

# The Inklings and Culture

*The Inklings and Culture* has so much to commend it that it is hard to know where to start my commendation of it. For me, two qualities are preeminent. The first is the originality of the enterprise. Simply reading Monika Hilder's introduction was for me an education into topics I never knew existed. A second virtue of the book is its scope. It is no exaggeration to say that this book is a small library in one compact package. The book is a stunning achievement.

—*Leland Ryken, Emeritus Professor of English, Wheaton College*

This wide-ranging and erudite collection includes contributions from many of the most significant figures in contemporary Inklings scholarship, and offers plentiful new and fascinating insights. Readers of this book will gain much more than literary interpretation, for here are essays that show how pertinent the insights of these writers are for so much of contemporary life. There are excellent pieces here that show their relevance to the arts, to theology, to politics, to education, and to far wider realms of contemporary culture.

—*Malcolm Guite, Girton College, Cambridge*

This richly insightful volume will be of interest to any reader or scholar of the Inklings, especially those interested in cultural engagement and the workings of the creative imagination. The essays here engage with the broad topic of “culture” in a variety of compelling ways, including considerations of specific literary and personal influences on the Inklings; analysis of their views on such topics as the workings of the creative imagination and the moral and spiritual implications of art; the value of reading with a “hermeneutic of love”; and a consideration of artistic responses to their work in modern media. The essays also consistently bring the writings of the Inklings (and associated figures such as MacDonald, Sayers, and Chesterton) into conversation with significant philosophical, theological, and literary-critical ideas of their time (and ours), with very fruitful results. The volume as a whole amply demonstrates the continuing, and increasing, relevance of the Inklings for the twenty-first century.

—*Holly Ordway, Fellow of Faith and Culture, Word on Fire Institute, author of Tolkien's Modern Reading: Middle-earth Beyond the Middle Ages (Word on Fire Academic, 2021)*

Aptly subtitled “A Harvest of Scholarship,” this is truly a rich harvest of the latest scholarship, full of insight. It skillfully brings together veteran and new scholars, with uniquely garnered stimulating studies of central members of the Inklings—C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams—and significant others, who were outstanding mentors (George MacDonald and G. K. Chesterton), and Dorothy L. Sayers, friend of Lewis and of Williams. This authoritative volume is essential reading for all intent upon discovering much about the Inklings and what shaped them, a topic that is too rarely explored. Monika B. Hilder, one of the editors, provides a useful introduction to the teeming harvest of knowledge.

—*Colin Duriez, author of The Oxford Inklings: Lewis, Tolkien and Their Circle*

Much like Bilbo in Rivendell discovering a delightful collection of things he liked best, the intriguing, insightful essays in *The Inklings and Culture* delight in their depth and breadth, offering readers a rich feast of food for thought.

—*Andrew Lazo, independent C. S. Lewis speaker and scholar, preparing for priesthood in the Episcopal Church*

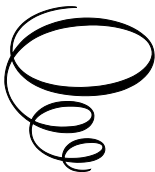
# The Inklings and Culture

*A Harvest of Scholarship from the  
Inklings Institute of Canada*

Edited by

Monika B. Hilder,  
Sara L. Pearson,  
and Laura N. Van Dyke

**Cambridge**  
**Scholars**  
Publishing



The Inklings and Culture:  
A Harvest of Scholarship from the Inklings Institute of Canada

Edited by Monika B. Hilder, Sara L. Pearson, and Laura N. Van Dyke

This book first published 2020

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-6014-7

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6014-7

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To the glory of God



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A fruitful harvest takes not only diligent planning and sowing, followed by a significant season of cultivation, but many skilled and devoted labourers for the ingathering. Indeed, this book is a testimony to the patience and faith of people more numerous than we can name. It is also evidence that a worthy dream can only be realized by a widening committed community of like-minded thinkers—people with a common vision upheld in friendly and mutually augmenting diversity.

First, we would like to thank warmly the editorial team at Cambridge Scholars Publishing, especially Adam Rummens and Camilla Harding, for their vision and expertise. Likewise, we owe a great deal to several readers: Andrew Lazo, Colin Duriez, Holly Ordway, Malcolm Guite, and Leland Ryken. We are grateful to several academic communities who have invited us to present the work that has culminated in this volume: the Department of English and Creative Writing at Trinity Western University which houses the Inklings Institute of Canada—particular thanks are owed for hosting the evening Coffee House events; the Verge Conference 2016, *Arts + the Inklings*, with the School of the Arts, Media + Culture, at Trinity Western University; the Christianity and Literature Study Group, affiliated with the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE), at the annual meetings at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Victoria, 2013; University of Ottawa, 2015; and University of Calgary, 2016). We are also grateful to the librarians at Trinity Western University as well as to the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton, Illinois, for their friendly advice. And we are indebted to the following literary estates for permission to cite from the original texts: the Owen Barfield Literary Estate, David Higham Associates for permission to cite from Dorothy L. Sayers and Charles Williams, the Marion E. Wade Center for permission to quote from archival materials, and the C. S. Lewis Company to quote from the works of C. S. Lewis.

