

# The Hansen Lectureship Turns Ten

This spring, Dr. Aubrey Buster, an Associate Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, served as the *tenth* lecturer in the Ken and Jean Hansen Lectureship. Building on research conducted at the Marion E. Wade Center, Dr. Buster’s lectures on “C.S. Lewis and the End of the World” offered a compelling exploration of Lewis’s views about apocalyptic literature and the apocalyptic visions he presents us with in his own works—visions that, as Buster demonstrated in her first lecture, counter the myth of scientific and technological progress.

The Hansen Lectureship was established by Walter and Darlene Hansen in honor of former Wheaton College Trustee Ken Hansen and his wife Jean. Drawing on C.S. Lewis’s comments about why we read from his great book *An Experiment in Criticism*, Walter Hansen explains that a primary goal of the lectureship is “to explore the great literature of the seven Wade authors so that we can escape from the prison of our self-centeredness and narrow, parochial perspective in order to see with other eyes, feel with other hearts, and be equipped for practical deeds in real life.”

Over the course of the last ten years, Hansen lecturers and their respondents have fulfilled this goal in many different ways. In addition to Dr. Buster’s exploration of the apocalyptic in Lewis’s writings, lecturers have discussed glimpses of the threefold office of Christ in Tolkien’s Middle-earth (Dr. Philip Ryken), the place of



the incarnation and the imagination in George MacDonald’s faith (Dr. Timothy Larsen), C.S. Lewis’s reception among American Christians (Dr. Mark Noll), the significance of the poem “Dymer” in Lewis’s life and works (Dr. Jerry Root), Dorothy L. Sayers’s commitment to life in community (Dr. Christine Colón); G.K. Chesterton’s relevance to Native American history and art (Dr. Matthew Milliner); the theme of stewardship of our natural world in the works of Tolkien and Lewis (Dr. Kristen Page), Lewis’s indebtedness to the Romantic period (Dr. Jeffrey Barbeau), and the Divine Comedy’s place in the life and writings of Lewis, Sayers, and Charles Williams (Dr. Richard Gibson).

“One of the things that makes the Hansen lectureship so rich,” Wade Center Director Jim Beitler notes, “is the variety of disciplinary perspectives represented by lecturers and respondents. In addition to English professors, we’ve heard from artists, creative writers, historians, political scientists, theologians, scientists, and more. Studying the Wade authors using different academic lenses results in fresh insights about their lives and writings. I’m looking forward to what the next decade holds for the Hansen lectureship!” **W**



Hansen lecturer, Aubrey Buster, Ph.D. with respondent, Danielle Corple, Ph.D.



## Congratulations to Our First Cohort of Continuing Scholars

More than sixty people participated in the inaugural year of the Wade Center’s Continuing Scholars Program. Events were held in person for participants living locally and online for those joining from a distance.

The program engages works by and about the Wade’s seven featured authors to promote lifelong learning, convivial conversation, and spiritual encouragement in the Christian faith. Wade scholars attend lectures, read and discuss a book by one of the seven authors, and explore the riches of the Wade Center’s collection.

This year’s program began with a September orientation session. At the orientation session, participants discussed program requirements and examined some of the remarkable items in our C.S. Lewis library, including Lewis’s personal copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Throughout the fall, program participants attended a variety of Wade events, including lectures by Amy

Baik Lee, Diana Glycer, John Hendrix, and Timothy Larsen.

In early January, participants gathered for a book discussion of Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*. The book’s eschatological reflections set us up well for Dr. Aubrey Buster’s Hansen lectures on “C.S. Lewis and the End of the World” in the spring.

Over the course of the year, Wade Scholars also deepened their knowledge of the seven authors through individual research projects and/or reading goals. Some delved deeply in the Wade’s archives; others read a book by one of the authors that they hadn’t read before.

The Continuing Scholars Program will conclude in mid-May with a celebratory certificate ceremony.

We will begin accepting applications for the 2025-26 Continuing Scholars Program this summer, and we have both in-person and online options. If you are interested in applying, email [wade@wheaton.edu](mailto:wade@wheaton.edu) to request the application link. **W**



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The Continuing Scholars Program in-person cohort meets for a book discussion in the Bakke Auditorium.

## A Message from the Director

Jim Beitler, Ph.D.

