

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING NEWSLETTER



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A Bible Verse for Trying Times

Isaiah 41:10

"So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Student Publications

DAISY CHEN'S *THE LITTLE KING MOUNTAIN* (小王山/)

We are very pleased to note that a recent graduate from the Department of English and Creative Writing, Daisy Chen, has just published her first novel, *小王山/ The Little King Mountain*, which, she tells us, is set “in the early 1990s in a small village in northern China.” In the story, “an accident changes the life trajectory of two otherwise close families. One family is drowned in hatred, experiencing the complexity and darkness of human nature, while the other family is chased by guilt, struggling to escape the condemnation of conscience. How can a flawed person live as if he or she is blameless is the question the characters all explore. They experience suffering in different ways, seeking redemption between darkness and light.”



Faculty Publications

Dr. Holly Faith Nelson's Upcoming Publication: *Besieged: Early Modern British Siege Literature, 1642-1722*. Forthcoming McGill-Queen's University Press.



TWU's Dr. Holly Faith Nelson and her sister Dr. Sharon Alker, an English professor at Whitman College, have just completed their monograph on the siege in early modern British literature. They report the following about the book's content:

“Siege literature has been composed from classical times onward, but its cultural role has not always remained consistent. Our book, *Besieged*, brings to light the popularity and influence of the siege motif in early modern British literature (broadly defined), with an emphasis on its strong magnetic pull during a particular

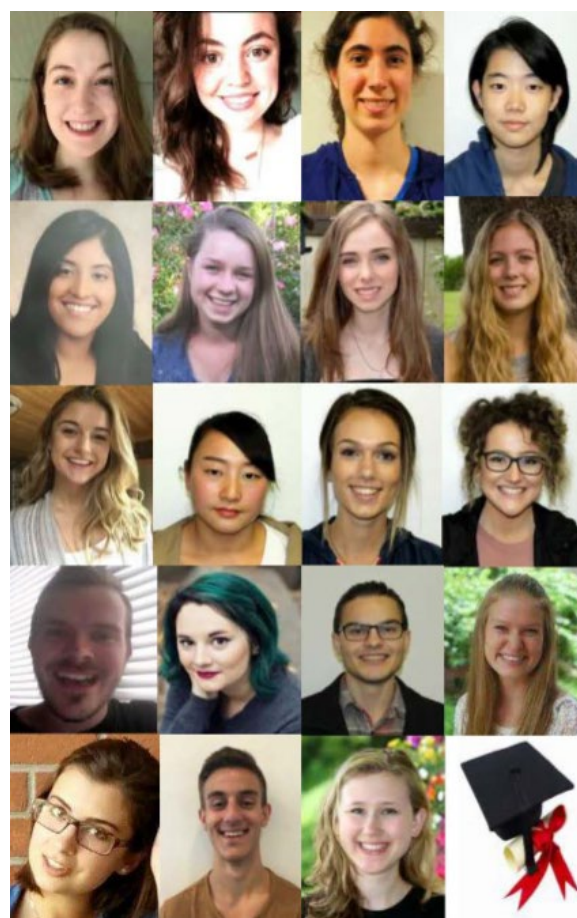
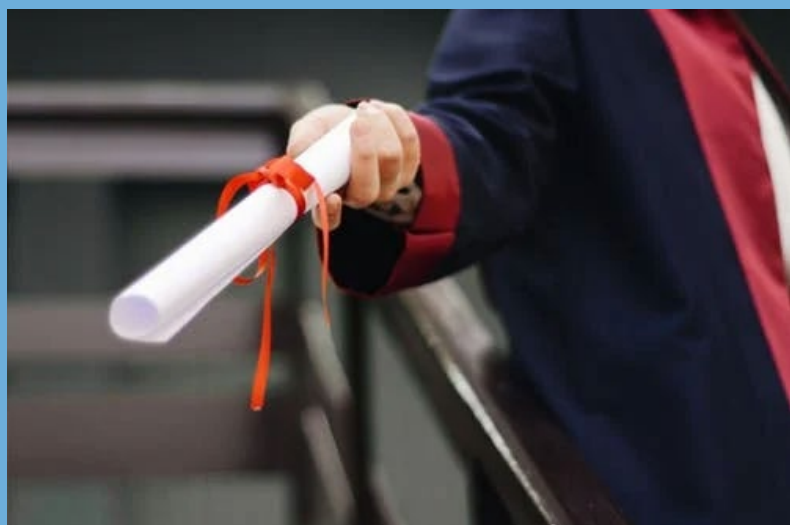
period in history. In the volume, we examine the representation of the siege in some well-known works by William Davenant, Abraham Cowley, John Milton, Margaret Cavendish, John Dryden, John Bunyan, and Daniel Defoe along with the treatment of the siege in seldom studied works across a range of genres and modes, including life writing (e.g., letters, diaries, journals, and memoirs), poetry (e.g., the ballad, sonnet, epigram, epic, ode, panegyric, and satire), drama, and fiction. These works give voice to both military and civilian experiences of siege warfare. The volume takes into account contemporary ideas on the nature and operation of space and place in order to theorize the ways in which early modern British men and women anxiously struggled to process the brutality and cruelty of urban warfare. The book suggests that the siege motif became a potent way to grasp the vulnerability of urban space in general at a time when Britain's political, social, and religious structures were shifting, new technologies were evolving, and older heroic military ideals were becoming far less relevant. The study concludes by reflecting briefly on the relation between siege literature in early modern Britain and siege novels, movies, and video games (along with newspaper and academic articles on sieges) in twenty-first century Europe and North America, with a focus on the problems of a growing siege mentality.”

