

THREADS OF TRUTH FROM ART & STORY ▸ VOLUME 4 ISSUE 4 ▸ WINTER 1999

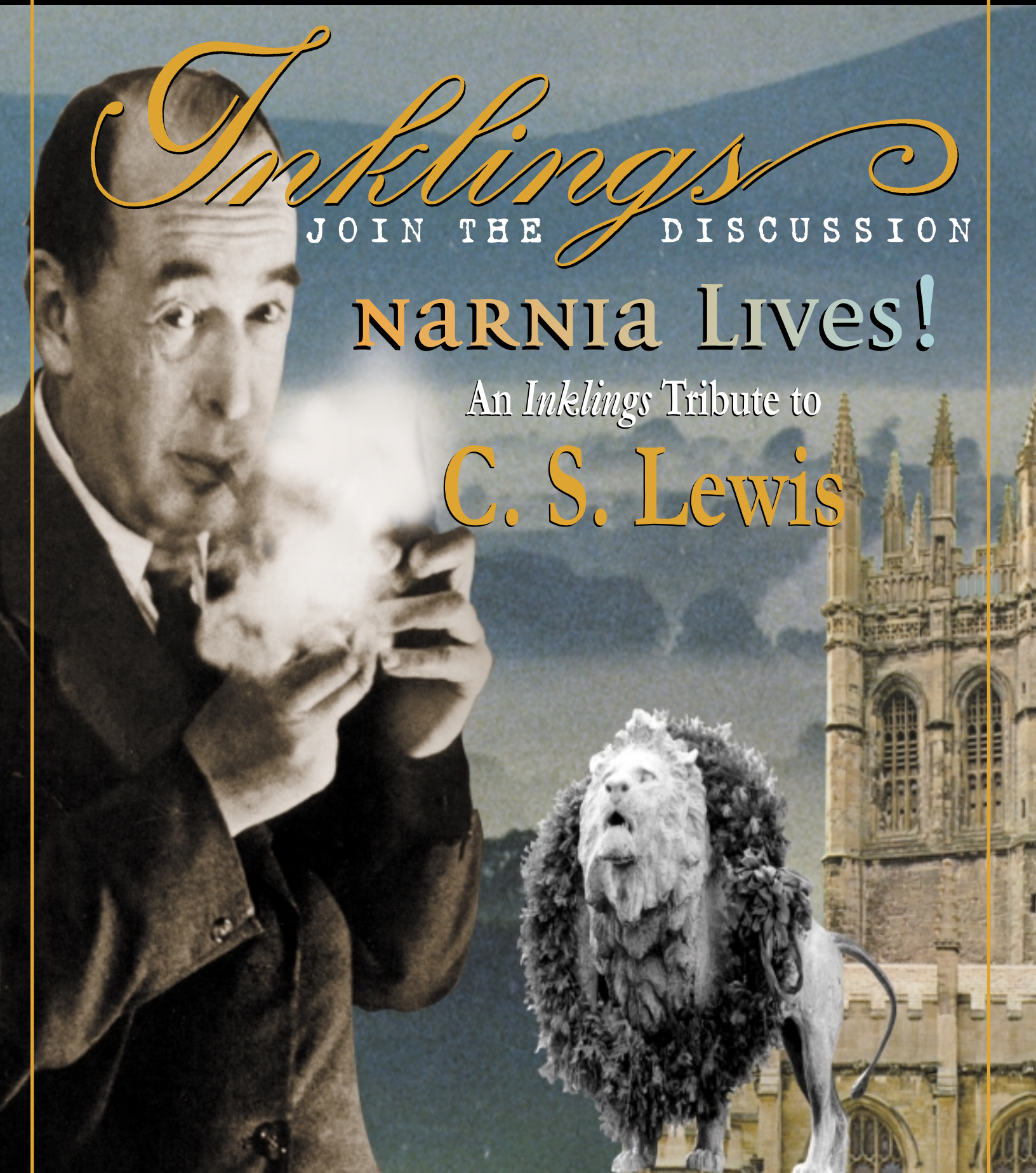
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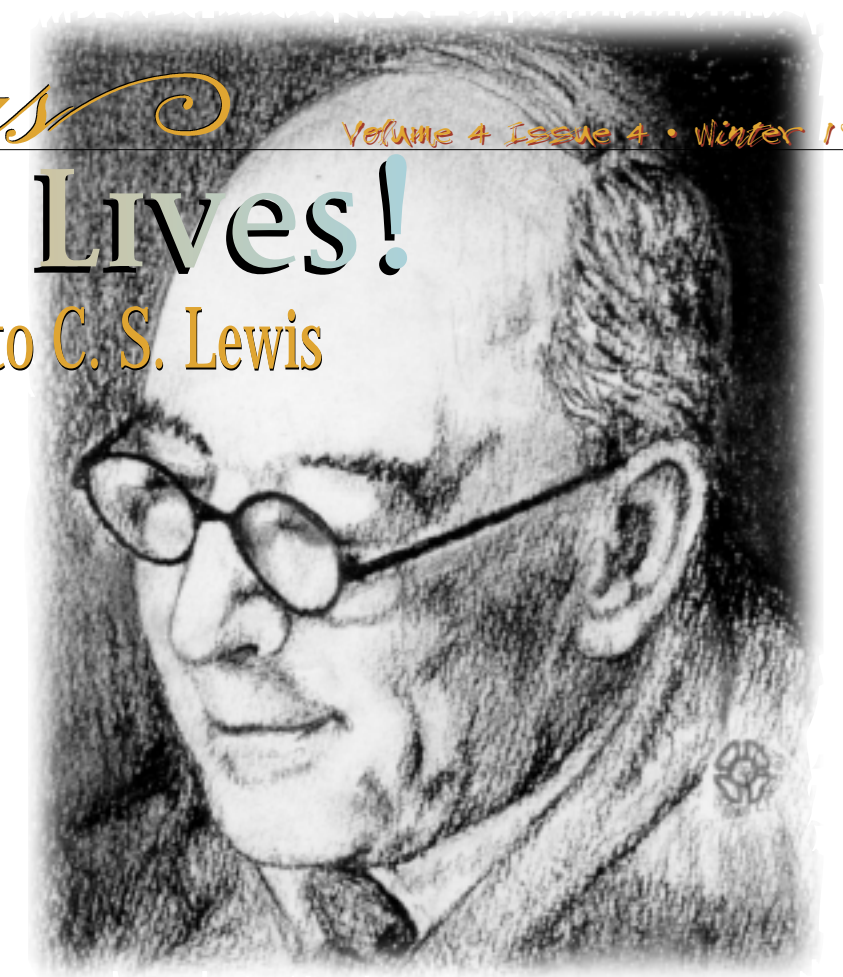
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Inklings

NARNIA Lives!

An Inklings Tribute to C. S. Lewis

Volume 4 Issue 4 • Winter 1999



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OUR MISSION:

To establish a literature and arts community forum which promotes and facilitates expression, discussion, and exploration of our shared human experience through art and literature.

OUR VISION:

To establish local *Inklings* communities regionally throughout the United States and around the world.

ABOUT OUR NAME:

The unusual name *Inklings* was selected in the same vein as an Oxford literary company of thinkers, writers, poets, and friends during and after World War II. The noted English writers C. S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and a few of their Oxford friends gathered regularly to recite poetry, to critique aloud each others' writing, and to invite comments and criticism. Establishing a literary forum for dialogue, discussion, and, above all, friendship, they called themselves the "Inklings." Tolkien later said of the group's name: "It was a pleasantly ingenious pun in its way, suggesting people with vague or half-formed intimations and ideas, plus those who dabble in ink."

Letters

We encourage your letters to the editor. Let us know your thoughts, praises or rantings about the content in this issue—or others. We genuinely print every letter (or at least excerpts from each one). Write to *Inklings*, 1650 Washington St., Denver, CO 80203, or e-mail us at inklings@lodo.net.

Thank you for the many generous letters you've sent to us over this past year, a year in which we weren't certain if *Inklings* would continue to publish. A few of the following letters are excerpted from responses to a letter that was mailed to our readers in September explaining the difficulties we experienced in 1999. Again thanks to each of you for your warmth, your friendship, your financial support, and your prayers. We hope to continue providing *Inklings* for you for many more issues.

Last year my friend, an ardent Bruce Cockburn fan from Pittsburgh, made your acquaintance at the Festival of Faith & Writing conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He returned from this event incredibly charged and generously shared lively anecdotes from the weekend, along with several back issues of *Inklings*. "You're going to love this!" he gushed. "And there's great poetry in here, too!" He was right on both counts. I may have missed out on the conference, but the rich and varied concentration of ideas delivered by *Inklings* was ample compensation. I am grateful to my friend for the introduction. Thank you for the effort you put into placing poetry on the pages of *Inklings*.

—Susanne Dopierala Richardson
Concord, New Hampshire

I came across your fall issue (Vol. 4:3) on a recent cruise for periodicals at the 6th Avenue Newsstand Cafe in Denver. It is rare that I read so much of an issue of any magazine. I kept finding material that moved me, rang true, inspired me, or offered important reminders about writing and about life. I particularly enjoyed Susan Adams Kauffman's piece, "Duncan, Updike, and G. I. Jane." I will keep my eyes open for future issues.

—Carolyn Jennings
Westminster, Colorado

I discovered your amazing magazine at the Cornerstone Festival last year and I was so delighted! I was only introduced to the whole *Inklings* scene about three years ago. Since then, a friend and I have started a similar literary group that meets in my basement which we call "The Pub." We call ourselves the "Imaginary Society" in the tradition of the *Inklings* having a name with several connotations.

I think my favorite article from your summer '98 issue (Vol. 4:2, What If? Scienc Fiction, Fantasy, and Other Worlds) was the Publisher's Note, "The Death of Myth" (Brad Hicks, p. 5). I also thoroughly enjoyed the articles by Mike Hertenstein, Mary McDermott Shideler, and the interview with Rod Bennett by Dave Canfield. Perhaps the most exciting thing about the issue was that it contained an original modern short story of science fiction! I was beginning to think it was a lost art among Christians. The story was well done and thought-provoking . . . not the best I've ever read . . . (but) at least as good as what seemingly arbitrarily fills the pages of Analog and Asimov.

I was so glad Barbara Linville did an introductory article to C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy ("A Ransom'd Journey: C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy," p. 17). I am firmly convinced that it is one of the greatest pieces of twentieth-century literature.

—Otto Peterson
Indianapolis, Indiana

Call for Submissions

All manuscripts—original fiction, poetry, interviews, book, film, music and theatre reviews, as well as essays about art, literature, and culture—should be mailed, with a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) to *Inklings*, 1650 Washington St., Denver, CO 80203. Writer's guidelines are available upon request. *Inklings* pays \$100 for fiction, \$50 for nonfiction and theme articles, and \$25 for poetry and reviews. Themes for Y2K: "Time, Death & Eternity" (Vol. 5:1, Feb., writing deadline: Jan. 7), "Crime, Punishment & Forgiveness" (Vol. 5:2, May, writing deadline: April 7), "Playing: Fun & Games" (Vol. 5:3, Aug., writing deadline: July 7), "Harvest, Seeds & Sowing" (Vol. 5:4, Nov., writing deadline: Oct. 6).

I was shocked to hear of your difficulties. Clearly you encountered the problems any business might face but it is no fun when it happens. *Inklings*, you have provided a needed boost to the Denver performing arts. It sounds like you are pulling out of your difficulties and I can only add my good wishes and hope that you will be enormously successful in the future.

—Henry Lowenstein
Denver, Colorado

I know that there is an audience for *Inklings*. I will pray for the financial relief that is necessary to keep this project afloat. I will also pray for the leadership and skills necessary for the business end of things. I will pray when you are weary, and have faith when yours wanders. Peace to you.

—Alice Longaker
Greeley, Colorado

Recently I've returned from Nova Scotia to our monestary in Colorado. To my delight I found *Inklings* on our magazine rack and have read a few copies. I'm intrigued as are all of us monks. We are Roman Catholic contemplative monks whose retreat centers are also centers of spirituality, culture, and the arts.

—Sister Patricia McGowlan
Nada Hermitage, Crestone, Colorado

Wondered why I hadn't seen *Inklings* in awhile. Glad you're not sick and the problem was only financial.

—Kathryn Lindskoog
Orange, California

I find it curious that in a magazine devoted to the memory of C. S. Lewis and his life of faith and letters, one can read from your regular contributor (J.C. Speck) that as a writer her "first responsibility is to myself and my art." (Vol. 4:3, "It's Just a Movie," p. 9) Please refresh my memory: what is the difference between her approach and that of the average narcissist? I am not content to read the thoughts and exhortations of one whose highest accountability is to herself. She continues by saying, "If I offend someone with a word or a belief, I know it simply doesn't matter because it has come from my heart and is therefore sacred and true to my vision." Apparently, hurt or offense felt in the hearts of others has no value to advance J.C. Speck's understanding of truth; at least not compared to the sacredness of her own heart. It is good to remember that among the many words for the wise the Bible says about the heart, one of them is that it is "deceitful above all things."

—Anne Farr Bartol
Boulder, Colorado

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Publisher's Note

Six Years of *Inklings*, 101 Years of "Jack"

Six years. Six years of *Inklings*. You hold in your hands the sixteenth issue of *Inklings* magazine. I thought it was one of the most unbelievable things I had ever been a part of when we published our first issue, Volume 1:1, in March 1994. But we've published *Inklings* fifteen times since!

It kind of feels like what Tolkien's squatty hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, must have experienced when he realized he was a dragonslayer, or like what C. S. Lewis's Pevensy children—Peter, Susan, Lucy, and Edmund—must have felt when they realized their hearts pumped royal blood in Narnia. Yes, it's that unbelievable to me.

Speaking of Lewis, did you notice we have a little to say about him in this issue? This is our tribute to the man whose writing group's namesake has been adopted as the name of this magazine. For those of you who don't know, we derived our name, *Inklings*, from a group of writers and friends—spearheaded by Lewis and Tolkien—who called themselves the "Inklings" in 1930s and '40s Oxford. [You can read about this spirited group in Nancy Shideler Hicks's article, "The Inklings of Oxford" (reprinted from *Inklings*, Vol. 1:1, Spring 1994) on page 16 in this issue.]

This issue was scheduled to be released a year ago on or around what would have been Lewis's centennial birthday. But the last twelve months have been for *Inklings*—and for everyone involved with it—a season to taste the realities of hope, faith, patience, endurance, fear, and friendship. Getting this issue out has been hard fought as it appeared in April this year that we may never publish *Inklings* again. (Check out our website—www.paradoxpub.com—for an explanation of what has transpired with us this past year. There is a reprint of the *Denver Post* article that very graciously and accurately told our story.)

I am especially grateful to those who wrote, called, e-mailed, or sat down with me

for lunch or coffee to find out what was really going on with *Inklings*, and with me personally. Thank you for not giving up on me and for not simply believing rumors that *Inklings* was finished. Your gifts, prayers, subscriptions, and warm notes of support have been grace to my soul. It has felt like being laid up in a sick-bed with a grotesque injury, yet not without authentic friends stopping in to wish the very best, preparing meals, offering hope and prayer, simply loving and urging to get well.

And we have been getting well—though some ugly scars remain. God has provided resources—human, financial, spiritual—and we've been able to get this issue to you. We plan on continuing to publish quar-

If you've never read Lewis and become interested in the man because of what you read on these pages, then this tribute will have indeed been worth the ink and the effort.

terly after this issue as well: February, May, August, and November each year, as God provides and as long as you're enjoying it.

I hope you view this tribute issue to "Jack" as a mere continuation of the party that began last year and has lasted well into the wee hours of the morning. To us, it's always a good time to celebrate Lewis's work. And I hope that many of you who may not be so familiar with the dowdy British writer—outside of Anthony Hopkins' portrayal of him in the 1994 film *Shadowlands*—will begin to understand our affinity for him after enduring some of the perhaps-a-little-sappy writing on these pages of *Inklings*. If you've never read Lewis and become interested in the man because of what you read on these pages, then this tribute will have indeed been worth the ink and the effort.

For this publisher it was Lewis's books—particularly *Till We Have Faces*, *The Great Divorce*, and the Space Trilogy *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*—which first connected with deep

longing in me, longing for Home, true Home. In editorials past I've written about this Place using a few of Lewis's metaphors to describe it—the Mountains of the Gods, Perelandra, Narnia, Heaven—but sometimes it seemed like only Jack may have known what I was trying to say (based on the utter silence and painful looks of puzzlement observed on the faces of several readers of those Publisher's Notes).

His ability to say, to write, what only my heart can articulate, is why I have stayed with Lewis and kept reading more. Lewis also had a special way of warmly introducing me to many of his dearest writing friends and mentors—Tolkien, Charles Williams, George MacDonald, Dorothy Sayers, Chesterton, Hopkins, Herbert, Shakespeare, Blake, Milton, Donne, and on and on. And it was Lewis who got me—a literary "muggle" (to coin a popular *Harry Potter* term) in grade school and college—excited about the classics!

And, of course, Lewis's Christian faith. Has there been another writer in the modern/postmodern eras who has articulated so ingeniously the tenets of Christianity and so poignantly addressed its opponents? (Probably Chesterton.) Yet Lewis expressed Christian meaning in so many literary ways—fantasy, fairy tale, science fiction, parable, essay, poetry, literary criticism, editorials, reviews—to which so many diverse and opposed minds could (and still do) relate.

Over the last year we've tried very hard to get this issue out. It has been designed since April and we've been hindered at every turn from publishing it. Lewis wrote in his *A Grief Observed* that "It doesn't really matter whether you grip the arms of the dentist's chair or let your hands lie in your lap. The drill drills on." It's felt a bit like this the past twelve months. Somewhere else he wrote that our difficulties can serve to remind us that our real home is elsewhere. And why should we not look forward to the arrival? ☛

There are many people I really want to acknowledge for laboring through the birth of this long-awaited issue. A few are mentioned in the masthead on page 6; others I would like to thank are Linnea Thompson (our "Gram"), Melanie Owen and Valerie Rife (my faithful friends and prayer warriors in the office), Scott Kingry (our summer prayer time meant the world), my family at Corona, Joe Fanganello (our landlord), Gary Oakley, Gary Bidwell, Mark Pingry and my friends at Heritage Bank in Lodo, Kallie Vermeiren (for fighting so very hard with the computer demons who didn't want this issue to be!), Susan Kauffman (for hanging in there through it all), and finally, my best friend, Nancy, and our precious gifts from heaven whom we call Mandy and Brittany. I am grateful to each of you for your caring, gifts, patience and most of all for your mind-boggling love. —Brad

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RETRACING THE LION PRINTS

What have the works of C. S. Lewis meant to you?

The following accounts are from men and women from all over the U.S. who have read, and in most cases been profoundly and deeply affected by the works of C. S. Lewis, warmly known to his friends as simply "Jack." And as he was to so many while he was alive, posthumously Jack has become to millions more, a cherished friend. It is *Inklings'* privilege, then—and perhaps the greatest tribute to Lewis we can offer—to share with you these vignettes which uniquely attempt to relate how this man's imaginative stories, essays, literary criticism, and letters somehow, uniquely, have nurtured each into places Lewis's great lion, Aslan, called "higher up and further in."

"I DIDN'T KNOW HORROR—UNTIL NARNIA"

Narnia opened the door into longing for me as a child. I remember praying for Narnia to be real because I wanted so badly to go there. I fantasized that I would meet C. S. Lewis, and one day, over tea, he would lean over conspiratorially and whisper to me what he had never told anyone else: Somewhere there really is a wardrobe that's the bridge into a real place called Narnia. When I discovered that Lewis had died the year I was born, I cried; I would never meet him and never hear the secret that I longed for.

I was raised in the church and experienced Easter morning long before I was introduced to Good Friday. In essence, I read the end of the story before the climax, and the power of the resurrection was lost to me. It was like reading the last page of the murder mystery before even reading that the body had been found—no bafflement, no intrigue, simply a matter of filling in the details that joined the beginning to the end. I had no sense of horror at the eclipse of unquenchable good in its collision with unredeemable evil. I knew from the start that everything would turn out okay, that the dark piece of the story would eventually be illuminated by divine light. I didn't know horror—until Narnia.

Because I was young enough, I didn't know about words like 'allegory' and 'myth.' In the story, the lion, Aslan, was beautiful and drew emotion and longing from me at the deepest levels that I could experience, but he was only a character in a book and not a real anything. More intrigue lay in the fact that my parents did not approve of a book with the word 'witch' in it. This lent a certain power to the surreptitious nature of my reading—the delight of forbidden fruit. The white witch was chilling and horrible, but my young suburban, white, Sunday-school life had taught me that all would be well. Aslan was her obvious opponent and was clearly stronger with his good than she with her white magic.

When Edmund betrayed his brother and sisters by agreeing to take them to the white witch, Aslan's mercy towards him inspired in me the pleasure a good story should elicit. And when Aslan went to meet with the white witch and came back sad, and the witch jubilant, I was suspicious but not alarmed. Then, during the night, he went to the enemy camp. Edgy, I found myself side by side with Lucy watching the ghoulish creatures shave him and brutalize him, and I shifted uncomfortably in my little-girl skin. He was bleeding and humiliated, and a small part of my stomach tightened and said, "That's enough. This is far enough. Do something now. Break the bonds and save the day." And then she killed him.

Lucy and I sat together in horror. I reread the most recent pages, frantically trying to relocate some strong thread of goodness that would prove his death a sham, that would make me laugh because I, along with the witch, had been taken in on a glorious ruse. I searched and found nothing. This story was going much too far into the darkness. Perhaps my parents had been right. Perhaps stories with witches in them are too powerful and dark for little hearts. The wilderness after his death was barren, with no hint of a familiar landmark. I had been betrayed, drawn into a dark place I had never been before—where evil wins. Tears didn't seem to touch the depths of the disillusionment. My childish soul was rent.

And then the dawn.

And then Aslan. Golden, glorious, laughing, whole? The whiplash sent me reeling. Hope and miracle had reached deeper than the bottomless deep to which my soul had sunk. Never since, not even at the birth of my first child, have I experienced such glory. Hope had been completely dead—not in a coma, not accidentally buried alive, not magically preserved and waiting for a kiss, but dead. That cadaver of hope came alive again and a new category burst to life in my mind, my heart, my soul.

It wasn't until a later childhood reading of this ravishing story that I set the book down because of the weight of new revelation. Jesus. This story was just like Jesus. Suddenly I understood the story line: There is death before resurrection, no Easter morning without Good Friday. I had been taken back to the beginning of the mystery, walked through the discovery of the body, and wrestled through the impossibility of a resolution. This story of Jesus that had had its power stolen from me was suddenly, in one stupendous moment, revealed to my soul in brilliant detail. Another miracle. The impossible—to have gone back to a place of unknowing after knowing.

This solid revelation and tangible touch of hope is now a familiar piece of furniture within me. It looks like an ordinary wardrobe, but when the griefs of my life are too large to stuff in it, somehow, miraculously, there is an entire country where the back wall is supposed to be. Indeed, my childhood longings have become real and the landscape has increasingly familiar landmarks. 🐾

From Arvada, Colo., *Inklings* editor Nancy Shideler Hicks teaches English composition at UC-Denver. One of her most treasured landmarks, she says, was reading Lewis's *Narnia* to her daughters, Mandy and Brittany, ages eleven and nine (in photo).



By Susan Adams Kauffman

"I LEARNED HOW TO THINK . . . AND THINK SOME MORE"

I first made C. S. Lewis's acquaintance on a summer day in '73. Wearing denim cut-offs, a halter top and molded-rubber thongs, I sprawled, as usual, on the floor of our local library. My damp skin stuck like duct tape to the vinyl bean-bag chair, and the carpet's bristly shag chafed my white nine-year-old legs. That day, though, I didn't care.

Neither humid heat, skin-rash, nor a floor scattered with other books colorfully vying for my attention could have pried my eyes from the words, "Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away . . ." I finished the first chapter of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, then checked Lewis out at the front desk and took him home with me. Together we floated on porch swings and through chiggery fields to Narnia and its dazzling spells, its Aslan.

