Lewis in the Dock (Part 2): A Brief Review of the Secular Media's Coverage of the 50th Anniversary of C.S. Lewis's Death

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In 1999, I presented a paper here at this colloquium on the secular print media’s response to the 1998 C.S. Lewis Centenary Celebration. In 2014, it seems only natural to do a similar paper on the secular media’s coverage of the 50th anniversary of Lewis’s death which also included the dedication in Poets’ Corner in Westminster Abbey of a memorial stone in his honor. The number of articles again abounds, even more than in 1998.

This paper will consider articles by syndicated literary, news and religious columnists from secular newspapers and periodicals; internet postings by public TV and secular cable news websites; print, audio and video coverage by the BBC; plus, one article posted on Aljazeera and another one that is a large multi-color section in a Delaware newspaper. Therefore, I will not be sharing any reports or opinions from any non-secular sources, any Lewis-related conferences or any news site or blog who are themselves directly promoting the life and works of C.S. Lewis.

When we seek merely to consider the number of reports made by the secular media about both the 50th anniversary of Lewis’s death and his being honored at Poets’ Corner, I found, in my own search on the internet and through library accessible databases, close to 200 separate secular accounts plus that many more that are non-secular or directly connected to C.S. Lewis. Those articles published in syndication or reposted on someone’s blog were only counted once.

Six Syndicated Columnists Who Wrote About C.S. Lewis and the 50th Anniversary of His Death

I begin my review of the responses with six syndicated columnists. Four of these – Cal Thomas, Michael Gerson, Ross Douthat, and Eric Schulzke are weekly news columnists. The other two – Sarah Pulliam Bailey and Terry Mattingly focus more on the religious side of the news. All six are published in both national and regional secular news outlets.

Thomas, also a broadcast journalist, writes for the Tribune Media Services and is published in over 500 newspapers. Gerson, possibly better-known as a former speech writer for President George W. Bush and as a political commentator on the “PBS NewsHour” and “Face the Nation”, has a twice-a-week op-ed column for the Washington Post Writers Group. Ross Douthat, formerly a senior editor at The Atlantic, has, since 2009, been a regular op-ed columnist for the New York Times. Columnist Eric Schulzke, writes on national politics and policy for the Deseret News in Salt Lake City. Sarah Pulliam Bailey, formerly online editor for Christianity Today, is a national correspondent for the Religion News Service (RNS), covering faith, politics and culture. Terry Mattingly, a journalism professor,

When we focus on the headlines of each of these columnists, three of them – Thomas, Schulzke, and Douthat - chose to highlight each of these famous men dying on the same day, November 22, 1963, fifty years ago.

In Thomas's opinion “Lewis remains perhaps the 20th century's most towering intellectual practitioner of the Christian faith”. From an older generation, Thomas views Mere Christianity as “perhaps his most influential work”. He closes stating that

“some people long for another C.S. Lewis, but the original should suffice for at least another 50 years.”

- Thomas, Cal.

“Kennedy, Huxley and Lewis”. The Chicago Tribune (November 15, 2013)
http://www.chicagotribune.com/sns-201311151030--tms--cthomastq--b-a20131115-20131115.0.381216.column

and World Radio
https://soundcloud.com/world-news-group/the-influence-of-c-s-lewis

and Louisville Courier Journal

and Bowling Green Daily News
http://www.bgdailynews.com/opinion/commentary/kennedy-huxley-and-lewis/article_1574dd54-f0b0-5eeb-acd6-63bf1aaddb7.html

and Omaha World Herald
http://www.omaha.com/article/20131126/NEWS08/131129110/1677

and Townhall
http://townhall.com/columnists/calthomas/2013/11/14/kennedy-huxley-and-lewis-n1745883

Schulzke reviews their basic beliefs, how each died and also includes several quotes from their biographers and friends, noting that “their three divergent paths remain compelling models to millions of skeptics and seekers alike.” He ends by stating that

“reasonable minds may differ in weighing the spiritual paths of Huxley and Lewis. Few, it seems, are asking the same question about John F. Kennedy.”

- Schulzke, Eric.

“50 years ago today, Kennedy, Huxley and Lewis followed different paths to the grave”. Deseret News (Salt Lake City) (November 22, 2013)

and The Steuben Courier Advocate (NY)
http://www.steubencourier.com/article/20131121/NEWS/311219990/10122/LIFESTYLE

and Peoria Journal Star (IL)

Douthat suggests that “pausing amid [November's] Kennedy-anniversary coverage to remember the two British-born writers offers a useful way to think about the J.F.K. mythos as well.” His observes that “the impulses driving the Kennedy nostalgists are the same ones animating Lewis’s Puddleglum (from The Silver Chair) and Huxley’s Savage (a character at the end of Brave New World). All three viewpoints, he writes, have a desire

“for grace and beauty, for icons and heroes, for a high stakes dimension to human affairs that a consumerist, materialist civilization can flatten and exclude.”

- Douthat, Ross.
Writing on Lewis’s 115th birthday and looking back fifty years to the date of his death and to the honors he received at Westminster Abbey this past year, Mattingly states that “the entire Lewis canon is as popular as ever” noting that “researchers struggle to total the numbers” that are somewhere over 100 million copies sold, just for the Narnia books. Yet on the other hand, he writes that

“many academics and liberal religious leaders still see Lewis as “far too popular to be taken seriously.”

- Mattingly, Terry.

Gerson turns to Lewis as what he calls “our guide to the good life”. To do this he tells us that Lewis does two things: first, his writings help us to deal with what Lewis calls “the poison of subjectivism”, helping us realize the need and importance of an “objective standard of good”; and second, his writings also help us realize that

“our deepest, unsatisfied desires for joy, meaning and homecoming are not cruel jokes of nature. They are meant for fulfillment.” And for Lewis this was found in Christianity.

- Gerson, Michael.

“C.S. Lewis, our guide to the good life”.
Washington Post (November 21, 2013)

and Dallas Morning News

and The Hutchinson News (KS)
After noting the fiftieth anniversary and the memorial stone celebration, Bailey points us to the Lewis who “still inspires 50 years after his death”. She interviews several people influenced by Lewis. Among these were Tim and Kathy Keller, herself someone with whom Lewis had corresponded; James Houston, a friend and colleague of Lewis; and Mickey Maudlin, senior vice president at HarperOne, who became a Christian by reading Lewis’s spiritual autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*.


Secular newspapers with the most published Lewis-related articles

While the news about Lewis’s anniversary and his special honors at Westminster Abbey spread in the United States mostly through these syndicated reports, I found that it was through four non-American news outlets that the most articles were published. Yes, Lewis is still very, very popular in the States, especially among Evangelicals and Roman Catholics and even Mormons. The *Deseret News* in Utah had six articles, the *Petoskey News* in Northern Michigan had five, the *Washington Post* and the internet-only *Huffington Post* had four, the *Jackson Sun* in western Tennessee had three, the *New York Times* had two, and many, many more had at least one. But, it was in Great Britain, which had, over the years, been sorely lacking in recognition of Lewis, that I found the most articles written about him.

