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## An Unexpected Poet: The Creative Works of Dr. Robert E. Havard

Sarah B. O'Dell

*University of California, Irvine*Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

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## An Unexpected Poet: The Creative Works of Dr. Robert E. Havard

### Abstract

Despite the incredible wealth of Inklings scholarship, little critical attention has been paid to the lesser-known members of the circle, including physician and writer Robert E. Havard (1901–1985). Dr. Havard has been noted as a “skilled and prolific writer” (Glyer 12) who was “well-read and keenly interested in the processes of literature and in theology” (Sayer 151). Yet, Inklings scholarship has long been limited to his appendix to Lewis’s *The Problem of Pain* and several memoirs on fellow Inklings. When asked regarding his own writing during a 1984 interview with Lyle W. Dorsett, Havard remarked that “I have never written anything very much...I’ve never been a writer in the ways the others were” (Oral History). Although Havard is recognized to have co-authored a wide variety of biomedical research articles, this estimation of his own creative and academic output has long been taken for granted.

In reviewing Dr. Havard’s published and unpublished writings, my ongoing research has revealed a far more striking portrait of this (previously) un-studied “medical Inklings.” While Dr. Havard’s writings touch on a diverse array of genres, his poetry remains of particular interest: currently, over thirty completed poems have been identified, several of which were published during his lifetime. Study of these poetic works not only illuminates the contours of Dr. Havard’s own life experiences, but also invites deeper consideration of his role within the Inklings.

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Accordingly, this paper will trace recurring themes and elements in Dr. Havard's poetry, as well as explore the poetic relationships between R. E. Havard and Lewis, among others. In *The Company They Keep*, Diana Glyer identifies referential writings as evidence of "strong mutual influence" (189), even noting literary references as "a form of influence in its purest sense" (167). Reflecting such impact, Havard is honored in several of Lewis's poems, including "The Admiral Stamped on the Quarter Deck" and "Five Sonnets." These referents, coupled with new evidence that Lewis both read and provided written feedback on Havard's own poetry, enriches understanding not only of Havard as a writer, but of his role within the Inklings. Notably, Havard's poetic collaborations extended beyond the group, including figures such as artist and sculptor Rosamund Fletcher. By identifying such connections and collaborations, this paper—as part of a larger book project on Robert E. Havard—highlights the importance of renewed scholarly interest in the "lesser-known" members of the Inklings, as well as invites broader consideration of patterns of influence within the group.

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#### Additional Keywords

Poetry; Robert Havard; Havard

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AN UNEXPECTED POET:  
THE CREATIVE WORKS OF  
DR. ROBERT E. HAVARD<sup>1</sup>

SARAH O'DELL

While INKLINGS scholarship flourishes, little scholarly attention has fallen to the lesser-known members of the circle: of the nineteen “canonical”<sup>2</sup> members, many have never received a more extensive treatment than David Bratman’s meticulously researched appendix to Diana Glyer’s *The Company They Keep*. Robert E. Havard, labeled the only “non-literary” Inkling by Humphrey Carpenter and the “medical Inkling” by others, falls into this category. While not “literary” in the same sense as C.S. Lewis or J.R.R. Tolkien, I would like to challenge this oversimplification of Havard, an Oxford and Cambridge-trained physician who, as George Sayer notes, was “well-read and keenly interested in the processes of literature and in theology” (Sayer, *Jack* 151).

The lack of scholarly interest in Havard’s writings may partially be explained by Havard’s own estimation of his literary output. In a 1984 interview with Lyle Dorset, Havard commented:

I have never written anything very much [...] I wrote some reviews for the *Tablet* sometimes, and one or two papers—some occasional efforts at first with Lewis’s help, but only one erupted into print<sup>3</sup>. But I’ve never been a writer in the way the others were.<sup>4</sup> (Oral History)

And yet: while many of Havard’s writings survive only in manuscript or typescript form, he is far from unpublished. Havard’s name appears on over thirty scientific research papers, indicating both his background in academic medicine and his collaboration on a variety of projects. He published a sizeable number of book reviews and essays, the bulk of which are focused on medical and theological matters. Several of his poems also “erupted into print.”

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<sup>1</sup> Winner of the Alexei Kondratiev Award for best student paper, Mythcon 50, San Diego, California, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> As listed by Humphrey Carpenter in *The Inklings* (255-259).

<sup>3</sup> Presumably Havard’s “Appendix” to *The Problem of Pain*.

<sup>4</sup> It may be important to note that Havard made this comment in the context of speaking of the “originality” of works by fellow Inklings.

While Dr. Havard's published and unpublished works touch on a diverse array of genres, his poetry remains of particular interest: currently, over thirty poems have been identified, two of which were published during his lifetime. Study of these poems not only demonstrates Havard's acumen as a creative writer but also invites deeper consideration of his role within the Inklings.

Accordingly, this paper will trace recurring themes and elements in Dr. Havard's poetry, as well as explore the poetic relationships between Havard and Lewis, among others. Havard is honored in several of Lewis's poems, including "The Admiral Stamped on the Quarter Deck" and "Five Sonnets." Glyer has previously described referential writings as evidence of "strong mutual influence" (189), even noting literary references as "a form of influence in its purest sense" (167). These referents, coupled with new evidence that Lewis both read and provided written feedback on Havard's poetry, not only enrich our understanding of the friendship between the two men but also deepen our appreciation of Havard as a writer.

Notably, Havard's poetic collaborations extended outside the group, including figures such as sculptor and artist Rosamund Fletcher. By identifying such connections and collaborations, this paper—as part of a larger book project on Robert E. Havard—highlights Havard's role within the Inklings and beyond, as well as invites renewed scholarly interest in the "under-studied" members of the circle.