Monika is deeply grateful for the many souls who have nurtured her: to my parents who first taught me to cherish story that is not only delightful but is itself a quest for truth; to my siblings and relatives who cheer me on; to my early teachers in Vancouver as well as to my professors at the University of

British Columbia and Simon Fraser University who believed in me; to pastors; to the fine community at Trinity Western University where I found a home and that inspired the Inklings Institute of Canada; to my co-director Stephen Dunning for his wisdom and merriment; to my colleagues in different corners of the globe who also model so superbly why the academic life matters; to my many students who have enriched me, all equally precious; to my friends, constant in loving-kindness; and especially to my own dear family: my husband Emanuel, and our children Natalie, Jessica, and David (you are all resilient, gifted writers as well as enthusiastic Inklings readers, and not only are you my best fans but also my wisest critics—truly, this would not have been possible for me if you weren't the beautiful people that you are!). All told, as the famous fictional Canadian character Anne of Green Gables discovered, there are indeed many more kindred spirits in the world than one might have guessed—and there are always more to discover. In the fullness of time, then, the small beginnings of this project came to a fruition that surpassed my hopes by far—and indeed, I cannot over-emphasize that this book would not have come to life without the diligence, skill, care, and ever good humour, of my amazing co-editors, Sara and Laura. How I thank God for you both! And finally it must be said that I would not be the same person without the wealth I've received from C. S. Lewis in particular, and each of the related authors in their own ways. It is too wonderful to state how their lives and writings continue to strengthen readers on *The One Great Journey* that means everything. *Danke.*

Sara would like to thank Trinity Western University for a one-year sabbatical leave that enabled her to assist with co-editing this collection. She is also grateful for research assistance from the Norma Marion Alloway Library at Trinity Western University, particularly from the Interlibrary Loan department. Ken Pearson deserves special mention not only for providing outstanding service in obtaining interlibrary loans, but also because he is my ever-supportive and encouraging husband! Ken introduced me to *The Lord of the Rings* when we were getting to know each other at Regent College, and we decided to read each other's favourite book (mine was, and is, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*). I've been grateful for Ken's Tolkien and Lewis section in our home library, which has proven extremely helpful. I am also grateful to my parents Gary and Marilyn Letcher for encouraging my childhood reading, especially my dad, who read aloud to me every evening for years. The powerful truth and beauty of these works was demonstrated to me by Dad's visible emotion when he read the end of C. S. Lewis's *The Last Battle* and George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*. These authors, I could tell even as a child, had an unusual depth

and truth to them. I'm also grateful to my friend Frances Dearman who introduced me to Dorothy L. Sayers and G. K. Chesterton. It seems I've never come to any of these authors on my own: I've always been brought to them by family and friends. It's been amazing to share this project with my dear friends Monika and Laura. My hope is that you will likewise find new literary friends as you encounter this volume, but my ultimate hope is that these authors—George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy L. Sayers, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield and C. S. Lewis—would lead you to know their Dearest Friend more deeply and truly than before.

Laura is grateful to her two co-editors on this project, Sara and Monika, for making the experience of putting together a twenty-seven-chapter book such an enjoyable and educative experience. I have learned much, too, from all of our contributors; thank you to everyone who shared their insights and wisdom in these pages. Your work speaks for itself. Most of the learning I have done has happened in community, and some of the best communities I have been a part of are ones that formed around a shared love of the writings of the Inklings, from book clubs and reading groups to courses and conferences. My first entry point into the world of the Inklings was, as for so many others, Middle-earth, and I feel lucky to have journeyed there together with Rita Van Dyke-Kao, Alma Visscher, and Greta Visscher-Pau. Thank you for always showing up for Entmoot. Thank you, too, to Melanie Kottelenberg who gave me my first copy of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* and invited me into Narnia, from which I only ever return reluctantly. Thank you to all of the Companions of Co-inherence, here and departed, who witness to the beauty of the City as they live out the reality of exchange. Everyone involved in the Inklings Institute of Canada deserves special mention, but I will thank in particular both Monika Hilder and Stephen Dunning, for their many years of directing the IIC and putting on Inklings Coffee House Events, for cultivating the kind of learning spaces in their classrooms that nurtured so many students' intellects and imaginations, including my own, and for always modelling for me what truth-seeking scholarship done with integrity looks like. Thank you to the Christianity and Literature Study Group, for so often welcoming Inklings papers and conversations to the CLSG panels at ACCUTE, and to the English department at Trinity Western University for enthusiastically supporting the study of these authors. I can't think of a better home for the IIC than TWU.

*Trinity Western University  
Langley, British Columbia, Canada  
August 2020*



# INTRODUCTION

MONIKA B. HILDER

Imagine a world where there was no Narnia. No Middle-earth, no hobbits. No new Arthurian poetry, no talk of co-inherence, no supernatural thrillers. No contemplation of the quintessential meaning of myth and metaphor. No Lord Peter Wimsey, no deeply resonating theologically inspired plays, books, or essays. No fellowship of sundry Oxford scholars and friends frequenting the Eagle and Child pub or Magdalen College rooms with pipes and ale, laughing, arguing, going on walking tours, reading their latest drafts, and writing, always writing. No Victorian granddaddy pioneering fantasy literature: no Princess Irene, no *Phantastes*. No prolific early twentieth-century journalist and writer of most every other genre, one boasting to be as wide as he was tall, whose pithy observations strike home as precisely as ever.