First place with the most individual articles went to a countywide newspaper, *The Oxford Mail* and *Oxford Times*, a companion daily-weekly published in Oxford. Here there were thirteen reports covering the local Lewis Festival at his home church, Holy Trinity at Headington Quarry, a couple of stories on the Kilns, a remembrance interview with Doug Gresham and plans for 56 members of the church to attend the Poets’ Corner memorial service. Two unsigned editorials also raise some local issues about how the property around the Kilns is kept and whether or not the local community is doing all it can to honor Lewis. I will say more about the local festival later in my paper.

*The Oxford Mail* (daily) and *The Oxford Times* (weekly) (13)


- Harrison, Emma. “Festival will chronicle 50 years since death of Narnia writer CS Lewis” The Oxford Mail (4 September 2013) http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10651436.Festival_will_chronicle_50_years_since_death_of_Narnia_writer_CS_Lewis/?ref=twtrec

- Harrison, Emma. “Festival will chronicle 50 years since death of Narnia writer CS Lewis” The Oxford Mail (4 September 2013) http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/10651436.Festival_will_chronicle_50_years_since_death_of_Narnia_writer_CS_Lewis/


- Woodforde, Giles. “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is Oxford’s ‘mane’ event this year”. The Oxford Times (29 November 2013) http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/leisure/theatre/10844947.The_Lion_the_Witch_and_the_Wardrobe_is_Oxford_s_mane_event_this_year/


There is a two-way tie for second place with eleven articles each for both the “left-of-center” Guardian - formerly of Manchester, but now a major national newspaper published in London, and the “strongly conservative” national newspaper The Daily Telegraph. The Guardian reports consider Lewis’s life and the honors to be given him at Westminster. Especially interesting was an unsigned editorial which offered praise to President Kennedy, Huxley and Lewis for the hope that each in their own way offered to our world. Closing with the affirmation that “in their different ways they were wise – and we still need their wisdom.” In another article journalist Sam Leith acknowledges the mixed reaction some had to Lewis’s work, wondering whether his literary legacy is ‘dodgy and unpleasant’ or ‘exceptionally good.’ Two other articles, the one by Laura Miller and Nicholas Murray and the one by Lucy Mangan I will mention later in my presentation.
The Guardian (11)

  http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2013/apr/14/cs-lewis-life-mcgrath-review

  http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2013/may/08/lewis-genius-prophet-mcgrath-review

  http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/nov/14/cs-lewis-aldous-huxley

- Unsigned Editorial. "In praise of ... the wise ones: John F Kennedy, Aldous Huxley and CS Lewis" The Guardian (18 November 2013)
  http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/18/in-praise-of-the-wise-ones

- Leith, Sam. "CS Lewis's literary legacy: 'dodgy and unpleasant' or 'exceptionally good'?". The Guardian (19 November 2013)
  http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/19/cs-lewis-literary-legacy

  http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/22/aldous-huxley-prophet-dystopia-cs-lewis

  http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/21/cs-lewis-unseen-essay-image-imagination

  http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2013/nov/21/cs-lewis-childrens-author-christian-apologist-narnia

- Miller, Laura and Nicholas Murray. "My hero: CS Lewis by Laura Miller and Aldous Huxley by Nicholas Murray". The Guardian (22 November 2013)
  http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/22/other-heroes-cs-lewis-aldous-huxley


Of the eleven Lewis-related articles in the Daily Telegraph, six are about the service in Poets Corner: one speaks of its announcement, a second tells why Lewis should be honored, a third article mentions that former Archbishop Rowan Williams will pay tribute to Lewis, two more openly question whether Lewis deserved to be there, and a sixth mentions the several anniversaries of that day plus noting the newly discovered depth in the Narniad by Michael Ward and the prophetic anticipation for our time of his novel, That Hideous Strength.

The Daily Telegraph (11)

- McGrath, Alister. "C S Lewis deserves his place in Poets’ Corner". Telegraph (21 November 2012)
  http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9693294/C-S-Lewis-deserves-his-place-in-Poets-Corner.html

- Peterkin, Tom. "CS Lewis, Chronicles of Narnia author, honoured in Poets’ corner". The Telegraph (22 November 2012)

- Massie, Allan. “CS Lewis had three pints at lunchtime? How shocking!”. Telegraph (June 24, 2013) http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/allanmassie/100069744/cs-lewis-had-three-pints-at-lunchtime-how-shocking/


- Runcie, Charlotte. “JFK’s assassination: not a slow news day”. Telegraph (22 November 2013) http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturereview/10465714/JFKs-assassination-not-a-slow-news-day.html


Fourth place, with ten articles goes to the generally “unionist” leaning, regional paper –The Belfast Telegraph. Like much of Great Britain, little had been done in the past in Belfast to honor Lewis, their native son. He was born and raised in the East Belfast section of County Down. It was County Down native and political leader, David Bleakley, himself a former student at Oxford, who told me on my visit there, that back in 1945 Lewis had told him that in his opinion “Heaven is Oxford lifted and placed in the middle of the County Down.” So, in spite of his dislike of the “religious troubles” there in Ulster, Lewis was otherwise very fond of the land in which he was born and visited there as often as he could.

One Belfast Telegraph article by Ivan Little notes the sad chapter in Belfast’s history of their neglect of Lewis. A second writer mentions a call for the Belfast City Council to “step up to the plate”, concerned that Belfast was not yet doing enough to honor Lewis in 2013. I will describe what did eventually happen in a few paragraphs later. Also, here I point out that three of the ten articles on Lewis’s life and the upcoming celebrations are very positive ones from the same author, Alf McCready, the Belfast Telegraph’s award-winning religion correspondent. McCready wrote that in his opinion...
Lewis was a rounded character and not one of those frightful religious bores who have never lived enough to have really sinned and who try to lecture you and me from on high. In a sense, Lewis had earned the right to talk to us about Christianity, not just because he was intellectually brilliant but also because he related his faith to real, everyday lives.

**The Belfast Telegraph (10)**

- McCreery, Alf. “Memorial to a good man behind the saintly myth”. *Belfast Telegraph* (3 December 2012)

- O’Hara, Victoria. “Step up to plate for CS Lewis 50th anniversary festivities, Belfast council is told”. *Belfast Telegraph* (03 April 2013)

  http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/alf-mccreary/the-definitive-study-of-most-reluctant-convert-cs-lewis-29382601.html

- Little, Ivan. “Our neglect of Belfast-born writer CS Lewis is a sad chapter”. *Belfast Telegraph* (15 November 2013)

- Brankin, Una. “Did CS Lewis have a secret romance with pal's mum before marriage to Joy?”. *Belfast Telegraph* (18 NOVEMBER 2013)

- Usborne, Simon. “CS Lewis: The Belfast boy whose death was overshadowed by JFK”. *Belfast Telegraph* (22 November 2013)
  http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/columnists/alf-mccreary/why-cs-lewis-remains-such-an-inspiration-to-me-29777983.html

- Smyth, Michelle. “CS Lewis exhibition: Magic of Narnia is illustrated at Belfast's Linen Hall Library”. *Belfast Telegraph* (05 November 2013)


- Graham, Claire. “Westminster Abbey honours CS Lewis alongside literary elite 50 years after his death”. *Belfast Telegraph* (23 November 2013)
Secular Periodical with the most Lewis-related articles

Turning next to secular periodicals which published articles related to the Lewis 50th anniversary and the special celebration at Poets’ Corner, one magazine, National Review, stands out above all others. Between September 26 and December 16, 2013, it published nine individual articles about C.S. Lewis. Two short articles announced the “C.S. Lewis: In Memoriam” conference on November 23rd which was sponsored jointly by the New York C.S. Lewis Society and the Fulton Sheen Center for Thought and Culture with William Griffin, Elaine Tixier, and Michael Travers as speakers. One article provided a long slide show on the life and work of Lewis with several illustrated quotations. Three more articles tried to discuss current social and political issues from a Lewisian viewpoint. Two authors, M.D. Aeschliman and Christopher Tollefsen reviewed Lewis’s arguments against ‘scientism” and “subjectivism” and his belief in “the objectivity of value” and the “truth of the natural law”.

