



The FRIENDS OF C. S. LEWIS AND KINDRED SPIRITS
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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If You Want to Dream Bigger Dreams, Get Around Dreamers¹

Denise Vasiliu (University of Iași)

When the golden bowl with dreams of love, truth, and happiness of a very young soul was broken by the dark reality of life in a small town of Romania under the last incredibly hard years of Communism, who could have thought that, in mysterious ways, answers would come through a book like C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, smuggled in by people we will never know about, and that the seed of a new dream would be planted!

And, in the same period, just about a hundred miles away, a professor from the English Department of the University of Iași fell in love with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, discovered by one of her students in The British Council Library. She decided to translate and to try and publish it even though almost no one was interested at the time. More than twenty years later, that same professor was the enthusiastic dreamer who encouraged and supported the vision of the writer of the first doctoral thesis on C. S. Lewis to hold C. S. Lewis conferences in Romania.

That young soul and that doctoral student was the author of these lines, and I am grateful for the countless dreamers who have joined me in the founding of *The C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society* in Central and Eastern Europe and now in creation of *The Friends of the C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society*. I want especially to express my appreciation to the professors from the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, who accepted my quite unusual thesis proposal on C. S. Lewis at the border between Christianity and literature, as well as supporting and helping organize conferences on an author who was hardly known here. Secondly, I want to thank the many generous scholars and great dreamers who encouraged, guided, and advised, gave me books, wrote letters of recommendation, and—even more remarkably—traveled to Iași to attend and speak at these conferences. Some, quite many in fact, had had Romania on their hearts even before Communism fell. I will not try to mention them here, partly because there are so many and partly because I hope that they will be invited to share their personal visions and hopefully complete the story!

To be able to grasp the thread that leads from our own dreams to becoming part of a vision that others far away in another part of the world dreamed and sacrificed for, is a rare and special gift. We welcome you to get connected to the sense of the community of kindred spirits that has taken root in Iași. Much has been said and written about C. S. Lewis's heritage. We welcome you to join in our attempt to dream the great dreams pursued by C. S. Lewis and kindred spirits such as J. R. R. Tolkien, George MacDonald, and others, a vision that will inspire and plant the seeds of life in the soil of needy and searching souls, especially of the new generation in post-Communist lands.

1 Mark Batter son, *Chase the Lion: If Your Dream Doesn't Scare You, It's Too Small* (Portland OR: Multnomah Press, 2016), p. 169.

Who Were the INKLINGS? Pt. I

By Paul E. Michelson (Huntington University)

The C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Society is dedicated to the study of the lives and works of the Inklings. "Who were the Inklings?" some may ask. Definitions of this sort are notoriously subjective; we won't try to resolve such matters here. Our project finesse this by defining them as "*C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits.*" This leaves open the question of just who a kindred spirit is. We deliberately do this to allow flexibility for those who are interested in the mythopoeic aspects of our subject and to suggest that a wide variety of writers just might be "kindred spirits." Indeed, we want to suggest that members of our society are themselves "kindred spirits." Obviously there is a fine line to be drawn here. The purpose of this essay is to start a discussion of the Inklings with the more obvious writers who belong to the Inklings and then widen the net so to speak.

The logical place to begin is in Illinois. The premier center for the study of C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits is the Marion E. Wade Center at Illinois' Wheaton College. It was there that Prof. Clyde S. Kilby founded in 1965 "The C. S. Lewis Collection." In 1974, the friends and family of businessman Marion E. Wade established an endowment in his memory to support the collection, which was renamed "The Marion E. Wade Collection." This later became the Marion E. Wade Center (www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/). Dr. Kilby's decision was to focus on the writings of seven authors: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers, George Macdonald, and G. K. Chesterton. The first five writers read and engaged with MacDonald's work so he was included from the outset, but because of the imposing bulk of Chesterton's works, Dr. Kilby originally omitted him. However, in the end he couldn't be kept out. In 1980, the Center began publication of what became *VII: Journal of the Marion E. Wade Center*, named after the seven authors at the center of its collection.

