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The Androgynous Vision in the Mythic Narratives of Charles Williams

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EROS AND LOGOS:
THE ANDROGYNOUS VISION IN THE MYTHIC NARRATIVES OF CHARLES WILLIAMS

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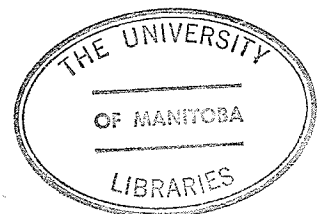
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Abstract

Although critics have analyzed and interpreted Charles Williams's prose fiction for more than thirty years, critical opinion has generally been swayed by two assumptions, one about Williams's genre and one about Williams himself. These assumptions—that Williams wrote novels and that he was an orthodox Anglican—have created the view that his prose fiction is aesthetically inferior to the more experimental novels of the twentieth century, that his prose fiction is "escapist" since it is not mimetic or "realistic," and that he himself is a Christian apologist.

This study is primarily concerned with re-evaluating Williams's seven works of prose fiction; the "war of forms" is a secondary interest. Consequently, assumptions about Williams's genre and the influence of his religious convictions are dismissed as a priori beliefs which may prejudice one's evaluation and interpretation of Williams's art. To avoid the view that Williams's prose fiction is merely a vehicle for his theological ideas, this study adopts an eclectic or interdisciplinary approach. The critical materials used here are drawn from a variety of disciplines—psychology, cultural anthropology, philosophy, theology, literary criticism—and together constitute the critical material basic to archetypal criticism. The prose fiction itself, however, is always the final authority. At the same time, this study makes no assumptions about Williams's genre and attempts to evaluate his fictive form, rather than to condemn or to patronize him as a failed novelist.

The dissertation opens with an examination of Williams's inter-

pretation of the biblical Creation myth in which he strongly implies his belief in an androgynous Creator. This concept is absolutely crucial to my argument of regeneration or re-creation through the androgynous union of the masculine principle of Logos and the feminine principle of Eros. The introduction also examines Williams's ideas about time and history, concluding that he embraced the concept of cyclical time and periodic regeneration, and that he rejected the notion of eschatological time. After establishing Williams's deviation from the mainstream of the patriarchal Judaeo-Christian tradition, the introduction turns to the question of genre and suggests that Williams's prose fiction does not belong to the tradition of the novel, but more properly to the literature we call fantastical, mystical, or archetypal. Finally, the introduction rejects the term "novel" for Williams's prose fiction and substitutes the term "mythic narrative" in the belief that this better describes the mythic and narrative dimensions of his prose fiction.

After the introduction there follow five chapters devoted to an analysis of androgynous union and the significance of this to Williams's thought. His first two mythic narratives, Shadows of Ecstasy and War in Heaven, are examined in an appendix, since they contain only the embryonic form of his androgynous vision. Each of the remaining narratives—Many Dimensions, The Place of the Lion, The Greater Trumps, Descent into Hell, and All Hallow's Eve—is studied in a separate chapter in an effort to determine the varying circumstances under which androgynous union occurs and the effects of this union on the world of creation. Special attention is given to the role and figure of the artist-shaman, to the significance of woman as a

redemptive force, to the myths of the Fall and Incarnation, and to the spiritual quests of the protagonists. These chapters also attempt to examine Williams's methods and techniques and to explain how they complement and reinforce his mythic vision.

In conclusion, this dissertation departs from the traditional interpretation of Williams's prose fiction. It suggests that Williams's thought and vision are more akin to the primitive understanding of divinity and the relationship between nature and supernature than to the Christian view. The archetype which supports this contention, and the one examined in this study, is that of the androgyne. This study suggests that in Williams's prose fiction narrative has been returned to its ancient seat for he subordinates character to the innate human love of story. Ultimately, this dissertation asserts that Williams should not be regarded as an artless and dogmatic novelist or as a Christian apologist. We can best appreciate his art and position in twentieth-century literature if we ignore the sectarian point of view and overcome our critical biases.