But in my opinion the best Lewis-related article in this group was written by Jim Como, a former professor of rhetoric at York College and a co-founder of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, known by many through his books and articles on Lewis. In his “Why All the Fuss?” essay he lightly reviews the many facets of who Lewis was and how as a “Christian apologist, novelist and public intellectual he spoke to his own time and ours in many voices.” He then sums up his article about Lewis with these remarks, “For it is all of those voices together that sing us to intellectual clarity and coherence, to visionary joy, and to spiritual hope, and that lift us finally to the brink of Heaven. At the end of the day, that is why all the fuss.”

National Review (9)


Other Secular Print Periodicals

Several additional periodicals also honored C.S. Lewis with articles about him and the events of November 2013. I chose five of these to mention in my presentation. First, even though it usually only cites books that are being reviewed, the October 30th Publishers Weekly chose in that issue to mention some events as well as books that would be honoring C.S. Lewis in the next month. So, along with some new HarperOne editions, we hear of the “C.S. Lewis and American Culture” conference at Wheaton College on November 1st; the C.S. Lewis Foundation’s “Forge of Friendship” conference in Houston on November 8th-10th; the C.S. Lewis Symposium at Westminster Abbey on November 21st; the memorial stone dedication service there on November 22nd and the “Lewis as Critic” conference at Magdalen College, Cambridge on November 23rd.

John Garth, well-known for his book on the influence of World War I on Tolkien, wrote an essay for Oxford University in their November issue of the Oxford Today Magazine. After reviewing the individual lives of Kennedy, Huxley and Lewis, their basic beliefs, how they each dealt with grief and how they each died, Garth writes in conclusion that “it is surely in their achievements in life that we must really measure these men: the writings of Huxley and Lewis which look beneath and beyond the world; and the 13 days in 1962 when Kennedy ensured the survival of that world in which we can continue to read them.”

Fantasy novelist and book critic, Lev Grossman writes in Time magazine on the theme, “Why Narnia Still Matters”. Illustrated with a dust jacket of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and a 1946 photo of Lewis standing near Magdalen College, Grossman tells of his personal connection with Lewis through his mother who met him as a student at “The Bird and Baby” pub and of being profoundly affected at eight years old when reading that first Narnian volume for himself. He tells us that “every reader of Lewis has had to come to a reckoning with him, a renegotiation of terms, as he or she has grown up.” While troubled by Aslan’s role in the stories, he sees that tension as an opportunity not to give up on Lewis, but to talk back to him through his own novels. He says that “it’s a sign of Lewis’s greatness that...people still need to talk to him: to ask him questions, to air their grievances, to share his sense of wonder, and to tell him stories the way he told us stories.”

Jeremy Lott’s article in the December 2013 issue of The American Spectator focuses on what he calls “The C.S. Lewis Industry”. He states that the many 2013 Lewis-related celebrations, while grand in themselves, are but “a small part of a vast and growing C.S. Lewis Industry in America, the United Kingdom, and all over the globe.” He covers the waterfront with the many journals, societies, conferences, Hollywood movies, merchandise, the publishing of unknown essays and portions of books, new biographies, most seemingly making profits as well. After noting some critical issues that arose after A.N. Wilson’s biography of Lewis was written, Lott tells us that everyone has adjusted a little, accepting some of Lewis’s flaws and continued on to sell even more Lewis products. He ends by saying, “One suspects that the success the great novelist and apologist has found in the 50 years since his death will last well into the next 50, too.”
One more article seeking to acknowledge this special year’s celebration of C.S. Lewis is found in the December issue of The Atlantic. Written by Aaron Hanbury and entitled, “Why C.S. Lewis Never Goes Out of Style”, this article seeks to show how Lewis’s “writings are more relevant than ever.” He quotes one reviewer who reminds us that “while Huxley is now largely forgotten and Kennedy remains a symbol of lost promise, Lewis lives on through his novels, stories, essays, and autobiographical works.” (Carrigan, PW (3/27/13) Other quotations and facts mentioned in much of the remainder of his article seek to show why this in his opinion is mostly so. He closes with the thought that at his death Lewis left us a legacy with influence that reaches far beyond his own lifetime by his wedding of “significant facts with ideas that live on.”

Other Secular Print Periodicals (5)


Selected Public Broadcasting and Secular Cable News Postings

Next we will consider public broadcasting and secular cable news postings of Lewis-related reports and programs. I was only able to find three such postings in the United States. One was on the PBS Newshour website Art Beat, by Victoria Fleishcher and was titled “Celebrating a Literary Giant: The 50th anniversary of C.S. Lewis’s Death”. It reviews Lewis’s life and his work, and then includes in the report an audio interview of Gregory Maguire, best-selling author of Wicked who discusses his reading and love of The Chronicles of Narnia. He says that when he came to write Wicked that he looked at Oz the way he thought Lewis might have looked at it. He also notes that Lewis has many imitators today; even those like Pullman who are so critical of his Christian worldview.

The second American posting on public broadcasting was done by WGBH, the PBS station in Boston. In this report Edgar Herwick focuses on Huxley and Lewis and calls them in his title, “Two Other 20th Century Titans Who Died on Nov. 22, 1963.” The third public broadcast report comes from Shreveport, Louisiana over the National Public Radio station there. Kate Kent reports
on Centenary College’s 12-day series of programs on the life and legacy of C.S. Lewis.

Selected Public Broadcasting and Secular Cable News Postings
United States:

- **PBS NewsHour (Arlington, VA)**

- **WGBH News and The Curiosity Desk (PBS Boston)**

- **Red River Radio (NPR LSU-Shreveport)**

Australia:

- **ABC (Australian Broadcasting Commission) Religion and Ethics**

  Still staying with public broadcasting but moving back to North America, we discover in Canada on the Canadian Broadcasting Commission, the CBC, two Lewis-related audio programs. The first program is called *Ideas with Paul Kennedy* and is a two-part series on “C.S. Lewis and the Inklings” which first aired on October 9th and 17th. Each part is one hour long and after a brief review of Lewis’s life includes interviews with Malcom Guite, Alister McGrath, Monica Hilder and Ralph Wood. Lewis, Tolkien, Barfield and Williams are the main Inklings that are discussed. The second Lewis-related CBC program was aired on November 22 and was a promotion interview done on Information Morning Radio to promote a C.S. Lewis Symposium in Halifax, Nova Scotia on Saturday November 23rd. Two leaders of the symposium were interviewed and asked about Lewis and why they were having an all day seminar on him.

