

CWilliams

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 11 Feb 2002

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Dan'I Danehy-Oakes — 11 Feb 2002, 16:00

Hartshorn wrote:

Specifically, the real-life Japanese kamikazi is an expression of a religion

which literally deifies a tribal leader - the Emperor.

Catholics regard this with horror.

The horror! The horror!

(See, he was right.)

See the mystical/Catholic poetry of Charles Williams, TALIESSIN THROUGH LOGRES and THE REGION OF THE SUMMER STARS, for a powerful expression of this horror.

Ummmm.... While I agree that the Emperor of P'o-Lu is a very powerful image, I'm not as certain as you of several things here ... beginning with the idea that Williams' poetry was "Catholic."

Charles Williams was, depending upon how you take him, either an Anglican or

a weird, possibly-heretical Christian mystic who derived too many of his ideas from the Golden Dawn circle. -- the "either" there was not intended as

a binarism, btw, but as an indicator of the extremes of opinion; mine falls rather in between. Williams was very much an admirer of the early medieval Catholic church -- and quite as much an admirer of the Orthodox church; Byzantium is every bit as much an image of holy order in the "Taliessin" cycle as is Rome (though, admittedly, the image of Byzantium is the image of the holy-ordered Empire: and, while much of the Byzantine imagery is the imagery of the Orthodox church, nothing about his "Byzantium" presents any direct challenge to the religious authority of the Pope).

Second, I am not as certain as you that the headless Emperor of P'o-Lu is an

image of the tribal leader deified. He is, I think, an image of a demon deified; of the reality that lurks behind an idol. His being headless is the

key here: he is an Authority with no authority, with, indeed, no mind at all. (I have occasionally wondered whether Williams was familiar with HPL's Azathoth, but that's a separate matter...) His servants are not humans but octopoto-wowles of some sort: details slip my mind.

Third, I am not as certain that the word "Catholics" is the correct word to use when you say "Catholics regard this with horror." I think that Christians of most denominations* regard the deification of a human leader with a justifiable horror, whether it be the Son of Heaven or the Great House.

* Including that denomination that goes under the very peculiar name "nondenominational"

All that aside, I very much second the recommendation of Williams' Arthurian

poems, which I have been reading, and occasionally understanding, for a quarter of a century now. These poems were praised by both CS Lewis and TS Eliot - and when these two agreed on anything about poetry, it was a momentous occasion.

Williams published two collections of his major Arthurian poems in his lifetime, called (as Hartshorn notes) TALIESSIN THROUGH LOGRES and THE REGION OF THE SUMMER STARS. These might be available in either of two useful forms.

The older edition is an omnibus from Eerdmans', a Christian publisher in the

American North, which is (sadly) out of print but not hard to find. It contained not only these two books but a third, ARTHURIAN TORSO, which was itself a sort of omnibus containing (1) a brilliant but unfinished (because he died) essay by Williams on the history of the Arthurian legends; and (2) an essay by CS Lewis on Williams' Arthurian poetry, valuable to someone who (like me) finds poetry in general and modern poetry in particular rather hard going.

The newer is an edition in the "Arthurian Poets" series, edited by David Wesley Dodds, which contains the two collections mentioned above, a number of earlier Arthurian poems, and a number of additional poems (finished and unfinished) CW had written for a third volume, unfinished at his death, plus a more textual and less beginner-friendly essay by Dodds.

Amazon US wants to charge you \$72.00 for it, and takes "5 to 6 weeks" to ship: http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0859913279/qid=13442372/sr=1-5/refsr_1_5/103-5771779-9450200

Amazon UK will charge only £13.59, and will "usually dispatch" within 24 hours, but shipping to the US may make it a push for Americans, both financially and chronologically: http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0851152910/ref=ra_of_dp/202-6670415-5459065

cheers,

Blattid

Andy Robertson — 12 Feb 2002, 09:12 · follows Dan'l Danehy-Oakes

----- Original Message -----

From: "Dan'l Danehy-Oakes" <ddanehy at siebel.com>
Hartshorn wrote:
The horror! The horror!

(See, he was right.)

Sarky!

Ummmm.... While I agree that the Emperor of P'o-Lu is a very powerful image, I'm not as certain as you of

several things here ... beginning with the idea that Williams' poetry was "Catholic."

OK, "Catholic" in the catholic sense then.

Second, I am not as certain as you that the headless Emperor of P'o-Lu is an

image of the tribal leader deified. He is, I think, an image of a demon deified; of the reality that lurks behind an idol. His being headless is the

Complex. The real-life Emperor represents a combination of tribal leader and religious leader elevated to godhood. Williams' headless Emperor is a demonic image of this.

key here: he is an Authority with no authority, with, indeed, no mind at all.

(I have occasionally wondered whether Williams was familiar with HPL's Azathoth, but that's a separate matter...) His servants are not humans but octopoto-wowkles of some sort: details slip my mind.

Giant octopodes. R'yleh cannot be far away, IA!!! CTHULHU FTHAGN!!!

Third, I am not as certain that the word "Catholics" is the correct word to use when you say "Catholics regard this with horror." I think that Christians

Humble apologies

All that aside, I very much second the recommendation of Williams'

Arthurian

poems, which I have been reading, and occasionally understanding, for a quarter of a century now. These poems were praised by both CS Lewis and TS Eliot - and when these two agreed on anything about poetry, it was a momentous occasion.

It is a pleasure to find someone of a like mind. ((Shall I post a few of the poems here? Or not?))

hartshorn