Class of 2020

Congratulations to our Remarkable Graduates!

Anne, Sarah, Aurora, Jill, Katelyn, Sabine,
Arianne, Mikah, Hannah, Daisy (Biying),
Emma, Madison, Kevin, Emma, Taylor,
Sarah, Juliana, Ethan, and Katie

(pictured left to right)




These talented students successfully completed
their qualifications in English in the midst of a
global pandemic. *Vincit qui patitur.*



Alumni Update

With Briercrest College Professor Chance Pahl

Shortly after graduating with a PhD (English) from the University of Ottawa in 2018, I took on the post of Assistant Professor of English at Briercrest College. Briercrest is a small faith-based institution located in Caronport, Saskatchewan. The transition from Ottawa to small-town Saskatchewan was striking, but my family and I are adjusting well. I'm particularly grateful that I can now walk to work! Like the college itself, the English department at Briercrest is small, which means I am responsible for teaching a variety of different courses on a variety of different topics. In addition to lecturing on eighteenth-century English literature—my primary area of study—I have also taught classes on Book History, Romanticism, and even the Oxford Inklings. Lecturing on such a wide range of topics can be daunting, of course, but also deeply rewarding. In all of this, my time at Trinity Western University has served me well. I'm indebted to each of the professors in the English department—of which Holly Nelson, Monika Hilder, Stephen Dunning, and Sara Pearson deserve special mention—who not only taught me a great deal about research, writing, and pedagogy, but, perhaps more importantly, instilled in me a passion for great works of literature.



"I'm indebted to each of the professors in the English department."

~Dr. Chance Pahl

“Teaching is an adventure; ideas have to move out of the interior world of the mind to the practical and dialogical realm and then return home for reflection and refinement. Each class is a bit of a circular pilgrimage or—at times, harrowing—hero’s quest!”

~Dr. Katharine Bubel



An Interview with Professor Katharine Bubel

Professor Bubel on Teaching Full-Time, the Pandemic, and TWU’s Culture

Interviewer: How has the transition from studying to full time teaching been? What are the challenges, and the unexpected blessings?

Professor Bubel: I was hired as Assistant Professor last spring, but previously, while working on my PhD at UVic, I was teaching part time at TWU. So in many ways, the transition to full time came with ease. This is a familiar “home” place: I was a student here, completing an MA in Interdisciplinary Humanities, and came to know faculty within and beyond FHSS (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences). As an MAIH student, I was invited by Professor Emerita Lynn Szabo to lecture and assist in some of her undergraduate courses, so I was apprenticed to a marvelous teacher-sage. I was mentored by others in the department, too—especially Dr. Nelson—and nourished by all those English department faculty potluck gatherings.