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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Notes	19
CHAPTER ONE: <u>MANY DIMENSIONS</u>	22
Notes	63
CHAPTER TWO: <u>THE PLACE OF THE LION</u>	66
Notes	114
CHAPTER THREE: <u>THE GREATER TRUMPS</u>	117
Notes	162
CHAPTER FOUR: <u>DESCENT INTO HELL</u>	164
Notes	217
CHAPTER FIVE: <u>ALL HALLOW'S EVE</u>	221
Notes	271
APPENDIX: <u>SHADOWS OF ECSTASY AND WAR IN HEAVEN</u>	275
Notes	319
Selected Bibliography.	323

Introduction

Charles Williams has suffered what for the artist is an odious fate; he has been regarded more for his magnetic and charismatic personality than for his art. There is much discussion of his impact as a lecturer at Oxford during World War II; both T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden have written accounts of the impact that Williams's personality had on their lives and religious faith. "Williams," said Eliot in a memorial B.B.C. broadcast in 1946, "seemed to me to approximate, more nearly than any man I have ever known familiarly, to the saint,"¹ while Auden wrote of his meetings with Williams as "among my most unforgettable and precious experiences," going on to say that Williams, "more than anyone else I have ever known gave himself completely."² Finally, Williams's friend and colleague C.S. Lewis, no doubt with the best of intentions, has written a moving tribute to Williams and his effect on Lewis's faith. "No one," wrote Lewis, "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."³

Such praise from literary men of this stature, and men whose religious leanings are so familiar, has shaped William's reputation. First, Williams's friends, those whom one might expect to promote his writing, have taken a reverent interest in his character and religion, but only a cursory and sometimes patronizing interest in his art. Naturally, other critics have tended to follow this example. Secondly, critics have tended to associate Williams with his Anglo-Catholic admirers—Eliot, Auden, Tolkien, and especially Lewis—

drawing the conclusion that he must be another highly learned Christian apologist.

If one is to put Williams's work into critical perspective, however, it is best to forget his Christian friends, other than where their scholarship illuminates his work, and even to forget for the time being his well-advertised commitment to the Church of England. Indeed, criticism which assumes a Christian perspective is ultimately Procrustean and its impartiality questionable, since it disregards the primacy of the work by beginning with a set of a priori assumptions. In my view, whether or not Williams's perspective is Christian is critically less relevant than the fact that his writing reflects an archetypal understanding of reality. One might add, of course, that Christianity may do the same thing.

If we are to establish Williams's place in twentieth-century literature, it is equally important to disregard his reputation as a writer of "thrillers."⁴ Though his books are "fantastic" in the original sense of the word, they are compelling because they appeal to the innate human love of story and not to the desire for sensationalism or "escape." In Williams's prose fiction, narrative has been restored to its ancient seat, and quite against the mainstream of modern criticism—quite against the art of the acknowledged modern masters—in Williams's narratives, plot or story is more important than character.⁵ Quite unintentionally, one supposes, Williams put himself in the position of contradicting much of the theory of the modern novel. During a literary period when the majority of serious novelists struggled with technique in order to re-vitalize the novel and expand its possibilities for exploring the human condition,

Williams ignored the importance of technical innovation and the psychological complexities of the individual, relying instead on traditional forms and choosing to write about the immemorial patterns of human experience. Considering this divergence from the mainstream of the modern art novel, one can understand why Williams's narratives have annoyed some critics and have amused others, but have seldom been seriously considered.

The hiatus in Williams scholarship—I refer here to the criticism of his seven works of prose fiction—stems from a critical failure to recognize the genre in which he wrote and from a preconceived notion about his religious beliefs and their place in his art. As long as Williams is regarded as a Christian apologist, he will be dismissed as an artless and dogmatic novelist. Only when he is valued for what he has actually accomplished will it be possible to criticize his works intelligently and to establish his position in twentieth-century literature.