On this seventieth anniversary of the publication of C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, generations of readers of the Narnia Chronicles and the many other works of the Inklings-related authors rejoice that the world "without Narnia, without Middle-earth" is not our world. Instead, the legacy of the foremost Inklings authors, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield, their mentors George MacDonald and G. K. Chesterton, and their friend Dorothy L. Sayers, is a stunning modern testimony to the power of literary art inspired by the Christian faith. This famous group of seven combined has contributed more to the intellect and imagination of millions than, shall we say, quite boldly, many of their literary contemporaries put together, few of whom have made this kind of lasting impact on subsequent generations of enthusiastic readers. Their diverse voices form a medley, even a symphony, in a world that desperately needs faith-inspired intellectual and imaginative engagement and, ultimately, courageous hope. In an increasingly polarized world where fewer voices seem able or willing to dialogue about different perspectives, where many intellectual and artistic voices are perceived as depressing, these Inklings authors, keenly intelligent and highly artistic, shine like stars. Their joyous voices speak hope and wonder into a hurting and deeply divided world.

Much has been said about the nature of these writers and their influence which, as Walter Hooper has said, “is being felt nearly everywhere on the planet” (197), and undoubtedly much more will be said in future. Novelist John Wain, a member of the Inklings group, described them as “a circle of instigators, almost of incendiaries, meeting to urge one another on in the task of redirecting the whole current of contemporary art and life” (qtd. in Zaleski and Zaleski 3). Andrew A. Tadie describes the Inklings and related writers thus: “while they engaged in the disputes of the time, they resisted, unlike so many of their contemporaries, the appeals of fashionable ideological groups...” (viii). Ian Crouther speaks of them as “profoundly out of sympathy with the secularist spirit of the age, seeing progressive enlightenment as ushering in, not a millennium of perfect freedom, but a Waste Land” of spiritual poverty (xii-xiii). Colin Duriez and David Porter describe them as “one of the most remarkable associations of writers in the last century of the second millennium[.]” writers whose “themes and concerns are strikingly relevant to the beginning of the third” (viii). They assert, “The continuing appeal of the Inklings raises fascinating questions about the relevance of Christian faith and its virtues in a modern, war-torn, secular and increasingly global culture” (vii). Similarly, Peter Kreeft, who describes the twentieth century as “the century of destruction, genocide, suicide, anxiety, and psychosis” (23), one where “[t]he media moguls, the opinion molders and real educators of our society, are the most aggressively anti-Christian propaganda elite since the Nazis” (33-34), looks to Lewis in particular as a much-needed voice for the third millennium. Likewise, James T. Como writes of Lewis, “His thought will likely remain the template for describing and responding to our post-Christian world” (27). Tom Shippey hails J. R. R. Tolkien as the “author of the [twentieth] century.” In Richard Purtill’s words, “There is a good deal of sadness and wrath in the modern world,” and Lewis and Tolkien have tried to “show us ‘a more excellent way’” (194). Similar praise is bestowed upon the other Inklings, friends, and earlier mentors. Philip and Carol Zaleski describe the four best-known Inklings, Tolkien, Lewis, Barfield, and Williams, as “a major literary force, a movement of sorts. As symbol, inspiration, guide, and rallying cry, the Inklings grow more influential each year” (509).

When Suzanne and Gregory Wolfe founded the Oxford C. S. Lewis Society in 1982, their thought was to have “a society that grappled with the rich relationship between Christianity, culture, and the imagination, including literature[.]” and Lewis struck them as “the ideal patron[.]” not only because he was “a great ‘talker,’ a towering literary and theological figure . . . but above all a writer who was passionate to introduce his readers to *other* great writers and thinkers” (ix). They regarded Lewis “as a ‘gateway’



figure” for meetings that also addressed related Inklings figures, including G. K. Chesterton and Dorothy L. Sayers, not only to consider Lewis “in his own right[,]” but to “also combat the tendency . . . to turn Lewis into a plaster saint, rendering every statement about him into hagiography” (x). Equally, the challenge and privilege of every Inklings scholar is to assess and reassess the combined achievements of these champion writers for their recovery of forgotten ideas and reinvention of earlier literary forms—as the Zaleskis have argued, “not as an antiquarian curiosity but as a means of squarely addressing modern anxieties and longings” (512). It is our hope that this book provides such a “gateway.”

As Diana Pavlac Glycer states, “creativity thrives in community” (214), and she has ably argued that C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and the other Inklings had considerable influence on one another’s work, and so ought to be studied as a community of writers. They “worked closely with others throughout their creative lives, and most of them worked collaboratively in their professional lives as well” (211). Moreover, their collaborative practice, Glycer says, was founded on their shared Christian faith, as “reflected . . . in the doctrine of the communion of the saints” (224), and, pointing to the fact that many of them were members of the Church of England, she quotes from “the closing prayer of Compline in *The Book of Common Prayer*, which includes this petition: ‘Grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other’s toil’” (qtd. in Glycer 224). It is not surprising therefore that scholars have investigated and will continue to investigate the work of the Inklings as a literary community, nor that their earlier mentors, George MacDonald and G. K. Chesterton, as well as their friend Dorothy L. Sayers, are sometimes included in these studies. The famous group of seven indeed needs to be addressed as a whole. What is surprising to us, therefore, is that to date there is no known volume that treats together all seven members of this recognized group of authors. We are therefore extremely pleased and grateful to be able to introduce *The Inklings and Culture: A Harvest of Scholarship from the Inklings Institute of Canada*, the celebration of some of the many achievements of our institute since its inception in 2013, and the first volume of its kind.