Years later, I grew up and left Lewis behind—but not for long. As a college freshman I naively signed up for Philosophy 301. On the first day of class a slight, stodgy-looking gentleman who turned out to be my professor rose to the podium and mused, "You ask me how I know he lives/He lives within my heart.' Are faith and conviction enough?" He assigned Lewis's treatise on education and morality, *The Abolition of Man*, for homework. "A skinny little paperback by a children's writer," I reassured myself. Over the next few weeks I mud-wrestled my way through the book's three essays, pausing frequently to look words up in my collegiate dictionary. By mid-semester every page of my 109-page copy bore caffeine stains and volumes of inky red notations. I pulled a C on the mid-term and was grateful. And I learned how to think, and think some more.

Lewis also showed up in freshman

comp. I should have seen him coming when, on day one, my professor dissolved herself and the rest of us into tears reminiscing about her good old days as pen pal of "that brilliant, passionate soul, Jack Lewis." She handed out a syllabus listing *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, *Surprised by Joy*, *Till We Have Faces* and *The Great Divorce*. I grew to share my teacher's fondness for Jack and went on to read more of his works on my own.

Lewis has enriched my life in numerous ways. His richly-textured, metaphorical *Chronicles of Narnia* opened my childhood imagination to new possibilities, new "if onlys." His essays, non-fiction and allegorical writings have sparked in me an appreciation for both reason and paradox. Few people, Lewis once said, expend the time and energy necessary to follow a thought through to its truly logical conclusion. When I sit down to read Lewis, I can be certain I will be challenged to resist reaching for simplistic, status quo explanations.

It was my mother who, when I was a boy of eight, read to me *The Chronicles Of Narnia*. For one hour every evening, I left behind the heat and confusion of the day—the drudgeries of schoolwork, the low math scores, the high tardy rate, the flash cards I could never seem to memorize—and passed through a doorway into another world. A world where animals talked (even philosophized), where the kingdom was ruled by a beneficent Lion, where the land itself, the rocks, and rivers, and trees lived, moved, danced. It was a world of adventure and enchantment and astonishing beauty. And it was a world of danger, too. Behind every creaking door lurked the dark side of magic—scheming magicians and black-hearted witches and giants with an appetite for small children.

During those many nights, Narnia became for me as vivid and tangible a world as the one outside my own front door. But most importantly, Narnia became a place where things like goodness, and loyalty, and courage mattered, where, for once, things like popularity, and gold stars, and expensive tennis shoes didn't. It was a place where standing up to a bully could turn a coward into a king.

As a boy of eight, I believed in that place, in its possibility and promise. I still do. 🐾

Thom Mannarino is a Ph.D candidate in English at Florida State University in Tallahassee



In honor of Lewis's Anglicism, *Inklings* editor Susan Adams Kauffman takes her tea with cream, orders scones at Starbucks, and swears by old-fashioned hot water bottles on frosty winter nights.

RETRACING THE LION PRINTS

What have the works of C. S. Lewis meant to you?

Continued from previous page

C. S. Lewis was a master at the craft of writing but so are a few others. He had a distinct sympathy for the human lot, but then this can be found elsewhere also. He was a thoughtful Christian, but again, this is not unique. He was the epitome of the cultured Western Man, an endangered species (but it has always been an endangered species), yet still not extinct.

God found in him a vehicle for inspiration that combined these facets of a complex man and more, and produced a friend and mentor to millions of fellow pilgrims.

His work gave me a sense of having a special gifted friend and mentor. I’m sure others would agree and have said with a sigh at certain times, “Jack knew”. 🐾

Jim Carroll resides in Pennsylvania, and we’re not quite sure what he does (not that it really matters). Thanks, Jim, for your insightful words.

Perhaps it’s because I grew up switching ping-pong paddle from hand to hand, depending upon whom I was playing—but for me, the genius of C. S. Lewis lies in his ambidexterity. With one hand, he writes theoretical treatises with the devastating dialectic of an academic. Ping. Then, with the other, he reverses the pen and paper to craft beautiful alternative worlds of pure story. Pong. I freely admit that his talents as a popular theologian, a scholar of literature, and a weaver of fantasy (wait a minute, that’s two hands and a foot!) are all, arguably, individually surpassed by the work of others. This does not diminish for me the fact that I know of no one else who did, does, or could write so masterfully with both hands (and foot) at once. Game point. 🐾

David Noller, *Inklings* writer and former Denver resident, now teaches at NYU in Albany. He was ping-pong champion of his junior high school.

Jack? Well, of course, for sheer enchantment the Narnia tales rate right up there—but my personal favorite is *The Great Divorce*: Lewis at his most hallucinogenic. But I must confess: I am just as fascinated by Lewis’s life as I am by anything he wrote. Writers’ biographies grab me in a way hard to explain.

So, my favorite Lewis story: Scotty (my husband) and I were living in London when *Shadowlands* opened in previews, with the beloved Nigel Hawthorne playing Lewis. I can remember sitting in that darkened, plush English theater, amazed at the laughter that erupted from the audience at odd moments of the play. What I soon realized was this: the British knew Lewis—knew his strengths, foibles, odd mannerisms—and were relishing certain illuminating moments like they would a good-natured roast of an old friend. He wasn’t just another writer to them; he was an integral, beloved part of their literary culture. It felt wonderful to be part of a crowd who cherished him so. A small slice of heaven indeed. 🐾

***Inklings* columnist Joy Sawyer, poet, author, and Ph.D candidate, resides in Denver, Colorado.**

He (Lewis) sure has and continues to be a most helpful and important mentor to me. *The Screwtape Letters* in particular has been better guidance for me (as a Christian) than any therapist ever was. Lewis’s insight into ‘Satan’s thinking’ and into the enemy’s ways has often demoted the enemy’s tactics (thanks be to God) and helped me, many a time, to undercut an enemy foothold (or a potential foothold). *Screwtape* has been a great source of guidance for (this) soldier on the front line. 🐾

Danita Geltner is a visual artist in New York City.



Sometime in late adolescence I encountered the fiction mind of C. S. Lewis. I read the *Chronicles of Narnia*, each book compelling me to read more and more of this wonderful blend of symbol, fiction, mysticism, and adventure. From the *Narnia* books I was drawn on and on, reading nearly everything Lewis wrote, sponging it up because I had discovered someone who could put in words much of the complexity and mystery of the faith I was coming to embrace. His writing took me to places where the gossamer that separates what is present in this world from the promise of the other seems to disappear altogether. He took me to “thin” places as any good Celtic storyteller might do.

Whether the image is of the risen Aslan calling forth flowers from his footsteps, or the courageous and entirely approachable Reepicheep choosing to pass beyond the waterfall, or the Dawn Treader sailing toward the horizon, Lewis’s metaphors and characters continue to call me “higher up and farther in” to a journey that weaves the myth, the symbol, and the mystery into a joyful and always surprising encounter of the Divine. 🐾

Poet and freelance writer Peggy Gilbert, from Nyack, New York, provides organizational management and retreats for nonprofit organizations.

The fog had lifted for me, when at age fifteen, I happened on a copy of *Mere Christianity*. This book clicked with me and, in the most profound way, set me free. I had already read *Screwtape* and realized immediately that Lewis was not your run-of-the-mill Christian evangelical: read, legalist. So, *Mere Christianity* allowed me to put logic around the faith many in my circle of Christian associates insisted was the only approach to God. Lewis liberated my thinking and my walk with God like none other.

Recently, I am challenged to revisit much of the empowerment that *Mere Christianity* provided to my young faith. Now, at forty, I need to find time to return to my Lewis roots and rediscover again the theology that allowed me to know I could have a belief in God that was both intellectual and based on faith. Lewis made it mere and I often wondered why he used that word: Maybe God intended the Christian journey to be a far simpler, less muddled thing than what so many make it out to be. 🐾

James Marshall, from Nyack, New York, is the director of new programs development for World Relief, a refugee resettlement agency.



Eric Mataxis writes for Charles Colson’s *Breakpoint* radio commentary in New York City.

As for “Jack,” I’m afraid my comments are heresy, but here they are nonetheless: In terms of style, C. S. Lewis has never captured my attention. I must confess, I can’t get past page two of most of his stuff unless someone is making me read it, although I did once hear John Cleese read *Screwtape* on cassette—that was a marvelous experience. But I do get excited about Lewis when people summarize his works for me; when, for example, a friend of mine in adult Sunday School class came up to me several years ago and told me about *The Great Divorce*. I couldn’t wait to read it. The story that Lewis was telling expressed my feelings so well. 🐾

Del Doughty is assistant professor of English at Huntington College in Indiana and book review editor for *Inklings*.

Though it may outrage thousands, even millions, to say such a thing, Lewis’s influence on me has been principally sartorial. (There, I have said it.) A tattered three-button brown tweed jacket I often wear illustrates my point. In fact, in the summer of ‘98 I attended the C. S. Lewis Foundation’s Centenary Celebration in England and sported that very jacket, much to the goggle-eyed admiration of aesthetically sensitive Lewis fans from everywhere.

As an added blessing, a Greek Orthodox nun who took a shine to my surname tore the jacket from me and during an uninspired lecture at St. Mary’s Church, Cambridge, stitched up the ragged lining, welding the jacket and Lewis together in my mind forever. But I do not mean to be entirely flippant here. My attraction to what we might call a Lewisian aesthetic—to the beauty of Oxford, its pubs and chapels, and to Lewis’s tweediness and profound Englishness—is inextricably intertwined with my love for his writing. There is a numinous and sacramental quality in both that is absent in our American evangelicalism. But in the spires of Oxford and in the sentences of *Perelandra* one touches it: the painful Beauty, the awesome Otherness, the dumbstriking Presence of God. 🐾

RETRACING THE LION PRINTS

What have the works of C. S. Lewis meant to you?

Continued from previous page

Other than the influence of the Holy Scriptures and my parents (okay, and maybe the old *Rocky and Bulwinkle* shows), my thoughts have been unmade and remade by the writings of C. S. Lewis. This Oxford don and grand apologist of the Christian faith quietly invaded the occupied territory of my mind and set up a subversive infiltration that worked to shake and rattle those unexamined conventions lurking in my thinking.

Curiously enough, his ecumenical vision of Christ's Church that remains remarkably evangelical in doctrine, was played out in the founding of Regent University in Virginia, where I teach. A motley orthodox fellowship of original faculty, including a Roman Catholic, a black Pentecostal woman, a (white) Presbyterian, a Southern Baptist, a

Congregationalist, an odd Methodist, and, of course, an Episcopalian, found ourselves emerging from our comfortable rooms into the great hall of one faith in one Lord Jesus Christ. Lewis served as God's own engineer in showing us the biblical blueprint of such an unlikely company of mere Chaucerian pilgrims, all on our way to Canterbury to repent of our sins and worship God, but each with very different stories to tell.

Lewis also defined for me, too well, my most besetting sin: flippancy. It is a wickedly delicious habit for academics, and Lewis would not let me escape its fiery wages with an additional witticism. Even jokes can not keep me out of the consequences of disobedience to God or falling short of loving my wife or my neighbors. Lewis persuaded me that my laughter needs sanctification as much as my soul.

Lastly, Lewis revealed the sources of his light, and led me on my journey to Jerusalem, and into many merry inns along the way, where cheerful hosts like George Herbert, Jane Austin, MacDonald, Spenser, Rabelais and, especially, G. K. Chesterton, poured their intoxicating vintage wines into my leaky wineskin. Thus I toast the host, Lewis, who introduced me to such a rollicking and lively group of friends and fellow Christians. 🐾

Dr. Terry Lindvall teaches at Regent University in Virginia. He is the author of *Surprised By Laughter: A Study of the Comic World of C. S. Lewis*, published by Nelson.

"If good novels are comments on life, good stories (which are very much rarer) are actually additions to life; they give, like certain rare dreams, sensations we never had before, that enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience."

—C. S. Lewis

Lewis has most affected me in an indirect way. Though at certain points in time I came to lucid realizations directly from books he authored, I was most touched by the impact he had on Van and Davy, and they on he—and thus me. Their story, told in *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon (Van) Vanauken himself, includes correspondence between the two and Lewis, and parallels Jack's time with Joy Davidman, his later-life, short-lived wife and friend. The letters from Lewis, initially in response to the couple's quest for Christianity, and then more and more simply as friends who cared for each other deeply and honestly, made Lewis more human to me—real and compassionate. Because the friendship was primarily between Van and Lewis, it gave me a picture of a rare, male friendship with integrity.

But if I had to point out the strongest influence from their exchange, it was the thoughts on time and eternity. It is hard to describe how reading the exchange made me feel, but somehow their description tugged at the part of me that is good and longs for something greater. It was a catalyst for change: previously, I wasn't sure heaven was particularly appealing. Of late, my desire for 'home' has an intensity I never knew before. 🐾

Laura Keith Wright, from Denver, is *Inklings'* former fiction editor. She is recently married and attempting to juggle the roles of wife, friend, editor, writer, marketer, project manager, reader, cook, housekeeper, financial planner, exerciser, hiker . . . "not necessarily in that order," she says.

Lewis has been a great influence on me since age five when my dad read me *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

My imagination's landscape has been greatly formed by the Narnia Chronicles and all of Lewis's fiction. "Solid Ground" was written about Lewis's book *The Great Divorce*.

"Solid Ground"
by Annie Quick

will you not take my hand and guide me
through this blinding-bright day
since my eyes have just awakened
they're not used to seeing light this way

won't you raise me through these streets
my feet are accustomed to slumber:
there walking on shadows
now tender against such solid ground

I've been awakened
from my dreaming
by your touch on my hand
I've been awakened
from my dreaming
by your kisses

interpret for me what my ears are hearing
music so clear I'm lost in the sound
my senses are not yet strong
strong enough to bear this beauty

I've been awakened
from my dreaming
by your touch on my hand
I've been awakened
from my dreaming
by your kisses

I don't know the lay of love's land
I don't know how deep or how wide
I don't know how far are its borders
I don't know how high to lift my eyes 🐾

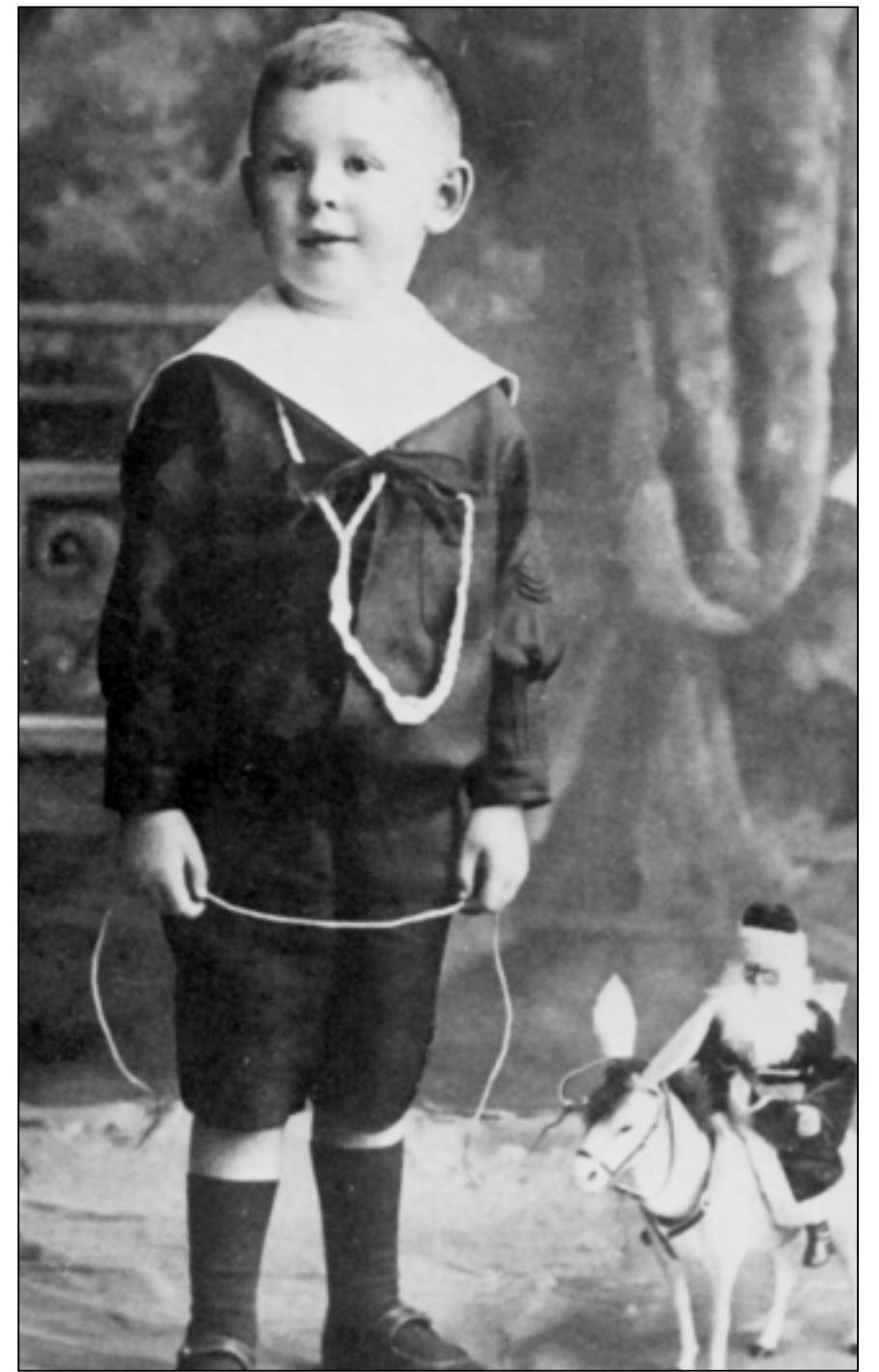


Annie Quick, from New York City, is a songwriter and lead singer for the band Stickman Jones. These lyrics were taken from their album *Blinding Bright*.

When I think of C. S. Lewis I think of Aslan. I think of His footprints in the snow and how flowers bloomed wherever His feet trod. I think of the Lion who is not safe, I think of the wildness of our God. When I think of C. S. Lewis I think of Aslan and of being a child and the wonderful feeling of having a hero—and being a kind of a hero. It's not something I've grown out of. I hope I never do.

I love C. S. Lewis because he doesn't say what you expect. He turns your expectations on their head and takes your breath away. Maybe that's because it is the Truth. Maybe it's because in his writing you trace footprints of the Lion—and wherever His feet touch the earth, He turns winter to spring. 🐾

Sally Lloyd-Jones is children's publisher for *Reader's Digest* Publishing in Connecticut.



C. S. Lewis in the Outback

by Chris Gilbert

The Wanaaring Road is signposted at a left fork off a ragged blacktop strip that passes for a road westward from the town of Bourke. This is the eastern gateway to the Australian outback. Trees are stunted and drought-hardy with leathery leaves hanging like clusters of scimitars, blue-green and gray-green, soft on the eyes. Saltbush and clumped grasses make silver and tan cover over a crusted red-ochre alluvium. The road descends gently from light scrub cover on a red-soil ridge to become a cream-clay causeway across a black-soil flood plain silted by the Darling River. We are entering C. S. Lewis country.

This was once the wild west of Australian white settlement on the edge of the desert, the last frontier. Paddle steamers and outlaws once frequented these parts. Only Antarctica would be more remote from Oxford, England. How did the little-traveled Lewis know what it is like to stand on the vast plains of the Australian outback? Speaking from the midst of an ocean in *Perelandra*, he articulates what I have come to know as an “outback experience.”

“Like all solitudes it was, indeed, haunted: but not by an anthropomorphic Deity, rather by the wholly inscrutable to which man and his life remain eternally irrelevant. And beyond this ocean was space itself . . . Mere bigness and loneliness overbore.”

Still, there is a better reason why I call this Lewis country. Five miles from the fork over the dusty corrugations of the Wanaaring Road is Fort Bourke Station and the Pera Bore homestead. For twenty

years it has been a campus for a radical experiment in Christian lifestyle training known as Cornerstone Community. Here, from its beginnings, I came to enjoy the writings of an Englishman we often called Saint C. S.

What was the appeal of this Oxford don to late teens, early twenties Aussies who left the cities for the desert to re-think the direction of their lives? We lived in rough huts and old caravans sheltered under

brushwood sheds. We converted a chicken house into a kitchen/dining room and turned a century-old school house into a lecture hall and library/study. We killed our own animals for beef and mutton. Electrical power was diesel-generated and ceased at 10 p.m. Everything was pioneering, including the growing of irrigated cotton. Half a day was spent in the fields, the other half in the school house. And we pursued a theology from Christian experience that made sense in the world we knew.

Pride of place on the library shelves was C. S. Lewis. *The Great Divorce*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the space trilogy, and of course, *Mere Christianity*. There were his various essays and *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles*, *Letters to Malcolm*, and most precious of all was a cassette recording of the man himself made in 1962 by the Cornerstone Director while sitting in on a lecture at Cambridge University. George MacDonald's books also abounded on the shelves because of Lewis's influence.

Most of us came to Fort Bourke disillusioned with youth culture's “flower power” psychedelic answers to existential pain. Some, including me, found the excesses of Christian fundamentalism and the dominant ideologies of East and West abhorrent. The writings of C. S. Lewis strengthened and enlarged our imaginations and gave us hope that, by using our minds, we might find a reasonable truth about the life before us.

Hardly a lecture failed to be enriched by the ideas of Lewis. The attraction was his bigness of thought, transcending the

immediate reality and reversing the order of a meaningless popular culture. I found in all of his writing a wonderful perspective: Heaven was the original, all else was a reflection, even a shadow of that reality. The value of an idea was measured by how well it represented the higher reality, which was not our own invention.

Twelve of us lived and worked and studied together at Cornerstone Community in 1979. At Pera Bore we sat under the inspiration of this man, learned in the literature of nearly the sum of human civilization. I began to learn what robust questioning faith is and to listen to the longings of what he called the true self. “If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another,” said Lewis in his apologetics, *Mere Christianity*.

But I must confess, for all the accent on theology, apologetics, biblical study and practical work in community, my core theological beliefs were shaped most profoundly by the Narnia tales, the seven-book series for children. In *Letters to Children*, Lewis remarked: “Anyone in our world who devotes his whole life to seeking heaven will be like [Reepicheep in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*].”

Reepicheep, the swashbuckling mouse

of Narnia, held special attraction for me. Small but courageous, he was jealous for the cause of Aslan to the point of risking of his life and especially prone to dignifying everyone with reminders of their relationship to the true Lord of Narnia. This is what my own soul still resonates to; Reepicheep told me something of my own

to suburban and urban lives made richer by the Lewis imperative to evangelize and humanize our local communities.

It has been twenty years since that time in the community of Saint C. S. Things could not be more opposite. In New York, a rigid, towering, angular landscape and social institutions with powerful technologies that intimidate the human spirit differ drastically from the oceanic plains and parochial pioneering communities of the outback. Here, C. S. Lewis, more than any other writer, fires my imagination on what it means to be truly human. He makes me pay attention now. My own experience is that the other world is always imminent and sometimes breaks in—even in New York City, on Wall Street, and in the subways. And I hear

him still:

“If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.”

Freelance writer Chris Gilbert's work has been published in both Australian and American magazines. He is currently writing a memoir about growing up Australian and the unique spirituality that shapes Christian faith down under.

Hardly a lecture failed to be enriched by the ideas of Lewis. The attraction was his bigness of thought, transcending the immediate reality and reversing the order of a meaningless popular culture.

destiny.

