

TWU Institute and Centre Review

Date: *due April 9, 2018*

Centre/Institute: **Inklings Institute of Canada**

Director(s): **Monika Hilder and Stephen Dunning**

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Members of the advisory board: Christopher Morrissey, Holly Nelson, Monika Hilder, Stephen Dunning

A: Executive Summary

Inklings Institute of Canada (IIC), led by faculty members in the Department of English and Creative Writing, is an interdisciplinary research effort that formalizes, strengthens and advances TWU's contribution to international research on the works of the Oxford Inklings group—including C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, and J.R.R. Tolkien, as well as friends such as Dorothy L. Sayers, and their literary mentors, earlier writers such as George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton. Public interest in the Inklings has never been greater as academics and non-academics alike are asking how these Christian authors encourage us to respond to our own historical/cultural context.

Since our inception in 2013, IIC has enjoyed significant success. Our activities have advanced **TWU's mission** as an international centre of scholarly excellence which generates innovative knowledge. Institute members have led discussion within academic and religious communities, as well as in the public sphere, both on TWU campus and nationally and internationally. We have published academic and general readership books and articles, and have been interviewed in the media, including CBC Radio IDEAS.

Inklings Institute uniquely combines two of **TWU's Strategic Research Plans**: 1) Religion, Culture and Ethics; and 4) Aesthetic Expression and Interpretation. In the first research strand, "Religion, Culture and Ethics," we have in particular focused on a) the formative role of religion in the shaping of society and culture; i) spiritual values and artistic creativity; and j) science and religion in dialogue. Our work is inseparable from the fourth research strand, "Aesthetic Expression and Interpretation," as we investigate the implications of the literary achievements of these authors. The following events are highlights of our success:

- **October 2, 2014: "The Inklings and Psychoanalysis."**

Psychology professor **Chuck MacKnee**, English professors **Holly Nelson, Monika Hilder, Stephen Dunning**, and MAIH student **Mr. Nicolas Noble** gave presentations on various Inklings writers and their views on Freud and psychoanalysis. Special Guest, Damon Calderwood, Actor for C.S. Lewis in *Freud's Last Session*, made a Guest Appearance.

- **November 3, 2015 - "Owen Barfield on Idolatry."** TWU professors **Laurel Gasque** discussed, "My Friendship with Owen Barfield." **Dr. Grant Havers** presented "Barfield's Biblical Critique of Idolatry"; **Dr. Bob Doede and Dr. Stephen Dunning** presented "Nietzsche and Barfield: Overcoming Idolatry."
- **September 28 – 30, 2016 "Arts & The Inklings: VERGE 2016,"** TWU conference. An international joint conference of the Inklings Institute of Canada and the School of the Arts, Media + Culture, Trinity Western University. **Over 30 presenters and 300 in attendance. Keynote Speaker: Dr. Michael Ward, University of Oxford.** In our cross-disciplinary conference we had a strong representation of academic papers as well as performative practice (music, theatre, story-telling), all illustrating the transformative impact of the Oxford Inklings in fostering spiritual values through artistic creativity. Chapel Talks by our keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Ward, commented on the legacy of C.S. Lewis, further underscored the vital role of faith-based imagination for human flourishing.
- **March 8, 2017: "Mythology and Science: Intersections."** Dept. of English/Inklings Institute partnered with SFU's Philosophers' Café' for an open discussion of C.S. Lewis's observations in "The Funeral of a Great Myth" that the imaginative story (myth) of evolution predated the biological theory, his ideas on the reasons for the appeal of the myth, and the nature of myth, narrative, meta-narrative, the philosophy of modern science, and various ways of knowing. Participants included TWU professors **Arnold Sikkema, Christopher Morrissey, Holly Nelson, Paul Brown, Sara Pearson, Steve Nicholle, and Vic Cavalli**; SFU coordinator, **Professor Meguido Zola**; TWU alumni **Benjamin Linkewich Britton, Ph.D. candidate in chemistry at SFU and Richard Bergen, Ph.D. candidate in English at UBC.**
- **Tuesday, February 13, 2018: Valentine's Café co-sponsored with Gender Studies Institute: "C.S. Lewis on Love, Eros, and Friendship"**
With MAIH candidate **Joshua Randhawa** and **Dr. Jason Lepojärvi scholar-in-residence at Regent College** discussing contemporary views of love in light of Lewis's insights.

In the five-year period 2013 - 2018 Inklings Institute has hosted **sixteen TWU-campus events** open to the public, several of which have featured the work of **undergraduate and graduate TWU students**, and various **off-campus activities (workshops, presentations, media—12 by co-directors Monika Hilder and Stephen Dunning)**. In doing so we have **partnered with SAMC, Gender Studies Institute, and SFU's Philosophers' Café.** We have organized and participated in **six conference panels** through **Christianity and Literature Study Group at Congress**, one of which was co-sponsored with **ACCUTE (Association of Canadian Colleges and University Teachers of English)**. Locations for these and other conferences that Inklings members

have presented at include Ottawa, Calgary, Toronto, Vancouver, Michigan, Indiana, Texas, London UK, Oxford UK, Cambridge UK, Glasgow UK, and Romania. Our conference work over the years has attracted the attention of **Cambridge Scholars Press**, which has invited us to submit a book proposal. We have already begun collecting completed book chapters from members, and while the project has been delayed due to some set-backs, we intend to focus on this in the next few years.

In sum, Inklings Institute has enjoyed a lively and successful first five years. We have nurtured TWU undergraduate and graduate students, regularly involved the general public in our inquiry into the Inklings' legacy and its value for our culture, and advanced scholarship through academic conference presentations and journal and book publications.

