

*Gillian Luu*  
The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

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### LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

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### C.W.S. A.G.M. 19 May 1990 (some main points)

The Society held its AGM on Saturday 19 May 1990 at  
Liddon House. Reports were presented by the Hon  
Secretary, the Hon Lending Librarian, the Hon Treasurer  
and the Hon Newsletter Editor.

Gillian Lunn, Hon Secretary, opened her report by paying  
tribute to the contribution of the late Alice Mary Hadfield  
to the work of the Society. Mrs Lunn reported that the  
book sales account stood at £800 with £70 in the current  
account. The supplements to the Newsletter were being  
made up into a booklet by Anne Ridler and would be made  
available through the Society later in the year.

Brian Horne, Hon Lending Librarian, reported that the  
lending library had been gradually added to during the  
year. The contents of the Reference Library had been  
swelled by the bequest of about 150 books and papers from  
Alice Mary Hadfield. Details would be given in a future  
Newsletter.

Richard Wallis, Hon Treasurer, distributed copies of the  
accounts. Over the past year there had been an excess of  
income over expenditure of £108. There was a total  
cash balance in hand of £616.

Molly Switek, Newsletter Editor, reminded members that  
back copies were available for 50p each and invited  
suggestions for improving the content.

The following were elected to the Committee for the next  
year: Richard Wallis, Gillian Lunn, Brian Horne, Adrian  
Thomas, Anne Scott, Joan Northam, Peter Couchman and  
Molly Switek. Ben Robertson wished to stand down. There

was a vacancy and the Committee would consider inviting someone to be co-opted.

### NEWS ABOUT BOOKS

Members may be interested to know about the following new books with a "Charles Williams flavour":

Outlines of Romantic Theology by Charles Williams, edited by Alice Mary Hadfield, published by Eerdmans at \$14.95. See insert for information on availability (sent to non USA/Canadian members only).

The Pattern in the Web. The Mythical Poetry of Charles Williams by Roma A King Jr, published by Kent State University Press at \$28.

Discerning Spirit by Dr T J Gorringer, published by SCM Press which has a chapter on Spirit in the Flesh which deals with Romantic Theology and refers to Charles Williams book Outlines of Romantic Theology.

The Remarkable Case of Dorothy L Sayers by Catherine Kenney published by the Kent State University Press at \$26.

### A FEW WORDS AT THE A.G.M. 19.5.90

Following the A.G.M. on 19 May 1990, members were invited to read short extracts of CW's work which they would use to recommend him to others. Thelma Shuttleworth read the following.

"'When you are old and grey and full of sleep', what will you have made of it all, I wonder?" So quoted Charles Williams to me in 1929. In my 88th year, I would tell him that I am still "'faint yet pursuing.'"

In 1927 (two years after we had met first, as lecturer and student in the London University Extension Lectures on English Literature, I was coming up to 24, as he ~~passed~~ 41 and we were fast friends. He had four volumes of poetry to his credit, and had just finished with the Society of

the Golden Dawn - though all I knew of that, then, was that he had remarked in a lecture "It is fascinating that at 40, one realises that what one learnt at 4, at one's mother's knee, is merely true."

At 21, I had eschewed all dogmatic religion, to my Mother's grief. Till then the Church of England had been the backbone, and with confirmation at 15, the glory of my life. Charles took this in his stride, but insisted that I must have a creed, and in 1929, a year after being engaged to be married, he gave me this, followed in 1930 by a sonnet of The Lord's Prayer, and another, both written at midnight, February 7th.

"I believe

1. Love to be that which truly is, and to which we all return.
2. All - whether I like them or not: whether they believe as I wish or not - to be equally in the heart of love.
3. That love can and will so control and dispose me as to make me nothing but the channel of his glory, the express image of his person.
4. That I must offer myself to Love in all my relationships, painful as well as beautiful, distressing as well as joyous.
5. That I and they and all are atoned (at-oned) in a state of love"

N.B. Love? - "this glorious wonder over all amiss". C.W.