On the edge of the desert, where the night sky bedazzled us, the C. S. Lewis fantasies fired our imaginations with fresh meaning for our lives. This enthusiasm we shared with the local children of Bourke, many of them Aboriginal, in a weekly after-school club. The stage backdrop we painted directly from the Pan edition cover of *The Magician's Nephew*. Polly and Digory astride the flying horse above the land of Narnia. Most of us in the class of '79 moved on from Fort Bourke Station, back

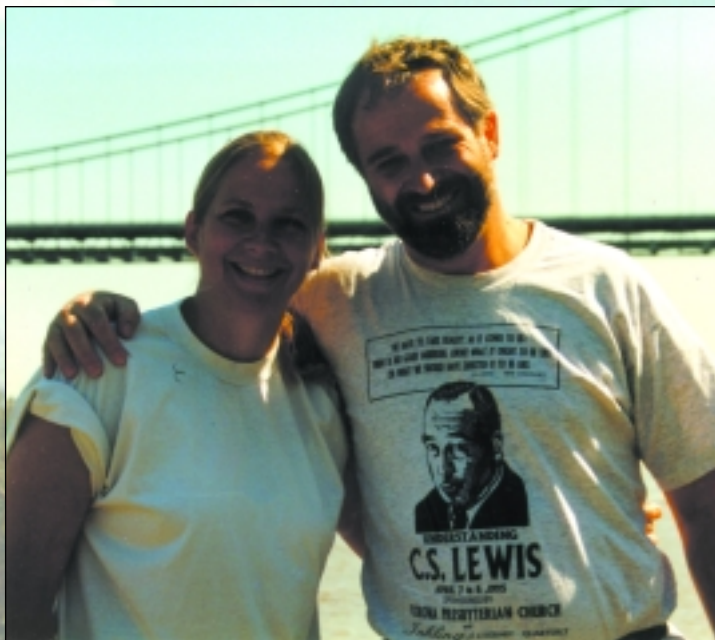
I have measured out
my life in coffee spoons.

—] J.S. Eliot

Ditto.

—] Peaberry Coffee

Exquisite espressos, consummate coffees. Eight metro locations.



Aussie writer Chris Gilbert and his newlywed wife, former *Inklings* editor, Jo Kadlecak, live in New York City.

By Nancy Shideler Hicks

The Inklings of Oxford

Editor's Note: One hundred years ago last fall, C. S. Lewis officially made his first appearance on earth. In honor of Jack's birthday and in celebration of the six-year mark for Inklings magazine, we want to offer the following "almost exact" reprint of our original article about the Inklings of Oxford.

It is Tuesday in the English pub Eagle and Child—affectionately redubbed The Bird and Baby. The group of men in the corner, alternately raising beer mugs and voices, are going at one another hammer and steins. Thinly-veiled insults hurl through the air and the tension is palpable as one particular figure ruthlessly delivers his argument. There is a brief silence and another man rises dramatically to his feet. "Your goal then, brother Jack, is to drive your views about peace down our throats until we are forced to respond in piece-es?" The group erupts into laughter, the tension melts into the well-worn floor, and everyone orders another round of foaming ale.

The group? The Inklings. During and after World War II, a group of scholarly bullies, one of whom was named C. S. Lewis, met every Tuesday at the Bird and Baby pub and again on Thursday nights in Lewis's rooms at Magdalen College at Oxford. Lewis was a don at Oxford, as were most of the friends who gathered with him. They read their works-in-progress aloud to one another, discussed English school politics, theology, the state of the nation, or practiced besting one another with puns. It was in this company that the fabric of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* was woven, as was that of Lewis's science-fiction novels and *The Screwtape Letters*. Charles Williams, poet and writer of supernatural thrillers such as *War in Heaven* and *Descent into Hell*, also found a haven of camaraderie and stimulation within the circle of the Inklings.

For these men, the common thread of friendship appeared to be their love of story. As Lewis explained, "Are not all lifelong friendships born at the moment when at last you meet another human being who has some inkling?" Each Inkling brought such a connection to their literary table. Since childhood, Lewis had been philosophically shaped by literature and was enamored with Norse mythology. In Tolkien he found a soul mate on both counts. Early on in their acquaintance, Tolkien had founded a club amongst the dons at Oxford to read Icelandic sagas and myths. Soon the two self-fashioned poets were trading and remaking one another's poems. To the group, Tolkien became "Tollers" and was

included on walks and pub visits with the Lewis brothers: Jack (as C. S. had preferred to be called since childhood) and Warnie (Major Warner Lewis). Warnie had had Jack to himself almost exclusively since childhood, and Tolkien's introduction was a bit of a bump for the affable brother. But time and friendship soothed the intrusion, and the three became good friends.

In the spring of 1936, another soon-to-be Inkling, Charles Williams, was reading Lewis's *Allegory of Love* at the same time Lewis was



The Eagle and Child pub in Oxford, affectionately called "The Bird and Baby" by Lewis and his writing friends, the "Inklings."

reading *The Place of the Lion* by Williams. Their letters of affirmation nearly crossed in the mail. Once again, Lewis had found a like-minded friend with whom to compare poetry and discuss his love of Celtic mythology. They corresponded by mail until Williams' publishing firm was relocated to Oxford because of the war. This man whom Lewis immediately welcomed into the group as an old friend was one whom Tolkien had never met. Williams turned out to be more than a bump for Tolkien. In Tolkien's opinion, he and Lewis were never quite the same after this sudden apparition. While Williams liked and admired Tolkien's work, Tolkien neither liked nor understood most of what Williams wrote. Although Williams' fascination with T. S. Eliot's writings failed to impact the group as a whole, at last Williams had a circle of peers with whom to argue and discuss as equals. Williams' contributions to the group were numerous: he was passionate about writing, he possessed an unusual ability to defend both sides of any argument, and he displayed an amazing gift for memorizing and quoting a vast spectrum of poetry and prose.

On the other hand, Warnie's contributions to the Inklings were more domestic in nature. He supported Jack, provided humor (usually well-marinated by the end of most evenings), critiqued and encouraged, and perhaps most importantly, recorded the events of many meetings in his personal journal. It is such an entry



Inklings Volume 1:1, the premeire issue released in March 1994, from which this article, "The Inklings of Oxford," was originally published.

that gives us a vivid impression of another frequent Inklings member: Hugo Dyson. Dyson was a man who "gives the impression of being made of quick silver: he pours himself into a room on a cataract of words and gestures, and you are caught up in the stream—but after the first plunge, it is exhilarating."

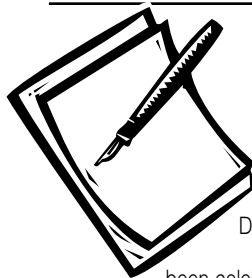
Another sideline participant of the group was Owen Barfield. He and Lewis had the longest-standing relationship of any in the group (except Warnie, of course) dating back to their reactionary undergraduate days. Tolkien gives us this rousing testimony of Barfield one night at the B & B: "Owen Barfield is the only man who can tackle C. S., making him define everything,

and interrupting his most dogmatic pronouncements. . . . The result was a most amusing and contentious evening, on which had an outsider dropped in he would have thought it a meeting of fell enemies hurling deadly insults before drawing their guns."

Nonetheless, it was Barfield, along with Tolkien and Dyson, who was greatly responsible for helping Jack cross his last hurdle into Christianity. The vehicle was that of myth. Myths and mythology had delighted Lewis since childhood, but in his mind myths were lies, and therefore worthless; Tolkien challenged this belief. "Myths are not lies," he asserted. "Man comes from God and it is from God that man draws his ultimate ideals. Man may pervert those

ideals into lies, but there is always a sense of the truth from which they have sprung." To put it another way, Tolkien argued that God always speaks fragments of truth through the minds of poets and myth-makers. Lewis was intrigued by this idea and in the course of the conversation brought up the theme of atonement. Lewis had long struggled with understanding how the death of Someone Else almost 2,000 years ago could have any impact on his present life. Tolkien suggested that the concept of myth was deeply woven into this theme as well. The only difference being that, in the atonement of Christ, God himself is the poet and the images he used were real men and real his-

Continued on page 21



Little Letters to Jack

Written in 1998 by Barbara Parsons Linville

OCTOBER 5

Dear Jack,

It's nearly here. Your hundredth birthday. People have been celebrating all year long, and who knows how many seminars, conferences, and memorials are yet to fall on November 29, the day itself? How uncomfortable you would have been with all the words of praise and gratitude, all the flurry and the fol-de-rol of it—you who thought great works should be studied, but not their authors. The Personal Heresy, you called such attention. Bardolatrous nonsense. And yet, how often before a crackling fire in your rooms, must you or Tollers or Charles or Dyson or Barfield have pulled out this bit or that about Shelly, Keats, Johnson?

OCTOBER 6

Dear Jack,

Have been thinking much about your marriage to Joy, the strangeness of its beginnings, the even stranger fulfillment of it. Could you have guessed what lay ahead? The surprises of a newlywed experienced out of season, the quiet conversations of settled married people, the bright flash of shared wit, Joy's cancer, the pain, the parting? You said of her afterward, "Her mind was lithe and quick and muscular as a leopard. Passion, tenderness and pain were all equally unable to disarm it. It scented the first whiff of cant or slush; then sprang, and knocked you over before you knew what was happening (*A Grief Observed*)."

I was still a neophyte in the world of thought when I first read those lines. I had never heard a woman described in such terms before and never since, for that matter. Desire rose up in me to be that kind of person. I wanted to exercise my cerebral muscles, to grow mentally agile and swift in classical literature, theology, philosophy, art, music, languages, history, or whatever else might arise and shine. All that startled me more than twenty years ago, Jack. The desire you kindled through Joy's life is still there. Growth started with something as small as a seed and has branched out in every direction, mustard-bush fashion. And, happiness beyond happiness, there is still more to discover, deeper caverns to delve, always, always, always.

OCTOBER 7

Dear Jack,

It was never easy to risk. You can imagine, then, what it was like for me as an adult to stumble into Narnia along with Lucy and Edmund and Susan and Peter and all the others, and to stand before Aslan—who was neither tame nor safe—and to come away with a sense of purpose. Out into the world I went—building relationships, risking, teaching, risking, writing, risking—taking the adventure Aslan sent. Adventure! The word took on the expectancy of finding a gift tied with golden bows, a gift with my name on it. Inside the box were maps showing untried roads. Some led to discovery. Some to joy. Others did not turn out well at all, but led down into the dungeons and past the dragons of my own fears. But loss and pain and the dark are never final. And dragons are either slain or die of old age. There are hidden doors leading out

to freedom and new adventures rising just when we thought our last dream had died. Further up, Jack. Further in.

OCTOBER 8

Dear Jack,

"The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bring some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret (*The Weight of Glory*)."

The inconsolable secret. The longing that reaches to the skies, that wells up from the depths, as though water itself should thirst. But I didn't understand what it meant. Why the terrible loneliness in the midst of people who loved me? Why the sense that I was cut off from something—*something*—what? I didn't know, but I longed for it in the best of times, like Psyche in *Till We Have Faces*. "It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills . . . Do you remember? The colour and the smell . . . And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it . . . The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing—to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from."

You showed me what longing was for, Jack—the signpost pointing straight up, Boccherini's bright little dances, Hopkins' fresh-firecoal poems, Austen's wit, Hugo's insights, Williams' exact words, point there, came from there—the place where all the beauty comes from.

OCTOBER 9

Dear Jack,

Your words to the invented Malcolm: "I dance like a centipede with wooden legs." How I laughed at that line. It clicked and clattered through my mind with all those peglegs like drumsticks tapping "Dixie" on the floor. But you mentioned The Dance, The Great Dance, often. At the end of *Perelandra*, one of your angelic creatures says, "The Great Dance . . . has begun from before always. There was no time when we did not rejoice before His face as now. The dance which we dance is at the centre and for the dance all things were made. Blessed be He!" Before the trumpet blast of those words, time's rigid walls gave way for me, and meaningless, sprawled space suddenly wheeled about a center. "All is centre." "Where [God] is, there is the centre." "The dance is at the centre." You, too, Jack. You, too. Your last words to Malcolm and to us were about Heaven. "Then the new earth and sky, the same yet not the same as these, will rise in us as we have risen in Christ. And once again . . . the birds will sing and the waters flow, and the lights and shadows move across the hills, and the faces of our friends laugh upon us with amazed recognition. Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be." A few weeks later, you left us. No more guesses for you now. You've found that splendid center. And those wooden centipede legs are transformed, tripping the light fantastic, full of felicity and grace. 🐘

A Marked Soul

An *Inklings* Interview with Prof. James Como

Professor in rhetoric and public communication at City University of New York (CUNY) and president of the C. S. Lewis Society, NYC

By Chris Gilbert

Professor James Como first discovered C. S. Lewis in his scholarly works on literary philosophy thirty-five years ago. As an undergraduate student, Como found Lewis made the subject so accessible that he began to investigate his other writings—and struck gold. A Catholic Christian in a secular university besieged by intellectual antagonism, Como found in Lewis a fine mind bringing his faith to bear intelligently and with great power in this world of scholarship. *Inklings* discovered Professor Como while he was teaching a class in New York entitled “A Providential Voice: C. S. Lewis 100 Years Later.” Following is an interview he permitted us one evening before class.

Inklings: You’ve admired Lewis and his work for a long time now.

James Como: Yes, since I was eighteen. As I continued to read Lewis—I know that this is a common response from people—it seemed that he knew me and was speaking directly to me, had traveled the journey before and had become the most reliable guide to ways of thinking that I had never encountered in my life. Since then, of course, I have read other people who have marked my soul—Thornton Wilder, Flannery O’Connor, Sigrid Unsett, Walker Percy—but none exceed Lewis with respect to the influences exercised upon me. After thirty-five years he holds up, and I think it’s because of his coherence and consistency. There’s an integrity to Lewis that never lets you down.

INK: Besides his philosophical writings, which other Lewis works did you come across early on?

JC: First it was what I call the parabolic fiction. *The Great Divorce* remains a great favorite of mine. The other world, the next world, is always spoken of as something shadowy, ambiguous, abstract. Lewis reversed that thinking for me. The after-

world became the concrete place and we the ghosts who occupy shadowlands. This vindicated my own deepest intuition. Of course, if you are familiar with *The Great Divorce*, you know it is a series of episodes and, as is the case with much of Lewis, you continue to meet yourself in different episodes. [Laughs] I used to be the young man with the lizard on his shoulder. I’ve gone through various stages; now I am more the tragedian who we think is leading the dwarf but is in fact being led by the dwarf. I understand Lewis thought of himself in those terms, too, in some way, because he was very wary about his own rhetorical power. That’s the sort of thing that hooked me.

INK: So there was a vulnerability that you saw in his writing that spoke to you.

JC: Yes. The psychology of it seemed to be exactly right. And he has proven to hold up over time. He also holds up from any angle, any perspective. For example, when you read his literary criticism you encounter something which is a basic tenet of his religious thought: Reality is objective.

We’re told by the deconstructionists—especially the French deconstructionists—that there is no text. In *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis says, “Nonsense! There is a text and there is a right way and a wrong way to read that text. The right way is to get yourself out of yourself. When I read great literature, I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.” Now those two ideas are what you need to know to get to heaven: (a) that heaven is real just like morality, and (b) that you had better escape the prison of yourself if you are going to make it. So Lewis

tells us this in his religious writing, but it is there in his literary criticism, too. That’s what I mean by the integrity of the man. It coheres.

INK: You’ve mentioned *The Great Divorce* as a particular favorite. Is there another one?

JC: *The Magician’s Nephew*. Narnia is created in *The Magician’s Nephew*. It has the flavor of this other world. I know all my life back into early childhood I was a great fan of fairy tales. This seemed to be the fairy tale of all fairy tales. This was what fairy tales were meant to be.

I must admit to a more personal attraction which is very non-literary and one Lewis wouldn’t like. You know his mother died when he was almost ten. In *The Magician’s Nephew* he recapitulates that experience of his mother’s death—only in this case the mother lives and the father comes back home. At the end of the story Lewis says the mother lives and the father comes home and the family unit is established. Lewis’s own family unit had broken down. The mother died, and he did not



(Lewis) doesn’t tell you what to know. He tells you how to know it. Reason, imagination, definition, first premises. He helps you define the world to yourself.

get support from his father who seemed to go away. My father never went away—my father was a wonderful man—but my mother did die when I was a little boy. So there is this non-literary pull as well which somehow avoids mere sentimentality.

INK: Is there anything Lewis wrote that you don’t like, that you regard as unnecessary or not particularly helpful?

JC: There is an essay called “Delinquents in the Snow” collected in *God in the Dock* which is probably as uncharitable as anything Lewis ever wrote. It’s angry because apparently these people singing carols at his doorstep awakened Lewis’s wife, Joy, from one of the few slumbers she had had as a

kind of respite from her cancer. I wish he hadn’t written it. Also some of Lewis’s early poetry hasn’t been particularly helpful. Some of the poems in *Spirits in Bondage* aren’t terribly good. He was a young man in his teens and early twenties when he wrote it.

I wish there were things that he had written that he didn’t write. I wish he had written a good essay, a small, book-length essay, on the subject of the self. He is troubled by the self. He addresses the self. He advises us on how to treat the self. But I wish he had answered the question, “What do we mean by ‘self’?”

INK: Lewis didn’t seem to be well-received by other scholars. Why was that?

JC: My opinion, which really has matured over these three decades-plus, is that Lewis is a very great member of the republic of letters and a serious man of ideas. He addressed those ideas many times to common folk, therefore the literary elite tended to overlook him because he didn’t address them. And of

We Have Faces first, or perhaps not even *Mere Christianity*. But maybe Narnia. Lewis is so versatile that there is something for almost anyone’s taste. So I don’t think Lewis needs to be made more accessible. He might be made better *known*.

INK: I’ve often been amazed at Lewis’s ability to write so accurately from what he has experienced, his ability to extrapolate it.

JC: I don’t know that Lewis is unique in this capacity. The degree to which he paid attention he paid attention to his life. His concentration is extraordinary. He had this wonderfully alive mind, these astute and acute faculties for a man who didn’t travel much. Insulated in the Oxford environment, he was rather like the priest who gets to hear lots of confessions with the thousands and thousands of letters from people who educated him. And he paid attention. Because of inattention some people remain inexperienced their whole lives, but for Lewis experience seemed thick.

INK: I noticed this especially while reading *Perelandra*, and he talked about the trees and grass of Venus being blue, the sky yellow, and the sea gold. He perfectly described a beach setting I’ve seen during certain strange weather conditions. When you read *Perelandra*, it’s such a believable fantasy world, then you find that it *is* based on reality, that he hasn’t just dreamed it up.

JC: You know, you’ve touched upon something else that is so appealing in Lewis that it is kind of subterranean: There is nothing random about him, nothing merely capricious. These colors cohere obviously because he has seen them here. Aslan can’t wave his magic wand and eliminate Eustace’s sin. He has to pay for it. So Lewis seems to me to be very reliable that way.

There is always something behind a choice that Lewis has made. Something real, something plausible.

INK: There is an integrity in that, but is he also aware of his own astuteness?

JC: I think he is very sophisticated in that sense and very aware of the depth of his own thinking, of its intricacy. I’m also convinced that he is very much aware of how he conveys this to people less astute and intricate than himself. I think he was a rhetorician, a man who made stylistic choices based upon a desire to be readable, a desire to be believed, understood.

INK: How much influence does Lewis now have on university-level thinkers outside of

Christian circles?

JC: Less, I think, than one would suppose and far less than he should have. One of the services a magazine like *Inklings* could do is to de-ghettoize his writing. He’s been type-cast as a Christian apologist, and he’s in the Christian section of bookstores. He’s there with inspirational writing, devotional writing—and a lot of his work *can* be used inspirationally and devotionally—but he is not primarily a devotional writer. He’s not even secondarily a devotional writer. He’s a religious thinker, and as such he has a lot to teach. So if his books were advertised differently and placed in different parts of bookstores . . .

INK: Marketed in categories like philosophy or “thoughts and ideas”?

JC: Precisely.

INK: Also in education, among college professors.

JC: Yes, to get the books into syllabuses and curriculum would make a big difference. There are two books by Lewis: *An Experiment in Criticism*, which is a very great book—one of my all-time favorites of Lewis’s—and *The Abolition of Man*, a very great work but less accessible than most of what Lewis wrote. I’m mystified by the absence of common reference to these

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A Wardrobe Grows in Brooklyn

By Ramona April Garnes

It’s weird. It’s like remembering exactly where you were when President Kennedy was shot. That’s how I remember the first time I heard the name C. S. Lewis. I remember exactly where I was. What I was doing. Who told me. Even what I was wearing. And the whole thing was weird.

For one thing, I was a tabloid editor. And being an editor was my religion. Period. Because I’d sat in church every Sunday from age eight to age 18, I knew all about the true God, but I didn’t belong to Him. All this is to say I was not ignorant about God when I first read C. S. Lewis, thus reading Lewis at that time wasn’t exactly a pleasure. On one hand, my hard-core-reader self was exhilarated to have found an additional fount of literature well-done and story well-told. On the other hand, I cringed at what felt like yet another of God’s attempts to bring me to heel. I was an unhappy happy camper, which felt weird, and it’s why I remember the details.

Anyway, I was working at the *New York Post*, and I was standing near my desk in the financial news department, which was right across an aisle from sports. And Vinnie Calzone—a sports department paste-up supervisor whom I liked a whole lot but who never had a chance to do the formal education thing—strolls over and, speaking in total Brooklyn, division of Bensonhurst, says, “Hey. You like ta read, right?”

“Yo, Vinnie! My man, my man. Yeah. Definitely.”

“Well I got a book fuh yuh. Ya gotta check it out.”

I’m super interested because Vinnie doesn’t read anything but magazines and tabloids, and if he’s telling me about a book . . . “What book?”

“Akchully, it’s a series of books. There’s seven of ‘um.”

“Seven?!”

“Yeah. It’s called da *Chronicles of Narnia*. It’s a kids’ book, it’s like fairy tales.”

“Oh, @\$#! I love fairy tales!”

“Yeah. Dis one’s real good. I been

Ramona Garnes has worked as an editor at the *New York Post*, the *New York Daily News*, and the *New York Times*.



readin’ it to my kids. They’re crazy for it. This the secon’ time I’m readin’ it. Day won’t lemme stop, and I don’t wanna stop.”

I ask Vinnie for details about plot and . . . magicalness. At one point, he actually says, “It’s heaven, it’s book heaven! . . . written by some dude name C. S. Lewis.”

“C. S. who?”

“Lewis. Lewis.”

“Hmm. Well I never heard of ‘im, Vin. Ne-vah.”

“Yeah, well. Whatevah. You got to check it out.”

I did.

When I was a kid growing up in Brooklyn, I discovered that books are a veritable magic carpet. I was poor, I was black, and my parents were split; this in a neighborhood that was not mostly poor or black, and which was full of Daddies, none of whom were mine. To add insult to injury, most of the teachers in my mostly white schools not only resented me, they made sure I knew it. Mine is a well-known, oft-told story.

The details depend upon who’s telling the tale, but the story is akin to what C. S. Lewis described in his autobiographical *Surprised by Joy*: Unhappy (or lonely or nerdy or shy; you name it) child discovers books, falls in love with them, consumes them like there’s no tomorrow, and—ta da!—child’s life is changed; child gains tons of tomorrows.

Books were the reason I went from a housing project to great jobs in great newsrooms. Books were the reason I got to meet Vinnie. Even into adulthood, my favorite books, bar none, have “magicalness.” The books can be *Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien’s masterly saga of enchantment, or they can be by writers as diverse as Salman Rushdie, Chiam Potok, Theodore Drieser, or Amy Tan. I like writers who weave a magic carpet, set me firmly upon it, and go. When I picked up *The Chronicles of Narnia*, I was gone. I mean, there’s even a dragon!

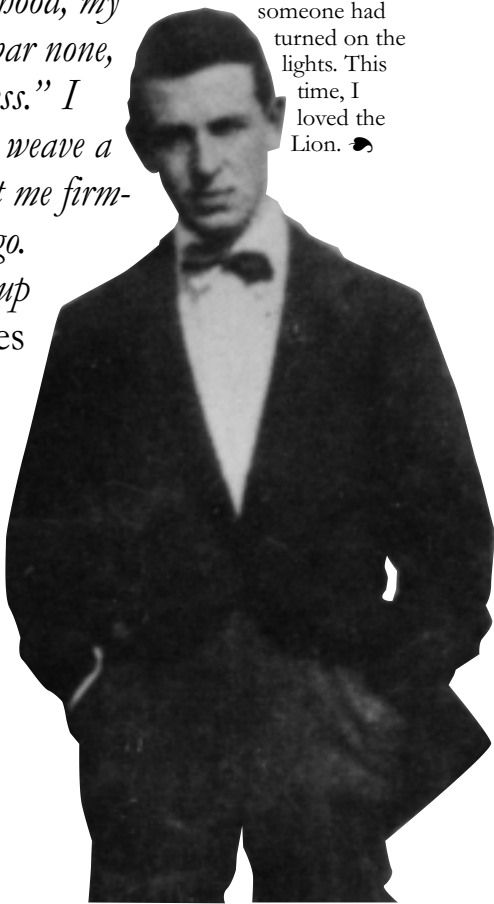
The only thing that bugged me was that Lion. Who was he? Why did he do the

stuff he did? Why did he make the other characters jump through hoops to get what he could have easily given them? Why did he allow the evil forces to “triumph” at the rock? Why didn’t he just make everything right and get on with it? I thought heroes were supposed to rush in and save stuff, not allow their friends to suffer.

