

# CLEAR ETHER!

Personal-genzine of Samuel Edward Konkin III for distribution in Amateur Press Associations (with companion commentzine . . . AND ON GREEN!), for trades, locs, artwork and even subscription. Address all correspondence to New Libertarian Enterprises, Box 1748, Long Beach, CA 90801; Personal: SEK3. Volume Four, Number 5

## To The Very End: C.S. LEWIS *An Appreciation by Samuel Edward Konkin III*

One can appreciate Clive Staples Lewis in many ways: a Christian testimonial, a literary criticism, a sercon science fiction review, a fannish SF appreciation, a philosophical analysis or a psychological biography. But as CSL taught me—among many other things—one should write for one's audience and so, in this personal fanzine (*perzine*), I'll aim accordingly at the likely audience. This appreciation was triggered off by comments to me in various APAs, usually some variant of "What do you see in Lewis, anyways?"

I've answered that question verbally to many members of the New York and now Southern California Lewis Societies, both which I joined about a year, give or take, after their respective foundings, and in both of which I've been an active member for five years. Their questioning has been from a theist, conservative (give or take a certain enjoyable liberal priest I met) viewpoint. Nonetheless, the answer is roughly the same as that I'll give to my mostly atheist, more or less libertarian-leaning fen in the APAs.

Lewis is impinging to an ever-greater degree on the consciousness of the world-at-large, that is, outside of

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### Final Issue

With this issue, Volume Four of **CLEAR ETHER!** ends. It's gone through various incarnations, and will reincarnate at least once more. But Volume 5 will be limited to comments to *APA-NYU*, of considerably less general interest than the five issues in this volume. So the mailing of **CE!** terminates with this issue. Those still wanting to read more general articles and stories with the **CLEAR ETHER!** sense of life can find it occasionally from this author and others in his latest volume of **New Libertarian** magazine, available for \$15 a year (5 issue) from NLE (address on white-on-black logo). And you may get an announcement of a certain *Solarian Outlaw* if certain concepts nucleate into flesh from the heady atmosphere of Noreascon II . . . —SEK3

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the Christian community, most recently through the televising of his *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe*. Yet only four or five years ago my objectivist friends who had dismissed all thought emanating from Christian sources as irrational mysticism had never heard of him. (Secondary evidence I have indicates Ayn Rand herself has.) But even so, what has become Lewis' early public image is that of Christian conservatism. Since I'm an atheist and anarchist, some have noted an incongruity. Perhaps, I'm being perverse?

Frankly, I love CSL. Lewis defines four kinds of love: *eros*, *philia*, *storge*, and *agape*. Now a Freudian could possibly construe something erotic here (perhaps based on our mutual oral fixation with pipes?), but I doubt anyone else could. Surely *philia*, the love of friends, applies. Lewis had a *fannish* mentality; perhaps one of these days if I'm not beaten to it, I'll write on that at length. Let me point out here that he was the sparkplug of the Inklings, a group of Oxford-oriented intellectuals who gathered around in a pub and read their science fiction, fantasy and other manuscripts to each other amid beer (*bheer*, we fen would say) and joviality. Nor did his good fellowship limit itself to an age group or academic profession or even by sex. (Although the Inklings proper were all male, students and professors, Lewis corresponded with worthy female minds, such as Dorothy Sayers.) His best friend and the strongest personality in the Inklings until his death in 1945 was Charles Williams, a breveted academic "for the duration."

Lewis also loved argument, as is well recorded by accounts of the Inklings, and was a strongly participating member of a Socratic Club for debating. And while "activism" hadn't been invented, here's what a young student member (a most ungrateful type, who was clearly "bent" as Lewis used the term in his SF trilogy, or in today's vernacular, *twisted*) had to say of

him: "For, of course, I shall give a quite false picture of Lewis and his friends if I represent them as merely reactionary, putting all their energies into being *against* things. Far from it; this was 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. Now that Williams was dead, the two most active members were Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien."†

There are too many variables to confirm or deny that CSL and I would be friends should we have met in person. Yet Lewis himself counted friendship through books, and by his own criterion, through his books I found him a fast friend indeed. He never let me down.

Let me expand on that, and tie it in with the *storge* (parental) type of love. Without getting into much autobiography, I'll just admit that CSL got to me at a tender age, and certainly past whatever "watchful dragons" (his delightful phrase signifying prejudicial blocks) I had. A voracious comic book reader from the age of four, I was exposed to *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe* at nine years old and found him in the library as I got into non-illustrated prose soon after. I was actually waiting for the arrival of the last of the Narnia Chronicles as they were published and acquired by my Edmonton library.

Later, around 14 or so, as I was turned on to SF and had been devouring the classics of the field for a year or so, I discovered *Out Of The Silent Planet*. I actually did not realize this was the same author as that of Narnia, but had connected them by the time I finished the Ransom trilogy. Perhaps Lewis' subtle influence had something to do with my budding young conservatism, but Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson, Barry Goldwater and William Buckley had more visible effects.