### **A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY**

Before delving into a discussion of the poetry of Robert E. Havard, it is helpful to have some idea of his chronology, as well as an understanding of his involvement with the Inklings. Robert Emlyn Havard (1901-1985) was born in South Kyme, Lincolnshire. After completing studies at the University of Oxford, he continued his education at both Cambridge and Guy's Hospital in London. While working as a biochemistry lecturer at Leeds University, he married Grace Mary Middleton in 1931. The pair would go on to have five children: John, Mark (Colin), Mary Clare, Peter, and David. While the exact sequence of events in the years following their marriage is unclear, Havard undertook a number of teaching and research positions, eventually receiving his MD in 1934. Soon after, Havard moved to Oxford to work as a general practitioner. It was in this capacity that he met C.S. Lewis and was invited to join the Inklings. During World War II, he served as a Lieutenant Surgeon in the British Navy and was stationed onboard the H.M.S. Corfu from March-August of 1943. Upon his return he joined the Army Malaria Research Unit in Oxford, where he investigated the effects of anti-malarial treatments, specifically mepacrine. About a year later, he transferred his research to a hospital near Liverpool,

where he served as a tropical medicine specialist until the end of the war. He then returned to Oxford and resumed his medical practice. He remained in Oxford until his retirement, when he was also awarded a papal knighthood for his medical work among local religious houses. He spent the next seventeen years living on the Isle of Wight, where he would walk each day to the Tennyson Monument on Tennyson Down. He passed away in 1985.

### HAVARD AND THE INKLINGS

Havard's association with the Inklings began in his friendship with Lewis, whom he met during a house call for "an attack of influenza" in 1934 or 1935 ("Philia" 216).<sup>5</sup> "On my first visit we went some five minutes discussing his influenza, which was very straightforward," Havard writes, "and then half an hour or more in a discussion of ethics and philosophy" ("Philia" 216). The two men's rapport was unmistakable from the beginning, and it was likely Havard's "interest in religio-philosophical discussion" that prompted Lewis to invite Havard to the Inklings ("Oral History"). Havard is frequently mentioned in Lewis's (published) letters and is even referred to as "almost my greatest friend" (*CL III*: 686). Similarly, Havard later described Lewis as "one of my best friends [...] my best friend for some many years" ("Oral History").

Within the Inklings, Havard demonstrated a particular knack for collecting nicknames. He was commonly referred to as "Humphrey" following an occasion when Hugo Dyson was unable to remember his name. Another nickname, the "Red Admiral," was bestowed by Lewis in 1943. Havard recalls:

In the war, I went to the Navy, and took the opportunity to grow a beard. And when I returned with this reddish beard [...] Jack promptly nicknamed me the "Red Admiral." This, I will say, was far from my real rank, which was Lieutenant. ("The Inklings Archives")

Havard's final nickname was the "Useless Quack," or "U.Q." for short. Described by Havard as "less complimentary," the nickname itself originated with Warren Lewis, who, along with Lewis and Tolkien, often depended on Havard for transportation. Havard notes: "I'd let down some promise to give them a lift and he referred to, 'Where's that Useless Quack Humphrey?'" ("The Inklings Archives"). Unfortunately, this last moniker—clearly not crafted in reference to Havard's abilities as a physician—has been adopted with some vitriol by later writers.

Havard also enjoyed a close friendship with J.R.R. Tolkien. It was Tolkien who helped arrange Havard's return to Oxford following his wartime

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<sup>5</sup> In "Philia" Havard notes that the meeting occurred in 1934 or 1935 (215). In 1984, he commented to Lyle Dorset that the pair met in early 1935 (Oral History).

service abroad; in a 1944 letter to Christopher Tolkien, he comments: "The Useless Quack has returned to Oxford! Almost the only wire I have ever pulled that has rung a bell. But there he is, uniform, red-beard, slow smile and all" (*Letters* #56, p.68). The two men were unified by their Catholic convictions: attending the same Church and often sitting together at Mass (Ruud 508). In the period between 1950 and 1968, Tolkien and Havard were neighbors, an association that only ended with the latter's retirement to the Isle of Wight.

Indeed, Havard's respective friendships with Lewis and Tolkien outlasted regular meetings of the group and survived long after the relationship between the other two men had "cooled." Havard comments that it was the differences between himself and Lewis that "laid the foundation of a friendship that lasted, with some ups and downs, until his death nearly thirty years later" ("Philia" 216). He also insightfully comments on the differences between Lewis and Tolkien, doing so in a rather *poetic* way (and therefore relevant to this particular study). Unfortunately, his estimation of the two men has been previously misquoted in such a way that the meaning has been lost. In describing the two men, Havard contrasts Lewis—a "big, full-blown man" who "came straight out at you"—with Tolkien, a "slight figure" whose "whole manner was elusive rather than direct" (Oral History). He continues:

The word *flighty* crosses my mind in connection with Tolkien. It's misleading, because I don't mean it in the ordinary sense of the word at all. But he would hop from subject to subject, in an elusive sort of way. You could see his mind was always hovering like a bee over flowers, whereas Lewis was working away more like a carpenter at a carpenter's bench. These are very imperfect descriptions of their differences, but they were very apparent at close contact. They were two very different people. And the surprising thing, really, is that they became such close friends, rather than that differences appeared and separated them. (Oral History)<sup>6</sup>

The vision of Tolkien as a bee flitting among flowers and Lewis hammering away like a carpenter demonstrate both Havard's insight and his penchant for figurative language. This, coupled with his skills as a conversationalist—John Havard has commented on his father's ability to provide "good talk" and converse with a diverse array of people—provides telling context for the physician who numbered among the Inklings. In turning our attention to Havard's own verse, as well as poetic references to Havard by other Inklings,

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<sup>6</sup> In published versions of this quote, the following is missing: "was always hovering like a bee over flowers, whereas Lewis was," resulting in a conflation of Havard's statements regarding Lewis and Tolkien. See Duriez 83.

our understanding of the “medical Inkling” increases in both clarity and complexity.