It seems odd that I never came across another book by C. S. Lewis until after I became a Christian. And it’s weird that I enjoyed Narnia tremendously, but never sought out Lewis’s other stuff. Later, I learned that C. S. Lewis was a Christian. Because I’d already read *Narnia*, I started my second go at Lewis’s work by devouring his magical stuff; my favorite is *Till We Have Faces*. What a strange, fabulous story! Then I lit into his non-fiction, which awed me because Lewis was able to bring magicalness to writings about our relationship with God. Not one sentence of his theological works is written in anything that even comes close to resembling The Dreaded Christianese.

Finally, itching for more Lewis (one can never get enough), I decided to re-read his work. Aptly, I started with *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It was like someone had turned on the lights. This time, I loved the Lion. 🐉

“Books were the reason I went from a housing project to great jobs in great newsrooms. Even into adulthood, my favorite books, bar none, have “magicalness.” I like writers who weave a magic carpet, set me firmly upon it, and go. When I picked up The Chronicles of Narnia, I was gone.”



Inklings of Oxford

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tory: God told a story with the life and death of Christ that is a truth for all time and all men. The ability of story to speak to the issue—and to the heart where abstract facts could not—was not a new idea for Lewis, but the application to Christ was.

Lewis embraced this new revelation with his characteristic tenacity and went on to become one of the greatest Christian apologists of the twentieth century through his lectures and books, such as *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, and *The Weight of Glory*. Nothing in his life remained the same from this point onward and, unfortunately, this included his relationship with Tolkien. There was a definitive schism created between the two soon after Lewis chose to embrace Christianity: Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic, and Lewis reclaimed some of his Ulster Protestant, anti-Catholic roots.

Another regrettable change in Lewis after his conversion (as observed and noted by Tolkien and Barfield, among others) was that he gained a sense of artificiality and shied away from real argument; he had made up his mind. Just as all good friendships, because of their unique fluidity, are elusive to define, so were the Inklings. There was no official first meeting just as there existed no exclusive list of members. Yet there seemed to be some common threads that united them, particularly their shared love of stories and a mutual admiration for one another as craftsmen and friends. Equally as elusive is any attempt to pinpoint the end of the Inklings, but perhaps Warnie Lewis best summed it up in his journal in 1945. Upon hearing of Charles Williams’ death he wrote, “There will be no more pints with Charles: no more Bird and Baby. The blackout has fallen, and the Inklings can never be the same again.”

But the ideas that took root and bore fruit during their time together are an enduring feast for all who love story. 🍷

Prof. Como Interview

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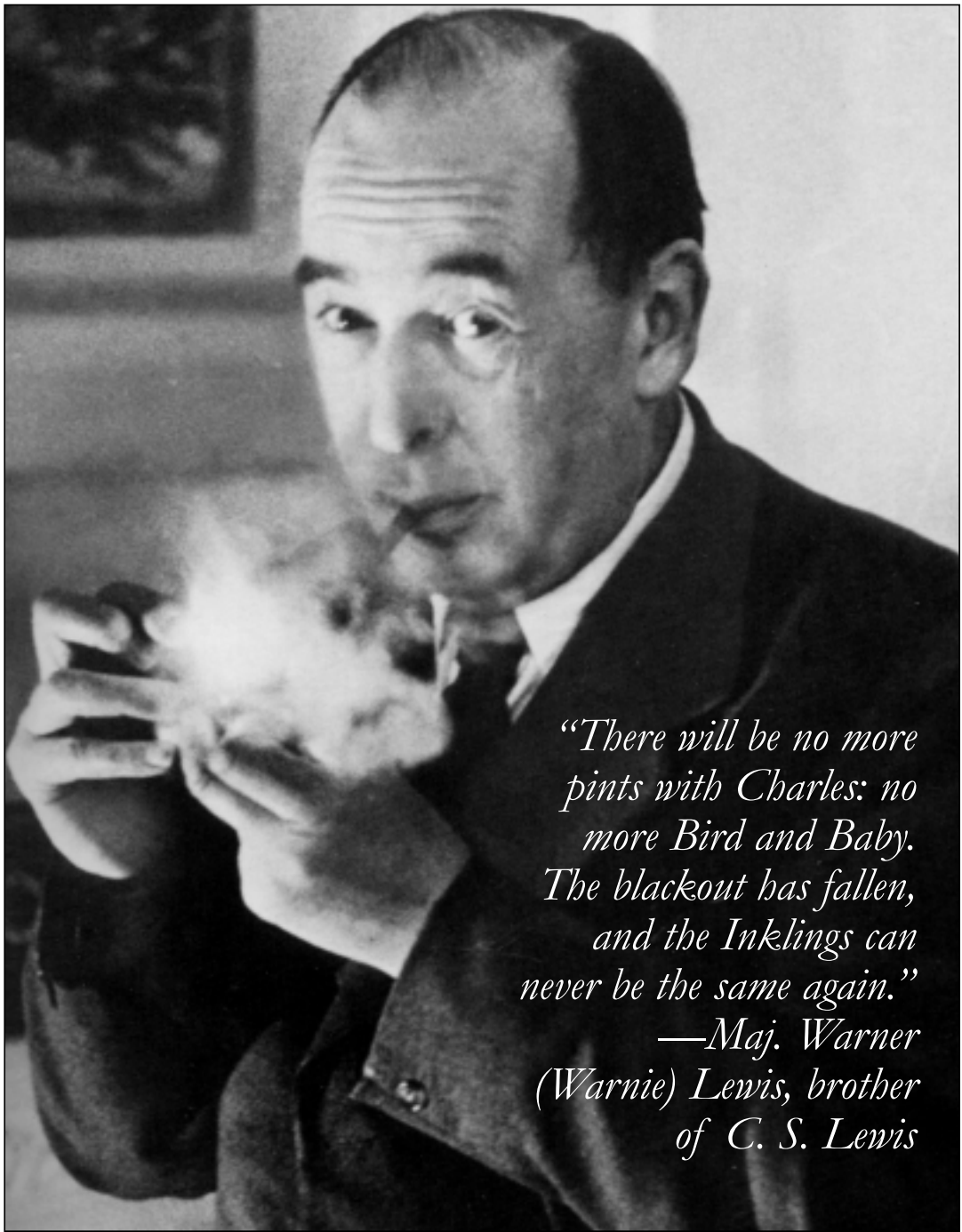
books by other scholars, critics, and philosophers.

INK: In your work now as professor of rhetoric and public communication, Lewis has clearly been a mentor. How has he influenced you in your career?

JC: I’ve been asked that before and I could not begin to separate his thought from my thought. As I’ve said, other writers have influenced me. He doesn’t tell you *what* to know. He tells you *how* to know it. Reason, imagination, definition, first premises. He

helps you define the world to yourself. I must say I have found a great virility in Lewis’s writing. I’m dealing with someone solid.

As Austin Farrer once said, “He went to the weakest part of the trench and set himself up there.” There is something forthright about that and undogmatic. That’s one of the keys to Lewis. One of the people who said this best was the actress Debra Winger who played Joy Davidman in the film *Shadowlands*. She said Lewis is not a man who gives you easy answers. Rather, Lewis is a man who makes difficult questions easy to understand and then says, “Try thinking of it this way.” That’s terribly astute! 🧠



“There will be no more pints with Charles: no more Bird and Baby. The blackout has fallen, and the Inklings can never be the same again.”
—Maj. Warner (Warnie) Lewis, brother of C. S. Lewis



The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels
by Thomas Cahill
Nan A. Talese

Realizing that we already know the stories of Abraham, Moses, and David, Thomas Cahill asks us to forget what we’ve learned about them in Sunday School classes and invites us instead to explore them as a historical novelist might—to imagine Abram, for instance, not as the “great hero of faith” but as the typical Semitic chieftain from Ur who, when he hears a voice telling him to pick up and leave the land of his fathers for someplace else, would assume that it comes from the wooden idol or the good luck charm he carries around to represent one of his household gods. Only gradually, over the course of many years and through several, often very difficult encounters, would Abram come to understand that this voice belonged not to any small-time deity but to YHWH, creator of the earth and breath of life itself.

Thinking about the evolution of the relationship between God and Abraham in this way is intriguing. Cahill’s are rich musings that often challenge one to grow one’s faith as well as one’s mind, and in thus recovering the familiar terrain of the Old

Testament, he helps the modern reader recover the sense of wonder intended by these old sacred narratives.

The Gifts of the Jews is the second in a series of seven books that proposes to retell the story of western civilization. (Cahill’s first volume in the series, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, was a *Times* bestseller two years ago.) Cahill, the former religious editor at Doubleday, brings to this book a literally encyclopedic knowledge of religion and ancient cultures. In spite of his great learning, he manages to avoid the pitfalls of so many scholars: tumidity, frigidity, and just plain showing off. On the contrary, he cultivates an easy, graceful style that displays plenty of wit.

Cahill’s best quality is a talent for amplification, a “gift” for fleshing out the bare-bones narratives of the Bible, as when he writes about Lot’s troubles in Sodom: “Fade-in: Sodom’s main square, where Lot, encountering the angels, invites them to stay at his house. (Though not as generous as his guests as Avraham [sic], he’s undoubtedly a good guy.) But the men of the city surround the house like the ghouls in *Night of the Living Dead* and demand that Lot bring out the two handsome young men so they can, well, sodomize them. It becomes all too clear that there aren’t ten innocents here. There’s only Lot, who tries to buy time with a ploy that might not have occurred to most of us in his situation. . . . Of course, the Sodomites aren’t interested and roar that they will bugger Lot, too, once they have broken down the door. But no one gets buggered; and the Sodomites get theirs—fire and brimstone from heaven—once Lot and his family are out of the way, save, unfortunately, for Lot’s wife, who looks back on the raining destruction, even though she has been told not to, and gets turned into a pillar of salt—another wifely pawn.” (pp. 76-77)

Cahill also knows how to make a rousing point, as on the occasions he reflects upon the gifts that the Jews have given us: individuality, a linear (as opposed to cyclical) sense of time, and justice among them. Reflecting on the prophecies of Amos, for example, Cahill writes: “So God raised up a nobody from nowhere to tell the truth—openly, without riddles, and in everyone’s hearing—a shepherd with the smell of the pasture still on him, bellowing out the truth to the smug and the perfumed.

“And the truth for eighth-century Samaria was this: To serve God means to act with justice. One cannot pray and offer sacrifice while

ignoring the poor, the beggars at the gates. But more radical still: if you have more than you need, you are a thief, for what you ‘own’ is stolen from those who do not have enough.” (p. 214) Yes, that is the scent of preaching you smell, but it dissipates as quickly as it gathered, thus whetting the appetite instead of making you nauseous.

By the time he’s finished, Cahill covers the history of the Jews from their roots in ancient Sumer through their beginnings in Abraham up through their exile and ongoing diaspora. After finishing the book, I thought I might fault him for speeding too quickly through the prophets and the exile, but then again that might just be me wishing he would have kept going another hundred pages.

—Reviewed by Del Doughty



A Passion for Books
by Terry W. Glaspey
Harvest House

First of all, this is not a serious book. It is a “gift” book, the kind that makes a nice stocking stuffer. (Not that there’s anything wrong with gift books.) Everything about this book is friendly, from its size (small, slim) to its glossy, amply illustrated pages and easy-to-read fonts. Glaspey’s essays on books and reading have a conversational feel and, sprinkled as they are with quotations and *bon mots* from the likes of C. S. Lewis, Emily Dickinson, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Lucy Maud Montgomery and “other beloved authors,” they are more than palatable.

If you enjoy reading, reading in the purest sense of the word—that is, if you can get your jollies from hypertext as happily as from the printed page—then Glaspey’s book might well strike you as so much schmaltz. But if it’s the books themselves that capture your fancy, if you love the way they smell, if you delight in the texture of a page as you rub it between thumb and forefinger, if you like the quiet crackle the binding makes when you peel back the cover of a new leatherbound volume for the first time, if your idea of a good time consists of stretching out on the sofa on a Sunday afternoon with a novel and a big cup of Sky Between Branches, this book is for you. Your soul will resonate with chapters like “No Place like a Bookstore” or “The Lure of Libraries,” and you’ll find yourself lingering over the many pictures of lamps, chairs, and pens—the paraphernalia of reading.

My favorite quotation in the volume comes from Francis Bacon: “Some books are meant to be tasted, others swallowed,

and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.” This one’s meant to be swilled, like a lite beverage. Tastes great, less filling.

—Reviewed by Del Doughty



Wobegon Boy
by Garrison Keillor
Viking

As problems go, John Tollefson’s is a good and fairly common one in middle-class America: How to deal with the semi-charmed kind of life. Tollefson, the fortysomething hero and narrator of Garrison Keillor’s *Wobegon Boy*, possesses all the accoutrements of success: A cushy management job in public radio and a home in lush upstate New York, a satisfying long-distance relationship with a beautiful history professor at Columbia University, and a taste for fine wines and the *Sunday Times* and the means and leisure to enjoy them both. It is, as he says, “the life of people in commercials.”

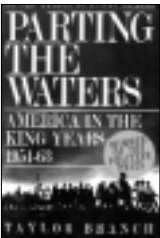
All he lacks, of course, is what all sufferers of mid-life crises lack: love, peace, a sense of purpose. Tollefson knows well enough how to resolve his mid-life crisis but is hard-pressed to actually do so.

For all of its shallowness, the upwardly mobile lifestyle of the East Coast still seems preferable to the workaday spirituality of the Lutheran Norwegians back home in Lake Wobegon. Choosing between the two is not easy for Tollefson, and when he goes home for his father’s funeral halfway through the novel, life in rural Minnesota looks backwards through the eyes of a naturalized Easterner. Much of the story focuses on Tollefson’s relationship to his father, a crusty but generous-hearted man, and his great-grandfather (for whom he is named), a tough and resourceful Norwegian immigrant. It is specifically their wisdom—“Life is complicated, so think small,” “You can’t plant corn and date women at the same time. It doesn’t work”—that Tollefson finds difficult to grasp. It is to Keillor’s credit that he lampoons the foibles of the Midwest as easily as the East without displaying any narrow-minded pieties. Indeed, Keillor, whose satire is of the shrewd but gentle sort, plays the cultural oppositions between East and Midwest, city and country, progressive and orthodox, academic and homespun, as well as anyone. In the end, Tollefson finds a happy middle ground: homespun wins, but it does so only when he is in New York. And thus the Lutheran wisdom of his fathers redeems the success of maturity.

—Reviewed by Del Doughty

Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63

by Taylor Branch
Simon and Schuster



Some of us read history to discover what it means to live truthfully, even Godly, in the world. Good history contributes to this discovery by showing us what the world is, by fleshing out the context in which we sojourn.

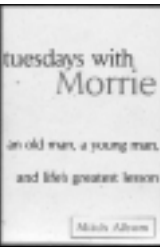
In the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63*, the 922-page first volume of a projected trilogy, Taylor Branch excels in narrating the context of both Martin Luther King, Jr.’s life and the Civil Rights Movement he was instrumental in launching. The book weaves information and quotations from such varied sources as interviews, transcripts of sermons and radio broadcasts, newspaper reports, oval office tape recordings, and Justice Department memos into an absorbing narrative. The story is shaped by the Cold War, which colored every aspect of American life after 1945. It provided the occasion for “the first great [presidential] lie”—when Eisenhower insisted that the American U-2 spy plane the Soviet Union shot down in 1960 was a weather plane even though he had personally approved the spy missions—and national insecurity and cultural paranoia meant that racial inequities (and outright violence) could not easily be admitted, much less resolved.

To care, to have authentic compassion, for the world, means accepting risk to participate in the world’s transformation. Branch palpably renders the terror of the 1961 freedom riders as they stepped off the bus in Birmingham, Alabama, and the Rev. W. G. Anderson’s nervous breakdown in an Albany, Georgia., jail. The movement’s cost was enormous—thousands were imprisoned, many were murdered—but through it greater justice was brought to this country.

Branch also shows how King himself experienced deep personal spiritual transformation. (He does a good job of neither ignoring nor dismissing King’s sins and shortcomings.) Though Branch argues that, for King, Gandhian nonviolence began as a convenient tactic to achieve the desired end of racial freedom, he also admits that nonviolence became King’s first instinct. In 1962, King was attacked during a speech by a member of the American Nazi Party. He was stunned, and the initial punches sent him reeling. When he regained his balance, he immediately dropped his hands and spoke calmly to the attacker. While others surrounded the assailant, King assured the man he would not be harmed and began to pray for him. What might have incited a riot

became an occasion for singing “I’m on My Way to Freedom Land.” Living truthfully, authentically, in this world is a movement toward the promised land God has set aside for all peoples, and *Parting the Waters* is one of the many miracles that prepare the way.

—Reviewed by David William Frey



Tuesdays with Morrie
by Mitch Albom
Doubleday

T. S. Elliot warned us that we humans can’t take too much truth. Sure, we want to know what’s real and good and true—but just not too much at once. Sale catalogues, trips to Cancun, and new sport utility vehicles prove too tempting. Mitch Albom, a sports writer for the Detroit Free Press and former college student of the late Professor Morrie Schwartz, has written *Tuesdays with Morrie* as a loving and radiant tribute to a great teacher. In so doing, he has given a rich gift to, as the Greatest of Teachers said, “all who have ears to hear.”

Tuesdays with Morrie unfolds as a dozen-plus conversations between a terminally-ill wise old man and a long-out-of-touch former student. The conversations form the student’s final course with his beloved professor, a course on—above all else—the meaning of life.

The course has no books, no papers, no tests, no final. But this is, perhaps, the most important class Mitch—or any of us—could take.

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

Over the Tuesdays they meet, the last ones of Morrie's life, the professor covers the great issues of life, those that, "once you get your fingers on . . . you can't turn away from them."

The questions? Life, death, family, money, marriage, letting go, forgiveness, among others. Topics rarely covered in Physics 101, English 202, Philosophy 303, or any other subject in college, because the pursuit of wisdom is seldom our focus in our formal educations. Sometimes, maybe, in the liberal arts. A lot of us, though, in school, just want "good jobs." Acquiring wisdom takes patience, humility, and sometimes heartbreaking disasters like Morrie's

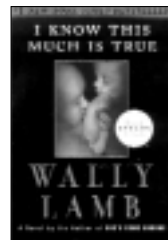
final illness.

It's not like riding a bus from Point A to Point B. And even if it were, education is often filled with so many "points A to Z" that, with schedule changes, transfers, tolls, and extra fare zones, we often forget why we got on the bus in the first place.

Tuesdays with Morrie pulsates with light, humanity, truth and wisdom—the kind of wisdom we all need to be bathed in, not once, but regularly; because, as human beings, it's not that we don't know that these truths are what's most important. We just forget.

Morrie helps remind us all.

—Reviewed by James O'Donnell



I Know This Much Is True

by Wally Lamb
Regan Books

I'm an Oprah Winfrey fan, and I admit it. Though I occasionally watch her talk show, even I was skeptical when she announced she was sponsoring a "book club." I first began reading the books she recommended because I was sure they weren't "real literature," probably some romance novels dashed off for the common reader but again, I couldn't have been more wrong. The amazing thing about

these books is their power to move the readers out of their comfort zones. I found myself reading books I would never have chosen on my own. While I haven't liked all the books, they've all been worthwhile. Many of the books are written by minority writers, like the most recent, Pearl Cleage's

What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day, featuring a black female protagonist who is HIV-positive and in love with a convicted murderer. Despite its premise, the book is hilarious and well-written. But I would never have picked it up in a bookstore of my own volition. Some of the books are

Recommended Poetry Books



Without

by Donald Hall
Houghton Mifflin

A sort of grief observed, Donald Hall's *Without* was published on the third anniversary of the death (from leukemia) of his wife, the poet Jane Kenyon. In *Without*, Hall attempts to express—if not explain—her death and his grieving in his typically understated, conversational style. The book reflects not only the terror of separation but the reality of ongoing communion between these two remarkable writers and lovers.

Hall's graphic, heart-rendering treatment of his beloved's death leaves him open, no doubt, to charges of sentimentality. Far from being clichéd, or overly-sentimental, though, *Without* fits into the pattern of Hall's distinguished poetic career.

This unity is not only spoken of, it is embodied in the poems themselves, many of which either quote Kenyon directly (creating poems which we might say are as much hers as Hall's) or, more subtly, reflect her ongoing influence on Hall's poetry. Like Kenyon, Hall has been one of our finest scouts of the details of living: cow manure, dead horses, baseball, church socials, pets, farmhouses, love, and finally the suffering and death of a spouse. Now seventy, a widower, and having undergone serious illness himself, Hall offers his readers painfully personal, but lovingly shaped insights into the details of dying, grieving, and, most especially, loving.

As a poet shaped by modernism, Hall anticipates and perhaps forestalls some criticism by preserving a strange narrative distance in the first half of the book. He does so by interspersing a long, fragmented, third-person narrative ("Her Long Illness") with brief, first-person lyrics. The very moment of Kenyon's death, for example, is remembered from this "objective" stance: "... She had not spoken for three hours, and now Jane said her last words: 'O.K.'" A few lines later, the "narrator" adds: "... For twelve hours until she died, he kept scratching Jane Kenyon's big bony nose." (p. 45)

Another way Hall avoids a clichéd sentimentality is his honest depiction of the details of suffering (both hers and his) as part of a natural process. That the inescapable horror of such suffering calls into question the goodness of nature or nature's creator seems implied everywhere in the volume.

Kenyon's once-luxurious hair turned to baldness, the winter storm that keeps Hall from her grave, even their dog, Gus, who, as naturally as can be, now pees on his once-beloved mistress's grave—the imagery piles up to remind us that there is much to lose and much to lament in this world and life. And yet, as in the gospel parable, weeds sown in the field do not cancel out the existence and beauty of the wheat, or, for Hall and Kenyon, the gardens, the birds, the poetry of Keats, and the peonies (the brief, extravagant beauty of which plays an important role in Kenyon's poetry). The entire volume, dedicated "In Memoriam, Jane Kenyon, 1947-1995," affirms (if not celebrates) the inexplicable but amazing nature of ordinary life in which every detail matters.

—Reviewed by Joe Ricke

Sacred Numbers

by Bill West
Feather Books

The fourteen poems in this simply produced chapbook form a gentle but lyric statement of Christian faith. The rhythms underlying the poems suggest that they are intended for musical accompaniment, a suggestion heightened by repetition of lines and phrases within each poem. There is an appealing innocence in poems such as "Listen to the bells" with lines such as "They turn in the tower, the citadel of faith" with repetition building from line to line, evocative of the tolling bells.

Poems such as "Let's set the Easter-Trimnings out" make clear statements of down-home values, with simple imagery such as "... lamb with peas/on a table set for all our folk." The reader is held in a refreshing and unshophisticated world.

There are, however, techniques of writing which should be honed. Some of the poems would benefit from stricter editing, eliminating unnecessary words and exploring a richer vocabulary. The use of dialect, in "Holy Brigid with the cattle" and "Jus a little Bible tune" obscures the music and, in places, the meaning of the lines. The unaffected honesty of this poet will give pleasure to those of quiet faith.

—Reviewed by Joanna M. Weston

(Feather Books' address is Fair View, Old Coppice, Lyth Bank, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 0BW)

very funny, but many are so sad as to be almost unbearable: Anna Quindlen's *Black and Blue*, a novel about spousal abuse; Ursula Hegi's *Stones From the River*, a WWII novel about a European dwarf facing the horrors of losing her Jewish neighbors one by one, and especially Wally Lamb's *I Know This Much Is True*.