Four of the Seven were obvious choices: they all participated in an informal writing circle around Lewis and Tolkien called the Inklings (an obvious double pun on writers=ink and inkling=a suspicion that something was likely). Others who attended the meetings at one time or another as regulars (in addition to Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, and sometimes Barfield), included Warren Lewis, Hugo Dyson, Robert Havard, Neville Coghill, Charles Williams, David Cecil, Jim Dundas-Grant, Adam Fox, Colin Hardie, R. B. McCallum, C. E. Stevens, C. L. Wrenn, Gervase Matthew, J. A. W. Bennett, Christopher Tolkien, John Wain.² Dorothy L. Sayers did not attend Inklings meetings, being in London, but was clearly a "kindred spirit," as Gina Dalfonzo's book mentioned below documents. George Macdonald, who passed away in 1905 decades before the Inklings first met, was a key influence in Lewis's life and work, and also had many kindred ideas with Tolkien and the others.. Chesterton—another influence specifically mentioned by Lewis, a Catholic convert like Tolkien, like Sayers, President of the London Detection Club,³ and a subversive advocate like the Inklings of a subtle Christian apologetic—was a natural seventh. Thus, The Wade Center's Seven. Next time, we will begin with an introductory look at specific Inklings.

(To Be Continued)

2 Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis. A Companion and Guide* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 17; Diana Pavlac Glyer, *The Company They Keep. C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as Writers in Community* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 2007, p. 11); Colin Duriez, *The A-Z of C. S. Lewis. An encyclopedia of his life, thought, and writings* (Oxford UK: Lion Books, 2013), pp. 142-146. All three are in basic agreement on this list.

3 The Oath of the Detection Club was "Do you promise that your detectives shall well and truly detect the crimes presented to them using those wits which it may please you to bestow upon them and not placing reliance on nor making use of Divine Revelation, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence, or Act of God?" Too bad that contemporary mystery writers no longer adhere to these.



BOOK NOTES

This section of *The Friends of the CSLKS Society NEWSLETTER*, edited by Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson (KJJ), Paul E. Michelson (PEM), and Joy Steem (JS), is given over to short and quirky notices of books by and about the Inklings and kindred spirits (including C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and Warren Lewis, as well as kindred spirits such as George Macdonald, G. K. Chesterton, and Dorothy L. Sayers).

1. Harry Lee Poe, *Becoming C. S. Lewis. A Biography of Young Jack Lewis, Vol. (1898-1918)* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2019), 309 pp. \$22.99

This is the first volume of a planned trilogy on the pre-conversion formative years of the life of C.S. Lewis. Poe is Charles Colson Professor of Faith and Learning at Union University TN and the author of *The Inklings of Oxford* (2009, with photographs by James Ray Veneman), possibly the best guide to Inklings sites in Oxford, and editor, with Rebecca Whitten Poe, of *C. S. Lewis Remembered* (2006), a compilation of reminiscences, essays, and interviews by people who knew Lewis. Based on a thorough examination of the published and unpublished sources about young Lewis, though there are few surprises in this study, it probably has everything that anyone who has read Lewis's *Surprised by Joy* (1955)—which covers roughly the same period—might want to know about Lewis's early years. The second volume is scheduled to be published in 2021. An excerpt can be downloaded at <https://static.crossway.org/excerpt/becoming-cs-lewis-excerpt/becoming-c.s.-lewis-excerpt.pdf>. (PEM)

2. Crystal L. Downing, *Subversive. Christ, Culture, and the Shocking Dorothy L. Sayers* (Minneapolis MN: Broadleaf Books, 2020), x + 240 pp. \$24.99

Crystal L. Downing is the Co-Director of the Marion E. Wade Center in Wheaton IL. She is the author of a previous book on Sayers, *Writing Performances: The Stages of Dorothy L. Sayers* (2004), and another *How Postmodernism Serves (My) Faith. Questioning Truth in Language, Philosophy, and Art* (2006). This new book draws a good deal on her 2004 treatment of Sayers's much-ignored stagecraft looked at through the lens of performance theory, but is refocused to elucidate Sayers's Christian faith and apologetic strategy. She rightly demonstrates that Sayers's approach was indeed "subversive" as she wanted to shock people into considering the truth of traditional Christian doctrine, by which she meant the Christianity of the first four Ecumenical Councils. By calling into question modern stereotypical views of Christianity, Sayers hoped to make doctrines of the ancient Church relevant to the present in a distinctly prophetic fashion. Particularly enlightening are how Sayers called into question the "economy of exchange" approach to Christian faith, a kind of transactional view of our relationships with God; and her salutary approach to questions of the politics of religion and the religion of politics. (PEM)

3. Michael L. Peterson, *C. S. Lewis and the Christian Worldview* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 240 pp. \$29.95

All worldviews address fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, human nature, meaning, and so forth. Michael Peterson, Professor of Philosophy at Asbury Theological Seminary and managing editor of the scholarly journal *Faith and Philosophy*, spells out Lewis's Christian worldview by methodically going through his works and basic themes. Charles Taliaferro, Oscar and Gertrude Boa Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at St. Olaf College, writes: "This is one of the most lively, systematic engagements with Lewis's thinking—from his early years to his mature, powerful thought that marked him as one of the most gifted and imaginative Christian thinkers of the twentieth century." (PEM)



NETFLIX ANNOUNCES CHRONICLES OF NARNIA SERIES IS ON

Netflix, which acquired the rights to C. S. Lewis' s Narnian Chronicles in 2018, has announced that the Narnian series is still in the works, but provided no further details. Douglas Gresham, Lewis's stepson, likes the TV series approach. Asked in an interview about a possible Netflix series, Gresham said "With a movie, you have an hour, maybe two-hour maximum if you really stretch it, to put an entire book—an adventure storybook—into the film. And you just can't do it." With a series you can fit "the entire book, every single nuance of it, on the screen." We shall see.