Here I want to suggest that Williams's narratives belong to a more ancient tradition than that of the novel. As a writer absorbed by myth he writes mythic narratives—books which are the narrative equivalents of archetypal or ritual acts.⁶ We have long been assured that story-telling or myth-making is man's most persistent as well as his most ancient verbally-structured art form. Consequently, it should not be surprising that the art of the story has re-appeared in the twentieth century; nor should it be surprising that in Williams's art, remembering its genre, the reader is released from the burden of time and history. "History," says Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's deceptively historical book Ulysses, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to

awake." Joyce, however, is writing a novel, and in his brilliantly ruthless attack on Ireland, he gives Stephen and the reader no way out of the nightmare. Williams, on the other hand, supplants Joyce's nightmare with a modern dream of timelessness and completion, since in his work the burden of history and the Fall dissolve, returning us to the Golden Age when man could walk with the gods.

Williams's mythic narratives, then, are not so much anti-historical—Joyce's Ulysses may well be anti-historical—as they are ahistorical because of their mythic dimensions. The relationship between myth and the ahistorical consciousness is a major factor in understanding Williams's narratives, and this concept is most clearly elucidated by Mircea Eliade in his anthropological study of concepts of time, Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return. According to Eliade, there is a major difference between the primitive and the modern concept of time and history: "The chief difference between the man of the archaic and traditional societies and the man of the modern societies with their strong imprint of Judaeo-Christianity lies in the fact that the former feels himself indissolubly connected with the Cosmos and the cosmic rhythms, whereas the latter insists that he is connected only with History."⁷ Eliade goes on to explain that the Cosmos, which was created by the gods and organized by supernatural beings or mythic heroes, has a "sacred history" which can be repeated indefinitely, in the sense that the "myths serve as models for ceremonies that periodically reactualize the tremendous events that occurred at the beginning of time" (p. viii). By virtue of myth, society and the Cosmos may be periodically regenerated, and in this light, it is easy to understand the subtitle of Eliade's book—The Myth of the

Eternal Return—since through myth a people may eternally return to their beginning in the Garden of Creation.

Eliade's concept of regeneration through eternal return and his idea of the archetype as a model "'revealed' at the beginning of time," one believed to have a "supernatural and 'transcendental' origin" are central to my argument about the atemporal nature of Williams's narratives. His narratives escape the nightmare of history through their mythic or eternally recurring content, so that in all of them, with the exception of Shadows of Ecstasy, the mythic world supercedes the fallen world and the forces of re-creation negate the effects of destruction. To put it another way, in Williams's thinking, Creation is not a single event which gives birth to the Cosmos, to man, to human history, rather it is a cyclical process and a fact in our current existence. Williams identifies with the idea of "sacred history" and rejects the eschatological concept of history.

Still, in Williams's thinking, the pristine beginning and the unqualified goodness of the Garden are veiled from the spiritually fallen man. Consequently, all his protagonists, usually quite unconsciously, embark on quests of spiritual redemption which have as their end the City of Light or the primordial Garden. The discovery of the City or the Garden, as Eliade suggests in his discussion of periodic regeneration, depends on fidelity to an original model or to an archetype. In Williams's canon the recurring archetype, the image promising a way back to primordial paradise, is that of the androgyne.

The importance of the androgyne as the archetype of regeneration emerges in Williams's view of the creation myth. For him the prototypic creative act is the Creation as recorded in Genesis, culminating