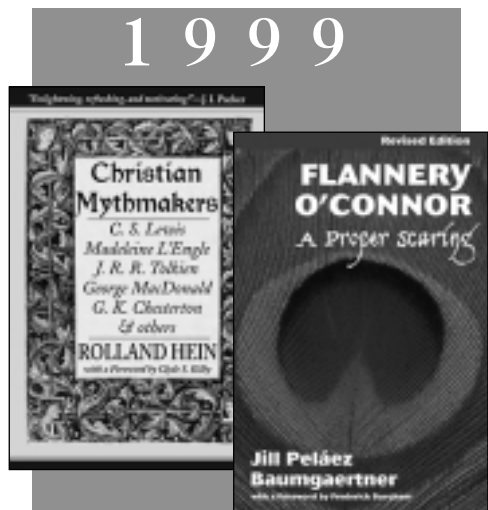
Lamb earned my respect with his first Oprah Book Club selection, *She's Come Undone*. I saw the book as flawed in many respects, but I've never seen a male author capture the female "voice" more effectively. In fact, I found myself looking back at the front cover time and again to be sure that Wally Lamb really had written the book. His ability to take on the protagonist's voice impressed me, and I wanted to read more. I got my chance with perhaps Oprah's greatest challenge, the 897-page *I Know This Much Is True*. Not only is the book long, but it's violent and unpleasant in many spots. I felt certain that the loyal members of Oprah's club would pelt her with copies of the novel during the taping of the program.

The protagonist, Dominick Birdsey, is forced to deal with his identical twin brother's growing mental illness. As the novel opens, the brother, Thomas Birdsey, cuts off his own hand in the public library to bring attention to his increasingly bizarre religious beliefs. Throughout the novel, we see Dominick come to terms with the public mental health system, his own failed marriage, his abusive stepfather, and his past, which includes an unpublished memoir by his grandfather that is one of the most disgusting pieces of prose ever written. But we, like Dominick, read on in the manuscript, unable to stop even during the most horrible parts. This book truly keeps the reader enthralled, and I guarantee you won't be able to figure out what his grandfather will write next.

As I finished the book, my first thought was that the public would never stand for such a long, depressing book. To my amazement, *I Know This Much Is True* became one of Oprah's most popular selections. On the day the program aired, Oprah reported that her staff had received over 6,000 letters proclaiming the book a masterpiece. Many of the letters came from family members of mental patients who saw Dominick's plight as their own. They said that it was time for someone to write a book about what they had suffered.

Certainly the discussion among the audience and dinner guests is not "high brow" in the literary sense. In fact, much of it begins with statements like, "I could really relate to this novel . . ." But I like the fact that ordinary people are discussing books like this, and some of their stories have made the books all the more meaningful for me—even as a rather jaded professor of English.

—Reviewed by Linda Urshel



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1999 Writing Contest Winner
First Place

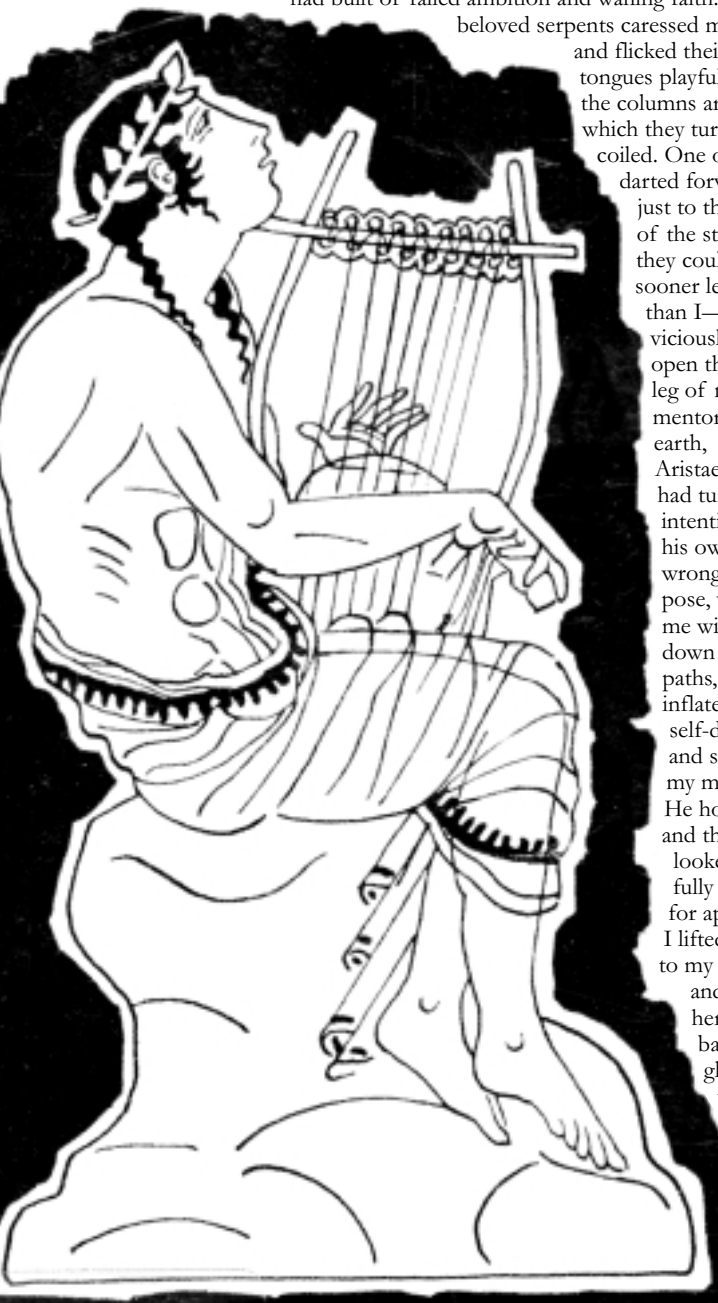
The descent into hell is always easy, for the gates of Persephone's realm stand always ajar; but the ascent is so heavy as to have been rarely achieved. Very few survive to breathe the air on earth again—few heroes perhaps, or a god of music like Orpheus.

—Norma Lorre Goodrich, *Priestesses*

The sky of Hel was steely, roiling with grey clouds that differed from the earth only by a shade. Intangible visages swirled about—disembodied souls of long-abandoned hopes and dreams. Vipers snatched at the ankles of passers-by; and harpies flew screaming from the blackened trees to plague them, beating them with their wings, and lashing them with their poisonous tails. The victims would fall to the ground, writhing with burning sores, only to rise and continue their hesitant, dogged journey from nowhere to nowhere.

By Janette L. MacDonald

I watched from the steps of the temple, my temple, which I had built of failed ambition and waning faith. My beloved serpents caressed my feet and flicked their tongues playfully from the columns around which they turned and coiled. One of them darted forward, just to the edge of the steps—they could no sooner leave than I—and viciously ripped open the lower leg of my tormentor on earth, Aristaeus, who had turned my intentions to his own wrong purpose, who led me willfully down evil paths, who inflated my self-doubt and scarred my memories. He howled, and the snake looked balefully to me for approval. I lifted her on to my forearm and kissed her, and barely glanced at the shadow that



Orpheus Ascending

After reviewing dozens of outstanding entries for the 1999 “*Inklings* Writing and Poetry Contest,” the winners have been selected. Janette L. MacDonald’s short story, “Orpheus Ascending” won the *Writing* category, and Sara Black’s poem, “Coyote,” was selected as the *Poetry* category winner. Winners are awarded \$150 cash prizes each. *Inklings* congratulates the 1999 winners and applauds their fine literary contributions.

no longer threatened me.

It had come to this: no longer did I hunger for revenge; its taste held no satisfaction. Upon the earth's surface I might have recognized forgiveness, but it was not reflected in any image in the eternal dismay below.

The days seemed less and less dreadful, and I wondered—worried, rather—that this betrayed an acceptance on my part of the impossibility of my situation. Since slipping to the depth of desolation, I drifted in and out of reality. I had ceased to fight, to try, though I struggled against the demon of complete hopelessness that sought to cement the foundations of my temple. Years must have passed since my clearer memories swarmed around me—of school, my dear family, the joy I found in just being alive and aware and curious. Now I had only my books, my serpent companions. But these things, in themselves, reminded me that there must be more. I had pleaded my case to Hades, upon first arriving. He was sympathetic, but unmovable. And Persephone's pleas on my behalf had driven him only to tears and a regret that he was governed by a higher power, Despair. I suppose I should have been happy, or at least content. I was not one of the doomed masses of Pathos. I was even told that people on the surface sacrificed mortal men to me, to ease my sorrowful existence. I had no idea about this, only knew that I was quite alone.

The earth suddenly shook, and I blinked, drawing back to the temple entrance, which I knew was solid, safe. And yet, I noticed a slight crack at the base. I knelt for a closer look, and saw the hairline fracture widen. The ground shook again, and I stood bewildered, watching all my serpents retreating to their holes which led deeper into the earth. Soon, only the little asp wound around my arm remained. She raised her head to look at me and turned toward the palace of Hades and Persephone. I turned also, hearing something, something I could not at first identify.

Then I knew. It was the end of a note, a glowing, aching fragment of music that in its delivery sang through the cacophony of Hel. Again it sounded, and I stepped with surprised ease away from the temple, down the wreck of stone steps, toward the palace.

I saw him then—at the same moment his eyes fell on me—and knew him. Taller than most men, crowned with blond hair, playing the sweet, sweet violin. Orpheus, I named him, my beloved, from that time so long ago. I had believed he had forgotten me when I buried my heart together with my soul. Driving my demons away with his music he had come for me, just in time, for I had ceased to look for a way out, had resigned myself to this place of darkling ease.

There was an immense tearing, breaking up, of the sky as Despair, unbound from me, flew up and raced back into some other where of the universe. The pillars of my temple came apart and crashed to the ground.

Gladly I nodded, and Orpheus smiled through the dust, playing always, and said, "There is but one condition. We will go together, but cannot look back, nor to one another. I will go first, for I know the way, and play to aid you in following."

My darling serpent remained with me, and we started up the path. The rocks stung my feet and wreaths of flame singed my hands when I reached to steady myself. The notes from the violin beckoned to me, as if from too far ahead, and I began to be afraid I would lose my way, my beloved, myself, in the dark, for the way out was not easy and terrified me. I started to call out once, but some force of disbelief and uncertainty leapt up to drag me back, and I bit my tongue, trying to move quickly, to leave this place as soon as possible, and return to the light, the brilliant sun.

I saw it then, through a crevice directly ahead. For a moment the light blinded me, and I paused, shielding my eyes. I saw Orpheus halt, silhouetted before the light, and he, weakened by concern for me, started to turn his head in my direction.

Shrieking with triumph, the voices of my fears and self-deprecation speared through the dark air at me, and the ruins of my temple, my sarcophagus, began to right themselves, proffering the deadly illusion of solace. Even Aristaeus joined his lurching presence to the ranks and raised a hammer of pain to hurl, intending to strike me, Orpheus, the music, and at the last, to blot out the sun. And I knew then that the strength of my hope had something to do with my escape from my tormentors, from the part of me that helped them imprison me here. With horror, I leapt forward, in a forever moment, heedless of the crevasse that opened at my feet to enfold me in a nightmare embrace. Orpheus flung the violin into the clawing waves, reaching for me, even as the forces of doubt seized my ankles.

When I opened my eyes Orpheus, chin in cupped hands, sat beside me, looking so earnest that I laughed. Laughed! The first time in so long.

As I sat up my little serpent slipped from my arm to wriggle out of her dusty grey skin in the dewy grass. When she resumed her customary place I saw in her new scales the precious iridescence of new belief, trust, faith, hope. ☘

1999 Poetry Winner
First Place

Coyote Morning

A movement of the still cold air
a shimmering trick
paused my hand in its
reach for the newspaper

I turned to see him a few yards away
his brush streaming out
as he loped unhurriedly down the hill
between the houses

Inside the kitchen I grabbed the binoculars
and watched him
the color of dried grass and snow
with a sharp nose to the frozen ground

He pounced with back legs splayed
where the vole tunnels curve through the weeds
and tossed a small brown writing body into the air
and caught it, jaws working, and again

When I looked back
at the dried grass and snow
a magpie searched the ground for clues
in the silent suburban valley

—Sara Black

ANNOUNCING THE 2000 INKLINGS WRITING & POETRY CONTEST

Q:
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three writers have
in common?



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C. S. Lewis



J. R. R. Tolkien

A:
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to the Inklings
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ENTRY FEE & DEADLINES. \$10 per submission. You may enter as many submissions as you like with accompanying entry fee for each (i.e. 3 submissions is \$30). All submissions must be postmarked by Dec. 10, 2000.

PRIZES. One winner will be selected from each category and will be awarded \$150 apiece. Both winning submissions will be announced and published in the February 2001 issue of *Inklings*, Vol. 6:1.

RULES. All submissions must be original and unpublished. Submissions will not be returned, so do not include return postage. Each submission should include your name, address, phone number, and e-mail in the top left corner. (No e-mail submissions will be accepted). Please make all checks payable to *Inklings* and mail with submissions to: *Inklings* Contest, 1650 Washington St., Denver, CO 80203. For more information call (303) 861-8191 or visit our web-site at www.paradoxpub.com.

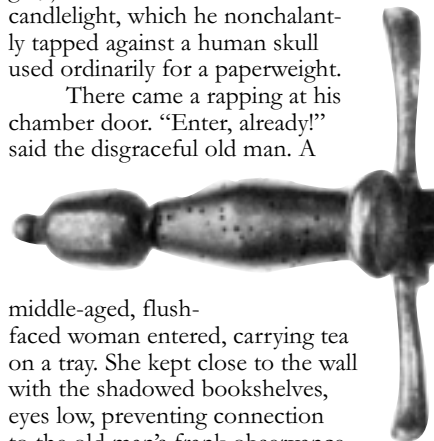
Inklings
JOIN THE DISCUSSION

*Well, it was probably more like a writing critique-fest than a contest. These noted English writers belonged to an informal literary company of thinkers, writers, poets, and friends during and after WW II who gathered regularly to recite poetry, critique each others' current literary endeavors, and to invite comments and criticism. Establishing a literary forum for dialogue, discussion, and above all, friendship, they called themselves the "Inklings."

He Finally Danced!

In Jewish lore, the golem is activated by placing a list of doomed individuals' names in its mouth. The golem then leaves at its master's bidding to complete the requested assassinations.

Once upon a midnight dreary a wicked old man schemed the deaths of many men. On a table before him lay papers, some folded in intricate shapes, others handwritten lists of names, and atop the whole mess lay an open book from which he read, chuckling. In one gnarled hand he held an ornate dagger, jeweled and scintillant in the candlelight, which he nonchalantly tapped against a human skull used ordinarily for a paperweight. There came a rapping at his chamber door. "Enter, already!" said the disgraceful old man. A



middle-aged, flush-faced woman entered, carrying tea on a tray. She kept close to the wall with the shadowed bookshelves, eyes low, preventing connection to the old man's frank observance of her. The porcelain pitcher and cup rattled with her nerves. "Make haste, Miss Kirsh," he said, his voice oddly smooth for one so fossilized. She set the things on a table and turned for the door. On the floor lay symbols which she stepped over gingerly, as though one of them might ensnare her ankle and pull her down to a black pool beneath the floorboards.

The door closed behind her; he resumed tapping. How irritating the woman was! Three times weekly for twenty years she had performed the same unvarying services dispensing the same tea following the same instructions with meek wordlessness. A tired frump she was however faithful and unobtrusive she was, who thrived on gallons of monotony. Well, that was good for her, but not for the wicked old man on this particular night. No, no! Tonight was special, and he felt positively light headed. Even so, he could not immediately account for his giddiness.

In mere moments he would conduct

By Keith Call

the ritual he had conducted for long years before on this particular evening, the Night of Reckoning. There was certainly nothing novel in this quite serious event, and the old fiend shuddered that such a whim be considered; the ritual's power lay in the very fact of its established antiquity, as grimly dogmatized as Miss Kirsh's unvarying deliverance of refreshment. A notion pressed itself upon him regarding the cause of these grudging, gleeful twinges, but he pinched it like a bothersome insect.

imagined such a silly thing. But it was as cool water swimming over his old heart. The cuck-cuck clock struck twelve, and he now felt a sweetness of soul beyond what even the origami offered. Midnight meant the Night of Reckoning, time for business. He arose solemnly from his desk and dropped the dove in a deep pocket. As he turned the corner he pulled a slip of paper from under the skull. On the east wall over a large closet hung a black drapery with symbols embroidered identically to those on the floor. For a moment the old man stood before it with his head bowed, very quietly muttering a chant under his beard. He pulled the drapery aside.

Before him stood a clay man almost twice his height. The legs and arms were thick as trees, and the face was rounded, featureless except for clay teeth like nails inside its gaping mouth. How old it was he did not know. It had been given to him by his own revered master decades ago upon the young (but scandalous, even then) fellow's graduation. This was merely one of the dark and secret things of this house.

One of the more useful, too. His lips played a little smile as he began to read the writing on the paper. But a sudden irritation seized him, and with this emotion he was much more comfortable. Here in his hand was not the list of doomed men: Wassermann who had written that damning monograph against the old man's theory of soul migration, and Muir who had consistently monikered the learned old man a "diseased crow" at the Copenhagen conference, and Isaacson whose horse had splattered mud upon him as it galloped along with Isaacson atop, laughing, obviously unapologetic. Other instances of miscreant men came to mind.

No, this was a mistake, and a rather bitter one in the wake of his meticulous preparations. Here in his hand was the supply list for Miss Kirsh's morning shopping in the village. He looked to the desk at the disarrayed papers and knew instant-

ly what he had done. He slapped his forehead. With the very assassination list had he made the origami dove! What zaniness, what abject foolishness! *O!* He hadn't realized he was getting so absent-minded. He shrugged and withdrew the dove from his pocket, holding it up to inspect the names. Folded and perforated, they were yet clearly readable. He thought for a moment. While it would certainly be most unorthodox, he saw no reason not to use the crafted paper. Tradition normally required the names of the doomed to be tightly rolled in a sealed scroll for placement in the golem's mouth. But the origami dove would do well enough, he reasoned, as long as the names were written on it. Again the inner breezes of giddiness. This was all so unorthodox! Some colleagues might object to this, but they weren't here to kvetch, and besides he didn't feel like making a new list. He pulled a stepping stool to the clay giant and ascended to gently place the little paper bird into the horrible rodent-hole of a mouth. The old man stepped down and cleared the floor of obstacles. There were no other sounds in the house. No crickets sang and no cats meowed. He held his breath. He stood in the center of his study, the exact middle of the kabbala inscribed on the floor, and softly chanted the strange words. Wax slid down candlesticks like tears. After half an hour he ceased. He folded his arms within his coat and backed into the darkness of the study.

"Go," he said softly to the golem. "You have much to accomplish before the rising of the sun. Afterward you shall return to me." But in all this solemn-golem seriousness he nearly had to cover his mouth to stifle unwelcomed giggles. That little bird looked so funny in the mighty golem's mouth! But then he saw something. For the merest instant it seemed to the wicked old man that the origami bird had fluttered, but this no doubt was a caused by the stirring of the golem. Its fingers clenched slowly, its head turned slightly, left and right, up and down, as though acknowledging an unheard dialogue of questions and answers. And then, of a sudden, it lunged from the closet out to the floor, quaking every wall, vibrating the room with such force that the old man fell backward. "Aaaha!" he yelped, grasping protuberances for support. He pulled himself upright, a usually laborious action for the old man but now a light and effortless task. It seemed there was no end to his rising; he felt as though he were flying upwards into deep clear sky. The room was spinning, but so was

something else. It was the golem. The great clay monster was gyrating its hips, stomping its leaden feet on the floor, raising its arms to the ceiling. It spun, stomped, bent over, and spun around again.

As the dizzy old man tried to pull the sights before him into something comprehensible, he realized that yet one more motion had erupted. He looked down to see his very own legs kicking. Ho, ho! He was dancing!

"Weee!" he sang, because he couldn't help it. He sprang out of the shadows to the floor with the golem who did not break stride for its new partner. They joined arms, elbow to elbow, clapped palm to palm, and kicked like showgirls. Books fell to the floor. Boards and windows strained for composure. Candles puffed out. Bottles and vases crashed.

The old man, panting, noted the little paper bird flapping in the golem's mouth between the wicked teeth. But he did not linger on this any more than a gushing fountain pauses for sightseers; it springs forth as its function requires, and nothing else. And thus did laughter burst from the old man's mouth, and it seemed his muscles and lungs were splitting apart from these unfamiliar sensations, this taxation of hilarity.

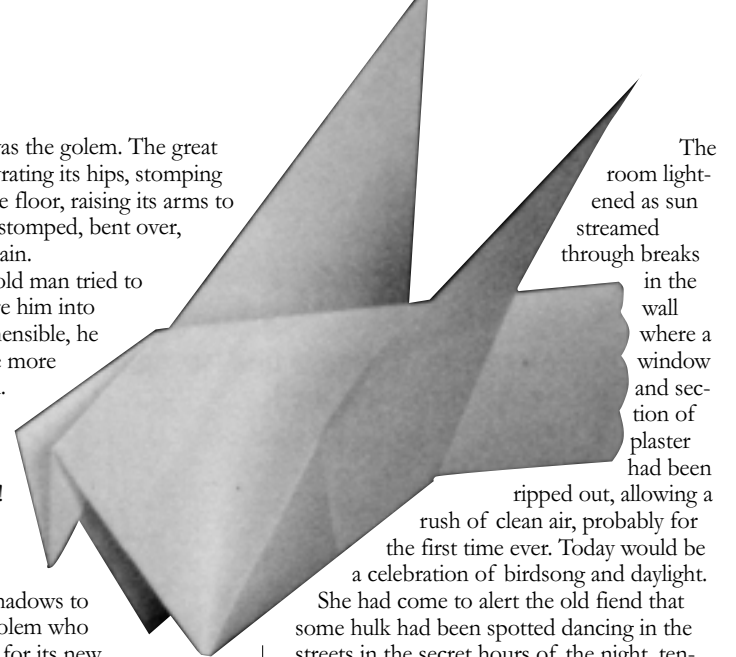
"What is this?" he asked of these peculiar feelings. "Name yourselves, invaders! Who are you, so bold? Names, names!"

The golem embraced him and the joyous-wicked old man returned the embrace, and out of the golem's mouth flew the bird, fluttering above their heads in circles for one instant like a shared halo. The mighty golem stiffened. It teetered, tottered, and finally timbered forward onto the still-dancing old man. Nothing like vases or bookshelves broke this time. This time it was just the old man's bones that shattered.

On the floor, nose to nose with the black, impassive visage above his own face, the old man whispered into its deep O of a mouth, "I know you, ancient one. Oh world of wonders, I know who you are, little dove of peace! Your name is . . . is—" A dove, a dove, what of the dove? In his darkening consciousness he recalled its fleeing whiteness above arks and rivers, things he had read about in old manuscripts.

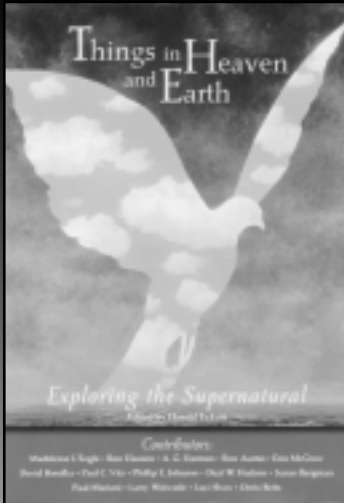
But twilight closed, and into the golem's mouth the old man breathed his last breath.

Next morning Miss Kirsh came in for the tea tray, and to relay some odd news. Instead she found the study torn to shreds, and an old man on the floor with a bit of crumpled paper in his mouth. She did not startle or cry. How could she? She knew that unspeakable doings occurred in this room. Her first thought was to sweep up this mess. But no, better first to alert the constables.