#### THE POETRY OF R. E. HAVARD: AN OVERVIEW

While Havard wrote several poems before and after his association with the Inklings, the overwhelming majority of his poetry dates from the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>7</sup> Many of the poems reflect Christian themes; in several poems, the theological is held as a mirror to the natural or human world. Others speak to a love of nature, especially rivers and the sea. Still others are imitative works: Havard “takes the form—both structural and conceptual—of a well-known poem and uses it as a medium to relay an aspect of his own understanding” (O'Dell 196). Each of his poems is lovingly crafted—various drafts of many of the poems have survived—and all of them are written in rhymed iambic verse. A considerable number of his poems were arranged (presumably by Havard himself) in a packet as the “Collected Verse of R.E. Havard.”

In addition to writing poetry, Havard also wrote *about* poetry in a series of essays published in 1947. In speaking of the power and presence of beauty, Havard lauds not only the beauty of nature and medieval architecture, but states that “There is beauty in men’s minds which has, at times, been recorded and enshrined in literature, poetry, art and music. The magic of poetry is such that a thought or a mood experienced hundreds of years ago can be communicated to us now” (“Uses of Diversity” 230). His musings on this magic are well-worth quoting in full:

By so clothing a situation with beauty, the poet makes it a living thing for us. Not only do the poets see further than most of us, but they have the art of making us see with them, and we see, moreover, in an especially vivid way. For they bring not merely intellectual knowledge; they stir feelings and emotions; they educate our hearts. So that there is in the world of poetry an enormous wealth of beauty, waiting only for our leisure, attention and exploration. And if poetry is a world, literature as a whole is an entire universe. Some of the greatest achievements of the human race are preserved in literature. We can resurrect and enjoy them when, and as often as we please. We can meet with and converse with the greatest human minds not only of our own days but of all ages. We can escape from the narrow confines not only of our own town and city, but of our own time as well. We are free to range over all historic time and the whole world. Literature will take us into the homes and lives of the wealthy and the poor; to the mind stored with learning and to minds rich

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<sup>7</sup> John Havard notes that only fragments of poems exist from the 1970s until Havard’s death in 1985.



only in the experience of suffering. The whole pattern of humanity is there for our study and delight. (230-231)

Havard's reflections, published over a decade before Lewis's *Experiment in Criticism*, anticipate Lewis's description of literature "as a series of windows, even of doors" (138) that allow us to "see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own" (137). Havard speaks to the impact of the written word on the entire person: head and heart; intellect and imagination. He subtly echoes Barfield and Lewis's injunction against "chronological snobbery" in referencing the ability of poetry and literature to furnish a means of imaginative time-travel. He indicates the possibility of literature to inspire empathy through its ability to expand our understanding of the experiences of others. Not only that, but literature sweeps us into communion with the "greatest human minds [...] of all ages." It is a description finely in tune with sacramental views of reading, of poetry, and of the world; as such, it gestures to Havard's immersion in his Catholic faith.<sup>8</sup>

#### COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

The remainder of this paper will present a series of "case studies" relevant to the following: Havard's own poetry, his poetic collaborations, and references to Havard in the poetry of fellow Inklings. In doing so, I hope to not only enhance our understanding of Havard's place among the Inklings, but also implicitly demonstrate what can be lost when such figures are relegated to "footnote" status. While Havard's works are of interest because of his friendships with Lewis, Tolkien, and others, I would like to suggest that his literary leavings are also worth reading (and remembering) for their own sake.

#### Published Poems

##### *"I Came Not to Call the Righteous"*

As previously indicated, two of Havard's poems were published during his lifetime. The first, "I Came Not to Call the Righteous," was not only published in a 1947 issue of the *Franciscan Annals* but was also shared at an Inklings.<sup>9</sup> Consisting of four stanzas, this devotional poem unfolds like a prayer,

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in another essay ("*Tota Pulchra Es*"), Havard asserts that "the Daily Office of the Church is in fact one long poem of praise, prayer and thanksgiving, offered to God" (358), as well as discusses the role of beauty within the Catholic Church and the lives of Catholics themselves.

<sup>9</sup> See Wade Center record for: Havard, Robert E. "I Came not to Call the Righteous." 1 p. (poem by Havard [Lewis's physician] which he read to the Inklings on one occasion, sent by Havard to John Rateliff.) csl-POEM.

demonstrating Havard's embeddedness in the Catholic tradition. Each stanza poses a question to Christ himself and is concluded by a common refrain. The first stanza recounts Christ's ministry on earth, then queries: "Can your patience last until / Every soul has sinned its fill?" (lines 3-4). The second stanza asks, "Does the woman of the street / Wash, as then, your tired feet?" (lines 5-6) even as it notes the continued presence of Christ's "human heart" (line 8). Nonetheless, the speaker questions his ability to encounter Christ's presence in the third stanza: he remains bound to "crowded city life" (line 11) where "love is lost in din and strife" (line 12). In the final stanza, the speaker cries out in grief and longing:

I work and fret till death shall come;  
Mean and shallow, selfish, numb;  
O Christ, whose glory fills the sky,  
What part in holiness have I? (16-19)

The poem's very title—"I Came Not to Call the Righteous"—implicitly responds to the speaker's doubts; although "mean and shallow, selfish, numb" and seemingly beyond the reach of holiness, the words of Luke 5: 31-32 hover above the text: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (*New International Version*). Furthermore, this stanza concludes in the same way as the others, with an affirmation of "*Ubi homo, ibi Christus*": Where man is, there is Christ. This refrain provides an answer to each question, affirming Christ's Biblical promise at the end of the book of Matthew—"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (*NIV*, Matthew 28: 20b), as well as invoking humans' status as image-bearers of Christ himself. This second meaning is perhaps best expressed by Gerard Manley Hopkins's conclusion to "As Kingfishers Catch Fire":

I say móre: the just man justices;  
Keeps grace: thát keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —  
Christ [...] (129)

Additionally, Havard's usage of "*Ubi homo, ibi Christus*" invokes the ancient hymn "*Ubi caritas*," a Gregorian melody often sung by Catholics on Maundy Thursday (Martin). The first line of the hymn—"Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est" (Where charity and love are, God is there)—may have inspired the poem's refrain. If so, Havard certainly suggests that the faithful serve as God's emissary in the world, called upon to act in *caritas et amor*.

