



The  
**Charles  
Williams**  
Society



**Newsletter**

No. 97 Winter 2000

## The Charles Williams Society

The Society was founded in 1975, thirty years after Charles Williams's sudden death at the end of the Second World War. It exists to celebrate Charles Williams and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive a quarterly newsletter and may attend the Society's meetings which are held three times a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at King's College London.

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### Officers of the Society

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Web site: [http://www.geocities.com/charles\\_wms\\_soc/](http://www.geocities.com/charles_wms_soc/)

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## Contents

Newsletter No 97

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<b>Officers of the Society</b>	2
<b>Reading groups</b>	3
<b>From the Editor</b>	4
<b>Forthcoming meetings</b>	5
<b>Council Meeting Report</b>	6
<b>Society News</b>	7
<i>The Masques of Amen House</i>	8
<b>Obedience to the general principle of things</b> <i>Graham Leonard</i>	10
<b>Book Review: Grevel Lindop's <i>Selected Poems</i></b> <i>viewed by Glen Cavaliero</i>	re- 21
<b>Editorial Policy</b>	23

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### Reading groups

For information about the **Oxford** reading group please contact Brenda Boughton, tel: 01865 515589.



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### **From the Editor**

Our review of Grevel Lindop's *Selected Poems* is matched in the November/December edition of the magazine *Resurgence* in which their new Poetry Editor, Peter Abbs, contributes a brief appreciation. This is followed by a short prose piece entitled 'Poetry of the Spirit' and four poems by Grevel Lindop. Lindop, says Abbs, works within the tradition that sees poetry and the "exploration of the sacred as all but synonymous", and concluding his own remarks, Grevel Lindop asserts that truly great poets must have a reservoir of spiritual experience to draw on "or must have so deep a quest for such experience that the quest itself becomes spiritual."

The quest for spiritual experience is in accordance with the universal law, picked up in Monsignor Graham Leonard's paper, of self-abnegation in love. As Charles Williams says in *He Came Down From Heaven* we should not labour in order to reap: "the harvest is of others, as the beginning was in others, and the process was by others." It is possible, as R.M.Bucke (amongst others) found, that a spiritual experience may come without apparent effort on the part of the recipient. But some may meditate and pray for years with no similar experience being vouchsafed them; and those initially favoured might labour in vain to recapture the moment. Either way the labour becomes the true spiritual experience in which the seeker negates the self and so becomes the process. The pilgrim becomes the Path.

Monsignor Leonard laid down a challenge quite forcefully in the delivery of his

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paper, but this emphasis may not appear in reading the text. Accordingly I draw the attention of readers to his remarks on the Internet. The World Wide Web facilitates personal interaction and exchange more readily and conveniently than any previous medium of communication. Like the printing press, it has been seized upon by such as the pornography industry; otherwise it is hailed as the 'information superhighway'. Is there a way of avoiding the present reduction of everything to the status of 'information'? Can we, as the students of Charles Williams, redeem the World Wide Web as an aspect of the Web of Exchange? Answers on a postcard please, or you can email us @.....

Edward Gauntlett.

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## Charles Williams Society meetings

- ◆ **Saturday 10th February 2001**  
The meeting will be held in Pusey House, Oxford at 2.30 pm. Walter Hooper will speak on C.S.Lewis on Charles Williams.
- ◆ **Saturday 9th June 2001**  
Annual General Meeting in the Church Room of St. Matthew's Church at 12.30 pm. At 2.30 pm the Revd. Dr. Gavin Ashenden will speak on a subject to be announced.
- ◆ **Saturday 13th October 2001**  
A reading of *The House by the Stable*. In the Church Room of St. Matthew's Church at 2.30 pm.

## Council Meeting Report

The Council of the Charles Williams Society met on Saturday 14 October 2000 in St. Matthew's Church Room, Bayswater.

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The Chairman said that Michael Williams had wished his ashes to be buried in his parents' grave. Terry Drummond, his executor, had this in hand. The Secretary said that the reason the turf had failed to take was apparently that it was in the "rain shadow" of the neighbouring tree. It was suggested that the best solution might be a kerb with gravel; but clearly nothing could be done till Michael's ashes had been buried.