The room lightened as sun streamed through breaks in the wall where a window and section of plaster had been ripped out, allowing a rush of clean air, probably for the first time ever. Today would be a celebration of birdsong and daylight. She had come to alert the old fiend that some hulk had been spotted dancing in the streets in the secret hours of the night, tenderly hugging drunks and harlots and unwary passers-by. It was an entirely unexpected caution for those who haunt the night. The constabulary had been unable to ferret any leads, but they seemed little distressed about it. The old man's skull paperweight grinned at her and she grinned back. As she stepped over his body she wondered if today, or tonight, or ever, some hulking monster might just spring from shadows and hug her so very gently, too, and set her down with her feet on the ground and her heart fluttering like doves' wings. She pulled her shawl tighter about her shoulders and planned a nice long stroll tonight. 🐦

Hansen * Harmon * Austin * McGraw
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Stories

RABBITS

RABBITS

My mother was always certain I was "going through a phase." It didn't matter what it was, if she disagreed with it, I was going through a phase. If my actions were puzzling or embarrassing, she would explain, "Oh, he's just going through a phase." On the rare occasion they met with her approval, she would credit me with maturing. "You're becoming very mature," she would say, an appraisal which delighted me as much as it surprised her. The fact is, though, she was right. I did go through phases (though I doubt as many as she claimed).

One phase I went through was characterized by a strong desire to trap rabbits.

I have little understanding why. It is only in retrospect that I

realize my decision may

have been a deep philosophical acceptance of

life's basic challenge: man against nature.

Or it may have been a logical

extension of my growing up with

animals, especially chinchillas. But this

is hindsight. At the time, it just came to

me as a splendid idea. The rabbits

were out there; it wouldn't really

cost me anything; it seemed like

fun. In short,

one day for

no

reason—based on little more than a whim—I made a decision to go through the puzzling, embarrassing, or possibly maturing, rabbit trapping phase.

I must have been a junior in high school, and I didn't have any particular goal in mind. But it's easy to make too much of goals. Maybe I would end up in the rabbit business, maybe I wouldn't.

How to structure such a business, how to

care for and

market my

rabbits to

turn a profit,

would have

to wait. It

seemed obvious

that unless I

could figure

out how to

trap a rabbit,

all other

plans were

off.

When I use the word trap, please understand, I do not mean I intended to catch an animal in a trap. Actually, my plan was more that of *baiting* rabbits. I intended to arrange events so that a rabbit, having

been enticed into a five-sided box, was

prevented from leaving a six-sided

box. My first objective, therefore, was

to somehow obtain such a

box. A quick check in the

garage showed me none

were available. So it looked

as if for me to become a

trapper—to become the

only kind of trapper I knew

about: a Jack London kind of

trapper, a tough, hard glob of

a man that snarled and ate

hardtack and beef jerky with his

dogs and lived on the edge—I had to

first become a carpenter. I had to build a

box.

The only woodworking experience

By Glenn Lucas

I could claim was a birdhouse I built in the Boy Scouts and an exact replica of a giant earthworm I carved from a two-by-four for a tenth grade biology project. (Actually, I learned more about carving than earthworms, but some things just work out well.)

Somehow, without plans or a schematic of any sort, I managed to fashion a box from one-by-eights my dad had in the garage. (It looked suspiciously like a birdhouse with a flat roof.) I even managed to construct a trap door operated by a trigger made from a small branch, which descended through the top and guarded the rear portion of the box containing the bait. I placed the box in a little meadow several hundred feet on the other side of the railroad tracks. I had seen rabbits scamper through there at times. For bait I used a fresh piece of apple.

A wild rabbit, a jack rabbit,
is wild from God . . . The essence
of the rabbit is wildness. Its wildness—
and the freedom it implies—
is such a part of it that it will fight
with all it has to keep from losing it.

I was up forty-five minutes early the next morning. I figured it would take at least this long to celebrate catching my first rabbit before I went to school. On the way to check my box-trap, an insidious fear nagged me: Had I caught a rabbit that was so monstrously huge that he could possibly bounce off with the box?—even while trapped on the inside—like a kid in a cardboard box, only better. Or, if that weren't the case, I imagined that, once trapped, he had kicked the box to pieces, leaving me only splinters for my trouble. My fears were quickly dispelled, however, when I spotted the box intact, the trap door closed.

I reached the box and quietly listened for movement of any kind. None. Maybe the door fell of its own accord. Then...tiny scratching sounds. I picked it up, turning the trap door to the sky, opened it and peered in. A tiny black ping-pong ball of fur huddled against one corner. Two beady little mouse eyes, helpless,

yet full from apple, looked back at me with a look designed to elicit mercy. For a moment I imagined I knew how God feels toward his helpless children. Then I sent him on his way.

The curious thing is, when I put the box under a nice pine in the adjacent woods, it just felt right. And I soon learned that, indeed, it was right. Breathlessly opening the trap door the next morning, I gazed at two large eyes staring out from under long, quivering ears. One USDA Grade A prime jack rabbit. I was in the rabbit business.

Dad had told me a wild rabbit can't be tamed. He told me, but I didn't listen. Because I knew better. And I wanted to try. I thought that with patience and enough work, even a wild rabbit would finally give in. So with this ill-founded belief I locked my first wild rabbit with rabbit pellets, hay and water in a small, run-down building previously used as a playhouse by my sisters, and left for school. I planned to begin the domestication process that afternoon. As I was leaving, I heard him bang against the bare-studded walls several times. I thought he would tire of that in a hurry—or kill himself.

That afternoon I found him dazed, sitting in a corner with most of the skin knocked off his forehead. He was so addled that he made no attempt to flee as I picked him up. I treated his wound with sulfur powder, the only thing I knew to do, and stayed with him awhile. I thought that, somehow, affection would make a difference; if for no other reason, he would rest safely now from sheer exhaustion. That night, before going in, I watched him sitting peacefully like a rabbit ought to.

Next morning he was dead. I

Childhood

Winding through my cul-de-sacked streets I found no secret paths or incantations, no change, no wild, nothing I couldn't draw in my straight lines and circles—though crayons can't capture the way sidewalks follow earth's curve, the hollow and rise of particular place, the hill I trudged up every day after school, forcing me to walk slow, notice trees. Tramping that slate, I wished dumbly for birds, rainstorms, fruit; I longed vaguely for mud. What I found was desire—and sidewalks could hold it concretely. They stretched a clean canvas to my restless imagining. They offered the curb for my first fearless leaping.

—Judith Terry McCune

checked on him first thing. He had beaten his head into those wooden walls until he exposed his skull. I was stunned. Here lay a poor creature—dead. And it was my fault. I hadn't listened to good advice. I had known better. I was saddened and ashamed. But then, I thought, why be so hard on myself? Maybe this was a fluke. Maybe this was a one-in-a-million crazy rabbit and another that could be tamed was waiting in my box that very instant. Maybe I shouldn't jump to conclusions. I buried the little fellow on my way to check the box. The door was down, and sure enough, my next experiment was waiting inside. If you've ever done something the second time you knew you shouldn't have, then you can relate to my experience with this second rabbit. I knew the attempt was doomed from the start. I could tell. I spent a good deal of time that afternoon holding him, handling and studying him. And looking at his rabbit eyes and sensing what he was about. I knew it wouldn't work. But with inexcusable stubbornness I went ahead with the project and locked him in the playhouse for the night.

A wild rabbit, a jack rabbit, is wild from God. The essence of the rabbit is wildness. Its wildness—and the freedom it implies—is such a part of it that it will fight with all it has to keep from losing it, even driving itself hopelessly against impenetrable walls in the effort. And it will continue this valiant fight even to death. Some things are more important than life. The value of some things demands the giving of life.

For this wild rabbit, as for the other, that choice was made. When I picked up its lifeless body the next morning, I was curiously filled with admiration. I was sad, yes, and my rabbit trapping phase was over. But more than that, I was impressed. The rabbits had won. Both had been challenged at the most fundamental level of being, and both had remained true to their natures. Neither had relented. Neither had settled for less than the life God had created it for. When that which

Holding Seeds in Her Mouth

She stands alone at the station as snow coughs into a gray evening that stutters toward night. The ache of winter squirms against her back, whispering her name. She tastes hoarfrost as leaves surrender themselves to the ice gullet: a chasm of whispered covenants.

She wraps herself in muzzled green, holds dung-colored seeds in her mouth to conjure a hammering train: spring screaming brazen over frigid tracks gathering speed snow-clad boxcars gorged with heat flatbeds heaped with noise wheels ravenous for change. She rides the engine with the sun in a satchel: a suitcase for desire.

And when she breaks the latches, summer sneaks through burgeoning gardens, secreting its tracks in the wind. Days crawl upon one another as she listens to grasshoppers prowl, the sough of rivers slithering to the ocean's jaws.

When autumn appears as a caravan of camels laden with treasures shrouded in Persian rugs, she swallows dust from the journey, smells leaves sheathed in painted caftans, and begins to dig a seedbed beneath the snow. Then, she paints her arms fledgling green as she waits for the train with her name etched in its skin.

—Carol Bell

was dearest was threatened, both had fought to the death. I admired that. I really admired that.

I wondered what in my own life I felt that strongly about. Would I literally give up my life to keep it? It was that question, in fact, that caused me to enter my "puzzling over the rabbits" phase. I have puzzled over those rabbits and the meanings of their deaths for a long time, and though I may not totally be out of that phase yet, I believe I understand its major import.

It was not for nothing that I related so strongly to the rabbits. They demonstrated by their deaths that the thing worth living for is the thing worth dying for. Just as freedom was more important for them than mere subsistence, so there is something much more important in my own life than just getting by, making ends meet. It is freedom, yes, but it is freedom to do, to fulfill. And it is God-given. He placed it in the rabbit and He placed it in me. It is a holy principle. Rabbits pounding on bare studded walls: the picture and the lesson of a lifetime. 🐰

Letters from the Underground

The Lost Letters of C. S. Lewis

In a recent visit to the home of C. S. Lewis, Inklings staff members inadvertently stumbled upon a literary coupe. Deep in the ashes of a furnace found in the bowels of Lewis's home, the Kilns, a clutch of half-burned correspondence was discovered. Recovered carefully and then reconstructed even more carefully by the experts in our extensive Paradox Publishing research laboratories, some of the precious documents were lost, but most of them have survived. Due to the almost complete destruction of the lower half of the letters, the names of the authors have had to be painstakingly deciphered using strong microscopes and educated guesses. These letters were apparently sent to Lewis in response to his early drafts of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe and represent some of the earlier influences on this book. These priceless letters are presented here, in as much entirety as we could provide, for the pleasure of our faithful Inklings readers.

—The editors

Jack,
As I read your latest draft, I composed a list out of habbit [sic], I suppose—of specialists to consult regarding the accuracy of your created country. Following are a few of my concerns with the thinness of the text:
Although we have discussed these issues before, I must emphasize that Narnia is not given enough detail as to be credible. I have noted some ideas for you as to the linguistic history of the various peoples and creatures of Narnia (thus far I have charted 52 variations of species, is

this correct?). Also, I would suggest an entire book, preceding this one, that explains the history of the country, its neighbors, political, social, cultural interactions, previous treaties, wars, alliances, etc. . . . Geography is sketchy at best as well. You may wish to consult a few cartographers for accuracy here as well as a botanist of good reputation, as the flora and fauna of differing terrains must be carefully verified. I will bring my notes to the B & B on Tuesday.
—Regards,
Tolkeen, Jr.



Recess

Time out, Kings-X and Anti-I-Over, escape into sunlight or squall, teeter-totters between geography and life when brain cells process perception.

Time out, a pause from technicolor lunacy, listen to the wind or sleet, interludes between anguish and delight, when cells and souls become one.

Time out, suspended between earth and beyond, searching for a galaxy to ride, floating between birth and rest when all the stars run to hide.

—Beverly Saylor

changing his sheets and worrying his landlady.
Again, he must wander Narnia, growing old and bent with the weight of sin and guilt. The faces staring back at him should grow more distant and more repulsive as his confused mind swirls into insanity. The sweating . . .

(Editors note: we have not printed a section of this text as the original letter was 500 pages long. This exclusion falls under the editing category known as “ya-da, ya-da, ya-da.”)

. . . then , and only then, must he experience freedom as he lives the rest of his days as a slave and in the loving company of his siblings who have chosen willingly to accompany him in his punishment.
—Respectfully,
Fyodorsky Dostoyev



Western Union Telegraph:
Lewis [STOP] just read manuscript [STOP] wardrobe is not credible as transportation device to Narnia [STOP] need something more mechanistic [STOP] perhaps a radiator or an electric box [STOP] both pose problems of insulation [STOP] either heat or frost [STOP] will draw up some plans and send later [STOP]
—Harry
Graystone Wells



Dear Clive,
I've had a revelation while reading your manuscript. My overall impression is that you are too subtle with your story. In order for the readers to hear your message, you must shout it out. For instance, in the initial scene in Narnia, I think the lamppost is too tame an image, perhaps the addition of an artificial faun? I also believe if would be helpful if at least one of the four children had a prosthetic device of some sort.
—Sincerely,
Flannel O'Connory



Dear Jack,
I received your manuscript earlier this week and have just this evening, on the hallowed eve of your birth, had the pleasure to sit down and read it. I must tell you that my experience in doing so has been a descent into spell-binding surreal-

ism. As the essence of the greater clumps of your piece moved through me, I felt the walls melt into spiritual beings and the wallpaper flowers emerged as nymphs and dryads. These ethereal creatures danced upon the pages of your book which had become a great storm. As the dryads were torn and transmogrified by the fierce wind, a large lion broke through the walls of the house. His savage roar went out like a fog over the entire scene, enveloping everything in its solid embrace. Then the wind died down into fluttering pages and the flowers danced ever so slowly back to their places on the wall, and the sound of the lion's call gentled into a whisper that said, “It is well.”
—Well done, Jack.
Peace, William
Charles



Lewis,
Too obvious and not enough action. For whom do you toil, man!? You've done all the work and left nothing to the reader. I've reconstructed a sample of the scene at the Stone Table immediately following Edmund's

betrayal and propitiation and the death of Aslan shortly thereafter:

A loud sound in the distance, like the grinding of stones, made everyone look up. “What was that?” Peter whispered. “It sounded like the Stone Table,” said Edmund quietly, fingering his canteen nervously. Susan looked directly at Edmund and spoke with a clipped, exaggerated pointedness, “Yes, it did. Didn't it Edmund?” All eyes turned and focused on the fidgeting boy. The minotaur, standing with the others and staring unblinkingly at Edmund, lowered its shaggy, bullish head, pawed once or twice and then charged the boy. As it came towards him, Edmund lifted up his hands in surrender and kept his eyes open.

Lewis: I prefer a bull in this scene, but given the nature of Narnia, and its utter lack of anything overtly Mediterranean, a mythological creature, such as the minotaur is decidedly more effective.
—Yours,
Ernestway
Heming



Blue-Notes and Vibration

Tonight, a man pulled a silver clarinet
From the moving wall, switched on background
From deep within the black burden slung
Over his life, and blew. No one ever
Flinches, like they would if this were Kansas.
The familiar drone and moan on a Coltrane,
White cheeks doing Armstrong. This one
In Kente cap laughs, shifts with ancestral
Claim, that one clings white-knuckled to
His end-of-day pole, most sit jammed
Inside padded personal space through stopped
Up ears, varied gloss and tone of black
And white or stupor. Any other night
We'd choose to wait in line for blue-notes
and vibration. Over a bridge the rails
Join in, noticing the need for certain percussion.
Frank O'Hara's city again, until the man
Stops, raises his cup to the way things are.
Accompaniment mourns from black bag
Drum section brakes, more clink than swoosh
Weights in, then walls form gaps, letting out
The played to. Off to another gig, he crosses
The platform. O, should've paid more for that.

—Kristy Johnson

Missing a back issue? We have a few left.



Vol. 1:1, Spring '94
Premiere Issue featuring "The Inklings of Oxford" by Nancy Shickel Hicks, "What's a Good Story?" by Walter Wagesen, Jr., "Reading 'romanticism'" by Brad Hicks, & an interview with Douglas Gresham.

Vol. 1:2, Summer '94
An Insider's View of Flannery O'Connor featuring "Mr. S.: Greatest Inspiring Writing" by Calvin Miller, "Diana & the Deathly Agent" by Gene Tidland Veith, & "Roger Ebert: On Sin, Kim Novak, & the Movies."

Vol. 1:3, Fall '94
The Cambridge Chronicles: The *Inklings* Staff in England featuring three original poems & an essay by Lucie Sturman, an interview with Larry Worwood, & "Literary Laughter: 3 Comic Writers Who Invented Faith" by Ralph Wood.

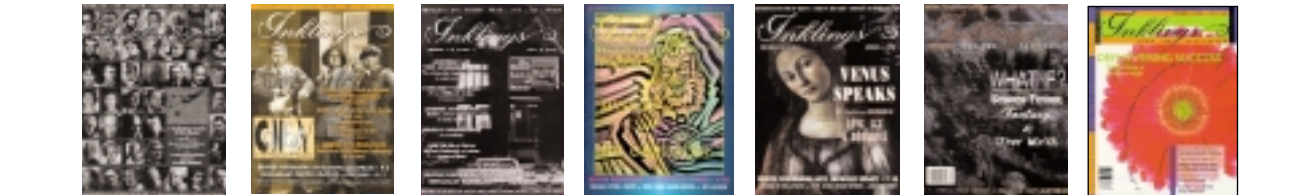
Vol. 1:4, Spring '95
A Celebration of Restoration: Stories of Art & Healing featuring "Van Gogh's War with Passion" by Dan Johnson, articles by Philip Vance, Frederick Buchner, & Leland Kiyen, & an interview with Lyle Dorsett.

Vol. 2:1, Fall '95
Music & Meaning: A Search for Artistic Integrity featuring "Music Making & Mothering" by Harold Best, "Fortunate Man: Mark Harris' Musical Legacy" by Neil Fagan, & "Does Poetry Make Good Music?" by Michael Card.

Vol. 2:2, Spring '96
Disemprisoning the Imagination featuring "The Misuse of Media & Arthur C. Lewis & Historical Fiction" by Brad Hicks & David Niles, & "Friends, Gratitude, & Steven Spielberg: Why I Don't Go to the Movies" by John Leax.

Vol. 2:3, Fall '96
The Artist's Inspiration: Why We Create featuring "Inspired By Three: A Look at Dorothy Sayers' Creative Trinity" by Jo Kadlec, & an interview with Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*.

Vol. 2:4, Winter '96-'97
Community & Friendship: An *Inklings* Discussion featuring an interview with Dan Wakefield, an *Inklings* staff discussion of our "Framed Friendship" & "What I Learned from Jim & Tammy" by Joy Sawyer.



Vol. 3:1, Spring '97
Recognizing Artistic Responsibility: Creative Voices Who've Shaped Us featuring an interview with Randall Stueckell & "The Burden of Creation: Beyond Self-Abandonment & the Dedication of Art" by Terry Glaspey.

Vol. 3:2, Summer '97
Comedy & the Paradox of Tragedy featuring "To Hear Words & Think with the Three Strides" by The Inklings staff, "Art's Secret: 'Waiting' Lately & the Comic Sense of Life" by Gene Veith, & an interview with Kathryn Lindsay.

Vol. 3:3, Fall '97
The Many Faces of Home featuring an interview with Eugene Peterson, "Language as Homeland: Finding a Place in the Story" by Judith McMane & "Until All Have Faces: Toward a Spirituality of Writing" by Bruce D. Martin.

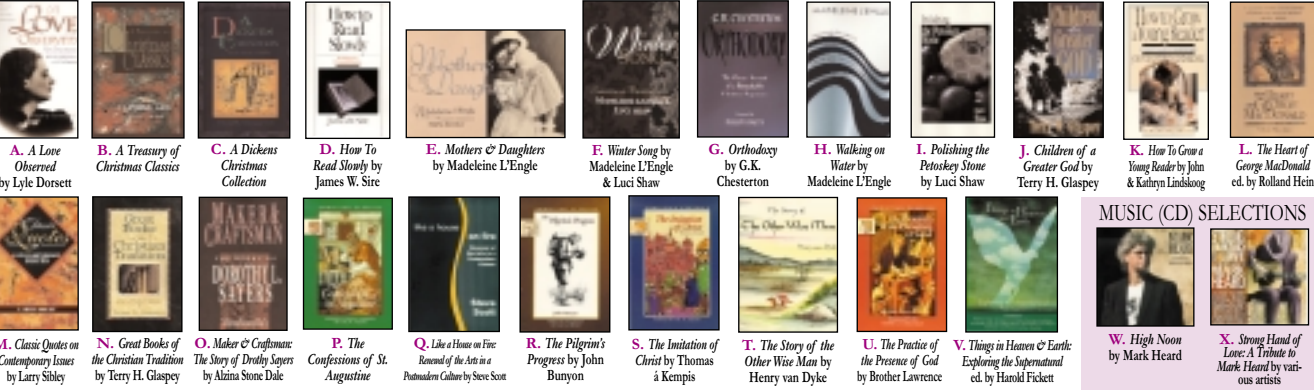
Vol. 3:4, Winter '97-'98
Horror, Mystery & the Grotesque featuring "Good & the Grotesque: Hope Beyond Reason" by Brad Hicks, "Gargoyles & the Grotesque: Perspectives of the Moral Gauge" by Karen Mulder, & an interview with Clive Barker.

Vol. 4:1, Spring '98
Venus Speaks: An *Inklings* Discussion of Love, Sex, & Romance featuring Gail Williams' "Theology of Romantic Love" by Brad Hicks, "The Secret Affair of Sister Wendy" by Karen Mulder, & an interview with Philip Yancey.

Vol. 4:2, Summer '98
What If? Science Fiction, Fantasy & Other Worlds featuring "Theology & Fiction: Peter Williams' 'Theology of Romantic Love' by Brad Hicks, "The Secret Affair of Sister Wendy" by Karen Mulder, & an interview with Philip Yancey.

Vol. 4:3, Fall '98
Deflowering Success: Uncertainty's Hollow Myth featuring "Deflowering on the '98 Festival of Faith & Writing" by Susan Jones, "From a song-writing seminar with Pierce Pettis, & an interview with The Call's Michael Been.

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Confessions of a Non-Narnian

I've had my reasons for not reading C. S. Lewis over the years. Or so I've thought. Before I go further, I ask you to fully appreciate the fortitude required to make such an admission (read: front cover of this publication). In some circles (again, front cover) I'm considered the sheep that entered the fold through a way other than the gate.

In my experience with the ever-widening Lewis cult, I've found that readers of his popular literature fall into one of two categories: the lover of fantasy and the person of faith, who sometimes are the same person. (For the alert among you, no, this combination isn't a commentary on the questionable validity of religion.)

My college girlfriend was a literary person of faith, as was I. She introduced me to Lewis by giving me the first volume of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I never cracked it. Reading Lewis at the time seemed to me just another conformist fad among my fellow students (though not nearly as conformist as reading Tolkien was). I overheard a lot of talk about the wonderful parabolic content of the Narnia books. But because of certain traumatic (and dra-

matic) events in my life, which shaped the contours of my faith, I demanded to see all talk of religion demonstrated on the pavement. From where I stood at the time, I rarely saw Narnia's supposed truths being lived out by those who recited them. Like Christ, Lewis didn't appear to have a lot of living advertisements for his work. To me, his influence was almost a sideshow—perhaps even a distraction—from the real matters of faith.

Over the decades I made the requisite false starts on *Mere Christianity*, either through the nagging of peers or by sheer force of will. The book was considered a monument, the peak to be scaled by every defender of the faith. But if I ever got through the first chapter, I don't recall anything from the experience. My reaction to Lewis then was that he was a witty pontificator, an ivory-tower don, not somebody who did battle in the trenches. And to me, the trenches were where real faith had to be lived. (As I later learned, Lewis was indeed a veteran of the trenches, humankind's worst, in World War I.)

The Lewis canon suffered other casualties in my life. Once, I saw a friend stage an adaptation of *The Great Divorce*. If I had a reaction, it was a vague gratitude that seeing the play had spared me from reading the book. But Lewis kept inching toward me nonetheless. *The Screwtape Letters* fared better in my mind, insofar as it put hands and feet to the fiery concepts of human psychology and behavior and the present reality of evil. Now there, I thought, is something that gets close to the real thing.

