a wild animal: den.
- l. 224: *convection*: the action or process of conveying.



- l. 225: *haggard*: not tamed/ wild in appearance.  
 l. 239: `Sister': one of Blanchefleur's sister nuns at Almesbury.  
 l. 244: *cross-stamped hazel*: hazel wands stamped with the sign of the cross; thus joining the Celtic and the Christian.  
 l. 245: *bright intellects of passion*: the nuns.

*passion*: the sufferings of Christ between the night of the Last Supper and his death/ ardent affection: love/ a strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept.

- l. 247: *Magian*: of or related to the Magi.

Magi: (Latin plural~magus - "wise man") the three Wise Men of the East who brought gifts to the infant Jesus--Matthew ii 1-18. Tradition calls them Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar, three kings of the East. The first offered gold, the emblem of royalty; the second, frankincense, in token of divinity; and the third, myrrh, a symbol of death. Medieval legend calls them the Three Kings of Cologne, and the cathedral there claims their relics. Among the ancient Medes and Persians, the Magi were members of a priestly caste credited with great occult powers. After Zoroaster's death, they adopted the Zoroastrian religion and spread its influence to Egypt and Asia Minor.

- ll. 249-251: After Lancelot is recognized by Helayne at the well (see note from l. 87), King Pelles orders, at the advise of Lady Brisen and his most trusted, that Lancelot should be taken in and healed, "...for this knight is out of his mind" (*Le Morte* xii 4):

And so when this was done, these four men and these ladies laid hand on Sir Launcelot, and so they bare him into a tower, and so into a chamber where was the holy vessel of the Sangrail, and by force Sir Launcelot was laid by that holy vessel; and there came an holy man and unhilled that vessel, and so by miracle and by virtue of that holy vessel Sir Launcelot was healed and recovered.

- l. 253: *legions*: the principle units of the Roman army comprising 3000 to 6000 foot soldiers with cavalry/ large military forces--see ll. 188-197.

- ll. 254-257: *Gaudium multum annunciamus;  
 nunc in saecula seri amamus;  
 civitas dulcis aedificatur;  
 quia qui amat Amor amatur.*

"We bring news of great joy;  
 now in this world we servants love;

the sweet city is being built;  
because Love who loves is being loved.”  
*(Notes)*

### **Palomides Before His Christening**

*In the wake of his disillusionment over the adultery of Iseult and Tristram, Palomides withdrew to a wasteland, determined to pursue the "questing beast" that Iseult's failure to be what she should be has let loose in the world. He decides that he will consent to be christened, but only after having captured the beast. God rarely receives others on their own terms, however, and Palomides confesses that things go wrong. Tristram humiliates him before a smiling Iseult, proving the worthlessness of his manhood, his chivalry, and his Prophet-taught "scimitar-play." In desperation, Palomides overthrows Lancelot by cheating at a tournament. Embarrassed by and angry at what he has become, Palomides flees, only to be captured by pirates and then ironically freed by Lancelot, who then rides unwittingly on to Carbonek and the deception and madness to befall him there. When Palomides later hears about Lancelot's unhappy fate, he admits feeling pleased.*

*Still disoriented and dismayed, Palomides pursues his own ill-fated course. He wanders away from the City and begins to climb a steep trail. A passing Dinadan remarks that "the missing is often the catching," but Palomides rejects the irony that one may in fact achieve one's quest by failing to achieve it.*

*Coming at last to a cave, Palomides enters. Ironically, the beast he is in search of keeps him company at the cave's mouth. Inside the cave, withdrawn from both the world and time, Palomides sounds the depths of his own humanity. A dark night of the soul descends on him. Frightened at last, Palomides emerges to find the sky "turned round." Embracing what he now sees as his folly, Palomides decides to be christened in Caerleon, the "city of the astrologers." The tormented "scratching" of the questing beast is superseded by a different "scratching": that of the Chi-Ro, the Greek emblem for Christ.*

*A joyful Dinadan returns to laugh at the pun at the heart of Palomides' conversion and offers himself as godfather at the christening. Palomides, now "dull" and "undimensioned," goes to receive the sacrament on God's terms.*

**C.W.'s note in Answers:**

Romantic love and social order have both become blank. All that there is is hardness and itch and scratchings on the rock. But Dinadan realizes

that loss may be a greater possession than having; and Palomides, incapable of believing believably believes unbelievably, by means of that more-than-irony.

l. 3: *petrification*: the process of converting into stone or a stony substance or making lifeless or inactive, rigid or inert.

l. 4: *slant-eyes*: "a. astrology comes from east/ b. state of mind when one looks, and is looked at, askance" (*Notes*).

*city of astrologers*: Caerleon--see l. 76.

*astrologers*: those who practice the divination of the supposed influences of the stars and planets on human affairs and terrestrial events by their positions and aspects.

l. 5: *astronomers*: those who are skilled in the science of the celestial bodies and of their magnitudes, motions, and constitution/ those who make observations of celestial phenomena.

This line marks the beginning of a flashback which does not end until l. 97.

l. 9: *I determined, after I saw Iseult's arm*: see CP l. 43.

l. 10: *questing beast*: see note from CP l. 129.

l. 13: *Having that honor I would consent to be christened*: cf. *Le Morte* x 63:

And though he[Palomides] was not christened yet he believed in the best manner, and was full faithful and true of his promise, and well conditioned; and because he made his avow that he would never be christened unto the time that he had achieved the Beast Glatisant, the which was a full wonderful beast, and a great signification, for Merlin prophesied much of that beast.

l. 16: *Pelles the wounded master*: see SL l. 71.

ll. 17-18: *Tristram knocked me sprawling/ under the tender smile of Iseult*: cf. *Le Morte* viii 31:

And therewithal Sir Palomides arose still, without words, and gat his horse, and saddled him and bridled him, and lightly he leapt upon, and gat his spear in his hand, and either fewtered their spears and hurtled fast together; and there Tristram smote down Sir Palomides over his horse's tail. Then lightly Sir Palomides put his shield afore him and drew his sword. And there began strong battle on both parts, for both they fought for the love of one lady, and ever she lay on the walls and beheld them how they fought out of measure, and either were wounded passing sore, but Palomides was much sorer wounded... "Alas," she said "that

one I loved and yet do, and the other I love not, yet it were great pity that I should see Sir Palomides slain; for well I know by that time the end be done sir Palomides is but a dead knight; because he is not christened I would be loth that he should die a Saracen.”

l. 21: *Once I overthrew Lancelot by cheating at a tourney: cf. Le Morte x 70:*

Right so came into the field Sir Launcelot du Lake, and saw and heard the noise and cry and the great worship that Sir Palomides had. He dressed him against Sir Palomides, with a great and mighty spear and a long, and thought to smite him down. And when Sir Palomides saw Sir Launcelot come upon him so fast, he ran upon Sir Launcelot as fast with his sword as he might; and as Sir Launcelot should have striken him he smote his spear aside, and smote it a two with his sword. And Sir Palomides rushed unto Sir Launcelot, and thought to have put him to a shame; and with his sword he smote his horse's neck that Sir Launcelot rode upon, and then Sir Launcelot fell to the earth...Right then were there many knights wroth with Sir Palomides because he had done that deed; therefore many knights held there against that it was unknighly done in a tournament to kill an horse wilfully, but that it had been done in plain battle, life for life.

C.W. discusses Palomides' part in the myth when he writes in *Figure 90:*

There is, however, another point where Palomides comes violently into the myth. It is at the famous--and oddly named--Tournament of Lonaze. It is there that Palomides does his greatest deeds--'it is his day', said Sir Dinadan--but also his worst; for he overthrows Lancelot by falsehood.

ll. 22-23: *whence, enraged, fleeing, I was taken by pirates;/ Lancelot freed me:* In Malory's account, Palomides is taken prisoner by twelve knights, instead of "pirates", and although his capture sequentially follows the tournament, Palomides is more in a state of sorrow than rage because he has separated himself from Tristram and Queen Isoud. However, Launcelot does indeed rescue him cf. *Le Morte x 85:*

Then these twelve knights suddenly turned their horses and said to Sir Launcelot, "Sir knight, we counsel thee not to meddle with this knight[Palomides], for he hath deserved death, and unto death he is

judged." "That me repenteth," said Launcelot, "that I may not borrow him with fairness, for he is over good a knight to die such a shameful death. And therefore, fair knights," said Sir Launcelot, "keep you as well as ye can, for I will rescue that knight or die for it."

- l. 24: *Did I smile when I heard that he my saviour was mad?*: see note from SL ll. 82-84.
- l. 26: *cream*: the choicest part: best.
- l. 36: '*Friend, the missing is often the catching*': Dinadan is a paradox-making wit. He seems to be saying that sometimes not finding what one is looking for is the finding.
- ll. 37-40: Palomides is having quite a struggle coming to terms with the physical side of human nature. It is a mountain climb for him.
- l. 42: *blank*: devoid of covering or content.
- l. 53: *Fire of flesh* the passions of love and desire.  
*ache of bone*: lack of hope: cf. Ezekiel xxxvii 11: "Then he[the Lord] said to me: 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'""
- l. 56: *starveling*: one who is thin from or as if from lack of food.
- ll. 57-75: cf. Ezekiel xxxvii 1-10:

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "O, Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four wind, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So I

prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army.

Sir Palomides, like Ezekiel, is trying to make his dead bones "live," but the "spirit" he has is of jealousy and envy and "unchristened" and will never give life. It will only "suck" the "nourishing marrow."

l. 64: *cates*: (archaic): dainty or choice foods.

l. 73: *At last the bats frightened me*: "Bats: now fear of madness makes him move at last, to look beyond himself. All is as it was, but seen now as it is, he cannot understand the fuss he made"

(Notes).

ll. 79-80: *It was true I should look a fool before everyone; / why not look a fool before everyone?*: cf. 1 Corinthians i 26-29:

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

l. 81: *Chi-Ro*: Chi Rho: a Christian monogram and symbol formed from the first two letters X and P of the Greek word for Christ--called also Christogram.

l. 84: *beast*: "the blatant agile beast" or the questing beast--see l. 89 or l. 10.

ll. 89-91: When Malory recounts Sir Palomides' triumph, Dinadan does remark on Sir Palomides' accomplishment. However, he does not do it "for joy," he does it to provoke Sir Tristram to do better.

Cf. *Le Morte x 71*:

And the king let blow to lodging; and because Sir Palomides began first, and never he went nor rode out of the field to repose, but ever he was doing marvellously well other on foot or on horseback, and longest during, King Arthur and all the kings gave Sir Palomides the honour and the gree as for that day...and so Sir Dinadan railed with Sir Tristram and said, "What the devil is upon thee this day? For Sir Palomides' strength feebled never this day, but ever he doubled hi strength."

- l. 92: *'Catch as catch can; but absence is a catch of the presence'*:  
see l. 36.
- ll. 94-96: see ll. 1-4.
- l. 96: *I will stand your godfather at the pool in Caerleon*: In *Le Morte*, Sir Tristram and Sir Galleron stand as Sir Palomides' godfathers at the pool in Carlisle--see note from CP Title.
- l. 97: *undimensioned*: lacking the elements or factors making up a complete personality or entity.
- l. 98: *he is the only lord without a lady*: see note from COA l. 35.



## The Coming of Galahad

*On the Feast of Pentecost, when Palomides is christened and Galahad is knighted, the covered Grail appears to the court at Caerleon, and as part of its miracle, provides those in the hall with the food they most desire to eat. After the miraculous meal, a procession that includes Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot, as well as the bishops and peers, leads Sir Galahad to the king's bed, where he will sleep in honor that night. Then all retire, but the queen lies awake, "thinking of Lancelot's son."*

*While the procession led Galahad up to the king's bed, Taliessin went down into the lower regions of the palace to be among the servants. There among the jakes and latrines, he begins to sing a nursery rhyme. A young man approaches him. This is Gareth, a prince of Orkney, who, for the sake of obedience, is working as a lowly scullion. Gareth's true identity is known only by his elder brother Gawaine and by the king's poet, who recognizes the profile of Morgause in her son's face.*

*Gareth questions Taliessin about Galahad. Using the symbols of "stone and shell" to suggest the two "sides" of our humanity--the material and the spiritual, our reason and our imagination, mathematics and poetry--Taliessin attempts to convey what the arrival of Galahad represents by saying: "Today/ the stone was fitted to the shell." All that has gone before--whether in pagan magic or Christian wisdom--now achieves perfection in Galahad.*

*Gareth wonders about his own part in this miracle. Can one who works in the jakes partake of it? he asks. All are involved, Taliessin answers, because all can "prefer"--that is, choose the good and reject the bad. A girl who is standing nearby asks Taliessin what food he chose at the banquet. Taliessin answers that he chose the "good that was there." But she then questions him about the "felicity" to be found in variety. Taliessin replies that he chose the felicity of what was available, a choice that conveys Taliessin's humility in the face of the miraculous "felicity" he could have elected.*

*The girl then asks about the phenomenon that occurred at Palomides' christening earlier in the day. Percivale's pentagrams appeared glistening in Palomides' eyes, she says. "What food there?" In an elaborate answer, Taliessin cautions her not to be overly curious about understanding things. Some things the "cut hazel" cannot measure, he observes.*

With a grave smile, the girl tells Taliessin that she was once whipped across the shoulders with a hazel wand. Was there good in that? she asks. Taliessin says yes, if the heart received the pain in the right way. The girl then asks about the color of Galahad's eyes. Taliessin says that we are all interested in how identity becomes its unique self. He then asks for the girl's hand and kisses it.