The Secretary reported from America that a Mrs. Matatics was trying to get "Witchcraft" reprinted, and that a Ms. Reneau of Southern Nazarene University, Oklahoma had been in touch about compiling a "webliography" of Williams.

The Treasurer said there was about £8,300 on deposit at present, and about £2,700 on current account; though we had still to pay the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine for the Conference. The deposit account was only receiving 0.8% interest. It was agreed to transfer it to the Triodos Bank, where it would earn 4.5%.

The Librarian said he would be retiring from King's College in about a year's time. He could ask the College to go on housing the Society's Library, but this might be difficult. There were up to 300 books, and many boxes of papers, more than he could house in his own home. It was agreed to sound Pusey House and Plater College (which housed the G. K. Chesterton Centre); failing these, Mr. Jeffery thought he could offer space. The Librarian said his home could house the lending library, though not the reference.

The Editor said he had been obtaining details of the Mythopoeic Society's publication of the Masques. This had appeared in August under the title *The Masques of Amen House*, and the Mythopoeic Society's press re-

lease would appear in the Newsletter.

There was a discussion on the frequency and lengths of conferences in future. Three years was felt to be the best interval. The "afternoon slot" was felt not to be easy; if we had three-day conferences Saturday afternoon could be left free, but the cost would be increased. The membership should be consulted about this.

Fees for speakers. The possibility of paying speakers a fee had been raised at the AGM. After discussion, it was agreed to take no further action at present.

Richard Sturch

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## Society news

### Copyright

Following the death of Michael Williams, copyright of all Charles Williams's material is now held by Bruce Hunter.

### New Members

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members of the Charles Williams Society:

Colin Laker  
97 Shirley Street  
Hove  
East Sussex BN3 3NH

Olga Markova

Kr.77, d/33

Mkr. 3 obl. Yubileyniy

Moskovskaya 141080

Russia

Geraldine Hawkins

18 Gramercy Park South

New York

NY 10003

USA

Tea & Micael Gustavsson

Loftvagen 5, 4ER

14235 SKO GA5

Sweden

## ***The Masques of Amen House***

**by Charles Williams.**

Published by The Mythopoeic Society. Price: US\$14  
(plus US\$5.52 to Europe).

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The following press release has been received from the Mythopoeic Society.

Charles Williams (1886-1945), poet, playwright, and novelist, worked as an editor for the Oxford University Press, whose London offices were in a building called Amen House. In the 1920s, Williams wrote three short plays in verse celebrating the work of the Press, two of which were performed by the author and his co-workers for the entertainment of the staff. The first play, *The Masque of the Manuscript*, shows the transformation of a manuscript into a printed book; *The Masque of Perusal* deals with the sale of the book; and in *The Masque of the Termination of Copyright* the book is rediscovered and reprinted.

These masques are witty, charming, and highly readable. Like all of Williams's drama and poetry, they are filled with allegorical and literary allusions, but even readers who find Williams's other work difficult will delight in the humour and story of the masques. Anyone who has ever written a book or been involved in publication will particularly find much to identify with, but any reader can enjoy these tales of a book's birth and its search for meaning.

Also included in *The Masques of Amen House*: Williams's poems relating to the masques, selections from the music written by Hubert J. Foss for the stage productions, and extensive commentaries by Bernadette Lynn Bosky and David Bratman about the author and the masques, their history, contents, and allusions.

"Charles Williams's masques are an intellectual frolic. Sometimes they

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deliver sharp and shrewdly apt comments on the publishing process. Sometimes this merges into a virtuoso display of Williams's own quirks and quiddities. They are fun to read, and to imagine being performed before Caesar - also known as Humphrey Milford, Publisher to the august Oxford University Press. As a former London publisher myself I can vouch for the accurate but impish background to the masques. Such events would be hard to imagine occurring within the book-publishing industry today. But then Williams, like all the Inklings, was an original, and caused unexpected things to happen." - Rayner Unwin, former Chairman, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.; publisher of the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

"It is good to have, at last, easy access to these remarkable products of Williams's overflowing creative energy, which he placed here at the service of his ideal of congenial and mutually supportive community. The ingenuity and serious playfulness of his masques provide much delight. Selections from the music composed for them and from related occasional verse help round out our experience. An excellent introduction and judicious notes guide us through the topical and personal allusions and offer glimpses into the enigmas of Williams's life." - Charles A. Huttar, Professor Emeritus of English, Hope College; co-editor of *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams*.