But I will be honest: the first year of fulltime teaching required a very different pace and schedule than that of the more contemplative (and, for some reason, too-often nocturnal) work of research and writing. I have been stretched by these changes and the challenges of preparing and teaching new course material (all the more so, now, under the conditions of COVID-19). But I’ve also been encouraged and supported by brilliant, wise, merry colleagues, and enlivened by being in the class with students who are so warmly collegial with one another and with me! Teaching is an adventure; ideas have to move out of the interior world of the mind to the practical and dialogical realm and then return home for reflection and refinement. Each class is a bit of a circular pilgrimage or—at times, harrowing—hero’s quest! What changes will come from the “fusion of horizons”?

Interviewer: What is one thing you appreciate most about the culture of TWU’s English department?

Professor Bubel: I have mentioned the collegiality of the students; this is a beautiful aspect of the English department as a whole. There is genuine conviviality among my colleagues, each bringing their different gifts and areas of expertise to support and encourage one another in teaching practices

and in loving stewardship of the word. Paula helps us remember to break from the work and gather for regular “coffee times,” and we often visit with one another through office doors (when they’re open!), freely discussing ideas and events that thrill or trouble us, celebrating professional accomplishments, and holding one another in prayerful care.

Interviewer: How has it been coping with this hectic time? What challenges have arisen, and what benefits do you foresee?

Professor Bubel: It has been disorienting, no doubt about it. There is a lot to learn swiftly. One benefit: we as faculty are keenly aware of what it is like to be a bewildered student! This may slow us down and help us to be more sensitive to the process of learning new things. I’m glad the sudden transition to online happened at the end of the spring semester, after we had a chance to form face-to-face connections. Students, for the most part, remained engaged. And now we professors have the summer to undertake the steep climb of transition to multi-access learning in the fall. One of the biggest challenges is to make informed, creative choices about—and gain competency in—online tools and activities. In the department (via Zoom and e-mail), we have had some reflective and clarifying conversations about what English Studies, and Humanities in general, offer to students and society. Our dean, Dr. Todd Martin, is encouraging us to keep it human (the FHSS slogan is *veritas, libertas, humanitas*). To help us combat technology from dominating, rather than serving, our aims, he has outlined a simple framework: content, contact, core values, and Christ-centred learning. I’m seeing how the Spirit can make clarity and renewed commitment to the word/Word the unintended *benefits* of COVID-19 for our department.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for the future as you continue your work at Trinity?

Professor Bubel: I hope to continue my research in poetry, place and spiritual practices (esp. focused on West Coast literature—my place), as my awareness of the entanglement of environmental-spiritual crises and alienation increases. I hope to become a wiser, better teacher and colleague. Just today I wrote to my friend, professor emeritus Stephen Dunning, lines from Mary Oliver that express what informs my hopes in these troubled times: “Doesn’t everything die at last, and too soon? / Tell me, what is it you plan to do / with your one wild and precious life?” Hopkins follows immediately, in this train of thought: “Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty’s self and beauty’s giver.”



Interview Conducted by Abby Pernsteiner

A Chat with Professor Laura Van Dyke

Professor Van Dyke Describes her Journey from Alumna to Professor and Experience Teaching during the Pandemic

Interviewer: As someone who has been both teacher and student at TWU, what perspective changes have you experienced as a result of being on both sides of the classroom?

Professor Van Dyke: That is a good question. There are so many ways in which my perspective has changed, but one that comes to mind first is that as a student, I was always so hesitant to go to office hours or take up any of my professors' time outside of class; I think I had this assumption that they were very busy and important people (which was true!) so they didn't want to be bothered by my interruptions (which I've learned wasn't true). It's very possible they don't believe me either, but I try to be really clear with my students that the best part of my job is them, and that means I am always going to be enthusiastic about taking the time to connect with and get to know them better. What I probably miss the most about my time as a student here is that back when I was taking classes across all these different disciplines, and dipping my toes in different possibilities and exploring all the many options for majors and minors and concentrations, I felt connected to a lot of the different departments on campus. There was actually so much potential for making interdisciplinary links back then between all the things I was interested in. With doctoral work and increasing specialization, and then with working in only one department, you do lose some of that breadth.

Interviewer: What was it that made you wish to work at Trinity professionally? How have you found the transition thus far?