as it does with the creation of man: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis I:27). Accepting the first, as opposed to the second biblical myth of man's creation, Williams never refers to the prelapsarian Adam as a male from whose rib the first female was later created. Instead, he writes of "the Adam," suggesting through this usage that the original Adam was male and female in imitation of a Creator who is androgynous. Only with the introduction of sin, death, and division—with the Fall—did the union of the Adam break down; after this man knows himself, not as male and female, but according to his physical gender, as man or woman. If man, however, is to escape the self-created confines of the phenomenal world, he must re-create himself in the image of the androgynous Creator by re-discovering the prelapsarian Adam who continues to be a part of us all. In Williams's narratives this is the meaning of the spiritual quest: by uniting the masculine principle with the feminine principle, the Logos or the power of the word with the Eros or the energy of the flesh, man incarnates the wholeness of the Adam which, in turn, stimulates the cosmic regenerative powers. The Adam, the androgyne, signifies a restoration to the unity of matter and spirit prevailing at Creation, and this return to homogeneity promises regeneration and a prodigious increase in redemptive power. Williams imagines a world which, because it is androgynous in its spiritual impulses, is redeemable. This is the grace of androgyny.

One of the most sophisticated and clearly developed theories of the androgynous nature of man occurs in the psychology of Carl G. Jung. From his study of mythological material and from clinical

observation, Jung sanctioned the concept of psychic androgyny, viewing it not as an aberration but as the natural or archetypal condition of the psychically mature man or woman. For Jung, the various myths of Creation, the Fall, and man's search for his lost other are transformed into an inner or psychic mystery. He postulates an anima within the masculine psyche, not simply "the soul" but the feminine element or the constellation of feminine characteristics in union with which the male completes himself. The female, on the other hand, houses an animus or constellation of male characteristics, and her wholeness depends on union with the animus. This inward extension of man's being carries the qualities that are not naturally a part of consciousness; they are experienced as "other" or "contrasexual" and become conscious only through the spiritual task, what Jung terms individuation, a process by which the contents of the unconscious are integrated with consciousness to produce the Self.⁸

Jung's fusion of ego and psyche, or the masculine and feminine aspects of man, to create the Self is especially helpful in understanding Williams's narratives where a character's dedication to the spiritual task, to his exploration of his psyche and the fusion of this energy with the conscious personality, determines his spiritual wholeness. In Williams's work, as in Jung's theory, one becomes whole or androgynous by becoming more conscious of one's spiritual or psychic strengths. The androgynous personality, then, as both Jung and Williams develop this concept, is a fusion of inner and outer into an individual who transcends opposites and who, consequently, incarnates the unity or totality of "the Adam." Jung's theory of individuation and the concomitant exploration of the archetypes of

the unconscious, along with his concept of psychic androgyny, are central to my interpretation of Williams. Indeed, my argument might be said to be "Jungian," for if Jung's theory designates psychic energy as the archetypes, in Williams's narratives these very archetypes are re-discovered as the gods within; here, through the archetypal androgyny, the numinal and phenomenal worlds co-inhere and man becomes his own saviour and redeemer.

To a large extent, then, my study of Williams's androgynous vision has reference to Jung's psychological theories and Mircea Eliade's concept of the eternal return. Eliade's eternal recurrence analyzes the ways by which man has eschewed the historical consciousness and sought, instead, the prelapsarian Golden Age or mythic world; Jung's theory of individuation and the collective unconscious suggests that psychic or spiritual completion results from the fusion of the masculine and feminine elements of the Self. In Williams's narratives, the union of Eros and Logos produces the archetypal androgyny, and through androgynous union a protagonist re-creates his unfallen nature, escapes the nightmare of history, and stimulates the cosmic regenerative powers of the "beginning." I do not mean to imply, of course, that Williams's prose fiction is Jungian or Eliadean in any reductive sense, but rather that their ideas help in understanding his vision. To put it another way, while my critical approach is interdisciplinary and makes use of Eliade and Jung, Williams's art itself is non-secular.¹⁰

Since Williams's mythic narratives have not established a reputation for themselves as a part of the mainstream of twentieth-century literature, it would seem helpful, before beginning my discussion, to

suggest in just what tradition his books might best fit. The most likely place to begin is with F.R. Leavis's criticism, since Leavis's attack on Williams represents the type of short-sightedness which may have diminished Williams's reputation, and, at the same time, indicates, indirectly, that different kinds of literature deserve different critical perspectives.