Gareth asks about yet another phenomenon: how the water turned phosphorescent when Galahad washed his hands in it. Taliessin says that many of the "beloved"--Blanchefleur among them--manifest their sanctity in such ways. Then remembering, Taliessin observes that when he saw the queen's hands that night, they were "claws," not a stone fitted to a shell, but a stone fitting its own echo, without the harmony or wholeness provided by the other.

As Taliessin turns to go, the servant girl, clearly won over by their talk, cries out: "Lord, make us die as you would have us die." One's fate is "in the stars," replies Taliessin. "Logres is coming into Jupiter," he goes on to observe. All, in essence, is in the hands of God.

Unseen by Gareth and the girl, Taliessin's eyes burn with an emerald fire.

Title: *Galahad*: see note from PT 1. 13.

"Galahad came to Caerleon after Palomides had been christened on the Feast of Pentecost. 'In the honour of the highness of Galahad he was ledde in to kinge Arthurs chamber and there rested in his own bedde'--*Morte d'Arthur*, Book XIII. The image of the stone and shell is from the *Prelude*, Book 5" (*First edition*).

l. 1: *In the hall all had what food they chose*: an account of this meal can be found in *Idylls*, "The Holy Grail" ll. 182-194, and *Le Morte* xiii 7:

Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world. And when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it become; then had they all breath to speak.

l. 3: *they led the young man Galahad to Arthur's bed:* in *Le Morte* xiii 8, Malory writes:

And then they went to rest them. And in the honour of the highness of Galahad he was led into King Arthur's chamber, and there rested in his own bed.

l. 5: *Rite:* a prescribed form or manner governing the words or actions for a ceremony/ a ceremonial act or action.

l. 7: *The queen all night lay thinking of Lancelot's son:* "I would fain see him," said the queen, "for he must needs be a noble man, for so is his father that him begat" (*Le Morte* xiii 4).

l. 10: *squires:* shield bearers or armor-bearers of a knight.

l. 14: *scullions:* kitchen helpers.

ll. 20-21: *all taken at their word, their professions, their oaths:* Tennyson's Arthur often emphasizes the power of man's word: "Man's word is God in man" (*Idylls*, "The Coming of Arthur" l. 132).

l. 23: *jakes:* small buildings having benches with holes through which the user may defecate or urinate.

l. 27: *youth:* Sir Gareth: in Arthurian legend, he is one of the knights of the Round Table, and in both *Le Morte* and *Idylls*, he is the youngest son of King Lot and Morgause. His mother, to deter him from entering Arthur's court, says that she will consent to his doing so only if he conceals his name and goes as a scullion for twelve months. He agrees to this, and Sir Kay, the king's steward, nicknames him Beaumains, or "Fair-hands," because his hands are unusually fine and large (*Le Morte* xii 1 and *Idylls*, "Gareth and Lynette"). At the end of the year he is knighted, and obtains his first quest when Lynette begs the aid of some knight to liberate her sister Liones held prisoner by Sir Ironside in Castle Perilous. Lynette treats Sir Gareth with great contempt, calling him a washer of dishes and a kitchen knave, but he overthrows five knights and frees Liones, whom he marries. In *Idylls*, there is some confusion as to whom Gareth marries in the end; Tennyson writes that Gareth marries Lynette. While rescuing Queen Guinevere from death at the stake, Sir Lancelot unwittingly kills Sir Gareth, who is standing guard, and thus evokes the vow of revenge from Gareth's brothers that ultimately effects the downfall of King Arthur's court and the end of the Round Table.

*scavenger:* a person employed to remove dirt and refuse from streets.

- l. 45: *saffron*: a moderate orange to orange yellow.
- l. 47: *Great Ban*: C.W. reveals here that the Great Ban is God's forbidding of the Holy Grail's appearance in Arthur's realm.
- ll. 51-52: *double-dance of a stone and a shell, / and the glittering sterile smile of the sea that pursues*: "In *The Prelude* Book V, Wordsworth describes how in a dream he met a Bedouin carrying a stone (mathematics) and a shell (poetry), which he is trying to save from a flood which pursues him" (*Notes*). In *Answers*, C.W. explains the stone and shell:

...the hard exploration of romantic states and the beauty of romantic states. The beauty comes before and after; which is why the shell has to be fitted to the stone, to breed there, and afterwards bursts from the stone [see l. 158]; this is the finding of Identity. Galahad is the supreme of both states.

- l. 54: *Northern poet*: William Wordsworth--see note from SL I. 53.
- l. 56: *van*: vanguard: the forefront of an action or movement.
- ll. 66-72: *five houses*: "Taliessin has claimed to see this 'fitting' achieved in five different Houses: in the House of Poetry (the Druid oak), in the life of the flesh (Caucasia), in the intellect (Gaul), in the Church (Lateran), and even in the vision itself (Byzantium). It might be supposed that intellectual Gaul neither needed nor admitted the shell, or that 'gay' Caucasia neither needed nor admitted the stone. But it is not so: 'each house' is double" (*Torso* 168). "There is no experience of man in which these shell and stone experiences do not exist; T. mentions five: poetry and wisdom, sex, intellect and theology, religion, interior religion" (*Answers*).
- l. 80: *digestion*: the action, process, or power of assimilating mentally.
- ll. 88-89: ...*'More/ choice is within the working than goes before'*: the actual act of choosing--the moment of choice--makes the choice real and is more important or significant than the anticipation.
- l. 90: *The good that was there--and did I well then? yes?*: "When I could have anything I wanted, I wanted nothing but what was there' (C.W.)" (*Notes*).
- l. 98: *pentagram*: a figure of a five-pointed star usually made with alternate points connected by a continuous line and used as a magic symbol.

ll. 100-101: *'Five cells the world gave me, five shells of multiple sound....'*: "When he tried to find their *reality*, the shells became empty" (*Notes*).

l. 105: *winged prince of the jakes*: the devil.

l. 106: *Child*: Galahad--see SL l. 226.

l. 107: *gate of growth*: the womb.

l. 110: *scintillation*: a brilliant outburst.

l. 115: *fare*: eat, dine.

l. 119: *cheer*: state of mind or heart: spirit.

*Messias*: Christ. Describing why he chose this word instead of the other, C.W. writes, "No doubt when we have looked up annotated editions and biblical dictionaries, we know what 'the Christ' means....But at the moment, there, it is a kind of incantation" (*Essential* 10).

l. 122: *the hazel, Blanchefleur, he*: Galahad is the metaphorical hazel.

l. 123: *redaction*: an act or instance of putting into writing.

l. 124: *categories into identity*: category: "umbrella term for the arbitrary collection of individuals, identifiable only by initial, age, race, colour, religion, occupation...therefore without identity. The Glory of the Empire lies in the identification of each entity with others and all with it in co-inherence" (*Notes*).

l. 125: *Give me your hand*: "He talks of her hand as if he were in love with it, but then T. can see the glory everywhere; he sees the light on Caucasia without desiring to possess it. But I think he has loved Blanchefleur chiefly" (*Answers*).

l. 126: *office*: a position of authority to exercise a public function and to receive whatever emoluments may belong to it.

*lights*: noteworthy people in particular places or fields.

l. 127: *king's substitute*: Galahad.

l. 133: *Sanctity*: holiness of life and character: godliness/ the quality or state of being holy or sacred: inviolability.

l. 134: *crescent*: marked by an increase.

ll. 142-143: *...this was the stonel fitting itself to its echo*: looking on Galahad jars Guinevere with intimations of her ultimate salvation/destination. She will end up at Almesbury where Galahad has been nourished and raised. She will eventually go where he has come from, grace uniting them.

ll. 146-164: "Williams's own headline for the whole of 74 [page of poetic text] reads 'Taliessin sees the process and triumph of the soul's fruition'" (*Torso* 171).

ll. 147-154: ...*Four/ zones*: from Mercury to Venus; Venus to Earth; Earth to Jupiter; and Jupiter to Saturn. "There is a preference (Venus) = Gareth, the hazel; and of irony (Jupiter) = perhaps Palomides; and irony that is something more = Dinadan; and of Galahad (Saturn) 'turned space' and time, cf. next poem, DM" (*Answers*).

l. 148: *firmament*: the vault or arch of the sky: heavens.

l. 150: *Mercury*: the Roman equivalent of the Greek Hermes, son of Maia and Jupiter, to whom he acted as messenger. Mercury is probably of totally Greek origin, brought to Rome by Greek traders. He was the god of science and commerce, the patron of travelers and also of rogues, vagabonds, and thieves. Hence, the name of the god is used to denote both a messenger and a thief. Mercury is represented as a young man with winged hat and winged sandals (*talaria*), bearing the caduceus and sometimes a purse.

l. 151: *Venus preference*: love--see note from AS l. 43.

l. 152: *strewn*: covered by or as if by scattering something.

*four*: Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn.

l. 153: *Jupiter*: (early Latin~Diespiter - "Father of the sky"): the ancient Italian sky god and the supreme deity of Roman mythology, also known as Jove and corresponding roughly to the Greek Zeus. He was the special protector of Rome and, as Jupiter Capitolinus--his temple being on the Capitoline hill--presided over the Roman games. He knew and could influence the course of history and made known the future to man by means of signs in the heavens, by the flight of birds, and, most awesomely, by the stroke of his lightning bolt.

l. 154: *Saturn*: Saturn is an Italian god of agriculture, associated with the Greek god Cronus. Saturn was the husband of Ops, goddess of plenty identified with the Greek Rhea. As a legendary king of Rome, Saturn was remembered for introducing agriculture, and his reign, considered a golden age, was commemorated by the Saturnalia.

l. 160: *Logres is come into Jupiter*: "The sphere of Jupiter is also justice. Logres with the coming of Galahad is now there, and all planets and provinces of the Empire circle round Galahad's sphere, the sphere of Saturn. This in medieval thought was the sphere of the ascetic contemplatives. See *Paradiso* Canto xxi" (*Notes*).

l. 163-164: *Emeralds of fire, blank to both, his eyes/ were points of the Throne's foot that sank through Logres*: "But Taliessin's eyes are non-human; he sees 'the Throne' and his eyes resemble the Throne" (*Answers*).

*both: Gareth and the girl.*

## The Departure of Merlin

*Taliessin sings of the Pope, who is standing at the altar in Lateran. Because of the coming of Galahad, there is a new hope, a new brightness in the world. The Moslem and Manichæan heresies have been put to flight. In Camelot, the Round Table is changing; while the secrets of creation are "indrawn to Broceliande."*

*Merlin has fulfilled his purpose. He has delivered Lancelot's son to Blanchefleur; and after her nurturing, Galahad, the Merciful Child, has taken his predestined place in the Siege Perilous. The Child now matures in his "perilous" chair even as Merlin rises and runs back to Broceliande. Seeing the "young wizard" approach, Joseph of Nazareth and Joseph of Arimathea, Christ's foster-father of the womb and his foster-father of the tomb, dance forth to meet him.*

*From the deck of one of the Emperor's galleys, becalmed near P'o-l'u, Taliessin has a vision of Merlin among the trees of distant Broceliande. The sailors also look at the mythical woods. However, the image is too much for one of them. At the sight of its "thick wood," this sailor despairs, throws himself overboard and drowns. Fortunately, the remaining crew feel the graceful wind of Broceliande strike their sails, and spring to the oars on a "visionary track" to Byzantium.*

*Then, as Merlin, who has completed his last task well, returns to his mother, the poem celebrates the woods of Broceliande and Nimue, who presides over its lakes and seas, its "natural becoming." Meanwhile, back in Logres, Galahad awaits in the "perilous chair" for the time of his appointed quest.*

Textual note: A previous version of this poem occurs in the *Advent*, entitled "Taliessin's Song of the Passing of Merlin."

l. 1: *Lateran's stone*: the altar.

l. 2: *vicarious*: performed or suffered by one person as a substitute for another or to the benefit or advantage of another: substitutionary.

l. 4: *Trebizond*: the Greek Empire from 1204-1461 which was an offshoot of the Byzantine Empire; at its greatest extent it included Georgia, Crimea, and the southern coast of the Black sea east of the Sakarya.

*Archangel*: Dvina Gulf--formerly Gulf of Archangel: arm of the White sea in Northern Russia and Europe.