Canada:

**Canadian Broadcasting Commission**


Three secular cable networks also had postings and programs related to the November Lewis celebrations. On the CNN Belief Blog journalist John Blake, on December 1st, posted an essay titled, “The C.S. Lewis you never knew”. After telling us that Lewis “lived secretly with a woman for years” and that “he once asked people at a party if he could spank them.” Blake then goes on to tells us three more things that most people supposedly do not know about Lewis: first, that “his religious books made him poor”; second, that “he felt like a failure as a Christian communicator”; and third, that “he had a "horrible" personal life”. All of this was mostly shared out of context and pretty much without any explanation.

The second secular cable network posting came on Fox News. Its Latino version had an article reporting that Lewis was to be honored at Westminster Abbey. Fox News itself had two additional Lewis-related posts. One was an article by Mark Steyn, a reposting of an article from the National Review referred to earlier. The second was a video interview of Cal Thomas by Lauren Green on November 21st, discussing on her program Spirited Debate his syndicated column about C.S. Lewis.

MSNBC was the third secular cable network to have a Lewis-related report. Martin Bashir, on his program segment, Clear the Air, gave a very positive statement of Lewis as a “uniquely gifted writer and academic”. He also spoke of Lewis as a “novelist, poet and theologian”, mentioning several of his books as the movie, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, was playing on the screen in the background. Bashir shared with his viewers that Lewis would be honored with a memorial stone the next day in Westminster Abbey, next to many other well-known literary figures. A lot of information was shared very effectively in a very short period of time.
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- MSNBC
  - Bashir, Martin. “Clear the Air: Remembering C.S. Lewis”. MSNBC (November 21, 2013)

For our next Lewis-related public broadcasting programs we go to some of the BBC programs specifically meant to honor C.S. Lewis on Radio 4. In addition there is also a review in The Guardian of a BBC documentary which I will share about a few paragraphs later.

These BBC Radio 4 programs were all presented to the public from November 12th through December 8th, and they varied in length with the shortest being just 90 seconds. That interview with actress Jill Freud, Clement Freud’s wife, came about because she was one of the evacuees that lived with Lewis and Mrs. Moore during World War II and for whom Lewis paid the expenses for her acting school classes. Also, there is a thirty minute program titled “Brave New World” which discusses both Lewis and Huxley and their literary contributions. There is another program on the Tolkien-Lewis friendship and also a daily reading from The Screwtape Letters. Some of these are still available online.

Three new short stories were contracted by the BBC specifically for this event. Sub-headed under the general theme, “Through the Wardrobe”, they are titled, “The Belle Dress”, “Tilly’s Tale”, and “The Rosy Rural Ruby”. These are not, in what I read and heard, in my opinion, typical stories that you would expect to find in a program honoring Lewis that is titled, “Through the Wardrobe”. But, from all I can tell, they seem to be quite acceptable to the British public who heard and reviewed them. Award-winning Belfast author, Lucy Caldwell read her story, “The Belle Dress” on the Vimeo video website listed below. The other stories have already been taken down. A snippet comment from one reviewer of “The Belle Dress” describes it as a story about a young boy raised in a Belfast family in which “gender roles were clearly defined”, and “he found himself inexorably attracted to a belle dress belonging to one of his sisters.” The story goes on from there to describe what he did with the dress.

United Kingdom:

- BBC TV 4

- BBC Radio 4
  - Selected programmes meant to honor “C.S. Lewis” on Radio 4 Home (Nov 12 – Dec 8):
    “The Lion, the Witch and Poets’ Corner”
    http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01lpzwh

    “The Brave New World”
    http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03h2rdj

    “Shadowlands”
    http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00n3pfg

    “Lewis and Tolkien: The Lost Road”
    http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03hxjrl

    “The Northern Irishman in C.S. Lewis”
    http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007jw8w

    “The Screwtape Letters”
    http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03hng18
“C.S. Lewis and the Evacuee”
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p010zvkt.

Three Short Stories: “The Belle Dress”
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03j9ktg
and

“Tilly’s Tale”
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03jyrs8
and

“The Rosy Rural Ruby”
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03kpl7l.

- Lucy Caldwell reads “The Belle Dress” on WordFactory.tv
(http://vimeo.com/78062400)

It is hard to pass up two other Lewis-related programs reported on the BBC. The first one related to the fantasy TV series, “Dr. Who”, in which an article by Fraser McAlpine says that the fifty year-old program, “Dr. Who”, owes Lewis a debt of gratitude for at least five reasons. Also, on the BBC Religion and Ethics site, there is an informative essay by Alister McGrath on the religious symbolism behind the Narnian stories.

- BBC America
McAlpine, Fraser. “Five Reasons ‘Doctor Who’ Owes C.S. Lewis A Debt Of Gratitude” (November 22, 2013)
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEwiklHEzRE)

- BBC Religion and Ethics
McGrath, Alister. “The religious symbolism behind the Chronicles of Narnia” (21 November 2013)

C.S. Lewis Festivals and Memorials
7/28/14
I have mentioned in passing a few of the 2013 Lewis-related festivals, conferences and celebrations that occurred in the United States, Canada and Australia. I attended three myself - one in Minneapolis, one at Wheaton College and one near Lexington, Kentucky. There were many others in New York and Houston, one in San Diego, another in Petosky, Michigan. I even came across one led by Perry Bramlett in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. I know that wherever they were and whoever went, that they must have all been great times of celebration, fellowship and scholarship. But what I discovered for even most of the ones that I mentioned that these Lewis-related conferences had no external secular media promotion or reports about them. And if they did, they were few and far between.

Headington Quarry - CSL Jubilee Festival at Holy Trinity – September 19-22, 2013

Anyway this leads me into a look at something very different that happened in Great Britain where local, regional and national secular media, especially the BBC and also the community in Belfast, were present to promote and report the story of the 50th anniversary of Lewis's death and the memorial service in his honor.

Let's look first at Headington Quarry in Oxfordshire where Lewis's home church, Holy Trinity, held a C.S. Lewis Jubilee Festival, September 19th through the 23rd. Of course, as you see below, it was promoted by the local newspaper, the Oxford Mail and Oxford Times; plus the BBC and the Times of London added three articles. The festival started with a talk by Alister McGrath. A new play on the life of Lewis was also presented. There were guided walks around Headington near where Lewis lived, and on Sunday the 22nd the Bishop of Oxford spoke at the evening service. Plus, along with several family activities, one of the
local pubs, Masons Arms, came up with a special brew in honor of Lewis that it named “Jack's Delight”. It was so popular that the pub ran out of it before the festival was over. In its report *The Times* of London called it “Apologetic ale”.