*"Sonnet"*

Havard's second published poem, "Sonnet," was printed in a 1952 issue of *The Tablet*. Subtitled "In memory of the conjunction of the Moon and Venus, July 21st, 1951," the poem is not only one of Havard's best, but also presents a novel instance of feedback and editing within the Inklings.

Written in the Shakespearian style, the poem begins with the astronomical lights indicated in the title: the "heavenly conjunction bright" (line 2) of "burning Venus and the inconstant Moon" (line 1). Yet this union is temporary, demonstrating "how love's dear day is ended soon / Losing its glory ere the fall of night" (lines 3-4). The poem continues, invoking other heavenly bodies—Mercury, "most shy of all the stars" (line 5); Jupiter, a king "mid servile moons" (line 6); "heavy Saturn"; "bloodstained Mars" (7)—in order to note their cumulative inconstancy. Like the moon, the planets—perhaps like their mythological counterparts—are "never constant long in anything" (8). Their light is capricious because it depends on "borrowed powers" (line 10); we are deceived by a "changing dim reflection of a far/Flung radiation not their own" (lines 11-12). The poem concludes by allegorizing this radiation, "so thus":

The fickle light of human love is won,  
By faltering reflection, from the Sun. (lines 13-14)

The conclusion of the poem illustrates a theme common to Havard's poetry, specifically the relationship between human and divine love. Just as planetary lights owe their glow to the Sun, the radiance of human love derives its source (however imperfectly) from the divine Love of the "Son" (that is, Christ).

Havard's ending and its phonetic play are present in all versions of the poem, holographs and typescripts alike. While it is difficult to piece together the sequence of these various drafts, one annotated typescript stands out in particular. The front of the document in question includes a complete rendering of the poem. Additionally, several variations of lines are typed on the verso, giving the impression that this draft was meant to be shared with another. Indeed, while Havard's edits and annotations decorate the document, another individual's handwriting is present: Lewis has added his own suggestions.<sup>10</sup>

There is a spontaneity in the "layering" of written edits; the nature of the document suggests that Havard and Lewis discussed the poem, each simultaneously adding their notes. It is highly likely, then, that Lewis suggested alterations and Havard made written edits within the space of a conversation. While the "edited" wording of the poem is not exactly equal to the published version, substantial changes have been made over the course of the exchange.

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<sup>10</sup> The identity of the handwriting has been confirmed by Charlie Starr (May 31, 2018).

Havard replaces “Jove” with “Jupiter”; similarly, “satellites” becomes “moons” (line 6). An earlier version of line 9— “For Mars, great Jove, Mercury, Saturn are”—is crossed out and replaced with “For them, the dust of heavenly splendor.” Lewis’s penciled annotations comprise suggestions regarding lines 11 and 12, the same lines that Havard’s typed variations call into question:

*Havard Version 1 (recto)*<sup>11</sup>

With faltering reflection of that star (11)  
Engendering warming lighting all; so thus (12)

*Havard Version 2 (verso)*

By faltering reflection from the all (11)  
Embracing radiance of sunlit space; and thus (12)

*Havard Version 3 (verso)*<sup>12</sup>

By faltering reflection from that ball (11)  
Engendering warming lighting all; so thus (12)

*Lewis’s Notes (verso)*<sup>13</sup>

**A far – (11)**  
**–Flung radiation not their own (12a)**  
{Embracing radiance not their own}: so thus (12b)

*Published Version*<sup>14</sup>

With changing dim reflection of **a far** (11)  
**Flung radiation not their own**; so thus (12)

It is not completely certain that the final wording of line 12 is Lewis’s own invention, however likely it seems.<sup>15</sup> Regardless, it is clear that Havard not only asked for Lewis’s input, but adopted a version of Lewis’s (written) suggestions. Furthermore, Lewis’s feedback not only influenced, but improved, the published version.<sup>16</sup> It is easy to imagine that Lewis also encouraged Havard to publish the poem, especially given Havard’s own description of his writing: “some occasional efforts [...] with Lewis’s help” (Oral History). Colin Havard

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<sup>11</sup> Refers to the typed version, not necessarily the handwritten notes that overlay the TS.

<sup>12</sup> The typed “by” has been crossed out and replaced with a handwritten “with.”

<sup>13</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Other handwritten drafts of the poem contain the same wording, and yet none of the versions are dated.

<sup>16</sup> By splitting a compound word — “far-flung” — between two lines, the final version is far more dynamic, and the altered line avoids the awkwardness of “Engendering warming lighting.”

has also commented on Lewis's influence on his father's poetry: "He was very much a traditionalist and I think that was quite considerably the influence of Lewis, who also had very little time for modern [poetry]" (Personal Interview).

### Poems about Havard

As Glycer notes, "literary reference is a form of influence in its purest sense: without the presence of the other individual, these allusions, tributes, character studies, and works would not exist" (167). Accordingly, Havard not only shared his poetry with fellow Inklings, but was also directly referenced in their verse. Two of Lewis's poems feature Havard: "The Admiral Stamped on the Quarter Deck" celebrates Havard's return to Oxford in 1943, and Havard is presented as a speaker in "Five Sonnets." Havard also makes an appearance in a series of clerihews written by Tolkien in honor of the Inklings.

