



inklinations

http://www.okcu.edu/english/csliis*

Hwæt we inclinga on ærdagum
searþancolra snyttru gehierdon. . .
þara wæs Hloðuig sum, hæleða dyrost, brad ond beorhtword. . .**

Highlights of the Annual Conference

This year's conference at Oral Roberts University, April 1-2, 2005, was truly a great opportunity to convene with scholars and students of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, other Inklings, and their influences. The campus at ORU was welcoming and had fine facilities for the various sessions, meals, and keynote speeches.

I was impressed this year with the high quality of undergraduate student papers at various sessions. It was hard to choose which session to attend, and I'm afraid I ducked in and out of a couple just to make sure I caught certain papers; my favorites were those dealing with medieval inspirations or Charles Williams (but that is because I'm a medievalist and because Williams remains an enigma to me). I heard some student presentations that I wish I could have written! There was a good diversity of topics ranging from "Science, Truth and Imagination" to "George MacDonald" to Middle-earth and Narnian themes, just to name a few. We can be proud of the young people who are studying these writers in our universities for their astute analyses and for the new directions they are taking Lewis scholarship.

There was excellent participation by the officers of the Society (all presented papers), and faculty presentations were most insightful. Among the many fine essays of criticism and explication I was able to attend, there were presentations like Pam Jordan's (Taylor U.), who showed facsimiles of George MacDonald's unpublished annotations of *Hamlet*, and Sheba Kulothungan (Southwest Assemblies of God U.), who eloquently challenged Christian colleges to offer courses devoted exclusively to the writings of C. S. Lewis. Joe Christopher's observations on the correspondence of names in Lewis's narrative poem *The Queen of Drum* and *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* was such a convincing parody of textual criticism (citing fictional critics like Peabody, invented by Lewis to critique Tolkien's poetry) that it may have fooled several listeners.

Other highlights of the conference included the sumptuous meals. Dinner on Friday evening was served on the 60th floor of the Citiplex Tower, which offered an amazing view of the Tulsa skyline. As the sun finally set and the city lights began to shine in the distance, the delightful

*The C. S. Lewis and Inklings Society is based out of Oklahoma City University. See website for information.

**"Lo! we have heard in old days of the wisdom of the cunning-minded Inklings. . . One of them was [Lewis], dearest of men, broad and bright of word" (Humphrey Carpenter, *Inklings* 176-77).

aroma of the buffet nearly drove us mad, until finally grace was said and we filled our plates and filled the banquet room with laughter and good conversation that consisted of Inklings anecdotes and other collegial banter. As we polished off the last remnants of the dessert table with coffee, Christopher Mitchell delivered many strong points about Tolkien's theology behind the Middle-earth mythos.

Breakfast the next morning with Ralph Wood was equally delightful. The sun shone cheerfully into the ORU Regents Dining Room, and after everyone stocked up on bacon, eggs, sausage, potatoes, pancakes, and french toast (a feast fit for Hobbits), Professor Wood pointed out several ways in which Tolkien speaks to our postmodern culture. True to the spirit of the Inklings, a number of attendees (emboldened by the ample breakfast) engaged Wood in lively debate and fruitful discussion. These meals were a good time for fellowship, exhortation, and reflection.

After the final session of excellent papers, Mitchell concluded the conference with his address on "Wellness and the Art of Reading," which sparked many comments and questions on monitoring (or censoring) books at home as well as at school. Some responded that we ought to present age-appropriate literature to young adults, while not simply feeding them pabulum, under our guidance as we work through challenging texts together. "Model a passion for books," Mitchell exhorted us, in our teaching, scholarship, and in reading aloud to children. Again, the Inklings provide an example of communal literacy with their regular meetings to declaim, debate, and discuss their favorite writings as an alternative to escaping into isolation with books.

Dr. Mark Hall, President of the CSLIS, did a tremendous job of organizing the conference and making sure everyone felt welcome and comfortable. Let's all be sure to give Mark our thanks and congratulate him on a job well done. We should remember to thank Susie Jones, who helped make local arrangements, and also all the students and faculty at ORU who volunteered their time and effort to make this occasion so memorable.

Upcoming Activities of CSLIS officers:

Salwa Khoddam will present at the C.S. Lewis Summer Institute (Oxbridge 2005) at Oxford and Cambridge, from July 22-August 6. The Institute is sponsored by The C. S. Lewis Foundation at Redlands, California. Her paper is entitled, "The Garden and the Wilderness in The Chronicles of Narnia."

Joe R. Christopher will read two papers on Tolkien at the Tolkien Society's celebration of the 50th anniversary of *The Lord of the Rings* publication, August 11-17, 2005, in Birmingham.

Jonathan Himes will present "The Inklings: Writers of the Speculative and the Sacred at Oxford" at the conference "Literature and the Sacred" in Finland, April 28-29. A book based on his research of the Anglo-Saxon epic fragments of *Waldere* will debut there in Finnish translation. Himes will also be in Oxford around July 20-22 to examine Lewis's home The Kilns (if anyone wants to join him at the Bird and Baby and see other Inklings sites), and will go to an excavation of the earliest Anglo-Saxon battle against the Celts in Chester.

