ADDRESSING THE SACRED THROUGH LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Program and Abstracts

A Faculty of Arts and Sciences Conference

2 – 3 August 2013

Australian Catholic University

25A Barker Road, Strathfield NSW 2135
'Addressing the Sacred through Literature and the Arts' is the second conference presented by The Sacred in Literature and the Arts (SLA), a community of interest that aims to bring Australian and international writers, artists, musicians, academics, religious and members of the public together for a fruitful dialogue about the interplay between the arts and the sacred.

Definitions of the sacred extend from the narrow to the broad, from referring exclusively to a deity or religious ceremony to describing that mystery which is at the core of existence and has the power to transform our understanding of life. It is both a technical term used in the scholarly study of religion and a popular term used to describe something that is worthy of respect.

As artists we can explore our own sense of the sacred through our artwork. As audiences we can seek traces of the sacred in works of art. Through the act of interpretation we become co-creators, though what we perceive as the sacred may be far from that which inspired the original artist.

This conference addresses acts of creation and co-creation and encourages a dialogue between artists, scholars and audiences in a mutual exploration of the sacred. At its heart is the idea that the sacred enables us to move beyond a utilitarian understanding of the world and infuses our everyday life with mystery.

The SLA is based in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Australian Catholic University (ACU).

The 2013 conference committee comprises Michael Griffith, Elaine Lindsay, James Marland, Dermot Nestor and Jeannette Siebols, whose painting, Love Poem III, is the cover image for this program booklet.

The post-graduate seminar preceding the conference on 2 August is organised by Dermot Nestor, from ACU’s Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, with panellists Kevin Hart and Angela McCarthy.

The committee particularly thanks the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at ACU and the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund for their financial support.

ACU is a NSW Institute of Teachers endorsed provider of professional development.
**Post-graduate seminar**

*Interdisciplinary Research and the Study of the Sacred*

Function Room, Edmund Rice Building
Friday 2 August, 2:30 – 4:00 pm

**Panellists**

**Professor Kevin Hart**
Kevin Hart is Edwin B. Kyle Professor of Christian Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, where he also holds professorships in the Department of English and the Department of French. He is also Eric D’Arcy Professor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University.

**Dr Angela McCarthy**
Angela McCarthy is a senior lecturer in theology at the University of Notre Dame Fremantle campus. She completed her PhD in 2006 at Notre Dame and is now focussing her research on religious art and theology.

**Convenor and participating chair**

**Dr Dermot Nestor**
Dermot Nestor is lecturer in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at Australian Catholic University where he is also the Head of School for Theology.

He joined ACU in 2011 following several years at Trinity College Dublin where he completed his PhD under the direction of A D H Mayes. His research interests include the identification and recovery of ancient Israelite ethnicity, material culture studies and the work of Pierre Bourdieu.
**Conference Program**

**Friday 2 August**

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<tr>
<td>2:30 – 4:00pm</td>
<td>Postgraduate seminar, <em>Interdisciplinary Research and the Study of the Sacred</em> Function Room, Edmund Rice Building (E Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:45 – 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Conference registration and light refreshments, Atrium (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:30 – 5:45 pm</td>
<td>Opening, Gleeson Auditorium (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:45 – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker: Kevin Hart, <em>Poetry and the Sacred</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 – 7:15 pm</td>
<td>Readings by Robert Adamson, Kevin Hart, Anthony Lawrence and Amanda Lohrey</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:15 – 8:15 pm</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker, Rosemary Crumlin OAM, <em>The Half-opened Door</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>8:15 – 8:25 pm</td>
<td>Juno Gemes introduces the <em>Picturing Compassion</em> exhibition (showing in Computer Lab 1, off the Atrium, Friday and Saturday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:25 pm</td>
<td>Coffee and tea</td>
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**Saturday 3 August**

