

## Welcome!

The TWU English Department is delighted to celebrate the conclusion of another busy year.



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# TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER 2018-2019

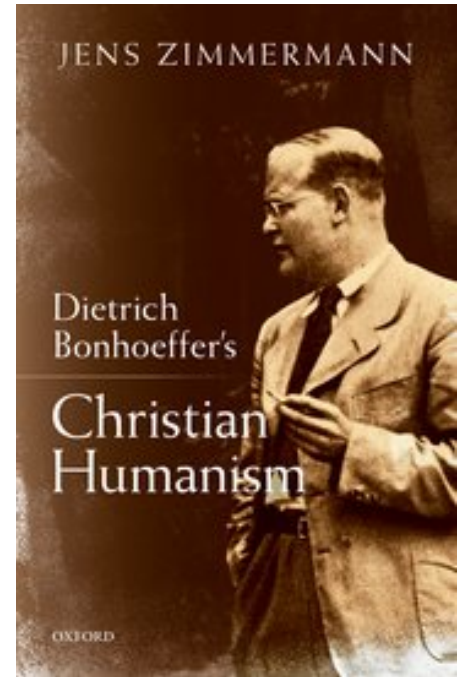


Image: Faculty and Students at the Spring 2019 Graduation Tea

# FACULTY NEWS

## Upcoming Publication: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christian Humanism* By Jens Zimmermann

“Jens Zimmermann locates Bonhoeffer within the Christian humanist tradition extending back to patristic theology. He begins by explaining Bonhoeffer's own use of the term humanism (and Christian humanism), and considering how his criticism of liberal Protestant theology prevents him from articulating his own theology rhetorically as a Christian humanism. He then provides an in-depth portrayal of Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology and establishes that Bonhoeffer's Christology and attendant anthropology closely resemble patristic teaching. The volume also considers Bonhoeffer's mature anthropology, focusing in particular on the Christian self. It introduces the hermeneutic quality of Bonhoeffer's theology as a further important feature of his Christian humanism. In contrast to secular and religious fundamentalisms, Bonhoeffer offers a hermeneutic understanding of truth as participation in the Christ event that makes interpretation central to human knowing. Having established the hermeneutical structure of his theology, and his personalist configuration of reality, Zimmermann outlines Bonhoeffer's ethics as “Christformation.” Building on the hermeneutic theology and participatory ethics of the previous chapters, he then shows how a major part of Bonhoeffer's life and theology, namely his dedication to the Bible as God's word, is also consistent with his Christian humanism” (Oxford University Press).



## Dr. Holly Nelson: Vaughan Association's 24th Annual Colloquium in Breconshire, Wales

Dr. Holly Faith Nelson gave a talk at the Vaughan Association's 24th Annual Colloquium in Breconshire, Wales, in April 2019. She discussed what new humanities databases, especially those that contain reproductions of historical periodicals, teach us about the reception and influence of the poetry and prose of Henry Vaughan in the United States in the Nineteenth Century. The colloquium was held in Brecon Castle Hotel, “formerly an eleventh-century Norman Castle.” In June, she gave a plenary lecture for the Christianity and Literature Study Group, at UBC, entitled “What Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Literature Has to Teach Us About Living in a Polarized Age.” Her co-edited collection, *Games and War in Early Modern English Literature*, is coming out with Amsterdam University Press later this year.

# Dr. Stephen Dunning's Retirement

By Dr. Holly Nelson

Over the more than ten years that Stephen has worked for the Department of English and Creative Writing at Trinity Western University, he has added such luminescence and laughter that it is difficult to imagine him no longer regularly lighting up our halls and inspiring our students in our classrooms. What I admire most about Stephen is his love and respect for both carefully crafted language and informed ideas: his passion for the word and the ideas that emanate from and return us to the Word.

I also deeply appreciate the time and energy Stephen was always willing to spend on mentoring and training students to become rigorous thinkers and eloquent writers. Since our offices are across from each other, I have heard Stephen on countless occasions patiently and mercifully guiding students on rudimentary matters of grammar and style while also raising up their minds to the most esoteric of ideas—from the alchemical to the beatific.

It was, therefore, no surprise to learn that a student had written of Stephen, “He is the most influential professor in my life.” Stephen is, indeed, as other students have written, a “passionate,” “inspiring,” “enlightening,” and “witty” teacher, and a “super chill guy.” One student exclaimed of his teaching: “I have hands down never learned more from a prof.” So many of his students made note of the time he was always willing to make “explaining something that the class” had difficulty “understanding.” This has led them to embrace our discipline, one writing, “If I did not love English before Dunning, I would surely love it now.”