The Inklings Institute of Canada, finding its home at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada, enjoys national and international membership, and the contributors to this volume are comprised of both seasoned and emerging scholars. Several of the chapters were originally given as conference papers or as on-campus talks and have been revised and expanded for this volume; other chapters have been written expressly for this collection. In our call for papers we asked, “How did these

authors critique their own cultures? How do they help us respond to our own historical/cultural context? How were their contributions visionary?”

The twenty-seven chapters selected by the editorial team are organized into four sections: Literary Influences, The Christian Imagination, Artistic Responses, and Contemporary and Theological Issues. These probing essays revisit older questions and ask new ones. The range of topics and the diversity of perspectives testify to the ongoing impact of the Inklings’ circle. Each writer’s purpose is not to adulate the Inklings, but to consider seriously how their combined legacy continues both to inform and potentially to transform us in the twenty-first century. What follows is a brief preview of each section’s contents.

## Literary Influences

Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson introduces this volume with a seminal investigation of George MacDonald, the Victorian author and mentor to many of the Inklings, particularly C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Owen Barfield, one whose mythopoeic legacy is indeed foundational to Inklings studies. Jeffrey Johnson skillfully explores the essentially theological nature of George MacDonald’s mythopoeisis in several of his works, as well as the influence of his legacy in Lewis’s and Tolkien’s writings. She observes that these writers are part of a much longer “literary lineage,” stating, “For none of these writers is their art a solitary endeavour—it arises from careful, well-studied engagement. They are part of an antiphonal choir that continuously calls others to join the worshipful play.” Jeffrey Johnson gives readers the strong sense that these and all other participants in the Christian “storied conversation” are transcendent voices leaving us with the remarkable idea that MacDonald “even dares his reader to read (and to ‘sub-create’) in the eschatological awareness that this ‘cloud of witnesses’ may yet someday be engaged face-to-face.”

David C. Downing’s erudite discussion ponders Lewis’s fascination with the archetypal image of Christ descending to the underworld and reascending. Suggesting that Lewis drew upon Dante and Virgil, Downing investigates this archetypal motif in Lewis’s imaginative portrayals in *The Great Divorce*, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, *Perelandra*, and *The Silver Chair*. This study has important implications for theological questions on “the problem of the righteous heathen,” purgatory as cleansing rather than punishment, and the destiny of all Christians as Christ-bearers. Downing concludes, “Lewis associates the journey through death into life with the rite of baptism—dying to self, but rising in the spirit, with the eternal hope of joining Christ in his final ascent.”

Lewis's relationship to Coleridge and Romanticism is explored thoroughly by Murray J. Evans. In a unique and careful study of the logical clarity of Lewis's *Abolition of Man* beside Coleridge's "sublime 'shadows of imagination'" in *Opus Maximum*, Evans invites readers to ask themselves which style of apologetics is perhaps more needed in "our challenging times"? He contends, "Coleridge's rhetoric can do things for readers that Lewis's clarity and logic cannot: it can hold readers' interest without requiring a commitment at each step of logic in an unfolding argument." Evans concludes, "Coleridge's rhetoric may ironically remain more modern than Lewis's because of its appeal to doubting readers, current and emerging, who having too much tasted the shadows, cannot abide the bright logic of Lewis's style."

Sara L. Pearson, like C. S. Lewis "a firm believer in rereading," explores Lewis's likely indebtedness to female characters in Charlotte Brontë's novels. First, Pearson carefully traces the similarities between Lewis's witches in the *Chronicles* to *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason Rochester, and second, maps the parallels between Lucy and Susan Pevensie and the novel *Shirley*'s loyal friends Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone. While Pearson admits to the danger of a Brontë scholar's seeing Charlotte "hiding behind every bush and tree in Lewis's works," her compelling examples of resemblance suffice to whet the appetite for a deeper knowledge of Brontë's work. Moreover, not only is it abundantly clear that Lewis's imagination was furnished by close reading, Pearson's argument on intertextuality illustrates Lewis's moral imagination in his depiction of female characters, and so contributes significantly to the ongoing discussion on Lewis and gender.

Mervyn Nicholson investigates Lewis's affinity with Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. Nicholson states that as with Sewell, for Lewis "[a]nimals, compassion, and imagination are central." In his detailed discussion of the "gallery of horses" in the Narnia books, Nicholson astutely argues that these often abused animals are "evidence of human corruption." He states, "In both Lewis and Sewell, brutalizing horses is not simply sadism: it is a function of *commercial society*. Cruelty makes profit. Like Sewell, Lewis never shows enthusiasm for 'the market system.'" Nicholson makes an important case for the "spiritual significance" of Lewis's "devotion to animals," thus offering a study that speaks to both ecological and socio-political concerns.

In his consideration of the relationship between C. S. Lewis and Bede Griffiths, Ron Dart covers new ground in considering the overlooked influence of mystic Bede Griffiths on Lewis, arguing that Lewis's life-long friendship with Griffiths "enriched and deepened [his] understanding of the

contemplative life.” Dart notes that “Lewis called Griffiths his ‘chief companion’ . . . on his journey to Christianity,” and traces the history of their friendship despite significant differences of opinions arising from Griffiths’s Roman Catholicism and later growing commitment to Hinduism. This essay is significant not only in terms of how Lewis grew in inter-faith dialogue, but also in terms of Lewis “the rationalist-romantic,” who “made it abundantly clear that Griffiths the romantic and mystic could not easily dismiss or divide the rational way of knowing (and the good it revealed) from the romantic and mystical way of being.”