Over the Christmas holiday, I re-read C.S. Lewis’s *The Great Divorce* in preparation for a book discussion at the Wade Center, and I found myself reflecting on what Lewis is saying to readers about our creative pursuits.

*The Great Divorce* takes place in the afterlife, near the foothills of heaven. A busload of ghosts has arrived there from a grey town, and one by one the ghosts are met by “bright spirits,” emissaries of heaven who offer them the choice to make the journey to heaven or return to the grey town. Despite the encouragements of the bright spirits, nearly all the ghosts choose the grey town. They would rather follow their own sinful desires than submit to God’s will, and so God gives them what they want. George MacDonald, a character in the book, explains it this way: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it.”

One of the ghosts we meet had been a prominent painter during his life, and he ultimately chooses not to make the journey to the heavenly country. As we learn during his conversation with the bright spirit who meets him, the painter’s “art” has become nothing more than a vehicle for self-worship—and he doesn’t want to give that up. According to Lewis, this “snare” is by no means a unique one:

Every poet and musician and artist, but for Grace, is drawn away from love of the things he tells, to love of the telling till, down in Deep Hell, they cannot be interested in God at all but only in what they say about Him. For it doesn’t stop at being interested in paint, you know. They sink lower—become interested in their own personalities and then in nothing but their own reputations.

For Lewis, inward turns are downward turns. When makers come to see their work as shrines to the self, they are drawn away from the Maker of all things.

Lewis deeply valued creativity, of course, but he was also acutely aware of its temptations. So too were Wade authors J.R.R. Tolkien and Dorothy L. Sayers. The actions of Fëanor in Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion* and William of Sens in Sayers’s *The Zeal of Thy House* serve as warnings for artists who care too much for what they have made and ultimately aim to glorify themselves through their work.

In *The Great Divorce*, the process of sanctification for artists involves drinking from a fountain of forgetfulness. “When you have drunk of it,” the bright spirit tells the ghostly painter, “you forget forever all proprietorship in your own works. You enjoy them just as if they were someone else’s: without pride and without modesty.” The proper attitude of artists toward our work, Lewis instructs us, is to stop seeing it as *our* work.

For those who are tempted to work in order to bring acclaim to themselves—and I certainly count myself in this crowd—Sayers, Tolkien, and Lewis are trustworthy guides. Reading and re-reading their writings can be a bit like an encounter with one of Lewis’s bright spirits: they chasten and encourage us as we *makers* make our way—by grace, through faith—toward the One who made us.



## New Collections at the Wade

Over the past year, the Wade Center’s archives have continued to grow, and we at the Wade are especially excited about two new collections.

This January we announced the release of the Walter Hooper Papers. This collection includes professional and personal documents relating to the life and work of Walter Hooper—particularly his extensive correspondence.

Hooper served as the personal secretary of C.S. Lewis near the end of Lewis’s life, and he later became the editor of many of his posthumously published works. In 2009, the Wade Center presented Walter with the Clyde S. Kilby Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his many years of dedicated work and significant contributions to Lewis studies.

The collection spans from 1918 to 2020, with emphasis on materials from 1963 until 2000, and includes 11 boxes of materials in over 400 folders.

This past year we also released the Shirley Sugerman Papers, comprised of correspondence, notes, and drafts relating to the publication of *Evolution of Consciousness: Studies in Polarity* (Wesleyan University Press, 1976). Edited by Shirley Sugerman, *Evolution of Consciousness* contains scholarly contributions written to honor Owen Barfield on his 75th birthday.



Shirley Sugerman



Walter Hooper receiving the Kilby Lifetime Achievement Award at the Wade Center in 2009.

Shirley Sugerman was a psychology professor at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. She authored the book *Sin and Madness: Studies in Narcissism*, and her article “BARSPECS: Owen Barfield’s Vision” was published in the Wade Center’s journal, *VII*, Volume 11 (1994). Sugerman served for almost four decades on the Advisory Board of *VII*, and the Barfield Centenary Celebration—held in 1998 to mark the 100th anniversary of Barfield’s birth—was dedicated to Sugerman.

We at the Wade are grateful to Walter Hooper and Shirley Sugerman for donating these materials and for the opportunity to make them accessible for ongoing scholarship. Both of these new collections are available for use on-site at the Wade Center, and research appointments may be scheduled by contacting the Wade. **W**