Now I will read his words on The Lord's Prayer, from He Came Down From Heaven, published in 1938, the same year as Taliessin Through Logres - the first volume of the Arthurian Cycle, the poetry of his mature years. [pp 144-146 "The organic word of prayer which Messiah ..... neither is this Thou." ]

This is the version of The Lord's Prayer that he wrote in a sonnet for me:

"1. Thus shalt thou pray; Father and origin, whose heaven is but thy knowledgeable fame, hallowed in all my temples be thy name, thy kingdom in me to its fulness

coin, and on my earth thy will be done as in the glory where thou sittest sole: my frame thrive on thy everlasting bread, nor blame me, as I blame not others, not for sin done against thee: lead me not any hour into temptation, but deliver me from evil - this thou canst and this thou dost, from treachery, from tyranny, from all lust of self; to whom belongs eternally the kingdom and the glory and the power.

2. Adored for Love's sake be immortal Love!  
Not for thy sake, nor for the world's: that is thy means of showing thou art truly his, in every thought and fashioned of his strength even as his sweetness; wherefore prove to him in thee, to thee in him, that this glorious wonder over all amiss doth with august design within thee move. But for thyself, spill not nor waste it; cry on him with all this power of him - his gifts must in such wise be rendered back as lifts the soul in adoration still more nigh to that which, sweet thus in itself, must be what strength, what sweetness, what felicity!"

As the company agreed that they would like to have my three sonnets to read for themselves, here is the first, written on a scrap of paper at lunchtime at Hills, in 1929. The occasion was a discussion of the physical side of love, which I was involved in, now that I was engaged to be married. My upbringing, though including (1917!) a school session with experts on the subject of sex, had left me as ignorant as it found me. I found it very difficult to deal with "most alien" however natural. Well, there was my friend Charles Williams, with whom one could discuss anything.

#### "Of Love

Invisible master of our days and nights,  
Perfect conclusion of the only quest,  
To whom, whereon, all prayer is well addressed,  
Whose seasonable grace, all prayer requites,

Hardest of labours, easiest of delights,  
Most alien and most natural, point of rest  
Wherfrom all glory is made manifest,  
Lamp of all rooms and star above all heights:  
Be in my spirit which being mine is thine,  
Continuous invocation; grant Lord Love  
The sole grace even thy glory can allow,  
To be an opening for thy light to shine -  
Toil, knowledge, adoration, love thereof -  
Thou art all else and all else is but Thou."

Now you can see why I finished by saying, as with  
Palomides at his death, that the wheel has come full  
circle:

"I utter the formula; the formula is all that lives:  
Sharply the Prophet, Iseult, Lancelot, Dinadan  
Call to me at my dying and I to them:  
'The Lord created all things by means of his blessing.'  
If this is the kingdom, the power, the glory, my heart  
formally offers the kingdom, endures the power,  
joins to itself the aerial scream of the eagle -  
That Thou only canst be, Thou only art."

#### BOOK REVIEW by James Brabazon

The Remarkable Case of Dorothy L Sayers by Catherine  
Kenney, 355pp, The Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio  
44242, USA, 1990, \$26.

This is the book Dorothy L Sayers would have wanted  
written about her. She always said that her work  
contained all that mattered about her, that the rest, the  
biographical stuff, was irrelevant. Catherine Kenney has  
looked deep into the work and found it full of treasures,  
and she has conveyed her admiration with a style, a  
sensitivity, a sympathy and a sense of excitement that are  
worthy of her subject.

Professor Kenney's first aim is to establish that DLS was  
not just a crime writer, but a true novelist in the  
English tradition, dealing with important social themes

and delving into psychological subtleties that most crime writing would be incapable of handling. She looks at the development of the Wimsey novels and convincingly shows how Miss Sayers put more and more of herself into them, facing and triumphantly solving the technical problems she set herself as she forced the genre to accommodate great questions of morality, of the reality of suffering, of the balance of the sexes in society, and many more.