Stephen successfully balances great intelligence and guttural laughter, an appetite for high fallutin’ musings on Kierkegaard and for dissing aspects of pop culture. Stephen has made a major contribution to academia, not only through the publication of his monograph *The Crisis and the Quest: A Kierkegaardian Reading of Charles Williams* but also by answering broader questions about the nature and purpose of the university in his coauthored article with Dr. Jens Zimmermann, entitled “Recovering from *Multiversity* Babel: The Possibility of a Christian University in Canada.” The fact that he is a member of the Triple Nine Society, only open to those who hold “an IQ above the 99.9% of the general population,” points to his intellectual potential in addressing matters of great meaning and significance, though he also enjoys physical activities, such as riding his motorcycle and in his university days, rowing and playing darts for the university darts team at Magdalene College at Cambridge University.

Even though department and faculty meetings were his kryptonite (🤔), Stephen has still made a momentous contribution to the life of our community of bibliophiles. We are especially grateful for his efforts in co-founding and co-directing, with Dr. Monika Hilder, the Inklings Institute of Canada, which has put Trinity Western on the map for studies in C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and Dorothy Sayers, among others.

In sum, the English and Creative Writing Department at Trinity Western thanks Stephen for giving of himself, in the spirit of light and laughter, in order to help transform the lives of others for the better: faculty and student alike.



## Dr. Sara Pearson: Charlotte Brontë as an Anglican Author

I've been perpetually surprised at the opportunities that have arisen from a career in the study of English literature—though it would be more accurate to say that I've been perpetually surprised at how God has taken dreams that I never dreamed and made them come true. While working on my PhD in English literature, I knew I wanted to become a Brontë scholar, but I wasn't sure what that would look like.

I began my career by writing book reviews for *Brontë Studies*. Writing a good book review takes a lot of work—you need to read the book, reflect on it, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and report on it faithfully so that interested readers (and perhaps even the author) can profit from your critical assessment. Reviewing books is not the flashiest or most glamorous work in the academic world, but it is important work. In retrospect, I think that my faithfulness in writing solid book reviews was eventually rewarded with the recognition of my own gifts and talents.

My review work led to my becoming the guest editor for a special issue of *Brontë Studies*, editing papers from a 2011 Brontë Conference. My own paper at that conference, “‘The Coming Man’: Revelations of Male Character in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*,” introduced me to established scholars at the top of their field, and over the years they have become both colleagues and friends. With one of those colleagues and friends, Christine Alexander, I’ve had the pleasure of co-authoring the book *Celebrating Charlotte Brontë: Transforming Life into Literature in “Jane Eyre”* in 2016. If I had dared to dream of the ideal book I’d love to write, full of gorgeous colour images of objects from the Brontë Parsonage Museum, this would be the book about which I would have dreamed.

In the fall of 2017, I was invited to contribute a chapter on Charlotte Brontë to a book entitled *Anglican Women Novelists: From Charlotte Brontë to P. D. James* (which will be published in June 2019). I loved writing this chapter—I had previously thought about Brontë as a religious writer and as a Christian writer, but I hadn’t thought deeply about what made her particularly Anglican. As I did more research and reading, I soon discovered that Brontë’s Anglican background had a profound influence on her two novels set in England, *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Shirley* (1849). I would almost go so far as to describe *Shirley* as Brontë’s love letter to the Anglican Church (though one full of “tough love” rather than sentimentality) as she critiques, mocks, scolds, encourages, and praises the Church of England and its clergy, earnestly desiring its reform in order that it continue to be a source of charity, compassion, and hope throughout England.

The co-editors of the volume, Judith Maltby and Alison Shell, had prepared several ways to share the contents of the book with interested audiences. For two summers in a row they organized a series of lectures at Westminster Abbey in London: in summer 2017, there was a series on twentieth-century Anglican women writers; in summer 2018, on nineteenth-century ones. They invited me to participate in the series by giving a lecture in June 2018 on Charlotte Brontë, and I gladly accepted. I



certainly would never have dreamed of giving a lecture on Charlotte Brontë in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, and if I had dreamed about it, I would not have believed that the dream would have ever come true. But it did. It was a thoroughly wonderful experience. The clergy at the Abbey were friendly and welcoming; the audience looked interested and laughed at the right places; I could see my husband Ken sitting in a row of clerical canons, smiling and encouraging me; the questions were engaging and fun to answer.