Perhaps Lewis' parental role as unwitting mentor is clearer in philosophy. Whatever the implications of his Anglican conservatism ought to be, Lewis was educated by a stern, (Classical) Liberal rationalist and he is absolutely committed to self-consistency and Reason. His concept of God inhabits a self-consistent, rational universe and will brook no nonsense on that score. Thus, as I said, he never let me down.

If Lewis had a grasp of metaphysics to thaw out an objectivist's cold dismissal, his sweeping embrace of Natural Law would surprise a Rothbard by joy. The first non-fiction work I read of his was *The Abolition of Man* with his concept of the *Tao* (redefined from the Oriental to mean a general summation of universally-held law). Lewis stuck to a rationalist, natural-law exposition in his Christian apologetics, so even *Mere*

*Christianity and God In The Dock* not only held us through their arguments but often thrilled me with their elegant logic and clever examples and analogies. They held me, I must add, but did not convince—convert—me.

Do we not, then, share *agape*? For the benefit of atheists, especially Christians, I still have not been presented with convincing evidence of a supreme being's being. So if only such an entity will serve as the recipient of *agape*, then it's absent. Others may not be so demanding, and many (such as neo-objectivists of various hues and stripes) who place Principles at their values apex rather than gods will understand how they may claim a certain shared adoration with CSL: the universe, how it is constructed, how it works, how Man thinks and works, and how one comprehends it all.

I share the joy of greeting his *eldila* and hiss his Unman; the Great Dance has my imagination caught in its rhythm; I too will be terrified wonderfully should Aslan manifest himself to me. CSL and I revere the same Throne, though he may see it occupied and I still await sign of any King.

My burning obsession is libertarianism of the purest sort, as my readers and all but my most casual acquaintances know well. And the term, in its most modern meaning, had barely gained any currency in North America and none in Great Britain at Lewis' death in 1963. Thus it would be clearly unfair to call CSL a libertarian.

Ah, but there was nothing of the *statist* in Lewis! Nowhere does he show any worship of the State; in fact, his almost total ignoring of politics is a profound libertarian statement itself. And while he will rein in his self-confessed individualism should his Church require Membership (he has an essay on just that subject), he shows no inclination to do so for the secular collectivity. True, he bends his knee to his beloved throne of England, but his view is the common British constitutionalist one in which the occupant is incidental to the idea. I surmise with what evidence I can muster, CSL would not be loathe to consider a reigning monarch with no ruling Parliament and certainly no bureaucracy (see his devastating portrayal of the N.I.C.E. in *That Hideous Strength*).

My secondary obsession is, as the title of this fanzine is meant to indicate, the heroic or Romantic spirit in literature and other arts, especially as portrayed in SF and fantasy. Here I find considerable congruence with Lewis. Let me pick up from *Wait* where we last left off:

"While Lewis attacked on a wide front, with broad casts, popular-theological books, children's stories, romances, and controversial literary criticism, Tolkien concentrated on the writing of his colossal *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. His readings of each successive installment were eagerly received, for 'romance' was a pillar of this whole structure. The literary household gods

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† John Wain, *Sprightly Running: Part of an Autobiography* (1962; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), p. 181. (I am indebted to Ken Futch of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society for finding this quote.)

were George MacDonald, William Morris (selectively), and an almost forgotten writer named E.R. Eddison, whose work seemed to me to consist of a meaningless proliferation of fantastic incident. All these writers had one thing in common: they *invented*. Lewis considered 'fine fabling' an essential part of literature, and never lost a chance to push any author, from Spenser to Rider Haggard, who could be called a romancer. Once, unable to keep silence at what seemed to me a monstrous partiality, I attacked the whole basis of this view; a writer's task, I maintained, was to lay bare the human heart, and this could not be done if he were continually taking refuge in the spinning of fanciful webs. Lewis retorted with a theory that, since the Creator had seen fit to build a universe and set it in motion, it was the duty of the human artist to create as lavishly as possible in his turn. The romancer, who invents a whole world, is worshipping God more effectively than the mere realist who analyses that which lies about him. Looking back across fourteen years, I can hardly believe that Lewis said anything so manifestly absurd as this, and perhaps I misunderstood him; but that, at any rate, is how my memory reports the incident."‡

Would a Lewisian architect build any less a glorious edifice than a Randian Howard Roark? Is not Lewis commended, from the lips of a Naturalism-possessed enemy, for unrelenting Romanticism? New Wavers beware; here lies Old Wave's paladin!

As *Of Other Worlds* makes clear, Lewis was not merely a writer of fantasy and borderline SF (borderline, some would say, because of the theistic element, though since Lewis believed that element factual, I would contend it is hard SF), but a true *fan*. He read the pulps, joyfully met and corresponded with his fellow pros, and kept up with the field. It is unfortunate that he was to be granted Guest-of-Honour (GoH) status at an SF con only posthumously, but I am convinced he would have accepted it in full spirit, if not able to do so in person.