Seeing the Wimsey-less crime story "The Documents in the Case" as the turning point in Sayers' fiction, Professor Kenney argues persuasively that this is a very considerable novel and much underestimated in the Sayers oeuvre. She shows how, once having broken out of the simple detection format of the early books, DLS was able after this book to deepen the character of Lord Peter Wimsey, and how his love for Harriet Vane, so far from destroying him as a detective, enriched him by making him vulnerable, and thus human, and thus a true fictional hero.

In the second half of the book Professor Kenney deals with the Christian element that runs through all of Miss Sayers' work. She looks at the articles and lectures in which it came out into the open and which made such a powerful impression at the beginning of World War Two; and in particular the majestic achievement of "The Mind of the Maker". She looks briefly at the stage plays, and finds that the most powerful of DLS's drama was the radio series, "The Man Born to be King", where the language is least pretentious and most human, like that of the novels.

It is a little disappointing, but understandable, that she says nothing of the last great work, the Dante translation, which is a specialised subject and which has been dealt with magisterially by Barbara Reynolds.

Inevitably in a book which concentrated on the writing there is a danger of excessive attention to minutiae, and here and there Professor Kenney may have let her enthusiasm find more significance than the work justifies. But overall she makes her case with unforced authority, and will surely send many of us back to re-read the books

with added appreciation.

One of the pleasures of reading Professor Kenney is to find that, with all her erudition, she is firmly of the opinion that Dorothy L Sayers' best work is to be found in her most popular books, where her "careless rage for life", her love of language, her wide range of interests and her inexhaustible talent for story-telling and character creation come together with her basically serious insights to create great stories. For, as Professor Kenney says, "story is often more effective than exposition or argument."

### BOOK REVIEW by Glen Cavaliero

C.S. Lewis. A Biography by A.N. Wilson, pp334, Collins 1990, £15.

Earlier reviewers have already praised the virtues of this book - its readability, its discriminating survey of Lewis' writings, above all its balanced and perceptive portrait of the man himself. Not the least of its merits is the sympathetic discussion of his relations with Janie Moore and Joy Gresham, relations that have perplexed some of his admirers. This biography is a welcome and sensible corrective to its more adulatory forerunners.

It does, however, have its weaknesses. Wilson is a seasoned journalist, and his text tends on occasion to forego analysis for the sake of a facetious phrase. This is most in evidence where personalities are concerned: thus Enid Starkie is caricatured and Helen Gardner subjected to what reads like a vendetta. But it is Charles Williams who suffers most insidiously from reductive treatment.

One can understand Wilson's not liking him, for a figure so eccentric to contemporary social and literary values is not easy to accept, let alone appreciate; one can pardon him for recoiling from Williams' occultist connections; moreover, he himself is a loyal champion of J.R.R. Tolkien, who had his mis-givings about Williams. What one cannot condone are a number of misleading statements that

a mere reference to the work of Carpenter or Hadfield could have eliminated. Williams is described as being 'entirely self-educated and cockney in speech'. (149), The former statement is simply not true: he attended both St Alban's Abbey School and University College, London. As to the vexed question of his voice, what Wilson presumably means is not 'speech' but 'accent'. More damaging, however, is a reference to 'largely innocent office romances - which do not appear to have gone much beyond crushes on secretaries' (148). Such slapdash distortions are inexcusable; and what is meant by that tendentious 'largely' and by 'much beyond'? This is journalese, unworthy of so experienced a biographer.

A more precise misrepresentation occurs on p.170, where Wilson asserts that Williams 'rather surprisingly left his wife and child behind to brave the Blitz in the Hampstead flat while he and his beloved secretary Celia came to take up their (separate) residences in Oxford'. As The Inklings makes clear, Michal Williams deliberately chose to stay in London; while 'Celia' (the name should stand between inverted commas) was never Williams's secretary, nor did she move to Oxford until after his arrival there; even then they scarcely saw each other, being no longer on close terms of friendship. Wilson's sentence implies far more than it directly states, to denigratory effect.