- l. 8: *phenomena*: objects or aspects known through the senses rather than by thought or nonsensuous intuition.
- l. 11: *perilous throne*: Perilous Siege.
- l. 14: *the blessed young sorcerer, a boy and less than a boy*: "The variation of the Merlin tale is due to Swinburne (but this Merlin is young): *Tristram of Lyonesse*, Books 1 and 6" (*First edition*).
- l. 15: *span*: (archaic): past tense of spin.
- l. 16: *repose*: a state of resting after exertion or strain/ eternal or heavenly rest.
- l. 17: *Joseph of Nazareth*: a descendant of David and husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Joseph was a carpenter and is the patron saint of that trade.  
*Joseph of Arimathea*: the rich Jew, probably a member of the Sanhedrin, who believed in Jesus but was afraid to confess it, and after the Crucifixion begged the body of Jesus and deposited it in his own tomb--Matthew xxvii 57-60. Legend relates that he was imprisoned for years, during which time he was kept alive miraculously by the Holy Grail, and that on his release by the Emperor Vespasian (AD 9-79), about AD 63, he brought to Britain the Grail and the spear with which Longinus wounded Jesus, and there founded the abbey of Glastonbury, beginning the conversion of Britain. He is also the forefather of Sir Galahad in *Le Morte*.
- l. 18: *coeval-rooted*: coeval: of the same or equal age, antiquity, or duration.
- l. 20: *beatitude*: any of the declarations made in the Sermon on the Mount--Matthew v 3-12: Christ Jesus.
- l. 23: *vigours*: active bodily or mental strengths or forces/ active healthy well-balanced growths, especially of plants.  
*rich-ringed*: ringed: composed or formed of annual rings--the layer of wood produced by a single year's growth of a woody plant.
- l. 29: *becalmed*: kept motionless by lack of wind.
- l. 30: *headless form*: the antipodean emperor--see l. 146 VE.
- l. 32: *djongs*: oriental boats.
- ll. 33-36: "Williams's own note runs as follows: 'Those in the Antipodes (not formal Hell even feel Broceliande; they become aware of all moments beside the P'o-l'u one and...' 'hope springs eternal'--unless, like the one sailor, you really do hate the good. And the distance from the Antipodes is no greater, in Grace, than from, say, Camelot'" (*Torso* 173).
- l. 41: *fable of Dryads*: "The Dryads, according to legend, are born and die with the trees they inhabit, their identity being that of the trees" (*Pattern of the Web* 106).

*Dryads*: wood nymphs.

l. 45: *Time's president and precedent*: Merlin--see note from VE 1. 51.

l. 51: *brings all natural becoming to her shape of immortal being*: the use of "becoming" and "being" has many philosophical connotations. One is back in the world of Aristotle/Aquinas. The general sense is that Nimue is the natural route through which all life takes shape; "being" thus "becoming."

ll. 53-54: *Well has Merlin spoken the last spell,/ worked the last image, gone to his own*: cf. Matthew xxv 21: "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'"

## The Death of Palomides

Palomides, having been christened, feels the eagle power of his faith. Now reflecting on his own past, he recalls one episode in which he stayed the night with two old Jewish men at Monsalvat after the Moslems had conquered Cordova. One Jew was sea-going; the other was sun-black. Together they chanted the names of God, causing the "first mathematics of Ispahan," or Persian dualism, to tremble. Eagles screamed outside.

Aloof and scornful, Palomides nonetheless sat and listened. But when they pronounced the word "Netzach," Palomides could not help but express his confusion. The Jews define "Netzach" as "the name of Victory in the Blessing" and go on to say that "the Lord created all things by means of his Blessing." Then before Palomides' very eyes, these devout "twins of Levi" are assumed into Heaven. It is at this point that the Christian knight Dinadan, the "loneliest of lords," comes by, smiling in the "folly" of his faith. Palomides is struck with fear. The eagles continue to scream.

Then Palomides scans the various turmoils of his life as he plunges toward belief in the previously "unbelieved symbol." Now at the end of his life, Palomides, the reluctant convert, sings the "formula" the old Jews had taught him so many years before.

l. 7: *Israel*: (Hebrew - "contender with God"): it is the name given to Jacob after he wrestled with the angel of the Lord--Genesis xxxii 28. Also the name for the Children of Israel--the Jewish people or a people chosen by God.

l. 8: *Levi*: (Hebrew - "attached"): the third son of Jacob and Leah--Genesis xxix 34--and the traditional eponymous ancestor of the priestly tribe of the Levites--Deuteronomy xxi 15.

*Monsalvat*: "Monsalvasch, Monserrat: 8th century monastery; miracle-working image of Virgin Mary; later connected with Grail legend" (*Notes*).

l. 11: *guttural*: articulated in the throat/ being or marked by utterance that is strange, unpleasant, or disagreeable.

l. 14: *intoned*: uttered in musical or prolonged tones: recited in singing tones or in a monotone.

*formulæ*: set forms of words for use in a ceremony or ritual.

l. 16: *Sierras*: mountain ranges in central and western Spain.

l. 17: *seed-mail*: "Seed-mail = chain-mail, seed-pearls, springing seed, youth, young arrogant militancy" (*Answers*).

l. 19: *cherubim*: in the traditional hierarchy of angels, the cherubim are ranked just below the highest--the seraphim.

*seraphim*: according to medieval angelology, they belong to the highest order of angels, especially distinguished by the ardency of their zeal and love. They had six wings: "With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying" (Isaiah vi 2).

l. 20: *Netzach*: "station on the Sephirotic tree (Jewish cosmic diagram); its quality denotes Victory" (*First edition*).

l. 29: *interminable*: having or seeming to have no end; especially, wearisomely protracted.

*paths were stations*: "Paths and stations--We are free from the sense of finality except in the End" (*Answers*).

l. 40: *eagle*: "Eagle: pre-eminent in myth, folklore. Symbol, at once, of immortality and temporal power (Ancient Greece); in Christian myth, St. John, one of the four 'creatures' in Revelations. Chief of C.W.'s angelic manifestations, wisdom and balance, in *Place of the Lion*" (*Notes*).

l. 41: *primal*: original.

l. 44: *unbelieved symbol*: the Cross.

ll. 45-56: "Palomides recollects, renounces, is reconciled, with a gesture of ineffable grace, 'in a passion of patience', Taliessin's rule" (*Notes*):

At first we did not expect profit or praise;  
we were far too honourable or haughty for the pitpat  
of the world; we knew about, we enjoyed, irony.  
But we did not think irony would desert to the other side.

And as for love--that indeterminate prospect--  
it was not so secure as irony, but more kind...  
until we found it was not so kind to us  
as our own impulse had supposed, by its nature it would be;  
and what besides love or irony had we designed?

(C.W.: 1 April 1938)

l. 46: *beast*: the questing beast.

l. 48: *it was half because I was a greater fool so*: see note from PBC ll. 79-80.

### *Percivale at Carbonek*

*The three successful pursuers of the Grail--Bors, Percivale, and Galahad--stand before the Castle of the Grail--Carbonek. Percivale describes how the people of Pelles greet them, while, under the arch of Carbonek, the "joyful" Galahad, kneeling within the circles of his father the wolf, begs for the "joyless" Lancelot's pardon. The angels of heaven, the officers of the Grail, stand by astonished and doubtful as they look upon the reconciliation of this son and his father. The fulfillment of the quest and the healing of Pelles the wounded king must wait until the weeping Merciful Child receives forgiveness from his "betrayed father." Finally, the lover of Guinevere acknowledges his son, and Galahad asks Lancelot's cousin Bors to bear the pardon from the fallen house of Camelot to Galahad's house of Carbonek. Bors wonders what they should forgive, and Galahad simply answers, "Our existence." Galahad's very existence brings pain to Lancelot and even the doomed Camelot, and Galahad seeks reconciliation, even though he is not himself guilty. Bors responds that only God forgives, but he also assents to bear the forgiveness. With peace attained, the High Prince follows Bors and enters Carbonek.*

"C.W.'s letter of 15 February 1935 describes his first conception of the poem--the textual variants from the final version are also of interest" (Notes):

I've altered--or at least--added to Malory a little point. Meditating on the Riding of Galahad, it suddenly occurred to me last night to put the High Prince at the ...but you may as well have the first stanza--

Galahad stood in the gate of Carbonek;  
the folk of Pelleas ran to greet him;  
Christ was before him, behind him the rent silk of the sun.  
His eyes ere vacant; he sighed Bless me, Lord Lancelot.

And so on; and then--

Christ was before him; reconciliation waited;  
Arthur and Pelleas waited the end of their schism;  
Grief rose in his heart; Galahad wept  
for the need of his birth and the doubled misery of Logres.

On the threshold of Carbonek the High Prince doubted,  
his fiber torn by the infelicities of time

Only once does the Joyous Prince weep, and that is when he comes to Carbonek, the place where he was born, and Lancelot went mad. And even Galahad doubts if even eternity is quite worth it. But at least he implores his father to forgive him--not Lancelot alone, but Arthur and all Logres; as Percivale, whose poem it is, says--the High Prince being incapable of speech:

I commended the Prince to my lord Sir Lancelot his father...

The feet of Lancelot running, running, running...

Angelic were they (the folk of Pelleas) or faery; all myrmidons of unremitted beauty; astonished they stood.

The High Prince fell on his knees in the gate of Carbonek, pierced the implacability, crying Lancelot, forgive me.

And so on--as I remarked. Do you not conceive that to be a very moving episode? Joy having to be forgiven for the necessity of its own birth?

“Here, at the very frontier between Nature and Supernature, the threshold of Carbonek, Williams wants to exhibit to us something about which sacred poets are usually silent.

‘Pascal’, said Williams, ‘like all believers was a public danger’ (*Descent of the Dove* 199). That is the sort of thing that has often been said, and hotly, from outside, by unbelievers: the admission from within is the novelty. Williams does not mean in the least that believers are a danger in so far as they are unsatisfactory believers who mistake the passions of the natural man in them for zeal or his stupidities for guidance. That would, no doubt, be true, but it is not the point he is making. He means that the saints, beginning with Christ Himself, not by failure but by their very sanctity, inevitably cause immense suffering. Christians naturally think more often of what the world has inflicted on the saints; but the saints also inflict much on the world. Mixed with the cry of martyrs, the cry of nature wounded by Grace also ascends--and presumably to heaven. That cry has indeed been legitimized for all believers by the words of the Virgin Mary herself--‘Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.’...To be silent on this point was impossible for Williams” (*Torso* 174-175).

l. 1: *rent*: torn as a sign of anger, grief, or despair.

l. 4: *His eyes were sad; he sighed for Lancelot's pardon:* in *Le Morte* xvii 14, Galahad and Lancelot meet on a ship during the quest for the Grail:

And then Lancelot dressed unto him[Galahad], and said, 'Ye be welcome.'

And he answered and saluted him again, and asked him, 'What is your name? For much my heart giveth unto you.'

'Truly,' said he, 'my name is Launcelot du Lake.'

'Sir,' said he, 'then be ye welcome, for ye were the beginner of me in this world.'

'Ah,' said he, 'are ye Galahad?'

'Yea, forsooth,' said he; and so he kneeled down and asked him his blessing, and after took off his helm and kissed him.

And there was great joy between them, for there is no tongue can tell the joy that they made either of other, and many a friendly word spoken between, as kind would, the which is no need here to be rehearsed.

*pardon*: "Pardon, as between any two beings, is a reidentification of love, and it is known so in the most tender and the most happy human relationships" (*Essential* 58).

l. 5: *Joy*: Galahad.

*joylessness*: Lancelot.

l. 9: *celestial*: of, relating to, or suggesting heaven or divinity.

*myrmidons*: loyal followers; especially, subordinates who execute orders unquestioningly or unscrupulously.

*scions*: descendants; children.

l. 10: *unremitted*: constant, incessant.

l. 11: *fibrous*: tough, sinewy.

*infelicity*: the quality or state of being not appropriate in application or expression.

l. 13: *The passage through Carbonek was short to the house of the Grail*: see note from P l. 7.

l. 14: *wounded king waited for health*: see SL l. 71.

l. 15: *subdued glory*: Galahad.

*kingdom*: Lancelot.

l. 17: *Merciful Child*: Galahad--see SL l. 226.

l. 21: *Infant*: Galahad.

l. 24: *High Prince*: Galahad--see SL l. 215.

*bleak*: lacking in warmth or kindness.

*conjunction*: the act or an instance of conjoining:  
combination.

l. 32: *The Host in the Lateran lay in a hid sepulchre*: see COA l.  
70.

*sepulchre*: a place of burial: tomb/ a receptacle for religious  
relics especially in an altar.

l. 33: *drawn engine*: Lancelot.

l. 34: *slewed*: turned, twisted, or swung about: pivoted.

l. 35: *He*: Lancelot.

*Cousin*: Bors.

l. 38: *Us*: see l. 39.

l. 39: *means of grace*: Helayne.

*hope of glory*: Galahad.

l. 40: *Our father*: God.

*Our mother*: Helayne.

*Our birth*: Helayne's and Galahad's.

l. 48: *Carbonek was entered*: "unconsciously but happily  
reminiscent of Beowulf's *Heorot is gelfælsod*" (*Torso* 176).