Professor Van Dyke: I have loved working at TWU for the last six years for many of the same reasons I loved being a student here. I think this is a really special place; there are other liberal arts universities, and there are other Christian universities, but Trinity brings the two together in a way I can really get behind. A lot of faculty working these days in the humanities feel uneasy about the future of their disciplines, but at Trinity we have such a strong emphasis on the liberal arts core and on the value of the kind of thinking that goes on in the humanities that I feel we've been able to succeed in providing students with a learning experience in which they are being offered the whole package. Education

“Trinity student[s] [have] the opportunity to actually pursue wisdom, and contemplate truth, and encounter beauty, and all this happens alongside some of the best people you [will] meet anywhere...”

~Dr. Van Dyke



is always what each student makes of it, but if you're a Trinity student you have the opportunity to actually pursue wisdom, and contemplate truth, and encounter beauty, and all this happens alongside some of the best people you'll meet anywhere and on a campus that might have a really obnoxious train running beside it, but which also has magical ringing bells and cherry blossoms and a beautiful pond that still gives me a lot of joy when I drive across the bridge onto campus.

Interviewer: This is of course a very hectic time. How has it been coping with the transition to online learning? What challenges have arisen, and what surprises?

Professor Van Dyke: Well the transition hasn't been without some hiccups—it is for sure a strange time, and a steep learning curve for both learners and for teachers. I'm lucky to have a tech-savvy husband, and a few sisters who have many years of online teaching experience and a willingness to share their tips with me, so I had a lot of help during the transition period. Really, the biggest challenge for me (that is, after trying not to cringe every time I heard my voice on video recordings) was probably the same as for many people: just missing the human interaction so much, and feeling a kind of grief that we couldn't meet in person anymore.

A happy surprise was that for some students, it seemed like having extra time to collect their thoughts before they participated in discussion forums was something that really worked for them, so that even though I missed face-to-face class discussions I was so pleased to see that some students adapted well to the new online-only format. I also have really enjoyed doing some “Zoom office hours,” and think I actually want to keep incorporating a bit of that in a post-COVID-19 future world. I like the flexibility it gives (and seeing students' pets!), and I like the idea that instead of all the emailing I tend to do with students during the semester we could instead just jump onto Zoom and talk something out much more effectively.



“The biggest [COVID-related] challenge for me was probably the same as for many people: just missing the human interaction so much and feeling a kind of grief that we couldn't meet in person anymore.”

~Dr. Van Dyke

It would be so great if Trinity students could take environmentally themed classes, in both the sciences and the humanities, that synched up with each other, and there could be some cross-fertilization with class content and research projects, all working together but from different angles.

~Dr. Van Dyke

Interviewer: What is your hope for the future?

Professor Van Dyke: My hope for the English department at Trinity is that it will continue to grow and be a place where students find that their minds and souls and imaginations are nourished. In terms of my own teaching, a lot of my research has been eco-focused, so I'm always dreaming of ways I can bring more of the work I'm passionate about into the classroom. For instance, I am excited about the opportunities that a place like the Blaauw Eco Forest could offer us: I have this vision of teaching classes outside, in the woods, with books in hand but the trees right in front of us. I would love to do some collaborative teaching with people who know a lot more than me about the environmental science side of things. It would be so great if Trinity students could take environmentally themed classes, in both the sciences and the humanities, that synched up with each other, and there could be some cross-fertilization with class content and research projects, all working together but from different angles.

As an eco-critic, I've become more and more interested over the years in the way literature emerged out of myth and folklore, and how in so many ways these ancient, earth-centric patterns still govern much of the contemporary literature I love to read. Back when archetypal criticism was a big deal people still talked about this stuff, but it has been ages since most English departments have seriously read what is sometimes called "proto-literature." I think that this is too bad because it's not like any of these stories have gone away—if anything, they've been bubbling to the cultural surface with particular force lately, especially in visual media like film and gaming. And I think that's exciting and gives those of us in English Studies such a good opportunity to engage with this phenomenon because we're the place where different kinds of storytelling can really be analyzed with sophistication and depth. So, I would love to find more ways to connect all these different threads together in the classroom.

Interview Conducted by Abby Pernsteiner

“The church represents the disconnect between the Jewishness of my Messiah and the gentile-ness of the institution”.

~ Dr. Andrew Barron



Surprised by Lewis

The Relationship between C.S. Lewis and the Jewish Imagination according to Dr. Andrew Barron, Director of Jews for Jesus Canada

“What is the protocol of a Jew with a New Testament?”