His animus becomes clear when he refers to 'a dose of Coinherence, the Omnipotence, Angelicals, and the whole bundle of Williams's mystical, self-educated and vaguely occult preoccupations. (193) The collocation of those last three adjectives and that tell-tale adverb 'vaguely' reflects more on the author than on his subject, and consort uncomfortably with Wilson's declared admiration for The Figure of Beatrice. Altogether his treatment of Williams is an interesting example of how a writer's style, more even than his actual words, reveals his underlying attitudes. 'As one would expect of Williams, for whom the Other Side was quite as real as this world, he did not go away immediately after he had shuffled off this mortal coil.' (204) The patronising capitals, the glib resort to euphemistic quotation, cheapen the account

of Williams's death: nowhere does Wilson engage seriously with the question as to why Lewis (or for that matter Eliot and Auden) venerated him so greatly. The pity of it is that in slighting Williams, A.N. Wilson ends up by doing Lewis a disservice too.

### NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to:

Mr D A MacNaughton, 748 Holly Avenue, St Paul, MN 55104, USA,

Mark D Chestnut, 16 School Street, Schenectady, New York 12304, USA, and

Ian Longhorn, Box 332 GPO, Brisbane, QLD 4001, Australia.

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Following the Society's A.G.M. on 19 May 1990, Adrian Thomas spoke to members on "The Image of the Body". We are very pleased to be able to reproduce the talk in this Newsletter.

"My title is a combination of two titles from Charles Williams, 'The Image of the City' and 'The Index of the Body'. Since I spend my days as a Radiologist looking at images of the body I liked this verbal exchange (or is it a substitution!)

What an image consists of is perhaps easier to understand than exactly what a body is. I find bodies more complex and interesting as time goes by. Our appreciation of images can never be passive. There is no such beast as a disinterested or passive observer, with the possible exception of the television audience. There is always interpretation and manipulation of data starting first in the sense organ (eye, ear etc) and continuing along to the cerebral cortex. The more the subject is seen as a passive recipient of the object, the less meaning is present and this is particularly so in the field of education. The experiments of Held and Hein on the visual development of kittens illustrate this point well. Two kittens had identical visual inputs, however one received

the information passively and the other actively. Only the kitten who had the active input could perform visual tasks and the passive animal was effectively blind. We should think of literature or art less as passive objects and more as events or a series of events. There is a transaction between what is perceived and the perceiver. When the child learns to look at objects s/he is building up a series of expectations which is then applied to the next event and a predictable model of the world is built up. The degree of collaboration or interpretation is shown by the phenomenon of the visual illusion which has been investigated in detail by Richard Gregory who is Professor of Neuropsychology at Bristol University. In the visual illusion our preconceptions cause us to make mistakes such as the Ames distorted room. The Ames room is a distorted room built on the principles of perspective so that it appears to the eye like a normal rectangular room. Figures in the far corners of the room appear to be at the same distance although they are not and they therefore appear as being different sizes. There is also no such thing as a passive reader and this particularly applies to Charles Williams. A response is required.

In his essay 'The Index of the Body' (Dublin Review, July 1942) Charles Williams looks at the nature of the body particularly in Wordsworth. The human body is seen in Wordsworth as 'the shape of a shepherd seen among the hills' and the body is a 'whole being significant of a greater whole.' The body can be seen as an Index. Charles Williams quotes from The Prelude:

'the human form  
To me became an index of delight,  
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness. (viii,279-  
281)

A good index will tell one 'the particular kind of treatment offered on the separate pages.' 'Some such idea, Wordsworth's lines suggest, the body and even the members of the body may give of the delight, grace, honour, power, and worthiness of man's structure.'

'The structure of the body is an index to the structure of a greater whole.' This is the idea of the microcosm and macrocosm in which man is seen as a small image of the universe as a whole and is a doctrine found in Robert Fludd the 17th century physician and philosopher. Charles Williams was anxious not to use words which seem too much to separate the physical structures from the whole. He believed that the fact of death, and the ensuing separation of 'body' and 'soul', leads us to consider them too much as separate identities conjoined. He hoped that it would not be too unorthodox to say that body and soul are one identity. Death is: 'held to be an improper and grotesque schism a single identity - to which submission but not consent is to be offered.'