Leavis discusses Williams in The Common Pursuit. "Charles Williams," writes Leavis, "is ostensibly inspired by Christian doctrine, but if you approach as a literary critic, unstiffened by the determination to 'discriminate Christianly,' or if you approach merely with order, sensitiveness and good sense, you can hardly fail to see that Charles Williams's preoccupation with the 'horror of evil' is evidence of an arrest at the schoolboy (and —girl) stage rather than of spiritual maturity, and that his dealings in 'myth,' mystery, the occult, and the supernatural belong essentially to the ethos of the thriller. To pass off his writings as morally edifying is to promote the opposite of spiritual health."¹⁴ In spite of the accuracy of his concluding comment, there are some basic problems in Leavis's analysis and understanding of Williams.

Leavis's claim that Williams has been "ostensibly inspired by Christian doctrine" is at best misleading since it ignores the universal or archetypal dimensions of Williams's thought and work, and leads to the simplistic conclusion that Williams's writing belongs to "the ethos of the thriller." Perhaps more misleading is the hidden assumption underlying Leavis's criticism, an assumption which emerges as a bias in The Great Tradition. Here Leavis considers the novelists whom he recognizes as both great and traditional and, in the process,

reveals his critical bias. His great novelists—Austen, Eliot, James, Conrad, Lawrence, and Dickens in part—"are all distinguished by a vital capacity for experience, a kind of reverent openness before life, and a marked moral intensity."¹² But this "marked moral intensity" which Leavis believes to be essential to great fiction need not concern the writer of mythic narratives like Williams. While the novelist of manners quite properly deals with man's conduct in society, providing the reader with a moral vision relating to man as a social being, the myth writer frequently eschews social and moral concerns to explore man's relationship with the transcendent or numinal world. Mythic narrative, then, should not be judged by the same critical standards as the novel because mythic literature begins with a different conception of reality and is designed to do something quite different from the novel.

Colin Wilson, in The Strength to Dream, makes just this point. While Leavis stresses an author's "moral tensions" and his struggle "to become more fully conscious of them" (The Great Tradition, p. 16), Wilson writes that "It would be absurd to ask what Homer 'expresses.' He tells a story. In the course of telling the story, he might express various human qualities. . . . But the content of Homer is, first and foremost, the story."¹³ In keeping with Leavis's "moral intensity," the novelist is generally interested in character and a character's growing moral awareness, while the mythic writer, as Wilson suggests of Homer, is possessed by the story of man's place in the cosmos. Whether the story be simple, like those in C.S. Lewis's Narnia Tales, or complex, like those in Williams's mythic narratives, the mythic writer is primarily concerned with story.

The narrowness of Leavis's critical perspective is clearest in his treatment of D.H. Lawrence. While his praise of Lawrence is unqualified—Leavis believes that Lawrence is part of the novelistic tradition and that his creative achievement is "unsurpassed"¹⁴—his book on Lawrence stresses the moral elements in Lawrence's work and excludes any consideration of its archetypal dimensions. As a result of his concern with "moral vitality," Leavis admires Lawrence's iconoclasm without realizing that Lawrence was compelled to re-discover the gods as psychic factors. Leavis's critical insight may allow him to understand the work of a particular kind of writer, but his limitations surface in his treatment of a mythic writer like Lawrence and are blatant when he faults Williams. Since Williams's concern with character was neither social nor moral, and since he was not iconoclastic, Leavis dismisses his work as immature and belonging "essentially to the ethos of the thriller."