This is how Dr. Andrew Barron described a fateful encounter on the college campus where he worked over two decades ago. On being handed a Gideon Bible, and later being unable to hand it off to a Protestant friend, he was led to an encounter with the Christian faith that would leave him forever changed. Born and raised in a tight-knit Jewish community, Dr. Barron found himself lost in his newfound faith. Speaking to his audience in the Fosmark building of Trinity Western University, he said “the church represents the disconnect between the Jewishness of my Messiah and the gentile-ness of the institution.”



“The connection Lewis has with my Jewish people lies in the power of stories, remembrance, and imagination.”

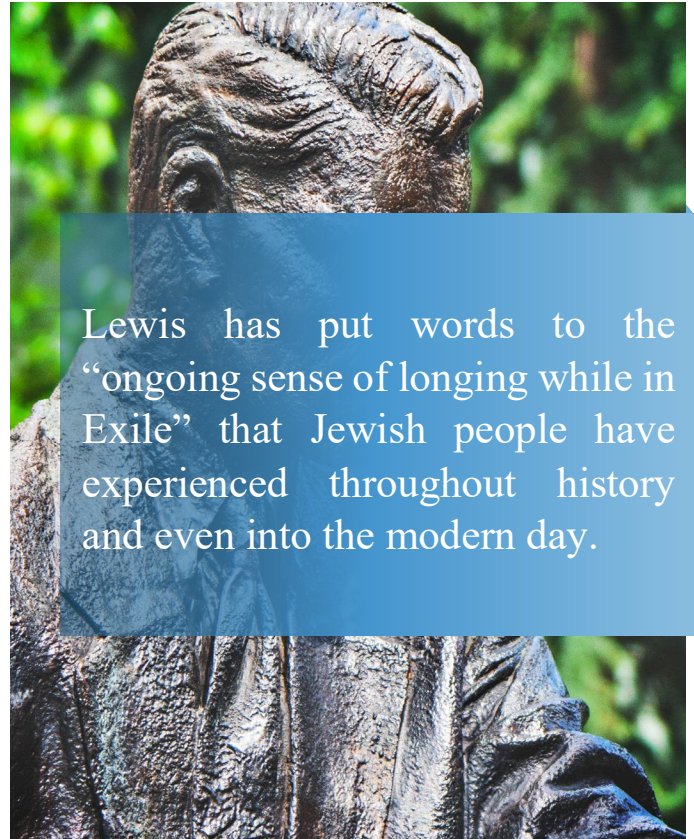
~Dr. Andrew Barron

In this floundering, though, he found what must seem an unlikely bridge: the writings of C.S. Lewis. Throughout his talk “C.S. Lewis and the Jewish Imagination,” Dr. Barron examined the aspects of and themes in Lewis’s work that cause it to resonate so strongly with Jews, even leading some to conversion.

C.S. Lewis’s connections to Judaism are not often discussed, but they are certainly not absent. His wife, Joy Davidman, was Jewish. As Dr. Barron mentioned during the lecture, Lewis wrote in the foreword to her book *Smoke on the Mountain*, “In a sense the converted Jew is the only normal human being in the world. To him, in the first instance, the promises were made, and he has availed himself of them. ... Everyone else is, from one point of view, a special case, dealt with under emergency regulations.”

Barron interviewed many converted Jews who had been affected by Lewis's work, and came to this conclusion: "The connection Lewis has with my Jewish people lies in the power of stories, remembrance, and imagination." In particular, he describes how Lewis speaks to the longing for a homeland that is at the center of Judaism. With his concept of "Joy," Barron argues that Lewis has put words to the "ongoing sense of longing while in Exile" that Jewish people have experienced throughout history and even into the modern day.

Lewis profoundly understood this sense of Exile in his writing: notably, as Barron points out, all of the Narnia children are displaced from their homes somehow. But Lewis points his readers toward something else. He brings about what Barron calls an "upside-down awakening," where he points to the unfulfilled longings at the core of Judaism and says they can be fulfilled. It is this sense of hope, of completion, that can reach across the cultural boundary to bring Jewish people closer to the faith that has so often felt foreign to them.



Lewis has put words to the "ongoing sense of longing while in Exile" that Jewish people have experienced throughout history and even into the modern day.



This article is based on an event titled "C.S. Lewis and the Jewish Imagination," hosted by the Inklings Institute of Canada on September 23, 2019 in the Fosmark Graduate Collegium.