### *Comfrey and Squills*

Tolkien's cleriheuw makes use of Havard's nicknames, as well his botanical knowledge:

Dr U.Q. Humphrey  
Made poultices of comfrey  
If you didn't pay his bills  
He gave you doses of squills. (Carpenter 177)

Comfrey and squills are both traditional medicinal plants, identified as members of the *Symphytum* and *Drimia* genera, respectively. "Poultices of comfrey" continue to be used for the treatment of myalgias, wounds, and joint complaints due to their anti-inflammatory and pain-reducing effects (Staiger 1441). Squills, on the other hand, have historically been used to treat a host of illnesses, including edema (*Drimia* species have diuretic properties) and respiratory ailments such as asthma (Bozorgi 124). Squill also had a place in Hippocrates's pharmaceutical repertoire: he wrote of its use for the beautification of scars, as well as the treatment of burns and empyema, among other ailments (Hippocrates 807). While both plants are potentially toxic, it is worth noting that the cardiac glycosides present in squills are potent enough to render it an effective—and historically popular—rat poison.

It is well-known that Tolkien had a deep knowledge of plants, and his tendency to stop and examine "trees, flowers, birds and insects" (Sayer, "Recollections" 22) while walking proved a source of frustration for the Lewis brothers. In "Recollections of J.R.R. Tolkien," George Sayer recounts the events surrounding one such hike in the Malvern Hills. While Havard had been "most kind in walking some of the time with Tolkien," Lewis asked Sayer to walk with

the Professor, as Havard was needed back in Oxford (22). Unlike Warnie and Lewis, who Tolkien described as “ruthless walkers, very ruthless indeed,” Sayer was delighted by Tolkien’s pace and the conversation that accompanied it: “He knew more natural history than I did, certainly far more than the Lewises, and kept coming out with pieces of curious information about the plants that we came across” (22). Sayer provides a glimpse of such information, citing Tolkien’s knowledge of the wood aven—*Herba Benedicta*, a reported “protection from the devil”—and celandine, whose picking was once accompanied by prayer (22). So it was to walk with Tolkien, something that Havard was “most kind” to do. Yet this was not due to any preference for slower pacing, as Havard had a history of rock-climbing and rigorous hill walking (John Havard). His willingness to amble alongside his friend was instead likely due to their shared interests.

Colin Havard recalls his father’s tendency to collect and press plants and flowers, an activity also mentioned by Havard himself in his letters and travel writings. Dr. Havard’s naval service was spent in West Africa aboard the H.M.S. Corfu, which “patrolled the central Atlantic between Freetown and the Brazilian coast” (Oral History). His tender and detailed letters to his wife, Grace, were later typed and prepared as the “Corfu Letters.” While in Freetown, he seeks to “describe the scenery without betraying the geography” (33), even describing the local vegetation at some length. “Some trees had large brilliant flowers,” he writes, “I picked one & am pressing it to send to you to get identified at the Botany Dept. if you care to” (33). He references the flower again in his description of the gifts he has found for their children: “Give my love once more to John & Mark [Colin]. I have a ship’s knife for John—a native one for Mark. I enclose the dried flower for Mary Clare. You must try to find out what it is” (38). It would seem such curiosity was influential, as Mary Clare eventually went on to complete doctoral studies in botany.

Similar references to local flora fill the pages of “Around America in Eighty Days,” an account of his 1969 stateside travels with Colin. While hiking near The Monastery of Christ in the Desert (New Mexico), Havard writes that he “made a small collection of flowers and evergreens, none of which I had seen before, and pressed them in the *Paradiso*,<sup>17</sup> which seems a suitable fate” (17). Similarly, he revels in the beauty of the Colorado wildflowers during a visit to Cuchara:

There were again many exotic and beautiful flowers, some of them I have pressed; also some familiar ones like dandelions in great abundance. (19)  
[...]

The roadside, even at 10,000 feet, was bright with flowers of all kinds, known and unknown, but more unknown than known. There were at

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<sup>17</sup> The *Paradiso* Havard refers to is Dorothy Sayers’s translation (*Corfu Letters* 8).

least two varieties of dandelion, and a variant of clover. There was a small blue 'flag', very beautiful, that covered large areas of the Rancho [sic] we had walked in. There were many more, and some I picked to press and bring home. I collected quite a bunch in about five minutes. The flowers of Colorado are one of the things that I shall remember. (23)

With this insight into Havard's interests, Tolkien's short verse not only takes on new significance—Tolkien's botanical references may have been specifically meant for Havard to understand—but also deepens our understanding of the friendship between the two men, unified in their shared wonder and appreciation of the natural world. While Tolkien's short verse gestures to this link, its implications are lost without the corresponding knowledge of Havard's interests and habits.

### *Speaking of Bees (1945)*

Similarly, Havard makes an appearance in Lewis's "Five Sonnets," a series written around 1945 (CL III:617).<sup>18</sup> The sonnets focus on despair and personal responses to grief, alluding to Dante's journey through the *Inferno* and ultimately offering a poetic rendition of Lewis's encouragement from *Mere Christianity*: "Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither" (*Mere Christianity* 134).

"Pitch your demands heaven-high and they'll be met," the fourth Sonnet begins, contrary to the voice of Nature, which cries: "That long way round which Dante trod was meant / For mighty saints and mystics not for me" (lines 9-10). To assent to this earthly view, however, is to be "like the bee / That booms against the window-pane for hours / Thinking that way to reach the laden flowers" (lines 12-15). Owen Barfield notes that the image of the bee buzzing against the windowpane—indeed, the central image of the final sonnet—was "suggested [to Lewis] in conversation with his physician, Dr. Havard" (Barfield 15).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Lewis notes that the poems were written "about ten years" prior to when Lewis sent them to Sheldon Vanauken in 1955. In the letter that accompanied the poems, Lewis makes an additional mention of Havard, this time in drawing a connection between Vanauken's descriptions of grief and the accounts of physical pain needed by a physician: "my doctor friend once rebuked me for the v. exact attempts at precision I made in describing a pain to him. He said 'All that about just how it felt, its unique quality, is generally useless & unreliable to us as doctors. Tell me where it is & how long you've had it. If I need anything more, I'll ask.' Possibly all those fine points wh. distinguish your loss from all the other losses suffered by lovers are less important than they (v. naturally) seem to you" (CL III:617).

<sup>19</sup> Diana Glyer has previously recognized this reference to Havard. See *The Company They Keep*, page 61.

"If we could speak to her," my doctor said,  
"And told her, 'Not that way! All, all in vain  
You weary out your wings and bruise your head," (lines 1-3)

Although the bee refuses the doctor's advice,<sup>20</sup> leaving such "inconceivables as glass" (line 6) to "queens and mystics and religious bees," she is nonetheless caught in a handkerchief and released "where quivering flowers stand thick in summer air" (line 12), thereby avoiding death via her own blind obstinacy.

While other accounts of "Five Sonnets" appear to treat the discourse with the bee as Lewis's invention, the episode is a near copy of Victor Hugo's "Providence—An Apologue," with some minor alterations. Hugo's denouement provides a fitting explication of Lewis's verse:

Well, you see how I saved the drone. I was *its Providence*. But (and here is the moral of my story) do we not, stupid drones that we are, conduct ourselves in the same manner toward the providence of God? [...] Seeing no farther than our noses [...] we plunge ahead in our blind infatuation, like madmen. We would succeed [...] we would break our heads against an invisible obstacle.

And when God, who sees all and who wishes to save us, upsets our designs, we stupidly complain against Him, we accuse his Providence. We do not comprehend that [...] He is doing all this to deliver us, to open the Infinite to us. (432. italics in original)<sup>21</sup>

While the story of the bee is not wholly original, "Five Sonnets" repurposes Hugo's original image, transforming his prose into poetry and expanding on its theological implications.

Given this source material, how are we to interpret Havard's role? Perhaps Havard brought the story to Lewis's attention, suggesting elaborations to Hugo's original discourse with the bee in the process. Perhaps he even suggested the incorporation of the story after reading a draft of the earlier sonnets. Honoring Havard's literary insight, Lewis wrote him into the final piece of the series. While conjecture, this remains the best possible interpretation of the available evidence.

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<sup>20</sup> It is interesting that Lewis chooses Havard's persona as the vehicle to deliver the crucial image of the final sonnets. While the "we" of the poems continues in a universal sense, it also can be read as referring to Havard and Lewis; the pair stand together within the world of the poem.

<sup>21</sup> Victor Hugo's "Providence" story also appears in *Elbert Hubbard's Scrap Book* (first published in 1923). It is likely that the scrapbook served as the source material for "Five Sonnets." My sincere thanks to Jon Milhon for gifting me a copy of this text, allowing for recognition of the allegory.



*Return of the U.Q. (1943)*

Another reference to Havard in Lewis's verse is less ambiguous with regard to the immediate source material. "The Admiral Stamped on the Quarter Deck," named for the first line of the poem, originates from a holograph accompanied by Havard's own note: "By C.S. Lewis on my return from sea, Aug. 1943". The poem begins with a search for "that useless quack"—presumably on the lam—onboard the vessel: "Come bustle about and quick find out / And arrest that useless quack" (lines 11-12). Of all places, the quack is found in the "lily-white bed" of the admiral's wife but escapes overboard: "And he swam a league and a league again / And to England he swam back" (lines 21-22). When he comes ashore, he gives a very different account to the First Lord:

"My Lud" said Hump with a doleful dump  
"We sailed through a U-boat pack  
At their first shell the admiral fell  
But not the useless quack." (lines 25-28)

The ruse of a tale continues until "the rest of the crew were soon polished off too/ Except the useless quack" (lines 31-32), who sails the ship home himself until it sinks "in sight of land" (line 37). The ending, however, is a happy one:

"You're a gallant lad," the First Lord said  
As he gave his shoulder a smack.  
"Take a job on shore and sail no more,  
But become a resident quack!" (lines 41-44)

While the tone of the poem is jocular, the (however fantastical) suggestion of infidelity is jarring—especially given the fact that Havard's return to Oxford was precipitated by Grace's diagnosis of breast cancer. However, it is altogether possible that this was unknown to Lewis at the time, who simply wrote a bawdy sea-shanty to commemorate his friend's return from sea. The poem is so clearly written in jest that the content becomes a matter of genre: the charming wayward sailor outwits his companions, fights his adversaries so well that "the enemy thought 'twas a hundred men / When 'twas only the useless quack" (lines 35-36), and returns home to acclaim. Within the context of other folk songs (or drinking songs) about sailors—the aggressively sexual Barnacle Bill comes to mind—it is clear that Lewis has crafted a very "PG-rated," yet still recognizable, member of the genre. Furthermore, Havard must have appreciated the gesture: the only reason the poem survives is because he placed it among his papers.

### Collaboration with Rosamund Fletcher

Havard's poetic involvements also extended beyond the Inklings and into collaboration with sculptor Rosamund Fletcher. Rosamund Mary Beatrice Fletcher (1908-1993), the daughter of painter Blandford Fletcher, was born in Dorking, Surrey and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors in 1957. Her stone relief carvings focused on natural and religious subjects<sup>22</sup> and were exhibited numerous times in both the U.K. and abroad. With regard to international exhibits, her "The End of the Covert" received a bronze medal in the art competitions of the 1948 Summer Olympics. Described as a working "principally for the local church," she fashioned a considerable number of artworks for display in English parishes, including several sets of Stations of the Cross (Hagan). Examples of her work can still be admired in churches across England, from Oxfordshire to North Yorkshire. Most pertinent to this current study, Fletcher also worked with Havard on multiple projects: she illustrated his poem "Winter"; the pair embarked on a joint project to create a children's book; Fletcher carved Grace's headstone when she passed away in 1950—a cross emblazoned with a pelican and its five children, under which Dr. Havard is also buried.