**Headington Quarry - CSL Jubilee Festival at Holy Trinity – September 19-22, 2013**

**BBC**
  http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-22478582


**Oxford Mail (daily) and Oxford Times (weekly)**
- Fantato, Damian. “Church to celebrate life of Narnia creator”. *Oxford Mail* (1 April 2013)

- Harrison, Emma. “Festival will chronicle 50 years since death of Narnia writer CS Lewis” *The Oxford Mail* (4 September 2013)
  http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10651436.Festival_will_chronicle_50_years_since_death_of_Narnia_writer_CS_Lewis/?ref=twtrec

  and *The Oxford Times*
  http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/10651436.Festival_will_chronicle_50_years_since_death_of_Narnia_writer_CS_Lewis/

  http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/10680664.Narnia_gets_a_rubbish_makeover_in_church_s_CS_Lewis_festival/


  http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/10758497.Narnia_expert_treats_his_audience_to_CS_Lewis_talk/

  http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/archive/2013/11/11/10799396.YOURS_FAITHFULLY_Christianity_deeply_and_privateley_lived_The_Rev_Tim_Stead_vicar_of_Holy_Trinity_Church_Headington_Quarry/ 

**The Times**
  http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/faith/article3881184.ece

  and
  https://twitter.com/BillCahusac/status/38496050147282944/photo/1

**Belfast – C.S. Lewis Festival – funded by Belfast City Council (November 18-23, 2013)**

But back in Belfast, the place of Lewis’s birth, something unique among Lewis celebrations was happening. The BBC Northern Ireland announced that a C.S. Lewis Festival was taking place on November 18th through the 23rd and that it had been funded by the Belfast City Council and organized by community leaders in East Belfast with the *Belfast Newsletter* newspaper writing about “the string of events” that would occur as this city celebrated C.S. Lewis.
The City Council announced what it called “a dizzying array of family friendly and schools events” including a Lewis Trail Tour, a lamplighting program at Campbell College, an interactive rendition of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, with St. Marks Church providing its own series of events focusing on faith, and much more.

The City Council announced what it called “a dizzying array of family friendly and schools events” including a Lewis Trail Tour, a lamplighting program at Campbell College, an interactive rendition of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, with St. Marks Church providing its own series of events focusing on faith, and much more.

Belfast – C.S. Lewis Festival – funded by Belfast City Council (November 18-23, 2013)

**Belfast City Council – CSL Festival Programmes**
- *C.S. Lewis Festival Website*
  [http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/CSLeagueFestival](http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/CSLeagueFestival)

- *C.S. Lewis Festival Brochure (.pdf)*
  [http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/sites/default/files/CSLeague_FestivalProgramme_2013.pdf](http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/sites/default/files/CSLeague_FestivalProgramme_2013.pdf)

- Anonymous. “C.S. Lewis Festival Programme launched at Belmont Tower” (31 October 2013)

- Northern Ireland News
  [http://www.4ni.co.uk/northern_ireland_news.asp?id=171440](http://www.4ni.co.uk/northern_ireland_news.asp?id=171440)

- *C.S. Lewis Festival Public Events at a Glance*
  [http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/sites/default/files/at%20a%20glance.jpg](http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/sites/default/files/at%20a%20glance.jpg)

- *C.S. Lewis Festival Event News and Images*
  [http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/CSLeagueFestival](http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/CSLeagueFestival)

Plus there are still more reports of Lewis-related activities in Belfast: a special Narnia art exhibit at Belfast’s Linen Hall Library, a somewhat “quirky” breakfast which includes Narnia-inspired foods – cakes, sardines and, of course, Turkish delight. Even a civic square at the Holywood Arches will be named after Lewis.

Belfast – C.S. Lewis Festival – funded by Belfast City Council (November 18-23, 2013)

**Belfast Telegraph**
- Smyth, Michelle. “CS Lewis exhibition: Magic of Narnia is illustrated at Belfast’s Linen Hall Library”. *Belfast Telegraph* (05 November 2013)

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*The Irish News*

*Irish Times*
- Casey, Fr Thomas G. “Belfast man who died the same day as JFK continues to fascinate 50 years on”. *Irish Times* (November 19, 2013)

*UTV News (Ulster)*
  http://www.u.tv/Entertainment/Festival-remembers-legacy-of-CS-Lewis/5e3add8c-147c-40f1-99c4-194623a83804

*London - Poets Corner Memorial Service at Westminster Abbey – November 22, 2013 – but first announced in 2012*

This next section of articles tells of the announcement by Canon Vernon White in 2012 and the year-long planning that will go into the memorial services for Lewis to be held at Westminster Abbey in 2013. In the BBC article Canon White, who is considered to be the progenitor of the Lewis memorial celebration, speaks of Lewis as an “extraordinarily imaginative and rigorous thinker and writer.”

*London - Poets Corner Memorial Service at Westminster Abbey – November 22, 2013 – Memorial Announced in 2012*

- McGrath, Alister. “C S Lewis deserves his place in Poets’ Corner”. *Telegraph* (21 November 2012)
  http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/9693294/C-S-Lewis-deserves-his-place-in-Poets-Corner.html


- Collett-White, Mike. “CS Lewis to be honoured with memorial stone at Poet’s Corner”. *The Independent* (22 November 2012)
  and *Chicago Tribune*
  http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-22/entertainment/sns-rt-us-cslewis-memorialbre8al0ku-20121122_1_narnia-poets-corner-white-witch

- McCreary, Alf. “Memorial to a good man behind the saintly myth”. *Belfast Telegraph* (3 December 2012)

August 5, 2014

Memorial Week Services Reported in 2013

The memorial service took place in Westminster Abbey, officially called “the Collegiate Church of St Peter at Westminster”. It is the place where some of the most significant people in the nation’s history are buried or commemorated. It also serves as the place where the British monarch is coronated and where many of them have been married. Here, in Poets’ Corner, with so many other British literary greats, is where Lewis’s memorial stone was dedicated on the 50th anniversary of his death. Engraved on the stone is one of his most famous quotes from a talk given to the Socratic Club, in 1944, titled “Is Theology Poetry?”: “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

Below is a listing of the secular media coverage of the Lewis memorial service, seventeen printed articles, including a copy of McGrath’s sermon at Headington Quarry on Sunday, November 17th. The audio is also posted on YouTube. Five of these reports come from the BBC, one describing the service, who did what and mentioning also the conference that had been at the abbey the previous day. Mostly just the facts, but little detail. One very special article is by James Conlee of the Deseret News who provides an online summary of his trip to the service and fifty additional photos from his two week trip to London and Oxford. Most of the other secular papers offer only a photo of the engraved memorial stone. As of the posting of this essay audio recordings of the service and the symposium given the day before can also be found on the community broadcast site, Audioboo, as listed below and should be heard.