[*The Masques of Amen House* can be obtained from: The Mythopoeic Society Orders Dept., 920 N. Atlantic Blvd # E, Alhambra, LA91801, USA; also from amazon.com. The Charles Williams Society can obtain copies for members in Great Britain and Europe for the reduced price of £12.00 each including postage. See the enclosed leaflet for details. -Ed.]

## Obedience to the general principle of things.

The following paper was delivered by Monsignor Graham Leonard at a meeting of the Charles Williams Society on 6 May 2000.

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I am sure you all recognise that the phrase which I have used for the title of my talk comes from the celebrated lecture which Charles Williams gave in Oxford in January 1940, and about which C S Lewis wrote so enthusiastically to his brother. The lecture, he said, was “nominally on *Comus* but really on Chastity. Simply as criticism it was superb because here was a man who really started from the same point of view as Milton and really cared with every fibre of his being about the sage and serious doctrine of virginity which would never occur to the ordinary modern critic to take seriously,” and added, “I have at last, if only for once, seen a university doing what it was founded to do: teaching wisdom.” In the same year the lecture was printed as the introduction to a new edition of the *English Poems of Milton* published by the Oxford University Press.

“Comus, by refusing to admit the general principle of things and to be obedient to it is foolishly and sinfully limiting the nature of joy”..... Obedience “is the proper order of the Universe in relation to a universal law, the law of self-abnegation in love.” And again “It is not only a law - something that obeys and is obeyed. There remains the possibility of disobedience to the law, of revolt against the facts.”

Since 1940, the climate of thought in which Charles Williams spoke these words has changed dramatically and is still changing.

In the first half of the twentieth century it was the discoveries of the atomic structure of matter and the wave / particle duality of light which affected our understanding of those words “the general principle of things.”

In the second half, developments in quantum theory, molecular biology and genetics have again changed our knowledge of the physical world. There is a new

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understanding of the nature of reality of which we have to take account if we are to understand what “obedience to the general principle of things” means.

To do so lays upon us a two-fold responsibility. Firstly to discern the significance of developments in our understanding of the nature of reality. Secondly to discern the effect of consequent use of the physical world upon human beings. The arrival of the Internet is already having a great effect on communication between human beings and thereby on human society.

With regard to the first demand, Professor John Polkinghorne, in *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, has summarised the developments in the last thirty years as follows. Five principle concerns have characterised activity across the border between science and theology:

- ◆ a rejection of reductionism, partly based on appeal to science’s increasing recognition of the interconnected and holistic character of much physical process;
- ◆ an understanding of an evolutionary universe as being compatible with a theological doctrine of *creatio continua*;
- ◆ a revival of a cautiously revised form of natural theology;
- ◆ a methodological comparison of science and theology that exhibits their common concern with the attainment of understanding through the search for motivated belief;
- ◆ and speculations concerning how physical process might be sufficiently open to accommodate the acts of agents, both human and divine.

The significance of these developments is not easy to grasp, as is illustrated in a passage from John Polkinghorne’s book.

I believe that nuclear matter is made up of quarks which are not only unseen but which are also invisible in principle (because they are permanently confined with the protons and neutrons they constitute). The effects of these quarks can be

perceived, but not the entities themselves. To borrow language from theology, we know the economic quark but not the immanent quark. Yet, on the basis of intelligibility, as providing the grounds for ontological belief, a view which has already been defended in the scientific context, I am fully persuaded of the reality of the quark structure of matter. I believe that it makes sense of physical experience precisely because it corresponds to what is the case. A similar conviction grounds my belief in the invisible reality of God.

He has also drawn our attention to the significance of a new kind of scientific paradigm. It is called 'complexity theory'; so far it has only reached the natural history stage of studying particular examples. It is reminiscent of Aristotelian distinction between 'form and matter', recovered by St Thomas Aquinas, distinguishing between the level of energy and bits and pieces, and the system as a whole with its pattern determining how the bits and pieces behave.