B: Research plan for the next 5 years

In the next five years, 2018 – 2023, Inklings Institute looks forward to ongoing collaboration at the local, national, and international level. We will focus on continuing to offer timely **on-campus events** that will appeal to students, faculty, and the general public alike. These will be topical in nature, such as “psychoanalysis” in 2014, “modern science and myth” in 2017, and “romantic love” in 2018, as well as author-focused events (such as Owen Barfield in 2015). In **2018-19** we are planning for events such as “The Inklings’ treatment of the Christian Artist” and “Dorothy L. Sayers.”

For some of these events (and one off-campus event), we have successfully **partnered with SAMC (2016), SFU’s Philosophers’ Café (2017), Gender Studies Institute (2018), and Christianity and Literature Study Group under ACCUTE (ongoing)**. We will continue to investigate ways in which to partner with these and other groups.

To date we are **funded** through the Department of English and Creative Writing for day-to-day operations. For the VERGE 2016 conference we applied for a Reid Trust grant (successful) as well as for a SSHRC Connections grant (not successful) and a TWU internal grant (not successful). In the first five years the biggest challenge has been to secure additional funding, and we will continue to consider various grant application possibilities.

In addition to designing on-campus events, we are committed to developing **off-campus events for the general public**, such as the SFU’s Philosophers’ Café in June 2017 and workshops at Regent College (2015) and at St. Matthews’ Anglican Church in Abbotsford (2015, 2016). Several of our

members, **Stephen Dunning, Malcolm Guite, Kirsten Jeffrey Johnson, and Michael Ward**, have participated in an exciting **upcoming documentary film: “The Fantasy Makers”**, part of The Faith in Imagination Series, a three-part series filming throughout 2017 – 2019 (**A Refuge 31 & Vision Video** (USA); Canadian Broadcaster: **Super Channel**; Directed by Andrew Wall):

<http://www.refuge31.com/project/the-fantasy-makers-faith-in-imagination/>.

Our biggest project in the next five years promises to be the essay collection with **Cambridge Scholars Press**, which has invited us to submit a book proposal, as mentioned above. We have already begun collecting completed book chapters from members, and while the project has been delayed due to some set-backs, we intend to focus on this in the next few years. The chapters will reflect a rich array of papers given through Inklings Institute conferences over the years.

We are continuing to advance scholarship through conference papers and journal and book publications. For instance, *Informing the Inklings*, a collection of papers on George MacDonald’s influence given at Magdalen College, Oxford, 2014, including **Monika Hilder’s** chapter, “St. George and Jack the Giant-Killer: As ‘Wise as Women Are’?”, co-edited by Mike Partridge and **IIC member Kirstin Jeffrey-Johnson**, is scheduled to appear with Winged Lion Press in 2018.

A major part of our work is in **training our undergraduate and graduate students in Inklings scholarship**. This begins with teaching Inklings-and-friends’ texts in our first year courses (such as **Monika Hilder’s ENGL 103** with MacDonald, Lewis, and Tolkien, and **Jan Lermite’s ENGL 104** with Dorothy L. Sayers). Our upper-level course offerings that feature some of the Inklings authors or are solely focused on them continue to be very popular: Children’s Literature (ENGL 391/591); Fantasy Literature (ENGL 392/593); The Inklings and Friends (ENGL 390/594); The Writings of C.S. Lewis (ENGL 650); and in the past, Studies in the Writings of C.S. Lewis (ENGL 390/594) and Studies in the Writings of George MacDonald (ENGL 390/594). Through these courses we foster both further academic research and its dissemination as well as artistic creation and the performance of such.

We are interested in **developing additional Inklings courses** and possibly in **developing a minor in Inklings Studies**. Our undergraduate and graduate students have on occasion developed conference papers, presented at our on-campus events, and published their work developed in our courses. In the next several years some of our **TWU alumni**, now teachers at **Evergreen Christian School in Bellingham, Nate Beede, Joy Hinds, and Dan Frlan**, will be involved with developing a “Narnia culture” at their

school fostered through the work of our **IIC member, Dr. Mark Pike at Leeds University**, with his project “The Narnian Virtues Character Education.” Others in the Lower Mainland are likewise considering the same. All of these efforts allow student and alumni training and interaction with leading academics.

Our proposed activities for the next five years will continue to advance **TWU’s mission** as an international centre of scholarly excellence in the Christian liberal arts, and as Canada’s centre for Inklings Studies in particular. The contributions of the Inklings with their friends and mentors have ongoing societal impact, and the work of IIC allows us to address research questions of vital importance for a Christian worldview. As mentioned above, Inklings Institute uniquely combines two of **TWU’s Strategic Research Plans**: 1) Religion, Culture and Ethics; and 4) Aesthetic Expression and Interpretation. This combination allows us to explore the transformational potential of the arts for contemporary society. The Inklings provide a natural focus for any such discussion given both the extraordinary influence of their work on our collective imaginations and the fact that all these writers directly and indirectly addressed precisely this issue in many of their works. It would not be overstating the case that the Inklings authors have challenged our materialistic technocratic society with a Christian vision of hope as no other authors in our day. Through their academic and creative writings, they have crossed barriers between religious and secular thinking that few have thought to cross. Moreover, their work breaks down barriers between various disciplines and positions within the academy as well as those between the academy and the public, and so they still have much to say to us today.

C: Budget

We expect to operate on a budget of \$400 for 2018-19 funded through the Department of English and Creative Writing. In addition, our financial business plan for the next five years includes the possibility of looking for donors as well as investigating grant application opportunities.