Lewis was, throughout his life, *Surprised By Joy* (title of his autobiography), and I have continually been Surprised By Lewis. As my world-view has grown and integrated, I am constantly finding that Lewis trod, in his own way, ground on which I have freshly discovered. My discovery of Natural Law principles and rationalism were quickly confirmed by subsequent readings of CSL; my disliking and condemnation of cliques and in-groups and purges in my Movement were followed by discovering his "Inner Ring" essay; and even my being turned on to Revisionist History followed my noticing his views on wartime fervour and Germanophobia. Nearly every meeting of a Lewis Society brings up some aspect of Lewis' analysis with which I find myself in joyful

‡ *ibid.*, p. 182.

recognition and concurrence.

I have, thus, every reason to believe I will continue to be so "Surprised By Lewis" as long as I find more of him and about him to read and discover. He is with me, and shall be I feel, to the Very End. —SEK3

[I have been informed just before press time I am to be the speaker at the first Long Beach Science Fiction Convention which honours C.S. Lewis as Professional Guest of Honour—Pro GoH. An advance advertisement for this convention is on the back page of this zine.]

### Most Recommended Books by C.S. Lewis:

The Narnia Chronicles:

*The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe*  
*Prince Caspian*

*The Voyage Of The Dawn Treader*

*The Silver Chair*

*A Horse And His Boy*

*The Magician's Nephew*

*The Last Battle*

The Ransom (Space) Trilogy:

*Out Of The Silent Planet*

*Perelandra* (also published as *Voyage To Venus*)

*That Hideous Strength*

Adult Fantasy:

*The Great Divorce*

*Till We Have Faces*

*Pilgrim's Regress* (Allegory)

Non-Fiction

*Abolition of Man*

*Experiment In Criticism* (literary)

*God In The Dock* (not just theological stuff)

*Introduction To Sixteenth Century Literature*

(See especially the fascinating introduction with the comparison of 16th Century Protestantism as a movement to 20th Century Marxism! *Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose!*)

Science Fiction/Non-Fiction

*Of Other Worlds*

Lewis Book By Personal Friends:

*Lewis At The Breakfast Table* by James Como ('79)

Forthcoming book on Narnia by Paul Ford (1980?)

## ANTIPONTIFICATIONS

### ERA Again!

Long-time readers of **CLEAR ETHER!** will remember Volume Three, Number One, which had a dubious distinction of being read by Harlan Ellison at Iguanacon as evidence of his vilification by the fannish press for his stand on ERA. One of the many things I pointed out about the stand (pseudo-boycotting Arizona where the Worldcon was situated and of which he was Pro GoH) was that he was politicizing fandom and I'm ag'in politics—*especially* in my precious fandom!

Now an ad has just appeared in this year's Worldcon Noreascon II's Progress Report #4, which begins:

"Should the ERA boycott be an issue in the 1982 Worldcon Site Selection? We think not. Of course we support ERA. But we feel that the boycott is primarily aimed at those organizations which have paid professional meeting planners and staffs; such organizations have freedom of choice between cities and their conventions are pretty much the same no matter where they are held. Fandom is different. The main difference is that our conventions are run by unpaid volunteers who are limited by circumstance to using facilities near them..."

Enough! That is *not* the main difference between fandom and the others. Nor does that matter a tinker's damn. While supposedly removing ERA from consideration from voting on this year's Worldcon choice for 1982 between Chicago and Detroit, it has done nothing of the sort.

As I've said, I wouldn't lift a finger to help *any* law; and I don't care if the ERA passes for if it does, the disillusionment it will create by *not* changing anything will radicalise many feminists and libertarianism can but benefit from that. But *that's* not the issue.

The issue is, and remains, that Fandom Shall Not Be A Political Battlefield. Let's make that our First Commandment (or Second, or Third, or Pick-A-Number). This mamby-pamby excuse will not do; the reason that "the ERA boycott [should not] be an issue in the 1982 Worldcon Site Selection" is that we couldn't care less. And I mean it: if the Worldcon's in Berlin and they're allegedly persecuting Jews; if the Worldcon's in Moscow and they invade Afghanistan; if the Worldcon's in Israel and they're allegedly burning Palestinians in their homes; if the Con's on the Moon and it's in revolt—Politics end at the Con Registration desk.

That's not to say anybody can't talk about anything

they want at a Con. Far be it for me or anyone else to imply any *restriction* on freedom of anything. And any *one* who wishes not to go anywhere (such as a Afghani to Moscow or a Jew to Berlin or an Arab to Tel Aviv), fine. But a Con is—should be—a *site* and nothing more; that is to say, a Con is a framework without content (other than scientificfictional).

I shall do the Chicago Bid the honour of ignoring the ad on their behalf and vote (if I choose) on the traditional basis. But let ConComs beware; the next ad I see slipping in politics in the name of ignoring a political basis for site selection will guarantee *my* opposition. —SEK3

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