At the same time we have to take account of cyberspace. That world is one of human contrivance, a world of virtual reality, which must be distinguished from the world of actual reality - the world of God's creation from which we construct the virtual world.

In seeking to understand these developments, I believe that the insights of Charles Williams relating to the Way of Affirmation and the relationship between the supernatural and the natural can be immensely helpful. As Dorothy L Sayers wrote about Charles Williams:

He was a major prophet. He could both love and know, and he knew good and evil as no one else knew them. I am sure that in spite of the form of his "spiritual thrillers" -disgusting phrase - he did not think of the spiritual as being wholly from outside. He knew it as both immanent and transcendent - and indeed he knew better than anyone the peril of immanentist: the outward projection of the self and the failure to acknowledge a 'true other'.

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I had hoped to be able to point out ways in which this could happen, particularly in respect of genetic engineering and the significance of the internet, but that I must leave to others more acquainted with Charles Williams and with the world of cyberspace. Meanwhile now I hope that your society will meet the challenge.

I want to draw your attention to another recent development in thought which must be faced if what is learned from Charles Williams is to be heard and applied. It is the truth expressed by him in the lecture on *Comus*. "There remains the possibility of disobedience to the law, of revolt against the fact."

In the last century one effect of the development of scientific achievement was the growth of materialism and the supposition that only empirically verifiable facts could be described as true. What could not be so justified was regarded as no more than a matter of opinion. But in the last quarter of the twentieth century a dramatic change has taken place. Truths and facts which, in popular thought, would have been regarded as 'scientific' are rejected because they do not accord with positions adopted on certain ideological grounds. Ironically, the adoption of such ideological grounds is usually based on what are taken to be self-evident truths. They cannot be justified scientifically yet are regarded as never to be questioned, even if they run contrary to certain observed facts about the nature of man, of society and of the created world.

Let me take one example of this phenomenon. The evolution of animals and man has taken place by the interaction of genetic and environmental variations, such variations being a characteristic of living things. The differences which result have their effect impersonally in the sub-human sphere. In the human sphere the differences, which are part of what we are, have to be recognised personally and decisions have to be made so that they are used rightly for the common good and not to oppress. To do so requires discrimination. But it is a self-evident truth for subjectivist liberals today, that discrimination is always a bad thing. Equality must mean identity. For people to be regarded as equal, they must be treated as if they were exactly the same. Discrimination, which used to call for the exercise of good judgement and taste, is now regarded as something negative and undesirable. Discrimination has become synonymous with victimization. In May of 1986 a policy document stated that "there is now widespread appreciation for deep-

seated reasons of history, philosophy, religion, language and even ignorance, we 'discriminate' and that totally to eradicate discrimination is a massive exercise." The variations and differences which scientists have demonstrated are at the heart of the evolutionary process are now rejected out of hand. We are given the prospect of a world of clones. Such an attitude fails to take account of the nature of the human person as a psychosomatic unity and disregards the fact that human beings are integrally related to the physical order. In one way, it is a kind of neo-Puritanism in which body and mind are divorced. In practice, it produces not freedom but a tyranny. The anti-discrimination attitude allows of no discrimination except against those who maintain that it is right and necessary to discriminate between what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what is normal and what is abnormal.

The example which I have taken illustrates the kind of thinking which is so prevalent today, but many others could be taken. It is most evident in the sphere of gender and sex. Nothing could be more evident than that we are created male and female, different but complementary. Yet that fact is not just minimised but dismissed as a most regrettable characteristic of human beings. As a result, marriage has come to be regarded as little more than providing the opportunity for sexual pleasure and to be abandoned when passion palls. Children are denied the love and security which they need. Fatherhood and motherhood are deprived of their real meaning. A doctor writing in a British newspaper has said that in great swathes of England, fatherhood is dead, replaced by serial step-fatherhood. Men and women can no longer be trusted to be faithful to their spouses which produces instability in society. Sexual relationships between those of the same sex are not merely regarded as permissible but are treated as the equivalent of marriage.