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<tr>
<td>8:30 – 9:00 am</td>
<td>Conference registration, coffee and tea, Atrium (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 – 9:20 am</td>
<td>Falaka Yimer introduces his exhibition (showing in the McGlade Art Gallery), <em>The Woodblock Prints of Falaka Yimer</em>, Gleeson Auditorium (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30 – 10:30 am</td>
<td>Paper presentations, Seminar Rooms TS1, 2, 3, and 5 (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:45 – 10:30 am</td>
<td>Workshop with Anne Benjamin, <em>Tanka and the Sacred</em>, Seminar Room TS18 (level 2, D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 – 11:00 am</td>
<td>Morning tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 12:30 pm</td>
<td>Workshop with Susan Murphy, <em>The Koan of Planetary Crisis</em>, Seminar Room TS16 (ground floor, G Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Paper presentations, Seminar Rooms TS1, 2, 3, and 5 (D Block)</td>
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<td>1:00 – 1:45 pm</td>
<td>Lunch, The Refectory</td>
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<td>1:45 – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker, Amanda Lohrey, <em>The Religious Novel: Is it possible?</em>, Gleeson Auditorium (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:40 – 4:10 pm</td>
<td>Workshop with Tracey Sanders, <em>The Sacred and Aesthetic Self</em>, Seminar Room TS20, Edmund Rice Building (above Co-op Bookshop, E Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:40 – 4:40 pm</td>
<td>Paper presentations, Seminar Rooms TS1, 2, 3, and 5 (D Block)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:40 – 5:00 pm</td>
<td>Afternoon tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:00 – 6:00 pm</td>
<td>Closing panel with Robert Adamson, Kevin Hart, Anthony Lawrence and Amanda Lohrey, and launch of Toby Davidson, <em>Christian Mysticism and Australian Poetry</em> (Cambria Press), Gleeson Auditorium (D Block)</td>
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Keynote Speakers and Abstracts

Rosemary Crumlin OAM

*The Half-opened Door*

To the surprise of many, the Vatican Museum signalled its intention to have a pavilion at this year’s Venice Biennale, a major showcase of contemporary art. Its Director, Michel Forte, headed the search for artists who would create the commissions around themes of creation in Genesis (Creation, Uncreation, Re-creation). The art world buzzed. Could any image challenge Michelangelo’s ceiling in the Sistine Chapel? Was the Vatican Museum trying to drag the Church into the 21st century? Was it really responding to the diversity of cultures and religions of those who queued daily to shuffle around its collections of figurative, centuries-old art? Was it seriously opening its arms to artists for new ways of seeing and feeling born in the heat of a differently complex world?

Beginning always with the art, this ‘talk’/ ‘adventure in seeing’ will invite those of you who are here to enter into some of the works currently in the Vatican Pavilion until December this year, and then to explore some images from the Blake Prize which prod, stretch, and reveal ways of seeing what is sacred and thus how, in Australia, the presence of different cultures and different religious traditions can shape and influence our seeing and stretch and prod our imaginations and understandings. The sacred has no boundaries. As the Nobel Prize winning poet reminds:

\[
\text{Every person is a half-opened door leading to a room for everyone.}
\]


Rosemary has academic qualifications in religious and adult education (she is a former Director of the National Pastoral Institute, Australia); Art Education (Birmingham University, U.K.); Art and Art History (ASTC National Art School, Sydney); and Visual Arts (M.A., Monash University, Clayton). She holds honorary doctorates from the Melbourne College of Divinity (STD), 1999 and Australian Catholic University (Hon.D.), 2000. She was awarded an OAM in 2001 for her contribution to the community in the areas of modern art and spirituality and education. She is an Honorary Fellow at ACU.
Kevin Hart

*Poetry and the Sacred*

The conjunction of ‘poetry’ and ‘the sacred’ produces an ambiguity. Are we to talk of the sacred as a theme of some poetry or even as marking poetry as such? Or are we to talk of the sacred as what poetry draws from and perhaps does not always render as a theme? In this paper I discuss this ambiguity, paying particular attention to the question of prayer in poetry. I conclude with some reflections based on my experience as a poet.