If Leavis's critical bias causes him to view mythic narrative with hostility and disdain, at least one prominent contemporary theorist of modern fiction appears to endorse this genre. In The Nature of Narrative Robert Scholes emphasizes the role myth plays in narrative fiction,¹⁵ and in The Fabulators he describes a type of fiction which he terms "fabulation."¹⁶ Scholes's concept of fabulation is important to the myth critic since it helps in explaining the nature of mythic narrative: fabulation is "opposed to the 'slice of life' technique characteristic of empirically oriented mimetic fiction" (p. 26), and in lieu of realism or mimesis, fabulation promises "a return to a more verbal kind of fiction. It also means a return to a more fictional kind . . . a less realistic and more

artistic kind of narrative: more shapely, more evocative, more concerned with ideas and ideals, less concerned with things" (p. 13).

The connection between Scholes's concept of fabulation and Williams's mythic narratives can perhaps be seen most clearly in The Place of the Lion, the work in which Williams delineates his archetypal theory. At the beginning of The Place of the Lion Quentin Sabot, shaken by the news that a lioness is freely roaming the countryside, questions his companion. "'I hope,'" says Quentin to Anthony, "'you still think that ideas are more dangerous than material things.'" After some time for pondering, Anthony assents: "'Yes, I do. All material danger is limited, whereas interior danger is unlimited.'"¹⁷ The narrative bears out Anthony's contention, for the things of the phenomenal world prove insignificant beside their archetypal counterparts, just as the "real" Anthony is insignificant beside the Adam he incarnates and the archetypal acts in which he engages. This subordination of things to ideas and character to myth distinguishes all Williams's prose fiction, and even colours his statement of the Affirmative Way—"This also is Thou; neither is this Thou"¹⁸—where he implies that the numinal derivation of an image should not obscure its phenomenal identity, nor its phenomenal identity obscure its numinal derivation. It is partly this concern with ideas—what Leavis condemns as Williams's preoccupation with the "horror of evil"—that makes Williams's art less "realistic" than other forms of narrative and more akin to Scholes's "fabulation."

The primary link between fabulation and mythic narrative, however, is not the tendency of both kinds of fiction to subordinate things to ideas. As Scholes indicates when he discusses Lawrence Durrell, fabulation is marked by a minimum of allegory and by a "direct plunge

back into the tide of story which rolls through all narrative art." Fabulation returns to story for renewed vigor, for without story, as Scholes puts it, "the blood of narrative ceases to flow. The humors atrophy, the brain shrivels, and finally the soul itself departs" (p. 31).

Like Colin Wilson in The Strength to Dream, C.S. Lewis in "On Story" believes that criticism has given little attention to story in itself, though he qualifies this by pointing out that there have been at least three attempts to come to terms with the nature of story: Lewis's examples are Aristotle in the Poetics, the work of Boccaccio, and, in modern times, Carl G. Jung with his doctrine of Archetypes. As Lewis sees it, "Those forms of literature in which story exists as a means to something else—for example, the novel of manners where the story is there for the sake of the characters, or the criticism of social conditions—have had full justice done to them; but those forms in which everything else is there for the sake of the story have been given little serious attention" (Essays Presented to Charles Williams, pp. 90-91). The reason for the neglect of "mere" story—what Lewis defines as "books . . . which concern themselves principally with the imagined event and not with character or society" (pp. 92-93)—would seem to be the twentieth-century obsession with mimetic or realistic fiction, a form which subordinates words to their referents, just as it exalts character and depreciates the importance of story.

The importance of story to mythic narrative, however, must be emphasized, since here its role is even more crucial than in Scholes's fabulation. If story is the narrative blood of fabulation, it is the

very bone of mythic narrative. The intimate relationship between story, plot, and myth will be explored in detail later; at present I would like to remind the reader of what Aristotle in his Poetics says of myth and plot: "The myth or plot is the principle and soul of tragedy. Character comes second in importance and thought third,"¹⁹ and of the fact that mythos anciently meant story.²⁰ In the final analysis, story is essential to mythic narrative because we cannot have myth unless we have story.²¹

The general disregard for story which C.S. Lewis laments, coupled with the modern critical appreciation for realistic or mimetic fiction which Scholes mentions, may be the main reasons why Williams's narratives have been either ignored or panned by critics. But the problem seems to be one of critical perspective rather than anything inherently defective in Williams's art, since critics have expected from Williams what they have praised in Jane Austen or Henry James. An intelligent and accurate understanding of his mythic narratives, however, depends upon a more sympathetic critical method.