So I want now to consider how Charles Williams shows that one fundamental difference in human beings is both the basis of human life and society and the means by which man comes to know and experience God as love.

I want to talk about the splendour of chastity under those three headings which Williams gave - the defeat of all evils, the transmutation of flesh, and a very high and particular Joy. Before I do so I must say something about the sexual instinct

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and its place in human life - and I want to make it clear that though I speak as a Christian what I have to say is not something that only applies to Christians but applies to all human beings. Naturally, since I believe that the God whom I know in Christ is God who made the world, including our human nature, I believe that the Christian Gospel enables me to live in accordance with the human nature with which he created me.

Man, throughout the ages, has never been content to see sex as purely a biological function, designed to continue the human species and to give pleasure. A greater and deeper significance has always been sought. Indeed it can be argued that it is for this very reason, that at certain times, as for example the late days of the Roman Empire, or at the present time, men and women have sought pleasure in unrestrained sex, simply because they have failed to find that deeper significance in human life elsewhere.

For human beings sex is never a purely instinctive urge. The biological content is interwoven inextricably with the fact that human beings are people capable of entering into deep relationships with each other - capable of choosing, caring, suffering for one another and supremely of loving. This capacity they have to exercise in the light of the fact that they exist not as disembodied spirits, but as those who owe their existence to the fact that they are body, mind and spirit. They have to do so in the light of the fact that they are created as part of a world in which is to be found that mysterious quality of gender - of male and female of which sexuality is the concrete human experience. It is that quality, which like positive and negative in electricity, creates a fruitful tension because they can never be completely separated or completely identified.

It is this experience which in the language of the church has been used as a figure or symbol of our relationship to God. In the Old Testament, sexual love is used to express both the love of God for His people Israel and the relationship of the individual to God. In the New Testament and in the Church the marriage bond is used as a symbol of the bond between Christ and his Church, of the union of the Divine and human nature in Christ, of the Persons in the Trinity, of the Son's union with the Father. Such use of sexual love should inspire us to explore its splendour and glory, and should forbid us from taking a negative view.

But it is also true of our human existence that, and I quote, “where any pleasure is given human beings have what seems to be an ineradicable tendency to get it out of proportion and to substitute the pleasure for the joy to which it can lead. Then what was given to bring joy becomes a tyranny.” We live in an ambiguous world in which so much can be joy or misery. Fire can warm and provide energy - it can also destroy. Water is life-giving and cleansing - it can also drown. Wine, as the psalmist says, can make glad the heart of man. It can also lead to great misery in our society. So sexual experience can be the destruction of man’s true nature and of society, or it can enable us to understand and experience the love of God as it is expressed in His created world.

So we are faced with the question of how this instinctive, passionate urge is to be used in a creative way which is true to our nature, and chastity gives us this way. By chastity, we are enabled to act in a way which matches our nature as those who are mind, body and spirit.

Listen to what that holy genius, Austin Farrer, said in his book *Saving Belief*.

So many miserable reasons have been found for our behaving ourselves and by contrast the Biblical reason is so splendid. When St Paul was writing to the still half heathen Corinthians, all the reasons which had been current in worldly minds from then until now had already been found. The philosophers were saying passion is base, starve it; reason is noble, foster it; but the Bible has nothing to do with this cultural snobbery. Lawyers were laying it down that wives are property not to be purloined, and marriageable girls marketable commodities which are not to be spoilt. Moses may speak in this strain but Christ does not. Social utilitarians were pointing out how undesirable it is for fatherless children to get loose in the world. But the Bible never refers to this as a reason to be chaste. No, the faith of Christ takes its stand on the integrity of the human person. We are to move in one piece, body, heart and spirit and not to commit our body to the other until we commit our heart and soul in an entire and perma-

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nent union. And if anyone says, 'But I don't see it like that; feels to me that sexual union were a fair thing to play about with,' Christ says to such a person, 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me and you shall find rest for your soul. You haven't known what is really good; follow Me and you shall no longer walk in darkness but see a more brilliant glory of light.'