Kevin Hart is Edwin B. Kyle Professor of Christian Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, where he also holds professorships in the Department of English and the Department of French. He is also Eric D'Arcy Professor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. He holds an honorary doctorate from the Institut Catholique de Paris. His scholarly books include *The Trespass of the Sign* (Cambridge UP) and *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago UP). He is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse* (OUP) and of Jean-Luc Marion’s *Essential Writings* (Fordham UP). His poetry is collected in *Flame Tree: Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe), *Young Rain* (Notre Dame UP), and *Morning Knowledge* (Notre Dame UP). A new collection of poems, *Barefoot*, will be completed in the next year, and a new scholarly book, *Kingdoms of God*, is forthcoming (Indiana UP).

Amanda Lohrey

*The Religious Novel: is it possible?*

The subject of the religious novel is large in scope and I propose to offer an overview only of some aspects of it that interest me most. Georg Lukacs defined the novel as ‘the epic of a world abandoned by God’. In the classical Greek epic, matter and essence were united in a totality no longer available in the modern era. The novel is a response to this, an attempt to reconcile ‘life’ and ‘meaning’ in new and unstable forms that foreshadow a Marxist utopia. The Liberal Tradition is as atheistic as the Marxist but repudiates its historical determinism and is more open to mystery. E M Forster’s exploration of the so-called prophetic novel as a form of mystical writing is a case in point. Forster’s heirs, Isherwood and Maugham, both essayed religious novels but in his essays Isherwood argues for the impossibility of fictionalizing the mystical experience. The contemporary critic James Wood echoes the work of Lukacs in his notion of a ‘broken estate’ in which religious texts have lost their narrative power and been replaced by the novel as ‘a special realm of freedom’ that offers a truer model of the real than religion. Wood argues for a secular mysticism which he finds exemplified in the work of Virginia Woolf. The critic John A. McClure argues for the emergence of a distinctively postsecular fiction, characterised by ‘weak’ or partial and hybridized forms of faith as exemplified in the work of writers like Thomas Pynchon. This raises the question of postmodern or ‘weak’ narratives as opposed to foundational or ‘strong’ narratives and the cultural contest between the two.

Amanda Lohrey lives in Tasmania and writes fiction and non-fiction. She has taught Politics at the University of Tasmania and Writing and Textual Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of Queensland. Amanda is a regular contributor to *The Monthly* magazine and is a former Senior Fellow of the Literature Board of the Australia Council. In November 2012 she received the 2012 Patrick White Award for literature.
Panellists

Robert Adamson
Professor Robert Adamson holds the Copyright Agency Ltd Chair of Poetry at the University of Technology, Sydney. Funded by the Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), the UTS Chair of Poetry is the first of its kind in Australia and is intended to promote the study, recognition and wider appreciation of poetry.


http://www.robertadamson.com/  Robert@robertadamson.com

Anthony Lawrence
Anthony Lawrence is a Lecturer in Reading and Writing Poetry at Griffith University on the Gold Coast. He has published thirteen books of poems and a novel. His most recent collection, *The Welfare of my Enemy*, was shortlisted for the 2012 Judith Wright Calanthe Award, the Age Book of the Year Award, and the 2013 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize (New South Wales Premier’s Literary Awards). He lives at Casuarina, on the NSW North Coast.
Workshop Presenters

Anne Benjamin

*Tanka and the Sacred: exploring mystery in miniature*

This workshop explores poetry in the tanka and haiku genre that enable a poet or reader to encounter traces of ‘some of the mystery which is at the core of existence and that has the power to transform our understanding of life’. There will be a brief background/refresher on the tanka and haiku genre, (if required) before exploring examples of tanka and haiku that lead the poet or the reader towards some glimpse of the sacred or hint at meaning within the human situation. In particular, tanka will be explored as a sense of ‘being present’ to a situation/person/nature/object that leads to uncovering some of the mystery of life.