Charles Williams considered the nature of the body in Witchcraft (Faber & Faber 1941) in the chapter entitled Witchcraft and Heresy and several passages are worth quoting (p.77-78). The predisposition to magic is seen to begin with the experience of a moment when it seems that anything might turn into anything else. The human body and the movements of the human body are considered:

'Even now, when as a general rule, the human body is not supposed to mean anything, there are moments when it seems, in spite of ourselves, packed with significance ..... a phenomenon, being wholly itself, is laden with universal meaning. A hand lighting a cigarette is the explanation of everything; a foot stepping from a train is the rock of all existence .... But if the human body is capable of seeming so, so are the movements of the human body - ritual movements, or rather movements that seem like ritual. A finger pointing is quite capable of seeming not only a significant finger, but a ritual finger; an evocative finger; not only a finger of meaning, but a finger of magic. Two light steps by a dancing girl may (if one is in that state) appear to be what all the schoolmen were trying to express; they are (only one cannot quite catch it) an intellectual statement of beatitude. But two quiet steps by an old man may seem like the very speech of hell. Or the other way round. Youth and age have nothing to do with it ...'

I am reminded of the finger of Gutei in the Zen Buddhist classic The Gateless Gate (by Ekai, called Mu-mon). This book is a collection of passages or koans made in 1228 for reflection with comments by Mu-mon. In case three it tells how when Gutei was asked a question about Zen he did not answer in words but merely raised his finger. The finger is an image of a reality that cannot be expressed in words. Any action has to be authentic and the story tells how a boy attendant began to imitate the master Gutei. If the boy was asked what Gutei had preached about he raised his finger in a similar manner to the master. When Gutei heard about this he seized the boy and cut off his finger whereupon the boy ran off crying. Gutei called the boy who stopped and turned his head. Gutei raised his own finger and the boy was enlightened.

The nature of the body is also of interest when applied to spiritual beings such as angels. In Paradise Lost the angel Raphael enjoys a meal prepared by Eve:

'and food alike those pure  
Intelligential substances require  
As doth your rational; and both contain  
Within them every lower facultie  
Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,  
Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,  
And corporeal into incorporeal turn.  
For know, whatever was created, needs  
To be sustained and fed; of Elements  
The grosser feeds the purer ...' (v. 407-416)

'So down they sat,  
And to their viands fell, nor seemingly  
The Angel, nor in mist, the common gloss  
Of Theologians, but with keen dispatch  
Of real hunger, and concoctive haste  
To transsubstantiate ... (v. 433-438)

Milton's belief in the corporeal nature of angels is based on the contemporary Platonic theology with the belief that

all created spirits were corporeal. The classic scholastic view of Thomas Aquinas was that angels were immaterial and if they appear to human view they have made for themselves a body out of air ('in mist'), condensed enough to be seen. Angels could not eat and if they appeared to eat it was 'not actual eating but a symbol of spiritual eating.' In Paradise Lost the angel really ate and concoction (digestion in the stomach or 'first concoction'), digestion ('second concoction' or conversion into blood) and assimilation ('third concoction' or 'secretion'), the three phases of digestion in contemporary physiological theory, followed. That the angelic eating was real is indicated by the generation of heat ('concoctive heate'). As C.S. Lewis points out, in Paradise Lost Raphael hints that the spiritual world may be much more like the earthly than some people (for example, the scholastic philosophers) suppose.

In Genesis (chapter 18) the Lord appeared to Abraham as three men (angels) and they were fed with milk, bread and meat whilst Abraham watched from under a tree (v8). The risen Messiah when with the disciples asked 'Do you have anything here to eat?' and proceeded to consume broiled fish in front of them. At a meeting of the Socratic Society on 14th May 1945 C.S. Lewis said that if the risen Christ appeared and disappeared and yet was possessed of a natural body, then a new mode of being had appeared in the universe (quoted by Griffin in his recent biography of C.S. Lewis). He continued: 'Then the Ascension, the going up of the body ... was an essential part of the same story ...' C S Lewis explored the possibility of new modes of being resulting from the resurrection and ascension and finished with the interesting statement: 'Heaven is not merely a state of the spirit, but a state of the body.'