Crystal Downing concludes this section with an exploration of the intriguing influence of Reinhold Niebuhr on Sayers, herself an important influence on the spiritual life of Lewis, who uncritically dismissed Niebuhr as too “liberal.” Downing proposes that Sayers’s various writings, including *The Zeal of Thy House*, *The Mind of the Maker*, and *The Man Born to Be King*, illustrate Niebuhr’s argument that every culture absolutizes human interpretations of truth in problematic ways. Suggesting that Niebuhr’s allusion to *Othello* in *Beyond Tragedy* piqued Sayers’s imagination, Downing’s chapter illustrates how literature may enable us to address questions surrounding the ever-timely subject of what Niebuhr called “political messianism.” Moreover, Downing demonstrates that even when writers like Niebuhr and Sayers are denounced, their influence may nonetheless significantly impact the spiritual journeys of others.

## **The Christian Imagination**

Michael Ward’s chapter introduces this section on the Christian imagination. Ward contrasts the popular hermeneutic of suspicion which reads literature in terms of power-claims with Lewis’s characteristic and radical “open-hearted” approach to the literary arts as discussed in *An Experiment in Criticism*, one which allows transcendence of self—essentially, Lewis’s “hermeneutic of love.” Ward proposes that “Lewis’s theology of love can help to undermine the hermeneutic of suspicion.” This is an outstanding and much-needed argument on how Lewis’s grasp of the twin arts of writing and reading can liberate contemporary readers and writers from the “cultural small-mindedness” that leads to *using* a book rather than *receiving* a book. Ward views Lewis as proposing that the ideal approach to literary art is the symbiotic one in which writer and reader exercise loving respect.

Stephen M. Dunning examines the particular spiritual risks facing Christian artists in their own lives. In this exceptional study of C. S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, Charles Williams, and J. R. R. Tolkien, Dunning ponders dangers such as the artist’s unwillingness to seek truth, pride in one’s art,

and artistic production as an excuse to overlook one's moral failings. He considers the contradictory claims made by some of these writers, such as Williams's view that while the artist has a priestly role, capable of summoning the reader to participate in divine reality, the art itself also reveals and judges harshly the artist's true character. Of the four authors, Tolkien alone regards the production of art as having potentially "moral and spiritual benefits to the artist." Dunning's chapter is a clarion call for gratitude to these writers who understood the spiritual risks and yet chose to share their gifts, and it is also a call to crucial self-examination of one's own approach to literary art.

Joy Steem beautifully envisions George MacDonald's view of creativity as "a response to the Creative Maker and his creation," a response that is fundamental to spiritual life. Steem closely examines MacDonald's view of God's creative character, the relationship between the Divine and human imagination, "immersion in creation as fundamental to our creativity," and then she applies these concepts to *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie*. Skillfully orchestrating a host of voices on Creation theology, Steem draws attention to "The Maker's inclusive creative plan"; "the cultivation of receptive creativity" in which the human artist is "'finder' rather than 'maker'"; the concept that we are only truly ourselves when "actively creating something"; and the idea that imaginative exercise is loving participation in God's continuous creation. Her discussion of the Princess books invites readers to "take seriously the cumulative moments of our days, for each moment is a chance to respond to the Maker's invitation to live creatively in relationship with the Creator, others, and the created world." This chapter is a remarkable call to creative health as a spiritual discipline—that which makes us intrinsically human.

Matthew Steem meticulously investigates and synthesizes key features of G. K. Chesterton's widely disseminated views of art into a cohesive discussion. His argument delineates Chesterton as a joyously counter-cultural literary artist who esteemed "the common things of the world . . . both the common people and the conceptions that the common people held to be good." Believing that all humans are artists created in God's image, Chesterton resisted artistic elitism in his view that good literature needs to address conventional life and be understandable to the common person. In contrast to the pessimism of avant-garde writers, Chesterton insisted that great artists are ultimately more optimistic. While good writers address the darkness and wickedness of the human heart, they succeed with the more difficult task of illustrating "joy and thankful wonder" in response to God and his creation. Steem thus not only underscores Chesterton's place among

the Inklings, but makes a key contribution to an ever-timely discourse on the philosophy of literary art.

Laura N. Van Dyke in her thought-provoking study of the so-called “third Inkling” Charles Williams considers why of the four Inklings “Williams’s linguistic theory may have been the most radical.” While C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Owen Barfield were equally worried about “linguistic reductionism” attributed to the impact of the “modern scientific revolution,” Williams, Van Dyke claims, was distinctive in his belief in the power of words to shape reality. She speaks to how “both the Christian theological tradition and the philosophical currents of Western hermeticism” influenced his vision, and states, “Williams really did see the world as a place where human utterances shape external realities, even realities as large as world wars.” This compelling discussion of Williams’s poetic vision invites us to consider how “attentive[ness] to the real meaning of the words we use” can bring peace to a world in crisis.

