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## Preface: “A Balcony Perspective”

by Ashley Chu  
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The eleventh Biennial Lewis & Friends Colloquium at Taylor University in 2018 was one for the record books. Not only was it the largest Colloquium yet (with 150+ attendees), but it also brought the greatest number of “Young Inklings” and featured the first-ever presentations of the Neuhouser Award. Oh, and there was an awesome Saturday night concert on a balcony. We dreamed up an ambitious, scholarly, and convivial program – and it was a big dream. To see it come together (with all its flourish and haste) was incredible. And maybe somewhat miraculous. Ultimately, it was another significant step toward fulfilling the Center’s mission: to support Inklings-related scholarship and to encourage and nurture the next generation of Inklings scholars.

To emphasize the Colloquium’s theme, “The Faithful Imagination,” artistic elements were woven throughout the program. D.S. Martin, one of our keynote speakers, became our “poet in residence,” sharing his own Lewis-inspired works and hosting a late-night poetry reading by several of our attendees, sponsored by Wipf and Stock Publishers. You can read Martin’s sonnet and clever limericks about the Colloquium in his reflection on page 412. In addition, two visual artists, Jeremie Riggelman and Emily Austin, exhibited and discussed their Inklings-inspired art. And, of course, we had that balcony concert. The nearly one hundred essays and creative pieces presented during those few days were both intellectual and imaginative as they explored the Inklings and Friends in relationship to the Colloquium’s theme.

Our keynote presenters – Joe Christopher, Crystal Downing, Crystal Hurd, D.S. Martin, Stephen Prickett, and Charlie Starr – were insightful and invigorating. We enjoyed their scholarly presentations as well as hearing their personal stories during the keynote panel. We especially appreciated their full participation throughout the Colloquium, which enhanced the friendly, scholarly culture we strive to achieve. We also proudly presented the Neuhouser Awards to Joe Christopher and Rachel Johnson, who were recognized for their exceptional contribution to Inklings studies.

## THE FAITHFUL IMAGINATION

In addition to our many faithful Friends from previous colloquia, this year we welcomed quite a few newcomers as presenters and participants, specifically a sizeable group of undergraduate and graduate students. To that end, we hosted a first-ever “Young Inklings” pre-conference workshop led by Charlie Starr, utilizing some of the rare manuscripts in the Center’s Brown Collection. Many students were initially attracted to the Colloquium by the undergraduate critical and creative writing competitions. In fact, several award-winning student contributions are published in this volume. Comments during the keynote panel (of which an edited transcript is included on page 364) underscored our collective delight in welcoming these new(er) scholars as new Friends.

You may have noticed that this volume is not titled *Inklings Forever*. We adopted the Colloquium theme as the title for the volume in order better to reflect its contents. In addition, we realized that a revised strategy for publishing the proceedings was necessary due to both the size and quality of the Colloquium. Our goal was to publish thirty essays that both made a valuable contribution to the field and were as representative as possible of the Colloquium’s content. For the essays, please note that authors have used either MLA or Chicago Manual of Style, and while we have done our best to ensure that each essay’s style and documentation is logical and consistent, we have made no attempt to normalize all essays. Thus, for example, some authors use footnotes and others use parenthetical references.

The contributions in this volume offer discerning and intriguing responses to the question moderator Joe Ricke asked the keynote panel: “What’s going on today in Inklings studies?” Several essays consider C.S. Lewis in relation to other, sometimes surprising, writers. Some delve deeper than usual into the influence that individuals such as George MacDonald and Joy Davidman had on Lewis. Others consider the significance of nature, walking, family, and war related to the Faithful Imagination. As always, there are a great variety of treasures from a wide range of perspectives.

One new component included in these proceedings are the reflections, some of which we requested and others which were sent to us unprompted following the Colloquium. Whenever we would receive one, we would read it out loud and smile as we shared in the joy of others who echoed our parting sentiment, “Wow, that was amazing.” We enjoyed them so much that we wanted to share some of them with you, even designating one as a foreword (Crystal Hurd) and another as an afterword (Sarah O’Dell).

## Preface

Finally, many words of thanks. Planning and executing a full and vibrant program is not easy, and we happily welcome the “problem” of growth. We are very grateful for the other members on the Colloquium Planning Committee (Dan Bowell, Anne Cooper, Kaylen Dwyer, and Michael Hammond), as well as those who volunteered (or “were volunteered”) to ensure that everything was ready and ran smoothly. We echo the many positive comments from participants about how welcoming and helpful our team members were. Student Kaylen Dwyer ('18) is to be especially commended for her excellent design of the Colloquium program while simultaneously completing her final semester of college. We also wish to thank the judges of our undergraduate writing competition, Julie Moore (creative writing) and Edwin Woodruff Tait (critical essay). Many other groups and individuals associated with Taylor University worked hard to make the Colloquium both enjoyable and comfortable. We are thankful for all of them.

As strange as it sounds, I must make special mention of The Balrog. You see, dear reader, The Balrog was the Celtic/classical-fusion trio that enchanted all of us during the reception on Saturday night (and following three days of very tightly packed sessions). It was a time to relax and bask in the beauty and the music and the Friends and the conversation all around us. Nearly all the responses we received remarked how meaningful and magical that evening was, especially the feeling in the presence of so many Friends singing “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” It was “shiny.”

Finally, I want to thank my co-editor and friend, Joe Ricke. It is an honor and a joy to work and serve together in such an exciting field of study, utilizing our individual skills and experiences. When, in the bittersweet glow at the end of the Colloquium, Joe asked if I would be willing to co-edit the proceedings, I said yes without hesitation. I knew it would challenge me, but I also knew it would be fun. Professional collaboration is not necessarily an expression of friendship. Ours is.