London - Poets Corner Memorial Service at Westminster Abbey – November 22, 2013

- Balding, Clare. “Good Morning Sunday Interviews Alister McGrath”. BBC Radio 2 (November 17, 2013)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03hmll0

and

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zUHK-avAzC


http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03hmn-gx

and YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbRnMAENHT8


http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-25031909


- Trujillo, Kristina. C.S. Lewis Has Been Added to the Poets’ Corner. BBC America (November 25th, 2013)


Audiboo Community Broadcasts

- Talk by Alister McGrath at C.S. Lewis Symposium on Nov. 21st at WA, entitled “Telling the Truth through Rational Argument”:


- Talk by Malcom Guite at C.S. Lewis Symposium on Nov. 21st at WA, entitled “Telling the Truth through Imaginative Fiction”:

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Belfast Telegraph

The Deseret News


Newham Recorder
- Adams, Matt. “CS Lewis ‘should be proud’ of role he played in Doctor Who”. Newham Recorder (November 22, 2013) http://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/what-s-on/cs_lewis_should_be_proud_of_role_he_played_in_doctor_who_1.3031185

The Oxford Mail

New York Times

The Telegraph


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The Times
http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article3929688.ece

UPI

Post Memorial Service Conferences (November 23, 2013)

Both Magdalen College, Oxford and Magdalene College, Cambridge held special programs in honor of Lewis on the day after the memorial service. Rowan Williams, the main speaker the day before at Westminster Abbey, also spoke at both of these two programs.

Post Memorial Service Conferences (November 23, 2013)

- Magdalen College, Oxford University
- Anonymous. “Special event to honor C S Lewis on 23 November”. Magdalen College, Oxford (22 NOVEMBER 2013)  

- Magdalene College, Cambridge University
http://lewisascritic.wordpress.com/

Two Lewis-related Dramas Reviewed by the Secular Media

In addition to the newspaper articles, periodical essays, festivals, symposiums and memorial services there were several additional Lewis-inspired events to which the secular media gave its response during 2013. There were three major biographies published and one hour-long TV documentary produced on Lewis’s life followed-up with an insider’s behind—the-scenes eBook written to describe its production. Plus, there were also at least two drama productions that were promoted in the secular press and reviewed there as well. Each of these mentioned that their composition or production was connected with the Lewis 50th anniversary.

I note first the two dramas. The Fellowship for the Performing Arts opened its national tour of a dramatic version of one of his books, The Great Divorce, in Phoenix, Arizona in December. Kerry Lengel, the Arizona Republic’s arts critic, gave it a positive review, writing that “The Great Divorce does Lewis justice, brings his voice to stage” and “raises questions about right and wrong and how we live that should provoke thought in anyone. And just as important, it never feels like a dry sermon.”

In August a touring group called the Searchlight Theatre, performed Questioning Aslan, a stage play about Lewis’s interaction with a student facing difficulties in his life. Performed in Scotland, it also received a positive review from critic Islsa Van Tricht where she wrote that it was “thought-provoking, well-written and well-performed” and adding that “Questioning Aslan is an intriguing and open discussion about doubt and faith. Regardless of your beliefs this is a bright and beautifully constructed piece of theatre.”

Drama Reviews from Secular Newspapers and Internet sites:

- The Great Divorce – Fellowship for the Performing Arts

-Lengel, Kerry. “Great Divorce does Lewis justice, brings his voice to stage”. Arizona Republic (December 20, 2013)  
http://www.azcentral.com/thingstodo/arts/articles/20131221review-great-divorce.html?nclick_check=1
Secular Media Reviews of Three Lewis Biographies

The three major biographies of Lewis that were published in 2013 were Devin Brown’s *A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C.S. Lewis*, Colin Duriez’s *C.S. Lewis: A Biography of Friendship*, and Alister McGrath’s *C.S. Lewis – A Life: Eccentric Genius. Reluctant Prophet*. There were only two short secular reviews of Brown’s *A Life Observed*. One, by Carrigan, sees Lewis’s life as focused on seeking joy, providing “a close reading of Lewis’s writings and an examination of Lewis’s friendships” with Tolkien and other Inklings. The other by McConnell notes that Brown tells the “fascinating tale” with much to “savor” of a “man’s lifelong attempt to live out his faith.”

Also, only two reviews in the secular media were found of Duriez’s biography of Lewis. Robert Wilson writes that Duriez built his biography on “the key relationships in the life of Lewis”. Then, he tells us that Duriez, “by a process of ruthless selection”, has “managed to give us a brief and lucid biography”. The second review on the Duriez book is by A.N. Wilson who spends much of it stating his own views about Lewis’s life. About this book he does say that Duriez “has written a lively, short account of a great man” concentrating on Lewis’s friendships. He questions the author’s belief that Lewis and Mrs. Moore had only a platonic relationship. But still sees this book as “a good place to start” for anyone seeking to learn about the life of Lewis.

In the next list there are twenty reviews of McGrath’s biography of Lewis by the secular media in both the U.S. and England. Most are positive and appreciative for the work put in to produce this over 400 page biography. One well-known Irish reviewer calls it the “definitive biography of Lewis” (McCreary). Another speaks not of the biography but of the subject of the biography, calling Lewis’s life an “odd story” and himself, “an extremely odd man”. (Wilson) One flaw seen is that it is “rich with information but short on ... anecdotes that that make author biographies colorful.” (Kirkus)

It is a biography we are told by Olson that “Lewis’ admirers would prefer to all others”. John calls it “accessible” and “very helpful”. Of this biography Wilson tells us that

**Biographies: Reviews from Secular Media and Internet sites:**


- Wilson, A. N. "The Chronicler of Narnia and his love of the whip". *The Daily Mail Online* (13 April 2013)

- Wilson, Robert. "From Narnia to Christianity". *Sydney Morning Herald* (September 28, 2013)
“McGrath deals with the whole story remarkably fairly.” Heitman says that McGrath is “thorough”, but “his narrative method tends to keep Lewis “at arm’s length.” He tells us also that McGrath suggests that reading what Lewis read and reading what he wrote is the best way to understand Lewis.”

Dirda calls McGrath’s biography “a fine book” - “not a work of synopsis, but of analysis”, but he has the complaint that while McGrath dealt well and “chiefly with Lewis’s religious writing”, he failed to deal with Lewis as a “literary scholar”. But if someone is looking for a good introduction to Lewis, McGrath’s biography is, as Wilson said of Duriez’s, a “good place to start”.

Biographies: Reviews from Secular Media and Internet sites:

McGrath, Alister. C.S. Lewis – A Life: Eccentric Genius. Reluctant Prophet. Carol Stream,


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- Davenport, Arlice. "New biography shows how 'Narnia' author C.S. Lewis' intellect, imagination were formed". The Wichita Eagle (KS)(May 12, 2013) http://www.kansas.com/2013/05/12/2799609/new-biography-shows-how-narnia.html


- Massie, Allan. "CS Lewis had three pints at lunchtime? How shocking!". Telegraph (June 24, 2013) http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/allanmassie/100069744/cs-lewis-had-three-pints-at-lunchtime-how-shocking/


**His Life on TV: “Narnia’s Lost Poet” Documentary**

On Wednesday the 27th in the week following the celebration at Poets’ Corner, one more secular media report appeared about C.S. Lewis on the BBC TV Four. Using the 50th anniversary of his death and the memorial service at Westminster Abbey as a springboard, this hour-long documentary had an unusual title. It was called “Narnia’s Lost Poet: The Secret Lives and Loves of C.S. Lewis”. The presenter/narrator and also scriptwriter of this video was Lewis biographer A.N. Wilson – a journalist, novelist, historian, former tutor at Oxford, and now a TV broadcaster. The full program was available first on the BBC, last shown there on January 23, 2014 and then, could be seen for a while on a copy made on YouTube. I was able to view it on December 1st, but it is now unavailable, except for brief excerpts that can be viewed on Vimeo and YouTube.
Public Broadcasting Documentary  
**BBC TV4** – “Narnia’s Lost Poet: the Secret Lives and Loves of CS Lewis” (November 27, 2013 – 9:00 p.m.)
(First shown: 27 November 2013)  
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03jrw5j (current listing)


Below is the BBC TV Four’s description of this documentary in their TV guide. Read closely, and you can pick up on some of the slant that is brought to video:

CS Lewis’s biographer AN Wilson goes in search of the man behind Narnia - bestselling children’s author and famous Christian writer, but an under-appreciated Oxford academic and an aspiring poet who never achieved the same success in writing verse as he did prose.