Greg Maillet investigates why J. R. R. Tolkien cites *Beren and Luthien* as “the chief” of the tales in *The Silmarillion*, “a crucial link” in his entire mythology. Challenging the rejection of allegorical readings associated with Tolkien, Maillet reasons that Tolkien’s view of the relation between allegory and story is more complex—in fact, as Tolkien insisted, in their best forms the two converge so that the best allegory may be easily read as story and the best story as allegory. In his detailed consideration of the parallels between Tolkien and his wife Edith’s love story and the characters Beren and Luthien, Maillet speaks to themes such as a “self-sacrificial approach to life” and “married love [as] a means to battle against evil in this world, and finally a way to accept the gift of death together.” Maillet’s discussion of Tolkien’s “Christian hermeneutic” deepens our understanding of the author’s work as well as offers important insights for reading all stories.

Hannah Hempstead fruitfully explores the “under-recognized influence” of Russian Orthodox philosopher and mystic Nikolai Berdyaev’s “millenarian vision of human creativity on Dorothy L. Sayers’s thought,” arguing that Sayers was more “steeped in Berdyaev’s eschatologically centered [thinking] . . . than either Sayers or her readers have yet recognized.” In contrast to the “secular and political utopianisms” of the 1940s, including Marxism and National Socialism, Berdyaev spoke of “eschatological hope for the final and eternal . . . reconceived primarily as an *existential* reality apprehended by the individual who lives in freedom and works creatively in faithful response to God in the present.” Hempstead convincingly concludes that Sayers’s eschatological vision, informed by Berdyaev, is one

founded on a concept of creativity which “reveals the true eschatological goal of humanity: the presence of the Creator.”

Dominic Manganiello concludes this section with a profound discussion of Orual’s “veiled literary confession” in *Till We Have Faces*, one that has received little attention: the painful process of gaining “true self-knowledge” through “a double-voiced discourse in which ‘I’ is both subject and object.” Drawing upon the insights of Mikhail M. Bakhtin on dialogic discourse, Manganiello expertly guides readers into contemplating Lewis’s representation of “the ironic figure of the split subject—‘I am not I’” that leads to Orual’s repentance of self-deception. Manganiello describes the limits of subjectivity and language itself in this study of the diseased and the healthy imagination. In our time, which has been described as an age of anxiety over the twin questions of personal and cosmic meaning, as well as being concerned with identity politics, Manganiello’s analysis of Lewis’s last novel is a most timely testimony to the Christian imagination in this story, one whereby the true self is only discoverable as a gift of grace received through submission to divine love.

## Artistic Responses

William V. Thompson introduces this section with a pertinent discussion of the significant differences between J. R. R. Tolkien’s and C. S. Lewis’s approach to the genre of fantasy. While Tolkien criticizes the Chronicles of Narnia for their lack of “inner consistency,” Thompson observes that his “dismissal of Lewis’s secondary world fails to account for Lewis’s achievement in the wider development of fantasy as a genre.” He argues that Lewis’s “composite fantasy,” an “exuberant” adaptation and incorporation of Christian as well as Greco-Roman and Old Norse sources, “anticipates a shift in fantasy as a genre that comes at the end of the twentieth century,” one that includes “Steampunk and alternative history fantasy.” In his discussion of portal fantasy, sibling adventure, and quest romance, Thompson helpfully traces Lewis’s legacy in contemporary British fantasy writers for children, from writers as diverse as Philip Pullman, Jonathan Stroud, Philip Reeve, and J. K. Rowling. He concludes with the observation that Lewis influenced the development of later fantasies with his personal creative approach—a “light-hearted” writer “at play.”

In his discussion of the film adaptation of *The Hobbit*, Aaron Frede contends that Peter Jackson’s cinematic portrayals of J. R. R. Tolkien’s novel change “both the message and the meaning of the work in a fundamental way, so much so that the film adaptations of *The Hobbit* cannot be considered a true reflection of Tolkien’s ethical conception of the hero.”

While the film trilogy celebrates the “martial prowess” associated with super-hero movie box office hits, Tolkien demonstrates “the heroic life as one centered on a moral vision including perseverance, humility, and selflessness.” This misrepresentation, Frede points out, “is seen most clearly in the displacement of Bilbo as the story’s clear protagonist” in favour of Thorin. Frede’s well-informed discussion of communication through media and Tolkien’s writings gives insights into the gap, even conflict, between Tolkien’s ethical worldview and contemporary cultural distortions and misperceptions of his worldview—a highly relevant discussion that promises to continue.

Kevin Schut’s illuminating discussion of Tolkien, Lewis, and video games concludes this section on artistic responses. While drawing attention to Tolkien’s and Lewis’s shared critical view of “the ideological and religious overreach of scientists and technology enthusiasts,” Schut judiciously weighs the pros and cons of a successful transmission of their vision of “healthy humanity” into “the quintessential twenty-first-century medium: the video game.” While video games can dehumanize, tending to focus on power through acquisition, their use of the multiple tools of other media also allows for humanizing interactivity (“Imagine being able to actually converse with Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*”). Schut poses a robust challenge to Inklings scholars, Inklings-informed literary artists and video game designers alike, one that cannot be ignored if we value the Inklings’ commitment to communication within contemporary culture.