INKLINGS WEB DIRECTORY

The CSLKS *Newsletter* begins with this issue the publication of an Inklings Web Directory with web links that appear to be useful to the *Friends of the CSLKS*. Readers are encouraged to send suggested links to Paul Michelson <pmichelson@huntington.edu> or Joy Steem <joy.communitychaplain@gmail.com>.

1. The Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College

www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/

As mentioned above, the Wade Center is the premier center for the study of CSL and Kindred Spirits. Their site has sections on News, their Collections, Publications, and Media, including specific sections for Lewis and Tolkien, podcasts, and so forth.

2. The George MacDonald WWW Page

www.george-macdonald.com

Established in 1985, the Golden Key is the premier on-line resource for all things related to the Victorian Novelist, Poet and Christian Fantasy writer George MacDonald (1824-1905) and online home to the George MacDonald Society.

3. The C.S. Lewis Society of California

www.lewissociety.org

The Society is devoted to "Encouraging deeper understanding of Lewis as a man, author and thinker, as well as others' work that pertains to such topics." It has a rich site with many resources and an excellent newsletter that can be subscribed to online.

4. The Tolkien Society UK

www.tolkiensociety.org

The Tolkien Society is a membership educational charity and literary society devoted to the study and promotion of the life and works of J.R.R. Tolkien. Its website has fuller details. They sponsor such interesting events as the Tolkien Reading Day, which is held on March 25th each year since 2003 on the date on which the Ring was destroyed and Sauron was defeated. The event is designed to celebrate JRRT by encouraging people to celebrate by reading favorite passages from Tolkien's works. Why not have a Tolkien reading day at your university or at a local library. Do a read-through of *The Hobbit*, or if you are more adventurous, why not read *The Lord of the Rings* straight through?



AN UPCOMING CSLKS SOCIETY EVENT, April 2021

A *CS Lewis & Kindred Spirits Connected* ZOOM Meeting, "The Inklings: A Discussion" with Inklings scholars Malcolm Guite (Cambridge University) and Brenton Dickieson (University of Prince Edward Island), moderated by Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson, will be held on April 23, 2021. As an Inklings scholar, Dickieson is the creative author of the much lauded apilgriminnarnia.com. In his role as a scholar of the author of *Anne of Green Gables*, he hosts the recently established podcast of the L.M. Montgomery Institute (lmmontgomery.ca). A lecturer in literature at U of PEI, The King's College NYC, Northwind Institute, and Signum University, and an instructor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College, Brenton is also a freelance speaker and writer whose engaging and thought-provoking work can be found throughout cyberspace. He is particularly interested in how the creation of fictional universes help in spiritual formation, theological exploration, and cultural criticism.

Here Brenton shares direct overlap with the work and interest of popular poet, chaplain, musician, and lecturer Malcolm Guite. Malcolm has penned a number of highly-reviewed poetry collections, authored a significant book on ST Coleridge, and is a pandemic YouTube sensation via his "A Spell in the Library" www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac_XTbbfu4g). Recently retired from Cambridge University to focus on his poetry and public lecturing, he continues in his adjunct positions at Regent College and Duke University. For this CSLKS event, MacDonald & Inklings scholar Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson will host these two delightful raconteurs in an exploration of why they believe in the value of imaginative literature generally and the work of the Inklings specifically is significant for the increasingly global 21st century."

The ZOOM address and the time for this session of *CS Lewis & Kindred Spirits Connected* will be sent to the CSLKS mailing list in April.



zoom

ZOOM GROUPS and MEETINGS: Also on the web are numerous Lewis and kindred spirits ZOOM groups. You are encouraged to contact the facilitators about participating.

1. **InklingFolk: The Friday Fellowship**

A weekly ZOOM session usually on Fridays, moderated and facilitated by Joe Ricke <jsricke@outlook.com>, with wildly ranging madcap subjects and in depth discussions. See their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/inklingfolkTFF for past topics and other information. Last fall they did a read-through of *The Lion, the Witch, and The Wardrobe* to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the publication of the first Narnian Chronicle.