The writings of John Milton can be seen as asking questions as to the meaning of 'man', and on the limits of human autonomy and human obligation. In Christian Doctrine as in most of his writings he insists on human freedom but without undermining divine authority.

True freedom is seen as obedience to the divine will. Milton does not take a dualistic approach and views the soul not as an independent and immortal entity in conflict with the body. Instead the human being is a single, unified and undivided individual:

'He is not double or separable: not, as is commonly thought, produced from and composed of two different and distinct elements, soul and body. On the contrary, the whole man is the soul, and the soul the man: a body, in other words, or individual substance, animated, sensitive, and rational.'

In some Christian circles the body is seen as inferior to the soul and needs to be subdued so that there can be increasing spiritual development. It presumably follows that the bodies of great saints may have become different from ordinary men accounting for the lack of corruption of their bodies after death. One is reminded of the incident in The Brothers Karamazov where much to the embarrassment and scandal of the monastery the body of Father Zossima who had been considered a great saint underwent rapid putrefaction:

'When before dawn they laid Father Zossima's body in the coffin and brought it into the front room, the question of opening the windows was raised among those who were around the coffin. But this suggestion made casually by someone was unanswered and almost unnoticed. Some of those present may have inwardly noticed it, only to reflect that the anticipation of decay and corruption from the body of such a saint was an actual absurdity, calling for compassion (if not a smile) for the lack of faith and the frivolity it implied. .... The fact is that the smell of decomposition began to come from the coffin, growing gradually more marked, and by three o'clock it was quite unmistakable. In all the past history of our monastery, no such scandal could be recalled, and in no other

circumstances could such a scandal have been possible, as showed itself in unseemly disorder immediately after the discovery among the monks themselves. Afterwards, even many years afterwards, some sensible monks were amazed and horrified, when they recalled that day, that the scandal could have reached such proportions.' (Translated: Edward Garnett).

In Charles Williams spirituality is never something vague and immaterial. There is in Charles Williams a delight in the mere fact of having a body. We all have this as children but as adults the delight is often choked by cares. The delight is particularly seen in the figure of Sybil in The Greater Trumps. In the first chapter (p. 13 - 14 Faber Edition) there is admiration of her hands following which there is a general discussion on the nature of hands:

"Auntie's got the loveliest hands I ever saw", Nancy said .... "Look as them." They all looked, even Sybil herself, who said softly, "They are rather nice, aren't they?"

Later in the novel (p. 134 - 135) we have an image of Sybil revelling in the physical nature of reality - hot drinks, hot baths. "How sweet of Love to have a toe like that!" she exclaims in her bath.

In the opening of All Hallows Eve it takes a while for the reader to realise that the girl Lester standing on Westminster Bridge is, in fact, dead. When she meets her friend Evelyn she is physically gripped on the arm and her flesh is

repulsed. Betty who is alive also has a spiritual body that can separate from her physical body and it is this spiritual body that is manipulated by Simon the Clerk. It is Clerk Simon who makes a magical body out of dust and saliva for Evelyn, and Lester allows herself to go into this creation with Evelyn. In this novel corporeal and spiritual realities become rather blurred.

The essential nature of reality is unity. The first principle of Hell is 'I am my own.' All things are connected and all things exist in relation to other things. The illusion of separateness is the cause of so many problems. It is an illusion to see the soul as noble and the body base. Each person is a united whole and each facet needs to grow and develop. Humanity is a whole and all of us are related. We are not separate from the animals and plants around us and we ignore this at our peril. We are part of the biosphere and depend on the health of the planet for our survival. The world is a functioning whole and if we pollute and destroy our environment this will ultimately destroy us. If I have confused in my mind the nature of body and soul it is perhaps no bad thing. For William Blake said:

For Mercy has a human heart;  
Pity a human face;  
And Love the human form divine;  
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man of every clime,  
That prays in his distress,  
Prays to the human form divine:  
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form  
In heathen, Turk or Jew.  
Where Mercy, Love and Pity dwell,  
There God is dwelling too.

What more can I say? "

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OFFICERS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

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