By chastity all "evils are defeated" - what did Charles Williams mean by that phrase? To what evils was he referring? Let me give you some examples. The evil of being the slave of your body - at the mercy of your passions. That is an evil because it violates your worth and dignity as a human person. It is an affront to animals to say that people who are dominated by their bodily passions behave like animals. Animals behave instinctively by their nature. They are meant to do so. Human beings are not, and when they behave like animals, they drop far lower. That is why those who live by their bodily passions alone so often become selfish, violent and untrustworthy. Another evil that chastity defeats is infidelity, which springs from that attitude which abandons others when they no longer serve your purposes and which itself springs from treating others as if they were but for our benefit and use. Chastity also delivers us from the tyranny of our emotions in our relationships. The marriage bond can set us free to grow in love for it binds us at the moment when things are difficult and spurs us to overcome the problems and strengthen the union, whereas a temporary relationship depends upon the partners keeping emotionally up to scratch all the time. When emotion wilts, there is no spur to love. Chastity defeats the evil of children being made to suffer for the emotional vagaries of those who are supposed to give them love and security in which to grow. Chastity enables us to love our neighbours and it binds society, for the chaste person is one who can be trusted with his neighbour or his neighbour's wife, without fear that he or she may snatch the one or the other for themselves.

By chastity that pair bonding between a man and a woman which is part of human nature is elevated above its biological function to be the means by which the partners can learn to experience that true love which is of God.

“The flesh is transmuted”. So Williams described the second glory of chastity. Why does he use the word ‘transmute’? Because he understood the glory of the body and will not use a word like ‘controlled’ or ‘disciplined’, lest he be thought to be implying that the flesh is merely to be denied or repressed. By chastity, the body becomes the instrument through which the whole person can act in love for another and can become the instrument of the love of God. Chastity does of course demand discipline. But that should not surprise us for to do anything really worthwhile demands discipline. The pianist, the ballet dancer, the sculptor, the engraver - all have to accept discipline not merely so that they can expertly perform their art as a matter of skill. It is also essential if they are to be able to use that skill as an expression of their mind and spirit - if the exercise of their hands and feet and eyes is to flow as part of their whole personality. Only so can they interpret and convey their own individual insight and imagination. Part of the process involves rejecting what seems natural - the easy and obvious way - and learning what others have learnt to be the only way to reach the heights and to express beauty, harmony and order.

So it is with those who would love, whether within the marriage bond or with a vocation to virginity. For there are those who are called so to devote themselves and their energies to one particular end, that their bodies must be transmuted to serve that end.

Finally, Charles Williams spoke of chastity bringing a “very high and particular joy”. What does he mean? Let me begin to answer that by reminding you that a kind of joy is given when we exercise our natural instincts and abilities such as: using the skill of our hands, as in making music, painting, exercising our bodies as in singing, dancing and games. An initial joy or pleasure is experienced simply by doing them and we are being false to our human nature if we seek to deny or minimise such joy. But it is the common experience that such initial experience palls after a while, and what was initially pleasurable can become wearisome and lose its power. Such is particularly the case if we indulge in them merely for the sake of the pleasure or joy as an end in itself, divorcing the bodily experience from our whole personality. Mere dabbling proves to be unfruitful. We need to acquire a deeper skill by the discipline to which I referred earlier, by which, in the first place, we learn the art, and secondly, the exercise of the art becomes an

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act of our whole being in which our physical skill is integrated with our mind and spirit.

It is then that we experience the very high and particular joy appropriate to the art we have acquired, whether it be the joy of interpreting a piece of music, of the controlled rhythm of rowing in an eight, of creating a work of art, or of making a finely designed and well made piece of furniture. We experience an inner satisfaction as we know that as persons we have achieved something which is truly worthwhile. Such is true of our sexual instinct. It is when we exercise it with chastity that we are enabled to experience the very high and particular joy. It comes when our sexual instinct is disciplined and directed in such a way that it is the instrument of our highest instincts of love, fidelity and truthfulness, whether by the exercise of that instinct by sexual intercourse within marriage or by the consecration of its power so that its energy is used in the exercise of our personality to other good purposes. We must also remember that chastity is also required within marriage for the proper expression of our sexual instinct.