## The Last Voyage

*Painted in the Byzantine hall of the Empire, is a portrait of Solomon. He is standing on the deck of a ship which floats in a sea of dolphins with his city and temple in the background. While Solomon's left hand acknowledges the queen Balkis, Solomon's right hand overwhelms a demon, drowning him in the water below.*

*On the opposite wall, a poet laureate ceremony is painted. The portrait depicts the true succession of the great mythic poets by illustrating Virgil, who received his anointing from Homer, passing a shoot of hazel on to Taliessin. Surrounding the king's poet are the poets of Logres, soon to be Britain.*

*However, beyond all the real and painted shapes of the empire, sails the ship of Jerusalem over the waves of Broceliande towards the Holy City of Sarras. Driven by neither fire nor slave, but by the song of Galahad as directed by a multitude of "strangely sea-traveling" doves, the ship of Solomon thrusts through the sea, carrying with it the red-and-white-burning Infant Galahad, the silver-columned Percivale, and the black-mailed Bors--the three ways of exchange--and matching as it does so "power to purpose and passion to peace."*

*Before the driving ship of Solomon, the sun shines in the saffron cover of the Grail, while the pale body of Blanchefleur lies underneath on a funeral bier. Substituting her life for another's, Percivale's sister, "the mother of the nature of lovers," chose the way of exchange and died another lady's death.*

*In a brief digression, the poem then turns to the tragic death of Dinadan. He died, we are told, as a result of the "deep schismatic war" launched by Gawaine following a feud at court. Specifically, Dinadan is killed after having stumbled upon Gawaine's and Agravaine's treacherous ambush and murder of Lamorack, their mother Morgause's lover.*

*Aboard the ship of Solomon, Galahad releases Dinadan's soul by means of a "cry" of substitution that contains a "litany of names," including, ironically, that of the murderous Agravaine. Free of its suffering, Dinadan's heart "flew and flamed and flushed the argentine column" on-board the ship of Solomon.*

*Galahad's song then changes. He cries, Judica te, Deus--"Judge me, O God"--and the ship speeds even more quickly towards its holy destination: Sarras.*

*Meanwhile, back in Logres, a repentant Lancelot lands, but it is now too late for the "King's friend" to help Arthur. He learns from Taliessin that Arthur is dead and Mordred overthrown. He also learns that Pelles has been healed in an "exchange of death and healing" with Arthur. But Carbonek now absorbs Logres, leaving only a diminished Britain in its place.*

C.W.'s Note in *Answers*:

The city and temple and Solomon were all painted on as if on a ship which was surrounded by dolphins. A remarkable picture, but possible. Hexameters and decasyllabics--both forms of the hazel, of 'measurement' in verse, categories of identity. 'land melts': from the point of view of the lords, Logres is dissolving behind them (although Bors is to return); all that was Logres and the Empire has become this flight of doves driving the ship on its way; at the point where Galahad is so united with Christ that he has almost a necessity of being in himself; doctrinally heretical, I fear, but pass. 'The hollow of Jerusalem'--the generative organs of this life are no more than the shoulder-hollows of Galahad. What *his* generative organs are, no-one has begun to imagine. He meets the Acts of the Emperor, and Byzantium and Sarras are in a sense one.

C.W.'s Note in *Image* 170-171:

From Igrasil (the mythical world tree, connecting heaven, earth, and hell) they come to the shore and embark in the vessel with the body of Percivale's sister. (?Blanchefleur: called 'sister' only as a kind of name to describe their virginal love; then Bors's lady (?Helayne) encourages him to go upon the quest...Blanchefleur comes dead to Sarras. Thus the corporeal passions are left behind,--the mental come nearer--the spiritual only achieve. But note the importance that this achievement takes place in Helayne's heart also (or could)--she is not on a lower level than the knights and Blanchefleur.)

The ship, in which the Graal moves amidst cloud and mist, moves through the seas to the dark and silent quays of Sarras. On the way Galahad stands at the prow looking out towards the city. Percivale begins to sing the song of parting with Blanchefleur, a song of farewell as the souls draw near the place of ending....

The Grail achieved about the same time as Arthur returns to fight Mordred....As the old unity of Logres is breaking up, because the circle is too small, the new and perfect unity is achieved.

l. 1: *hollow of Jerusalem*: the womb--see the map.  
*ship*: in *Le Morte* xvii 5, the Holy Ghost tells King  
Solomon:

Solomon, if heaviness come to a man by a woman, no reck thou never;  
for yet shall there come a woman[Helayne] whereof there shall come  
greater joy to man an hundred times more than this heaviness giveth  
sorrow; and that woman shall be born of thy lineage.

When Solomon asks if this woman will be the "glorious Virgin  
Mary" about whom he has been foretold, the voice answers:

Nay, but there shall come a man[Galahad] which shall be a maid, and  
the last of your blood, and he shall be as good a knight as Duke Joshua,  
thy brother-in-law.

Upon hearing this news, Solomon's wife advises him to "let make a  
ship of the best wood and most durable that men may find." Within  
this ship they place King David's sword; a great bed covered with  
silk; a girdle made of hemp; and red, green, and white spindles  
made from the tree Eve first planted. According to Malory, this  
ship's next appearance is when Galahad, Sir Bors, Percivale, and  
his sister all sail to the city of Sarras and the land of the trinity in it  
in order to complete the quest of the Holy Grail (*Le Morte* xvii 2).

l. 2: *stair*: the porphyry stair--see note from VE l. 10.

l. 3: *Solomon*: in the Old Testament, he was the wisest and most  
magnificent of the kings of Israel and the son of David and  
Bathsheba. When asked by Jehovah to be granted any wish,  
Solomon wisely said, "...give your servant a discerning heart to  
govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong" (1  
Kings iii 9). For C.W., Solomon is the magician par excellence--  
see ll. 11-12. Solomon also appears in *Le Morte* xvii 5-7.

*city*: Jerusalem: Solomon's capital--see note from VE l. 101.

*temple*: Solomon's temple: the central place of Jewish  
worship. It was erected by Solomon and his Tyrian workmen on  
Mount Moriah, Jerusalem, about 1006 BC. It was destroyed at the  
siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC), and some seventy  
years later the Temple of Zerubbabel was completed on its site. In  
20 BC, Herod the Great began the building of the last Temple--that  
of the New Testament--which was utterly destroyed during the siege  
of Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus in AD 70. For many centuries  
the site has been covered by the Moslem mosque, Haram esh Sherif.

- l. 6: *whelmed*: turned upside down usually to cover something: cover or engulf completely with usually disastrous effect.  
*djinn*: jinni: one of a class of spirits that according to Moslem demonology inhabit the earth, assume various forms, and exercise supernatural power/ a supernatural spirit that often takes human form and serves his summoner.
- l. 9: *effectual*: producing or able to produce a desired effect.
- l. 12: *necromancy*: conjuration of the spirits of the dead for purposes of magically revealing the future or influencing the course of events/ magic, sorcery.
- l. 13: *necessity of existence*: "Christians have the necessity of existence: i.e., redemption in themselves through Christ" (*Notes*).
- l. 14: *laureate*: to crown with or as if with a laurel wreath for excellence or achievement/ to appoint to the office of poet laureate.
- l. 24: *reefed*: reduced the area of (a sail) by rolling or folding a portion.  
*set*: spread to the wind.  
*motived*: impelled.
- l. 34: *alchemical*: alchemy: a medieval chemical science and speculative philosophy aiming to achieve the transmutation of the base metals into gold, the discovery of a universal cure for disease, and the discovery of a means of indefinitely prolonging life/ a power or process of transforming something common into something special/ an inexplicable or mysterious transmuting.  
*Infant*: Galahad--see note from PC l. 21.
- l. 35: *celerity*: rapidity of motion or action.
- l. 41: *flesh of fatherhood*: Bors--see note from CA l. 29.
- l. 43: *City sped to the City*: Camelot sped to Sarras.
- l. 44: *Sarras*: the Holy City in which the Holy Grail is located (*Le Morte* xvii 11). C.W. comments on Sarras in *Figure* 81:

It is certainly true that Sarras was originally on the borders of Egypt, but that cannot now be helped, for the lords of the Quest must go there in a ship, and it must lie beyond Carbonek. To send the ship back from Carbonek though the Mediterranean to Egypt--I will not say it could not be done, for anything can be done that can be done, but it seems less convenient than to remove Sarras; especially as Sarras can be spiritually reached anywhere, but it is not quite suitable that the High Prince should return to the world.

- l. 52: *new-ghosted*: of the Holy Ghost.
- ll. 58-60: "The approach of Aeneas' ship up the River Tiber where he founded the city of Rome" (*Notes*).

1. 58: *Cymodocea*: she was a Nereid, a water nymph.
1. 59: *striking*: taking a course.  
*Tiber*: a river in central Italy that flows through Rome into the Tyrrhenian sea.
1. 60: *duke*: Aeneas.
1. 63: *The wonder that snapped*: “the fall of man, now redeemed” (Notes).
1. 64: *level*: a practically horizontal surface or area.  
*bulwark*: the side of a ship above the upper deck.
1. 65: *reeved*: fastened by passing through a hole or around something.
1. 68: *fleet*: swift in motion: nimble.
1. 69: *ship of Solomon (blessed be he)*: Solomon.
1. 71: *pall*: a square of linen usually stiffened with cardboard that is used to cover the chalice.
1. 72: *bier*: (archaic): a framework for carrying/ a stand on which a corpse or coffin is placed.
1. 73: *creature of exchange*: in *Le Morte* xvii 10, Galahad, Percivale, Bors, and Percivale’s sister come upon a castle with a strange custom: “what maid passeth hereby shall give this dish full of blood of her right arm.” However, when the custom is explained--that it is for the healing of the dying gentlewoman who possesses the castle and many others--Percivale’s sister consents even though she may lose her life (*Le Morte* xvii 11):

“Truly, and I die for to heal her I shall get me great worship and soul’s health, and worship to my lineage, and better is one harm than twain. And therefore there shall be no more battle, but tomorn I shall yield you your custom of this castle.”...Then she lift up her hand and blessed her [the gentlewoman]; and then she said to the lady, “Madam, I am come to the death for to make you whole, for God’s love prayeth for me.” With that she fell in a swoon.

1. 80: *dead woman*: Percivale’s sister.  
 “Blanchefleur died from a letting of blood to heal a sick lady ; her body was taken by the three lords of the quest, and buried ‘in the spyrytual place’” (*First edition*).
1. 81: *sacrum*: (last bone of the spine: literally from Greek ~*ηιερον οστειον* – “holy bone”): the part of the vertebral column that is directly connected with or forms a part of the pelvis and in man consists of five united vertebrae.

ll. 85-88: "Lancelot's war" (*Idylls*, "The Passing of Arthur" l. 31). Because of Gareth's death at the hands of the unfaithful and adulterous Lancelot, his brother, Gawaine, insists that war must be made against Lancelot until one of them is slain. His uncle, King Arthur, reluctantly consents and supports his nephew until Gawaine is slain and his kingdom is seized by his son Mordred. This war divides the Round Table into Lancelot and the knights that follow him and the knights that stay with Arthur and Gawaine (*Le Morte* xx 19-22).

l. 89: *king's dolphin*: Dinadan--see DOP l. 32.

l. 90: *bewildered wood*: Broceliande--see BFB l. 6.

l. 91: *when by an ambush Lamorack was shot in the back*: see note from COA l. 30.

ll. 92-93: *...who slew their mother/ to clean their honour's claws in the earth of her body*: see note from COA l. 28.

l. 97: *litany*: a resonant or repetitive chant.

l. 98: *king's friend*: Lancelot--see CA l. 40.

l. 104: *argentine*: silver.

l. 106: *omnipotent fact*: see note from CP l. 88.

l. 109: "*Judicate, Deus*": variation on Psalm 43: "Judge me, O God."

l. 112: *Prayer*: Blanchefleur.

*irony*: Dinadan.

l. 116: *monstrum*: Latin - "to show." Also suggests the monstrance used to display the Host/Eucharist during the Benediction in Catholic Tradition.

*triangularspeed*: "fact, intelligence, and flesh" (*Notes*).

l. 118: *necessity of being*: God.

l. 122: *Arthur's death and the overthrow of Mordred*: when King Arthur returns from his war with Sir Lancelot, he is met by his traitorous son Mordred. Although Gawaine has been slain, he appears to Arthur in a dream and warns him not to battle Mordred because he will be killed if he does. Even though King Arthur tries to establish peace, at the signing of the treaty, an adder comes out of the bushes and bites a knight--see note to TLM l. 23. When the knight draws his sword to slay the adder, the opposing party believes it to be a sign of aggression, and the battle has begun. In the final battle between them, King Arthur slays Mordred and is indeed mortally wounded in the process (*Le Morte* xxi 4).

"All-but-Desire[Arthur] destroys Entire-Desire[Mordred], and is saved by Bedivere, and the barge where are the Queens (I think,

Morgan, Morgause, and Nimue) which passes out to Avilion, itself the orchards of Carbonek" (*Image* 178).

l. 123: *healing of Pelles*: During the Lord's appearance to Galahad, Christ instructs Galahad to anoint the Maimed King's legs with the blood from the spear that pierced Christ's side (cf. *Le Morte* xvii 21).

### **Taliessin at Lancelot's Mass**

An exalted Taliessin tells of his coming to the altar of Lancelot. Lancelot--"he who was not sworn of the priesthood"--nonetheless celebrates the Mass. The altar is an ancient stone laid upon the "stones" of Carbonek's arch, Camelot's wall, and Bors' bones. Armored, but without helm or sword, Lancelot proceeds to do "the work of the Lord." All the dead rise to attend. They stand reverently between Nimue and Helayne.

In Almesbury meanwhile, Guinevere, now resident in the dead Blanchefleur's cell, feels her sinful past "exposed." Her repentance and reconciliation with Helayne, the "mother of Logres' child," becomes an act of "substitution" that enables the dead Arthur to attend the Mass as well.

The Byzantine ritual, the Epiclesis, begins. The creation of man, the Eucharist itself, as well as the part played by Mary (the Theotokos who conceived by the Holy Ghost), are all celebrated. The Divine Unity--of Three-in-One, of God and Man--is exalted.