The lecture also provided the opportunity for multiple personal connections. I was able to meet my colleague Peter Cook and his wife Samya, having worked with him for several years to produce an annotated Brontë bibliography for *Brontë Studies* without ever having met him in person. It was also lovely to meet the editors Judith and Alison in person after working long-distance with them, and after the lecture we had a fun dinner together at a little Italian restaurant. At the Abbey, I was able to see the memorial to C. S. Lewis in Poets' Corner and to reflect that in 2013, my colleague and friend Dr. Monika Hilder had participated in the ceremony laying the memorial stone for Lewis in that very place. However, the most meaningful experience for me was attending the evensong service at Westminster Abbey before my lecture. The beautiful service focused my heart and mind on God as the source of all glory and honour. The words of Mary's song in the Magnificat echoed with my heart: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on his lowly servant . . . the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Luke 1:46-49). God has done great things for me; it has been a surprising joy to see Him at work in my life in so many ways, including the gift of being able to deliver a lecture in Westminster Abbey.

## Dr. Monika Hilder: C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Conference in Iași, Romania

Interviewed by Anne Hill

In November 2018, Dr. Monika Hilder participated in the C. S. Lewis and Kindred Spirits Conference with her paper "'The Language of Joy': C.S. Lewis's Legacy as a Christian Communicator to Contemporary Culture." This event is an exciting new step in Lewis studies, and we have asked Dr. Hilder to share her thoughts on the conference, as well as her own experience as a contributor.

**Why is the fact that a conference on Lewis and Kindred Spirits took place in Iași, Romania, so powerful?**

Who would have thought that communist and heavily atheistic Romania would one day become the site of a growing evangelistic outreach through literature written by Christians like C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald? That a smuggled copy of *Mere Christianity* translated by the Romanian Missionary Society from Wheaton, Illinois, would help lead a young Romanian woman, Daniela (Denise) Vasiliu, who "didn't know anything about God," to faith in Christ? That this woman would receive a great vision that led her to do a Ph.D. in English on C.S. Lewis at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Romania, partner with international scholars, and become instrumental in organizing these conferences? The November 2018 conference was the fourth international

interdisciplinary event in building this apologetic ministry in the academic world in Eastern and Central Europe. Should we be surprised that the Gospel changes everything?

**How did this conference advance your understanding of Lewis and his work?**

Conferences always advance academic understanding of authors and their work. What made this one distinctive was the deepening sense that writers like Lewis matter in life-changing ways. It is one thing to learn from the greats like Lewis, but quite another to have them mentor you into growing faith—in life-changing ways that matter for all eternity. Academic work always matters, but what matters most is how writers and our academic work on writers might point, ultimately, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**This conference marked the founding of a “C. S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society” for Eastern and Central Europe, which is allied with the Romanian Church as well as academic institutions. Can you speak to the ways in which Lewis’s work provides opportunities for evangelism?**

I am astonished and encouraged by the commitment of our friends in Iași to reach the unreached in Eastern and Central Europe. Not only do these high-calibre academics celebrate the Christian voice in academics, they are praying and working for revival. Famous and emerging scholars partner with them. They are busy developing resources and building dialogue with the larger local community in schools, colleges, and public youth meetings. They collaborate with artists for cultural events. And in all of their work they ask for our prayers and possible partnership.



**What was the most significant element of this conference for you?**

It was lovely, of course, that this was the absolute classiest conference I’ve ever attended (and I’ve been to some classy ones). But the biggest thing for me was the heartfelt community I experienced with the speakers and conference attendees. I was deeply touched by their sincerity, wit, enthusiasm, hunger, and hope—a contagious hope—and by their unforgettable words, “We need you.”

**What can you say about your contribution to the conference?**

I asked myself, “What should I write? What can I say that might matter to people who have suffered so deeply under political repression?” Then I had the distinct sense that I needed to speak about C.S. Lewis’s trademark—his legacy of Joy. Whether in the heat of apologetic argument, or in the sweet delight of imaginative fiction, Lewis communicates to contemporary culture through the persuasive language of a robust joy. My favourite idea, as shown in *The Last Battle*, is this: the best of one’s home country, the true country—the best of Canada, the best of Romania, the best of each homeland—always was and will be, is there, in Aslan’s country, and here, now, in our hearts and always. Ultimately, *Nothing good is ever lost*.