Deliberations of the Society Officers

Annual Publication: The CSLIS officers determined that an annual publication of our conference proceedings ought to be undertaken. There was difference of opinion on whether this responsibility should rotate each year, depending on whose university hosts the conference, or remain at one campus as the homebase of the periodical. It was agreed that it should appear annually for now and not more frequently than that. We should get this publication recognized by the MLA so that our articles can be located by other scholars doing research on these writers. Most if not all the articles should be written by faculty, or at least under the close supervision of university faculty, so that our contributions to scholarship will reflect a high level of research and rigorous thinking.

Recruitment: In the coming months and years, we should make it a priority to draw in more members. We can do this by mailing out a newsletter like this one to existing members (offering more benefits for joining) and by actively seeking the participation of our sister schools in the region. There are many fine colleges and universities who have participated in our conferences in recent years, and there are several more we can draw into our fellowship. We can advertise our future conferences on various scholarly listservs (the ANSAXNET, for instance) and with the various academic organizations to which we all belong. We can send our CFPs to scholars we know personally and encourage them to present. Finally, there are other Lewis organizations and societies that we can continue to build rapport with, who might be willing to post our CFPs and announce our meetings: Mythprint; Into the wardrobe, NY CSL Society; Lamp Post (Southern Cal.); Pilgrimage (Toronto or Canada); C.S. Lewis Foundation (Stan Mattson).

Registration and Fees: To encourage ongoing participation of our members in future, we should try to keep registration fees under \$100, while maintaining the same membership dues (\$10 student, \$20 faculty). Perhaps grant monies could be secured to underwrite the costs, but these amounts depend on the kind of speakers we wish to invite. For our society to thrive and grow, we should strive to continue inviting Lewis and Inklings scholars who are recently published and widely recognized for their contributions to the field.

Next year's conference at JBU: In the CFP, we decided to request abstracts only, due ahead of time; applicants must be a member by the deadline for their papers to be accepted. In scheduling, we must make sure our conference doesn't conflict with others that our members are likely to attend. So far, March 3-4, 2006, is free for JBU, and I have seen no other conflicts with other societies or events. However, it is quite early, and so perhaps others have not decided on their meeting times. But judging by their usual dates, does this slot look open to you? Officers also agreed that conference schedules should allow 1 hour for the annual business meeting. To encourage members to attend these meetings, we could showcase an item of Inklings memorabilia every year and announce this with the conference flyer. Joe Christopher has a personal letter from C. S. Lewis, for example, that we could show.

I am honored and excited to be hosting the CSLIS Conference for 2006 at John Brown University, and my colleagues and administrators have lent their support to this endeavor. One of my ideas is to offer "An Evening with the Inklings," or a dramatic re-enactment of the

Thursday night meetings in Lewis's rooms in Magdalen, performed by myself and other JBU faculty. Our drama professor has already agreed to direct the production.

New Officers for 2005 - 2006: We have not decided yet how frequently to rotate the officer positions--every 2 or 3 years? Eventually, we might want a Historian to maintain records of our events and reminiscences of members and officers.

Should you have any questions about our activities, please contact one of the Executive Board members below, who are the newly-elected officers for this year:

President, Mark Hall, Oral Roberts University. mhall@oru.edu
Vice President, Martin Batts, LeTourneau University. battsm@letu.edu
Treasurer, Joe Christopher, Tarleton State University. jchristopher@tarleton.edu
Secretary, Jonathan Himes, John Brown University. jhimes@jbu.edu

News, Announcements, Queries. . .

- March 3-4, 2006, for conference date next year at JBU.
- Don't forget to purchase *George MacDonald: Images of his World* by Rolland Hein, featuring Larry Fink's (Hardin-Simmons) beautiful photographs for the book.
- Does anyone know how to obtain the the long, uncut version of Walter Hooper's documentary film *Through Joy and Beyond*, as described by Kathryn Lindskoog? Could this be borrowed through interlibrary loan? Does Wheaton have a film reel of it, or a video?
- Another Lewis conference opportunity this year: Belmont Univ. Nov. 3-5, 2005
- Michael Phillips website – Sunrise Publishers has *unedited* George MacDonald books leatherbound for \$30 to \$45

Possible Keynote Speakers for Next Year

I will be looking for our guest speaker(s) for next year's conference, and I think a specialist in Lewis or Tolkien who has published recently would be ideal. If we could get a scholar who is widely known for insights on the intersection of faith, learning, and creative writing for the Inklings, we would draw presenters of high academic quality for our proceedings publication. I will try to obtain funding to cover the considerable cost of bringing one of these scholars to our conference. Please let me know if you have a suggestion for the speaker(s).

That's about it for this installment of the newsletter. I suppose it's long enough!

Jonathan B. Himes, Ph.D.
Secretary 2005-06, CSLIS
Assistant Professor of English,
John Brown University