Yet, try as I might, I could never escape the guilty pleasure of enjoying G. K. Chesterton, a Lewis forefather, more than the Oxford don himself. I might well attribute this taste to a childhood diet of *The Three Stooges*. Chesterton had more of a

pants-dropping approach to his appraisals of life's absurdities. When I read Lewis, I heard cocktail glasses clinking; when I read the big guy, I saw his shirt coming untucked and his pint spilling over. The reassurances I sought weren't to be found in the drawing room I imagined Lewis inhabiting. (I never would have guessed from his books that he ever set foot in a place like the Bird and Baby.) True, he stood as an omniscient within the fight for the faith. As Henry Adams said of Henry James, "He possessed a mind so fine it could not violate itself." And I could appreciate that. But nothing about the man, as far as I could discern, connected us on a gut—read: spiritual—level.

When I read Lewis, I heard
cocktail glasses clinking;
when I read (Chesterton),
I saw his shirt coming untucked
and his pint spilling over.

Years later I'd all but given up on Lewis when, at a somewhat desperate point in life, I picked up *A Grief Observed*. After a few pages, I quickly realized this had to be Lewis's least accomplished book. Even the most casual reader could detect that this wasn't the author's usual mode of writing. Yet it was all raw life. And arrestingly unsettling. Reading it was like seeing your father standing in his boxers in the next room bawling like a baby. I had the awful feeling I was witnessing something I shouldn't be watching but couldn't turn my eyes away. And yet there was a certain release in doing so. The tonic came not in what Lewis had to say, but in the shockingly revealed nakedness of his humanity. Marriage had brought this man's work down to earth—and now his wife's death had brought it down farther still.

Surely Lewis didn't intend this in the writing—the integrity of its raw honesty stood on its own—but he had me in an emotional grip. Soon I hated whenever that grip began to slip. At times Lewis maddeningly reverted to arm's-length pontificating and rhetorical questioning. But by now I was convinced he couldn't help himself (and I admire him for not attempting to hide the ugly struggle). At virtually every vulnerable moment, he was overtaken by the live-wire intellect that had kept his comportment intact over the decades. Thus, he came across at times as too clinically self-analyzing to convince me he'd

just essentially lost half of his own body. Come on Clive, I prodded, show me the real. I need it.

It came. The book's pathos began for me in a subtle gathering of momentum, as I watched the man behind the words—Lewis the guy—wrestle down his demons of distance. It began to dawn on me that now he saw his life differently, his brother differently, his home differently—irreparably so. I knew he ate differently, slept differently. I saw him hollow-eyed, sitting alone, leaving empty glasses in odd places around the house.

I stuck around to witness it all, down to its messy conclusion. By the end, he knew he couldn't wrap up his grief in a slogan or blame others anymore for trying to do it for him. He could only look down at his wife helplessly in her final moment on earth with him and reflect later, without comment, "She smiled, but not at me."

Thank you, I breathed. Thank you. The lion of Narnia started to look real to me. ♣

Scott Sawyer makes his living as a freelance writer. His book of creative non-fiction, *Earthly Fathers*, will be published next year. Scott and his wife, Joy, live in Denver, Colorado.

Minstrel of the Dawn

Every morning (so the legend goes), Georg Rubinowicz serenaded the sunrise. He was not particularly prepossessing: squat, stolid; the kind kids taunted. He was more like a Snow White dwarf than some wart-free wunderkind.

At first, the cops cautioned curfew—then the darkness and its stalking algae. His parents had perished in the camps but he was extricated by the Allies. Perhaps it made him immortal to threats, to fear, to mists man-made. No one chained his song from those fading stars. His face melted with crimson, becoming the dawn and the heart of Aptos.

I wanted to ask him why police and muggers shunned him. Maybe it was at Auschwitz or Belsen—or some other sardine factory where they closed the canopy of the stars to him—that he vowed to redeem borrowed time, bringing with him the souls less destined.

—Mike Catalano

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The Prophetic Imagination

The Squatting, Smiling Incarnational Writer

In an issue commemorating C. S. Lewis, it seems only fitting to discuss the morality of writing. I'm a person of faith, and I'm continually amazed at one, particular aspect of my community's literature: The tantalizing wonder that Christ invaded our untidy existence and became one of us.

As one modern translation of the Scriptures says, he "moved into our neighborhood," fully entering the world of noisy traffic jams, burnt toast, petty acquaintances, smelly feet, strep throat. Such a human picture flies in the face of what I think when I hear the word "spiritual": a word that connotes a tranquil, ethereal, sanitary way of living. I imagine a spiritual person as one who glides through life on a cushy cloud, spouting winsome words of wisdom and leaving a trail mix of

glory dust behind.

I think it's much tougher for me to think about Jesus the person. That's because a God who is like me, in every

substantive way, is uncomfortable and unsettling. It means he does not stand far off. It means he knows me to the core. The great temptation in writing is to distance ourselves, to withdraw from the messy world. There is no danger, no threat, when we can pontificate our lofty thoughts from the lectern of

safety we often accrue when we carry the safe label of "writer." Our protective pulpit of words can actually prevent us from the dirty business of living the words we write. "I think, therefore I am," the old adage goes. An apt paraphrase for the distanced writer would be, "I write, therefore I am."

But the incarnational act stops us frozen in our all-too-often undisturbed tracks. To be a writer, a Christ-ful writer, we are invited to resist the temptation to allow life to glance off us like a child's suction-cup arrow. Christ lovingly bids us to

The great temptation in writing is to distance ourselves, to withdraw from the messy world.

enter fully into the sheer misery, the humdrum ordinariness, the exuberant joy, the painful disappointment he experienced. The writer who, like Christ, fully "moves

into the neighborhood" is the one who will cause our hearts to burn within us.

As I've talked to other writers, I've discovered that many of us seek to unearth ways to remain rooted in the raw, real world—living, organic ways. I've also found that my work as a counselor helps keep my vision and, hopefully, my writing grounded in the dirt, keeps my heart and my hands and my feet muddy, as I continually wade into the mess of human shame and joy. Hearing cigarette-butt, broken-beer-bottle stories of unwanted pregnancies and debilitating mental illnesses and broken marriages reminds me that, like writing, living incarnationally is not necessarily a lofty venture; it is about the cracked sidewalk in our hearts and the semi-strangled-but-fully-alive-and-gorgeous flowers that mysteriously grow between those cracks. It is about, as the poet Geoffrey Hill calls it, "our common, puddled substance."

The incarnational writer will find it impossible to be a bystander in life, or use writing as means to stand aloof from those loved or newly met. Every meeting, chance or otherwise, is an opportunity for both unmitigated glory and gut-wrenching pain (just consider dear C. S. and his one, great love, Joy). It is the gorgeous, humbling task of the incarnational writer to actually become the words written, so that those who read are so caught up in the

telling of the tale it becomes their own narrative. Life becomes words, and then is turned back to life again through our readers' lives.

The glory of glory is that it often presents itself as plain, white bread. Simple. Unadorned. Humbling. And the lowly truth about the writer who is a pilgrim on the path toward heaven is that he is, first and foremost, both the imitator and embodiment of one who preferred to hang out with dysfunctional fishermen and slimy IRS people. Anything less is not incarnational writing; it is solipsistic snobbery.

The incarnational writer resists the temptation to fortress himself in the dreamy castle of pretentious illusion, where his servant-readers scurry around him wondering what grandiose banquet they could possibly offer him. Instead, he lives smack in the middle of the beach-front of life, as Jesus did squatting, smiling, frying up breakfast and serving it on the rolled-up newspapers of our common existence. Our common, puddled existence. ☛

A version of this article will appear in Joy's book, *The Art of the Soul: Meditations for the Creative Christian Community*, forthcoming from Broadman & Holman Publishers. She is also the author of *Dancing to the Heartbeat of Redemption: The Creative Process of Spiritual Growth* (InterVarsity Press).

Upon Reading a Biography of C. S. Lewis

The biography close-leafed

in my hand I railed

on the author. To reduce

such a mind as probed

ocean depths of thought

to a flat and squalid formula—

this caused this and that that—

as though pebbles dropped

in ponds shoot one straight line

to shore rather than

ring rounding upon ring?

How dare you squeeze

such immensity of spirit

through a few pages

glued between boards.

—Barbara Parsons Linville

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“When she grows up, who she becomes affects both you and me. We can choose to help her or hurt her. If she's in trouble, so are we. If she is victimized, so are we. If she's in pain, so are we. If she fails, so do we.

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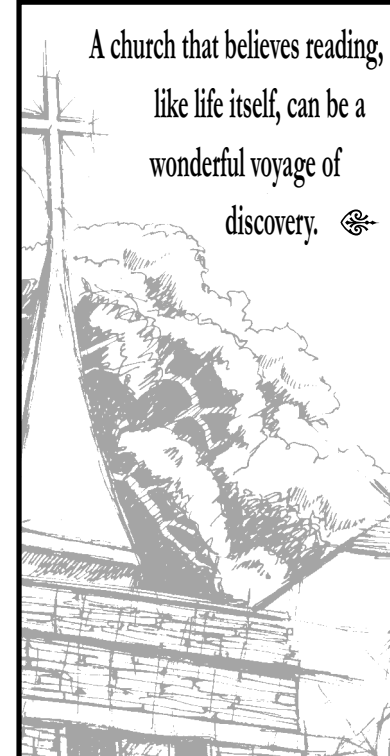
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Get the Picture

On the Edge of an Overlook

Editors Note: This article was originally written last spring, just after the Academy Awards were presented for the best films of 1998. This issue of Inklings was scheduled to be released in April. It wasn't, of course, so you'll notice the films about which Scott has written so wittily are quite dated. Our apologies. Though each of Scott's selections were '98 films, we've run the article in hopes that you'll take his critical recommendations and perhaps view them on video.

It was the season. Of course the Oscar buzz already came and went. You saw the list of top contenders: *Saving Private Ryan*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Life is Beautiful*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Elizabeth*. These films were filled with superb stories, great actors, and fine performances. But what about the slighted award hopefuls and the omitted artistic schlock that appeared throughout last year? There are many films that deserve to be added to the Best of '98 and shouldn't be left on the edge of an overlook.

AMERICAN HISTORY X



It amazes me that Edward Norton has done only five films. One minute he's a psychopathic, schizophrenic geek, the next he's crooning in a Woody Allen musical. This time he's bulked up, tattooed and sporting a clean-shaven dome as an angry, outspoken skinhead leader. Disillusioned with neo-Nazi philosophy, he attempts to dissuade his younger brother from following the same path. Redemption surpasses this film's brutality. To miss Ed would be to skip one of the most powerful performances of the year.

EVER AFTER



Find out the truth that lies within the Cinderella fairy tale. Our heroine, played by Drew Barrymore, survives her abusive sisters, loses a shoe and wins the prince! No big plot shockers here. But when

Drew isn't doing the "bad girl" thing, she can be irresistibly charming, which describes this film perfectly. Oh, I've also got to put in a plug for Angelica Houston. With her big, handsome face, finally she is given the role she was born to perform: The Wicked Stepmother.

THE WEDDING SINGER



This film should be on any aging baby boomer's "must see" list. *The Wedding Singer* (Adam Sandler) navigates his way through eighties tunes, bad fashions (that used to hang in my closet) and a sea of teal and fuchsia to find a romantic match in Drew Barrymore. The film has a great soundtrack filled with all the old reliable stomps that are handy for any spontaneous dance party.

CITY OF ANGELS



Not much for the theological crowd to chew on, except a possible discussion on heresy. Nicolas Cage is an angel in a black overcoat—they all wear black overcoats, a fact not mentioned in *Touched by an Angel*—whose interest is piqued by a surgeon in despair played by Meg Ryan. His curiosity mounts and ends in a decision to hang up his wings to give this "mortal thing" a try. Inconsistencies aside, we feel how near our joys and griefs are to those who reside in

the unseen realm. It's also a nice reminder of the sensuality we have an opportunity to experience every minute as human beings.

THE OPPOSITE OF SEX

How would you describe Dedee Truitt, the white-trash girl on the run played by Christina Ricci? The closest I can come is some mutated cross between Cruella de Vil and Betty Boop: devilishly devious, menacing and manipulative all packaged in a vampy, pixie bombshell. Even Wednesday Addams is afraid. Added to these secure defenses is a mouth that rifles off the most exquisitely rude and calculated one-liners (it makes me envious). With all this intact, Dedee rolls over everyone and everything that comes into her destructive path. It would seem that no love or virtue could ever penetrate such a heart. But then again, never say never.

DEEP IMPACT

Every notable movie list should include at least one disaster (and even though I'm not talking about the acting here, we could give that honor to *Armageddon*). A comet hurls towards earth that will cause a 1,200-foot tidal wave to wash over the Eastern Seaboard. But don't worry. America saves the day again! With heroic astronauts, repentant reporters and scared teenagers, this is melodrama at its finest. Take some Kleenex; you'll be sniffing.

THE HORSE WHISPERER



Kristen Scott Thomas is on the border of having an affair... again (just like in *The English Patient*). But, take Ralph Fiennes' messy, burned face and put it on a horse. Keep the emotionally unavailable husband. Add a grieving daughter. Move it from the Middle East to the stunning vistas of Montana. Enter a cowboy (with every day

of his life etched into his leathery face) bearing gifts of patience, wisdom and healing. Keep it the same length: three hours! In the end, throw out the despair and serve up a refreshing portion of integrity. *Viola!* You've got an absolutely lovely movie. Thanks, Mr. Redford, you've still got it going on!

SLIDING DOORS

Would the consequences of something insignificant matter so much in the grand scheme of things? The answer is "yes" for busy Gwyneth Paltrow (four movies this year!). Once again she dons her perfect Brit accent as Helen, a woman with career and boyfriend troubles. A departing train leaves with one Helen, leaving another behind, as her life and the plot splits into two stories running simultaneously. Sound confusing? Never fear. The film successfully uses a bandaged head and a groovy new bleached "do" to keep us on track.

DEEP RISING



Last, but certainly not least, is the winner for "The Best of the Worst" category for 1998. The contest was close this year with such worthy competitors as *Bride of Chucky*, *Urban Legend*, and *H20*, but this film was so bad and fun, it earned the trophy. Treat Williams (who obviously doesn't have any good offers these days) is hijacked by modern-day pirates who plan to ransack a luxury ocean liner filled with the richest people on the planet. Uh-oh! The boat has already been plundered and the people have been eaten, which leaves our questionable heroes with a real dilemma: A large, slimy, tentacled monster, up from the depths of the ocean, which stalks and then "drinks" its victims. Yuck!

To avoid leaving these hidden gems on the edge of an overlook, pick them up at your local Blockbuster Video. These films, to quote the late Gene Siskel, are definitely "thumbs up." ●

Scott Kingry, it is believed, has been spotted in every AMC, Mann, United Artist, Landmark, and dollar-movie theatre house in Denver and Boulder. He has also been striped in each.

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Ongoing, *ENDURING LEGACY: TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT*—At the Sangre De Cristo Arts & Conference Center, 210 N. Santa Fe Ave., Pueblo. Call 719-543-0130.

Ongoing, *EXPRESSIONS OF THE JEWISH SPIRIT*—At the Mizel Museum of Judaica. Permanent collections telling stories about the Jewish people, their ceremonies, traditions and customs. Within BMH/BJ Synagogue, 560 S. Monaco Parkway, Denver. Call 303-333-4156.

Ongoing, *FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK*—Visit the galleries of the Golden Triangle. Call 303-534-0771.

Ongoing, *BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING*—At the Mizel Museum of Judaica. A multicultural exhibit tracing the "Rites of Passage" and "ceremonies and Festivals" through six cultural groups. Art projects, role playing and other interactive activities are an integral part of the two hour tours. Within BMH/BJ Synagogue, 560 S. Monaco Parkway, Denver. Call 303-333-4156.

Ongoing, *THE IMMIGRANT ADVENTURE: TRAVELING EXHIBIT*—At the Mizel Museum of Judaica. A hands-on exhibit about immigration to America, told through the voices of three Jewish immigrants. Their memories are the basis for intriguing dioramas, photo albums and personal objects that lead visitors to explore their own family's immigration stories. Within BMH/BJ Synagogue, 560 S. Monaco Parkway, Denver. Call 303-333-4156.

Ongoing, *CHAC GALLERY*—(Chicano Humanities & Arts Council) A series of visual art exhibitions, music performances, poetry readings, dance demonstrations and other activities. CHAC, 772 Santa Fe Drive, Denver. Call 303-571-0440.

Ongoing, *GOLDEN GALLERIES ART WALK*—First Thursday of each month. 5-8pm. Participating galleries: Arrowhead Gallery, Foothills Art Center, Smith Art and Framing Gallery, The Golden Hotel, Spirits in the Wind Gallery, and Table Mountain Inn. Call 303-273-3113 for more information.



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Through 5 Dec, *CORE NEW ART SPACE: MEMBER'S SHOW*—New work by gallery members Linda Everson, Madeleine Dodge and Teresa Gostanza Stout. CORE—New Art Space, 2045 Larimer St., Denver. Call 303-297-8428.

Through 5 Dec, *COMPOST EXHIBITION-JOSH BEMELEN*—In "Compost," Bemelen simplifies the decomposition of his large charcoal drawings and stone sculptures by recognizing the impetus of layering as an elementary tool for understanding self. Working with elements which actual elements for compost, he brings his own sense of clarity, vulnerability, and strength to his work. At Ilk at Pirate, 37th & Navajo, Denver. Call 303-722-6024 for more information.

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Through 19 Dec, *WOMEN'S ARTS CENTER & GALLERY*—Variety of works by members of the Art Center for exhibit and sale. Women's Arts Center & Gallery, 282 Delaware St., Denver. Call 303-282-8000.

Through 11 Dec, *COLORADO PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS CENTER*—Group photography exhibition. Colorado Photographic Arts Center, 1513 Boulder Street, Denver. Call 303-455-8999.

Through 12 Dec, *IMPRESSIONISM: PAINTINGS COLLECTED BY EUROPEAN MUSEUMS*—In Europe, Impressionist paintings were collected by artists, museums, ministers of culture, private collectors, and even churches. On view will be approximately 70 works by Monet, Cezanne, Pissaro, Degas, Renoir, Marisot, Caillebotte, Sisley and others. Special ticketed exhibition. Denver Art Museum, 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789, 1-888-903-0278, toll free.

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Through 23 Dec, *SALLY APFELBAUM*—At the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. A former artist-in-residence at Giverny (home of Monet's famous waterlilies), Apfelbaum makes flower photos with pop art color and timeless beauty. Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 1750 13th St., Boulder. Call 303-433-2122.

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Through 5 Feb, *SANGRE DE CRISTO ARTS & CONFERENCE CENTER*—Featuring the works of Pueblo artists Dorothy Mendoza, Tom & Jean Latka, and Kay Singleton to the winter in three unique exhibitions. Call 719-543-0130.

Through 15 Feb, *PORCELAIN & PEWTER*—At the Harmsen Museum of Art. Nineteen pieces of Asian and European porcelain and pewter dating 1600-1900. Lakewood Municipal Building, 445 South Allison Parkway,

Lakewood. Call 303-279-5053.

Through 15 Mar, *JOHN SORBIE: GRAPHIC DESIGNER*—Described by colleagues as "a giant in the field of American Poster Design," Sorbie's body of work is the first solo show the Museum has ever presented for a Front Range graphic designer. Denver Art Museum, 100 West 14th Avenue Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789.

Through 26 Mar, *CHARLES SIMONDS: FLORAL FONT*—A New York City-based artist, Simonds creates miniature landscapes and buildings that are reminiscent of Rocky Mountain area geology and the cave dwellings of Mesa Verde. Denver Art Museum, 100 West 14th Avenue Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789.

Through 27 Aug, *THE CLAY VESSEL: MODERN CERAMICS FROM THE NORTHWEST COLLECTION, 1890-1940*—This presentation from the collections of the Norwest Corporation, features exquisite examples of ceramics and glass representing wide-ranging artistic styles - Arts & Crafts, Art Nouveau, Jugendstil and Art Deco. Denver Art Museum, 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789.

Through 1 Oct, *TAKASHI NAKAZATO: CONTEMPORARY POTTERY FROM AN ANCIENT JAPANESE TRADITION*—Takashi Nakazato is a member of the 13th member of an unbroken lineage of Karatsu potters. Having mastered ancient forms and techniques in ceramics, Nakazato applies these centuries-old traditions toward contemporary forms and designs. Denver Art Museum, 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789.

Through Oct, *IMAGES OF DEVOTION IN SPANISH COLONIAL AMERICA*—Exhibition of religious art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Spanish Colonial America. Museo de las Americas, 861 Santa Fe Dr., Denver. Call 303-571-4401.

9 Jan, *ETHIOPIAN ART EXHIBIT*—At the Collage Children's Museum. Pottery, paintings, drawings and photography by children from Lalibela Elementary School in Lalibela, Ethiopia on display in Collage's Art Stream Gallery. Collage Children's Museum, 2065 30th St., Boulder. Call 303-303-440-9894.

14 Jan - 26 Feb, *THE WEST: NEW WAYS/OLD VISIONS*—Held concurrent with the National Western Stock Show and including the work of sixteen artists from Colorado, New Mexico, and Germany. Center for the Visual Arts, Metropolitan State College of Denver, 1734 Wazee, Denver. Call 303-294-5207.

CLASSES WORKSHOPS

Ongoing, *WASHINGTON HEIGHTS ART & HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS*—Developmentally Disabled Artist Workshop, Visual Arts Workshop & Holiday Workshop, decorating, and party. Lakewood Heritage Center, 797 South Wadsworth Boulevard, Lakewood. Call 303-237-7407.

Ongoing, *ART STOPS*—At the Denver Art Museum Custom-designed kits with touchable art objects and materials explained by trained interpreters are featured in different galleries of the Museum. Denver Art Museum, 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789.

Ongoing, *STORY READING*—At the Collage Children's Museum, 2065 30th St., Boulder. Wednesdays 3:30-4:30pm Included in museum admission. Call 303-440-9894.

Ongoing, *FAMILY BACKPACKS*—At the Denver Art Museum. Take a trek through the museum with a Family Adventure Backpack. Each pack is full of hands-on games and activities to lead you through the galleries. Denver Art Museum, 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, Denver. Call 303-640-4433, TTY 303-640-2789.

Ongoing, *FALL FINE ART AND DANCE CLASSES*—At the Sangre de Cristo Arts and Conference Center. Multi-discipline classes are offered to the public. Sangre de Cristo Center Theater, 210 North Santa Fe Avenue, Pueblo. Call 719-543-0103.

Ongoing, *MANITOU SPRINGS ARTS ACADEMY*—Arts and foreign language enrichment programs for youth, families & teachers. Workshops, visiting artists, staff development, after school classes, summer arts day

camp, children's activity booth at craft fair. School District 14 buildings, Manitou Springs Business of Arts Center, 513 Manitou Ave., Manitou Springs. Call 719-473-9568.

Ongoing, *PALETTEERS ART CLUB, INC.*: Monthly meetings and demonstrations. Northglenn United Methodist Church, Northglenn. 2nd Monday of every month. Call 303-460-7586.

Ongoing, *ART CLASSES, TOURS AND EVENTS FOR ADULTS, CHILDREN & FAMILIES*—At the Denver Art Museum. Call 303-640-ARTS, 303-640 KIDS.

Ongoing, *CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS AT THE ARVADA CENTER*—Performing arts, visual arts and the humanities. Call 303-431-3939.

Ongoing, *CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE SCHOOL*—Dance classes for all ages and all levels in African, Ballet, modern, Jazz and tap among others. At the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance School, 119 Park Ave. West, Denver. Call 303-295-1759 X17.

Ongoing, *FOLKDANCING FOR EVERYONE*—With the Boulder Postoley Dance Ensemble. Participatory folk dances from around the world. No partner or experience needed. New Vista High School, 805 Gillaspie Street, Boulder. Every Tuesday 7:30pm, Dancing 8:30-10:30pm. Call 303-499-6363.