# DEPARTMENT EVENTS

## TWU Inklings Institute

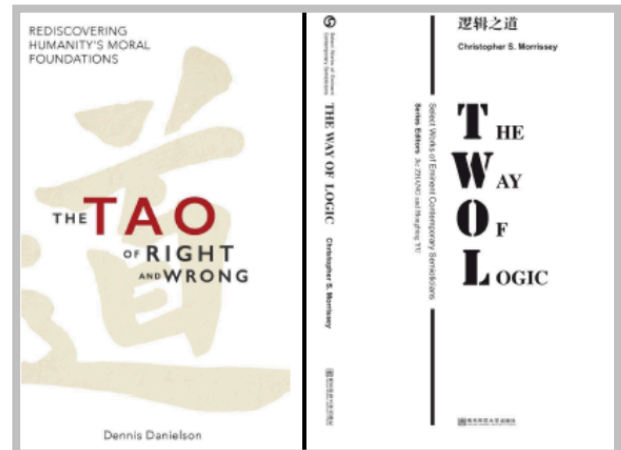
By Anne Hill

### “Allegory in Narnia, or Being Edmund and Finding Jesus.”

On September 25th, TWU alumnus and UBC PhD. candidate Richard Bergen returned to Trinity to speak on allegory in the works of C.S. Lewis. Bergen argued that while Lewis refuses to admit that his works are allegorical, he intends readers to draw allegorical meanings from them. The twentieth century was hostile towards allegory, as it implied simplicity and reductionism; Lewis writes complex novels with many possible readings, and refuses to allow Christian moralists to label them as didactic tales for children. However, Lewis’ comments in *Reflections on the Psalms* and the letters he wrote to fans show that he encourages readers to find allegory in his works—he simply does not want to reduce his novels to a single interpretation. The *Narnia* books offer a wealth of interpretive possibilities; while they cannot be reduced to Christian allegory alone, to entirely disregard this aspect of the works is to neglect much of the series’ meaning.

### Book Night: “*The Tao of Right and Wrong* and *The Way of Logic*”

UBC Professor Emeritus Dennis Danielson discussed his book *The Tao of Right*, a reinterpretation of C.S. Lewis’ *The Abolition of Man*. Danielson borrows Lewis’ term “Tao” to argue for moral realism, showing the necessity of ultimate truth. While he believes that the defense of objective truth is vital for Christians, Danielson’s book is not explicitly faith-based; he hopes that his book will be accessible to a general audience, and will lead many to a firmer understanding of truth in an increasingly ambiguous world. TWU Professor Christopher S. Morrissey responded with comments on his book *The Way of Logic*, arguing that moral realism is tied to objective beauty. The authors’ thoughts ignited a lively discussion on the value of objectivity in a postmodern world.



### “Why George Grant is Canada’s C. S. Lewis”

In November, University of the Fraser Valley’s Professor Ron Dart spoke on the life and impact of the Canadian philosopher George Grant. One of twentieth-century Canada’s most prominent public figures, Grant was heavily influenced by C.S. Lewis. Grant began studying at Oxford just as Lewis was gaining popularity, and participated in the Socratic Club when Lewis’ was president. Here, he experienced Lewis’ efforts to bring Christians into dialogue with people of different worldviews: Grant brought this endeavor back to Canada, where his teaching and writing helped make Christianity present in the public sphere. Grant also shared Lewis’ interest in the human longing for truth and meaning, and championed the study of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom rather than mere mental calculation.



### “Are Women Human?": Dorothy L. Sayers."



On January 22nd, the Gender and Inklings Institutes united to host a lecture by TWU Professor Jan Lermite on Dorothy L. Sayer's essay collection *Are Women Human?* While best known for her detective novels, Sayers is the author of numerous essays and plays concerning everything from her Christian faith to the role of women. In the essay "Are Women Human?," Sayers emphasizes humanity over femininity, suggesting that women's career choices should be based on their unique personal qualities rather than their gender. Historically, society has assessed woman by their femininity rather than their personhood; in "The Human-Not-Quite-Human," Sayers counters this view by showing that Christ values women as humans who may or may not fill traditionally feminine roles, and encourages everyone to be involved in fulfilling work. Sayers also expresses these ideas in her fiction, as novels like *Gaudy Night* prioritize intellectual integrity over

domesticity. The audience responded to Professor Lermite's lecture by discussing the place of Sayers' ideas in the contemporary world, particularly in relation to modern feminism.