## Contemporary and Theological Issues

Richard Angelo Bergen opens this section with an investigation of Lewis as a “literary historian.” Was he a historian when he also put in the disclaimer that he was “a ‘desperate skeptic’” about “everything that could be called ‘the philosophy of history’”? Drawing upon thinkers such as Benedetto Croce, G. W. F. Hegel, Michel Foucault, and George Grant, Bergen undertakes a thorough discussion of Lewis’s commentary on the subject, probing “the interstices of temporality, narrative, anthropology, and ethics.” Bergen concludes, “Lewis obviously hoped that history would function in a similar manner for [modern readers] as it did for him: that history will be their Interpreter, for guidance and instruction, particularly as past texts display life-worlds, bringing individuals back to the *present*, in which eternity is *presented* to them.” This analysis makes a valuable contribution to the growing discussion on interpretations of history, particularly in light of the myth of progress against which Lewis contended.



In her ecospiritual analysis of “stances to nature” in *Till We Have Faces*, Katharine Bubel perceptively contemplates Lewis’s treatment of Augustine’s concepts of “ordinate love” opposed by “the deceiving illusion of daemonic dread and disordered love” or *libido dominandi*. Bubel suggests that the novel portrays the latter two stances as “the spiritual roots of environmental ruin,” and concludes, “[s]eeing outer nature [as theophanic] requires reorientation of inner nature, love ordered through a sacramental form of life, of daily relinquishments and affirmations. In Lewis’s Christian retelling of the myth, we are invited to see that it is for Divine Love’s sake that all things ‘count’” and are valued properly in an “ethic of care.” This in-depth discussion offers an unprecedented contribution to eco-discourse since the mythical-metaphorical view of Ungit in the City of Man as fallen Nature and of Psyche in the City of God as redeemed Nature challenges, even seems to fly in the face of, current eco-thinking.

Matthew T. Dickerson’s chapter astutely explores Tolkien’s portrayal of an ethic toward the outsider in *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Fall of Gondolin*. Dickerson begins with Tolkien’s lament in January of 1945 over “the tragedy surrounding a line of German refugees fleeing advancing Russians,” and points out that Tolkien regarded this “lack of mercy and compassion toward refugees” (even those “associated with a nation at war with England”) with “the collapse of civilization, and even more damningly with the behavior of orcs.” Dickerson scrutinizes the hard questions of how to “balance the virtues of hospitality and compassion with the needs of war and the defense of a nation,” of whether to “welcome strangers and refugees,” or whether it is “justified to build walls to exclude them,” as seen throughout Tolkien’s legendarium. He concludes that Tolkien advocates hospitality to strangers at the price of risk—the alternative is to enter “a dark diabolical hour.” Undoubtedly, Dickerson’s analysis of Tolkien in terms of a moral response to a refugee crisis breaks new ground and will inspire conversation in years to come.

Continuing the discussion of community in Tolkien’s works, Ariel Little thoughtfully reflects on Tolkien’s vision of community which contradicts both the modern focus on individualism with its attendant fear of conformity and the idea of community as homogeneity that disallows difference. She observes, “The Fellowship presents a serious challenge to a modern individualistic ethos by powerfully demonstrating a community-based heroic, where a diverse yet harmonious community bound and fortified by love is an essential element for overcoming evil.” Little explains that Tolkien’s heroic vision of community is based on “platonic love,” the friendship love which invites outsiders inside a widening circle, a circle racially and culturally diverse operating in an atmosphere of “harmonious

interdependence.” Her convincing argument shows that Tolkien’s worldview serves as a vital counterpoint to current conceptions surrounding individualism, conformity, racial and cultural difference, and the sense of complete helplessness toward evil. Little persuades readers that Tolkien’s depiction of a loving community, far from being escapist, depicts a necessary response to human angst.

Turning to Dorothy L. Sayers on war, women, and work, Jan Lermite insightfully explores Sayers’s experience of a struggle with which many women in the twenty-first century can identify: the struggle “to understand and live out a life of Christian faith that includes care for family, meaningful work, and creative, intellectual expression.” Lermite’s reminder of Sayers’s navigation of these issues in the context of “postwar troubles in Britain, including unemployment, economic depression, poor treatment of veterans, and homelessness caused by disability, illness, or the death of a spouse owing to war service,” together with her in-depth discussion of Sayers’s life as often being one of “loneliness, disappointment and poverty,” renders the author’s central view of “the sacramental nature of work” especially poignant. She argues that Sayers’s theology of work is founded on the view that Christ “treated women as individuals, not a class, not as non-humans,” and concludes, “[w]e can still learn much from Sayers’s witty commentary and scathing examples in the quest to see all human work as valuable and valued.” Indeed, Lermite’s analysis of Sayers’s response to sexism both from society and the church is a vital one.

Grant Havers offers a meticulous study of how Owen Barfield demonstrates in *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* that “he is one of the few moderns who perceives the paradox that the Bible reveals the truth of idolatry even as it is also (indirectly) the greatest source of idolatry.” Pointing to Barfield’s acknowledged indebtedness to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant as well as to the biblical tradition of the Israelites, Havers explains the marked difference between the interpretive powers of modern science and history to assess idolatry. In his words, “Barfield develops Kant’s famous distinction between thought or consciousness (*noumena*) and nature or the universe (*phenomena*) in order to show that, while modern science makes possible a true understanding of idolatry, science does not provide us with the interpretive principles by which to understand the making of idols. History, not science, is the means by which we must understand idolatry.” Moreover, he emphasizes the implication of Barfield’s thought: “the biblical tradition is the true foundation of freedom (or creation).” Havers’s discussion offers a provocative and acutely relevant investigation into human perception, specifically the gap or difference between consciousness and phenomena. His study challenges readers to

consider “the biblical truth that our idols misrepresent both God and ourselves.”