Although his public life was spent in the all-male world of Oxford colleges, his private life was marked by secrecy and even his best friend JRR Tolkien didn’t know of his marriage to an American divorcee late in life. Lewis died on the same day as the assassination of John F Kennedy and few were at his burial; his alcoholic brother was too drunk to tell people the time of the funeral. Fifty years on, his life as a writer is now being remembered alongside other national literary heroes in Westminster Abbey’s Poets’ Corner.

In this personal and insightful film, Wilson paints a psychological portrait of a man who experienced fame in the public arena, but whose personal life was marked by the loss of the three women he most loved.

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Readers are not asked to take a quiz on who these women are [their names start with the letters F, J & J], but I encourage you to watch it if you can, just to see the Lewis-related places in London, Belfast, Oxford, Cambridge and Headington. Also, some highly edited portions of interviews with Alister McGrath, Michael Ward, Peter Cousins, Jill Freud and others are shown. Be careful about what is said by Wilson, since in my opinion much of the video is more about Wilson and his own reaction to Lewis than it is about Lewis himself. While many facts are shared and much beautiful scenery is shown, to someone like myself who has done counseling and also been in counseling, there seems to be a large amount of Freudian psychoanalysis offered by someone who is untrained in that field and who also fails to mention that Lewis himself had studied and written on that very subject, expressing some very strong opinions against its use in literary criticism. Yet, overall, in spite of many of Wilson’s very slanted comments, many of those interviewed are still able to provide the film with a needed positive balance.

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Below is a list of previews and reviews from secular newspapers and internet sites which will help give some perspective on the video when it was shown. The Times of London reviewer, Alex Hardy begins his review with
the statement, "C.S.Lewis's biographer showed us that the writer was a hybrid creature, who had a few skeletons in the wardrobe." On most of these reviews, I also checked the internet comments following the reviews, and they, like the reviews themselves, were highly positive about Wilson's presentation and the video, itself, in a way that seemed to say that Lewis was shown to be a "really good chap" who like everyone else had his problems, but also wrote some wonderful books – both academic and children's fiction. His apologetics like Mere Christianity are generally dismissed while books like the Chronicles of Narnia and A Grief Observed are highly recommended, along with some, but not all of his literary work.

Previews and Reviews from Secular Newspapers and Internet sites:


- Hardy, Alex. “TV Review: Narnia's Lost Poet". The Times (UK) (November 28 2013): 10 http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/tv-radio/reviews/article3933713.ece

The Man Behind Narnia eBook

Published on December 10th, just two weeks after his Lewis documentary on the BBC, The Man Behind Narnia is A.N. Wilson’s e-book attempt to give the reader a behind-the-scenes explanation of the making of that documentary, Narnia’s Lost Poet: The Secret Lives and Loves of C S Lewis. In the first of seven chapters titled, “C. S. Lewis and I”, Wilson invites us to share his re-encounter with the creator of Narnia. Following on, much like a friendly conversation that sometimes seems confessional, Wilson revisits with us his generally negative interaction with someone he eventually cannot avoid describing in chapter six as "a very, very good man". But this slight praise,
in his shortest chapter, never overcomes the initial negative impression he gives us, both in the documentary and early in his book, of “poor old C.S. Lewis”. In fact, in chapter seven he closes by saying that even though he now thinks more highly of Lewis as a man, “I like his works rather less than I did.” Somehow Wilson misses the whole point of the memorial services and the talk given by former Archbishop Williams, that it is only now that the value and depth of many of Lewis’s insights are beginning to be seen.

Unlike the documentary which drew several immediate reviews in the secular media, I have been unable to discover any reviews in the last six months of this behind-the-scenes, personal impressions, eBook - either in a major newspaper or periodical. There is one exception: the publisher’s website, Amazon.com, has twenty-three brief, somewhat mixed reviews – 19 in the United Kingdom and 4 in the U.S. If you have the inclination and do not mind spending $1.99 on an eBook or interacting with Wilson’s highly personal bias, this book gives some insight into where Wilson is in his recent return to the faith, including his presuppositions in preparing the documentary and how it came to be. Like many who struggle in the faith dimension of their lives, he, too, is in the process of rediscovering and recovering what he had lost regarding his religious faith over those years between his writing of the Lewis biography in 1990 and his return in 2009.

Here is the book’s description on Amazon’s website:

It looks like a wardrobe, but open it up and it leads you back into a world of childhood – of fantasy. Lewis, now famed the world over as a children’s author and religious apologist, was a university Professor who kept his private life a doggedly guarded secret. Living exclusively in the world of men, his life was really dominated by women – by his mother, whose death when he was a child scarred his whole life; by Jane Moore, with whom he lived for thirty-three years; and by Joy Davidman, the American he married. The mystery of Lewis is deep. He was a man who professed to be ruled by his head, but was manifestly governed by his heart. In THE MAN BEHIND NARNIA, A.N. Wilson, who wrote Lewis’s full-length biography over twenty years ago, returns to the theme – having made a television documentary about Lewis and his work. He opens the wardrobe and finds many demons – some are Lewis’s, and some are his own.

Two articles with two double authors

Both The Guardian and The Times have offered their readers a very unique experience in their observance of November 22, 2013. These two national newspaper have chosen to focus, not on the American president who died on that day 50 years ago, but to direct their reporting on the life and work of the two well-known British authors who died on that same day, Lewis and Huxley. Their chosen method is to have two authors each for the one article in each paper. In The Guardian, Laura Miller, co-founder of Salon.com and author of The Magician’s Book, a book on the Narnian stories, writes of how, along with her love of The Chronicles of Narnia, she cherishes, not Lewis’s Christian apologetics, but “his literary criticism”. Nicholas Murray, on the other hand, a biographer of Huxley, “admires his exemplary open mind”, describing him as “an eloquent critical voice” who warns us “against our tendency to ‘love our slavery’” as he had described it in his Brave New World.