Vulnerability in Fiction

TWU Alumnus and Novelist Jonathan Fehr Speaks about the Uniquely Vulnerable and Revealing Position that Authors Fill

November 14 saw the return of Trinity Western University's own Jonathan Fehr to speak on his novel *Skyblind*, as well as his ongoing series *The Magician's Workshop*. Fehr delivered an account of his own journey as an author and led a discussion on the power narrative and fantasy can have in our lives.

Fehr told his own story of going from a high schooler banging out bad spy fiction based on the fantasies he and his fifteen-year-old friends invented to a published author of multiple young adult novels. After graduating from university, he began writing his first novel, coming to realize he wanted to get it published. After connecting with an author and the founder of a writer's fellowship on Bowen Island, Fehr began the arduous task of turning his draft into his first published novel.

What Fehr described as the most impactful and surprising part of the writing process was the unexpected vulnerability. As he put it himself, "No story is neutral. ... You connect to it for a reason." Working through the draft of his novel, he was surprised at how many parallels he could draw between the conflict in his story and the tensions he was experiencing in his local church community. "I mean, the main villains were a council of Elders," he joked. Without intending to, he had used the medium of his own fiction to work through his frustrations with a felt injustice he had experienced.

Fehr does not believe this was a fluke, but rather that it was representative of the power of fiction. Narrative, from his perspective, "tills the soul" and exposes what is lying underneath. As further

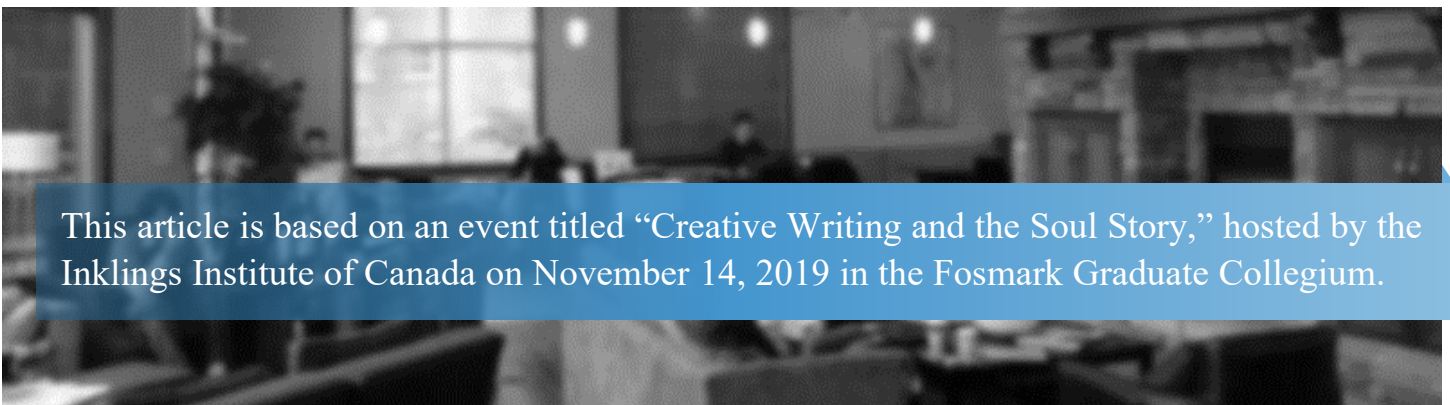


“Narrative...tills the soul.”

~Jonathan Fehr

evidence, he cites a sort of experiment he carried out where he encouraged his friends to write a short story off the top of their head. As it turns out, “off the top of the head” is a uniquely vulnerable state of mind in which to find oneself, as it often exposes the inner state of the author in unique ways. Writing and creation, Fehr argued, allows one to “process, reconcile, [and] work-through” the issues we often have trouble confronting head on. To quote G.K Chesterton, “Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed.”

The evening was a refreshing and spirited one, for all lovers of literature, and a reminder of the impactful nature of fiction, not only for its readers, but for its writers as well.



This article is based on an event titled “Creative Writing and the Soul Story,” hosted by the Inklings Institute of Canada on November 14, 2019 in the Fosmark Graduate Collegium.