2. **New York CS Lewis Society**

www.nycslsociety.com/meetings.html

For the duration of COVID19, their second Friday of the month meetings are being ZOOMED. See the address above for instructions.

3. **Urbana Theological Seminary Online Tolkien Conference**

<https://tolkiencollege.com>

This is a free conference on Saturday, February 6, 2021, but you must register at the link above. An impressive roster of speakers will present and there will be several fun events during the day of the conference that you won't want to miss!

4. **Signum University TexMoot: Embodiment: Do You Need Some Body to Love?**

<http://texmoot.org>

The 4th Annual TexMoot (the Texas Literature & Language Symposium), sponsored by Signum University is Saturday, February 13th, 2021. TexMoot will offer a gallimaufry of lively curated conversations, a keynote presentation, workshops, and lots of fellowship and social time. Registration for TexMoot 2021 is \$10 for students; \$15 for all others. See <https://registration.signumuniversity.org/events/tm2021/> for more information.

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF C. S. LEWIS & KINDRED SPIRITS SOCIETY

This *Newsletter* is brought to you by the *C. S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society* created in 2018 by the Agora Christi Foundation of Iași, Romania. In turn, the *CSLKS Society* has established a “Friends of C. S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society” to support the faith/integration project of Agora Christi in cooperation with the English Department at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași organized around the study of the lives and works of the Inklings, beginning with C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. This project is not limited to Iași or Romania, but has already reached across post-communist Eastern Europe as well as to Western Europe, Asia, and North America.

In November 2020, we hosted a *CS Lewis & Kindred Spirits Connected ZOOM* meeting on ““Of this and other worlds: Narnia at 70” celebrating the 70th anniversary of the publication of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (the entire session can be viewed on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=57aJspmfV6Q&feature=emb_logo, which includes a brief four minute introduction to the work of the *C. S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society*, and at the 15:30 point a short presentation of previous symposia and conferences from 2013 to 2018.) We hope to launch a *CSLKS Society* web site soon. In addition, as mentioned above, we will be sponsoring another *CS Lewis & Kindred Spirits Connected ZOOM* meeting in April with a lively discussion between Inklings scholars Malcolm Guite and Brenton Dickieson; and in November 2021—COVID19 permitting—the next edition of the *CS Lewis & Kindred Spirits International Interdisciplinary Conference*, originally scheduled for November 2020 and postponed because of COVID19. Some of papers given at the 2018 conference have been published in *Linguaculture* (Iași)Volume 10, Number 2, 2019, which can be accessed at <http://journal.linguaculture.ro/archive/65-volume-10-number-2-2019>. *Linguaculture*, Volume 5, Number 2, 2014, also published a number of papers from previous meetings at <http://journal.linguaculture.ro/archive/53-volume-5-number-2-2014>. Articles from these volumes can be downloaded as pdfs.

We encourage all of you to support the work and mission of the *C. S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society* by becoming a member of the *Friends of the CSLKS*. How can I do that, you ask? Easy. There are various membership levels in the *Friends of the CSLKS*, depending of what level of support you feel led to contribute. These include the following: Student Membership (through University)=\$15.00/15 €uro/40 RON; Basic Membership=\$30/30 €uro/80 RON; Sustaining Membership=\$60/60 €uro/160 RON; Benefactor Membership=\$100/100 €uro/300 RON; and Patron and Institutional Membership=\$200/200 €uro/600 RON and up. Romanian contributors can send their membership contribution to: Fundația Agora Christi, Centrul de Studii Creștine și Apologetică, IBAN: RO27BRDE240SV92420052400, in RON, B.R.D. - G.S.G., codul SWIFT: BRDEROBU. International Membership contributions may be sent to Faith and Learning International which facilitates donations to the *CSLKS* via *Agora Christi*. (For more information on Faith and Learning International and *Agora Christi*, see <https://faithandlearning.org>.) To contribute, go to <https://faithandlearning.org/give-today/>; then click on “Give Again” or “New Gift” as appropriate. US contributions will receive a tax receipt.

Memberships in the *Friends of the CSLKS* are on a calendar year basis, starting with 2021. All members will receive periodic updates from the *CSLKS*, issues of *The Friends of the CSLKS Newsletter*, various *CSLKS* notices (including ID codes to ZOOM meetings), and other freebies too numerous to mention, so why not join today? If you don't, our honorary membership enforcer, Queen Jadis, will be paying you a surprise visit, which would be most unpleasant and might result in the cancellation of Christmas again. Don't let that happen; send those memberships in ASAP.