### “The Perilous Lot of the Christian Artist.”

In this lecture, Dr. Stephen Dunning spoke on the role of the Christian artist in the works of three Inklings and a friend: C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Dorothy L. Sayers. Scholars often discuss how Christian art affects the viewer or reader, but rarely examine how the creative process affects the artists themselves. Dr. Dunning showed that the Inklings often portray the artist's work as a dangerous business: Lewis depicts characters who are forced to strip back their artistic lies to reveal the ugly truth, while Sayers and Williams suggest that artists are tempted to isolate themselves and become obsessed with their art. Tolkien paints a more optimistic picture in his *Leaf by Niggle*, suggesting that art's ability to mislead is tempered by the glimpses of transcendence which it offers. Dr. Dunning ended his lecture by connecting Tolkien's story to Kierkegaardian philosophy, and discussing the artistic process with audience members.

## “THOMAS MERTON: A MONK FOR OUR TIMES: BEING HUMAN IN A CYBORG WORLD”

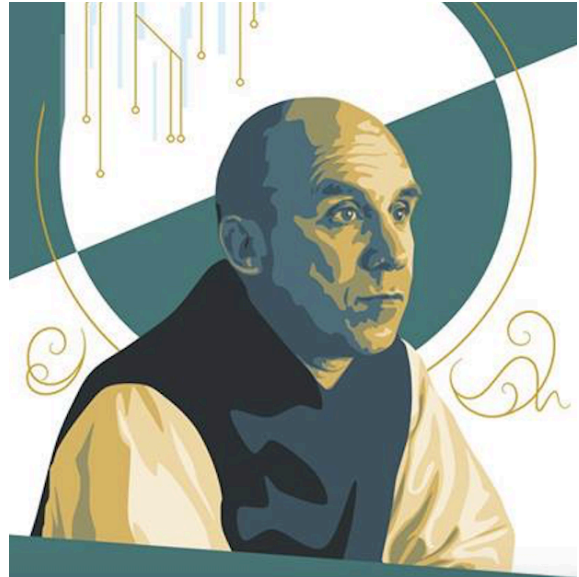
By Anne Hill

On October 19th, the TWU English Department hosted a symposium on the works of the monk and poet Thomas Merton. The event was moderated by Ron Dart of the University of the Fraser Valley, and included lectures by TWU professors Leah Cameron and Dr. Katharine Bubel, as well as TWU professor emerita Lynn Szabo. Merton was a prolific writer, but the three speakers managed to cover a number of his many topics. Dr. Szabo opened the evening with her thoughts on Merton's *Cables to the Ace*, a collection of "anti-poetry" which reflects the modern rush of endless communication. Merton's prophetic poem anticipates the disjunction of form and content that has become so prevalent in the age of texting and internet, satirizing modern communication's abundance



of words and absence of meaning. Merton's poem gives readers a desire for interpretation and understanding, urging them to pause and reflect on life instead of spewing meaningless words into the void.

Professor Leah Cameron followed Dr. Szabo with a lecture on Merton's view of sacred art. Merton argues that sacred art can draw humans into super-rational contemplation, leading them to a deep knowledge of God. Although the mystic pursues God, he or she is also pursued by Him—sacred art highlights God's activity in the mystic's life by allowing humans to passively experience God's truth instead of striving to discover it. Sacred art must meet to a high standard, and be spiritual, traditional, and alive; but when truly good, it allows humans to witness God moving all things. Professor Cameron went on to contrast sacred art with technology. Technology connects people to others, but alienates them from themselves; sacred art connects viewers to God, but also creates an embodied experience of truth which shapes the entire human person.



Dr. Katharine Bubel concluded the symposium by discussing Merton's views on the relationship between humans and technology. Any union between humans and technology, even one as simple as the use of a pen, results in a "cyborg." When humans join with technology in ways that honor their personhood, the consumption of technology can be creative and helpful. But often, such unions between humans and technology privilege progress and machines over the human wisdom that should control them. Merton argues that this disordered prioritization corrodes personhood, preventing humans from fulfilling their true role as beings created in the image of God. The solution to technology's usurpation is a renewed appreciation for the human, which springs from a contemplative life. The misuse of technology makes people seem unimportant and dull; active contemplation reveals Christ in the other, connecting the human with God and creating love. In a culture fixated on humanity's progress, Merton pauses and considers what they should be advancing towards: he chooses not the frenetic word-mongering and deified mechanisms of technology, but a distinctly human life of wisdom and connection with God.