A Hospitable Evening with Malcolm Guite

Christianity in Art according to Renowned Poet Malcolm Guite

Some have argued that the term “Christian art” is becoming an oxymoron. This argument is not without merit. While painting with broad brushstrokes an entire artistic movement is rarely charitable and even less

often accurate, it is hard to deny that the faith that once produced Dante, Julian of Norwich, and Tolkien has fallen on some hard times when it comes to meaningful expression. A faith tradition once beloved for its keen insight into human suffering and striking depictions of glory is now perhaps best known for a slurry of mediocre worship songs and endless paintings of a beach and some footprints. Lovers of art and the faith may find themselves torn between the two.

Perhaps that is the reason why, on September 13th, sheltered from the torrential downpour outside by the high ceilings of Trinity Western University’s Fosmark building, the atmosphere was one of breathless relief. Dr. Mark Husbands gave the warm opening welcome, and then all eyes were fixed

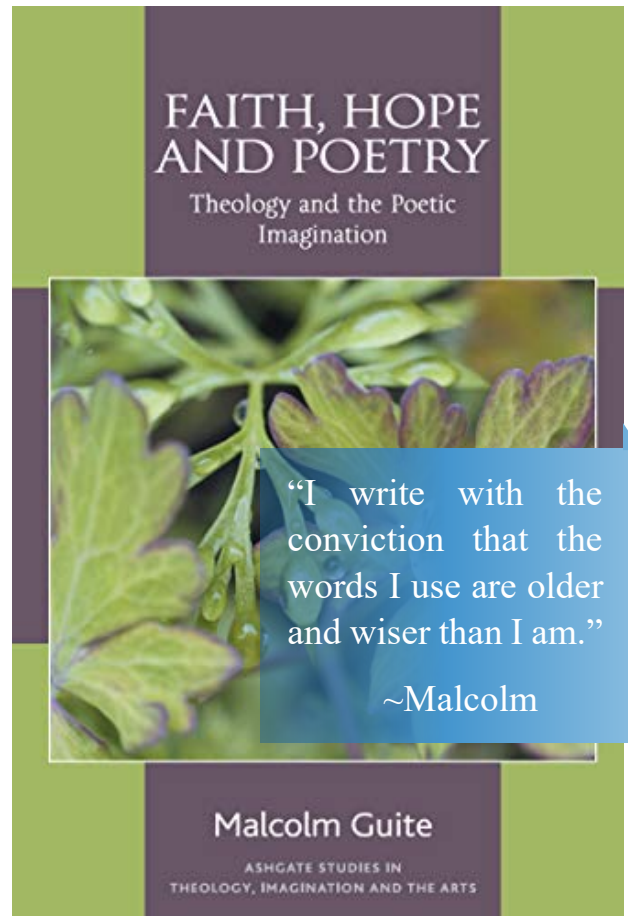


on the central figure of the evening, poet and songwriter Malcolm Guite. With a somewhat Lewisian twinkle in his eye and with a robust humor, he led the evening in a discussion of poetry, Christianity, and the transcendent power of words to move us.

Guite, indeed, makes no secret of his love for words as the foundational tool of his trade. When asked if he ever experiences doubts about the quality of his own work, he happily replies, “I write with the conviction that the words I use are older and wiser than I am.” A self-described “genial host of words,” Guite uses the metaphor of a dinner party in his poem “Hospitality” to describe the experience of writing: the work of the poet is not to create words from the ether, but simply to set them in their proper place. “I set them in the order they like best,” Guite reads, “And listen for their wisdom, try to learn / As each unfolds the other’s mystery.”

That word, “hospitality,” rose to prominence throughout the evening. Guite performed his song “Angels Unawares,” which is based on the story of Abraham and a hot meal to angels in disguise. Guite advocates for this kind of reckless love and generosity, which allows us to welcome anyone and anything into our hearts. Indeed, it is perhaps only by this welcoming that we leave ourselves open to the transcendent experience that produces art and faith in the same moment. This leaves us open to “a truth that you can taste upon the tongue,” as Guite writes.

“Stay with the music,” Guite urges an audience of would-be poets and poetry enthusiasts. “Words will come in time.” And as his audience braves the rain once more, it is this urge to welcome the music that, hopefully, stays with them.



This article is based on an event titled “The Word Made Fresh: Art, Faith, and a Flourishing Culture,” hosted by the Inklings Institute of Canada on September 13, 2019 in the Fosmark Graduate Collegium.