In The Telegraph Oliver Moody reminds us that “Aldous Huxley becomes more and more relevant as the years pass”. Huxley’s great insight, he writes, “is that the real danger is not that our freedom will be taken away, but that we will hand it over
willingly.” Michael Ward tells us that “C.S. Lewis lacked faith only in the lasting power of his work”. He concludes that Lewis’s Christian writings remain both popular and good because “they spring from conviction”, affirming that Lewis passionately believed “in the value of whatever he wrote about.”

Two articles with two side-by-side authors from The Guardian and The Times
- Miller, Laura and Nicholas Murray. “My hero: CS Lewis by Laura Miller and Aldous Huxley by Nicholas Murray”. The Guardian (22 November 2013)
  http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/22/other-heroes-cs-lewis-aldous-huxley

- Moody, Oliver. “Kennedy’s killing overshadowed the death of two greats....”
  http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/article3929454.ece
  and
  Ward, Michael. “... and we should not let them be forgotten”

Four Serendipitous Coverages

  Over the many weeks that the secular media responded to the 50th anniversary of the death of C.S. Lewis and to the programs that celebrated his memorial at Poets’ Corner, four articles stood out to me as simply serendipitous because they were either extraordinarily creative or different or maybe unexpected. The first of these I discovered in the Wilmington Delaware News Journal. This regional newspaper did an amazing double-page multi-color section on Lewis in its November 19th edition titled “Did You Know: Fifty years after his death”. Artist Dan Garrow’s creative caricature of Lewis surrounded by many of his Narnian characters was the center of these two pages that were filled with Lewis quotes, a reading guide, information on the Inklings and the Poets’ Corner memorial, a brief Lewis biography, and an essay on him by Gary Soulsman. Enlarging the pdf will allow you to read the essay by itself. When you do, you will note an obvious error in Soulsman’s comment about the subject of Surprised by Joy, calling it a memoir about Lewis’s wife. Possibly he meant A Grief Observed here, but who knows. That somewhat obvious mistake takes away from the project’s accuracy, but not from its creative presentation.

Four serendipitous coverages:
1. A double-page multi-color section in Wilmington (DE) News Journal
- Soulsman, Gary and illustrator, Dan Garrow. “Did You Know: Fifty years after his death” Wilmington News Journal (November 19, 2013)
  http://archive.delawareonline.com/assets/pdf/BL2152831119.PDF

  My second surprise came when I found an article on the JFK-Huxley-C.S. Lewis 50th Anniversary in Aljazeera by Rahul Radhakrishnan. But there it was and most of the facts are right with an interview with Judith Priestman, a librarian at the Bodleian, one with author John Garth and a few references to the Peter Kreeft book, Between Heaven and Hell. For me it was an unanticipated find on my Google search for Lewis-related articles posted to remember the events of November 22, 1963 and the celebrations in 2013. Plus, the photographs of all three men together somehow gave the report more gravity in its non-western setting.

Four serendipitous coverages:
2. An article in Aljazeera
- Radhakrishnan, Rahul. “Remembering Huxley and Lewis”. Aljazeera (22 November 2013)

  A third unexpected post was found on November 29th on the website of Tor, that part of Macmillan that publishes their fantasy and science fiction books. There I discovered
an article by Leah Schnelbach mentioning the 50th anniversary of his death the previous week and the honor given him in Poets’ Corner. She describes him as a Moral Fantasist. She also wrote that “the career that made him famous and became his lasting legacy was that of a fantasy and science fiction author… Lewis was a member of one of the most famous literary societies of the 20th century, The Inklings,… But his greatest impact can be felt each time a child looks into a wardrobe with a little more wonder than necessary.” Plus, next to her comment on Lewis was an interesting caricature of him drawn by David Johnson.

Four serendipitous coverages:
3. A SF/Fantasy tribute from Tor

A personal remembrance by Damaris Walsh McGuire in The Times-Union newspaper of Albany, New York, is my fourth serendipitous article celebrating the November 22nd events honoring Lewis. The article was titled “C.S. Lewis, ‘Shadowlands’: an Albany woman remembers” and reports that her father was Chad Walsh, the first person to write a book on Lewis back in 1947. Walsh, took their family to England to meet Lewis, and Damaris (aka Demi) mentions in this article how her father, as a friend of Joy Gresham, had encouraged her to write Lewis and ask him the questions she had about his writings. Anyway, she describes her father as the official matchmaker between them – the yenta! It’s an interesting fact to discover about the Lewis-Gresham relationship right in the middle of the memorial stone celebration.

From Alaska to Kentucky We each try to share what Lewis means to us

I close with two small personal examples: first, from Alaska and next, from Kentucky. I did not know that Dr. Bruce Edwards now lived in Alaska until just recently, but that did not deter him from doing his C.S. Lewis “thing” at the Bad Coffee Lecture Series at Fireside Books in Palmer, Alaska on Sunday, November 17th as promoted on Facebook events by the bookstore. We all thank Bruce Edwards for his continued example for all of us in getting the word out about Lewis wherever we are, each of us in our own way.

There is one more small thing which I am both hesitant to mention in this presentation, but also glad that I did it. For it was my own response to Cal Thomas’s column in the secular media in my hometown of Bowling Green, Kentucky. I decided to send a letter to the editorial page of our local newspaper, The Daily News, regarding the 50th anniversary of Lewis’s death on November 22nd, sharing there, in the 300 words I was given, what C.S. Lewis means to me and inviting others to email me. It was not a lot compared to what I have since researched as having been done in the syndicated columns, festivals, memorial services, documentaries or biographies, but it was something personal that many read that day and remembered that author, that “Lewis-guy”, who had written books meaningful to them or their children like Mere Christianity or the Chronicles of Narnia. Plus, possibly for them it was more important than the distant reports that were to come about him at Poets’ Corner that most of them
would never read. For this letter was written by someone they could actually contact in their own community which actually did happen. For that I am glad that I sent it and post it below to be read as the close of my paper:

_Bowling Green Daily News_
Wednesday, November 20, 2013
Letters to the Editor
“Reader’s life changed years ago by C.S. Lewis”

British professor C.S. Lewis died 50 years ago on Nov. 22, 1963, the same day on which President John F. Kennedy died, and yet, most important for me, Lewis was also a spiritual guide and Christian apologist.

An old proverb tells us that “some people come into our lives and quickly go, but others stay awhile and leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never the same.” This happened to me in 1963. In the fall of my first year at the University of Virginia, I was facing some serious doubts about my faith, and a friend suggested that I read a book called “Mere Christianity” by C.S. Lewis. Who would have thought that this advice 50 years ago would have left such an indelible influence upon my life today?

Someone who knew Lewis described him as “the most thoroughly converted man I ever met.” Yet, like all of us, he had feet of clay.

But in spite of his flaws, what also impressed his friends was that he was the same person at work, at home and among them as he was at church. Called an “apostle to the skeptics,” Lewis took to heart the scripture found in 1 Peter 3:15: “... always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”

I, for one, am so thankful that he did.

Yes, over these past 50 years, the footprints of C.S. Lewis have been left on my heart and my life has never been the same. But ultimately, not because he has pointed to himself, but because he has pointed me to Jesus Christ. Email me at rvjames@kih.net for further information about the works and legacy of C.S. Lewis.

Richard James,
Bowling Green

Closing: