

Book Talk

In 2018, it was announced that the streaming service Netflix had acquired the film rights to the Narnia Chronicles

for a whopping 250 million dollars. Though Lewis's seven children's stories are already perennial best-sellers, word of this latest live-action film series has certainly generated new interest among Narnia fans. As a result, David C. Downing's guide to the Narnia books, *Into the Wardrobe*, has been republished in paperback this year and translated into Japanese, Korean, and Polish.

Due to this renewed attention to Narnia, Downing has also received invitations this fall to talk about Lewis's imaginary land on podcasts such as "Pints with Jack" in San Diego, "The Thinkings" in Iowa, and "God's Story" in New Zealand. Downing also appeared in a Zoom book discussion with Douglas Gresham, C. S. Lewis's stepson, and Patti Callahan, the best-selling author whose charming new novel, *Once upon a Wardrobe*, will be launched by the Wade Center on October 28.

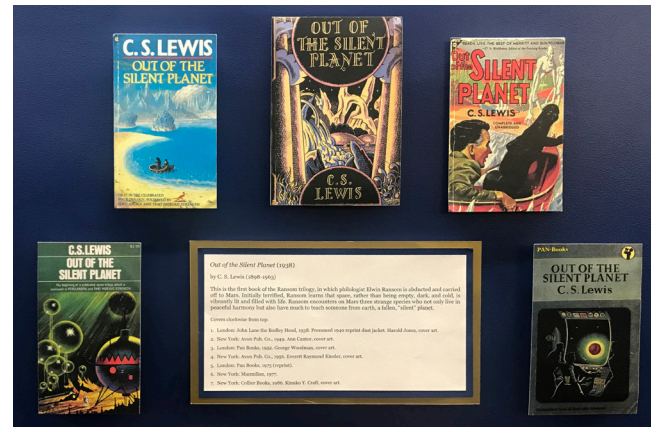
Museum Makeover

While the Wade Center was closed to the public for most of 2020, we realized this would be the perfect opportunity to renew the museum space in the building. Apart from some repainting and refurbishing, the Wade staff updated exhibits in the space.

The new wall exhibit is called "Judging a Book by Its Cover." It features a variety of book covers from five of our authors (Lewis, Tolkien, Sayers, MacDonald, and Chesterton),

revealing how the same book can elicit a range of renderings by cover artists, from the plain and stately to the garish and the bizarre. You *can't* judge a book by its cover, for the simple reason that British and American editions from different decades portray such radically different visions of the book's contents.

Also relevant to the marketing of our authors' works, a central display case features Tolkien-related merchandise from across several decades, offering visual interest for Tolkien fans young and old with examples of Tolkien fandom and commercialization in its many interpretations over the years. **W**

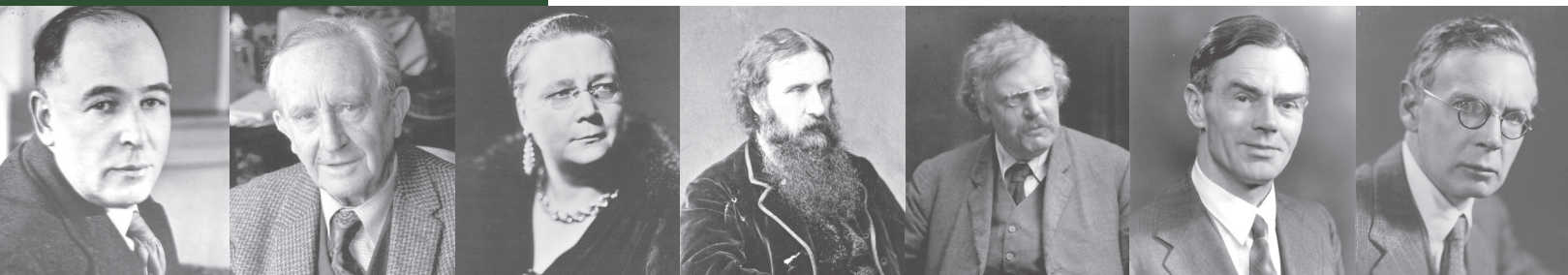


Book covers from C. S. Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet*

"C. S. Lewis in America: Lessons for Today from the Early American Reception of C. S. Lewis's Books" is the title of the 2021-2022 Hansen Lectureship series, given by Dr. Mark Noll. The dates and titles of his lectures are:

- **January 20, 2022:** C. S. Lewis for American Roman Catholics, 1936-1944
- **February 10, 2022:** C. S. Lewis for American Scholars and Mainline Protestants, 1935-1949
- **March 17, 2022:** C. S. Lewis for American Evangelicals, 1943-1956

All lectures will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Bakke Auditorium and will be posted to our YouTube page afterwards. Visit our website for more details. **W**



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Marion E. Wade Center Friends of the Wade

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Committed to Spiritual Formation

In August, the Wade Center had the privilege of hosting thirty-four people from the Renovaré Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation. Founded in 1988 by famed author Richard J. Foster, Renovaré has helped believers around the world to practice the Presence of God, providing ecumenical programs that offer, according to its website, a "blend of intellect and experience, of individual and community, of theory and practice, of charismatic and contemplative. It is deeply and unapologetically centered on Christ and rooted in the gospel of the Kingdom."

Recognizing the Wade as a sister institution along the road to Emmaus, Renovaré wanted to introduce its Illinois cohort to the devotional riches

of the Center. Co-directors David and Crystal Downing rejoiced in the opportunity, tailoring their talks to the book participants had been reading, Foster's *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*. In the morning, they explained the vision and mission of the Wade before giving participants a tour of the Museum and the Reading Room, where Wade Cataloger Jill Walker had put on display books that have enriched both Christians and seekers. Visitors found specially intriguing a copy of Lewis's *Pilgrim's Regress* that contains annotations in his own hand explaining how the novel illuminates his journey to faith.

After lunch, the Downings gave illustrated lectures about the various ways C. S. Lewis and Dorothy L. Sayers

demonstrate "the Incarnational Stream" discussed by Foster in his book. Though everyone was masked during the presentations, the Renovaré participants made up the most insightfully engaged and energetically responsive audience the Downings have ever addressed in the Bakke Auditorium. Wade Bookstore staff experienced the same energy when attendees bought numerous titles to aid in spiritual formation, having been introduced by Associate

Director Marjorie Mead to a number of Wade related works (pictured), such as *Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C. S. Lewis* by former Wade Director Lyle Dorsett.

The Wade Center has always evidenced a strong commitment to spiritual formation beginning with our founder Clyde Kilby. Recently, some Friends of the Wade strengthened this legacy by creating a special fund named the **Stephen and Marjorie Mead Endowment for Spiritual**



Formation, in honor of Marj Mead and in memory of her husband Steve who entered the presence of his Lord last May, after a long struggle with Parkinson's Disease. As funding allows, this new endowment will provide periodic research grants to individuals who are interested in using the Wade Center's resources to study the works of our seven authors on various spiritual disciplines and practices. In addition, this endowment will also fund occasional speakers who will share fresh insights in spiritual formation drawing primarily from the writings of the Wade authors. See the enclosed card for how you may make a gift toward this endowment. In addition, information on applying for the Mead Grant to research spiritual formation in the Kilby Reading Room is available on the Wade website. **W**



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DIRECT FROM THE DIRECTORS

Crystal and David C. Downing

When we came on board as Directors (already three years ago!), one of the first things we did was collaborate with Associate Director Marjorie Mead to generate a new vision statement, which now describes the Wade as “A living literary center of scholarly, artistic, and ongoing spiritual renewal.” And nothing has supported this vision of a living center better than the Wade podcast, initiated December 2018.

Now accessed in over one hundred countries, the podcast has been downloaded more than 70,000 times by listeners eager for Christian insight, many of whom reside in predominantly Muslim nations. We therefore felt led to continue even after COVID-19 closed the Wade doors. Setting up a recording studio in our home basement, we were aided by our producer, Aaron Hill, who adds commentary from his socially-distanced microphone near the washing machine. When restrictions temporarily loosened, we invited Wade researchers to our basement: speaker Jerry Root, handwriting specialist Charlie Starr, Chesterton Society President Dale Ahlquist, and more. Responses have been startling: students on campus and twenty-somethings at conferences yell to us “Love your podcast!”; international listeners thank us via email or YouTube, many explaining they had never heard of the Wade before discovering the podcast, some sending donations in gratitude. Most humbling of all, one woman told us that the podcast helped her cope with profound loneliness after a loss in her life, our laughter-filled conversations about books at the Wade ministering to her soul.

If you are not already doing so, we invite you to join the fun at wheaton.edu/listen/wade-center-podcast/.

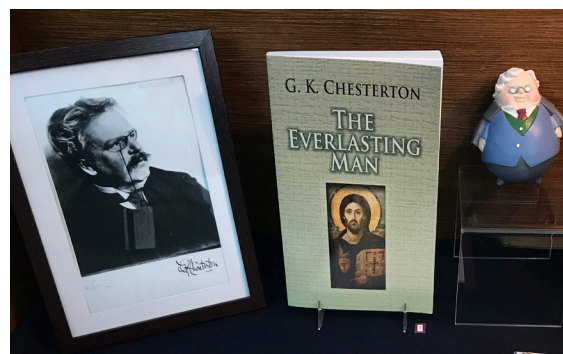
G.K.C.’s Influence on Jack

At the national G. K. Chesterton conference this July, one attendee proclaimed that if you have read Chesterton, you don’t need to read C. S. Lewis, since all of Lewis’s best ideas can be found somewhere in the massive works of his predecessor. Most Lewis fans would not agree, but they can’t help but notice how many of Chesterton’s most striking observations recur in the works of his famous “disciple.”

Lewis himself readily admitted the influence of Chesterton on his thinking. In his memoir *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis said that he first encountered one of Chesterton’s books while recuperating from trench fever during World War I. Lewis confessed that Chesterton “made an immediate conquest on me,” adding that “I liked him for his goodness.” Even though an atheist at the time, Lewis kept finding himself attracted to Christian authors, despite what he considered to be their implausible worldview. As Lewis concludes, “In reading Chesterton, as in reading [George] MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading. There are traps everywhere. . . . God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous.”

Lewis was especially impressed by Chesterton’s book *The Everlasting Man* (1925), a survey of Western culture from a Christian point of view. Chesterton argues that world history is indeed “His Story,” an unfolding revelation of God’s nature and purposes as first seen in the moral vigor of the Jews and the intellectual rigor of the Greeks. Chesterton viewed first-century Palestine as the perfect time and place for the Incarnation: the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, in which the Good News could be carried throughout the Roman Empire. Lewis frequently recommended *The Everlasting Man* to spiritual seekers, and he echoed Chesterton’s historical survey in the chapter of *Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933) featuring a wise old hermit called “History.”

The Wade Center holds two dozen of Chesterton’s books once owned by Lewis, whose underlinings and annotations in Chesterton’s books reveal how Lewis’s own thoughts were shaped by “The Laughing Prophet.” Suffice to say, it was partly through Chesterton’s influence that readers can conclude about Lewis what he said about Chesterton: “I liked him for his goodness.” W



A display on Chesterton, including a section on *The Everlasting Man*, in the Wade museum.

Celebrating the “Laughing Prophet”

Though Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874 – 1936) was the last of C. S. Lewis’s influencers to be archived at the Wade, he was the first to welcome people back to the Center this summer. Known as the “laughing prophet,” Chesterton was a joyous greeter, if even present only through his books, correspondence, and original drawings.

It all happened when the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton held its national conference in Chicagoland during the last week of July. Over 300 people met at a hotel located twenty minutes from the Wade, and 300 more watched online as scholars presented papers about the cultural insight and theological profundity of the prolific journalist, apologist, and novelist. Crystal Downing was honored to share how Chesterton kept Sayers from abandoning Christianity during her adolescence. And, in the process of doing Wade-based research on the numerous other ways Chesterton influenced Sayers, Crystal made discoveries that were new to not only Chesterton fans but also Sayers scholars. Best of all, the crowd was treated to a Chesterton impersonator who, adorned with cape, hat, pince-nez, and walking stick, recited published passages from Chesterton as though speaking to a group gathered in his honor—which indeed it was!

A highlight of the conference for many, however, was visiting the Wade Center for the very first time. After coordinating transportation for three separate groups of twenty, Nancy Brown, Director of Communications for the Chesterton Society, effused, “It was an amazing opportunity for the Chesterton folks to become aware of the wonderful collection of manuscripts and artifacts housed at the Wade Center. They also got a taste of how dedicated and devoted the staff were to the authors and to their visitors.” Indeed, Archivist Laura Schmidt and Catalog Librarian Jill Walker did a tremendous job explaining to conference visitors the significance of various “treats” they had put on display: precious first editions, one-hundred-year-old film clips of Chesterton with his wife, and hand-written letters, one including Chesterton’s caricature of his rotund self with wings. Especially exciting to visitors were chalk drawings Chesterton created on butcher paper: evidence of an experience he describes in his book *Tremendous Trifles* (1909).

In addition, Laura Schmidt collaborated with Associate Director Marjorie Mead to construct a special museum display informing visitors of a book soon to be published by the Wade: *The Everlasting Peoples*:

G. K. Chesterton and the First Nations. Based on a series of Hansen Lectures in the 2019-2020 academic year by Wheaton College art historian Matthew J. Milliner, the beautifully produced book draws upon Chesterton’s 1925 work *The Everlasting Man* in order to discuss the relevance of Chesterton to Native American religion and culture. (This book, pictured, will be released in December, with the Wade Center launch being held on January 20, 2022.) Visitors were also able to relish a museum display of changing book covers for Chesterton’s Father Brown detective stories.

After the conference, Nancy Brown proclaimed, “So many people told other people how wonderful the tour was, that we could have had three more tours!” Indeed, when one local conferee shared with Crystal how sad he was to miss out on the tours, she arranged for him to make a later visit on his own. And he was so impressed with the riches at the Wade that he returned several weeks later to do original research for an article he is writing on Lewis. W