Galahad, the High Prince, appears in a flame above the altar. As the Round Table ascends, all interchange adoration and prayer. Rising with the rest, Taliessin feels both bound and freed by the "web" of love that contains them all. Joy reigns supreme. Below, Lancelot sings the end of the Mass: *Ite, missa est*.

The household disperses. At the last, we are asked to pray for the "skill" of work and of will that makes such communion possible.

Textual note: A previous version of this poem occurs in the *Advent*, entitled "Taliessin's Song of Lancelot's Mass." An earlier version was also printed in *New English Poetry*, 1931.

Title: *Lancelot's Mass*: when Lancelot returns to Logres after King Arthur's battle with Mordred, he learns of Mordred's treachery, the king's death, and the queen's retreat to Almesbury. After he visits Guinevere, he comes upon Bedivere and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he decides to take on the habit (*Le Morte* xxi 10).

l. 5: *footpace*: platform, dais.

l. 6: *surcoat*: an outer coat or cloak; specifically, a tunic worn over armor.

l. 7: *rampant*: standing on one hind foot with one foreleg raised above the other and the head in profile--used of a heraldic animal.



*regardant*: looking backward over the shoulder--used of a heraldic animal.

*helm*: helmet.

l. 11: *as shields on a white rushing deck*: deliberate echo of LV.

l. 13: *at Almesbury the queen Guinevere*: see note from VE I. 56.

l. 16: *mother of Logres' child*: Helayne.

l. 18: *holy Thing*: the Holy Grail.

l. 19: *singly seen in the Mass*: in *Le Morte* xvii 15 at the end of Lancelot's quest for the Grail, Lancelot is finally permitted to view the Grail from a distance while it is being used in a Mass in the castle of Carbonek. However, when he perceives that the priest serving the Mass is falling helpless, he rushes into the chamber to aid him. Once Lancelot breaks the command to not enter, he is struck with "...a breath, that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it burnt his visage; and therewith he fell to the earth, and had no power to arise, as he that was so arranged, that had lost the power of his body, and his hearing, and his seeing."

*double Crown*: the Crown of Arthur and Pelles.

l. 23: *unseen knight*: Garlon--see *Le Morte* ii 14. "The mystery of the Invisible knight--say, the Invisible Slayer--is abroad in the world...As it is, he rides destructively, but in the hall of Carbonek he is at last seen and known; it may be that even there he was a dark knight, and perhaps the King or Duke of Castle Mortal...There is here a certain similitude to the figure of the Holy Ghost, as It exercises Its operations in the world" (*Figure* 85-86). "In the shape of a little viper, Garlon, the Invisible Knight--who is Satan to us but the Holy Ghost to the supernatural powers--provokes the last battle" (*Image* 178).

'the unseen knight' was Garlon, the brother of King Pelles. It was through the quarrel with him that Balin the Savage came to strike the dolorous blow at Pelles 'with the same spere that Longeus smote oure lord to the hearte', so that 'he myght never be hole tyl Galahad the haute prince heled him in the quest of the Sangraille (*Le Morte* ii 16)' (*First edition*).

l. 25: *Canon*: the Canon of the Mass--that is, the section of the Mass during which the actual consecration of the Eucharist occurs.

l. 33: *Epiclesis*: invoking the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

l. 36: *Theotokos*: the Mother of God.

l. 37: *the Unity*: the Trinity.

ll. 41-42: *Over the altar, flame of anatomized fire,/ the High Prince stood, gyre in burning gyre:* in *Figure 17-18*, C.W. quotes Rupert of Deutz (d. 1135):

Because the Virgin conceived him of the Holy Ghost, who is eternal fire, and he himself through the same Holy Ghost, as the Apostle says, offered himself a living sacrifice to the living God, by the same fire is the roasting ("roast with fire"--that is, burnt by the travail of the Passion) on the alter, for by the operation of the Holy Ghost the bread becomes the body and the wine the blood of Christ.

l. 42: *gyre*: to move in a circle or spiral/ a circular or spiral motion or form.

l. 48: *the ruddy pillar of the Infant was the passage of the porphyry stair*: "What then is the Achievement of the Grail? Dante...put the height of human beatitude in the understanding of the Incarnation...Angela of Foligno was to speak of knowing 'how God comes into the Sacrament'...It is more: it is, in some sense, to live beyond them, or rather (since that might sound profane) to be conscious of them as one is conscious of oneself, Christ-conscious instead of self-conscious. The achievement of the Grail is the perfect fulfillment of this, the thing happening" (*Figure 78-79*).

l. 49: *rood*: a cross or crucifix symbolizing the cross on which Jesus Christ died; specifically, a large crucifix on a beam or screen at the entrance of the chancel of a medieval church.

l. 51: *manacled*: made fast or secured: bond.

l. 56: "*Ite; missa est*": the Mass is over, go in peace.

l. 58: *barrows*: mountain, mound--used only in the names of hills in England.

l. 59: *Wye*: a river in eastern Wales and Western England that flows into the Severn river.

l. 60: *Company*: see note from FC Title.

## THE REGION OF THE SUMMER STARS

(Poetry London, 1944)

Title: "The phrase comes from a poem by the poet Taliesin (*sic*) in the *Mabinogion*, a collection of Welsh tales compiled in the 14th and 15th centuries, and published in her English translation by Lady Charlotte Guest in 1849. Tennyson in the *Idylls of the King* made Taliessin (adding the extra s) the chief poet at King Arthur's court" (*Notes*).

Primarily chief bard am I to Elphin  
And my original country is the region of the summer stars.

"After *Taliessin Through Logres*, the collection which followed was to have been called *Jupiter over Carbonek* (see PP), and two lists of projected Contents with that title survive. Probably they were both made before the publication of the *Summer Stars* ('the one which I called 'A' certainly was), for some of the material described was used in that book. But the *Summer Stars* was never meant to be more than Work in Progress. For clarity's sake I give both lists here, though some poems are common to both."

- A. Prelude--Nestorius [printed in S.S.]
1. The Emperor's design for the union of Logres and Broceliande: the Porphyry Rite [see CT]
  2. Merlin calls the lords and Balin and Balan
  3. The throne and council of Arthur: judgement against Gawaine--to show mercy
  4. The invisible knight
  5. The Dolorous Blow (Garlon asks pardon?)
  6. Interlude: the Rose Garden [see TRG]
  7. The Tournament of Lonazep
  8. The Pardon of Palomides [see the second of the notes printed after List B]
  9. The Conception of Galahad [see No. 6 in List B]  
The Dissolution of the Household  
The vision of the Pope [see 'The Prayers of the Pope' for this and the above]  
Bors to Elaine [an unpublished fragment exists of this poem]

- B.
1. The Emperor and the Zodiac [see TRG]
  2. Taliessin and the Co-inherence
  3. Broceliande and the Images
  4. Balin and the Dolorous Blow
  5. The Tournament of Lonazep: Palomides and Lancelot
  6. Lancelot at Carbonek: Merlin and Brisen
  7. Arthur and the Pope [a fragment in terza rima exists, probably a trial for this poem]
  8. Mordred [? a fresh poem, or the one printed in *S.S.*]
  9. Gawaine
  10. The death of Blanchfleur

On the back of List A are the following notes:

Garlon invisible outside Broceliande; within he is seen 'with a black face'; in Sarras--the Holy Spirit? Azrael?

Balin will not 'forgive' the universe, though Merlin and the Church warn him. (Lancelot does besides Palomides (as in Guinervere) hence Galahad.)

Of the Quest

The Burning Sepulchre

The Death of Blanchfleur

*(Image 174-175)*

## Prelude

Athens discovered irony. Rome adopted it. The Apostle Paul came to preach its fulfillment in "the golden Ambiguity" of the Incarnation. Paul invented the "vocabulary of faith," defined the "physiological glory," and proceeded to teach the "work of glory."

Despite initial resistance, the "orthodox imagination" seized Rome. The messengers of the word--the "speeding "logothetes" bearing the Acts of the Throne--dispersed throughout the Empire as Byzantium awaited the Second Coming.

The Grail--the "rich container, the Blood of the Deivirilis"--approaches, but rumors of a hostile P'o-l'u also appear. Yet the people await the Parousia. The people await the coming of the Grail.

l. 1: *Irony*: capable of many interpretations and contradictions and coincidences.

ll. 4-6: *A few wise masters*: the Greek philosophers, especially Plato.

ll. 9-10: *Paul sent over Athens and Rome his call: 'Whom ye ignorantly worship, him I declare'*: Acts xvii 23.

l. 12: *thorned-in-the-flesh*: 2 Corinthians xii 7: "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."

l. 15: *Ambiguity*: doubtful or double meaning: "integration of God with man, flesh with spirit. 'This also is thou; neither is This thou' (*Descent of the Dove* Intro).

l. 16: *vocabulary of faith*: Paul's Epistles in the New Testament.

l. 19: *handfasted*: betrothed, espoused.

l. 23: *main*: "as in Might and -- utmost strength" (*Descent of the Dove* 12-14).

l. 25: *limitary heresiarchs*: "leaders in that heresy which limits salvation to only part of creation" (*Notes*).

l. 26: *Nestorius*: (d c AD 451) patriarch of Constantinople: He was a leading teacher of the heretical doctrine that there were in Christ two distinct beings (not one divine "person") which are united in a moral union with Mary as the mother of His human nature."

l. 30: *Theotokos*: Mother of God.

*Anthropotokos*: Mother of Man.

- l. 32: *eikon*: icon: a conventional religious image typically painted on a small wooden panel and used in the devotions of Eastern Christians.
- l. 38: *polity*: the form of government of a religious denomination.
- l. 41: *manumission*: formal emancipation from slavery. Romans as well as Jews usually freed a slave after 7 years.
- ll. 45-46: *...as John once/ in Patmos, so then all the Empire in Byzantium*: Revelation i 9-11:

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet which said: 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

- l. 53: *Apennine*: a mountain chain in Italy extending the length of the peninsula.
- l. 54: *Cappadocia*: an ancient district in eastern Asia Minor chiefly in the valley of the upper Kizil Irmak in modern Turkey.
- l. 61: *in a rich container, the Blood of the Deivirilis*:  
 "Grail...Deivirilis: C.W.'s *Descent of the Dove* 115-117: 'He (Galahad; man achieving Grail) is flesh and blood in the union with the Flesh and the Blood'" (*Notes*).  
*Deivirilis*: Latin - "dei" - "God" and "virilis" - "man."
- l. 79: *P'o-l'u*: see VE l. 161.
- l. 89: *Parousia*: (Greek - "presence"): the Second Coming of Christ.
- l. 91: *Deposition*: the moment when Christ was taken down from the Cross.  
*vessel*: the Grail.

## *The Calling of Taliessin*

*Taliessin's Celtic origins are a mystery, but his gift of song soon distinguishes him. He grows and practices verse. All that the Druids have to teach him, he learns, and a formidable prophetic talent soon emerges. When rumors of the Empire--the new Christian dispensation--reach him, however, he knows at once that therein lies the greater truth he has been missing. He sets out in quest of Byzantium.*

*The third day on the road, he finds himself traveling between a yet lawless Logres and the wild wood of Broceliande. Beyond the woods he sees a daunting sea, and his nerves temporarily fail him. Turning back to the road, he sees a mysterious form blocking his way. The form grows double. Frightened, Taliessin calls on Mary Magdalene for aid. The forms change into a man and a woman. Taliessin feels their combined power rise up to meet him.*

*The man speaks and asks Taliessin where he is going. Asked his name, the man replies, "Merlin." The woman is his sister, Brisen. Nimue is their mother. Merlin then declares the nature of his and his sister's own quests: he is on his way to "call and install Arthur"; Brisen is bound for Carbonek in order to tend the daughter of Pelles, the future mother of Galahad. Merlin foretells the coming of the Grail from Sarras.*

*As the sun sets, Brisen suggests that all three stay the night together.*

*In a dream, Taliessin sees Merlin and Brisen rise and kiss. A vision of the "third heaven"--Venus--ensues. In a magic rite involving pentagrams and herbs, fire and trance, Merlin and Brisen begin their work. Taliessin, still new in his craft, can barely comprehend the forces he now "sees" unleashed. It is a cosmic vision before which language fails, even as Taliessin begins to share in the "doctrine of largesse" at the heart of the vision. Taliessin is commanded to go and "know the Empire."*

*As Brisen's shadow covers the whole of Logres, more visions come to pass: of Dindrane--"she who was called Blanche fleur in religion"; of Helayne the daughter of Pelles; of the foundation of Camelot; of Galahad; of the Dolorous Blow. The visions end with Merlin commanding that the three--he, Brisen, and Taliessin--now hasten to fulfill their appointed tasks.*

*In the morning, they all rise, eat, bid farewell, and depart, each his own way.*

ll. 1-10: The possible Celtic lineages of Taliessin. "The first 7 lines of the *Book of Taliesin* speculate on lineage, but 'none knew; no clue he showed...'" (*Notes*).

ll. 8-9: *...no clue he showed when he rode down the Wye/ coracle-cradled....*: cf. Exodus ii 3: "But when she could hide him[Moses] no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile."

l. 21: *code*: "I think this means that it involves Druidical doctrines of re-incarnation with which Elphin is familiar..." (*Torso* 98).

l. 31: *doctrine of largesse in the land of the Trinity*: C.W. defines this term in *Essential* 189-190:

"Sanctification" is that state in which "reconciliation and fellowship find their goal and consummation"; it is this which is, to raise to its full meaning a term otherwise applied, "the doctrine of largesse."...The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of largesse; the doctrine of the Atonement is a doctrine of largesse; the doctrine of the church is a doctrine of largesse; therefore the doctrine of the individual is the doctrine of largesse.