At least two other aspects of Scholes's definition of fabulation are helpful in establishing this sympathetic critical perspective. Writing of what he calls James Joyce's journey from "epiphany to archetype," Scholes describes Joyce's legacy to the "fabulators":

This journey was made possible by Joyce's discovery of cyclical theories of history (essentially medieval rather than modern because they are based on a notion of control of events in the visible world by an ideal order outside these events), and his parallel discovery of depth psychology—which modernized this medieval view of history by locating the ideal patterns that control the cycles of human life not in the heavens but in the unconscious. The collective unconscious effectively dehumanizes man by de-individualizing him. The social types of Lukacs

belong to realism. But the archetypes of Jung lead to a new allegory. (p. 103)

Strictly speaking, Joyce is not a fabulator—his work lacks that "purely narrative value that characterizes fabulation; that delight in story for its own sake . . . is lacking in Finnegans Wake" (p. 105); nor, of course, is Joyce a mythic writer since his work depends on the ironic manipulation of mythical material. What I am interested in here is Scholes's view that fabulation involves a cyclical concept of time and history and that Jung's depth psychology modernized this essentially medieval notion and allowed writers to discover "the ideal patterns that control the cycles of human life . . . in the unconscious." As should be clear by now, Williams's vision of the human condition and man's place in the cosmos depends on these very concepts.

There is, of course, a point at which mythic narrative diverges from fabulation, and this emerges in Scholes's discussion of Joyce's development. Scholes's claim that Jung's archetypes lead to allegory may well be true for the writers whom he analyzes, for fabulation is a highly self-conscious art form and the fabulator is unwilling to see himself as simply part of a larger story: "the fabulator is not merely conscious that he is allegorizing . . . the fabulators . . . are unwilling to accept the mythic view of life as completely valid. Against this view they balance one which I am calling the philosophical, which tells us that every man is unique, alone, poised over chaos" (pp. 172-73). While allegory, then, is the stock-in-trade of the fabulator, symbol is that of the mythic writer, and, as a result, the highly allegorical character of fabulation differs from the symbolic nature of mythic narrative. One form expresses the content

of the conscious mind; the other the content of the unconscious. In Jung's theory of archetypes, an archetype is formless and hidden until it is given symbolic expression, and, while archetypal symbols may have a tendency to degenerate into allegorical signs, an archetype can manifest itself in innumerable ways. A mythic writer can always discover new symbols for an archetype, and, consequently, Scholes is wrong in claiming that Jungian archetypes de-individualize man—the symbolic forms of an archetype are limitless.

These concepts of sign and symbol underlie D.H. Lawrence's discussion of the difference between allegory and myth, a discussion which helps to elucidate the fundamental difference between Williams's mythic narrative and Scholes's fabulation. In Lawrence's terms, "Allegory is narrative description using, as a rule, images to express certain definite qualities. Each image means something, and is a term in the argument and nearly always for a moral or didactic purpose, for under the narrative of an allegory lies a didactic argument, usually moral."²² On the other hand, according to Lawrence, while myth is also a descriptive narrative using images, "myth is never an argument, it never has a didactic nor a moral purpose." Quite clearly Lawrence believes that allegory can be explained; myth, however, is beyond explanation, "for it describes a profound experience of the human body and soul, an experience which is never exhausted and never will be exhausted . . . it will be felt and suffered while man remains man." For Lawrence, then, allegory is limited and allegorical images or signs have a definite meaning, but myth is limitless. Its images are symbols which are distinct from allegorical signs, because "They stand for units of human feeling, human experience." Furthermore,