#### *"Winter"*

Fletcher likely illustrated "Winter" in 1942 or 1943. A letter from Grace to her husband, dated April 19<sup>th</sup> 1943, mentions the involvement of another Inkle in the printing of the illustrated poem: "A letter from Charles Williams to say that 250 copies of the poem + drawing, almost half its present size, would cost £3." The resulting copies were likely distributed as Christmas greetings, as one surviving card is signed "Best wishes for Christmas + the New year, R.E. Havard." Fletcher's black-and-white illustration (page 35) beautifully frames Havard's verse on all sides: the roots of a tree begin in the lower left-hand corner, which then sweeps upwards to fill the top third of the card with its branches, dark and bare. A silhouette of the crucified Christ is visible beyond the tree, while falling leaves provide a left-hand border. The starkness of the scene is softened by continued signs of life—grass grows around the roots of the tree, and birds perch overhead. The illustration's focus on the doubling of "tree" appropriately mirrors Havard's verse:

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<sup>22</sup> In fact, Fletcher speaks to this specialization while responding to Havard's request to illustrate another poem: "I don't think I can illustrate "Plymouth" not quite my line. Animals and religious subjects are my best, rather a mixture!"

In swelling robes of living green  
A tree in summer blooms so fair,  
Majestical! a peerless queen  
She livens every vagrant air.

Though now with limbs unfrocked and lean  
She fronts the darker days and drear,  
Returning life is there unseen  
Within that skeleton austere.

While on a Tree man's Love doth die,  
A sign of Love's return is set.  
See! Dark against the Winter sky  
Its sharp and slender silhouette.

Again, Havard's poetry juxtaposes the religious and the natural, and does so in a way that affirms the sacramentality of the created world; the death and resurrection of Christ are echoed in the seasonal cycles of death and renewal seen in nature. The combination of Havard's verse with Fletcher's artwork renders these themes immediately visible, increasing the effect of his poem upon the reader and infusing her illustrations with literary meaning.

### *"Alphabet of Biblical Animals"*

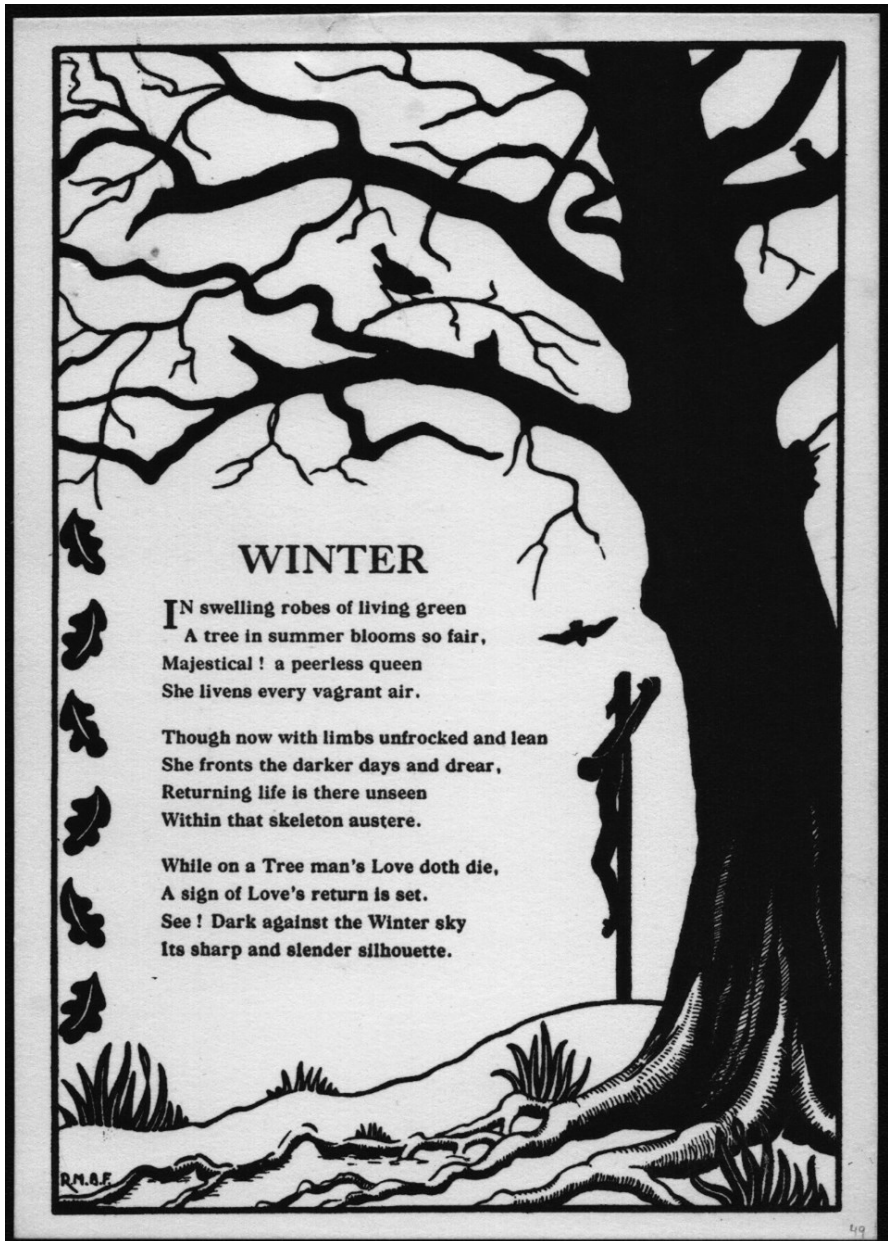
Although the project was never fully realized, Fletcher and Havard worked together on an illustrated book titled "Alphabet of Biblical Animals." Fletcher's surviving letters<sup>23</sup> suggest that she initiated the collaboration and asked Havard to write "four lines [of poetry] for each animal." The pair spent some time deliberating on which animals to include in the "Alphabet," seeking to avoid redundancy as well carefully selecting an appropriate verse for each letter. Fletcher finished sketches for almost half of the illustrations. Havard drafted poems for several of the animals as well as wrote a twenty-six line poem of the entire alphabet,<sup>24</sup> each line corresponding to a Biblical reference:

A is the Ass that has carried a King,	Matt. 21.5
B for the Bears that the prophet did bring	4 Kings 2.24
C is the Cock that St. Peter heard crow,	Luke 33.60
D is the Dove that the Baptist did know.	John 1.32

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<sup>23</sup> All references to Fletcher's letters are taken from copies given to the author by John Havard.