The operation which begins with the first kiss of pardon is not complete until all fibers of the being, physical and spiritual, are charged with that doctrine; and it is a doctrine of taking as well as of giving. It is easier often to forgive than to be forgiven; yet it is fatal to be willing to be forgiven by God and to be reluctant to be forgiven by men. To forgive and to be forgiven are the two points of holy magnificence and holy modesty; round these two centers the whole doctrine of largesse revolves. This is the pattern of our "actual situation" in the church, and "outside the church is no salvation." "I press on," wrote Saint Paul, "that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."

ll. 44-45: *...cauldron/ of poetry and plenty....*: pagan version of the Grail's origin.

l. 47: *Thebaid*: an ancient district surrounding Thebes in Egypt or in Greece.

ll. 49-63: "These[ 'riddling answers ] are mainly adapted from the 'Second Answer to Maelgwn' in the *Mabinogion* but so adapted as to state Williams's own myth of the birth of poetic genius. The passage is thus to be read with a kind of double vision; with one eye on the Welsh legends about Ceridwen and her cauldron and the other on the cosmic history of the Heavenly Muse--a wonder whose



origin is unknown, whose native region is the summer stars, who was a spectator of creation, and has shared (beyond or before time) in the travail of the Redemption" (*Torso* 98).

l. 62: *manger of an ass*: Luke ii 7: "and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

l. 63: *loquacity*: the quality or state of being very talkative.

ll. 64-65: *It is a doubt if my body is flesh or fish, / therefore no woman will ever wish to bed me*: from the *Book of Taliesin* in the *Mabinogion*. Much like the dilemma found in TSU.

l. 76: *rood*: the cross of Christ.

l. 80: *southern sea*: the Mediterranean.

l. 97: *Isle of the Sea*: Logres.

l. 101: *currying horses*: cleaning, combing, or grooming the coat of (as a horse) with a currycomb.

l. 114: *divine science*: theology.  
*grandart*: poetry.

l. 115: *third heaven*: see note from SL l. 184.

l. 144: *wood of suicides*: *Inferno*, Canto XIII ll. 94-98:

The moment that the violent soul departs  
the body it has torn itself away from,  
Minos sends it down to the seventh hole;

it drops to the wood, not in a place allotted,  
but anywhere that fortune tosses it.

l. 165: *of Mary Magdalene who had charity for Christ--she/ to him in his grief as he to her in her sin*: Luke viii 1-3:

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out...and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

l. 172: *man*: Merlin--see VE l. 51.

*woman*: Brisen--see SL l. 80.

l. 200: *daughter*: Helayne--see SL l. 81.

l. 215: *Sarras*: see LV l. 44.

ll. 219/221: ...*The Peace be with you!...And with you be the Peace....*: John xiv 27: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The point in Mass where tokens of peace are exchanged.

l. 224: *earth's coned shadow*: "The Earth's shadow, as we all know, is a cone--a dunce's cap of darkness. The point of that cone is here supposed to touch the sphere of Venus: Thus Nimue's agents stand at its base while Nimue's archetype receives its point. Continuity is established between the natural order, the manifold and unstable ectype, and its 'climax tranquil in Venus' where the 'unriven truths' dwell--the unities which down here become multiplicities" (*Torso* 102-103).

l. 237: *an image springing from a tangle of ringing names*: "The time has come for the Grail to appear openly in Logres and be known in man's outward life" (*Notes*).

l. 256: *stones of the waste*: "those who seem to be failures" (*Notes*).

l. 328: *stair*: porphyry stair: see VE l. 10.

l. 338: *when every crown and every choir is vanished*: Revelations iv and the final Canto XXIX of *Purgatorio*.

l. 345: *rescue the king at Mount Badon*: see MB.

ll. 357-358: *grew a golden throne, of two dragons twined/ where a king sat crowned....*: *Idylls*, "Lancelot and Elaine" ll. 430-436:

Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat  
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,  
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,  
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,  
And from the carven-work behind him crept  
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make  
Arms for his chair....

ll. 362-368: The image of an ideal Logres that is not to be.

l. 373: *emanation*: the origination of the world by a series of hierarchically descending radiations from the Godhead through intermediate stages to matter.

ll. 375-376: ...*Dindrane the sister of Percivale, / she who was called Blanche fleur in religion....*: Lewis explains this line in *Torso* 137-138:

In the first place she is called Dindrane at one time and Blanche fleur at another. This, I think, is unfortunate and I believe it came about solely because Williams while writing *Taliessin* had forgotten that her name Dindrane occurs in *The High History of the Holy Grail*. In Malory she is known simply as 'Percivale's sister', and Williams gave her the name Blanche fleur. Later, on re-reading *The High History*, he rediscovered her true name, liked it too well to let it go, and adopted it with the explanation that Dindrane was her baptismal name and Blanche fleur her name 'in religion'.

l. 378: *eidolon*: an unsubstantial image: phantom/ image of one submissively devoted--a slave.

l. 379: *phantasmagoria*: a constantly shifting complex succession of things seen or imagined.

l. 383: *the daughter of a king, holding an unseen thing*: "Taliessin sees a princess holding the Grail, who might be (a) someone whom even to look at was 'more than his function' (ll. 366-370), or (b) Nimue (ll. 371-373), or (c) Dindrane (ll. 374-377), or (d) Helayne. Who is (a)? I think that here we have the last -- and in the later poems the only -- appearance of the Princess of Byzantium who figures in the early Arthurian poems. In his book of *Three Plays*, published in 1931, the plays are set between four Arthurian poems, of which the second is called 'Taliessin's Song of Byzantium' and contains the stanzas" (*Notes*):

In the gate of Saint Sophia I saw a princess stand  
clad all in golden burnished robes, on the Emperor's right hand;  
with clasped and hieratic hands among the strings and swords  
A princess of Byzantium looked forth above the lords...

But within the Holy Wisdom, where the popes and patriarchs were,  
ere I turned to leave Byzantium I louted low to her  
where her face looked forth beyond me, in her Father's glory dim,  
as in galaxies of splendour from the wings of seraphim.

### *Taliessin in the Rose-Garden*

*One day, while walking among the queen's roses, Taliessin is arrested in the course of making poetry by three shapes who suddenly appear at the far end of the path. He soon recognizes them to be Guinevere, Dindrane, and a maid.*

*Taliessin sees in Guinevere "the consummate earth of Logres," while her wedding ring symbolizes for him "the contained/ life of Logres-in-the-Empire." The great ruby that is set in the ring unleashes in the poet's mind a flood of images involving blood and woundings.*

*While in the distance Guinevere looks about for Lancelot, Taliessin recalls the fatal love triangle involving Tristram, Mark, and Iseult. Identifying with Palomides (the Moslem knight made so miserable by Iseult's adultery), Taliessin muses on the bitterness that can sometimes flavor "the brew of exchange." He goes on to think of the bleeding of the wounded King Pelles--he of the Dolorous Blow.*

*Taliessin then recalls the vision of the Empire once vouchsafed him. In a zodiacal rhapsody, he thinks of the great "themes and the houses" that informed the vision. He sees in Guinevere the embodiment of one of those themes. She is an especially beautiful incarnation of the "unity" of body and soul that has so scandalized the Greeks and the Jews.*

*Thinking of the Fall in Eden--in which "the Adam" lost Paradise--Taliessin ponders the special role and responsibility of women in shaping the history of the world. He observes that they are ironically dignified by sharing--along with Christ--a unique "victimization of blood." In their own flesh they live the coming of the Grail. "Blessed is she who gives herself to the journey," thinks Taliessin. His mind then goes to Helayne, who will do just that. She will bear Galahad, and he will heal Pelles. Taliessin concludes by praying that Guinevere will also exhibit "the glory to the women of Logres."*

*When she is close enough to speak to him, Guinevere--"with the little scorn that becomes a queen of Logres"--asks Taliessin if he has been composing poetry among the roses.*

*"C.W. 1940: 'I send you a poem which I have written ('Taliessin in the Rose-Garden')...it is obscure, but you may recognize some ideas: the blood of war, of women, of Jesus'." (Notes)*

- l. 6: *cabbage-roses*: "among the earliest known roses; still in the catalogues -- *Rosa Centifolia* -- hundred-petalled" (*Notes*).  
 l. 12: *implicit*: "Implicit: Holy Trinity." (*Notes*).  
 l. 36: *ruby*: "the sovereign gem of Logres"--see l. 37. Also found in *Idylls*, "The Last Tournament" ll. 18-22:

Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous nest,  
 This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,  
 And all unscarr'd from beak or talon, brought  
 A maiden babe; which Arthur pitying took,  
 Then gave it to his Queen..."

Proverbs xxxi 10: "A wife of noble character who can find?! She is worth far more than rubies."

l. 51: *Wounded Rose*: "Image of the wounding of Christ -- though in Pelles it was due to contingency of hallowed spear and fighting -- furious Balin" (*Notes*).

ll. 55-56: *under her brow she looked for the king's friend/ Lancelot...*: *Idylls*, "Balin and Balan" ll. 237-242:

A walk of roses ran from door to door;  
 A walk of lilies crost it to the bower:  
 And down that range of roses the great Queen  
 Came with slow steps, the morning on her face;  
 And all in shadow from the counter door  
 Sir Lancelot as to meet her....

- l. 62: *we bid for purchase*: see CT ll. 412-413.  
 l. 65: *bitter is the brew of exchange*: "after labouring to build one's altar the heavenly fire comes down on another's." (See ll. 143-146; Genesis iv 2-5)" (*Notes*):

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

- l. 68: *shent*: (archaic): put to shame or confuse/ reprov'd, reviled.  
 l. 72: *golden sickle*: see TRL l. 15.

- l. 79: *magnanimous stair*: the porphyry stair.
- ll. 80-87: "Taliessin finds contemporary myth of Zodiac a convenient image of the Co-inherence of the Universe. The sun makes an annual journey around the earth and other planets (as the blood circulates through veins, arteries, organs of the human body) passing in seasonal order through the Houses (lunar months), the qualities of which are supposed, in Astrology, to influence the affairs of human beings born under their signs. The myth gives scope for contingent disasters inherent in the vagaries of natural phenomena in the universe and in mankind, and points the indissoluble relationship of each to all" (*Notes*).
- ll. 81-82: *twelve/zodiacal houses*: Aries the Ram; Taurus the Bull; Gemini the Twins; Cancer the Crab; Leo the Lion; Virgo the Virgin; Libra the Balance; Scorpio the Scorpion; Sagittarius the Archer; Capricorn the Goat; Aquarius the Water Bearer; Pisces the Fishes.
- ll. 86-87: *All coalesced in each; that each mind/ in the Empire might find its own kind of entry*: "The function of Taliessin is to see-- 'Aquarius for me opened the principle of eyes'. In Aquarius, the House of sight, he sees all the other Houses. That is the fashion in which it contains all the rest, as each of them, in some different fashion, contains it: 'All coalesced in each.' As long as Gemini, the House of the operative hands, or Scorpio, the House of generation, or Libra, the House of earth, or the body, of Caucasia, remain in their obedience, every one of them is an 'entry into the total empire'" (*Torso* 147).
- l. 88: *Aquarius*: see map: the house of Aquarius is found in the head over Logres--"the principle of eyes."
- l. 97: *Twins*: (see map: the house of Gemini is found in the hands over Rome): "Gemini, the twins, in the hands, used in labour and blessing, at Rome, which had been built by the fabled twins Romulus and Remus and which became the seat of the Pope, the head of the Christian Church, Vice-regent on earth of God" (*Notes*).
- l. 102: *Scorpion-contingency*: "Scorpio, the fully armed and armoured creature, with its reflex action to danger, is the image of contingency -- the unforeseen occurrence which causes a sword to flash, or a button to be pushed, and so looses catastrophe upon the world. In the map, Scorpio straddles the meeting-place of flesh and spirit in exchange and substitution for mankind, the genitalia; at Jerusalem the acknowledged holiest place of worshipful exchange between man and God. It is worth noting that there are no contingencies in the life on earth of the Son of God" (*Notes*).