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## STUDENT LIFE

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### The English Student Society

By Heather Twele

This year, the English Student Society (ESS), that mythical creature of whose existence first and second year English majors have only heard whispers, once again reared its majestic head from the depths of the English Department. Joining [spaces] Literary Journal in its quest to reveal itself to

the entire TWU community, the ESS has only succeeded in peeking out of the English Department door, staring in awe at the number of students flooding through RNT.

I am honoured to have been the President of the ESS this past year, with Caleb Nelson as the Vice-President. The ESS became an official club again through TWUSA's club ratification process, giving the ESS a platform to become popular amongst English majors and literary-minded students in other departments. In the fall, the ESS began a book club to kickstart its entrance into the academic club atmosphere. Continuing into the spring semester, the ESS book club members read fiction such as excerpts from G. K. Chesterton's *Father Brown* series and Virginia Woolf's novella *Flush*. However, the book club attendance was low owing to busy school schedules and copious amounts of homework. In the past, the ESS hosted themed events throughout the academic year, allowing students to dress up as their favourite literary characters. Although plans for similar events did not become a reality this year, I am excited to see what the next ESS President and Vice-President accomplish.

I am sure that whomever becomes the ESS President for the 2019/2020 academic year will take the ESS to new heights, creating a friendly, inclusive atmosphere for English majors to discuss their literary passions.

## [spaces] Literary Journal

By Meilani Southern

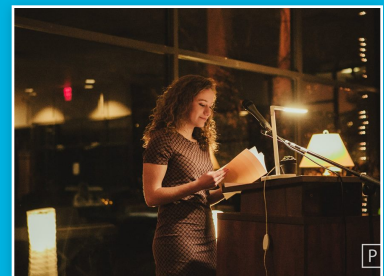
This year was an eventful one for [spaces]. We had a strong editorial team of nine members. Heather Twele continued her role as Editor-in-Chief for a second year, and Meilani Southern co-led the team with her, with Kennedy Dragt joining as Managing Editor. Our theme for the volume would be *[im]permanence*, an expression that captures the paradox of the immutability and transience of human existence. Our hope for this year was to establish an ever-so-slightly greater presence on campus, and along with that, to foster an inclusive environment for appreciators and practitioners of art. The diversity of fields represented by our editorial team members meant that we could spread the vision of [spaces] to departments on polar ends of campus. In October, we got together with the Writing Centre to host a Word Game night, involving food, board games, and found poetry: we wanted to encourage TWU to engage with us in an informal, semi-literary setting. With the English Student Society, we planned to host a poetry workshop (also in October), in which TWU students could offer their own poetry for discussion and critique; unfortunately, this workshop was forced into a slumber due to waning interest. During vetting period, we reached out to each individual artist with brief critical remarks on their literary submissions, whether or not they had been selected for publication. Our goal in all these was not to promote [spaces] per se, but rather to be more outspoken in communicating that we were an accepting, non-judgmental space where art was treated as a product *and* a [raw, rough] process.

And yes, the creation and curation of the literary journal was a beautiful process. Over the submission period (in Fall semester), the editorial members rollercoasted through excitement, amusement, discouragement, awe. We received a solid 70 submissions this year. The vetting process was conducted toward the end of Fall semester in three stages: the first involved respected members

of the TWU community with a reputation for excellent artistic and analytical ability, the second involved the full editorial team, and the third involved the chief editors and editorial board (headed by Professor Connie Braun). By January, the pieces for the volume had been selected, and soon-to-be-actually-published writers and poets gathered with coffee to workshop their pieces late into the night; for some, it was their first time reading their own written work aloud. The chief editors continued working with writers to finetune their pieces for publication through to February. In between team meetings and discussions with writers, the editors plowed through journal layout and design. Occasionally, we got together in the Art Studio to destress by noisily, maniacally spray-painting tote bag designs, to be sold around campus to boost funds for offsetting journal printing expenses.

The entire endeavor culminated in a joyous celebration on Friday, 8 March, with the Volume 13 Launch Event held on campus at the Atrium. On this evening, selected literary pieces from the published volume were presented and published visual art was showcased. This was our chance to honour our wonderful writers, visual artists, guest contributors, editorial board members, financial sponsors, and every community member who had some part to play in the publishing process.

## [spaces] literary journal volume 13 launch party



Top: The [spaces] team and advisory board at the volume 13 launch party

Middle: Faculty and others at the launch party

Bottom: [spaces] associate editor Joanna Williams reads her piece for the audience