Ongoing, *RAGTIME TEA DANCE*—With the Colorado Friends of Old Time Music & Dance. Learn Ragtime era couple dances to the music of the Mont Alto Ragtime & Tango Orchestra. Temple Events Center, 1595 Pearl St., Denver. 2nd Sunday of each month, Lesson 1:20pm, Dance 2-5 pm. Call 303-592-3972.

Ongoing, *KIM ROBARDS DANCE SCHOOL*—Call for schedule, 303-825-4847.

Ongoing, *AMERICAN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY DANCE*—Presented by Colorado Friends of Old Time Music & Dance. Learn easy contras and squares to live music. All dances are taught and walked through; no partner or previous experience needed. 1st & 3rd Friday of each month, 7:15-11 pm at Temple Events Center, 1595 Pearl St., Denver. 2nd & 4th Saturday of each month, 7:15-11 pm at New Vista High School, 805 Gillespie, Boulder. Call 303-592-3972.

Ongoing, *AFRICAN DANCE*—Traditional West African, Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian dances and drumming while interacting with other students. Moyo Nguvu Cultural Arts Center, 1776 Vine St., Denver. Mondays 7-9 pm and Thursdays 6-7:30pm. Call 303-377-2511.

Through 9 Dec, *MUSEUM OF OUTDOOR ARTS*—Various classes for children and teenagers. Museum of Outdoor Arts, 7600 East Orchard Road, Suite 160N, Englewood. Call 303-741-3609.

Through 16 Dec, *"TAPESTRY" CLASS*—Presented by Turning the Wheel Production. Tapestry provides a forum for joyful and meaningful community play that is safe and spontaneous and inclusive of all ages, experiences and backgrounds. Dairy Center for the Arts, 2590 Walnut, Boulder. Mondays 7-9 pm. Call 303-449-5720.

Through 18 Dec, *ROCKY MOUNTAIN CENTER FOR MUSICAL ARTS*—Classes offered ranging from private to group as well as workshops. Call for details. RMCMA, 200 East Baseline Road, Lafayette. Call 303-665-0599.

Through 25 Mar, *HERITAGE FINE ARTS GUILD SATURDAY WORKSHOPS*—You are invited to join us for fun and informative Saturday workshop, given by skilled artists who are locally and nationally known. Students will receive quality instruction and critiques. First Presbyterian Church, 1609 West Littleton Boulevard, Littleton. Saturdays 9-3pm. Call 303-798-6481.

Through 10 Apr, *GOULD VOICE RESEARCH CENTER*—The DCPA Wilbur James Gould Voice Research Center will offer free voice workshops covering the singing voice, the speaking voice, and voice care. Workshops are designed to help amateurs and professionals alike. DCPA Administration Building, Third Floor Studio 1245 Champa Street, Denver. Call 303-446-4841.

Beginning 20 & 21 Dec, *FOOTHILLS ART CENTER*—Classes in landscapes, pastel, watercolor, and oil. Foothills Art Center, 809 15th Street, Golden. Call 303-279-3922.

∞ Denotes Colorado Performing Arts Showcase (CPAS) Performances

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THEATRE

∞Ongoing, *COMEDY HELPER*—Long-Form Improv Comedy at the Denver Civic Theatre. Thursdays 8pm. Call 303-595-3821.

Ongoing, *IMPULSE THEATRE*—Improvitational comedy at the Lower Level Wynkoop Brewery. Call 303-297-2111.

Ongoing, *RADIO-THEATRE-LIVE!*: Live old-time-radio-style fundraiser once a month at the Acoma Center. Call 303-623-0524.

Ongoing, *SWINGTIME CANTEN—THE NEW 1940'S MUSICAL!*: Presented by Denver Center Attractions. The *New York Times* calls *Swingtime Canteen* "An exuberant excursion back to the days of World War II." You'll enjoy songs such as "Swinging on a Star," "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree," and "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy." Garner Galleria Theatre, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Tue-Sun 7:30pm, Sat&Sun 2pm. Call 303-893-4100.

∞Through December, *DEARLY DEPARTED*—The Avenue Theatre presents this lively comedy about a colorful and dysfunctional group of southern eccentrics. In the backwoods of the Bible Belt, the beleaguered Turpin family proves that living and dying in the South are seldomly tidy and often hilarious. *Dearlly Departed* was originally presented at the Avenue Theatre in 1992 and enjoyed a long, successful run while playing to sold-out houses. 2119 E. 17th Ave., Denver. Fri&Sat 8pm. Call 303-321-5925.

∞Through 11 Dec, *MAJOR PARTS AND HIS BODYWORKS BAND*—This rock 'n' roll show features 8 original songs, including such favorites as "Bones Bones Bones," "Perfect Genes," "A Lot of Nerve," "The Legend of the Heart," and many more! It's a high-spirited, comic and educational journey through the world's most remarkable machine, the human body! From nose to toes, this cellular adventure will challenge your brain and tickle your funny bone. Presented by Kidskits at the Denver Civic Theatre, 721 Santa Fe Dr., Denver. Saturdays at Noon. Call 303-446-8200.

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WEBSITE: www.lostandfoundinc.org

∞Through 12 Dec, *THE PHILANTHROPIST*—A singular comedy of academic life by Christopher Hampton (author of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, the musical version of *Sunset Boulevard*, and the translator of Yasmine Reza's *Art*) that combines wit and philology to create a first-class evening of theatrical high-jinks. Presented by Germinal Stage Denver, 2450 W. 44th Ave., Denver. Fri&Sat 8pm, Sun 7pm. Call 303-455-7108.

∞Through 11 Dec, *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?*: By Edward Albee. Winner of the 1963 Tony Award for Best Play. Presented by Shadow Theatre Company at the Ralph Waldo Emerson Center, 1420 Ogden St., Denver. Thur&Fri 7:30pm. Call 303-837-9355.

Through 12 Dec, *A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING*—This production explores the broad spectrum of romantic relationships in a musical revue of Rodgers and Hammerstein songs. Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Blvd., Arvada. 7:30pm Tue-Sat 7:30pm, Sat&Sun 2pm, Wed 1pm. Call 303-431-3939.

Through 18 Dec, *A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES*—Based on the story by Dylan Thomas adapted to the stage by Jeremy Brooks & Adrian Mitchell. Presented by The Denver Victorian Playhouse, 4201 Hooker St. Denver. Fridays and Saturdays 8 pm. Call 303-433-4343.

Through 18 Dec, *THE BREMEN MUSICIANS*—At The Denver Victorian Playhouse, Inc. Tue-Sat 10am. No show on Nov 25, Thanksgiving. Call 303-433-4343.

Through 19 Dec, *LITTLE WOMEN - THE MUSICAL*—Award Winner, Return Engagement! This musical premiered last year at Town Hall, and captured the hearts of the audience and acclaim of the critics! The heart-warming story by Louisa May Alcott finds its way to the musical stage, where it is destined to become a holiday classic. This should be a part of everyone's Christmas Season! Town Hall Arts Center, 2450 W. Main St., Littleton. Thur 7:30pm, Fri&Sat8pm, Sun 2pm. Call 303-794-2787.

Through 19 Dec, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*—Presented by the City of Aurora, Cultural Arts Division. A highly inventive adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* where we encounter a company of traveling players about to enact the story. Christmas spirits work their magic on Scrooge again! Aurora Fox, 9900 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora. Fri&Sat 7:30pm, Sun 2pm. Call 303-361-2910.

Through 24 Dec, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*—Presented by Denver Center Theatre Company. This timeless story of Ebenezer Scrooge and his encounters with the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future has become a source of hope and renewal for generations and has made Dickens' name synonymous with the holiday season. Stage Theatre,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The Foothills Art Center

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Holiday Art Market

Inklings Arts & Literary Calendar (cont'd)

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Helen Bonfils Theatre Complex, Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Mon-Wed 6:30pm, Thur-Sat 8pm, Sat 1:30pm. Call 303-893-4100.

Through 26 Dec, *FULL GALLOP*—Regional premiere of off-Broadway smash hit play based on the life of Diana Vreeland, the elegant & outspoken former editor of Vogue. Acoma Center, 1080 Acoma Street, Denver. Fri&Sat 8 pm, Sun 2 pm (except 12/24 & 12/25). Call 303-623-0524.

Through 30 Dec, *BARRIO BABIES*—Presented by the Denver Center Theatre Company. What happens when a hot, young Latino screenwriter reinvents his whole world in order to get his work produced? This story interweaves the zany lives of five Latino performers who set out to conquer Hollywood. Ricketson Theatre, Helen Bonfils Theatre Complex, Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Mon-Wed 6:30pm, Thur-Sat 8 pm, Sat 1:30pm. Call 303-893-4100.

Through 6 May, *DCPA FREE FOR ALL SERIES*—The DCPA kicks off its 1999/2000 Free For All series with 10 free performances. This series is dedicated to making theatre accessible to everyone. Tickets available 2 hours prior to performance, 1 ticket per person in line, no reservations, no children under 13. Denver Center for the Performing Arts, 1245 Champa Street, Denver. Saturdays 1:30pm.

Beginning 1 Dec, *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*—The triumphant return to the Buell Theatre presented by The Cameron Mackintosh/Really Useful Theatre Company, Inc. and Denver Center Attractions. Call 303-893-4100.

≈3 - 18 Dec, *THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES*—The classic tale as told by award-winning children's dramatist Charlotte Chorpenning. The Emperor cares for nothing but clothes and the Minister of Robes plays on his weakness to rob the royal weavers and persecute the Empress. Two rogues convince the Emperor that they can weave a cloth which cannot be seen by anyone unfit for the position he holds. Poetry, pageantry and humor unfold. Wonderful holiday entertainment for all ages. Presented by Boulder Conservatory Theatre at the Guild Theatre at the Dairy, 2590 Walnut, Boulder. Fri&Sat 12/18 7:30pm, Sat&Sun 2pm. Call 303-444-1885.

≈3 - 19 Dec, *AMAH! AND THE NIGHT VISITORS*—Adapted & Directed by Mitch Samu, presented by South Suburban Theatre Company at The Annex, 1900 W. Littleton Blvd, Littleton. Fri&Sat 8pm, Sun 12/3&19 2pm. Call 303-347-1900.

14 Dec - 2 Jan, *JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAM-COAT*—Back by overwhelming, popular demand, the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers comes to life in this Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice musical extravaganza full of sparkle and glitz. Presented by the

Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Boulevard, Arvada. Call 303-431-3939.

29 Dec - 2 Jan, *A BRIEF HISTORY OF WHITE MUSIC*—Presented by Town Hall Arts Center, 2450 W. Main St. in historic Littleton. The popular, soulful revue featuring an all-black cast, will be given on Dec 29&30 at 7:30pm, and Dec 31 at 6:30pm; a special New Year's Eve Show on Dec 31 at 9:30pm; followed by a gala at Town Hall on Jan 1 at 8pm and Jan 2 at 2pm. Call 303-794-2787 for reservations.

4 - 23 Jan, *RED, WHITE AND TUNA*—The third serving of the Tuna Trilogy. Tony-nominated Joe Sears and Jason Williams will take audiences on another satirical ride into the hearts and minds of the polyester-clad citizens of Tuna, Texas, the third smallest town in Texas. The much anticipated Tuna, part 3, following the comic hits *Greater Tuna* and *Tuna Christmas*. *Red, White and Tuna* makes its Denver premiere at the Auditorium Theatre in the Denver Performing Arts Complex. Call 303-893-4100.

11 - 23 Jan, *PETER PAN*—Starring Tony award nominee and two-time Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby. This timeless musical masterpiece about the little boy determined to never grow up began a national tour in November 1997 and played in over 50 U.S. cities. At the Buell Theatre in the Denver Performing Arts Complex. Call 303-893-4100.

≈14 Jan - 19 Feb, *STARMITES*—A space musical directed by Roberto Hamilton, presented by South Suburban Theatre Company at The Annex, 1900 W. Littleton Blvd., Littleton. Fri&Sat 8pm, Sun matinee on 1/30 & 2/6, 2pm. Call 303-347-1900.

≈21 Jan - 12 Feb, *PAT AND SARAH*—An original comedy by French playwright Bernard Da Costa which details the real rivalry of legendary actress Sarah Bernhardt and Mrs. Pat Campbell, as they attempt to collaborate on a stage production at the turn of the century. Conundrum State Productions is proud to have the opportunity to present this exciting new work, which is currently playing to critical acclaim in Paris. Denver Civic Theatre, 721 Santa Fe Dr., Denver. Fri, Sat&Sun 2/6 8pm. Call 303-595-3800.

≈3 - 26 Feb, *THE AFRICAN COMPANY PRESENTS RICHARD III*—In 1821, forty years before Lincoln ended slavery, and fifty years before black Americans earned the right to vote, the first black theatrical group in the country was putting on plays in a downtown Manhattan Theatre. Presented by Shadow Theatre Company at the Ralph Waldo Emerson Center, 1420 Ogden St., Denver. Fri&Sat 7:30pm. Call 303-837-9355.

3 - 27 Feb, *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*—Based on Harper Lee's beloved American classic, *To Kill A Mockingbird* takes a compelling look at prejudice and justice in a sleepy southern town in the 1930's. As the entire town gets caught up in the agitated swirl of a racially charged trial, we see the prejudice and posturing of the adult world through the innocent eyes of a six-year-old girl. Presented by the Arvada Center, 6901

Wadsworth Boulevard, Arvada. Tue-Sat 7:30pm, Wed 1pm, Sat&Sun 2pm. Call 303-431-3939.

4 - Feb - 4 Mar, *MOON OVER BUFFALO*—An acting couple is on tour in Buffalo in this backstage farce. Fate has given these thespians one more shot at starring roles and director Frank Capra himself is en route to Buffalo to catch their matinee performance. Hilarious misunderstandings pile on madcap misadventures. Presented by the Denver Victorian Playhouse, 4201 Hooker St., Denver. Fri&Sat 8pm. Call 303-433-4343.

≈4 Feb - 5 Mar, *THE DUMBWAITER AND THE COLLECTION*—Two early one-act plays from Harold Pinter, the master of "comedy of menace." Funny and unsettling, this tandem is quintessential Pinter. Presented by Germinal Stage Denver, 2450 W. 44th Ave., Denver. Fri&Sat 8pm, Sun 7pm. Call 303-455-7108.

≈18 Feb - 4 Mar, *ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL*—This is one of Shakespeare's "problem plays", that small group that includes *Measure for Measure* and *Titus Andronicus*. Not one of his romantic comedies, it is a sophisticated, realistic, and scathingly funny play about—well, war and sex. Presented by The Upstart Crow at the Guild Theatre at the Dairy, 2590 Walnut, Boulder. Thur 2/24&3/2 8pm, Fri&Sat 8pm, Sun 2/27 7pm. Call 303-442-1415.

DANCE

Through 19 Dec, *GRANNY DANCES TO A HOLIDAY DRUM*—Presented by Cleo Parker Robinson Dance. For the first time ever, this celebration of the holidays from around the world will be performed in the round. Space Theatre, Helen Bonfils Theatre Complex, Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Fri&Sat 8pm, Sun 6:30pm. Call 303-893-4100.

Through 26 Dec, *THE NUTCRACKER*—Presented by the Colorado Ballet. As traditional as trimming the tree and toasting the season with family, The Nutcracker brings wonderment to the holidays. Auditorium Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Denver. Times TBA. Call 303-830-8497.

21 Dec, *NUTCRACKER FAMILY MATINEE*—Presented by the Colorado Ballet. Step into a magic land of Sugar Plum Fairies and dancing choc-lates. Immediately after the performance meet all of your favorite dancers, make crafts and play dress up. Auditorium Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Denver. Sun&Tue 2pm. Call 303-830-8497.

15 - 19 Dec, *THE NUTCRACKER*—A new rendition of the holiday favorite which tells the story of how *The Nutcracker* we know and love came to be. Presented by Ballet Arts Theatre at the Denver Civic Theatre, 721 Santa Fe Dr., Denver. Wed, Thur, Fri&Sat 7:30pm, Sat&Sun 2:30pm. Call 303-595-3800.

OPERA

12 - 20 Feb, *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*—Act I opens as US Navy Lt. Pinkerton is contracting to marry a beautiful 15-year-old Japanese girl named Cio Cio San (a.k.a. Butterfly). For him, it's a mere pastime, something to do before he gets a real wife in the States. For her, it's true love and soon a matter of life and death. By Giacomo Puccini, sung in Italian with English surtitles. Presented by Opera Colorado at Boettcher Concert Hall. Call 303-893-4100 or 800-641-1222. Champagne reception following the performance 2/12/00, call 303-778-1500. Educator's Night, 2/9/00 and Student Matinee, 2/10/00, call 303-778-7350.

MUSIC

Ongoing, *CHRISTIAN CONCERT SERIES*—1st & 3rd Fridays of every month at the Ascot Theatre. Call 303-778-6182.

Ongoing, *TWILIGHT ART BEAT CONCERT SERIES*—At the Denver Art Museum. Call 303-640-4433.

2 - 4 Dec, *ALL BEETHOVEN, MASTERWORKS*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Beethoven's Contradances, Symphony Nos. 1&5, Marin Alsop, Conductor. Thu, Fri&Sat 7:30pm at the Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis. Call 303-986-8742.

≈4 Dec, *MUSIC OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON*—The holiday concert features a new commission by local composer Eric Staffeldt, Vaughan Williams' beautiful arrangement of *Greensleeves*, Alfred Reed's *Alleluia Laudamus Te* for winds and organ, and one of the richest sounds of the holiday season—*Works for Brass* by Gabrieli. Presented by the Colorado Wind Ensemble at Littleton United Methodist Church, 5894 S. Datura St. (south of Littleton Blvd. between Broadway and Santa Fe.) Saturday, 8pm. Call 303-394-4552.

5 & 6 Dec, *A GOSPEL CHRISTMAS*—From striking to solid choral and hymn-like versions, the Arvada Center Chorale is joined by the Shorter AME Gospel Choir to present an awe-inspiring musical event. At The Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Boulevard, Arvada. Sun&Mon, 7:30pm. Call 303-431-3939.

8 Dec, *COLCANNON*—The Holiday Concert series at the Denver Botanic Gardens begins with Colcannon performing the melodic songs of Scotland and Ireland. Tickets at Main Gate, 1005 York Street, Denver. Wednesday 8pm. Call 303-370-8187.

8 Dec, *PAN JUMBIES*—The Holiday Concert series at the Denver Botanic Gardens ends with Pan Jumbies bringing you the lively music of the Caribbean. Tickets at Main Gate, 1005 York Street, Denver. Wednesday 8pm. Call 303-370-8187.

9 - 11 Dec, *A COLORADO CHRISTMAS*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Dustin Wolfe, conductor; Colorado Symphony chorus and Children's Chorale. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th and Curtis, Denver. Thu&Fri 7:30pm, Sat&Sun 2:30pm & 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

9 Dec, *EMERGENCY BROADCAST PLAYERS*—Presented by Creative Music Works at the Houston Fine Arts Center, Montview & Quebec, Denver. Call 303-759-1797.

16 & 18 Dec, *HANDEL'S MESSIAH*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Marin Alsop, conductor. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Thu 7:30pm, Sat 2:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

17 - 19 Dec, *TOO HOT TO HANDEL*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Marin Alsop, conductor. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Fri&Sat 7:30pm, Sun 2:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

30 & 31 Dec, *A CELEBRATION OF THE MILLENNIUM BEETHOVEN'S NINTH*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, "Choral." Marin Alsop, conductor. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Thu&Fri 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

2 Jan, *SYMPHONY SAFARI*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Marin Alsop, conductor, with the Denver Zoo. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Sun 2:30pm & 4:00pm. Call 303-986-8742.

6 Jan, *AARON COPLAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Copland, *Music for the Theatre*, *Appalachian Spring*, *Prairie Journal*, *Old American Songs*, *First Set*. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Thursday 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

7 & 8 Jan, *AARON COPLAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Copland, *An Outdoor Overture*, *El salon Mexico*, Piano Concerto, Symphony No. 3. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Fri&Sat 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

9 Jan, *AARON COPLAND CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Copland, Hoe-down from *Rodeo*, Violin Sonata, Sextet, *Quiet City*. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Sun 2:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

14 & 15 Jan, *ARTURO SANDOVAL*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Lawrence Loh, conductor, Arturo Sandoval, trumpet and The Sandoval Quintet. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Fri&Sat 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

20 Jan, *ESTERHAZY COURT, ROMANTIC AND MODERN FRENCH*—Join the Arvada Center for an engaging concert with virtuoso harpist Bob Littrell. At the Arvada Center, 6901 Wadsworth Boulevard, Arvada. Thursday 7pm, Call 303-431-3939.

21-23 Jan, *GUTIERREZ PLAYS MOZART*—Presented by the Colorado

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Symphony. Kodaly, *Dances of Galanta*, Mozart, Piano Concerto No. 23, Bartok, Concerto for Orchestra. En Shao, conductor; Horacio Gutierrez, piano. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Fri&Sat 7:30pm, Sun 2:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

27 -29 Jan, *ALL BACH*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Bach's Suite No. 1, Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, Violin Concerto No. 2, Suite No. 3. John Silverstein, conductor & violin. Boettcher Concert Hall in the

Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Thu, Fri&Sat 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

3 Feb, *ANONYMOUS 4*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Boettcher Concert Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Thursday 7:30. Call 303-986-8742.

4 - 6 Feb, *RACHMANINOFF SYMPHONY NO. 3*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Takemitsu, *The Flock Descends into the Pentagonal Garden*, Grieg, Piano Concerto, Rachmaninoff, Symphony No. 3, Junichi Hirokami, conductor; Steward Goodyear, piano at Boettcher Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex. 14th & Curtis, Denver. Call 303-986-8742.

11, 12 Feb, *RAMSEY LEWIS AND BILLY TAYLOR*—Presented by the Colorado Symphony. Boettcher Hall in the Denver Performing Arts Complex, 14th & Curtis, Denver. Fri&Sat 7:30pm. Call 303-986-8742.

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Inklings Arts & Literary Calendar (cont'd)

∞ Denotes Colorado Performing Arts Showcase (CPAS) Performances

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CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

11 Feb, *GLORIOUS MUSIC FROM THE MOVIES*—Presented by the Littleton Symphony Orchestra. Young ten-year-old Xiaogi Rebecca Wu will be the featured soloist and will play Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22. Also on the program the LSO will perform John Williams' *Cowboys Overture*, *Star Wars Suite*, and *Schindler's List*, and R. Strauss' *Theme from 2001*. Littleton United Methodist Church, 5895 S. Datura, Littleton. Friday 8pm. Call 303-933-6824.

∞19 Feb, *AARON COPLAND'S AMERICA*—CWE honors Aaron Copland's centenary with two of his works celebrating American heroes—*Lincoln Portrait* and *Fanfare for the Common Man*. Other American selections include *An American Overture* by Joseph Jenkins and *Dawn's Early Light* by Warren Benson. Presented by the Colorado Wind Ensemble at Littleton United Methodist Church, 5894 S. Datura St. (south of Littleton Blvd. between Broadway and Santa Fe.) Saturday 8pm. Call 303-394-4552

LITERARY EVENTS

Ongoing, *BARE KNUCKLE POETRY SOCIETY OPEN MIKE*—Bring material to read, or just come listen. Trivia questions with \$10 gift certificate. The Warehouse, 25 W. Cimarron, Colorado Springs. 3rd Tuesday of every month, 7:30-10pm. Call 719-265-0091.

1 - 3, 7 - 10 Dec, *ASTOR HOUSE MUSEUM, FREE STORYTELLING*—Listen to imaginative stories about the winter season, the history of Hanukkah and Kwanza, and the celebration of Christmas on the western

frontier. Stories begin at 11am. Astor House Museum, 822 12th St., Golden. Call 303-278-3557.

13 - 16 Jan, *11TH ANNUAL COLORADO COWBOY POETRY GATHERING*—The Arvada Center will be swarming with cowboys and ranchers for four days who will share stories and songs about their ranching experiences and their love and respect for the land and livestock. Call 303-431-3939.

FILM EVENTS

Ongoing, *DENVER ART MUSEUM CINEMA*—At the Adventures in Art Center, Denver Art Museum. Call 303-640-7910. ➤



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