- l. 105: *Libra*: (see map: the house of Libra is found in Caucasia--see ll. 121-122): "Libra, principle of balance and justice is well set in Caucasia, the stable foundation and rich bottom of the Empire" (*Notes*).
- ll. 108-117: "An illustration from a medieval Book of Hours expressed in poetry, as Taliessin visualizes the Queen and Logres as it could have been" (*Notes*).
- l. 138: *The zodiac of Christ poorly sufficed the Adam*: "The mystery of the Christian myth is almost impossible for mankind, whose natural reaction to the unknown, i.e. fear, is physical violence. 'We are slayers all, from our mothers' wombs' (Letter from C.W.) (*Notes*).
- l. 148: *the Twins for very nearness tore each other*: after Rome is built, Romulus murders Remus.
- l. 152: *clearlight*: "Light: of Transfiguration: of Salvation" (*Notes*).
- ll. 156-158: See map.
- l. 161: *bynature oftheir creature*: "Christ is victim and priest. Woman is victim (l. 162) and mother of victim" (*Notes*).
- l. 163: *Flesh knows what spirit knows*: "Mother-wit (flesh) knows what wisdom (spirit) (l. 164) knows: wisdom understands (l. 165) the facts of Womanhood's physical life can be seen in the myth; in her willing submission to it" (*Notes*).
- l. 172: *anthropometrical*: anthropometry: the study of human body measurements, especially on a comparative basis.
- ll. 173-184: "Taunt: Himself he could not save; truth: Christ saves Mankind in Himself, and so himself. No irony. (See also CG ll. 155-162)" (*Notes*).
- l. 174: *Jupiter's red-pierced planet*: "Williams assumes that the huge reddish spot which astronomers observe on the surface of Jupiter is a wound and the redness is that of blood. Jupiter, the planet of Kingship, thus wounded, becomes, like the wounded King Pelles, another ecotype of the Divine King wounded on Calvary" (*Torso* 150).
- ll. 188-189: *Merlin magically prepare for the Rite of Galahad/ and the fixing of all fidelity from all infidelity*: "Image of exchange and substitution, and reconciliation in 'This also is Thou: neither is this Thou'. 'His honour rooted in dishonour stood,/ And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true' (*Idylls*, "Lancelot and Elaine")" (*Notes*).

## *Departure of Dindrane*

*On a gloomy, rainy day, members of Taliessin's household gather in order to see Dindrane depart for Almesbury. She has chosen to become a nun, and will thus withdraw from the world forever.*

*An Athenian slave girl waits along with the rest. She has a decision to make about her own future. She has reached the end of her seven-years' obligation and can now choose freedom if she so desires. She can then return across the seas to her old home or be dowered in marriage in Logres. There is, however, a third option: she can elect to remain in service. She is finding that the decision is not easy to make.*

*Dindrane comes from the house, accompanied by Elayne, Bors' wife, and Taliessin. They are Dindrane's two most special friends, yet today she must forever part from them.*

*The watching slave girl knows how great the pain of separation will be for all involved. Suddenly, she measures herself against Dindrane. The comparison immediately deepens her understanding. In a flash, she perceives that servitude and freedom are actually "one and interchangeable."*

*After Dindrane and Taliessin mount their horses, those accompanying Dindrane on her way set off, the slave girl among them. As she rides, she ponders the paradoxes of "the two Ways" symbolized by the two "centaur" figures before her: the Way of Affirmation and the Way of Rejection. Taliessin has chosen the first; Dindrane the second. Yet both are on the same Way ultimately, for both are heaven-bound.*

*The slave girl thinks again about the issue of choice and realizes that there is, in fact, no choice for her. At this moment she hears a heavenly voice. It is the voice of Galahad, "before his birth," asking Dindrane to greet his father Lancelot for him and "bid him remember of this unstable world."*

*Taliessin calls a halt. He will say good-bye to Dindrane on the road. He kisses Dindrane's hand, and they exchange good wishes. Then Dindrane vows to "affirm, my beloved, all that I should." Taliessin, in turn, vows to "reject all that he should." Thus they pay tribute to the Way that has been chosen by the other.*

*Taliessin turns back. Dindrane proceeds on her way.*



*Seven days later, the slave girl makes known her own choice. Her heart and mind at peace, she chooses continued service in Taliessin's household.*

l. 10: *old Levitical law*: Leviticus xxv.

l. 46: *affirmation into rejection*: the Way of the Affirmation of Images and the Way of the Negation of Images are C.W.'s ways of apprehending transcendence. C.W. often quotes a phrase--"This also is Thou; neither is this Thou"--from an unknown source to epitomize his doctrine, and he comments on this phrase saying, "As a maxim for living, it is invaluable, and it--or its reversal--summarizes the history of the Christian Church" (*Essential* 15). Lewis also comments on C.W.'s doctrine of the Ways of Affirmation and Rejection and their maxims:

Two spiritual maxims were constantly present to the mind of Charles Williams: 'This also is Thou' and 'Neither is this thou'. Holding the first we see that every created thing is, in its degree, an image of God, and the ordinate and faithful appreciation of that thing a clue which, truly followed, will lead back to Him. Holding the second we see that every created thing, the highest devotion to moral duty, the purest conjugal love, the saint and the seraph, is no more than an image, that every one of them, followed for its own sake and isolated from its source, becomes an idol whose service is damnation. The first maxim is the formula of the Romantic Way, the 'affirmation of images': the second is that of the Ascetic Way, the 'rejection of images'. Every soul must in some sense follow both...But souls are none the less called to travel principally the one way or the other.... (*Torso* 151)

l. 54: *chrism*: to be anointed, as in the oil that will literally be used by the priest to make the sign of the cross on Dindrane's forehead when she undergoes the ritual that will make her a nun.

l. 59: *new-panoplied*: panoplied: having a full suit of armor/ ceremonial attire/ something forming a protective covering/ a magnificent or impressive array.

l. 84: *Ways upon the Way*: the Way of Affirmation (Taliessin) and the Way of Rejection (Dindrane)--see note from l. 46.

l. 92: *centaurs*: any race of creatures fabled to be half horse and half man and to live in the mountains of Thessaly.

l. 100: *impersonal*: since Dindrane has chosen the way Negation or Rejection, she will enter an "impersonal" world of the convent.

- l. 124: *fixed is the full*: the ultimate ending has been determined--see  
ll. 125-136.  
l. 127: *mens sensitiva*: see note from SL ll. 54-55.  
l. 131: *foster-ward*: Galahad.  
ll. 132-136: see PC.: *Le Morte* xvii 21/23:

...then prayed Galahad to every each of them, that they should 'salute  
my lord, Sir Launcelot, my father, and of them of the Round Table'....

And anon Sir Bors said to Sir Launcelot, 'Galahad, your own son,  
saluted you by me, and after you King Arthur and all the court, and so  
did Sir Percival, for I buried them with mine own hands in the city of  
Sarras. Also, Sir Launcelot, Galahad prayed you to remember of this  
unsiker world as ye behight him when ye were together more than half  
a year.'

## **The Founding of the Company**

*Starting in Taliessin's household, a company of like-minded and spiritually united souls gradually forms and spreads. Self-generated and largely unstructured, the group has as its "rule" the "making of man in the doctrine of largesse." Its "vow" is made on behalf of the doctrine of the Co-inherence. Its members come from every level of society: from lowly maids, porters, and mechanics all the way up to Dindrane. Three degrees emerge: those "at the first station" who live ordinary good lives of "honorable exchange"; those of the "second mode" who engage more fully in the "general substitution of souls"; and those of the "third station" who enter into the mysteries of "co-inhering" in the most complete fashion.*

*One Sunday, on a Feast of All Fools, Dinadan comes upon Taliessin in the queen's rose-garden. Dinadan makes clear to Taliessin that he is now considered a "lieutenant" in the spiritual fellowship that binds the company. Taliessin rejects the "promotion," however, seeing it as a temptation to pride inspired by P'o-l'u. Dinadan lovingly corrects Taliessin. The lieutenancy is, he argues, an "excellent absurdity" rooted in God's own will. But Taliessin protests his own superfluosity. Dinadan agrees, but argues that "the dayspring will have its head where it bids"--which is to say, God's will is nonetheless God's will and that Taliessin is a "leader" by divine fiat. Properly understood, even Christ was "superfluous," Dinadan goes on to remark, but such is the nature of grace. It is more than we deserve.*

*Thus, both in Camelot and Caerleon Taliessin is viewed as the company's "single bond." Yet the paradox at the heart of the company remains: "through all degrees" there is an "equality of being."*

**Title:** *Company*: C.W.'s concept of Taliessin's Company is best related by a "promulgation" he wrote concerning an order based on Co-inherence:

"The Company of the Co-inherence" (MS.):

Composition: 19 September 1943

1. The company has no constitution except in its members. As it was said: Others he saved, himself he cannot save.

2. It proposes to those members a recognition of their proper natures, a private act of union with the other Companions and with all men, and an activity consistent. It puts itself entirely at the disposal of Almighty God, and it leaves to Holy Luck communication between its members and any enlargement of the Companionship As it was said: Am I my brother's keeper? and again: Others have laboured and ye are entered into their labours.

3. Its concern is with the practice of the Co-inherence both as a natural and a supernatural principle. As it was said: Let Us make man in Our image; and again: That they may be one even as We are one.

4. It is therefore, by necessity, Christian. As it was said: And whoever says there was when this was not, let him be anathema.

5. It intends the study, on the contemplative side, of the Co-inherence of the Holy and Blessed Trinity, of the Union of the Two Natures in one Person, of the relation of the God-bearer and the Flesh-Taker, of the exchange of offerings in the Eucharist, and of the whole Catholic Church; on the intellectual, of the co-inherence of opposite ideas in each other; on the active, of methods of exchange and substitution in all the many forms of love and in all operations to the State. As it was said: Figlia del tuo figlio; and again: Bear ye one another's burdens.

6. It concludes all forms of exchange and substitution in the Divine Substitution of our Lord in his Passion, and it invokes this Act as the root of all. As it was said: He demands that we lay down our lives for the brethren; and again: We must become, as it were, a double man.

7. The company will associate itself primarily with four feasts: the Feast of the Annunciation, the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, the Feast of the Transfiguration, and the Commemoration of All Souls. As it was said: Another will be in me, and I in him.

Note: Given, as it were, from Caerleon, at the midnight preceding the twentieth of September, in the year of the Fructiferous

Incarnation 1943, by the permission of Almighty God, at the will of the Companions, and in the hand of Taliessin.

Lewis also explains the company and its degrees of membership in *Torso* 141-142:

The 'company' is an extension of the 'household'--an overflow, or reproduction into Logres generally of the life lived in Taliessin's own house among his slaves, retainers, and squires. It is something subtly less than a religious order. It has not a rule, only 'a certain pointing': it has no name, no formal admission...There are three degrees of membership, but they are separable only by an abstraction ('for convenience of naming') and all share 'the gay science'. In the lowest degree are those who live 'by a frankness of honourable exchange' on the social and economic level; those, in fact, who willingly accept and honourably and happily maintain that complex system of exchanged services on which society depends. There is nothing to distinguish them from people outside the company except the fact that they....have taken into their hearts the doctrine of Exchange...As a result there is, inside the company, no real slavery or real superiority. Slavery there becomes freedom and dominion becomes service...In the second degree are those members of the Company who practice 'Substitution' as Williams defined it (see note from TDV I. 41)...The third and highest degree is harder to understand...In it the doctrine of Substitution which those of the second degree enact individually, substituting themselves one for one in pairs, is grasped in its totality. They experience, above and beyond particular substitutions, that total reciprocity or co-inherence which first exists in the Blessed Trinity and descends thence into Man who was made in the image of the Trinity and is lost in Man by the Fall and restored to Man by 'the one adored substitution' of Christ. What the Co-inherence means is best seen in the instance of the Blessed Virgin. Christ is born (and borne) of her: she is born (and borne) of Christ. So in humanity as a whole there is not merely an interchange of symmetrical relations (as when, A being the brother of B, B is also the brother of A) but of those unsymmetrical relations which seem incompatible on the level of 'rational virtue'. Each is mother and child, confessor and penitent, teacher and pupil, lord and slave to the other...And the archetype of this is the inexpressible co-inherence of the Three Persons in one God.

l. 2: *Tabennisi*: "St. Pachomius founded in 320 at Tabennisi, near the Nile, the first 'coenobitic' (i.e. living in common) monastery, whose Rule influenced St. Basil" (*Notes*).

l. 3: *Monte Cassino*: "the monastery founded by St. Benedict in 529" (*Notes*).

*Cappadocia*: "the three 'Cappadocian Fathers' were St. Basil, his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory of Nazianus" (*Notes*).

l. 13: *pacts of the themes*: "different parts of the Empire, pledged to its service" (*Notes*).

l. 23: *quicumque vult*: "from the Athanasian Creed, often quoted by C.W. 'Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith...and the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity'" (*Notes*).

l. 24: *Flesh-taking*: Christ Jesus.

l. 27: *mansion*: (archaic): dwelling, abode.

l. 47: *Esquimaux*: Eskimo: a group of peoples of northern Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and eastern Siberia.

*Hottentots*: members of a people of southern Africa apparently akin to both the Bushmen and the Bantu.

l. 56: *debonair*: (archaic): gentle, courteous.

l. 64: *'dying each other's life, living each other's death'*: see BKC  
l. 88.

ll. 69-70: *This to be practiced the hidden contemplatives knew/ throughout the Empire, and daily slew and were slain*: "The 'second mode' is the mystical exchange, of which the supreme example is the sacrifice for man, which is practiced by contemplatives when they partake in imagination of Christ's sufferings, and which now the Company try to practise in bearing each other's burdens" (*Notes*).

l. 81: *chary*: hesitant and vigilant about dangers and risks/ slow to grant, accept, or expend.

l. 90: *God-bearer*: the Virgin Mary.

l. 96: *the law willed and fulfilled and walking in Camelot*: Galahad--an image of Christ: Matthew v 17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

l. 99: *a deep, strange island of granite growth*: see PP ll. 242-245.

l. 102: *the Holder and the Held*: the idea is that he beholder is "held" by the thing he is beholding.

l. 106: *perichoresis*: circumincession: co-inherence: the theological term for the interpenetration of the Persons of the Trinity.

l. 111: *feast of All Fools*: “The Feast of All Fools, April 1, and specially appropriate to the irony of Dinadan, is when the lowest is called greatest” (*Notes*).

ll. 123-124: ... ‘*What should I do, calling/ myself a master, and falling so to P’o-l’u?*’: 1 Corinthians 27: “No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

l. 129: *Catch as catch can*: see PBC l. 92.

ll. 136-140: See MB.

l. 140: “*Taliessin! and charge, Logres!*”: “This is a variant on a favourite exhortation of C.W.’s: ‘St. Thomas! and charge, Zion!’” (*Notes*).

l. 164: *Christ-taunting*: see note from TDV l. 25.