John P. Bowen considers the relevance of the two distinct activities of enjoyment and contemplation to the evangelistic legacy of C. S. Lewis. Taking into consideration Lewis’s encounter with American evangelist Billy Graham and Lewis’s own claim that he saw himself as an apologist appealing to “head” rather than “heart” knowledge, Bowen offers a fine explication of what it feels like to “relate to Aslan” in several Narnia stories, and includes a case study of the impact of the Chronicles of Narnia on a young woman who converted to Christianity. Bowen concludes that Lewis’s fiction is in fact “an evangelistic strategy: imagining before believing.” He states, “Lewis’s fiction has the potential to be an axe that breaks the frozen sea of unbelief that separates us from the reality of God in Christ.” This pertinent chapter on “the power of the imagination” contributes greatly to the discourse on rational and imaginative approaches to faith as well as to the conversation about the similarities, or possible lack thereof, between Lewis and evangelicals.

Norm Klassen addresses how Lewis’s twin understandings of theology and of narrative intellectual history invite the reader to consider the major shift in ontology from pre- and early-modern literature to contemporary thinking. Why is it that a sacramental thinker like Richard Hooker can be considered a secularist? Or that “Chaucer can look modern when he is deeply medieval”? What has been lost and what is at stake? In a discussion that also draws upon the insights of Terry Eagleton, Rowan Williams, and Walker Percy, Klassen investigates the forgotten or rejected but vital Christian doctrine of the intrinsic creaturely status of humanity as portrayed by Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and explained by Lewis. He names “the myth of self-origination” as being at the root of Lewis’s “diagnosis of [the ills] of modernity.” Klassen’s argument on *A Preface to Paradise Lost* is a convincing tribute to Lewis’s eminent place as a literary scholar whose insights correct modern misinterpretations of earlier literature, and it also reveals the nature of contemporary “blind spots” about which Lewis was so careful to warn others.

Monika B. Hilder concludes this volume with a detailed exploration of the twin themes of eschatology and authentic spiritual identity in *The Silver Chair* and *The Last Battle*. How do “the ‘signs of the times’—naturalism, rationalism, syncretism, and a general commitment to the myth of progress”—play out in these children’s books? How does “Lewis nonetheless pain[t] a compelling picture of courage and hope”? Hilder claims, “Lewis challenges his readers to discern these ‘signs of the times’ that threaten spiritual identity” through “dangerous secular beliefs,” concluding that he

“offers an education out of spiritual deception into life-giving spiritual literacy.” This chapter provides a fresh and innovative approach to the discussion of how difficult topics might be addressed in children’s books, to commentary surrounding eschatology, and to Lewis’s challenge to readers that Christ and faithful Christians alike might “look like saboteurs” to much of contemporary culture.

## Conclusion

The chapters in *The Inklings and Culture: A Harvest of Scholarship from the Inklings Institute of Canada* together address a diversity of topics and perspectives on why the Inklings matter today. If Peter Kreeft is even only partially correct in his assessment that “[t]he essence of modernity is the death of the spiritual” (54), that “[w]e are the first civilization that does not know why we exist” (46), as well as that C. S. Lewis’s voice (and by implication, we add, those of his friends and mentors) is therefore increasingly relevant, then Inklings scholarship as a whole is not only vital academic work, but it also has far-reaching consequences. The insights in this collection and the questions that they inspire, will, we believe, abundantly contribute to further conversations about the known and lesser-known wealth that these authors offer us as literary scholars, philosophers, historians, theologians, educators, creative artists, and general readers—riches that will equip us as we carry them well into the future.

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# CHRONOLOGY

## LAURA N. VAN DYKE

- 1824 10 December: George MacDonald born
- 1858 MacDonald's *Phantastes* published
- 1871 MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* published
- 1874 29 May: G. K. Chesterton born
- 1886 20 September: Charles Williams born
- 1892 3 January: J. R. R. Tolkien born
- 1893 13 June: Dorothy L. Sayers born
- 1895 MacDonald's *Lilith* published
- 1898 9 November: Owen Barfield born
- 29 November: C. S. Lewis born
- 1905 18 September: George MacDonald dies
- Chesterton's *Heretics* published
- 1916 Lewis reads George MacDonald's *Phantastes* for the first time
- 1917 Tolkien begins writing what will eventually become *The Silmarillion*
- Williams helps with the publication of *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*, an anthology that includes poems from Chesterton and MacDonald
- 1919 Lewis and Barfield meet at Oxford
- Williams's nativity play *Scene from a Mystery* published in Chesterton's *The New Witness*
- 1923 Sayers's novel *Whose Body* published (the first of the Lord Peter Wimsey novels)
- 1924 Chesterton serves as chairman for a celebration to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of MacDonald's birth
- 1925 Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* published, a work that is particularly influential on Lewis
- 1926 11 May: Lewis and Tolkien meet at Oxford
- 10 September: Chesterton and Barfield meet at the office of *G.K.'s Weekly*
- 1928 Barfield's *Poetic Diction* published (dedicated to Lewis)