<sup>24</sup> From a copy of the poem given to the author by John Havard.



"Winter," Illustrated by Rosamund M.B. Fletcher.

And so on, until the end of the alphabet:

As for X, Y, and Z there are no names to mark;  
You will find them instead as they enter the Ark.

Additionally, several of Fletcher's illustrations can be matched to completed verses by Havard. For instance, Fletcher's tranquil sketch of a drinking Hart is matched by Havard's verse:

When, weary as the thirsty Hart,  
The toiler seeketh rest in vain.  
May God into his soul impart  
Courage and hope to quench his pain.<sup>25</sup>

Fletcher's enthusiasm for the project appears to in part stem from her (then) current limitations. In a letter dated August 18, 1945, she comments that "I am better, at least the lung is, and able to do more now," suggesting a possible diagnosis of tuberculosis and the prescription of bed rest. Later, she writes that "I suppose one must adjust oneself [to] these troubles and accept them, but I find it very difficult being so active in mind and full of ideas. I often wish you were my doctor!" One such idea involved asking Ronald Knox to write a foreword to the in-progress book:

I suppose there would be no hope of [Mgr. Knox] writing a foreword or preface to it? I expect you will be horrified at the idea but I am always too ambitious I fear, but if someone like that would write a small preface I do feel it would greatly help the publishing of it, as no one has ever heard of me in this line.

Havard must have not been "horrified" by the request—in a later letter, Fletcher remarks that "I am glad you approve of the idea of asking Mgr. Knox to help us when we have something to show." During his tenure as the Roman Catholic chaplain at the University of Oxford, Knox had been instrumental in Havard's 1931 conversion to Catholicism. The two men became good friends: Knox dedicated his 1934 detective novel, *Still Dead*, "To Dr. Robert Havard," and Havard later introduced Lewis and Knox at a "lunch party just before the war" ("Philia" 223). Overall, these friendships and collaborations demonstrate Havard's embeddedness in the intellectual and artistic backdrop of twentieth-century Oxford. By asking him to participate in such a venture, it is clear that

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<sup>25</sup> From a copy given to the author by John Havard.

Fletcher—an established and accomplished artist—clearly valued and respected Havard's poetry.

### IMPLICATIONS

Review of Havard's poetic works and artistic associations necessarily broadens our understanding of his place within the Inklings. By increasing visibility of his writings beyond his "Appendix" to *The Problem of Pain* and his memoirs of Lewis and Tolkien, such study illuminates his contributions to their gatherings. Several of Havard's works are documented to have been read among the Inklings: the "Appendix," an account of mountain climbing,<sup>26</sup> and "I Came Not to Call the Righteous." With the knowledge that Havard read one poem, there arises the strong possibility that he read others.

This (re)introduction of Havard as poet shifts, however slightly, our knowledge of the group's dynamics. References to Havard in the poetry of Lewis and Tolkien demonstrate not only that they "spoke" to Havard in the language of poetry, but that he spoke back, notably through his role in the text and creation of Lewis's "Five Sonnets." Our understanding of the friendship between Lewis and Havard—typically cast as "Lewis's friendship with his physician"—is transformed, revealing their poetic communion. Similarly, Havard's friendship with Tolkien is seen to be characterized by a profound interest in both knowing and naming the natural world, illustrated by their shared botanical interests. Crucially, Havard's poetic collaborations with Rosamund Fletcher demonstrate that Havard was valued and respected for his literary leanings in his own lifetime.

This study also highlights the need for renewed scholarly interest in other under-studied members of the circle. While Havard was one of the Inklings's most faithful attendees, surprisingly little has been written with regard to many of their number. Gyer's ongoing work on the correspondence of Warren Hamilton Lewis and Dr. Blanche Biggs, for example, demonstrates the riches that spring from such attention. Deeper consideration of the "lesser known" Inklings not only sheds new light on the group's most famous members—C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield—but allows us to reclaim the legacy of those otherwise obscured in their friends' fame.

Beyond these contextual interests, Havard's works are certainly valuable for their own sake. His musings on the nature and effects of poetry remain powerful; his essays on "The Uses of Diversity" warrant serious

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<sup>26</sup> In a 28 April 1940 letter to his brother, Lewis remarks, "Havard read us an account of a mountain climb he had taken part in—a straight account in plain language, which made our hair stand on end" (*CL II*: 405), referring to Havard's "A Novice on Gable."

consideration. With regard to his poetry, this paper has only begun to explore his poetic output, a task I look forward to pursuing at greater length in the future. Nonetheless, Robert E. Havard is revealed as something more than a merely “unexpected poet”: a theorist of the beautiful, a poetic companion, and an accomplished physician-writer.

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**SARAH O'DELL, MA**, is an MD/PhD student at the University of California, Irvine. She is currently pursuing a PhD in English with an emphasis in the Medical Humanities, as well as working on a book-length study of Dr. Robert E. Havard. More information regarding her research can be found on her website, [sarahodellmdphd.com](http://sarahodellmdphd.com).