## The Queen's Servant

The Lord Kay writes to Taliessin on behalf of the Queen, requesting a new servant. It is left to Taliessin to choose the maid.

Taliessin summons a woman he considers a likely candidate. He explains the Queen's request but tells the woman that she is free to reject the proposal. The woman wryly observes, "Freedom, I see, is the final task of servitude." She then reminds Taliessin of the occasion of her original "purchase," when Taliessin bought her in a shire of Caucasia.

Ordering the woman to unclothe, Taliessin declares that he will "furnish" her for her new life according to the rite of Sarras. She obeys. Magically, Taliessin then proceeds to "clothe" the woman in a cloak of red roses and golden wool. Taliessin fastens the cloak with his own brooch. He then draws around her an old leather girdle. Lastly, he fetches fine shoes for her feet.

The woman asks for a final "gift": the gesture used by the ancient Romans when setting a slave free, the same gesture used by a bishop at the confirmation of a "neophyte." Taliessin complies and strikes her on the face. Thus confirmed, the woman swears to be faithful in her new duties "till death and after."

Taliessin then signs the Queen's warrant, and the "free servant" leaves in order to take up her new responsibilities.

"This difficult and daring poem is best understood if we remember, firstly, St. Paul's longing to be rid of the mortal body not in order that he may be unclothed but that he may be clothed anew (2 Corinthians v 4) and, secondly, that place in the *Purgatorio* where Virgil having brought Dante to the earthly Paradise sets him free from all tutelage and makes him henceforth emperor and pontiff over himself. We are shown, in fact, the moment at which a soul is redeemed into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Treating the poem allegorically you might say that Taliessin is here a type of Christ: But it is not an allegory and we had better say that Christ in Taliessin is operative--as in all our guides and teachers" (*Torso* 155).

l. 7: *Sublimity*: the quality or state of outstanding spiritual, intellectual, or moral worth.

l. 16: *meinie*: retinue, company.



- l. 80: *genuflected*: to touch the knee to the floor or ground especially in worship.
- l. 84: *kirtle*: a long gown or dress worn by women especially in the Middle Ages.
- ll. 104-105: *'...that the Rite be certain, let/ my lord seal me to it and it to me'*: Song of Songs viii 6: "Place me like a seal over your heart,/ like a seal on your arm..."
- l. 108: *neophyte*: (Greek~νεοπηψτος - "newly planted, newly converted"): a new convert: proselyte.
- l. 109: *confirmation*: a Christian rite conferring the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the Seven Sacraments. It "confirms" what the sacrament of Baptism ensured: that the person receiving the sacrament is a member of the Church.
- l. 116: *Lightly he stuck her face*: "the ceremonial blow which he strikes her at the end of the poem is borrowed from the ceremony of emancipation in Roman law" (*Torso* 155).

## *The Meditation of Mordred*

*Determined to punish an unfaithful Lancelot, Arthur has sailed for Gaul, leaving his bastard son Mordred behind and in charge in Logres.*

*Mordred smugly contemplates the disaster that has befallen Camelot. Cynically, Mordred imagines parading a guilty Guinevere before jeering and self-righteous throngs. The Pope has ordered Arthur and Lancelot to reconcile, but Arthur has torn the Pope's letters into pieces. "Dementia" has descended on London, and Mordred now envisions his own elevation: "Arthur had his importance; why not I?"*

*Mordred goes on to reject the "fairy mechanism" of the Grail. He has no need of such "luck," he believes. Even if the Grail proved to be true, Mordred says he would send soldiers to "pull it in." It might be useful in his kitchen, he observes sarcastically.*

*Mordred then has a vision of P'o-l'u, a place he has heard about from an unbeliever named Ala-ud-Din. Mordred identifies with its ruler and imagines himself as an emperor indulging in similar kinds of corruption, a condition he imagines will be "Paradise."*

Textual note: A previous version of this poem occurs in the *Advent*, entitled "Mordred's Song of the Kingdom."

1. 2: *on the torn fragments of letters from the Pope Deodatus: cf. Le Morte xx 13:*

Of this war was noised through all Christendom, and at the last it was noised afore the Pope; and he considering the great goodness of King Arthur, and of Sir Launcelot, that was called the most noblest knights of the world, wherefore the Pope called unto him a noble clerk that at that time was there present (the French book saith, it was the Bishop of Rochester), and the Pope gave him bulls under lead unto King Arthur of England, charging him upon pain of interdicting of all England, that he take his queen Dame Guinevere unto him again, and accord with Sir Launcelot.

1. 3: *setting private affairs in front of public: see COA 1. 63.*

1. 6: *Now they stand immobilized round Lancelot in Benwick: Le Morte xx 20, "And upon the morn early, in the dawning of the day, as knights looked out, they saw the city of Benwick besieged round about..."*

- l. 7: *having one illegal son by his sister my mother*: see LQM l. 42.  
 l. 9: *He ravages Gaul; I rest on his palace roof*: cf. *Le Morte* xx 19:

And there King Arthur make Sir Mordred chief ruler of all England, and also he put Queen Guinevere under his governance; because Sir Mordred was King Arthur's son, he gave him the rule of his land and of his wife; and so the king passed the sea and landed upon Sir Launcelot's lands, and there he burnt and wasted, through the vengeance of Sir Gawain, all that they might overrun.

“I rest on his palace roof”: In BKC, *Taliessin through Logres*, Bors ‘saw the dragonlets’ eyes / Leer and peer, and the house-roofs under their weight / Creak and break’. Now Mordred sees himself as a dragon stretched out on the palace roof waiting for his moment” (*Notes*).

l. 19: *laidly*: loathly.

*wittol*: (archaic): a man who knows of his wife's infidelity and puts up with it.

l. 26: *dementia*: madness, insanity.

l. 31: “*adsum*”: “I am present; here I am. It used to be the word with which schoolboys answered to their name at roll-call” (*Notes*).

l. 43: *genii*: jinni.

l. 48: *Zemarchus*: “I am indebted to Mr. Richard Jeffery for discovering Zemarchus in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. In 568 he led a Byzantine embassy to confirm an alliance and a silk-trade treaty with a Turkish khan in Central Asia. C.W. evidently borrowed the name and the connection with trade and travel from this story” (*Notes*).

l. 52: *Emperor*: Jade Emperor--see l. 64: the supreme deity of the Chinese Taoist pantheon, a popular, personal god who reigned in heaven as the emperor did on earth, with palaces, a court, and ministers.

l. 68: *I will sit here alone in a kingdom of Paradise*: “Mordred's ideal -- ‘alone’ -- is the negation of all co-inherence” (*Notes*).

## *The Prayers of the Pope*

*Early on the Feast of Christmas, the young Pope Deodatus kneels in the Church of the Lateran in Rome. In appearance, he seems like the "third twin" of Merlin and Brisen. Alone and aloud, the Pope prays in the dark church, meditating on the Magnificat, the Pope intones: "Send not, send not, the rich empty away."*

*The news from Logres is bad. There is war between Arthur and Lancelot; Gawaine is pursuing a private vengeance; unruly mobs roar through the streets of Camelot. All over the world, failure and apostasy seem to be in the ascendant. The City is rejected. False idols are being worshipped everywhere. Deodatus embraces the mystery of evil and once more prays, "Send not, send not, the rich empty away."*

*Black magic abounds. The powers of P'o-l'u expand. Evil sorcerers even succeed in raising the dead. Fear spreads. The Pope imagines his own death but continues to pray, "Send not, send not, the rich empty away."*

*Against the rule of the Emperor in Byzantium, the Empire is divided. The Parousia is suspended. The Grail does not come to Logres. The "ordained place" of the Round Table is usurped by "unstable pagan chiefs."*

*Meanwhile, in Gaul, Taliessin addresses his household. He dissolves the Company and lays down the lieutenancy, yet nonetheless asserts the transcendent nature of the Company even in the face of the current catastrophe. All in the household exchange the kiss of peace.*

*Back in Rome, the Pope prays to God that He keep all in His charge and bring His own back to Himself.*

*Meanwhile, the three achievers of the Grail have arrived in Sarras. For a year and a day, they lie locked in a trance. The roots of Broceliande contest the expanding reach of the tentacles of P'o-l'u, and the tentacles are "held." The Grail achievers awake. Blessings "bloom," and a new bliss unites the far corners of the world.*

*The Pope calls on God to make even Hell confess Him, bless Him, praise Him, and magnify Him. He then invokes peace on the dead. He offers the health of his own soul for the "living corpses" aroused by the necromancers. As a result, an "easement of exchange" occurs, and evil is stopped in its tracks.*

After the Eucharist, the Pope prays for the last time, "Send not, send not, the rich empty away."

l. 2: *Deodatus*: "Pope Adeodatus (?AD 672-76): Egyptian-born, to remind us that the Roman Church may have 'seized, as by a creative intuition, on the idea of Order as the basis of the universe...But the spiritual presentation of the theory came not from Europe, but from Africa...'? (C.W. quotes, in *The Descent of the Dove*, 98, from Cruttwell's *Literary History of the Early Church*.)" (Notes).

l. 7: *as if time's metre were smitten by sacred grief*: "And do you think the Pope, who is young, with white hair, brilliant, the image of Merlin (only Merlin has black hair), might be Merlin + loss? If you get me. The Pope (let us say) is time losing its beauties (by deprivation or will, not by mere passing change) but affirmatively..." (Image lxv).

ll. 8-9: *Over the altar a reliquary of glass held/ an intinctured Body....*: "Eastern Church's mode of administering Communion -- consecrated wafer dipped in wine, dried; kept for adoration, and ministering to the sick or dying" (Notes).

l. 10: *tri-fold Eucharist*: "Three Christmas Masses: 1. Midnight, 2. Dawn, 3. Mass of the day" (Notes).

ll. 12-15: "Integration of Classical Latin -- official language of Roman government, literature, religion -- with Italian vernacular: involvement of ancient gods and customs with Christianity -- e.g. Lupercal, the feast of Lupercus god of fertility and flocks, and Lateran--l. 2, pertaining to the Pope's Cathedral Church, founded on the site of pre-Christian basilica" (Notes).

l. 16: *Pontiff*: Latin~Pontifex - "Bridge Maker."  
"Magnificat": Luke i 46-55:

And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me--  
holy is his name.  
His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.

He has performed might deeds with his arm;  
 he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
 He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
 but has lifted up the humble.  
 He has filled the hungry with good things  
 but has sent the rich away empty.  
 He has helped his servant Israel,  
 remembering to be merciful  
 to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
 even as he said to our fathers."

ll. 20-23: "'...each remembered his singular particular loss. The king felt: 'Now the dynasty fails'. Bors felt: 'Farms and manors are burned, the corn lost, the poor returned to starvation...'. Lancelot felt: 'If we win, after this, her kiss is the king's...'. Only Taliessin, in the west with the king, smiled to think how the household had founded a new Order...' (lines from an early version of the poem 'Divites Dimisit, for Michal in memory of the darkness 1914-17')" (Notes).

l. 25: *Send not, send not, the rich empty away*: the opposite of Mary's invocation in the *Magnificat* (Luke i 53)--see note from l. 16.

ll. 29-34: See MM.

l. 41: *let*: (archaic): hindered, prevented.

l. 45: *gnosis*: esoteric knowledge of spiritual truth held by various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through this esoteric knowledge.

l. 54: *braggadocio*: empty boasting/ arrogant pretension.  
*burlesque*: mockery.

l. 64: *Danube*: a river in central and southeastern Europe flowing southeast from southwestern Germany into the Black sea.

*Rhine*: a river in western Europe flowing from southeastern Switzerland to the North sea in the Netherlands.

l. 65: *Lutetia*: the Roman name for city of Paris.

l. 66: *Noel-song*: Noel: Christmas.

l. 75: *Vistula*: a river in Poland flowing north from the Carpathians into the Gulf of Gdansk.

l. 97: *mastic*: an aromatic resinous exudate from mastic trees.

l. 100: *Pit*: Hell.

l. 160: *succubus*: a demon assuming female form to have sexual intercourse with men in their sleep.

- l. 185: *fey*: marked by a foreboding of death or calamity.
- ll. 193-194: *blessed by Dinadan by whom the lieutenancy began/ when he called Us on the day of fools, on his own day*: see FC ll. 121-153.
- l. 211: *kiss of peace*: Romans xvi 16: "Greet one another with a holy kiss."
- ll. 226-231: Mark xvi 15-18:

He[Jesus] said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

- l. 244: *trine-toned light*: clear, roseal, and golden-creamed light--see QS ll. 72-73.
- l. 247: *last largesse of Galahad*: see DD ll. 132-133.
- l. 259: *Burma*: Myanmar: a country in southeastern Asia on the Bay of Bengal.
- 309: *promulgation of sacred union*: see note from FC Title..

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