The traditional Christian understanding of chastity demands ‘abstinence outside marriage and faithfulness within it’. For many, these demands are regarded as impossible. Those who take that line are only reflecting the attitude of some of those who heard our Lord. When He spoke of faithfulness to one’s partner in marriage, ‘if that is the position, it is better to refrain from marriage’ was their response. For something to be difficult does not make it wrong. What matters with something that is difficult and right is that we attempt to do it, even when we know we shall only do it imperfectly.

As C S Lewis wrote, “Faced with an optional question in an examination paper, one considers whether one can do it or not; faced with a compulsory question, one must do the best one can. You may get some marks for a very imperfect answer: you will certainly get none for leaving the question alone.”

Now, in what Charles Williams wrote about chastity, I do not think that he was speaking specifically as a Christian, though his faith was woven into every fibre of his being, and elsewhere he speaks of the even greater Joy which is experienced when the particular Joy of Chastity is given to God in Christ from whom it

comes. He is speaking of chastity as a quality which should be part of the life of every human being. It is part of that obedience to what he describes as the general principle of things “to the way we are made - to what we are as human beings and to the fact that discipline is the way to freedom and joy.”

It is one aspect of a greater and more universal law that is to be found in the whole of creation, both in man and nature - the law of giving to receive - of dying to live - of winter preceding spring - of the seed falling into the ground to die if it is to bear fruit.

It was of this law that Our Lord was speaking when He talked of losing His life to gain it. It was the law which He fulfilled supremely in His death on the Cross and His Resurrection. It is through life in Him that we are enabled to grow in and so reflect that true love which is of God.

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***Selected Poems* By Grevel Lindop**  
**Carcamet £9.95**

Reviewed by Glen Cavaliero

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Readers interested in English poetry of the past four decades should find much to enlighten and reward them in the work of Grevel Lindop: both in technique and subject-matter his poems reflect the more positive aspects of late 20th century imaginative sensibility. Precisely observant and verbally resourceful, they focus on a world of family life, of memories and personal mythologies; and their most resonant effects are achieved through the portrayal of specific incidents and scenes. Thus 'Hide and Seek' poignantly evokes a father's panic when his child momentarily disappears while on a country walk: the poem suggests more troubling depths than it ostensibly describes. Yet at the other extreme we find an exuberant celebratory poem, such as the enchanting account of the making of a summer pudding. Its beautifully controlled melodic line and blend of wit and a succulent tactility would have delighted Keats.

Full though they are of a strong feeling for the past and for specific landscapes, Lindop's poems reflect the current abandonment of any overarching metaphysic. Instead, by concentrating on a limited area of perception and experience, they seek to enlarge the particular into a matter of shared response: at one level they do what all genuine poetry does, but they then proceed to explore that level's imaginative potential for enlargement. Although the frequent use of first-person present-tense narrative (such as characterises poems of this kind) may tend to confine their significance to its immediate occasion, Lindop combats this inbuilt hazard through his use of place-names, historic artefacts and recognizable localities. For him, the world we ordinarily inhabit is never far away - witness the engaging description of an encounter with a bat's 'small continuous rumpling noise / like someone shaking and shaking a soft leather glove / that refuses to come right side out...'

Elsewhere a series of short poems illustrates the artistry of Bewick's woodcuts.

You peer, rapt, into the blank slice  
Of polished boxwood like a pool of ink  
Where such a scene floats clear and steadies, while  
With a repeated urging of the hand -  
Palm snug against the graver's handle -  
You coax it from the darkness, crystalline  
With long immersion in your memory.

This describes not only Bewick's methodology but Lindop's, one suspects, as well. And if, in common with much other late 20th century English verse, his poems' verbal textures are more compelling than their rhythms, that is in keeping with their tendency to stay earthed, approaching some continuously elusive revelation, only to shy away from it upon a dying fall. In doing so they provide excellent latter-day examples of that tentative romanticism definitively voiced by Edward Thomas over eighty years ago.

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Contributions to the Newsletter and the Web site are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- ◆ Submissions should be sent to the Editor.
- ◆ Submissions over 300 words should be made on floppy disc, typewritten paper, or by e-mail.
- ◆ Submissions under 300 words can be hand-written.
- ◆ Submissions on paper should be one-sided and double spaced.
- ◆ All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- ◆ The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission.

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