Participants are invited to respond to tanka or haiku presented during the workshop, to bring examples to share with other participants and to write tanka or haiku during the workshop that they also may wish to share. Maximum number of participants: 14.

Dr Anne Benjamin writes poetry, short stories and longer works. Her tanka and tanka prose have been published in Australia, Canada, Japan, UK, USA and New Zealand. While she lives in Western Sydney, her strong ties with India are often reflected in her writing. Anne is an educator and consultant, a Fellow of UWS and an Adjunct Professor of ACU in the Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership.

Susan Murphy

*The Koan of Planetary Crisis*

Anthropogenic climate change poses humanity with a koan we have no choice but to resolve. Zen (and non-Zen) koans can provoke a strong shift in consciousness and help rouse the mind towards the sacred responsibility we have to mind and to love the earth, in a moment of environmental and planetary crisis. The environmental crisis is perhaps as much as 90% a mental crisis – at best, it has the potential to be a healing crisis in consciousness. The shift in consciousness we have to make, the most rapid and urgent in human history, in order to avert planetary catastrophe, is political, economic and social, as well as moral and ethical – but equally it is personal and transformational at the most fundamental level of mind. Drawing on the resources of the mind in relative stillness, I will offer a series of brief encounters with koans that will let participants explore the way these tiny facets of undivided consciousness can re-awaken dormant parts of the mind that are vital to us in facing extreme crisis. Maximum number of participants: around 30.

Dr Susan Murphy is a Zen Roshi, teaching in Sydney and Melbourne and south coast NSW. She is a writer, radio producer and film director, as well as teaching and mentoring writing. She taught film for many years at the University of Technology, Sydney, and in 1997 was awarded a five-year QEII ARC Research Fellowship in social ecology at UWS. Susan has co-written three books on film, and directs the annual Buddhist Film Festival in Sydney. She also teaches embodied dreamwork and imagination for artists, therapists and actors with Robert Bosnak. Her most recent book (also e-book), *Minding the Earth, Mending the World* (PanMacmillan/Picador, 2012), is a response to the tremendous koan presented to the world in our life-times by the environmental crisis we all face.

Tracey Sanders

*The Sacred and the Aesthetic Self: unpacking the sacred through dramatic action*

What does the sacred mean to you? How do you animate the sacred through body and soul? In this workshop, these questions will be explored through a gentle and empowering experiential encounter with our own notions of the sacred. Participants will work collaboratively through the dramatic form to unpack what the sacred means to us as individuals but also as a community. No previous experience of drama is necessary, just a willingness to delve deep into our aesthetic and expressive selves. Maximum number of participants: 20.

Dr Tracey Sanders is a senior lecturer in the School of Arts and Sciences (Qld) at Australian Catholic University. She is a specialist in Applied Theatre and Educational Drama and has a special interest in community ethno dramas that capture the stories of marginalised and oppressed groups. Dr Sanders is particularly interested in exploring spirituality through the use of dramatic art forms and has worked in this area in myriad contexts with a variety of groups ranging from children in schools to adults in ministry and tertiary education. Dr Sanders is a member of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Brisbane Catholic Education Council and is the academic co-ordinator for the Bachelor of Arts program in Queensland. She is the recipient of an ACU Excellence in Teaching Award, the Vice Chancellor’s Community Engagement Award (2011) and an Australian Learning and Teaching Award.
Conference Exhibitions

The Woodblock Prints of Falaka Yimer

Falaka Yimer is an Ethiopian Christian and master printmaker who is creating a body of large woodblock prints on Ethiopian Christian imagery. He was born in Ethiopia in 1942 and studied at the College of Fine Arts in Addis Ababa between 1968 and 1973. He studied at Howard University, Washington D.C. from 1973 to 1980, graduating with a Masters in Fine Arts in 1980. Falaka taught printmaking and drawing to undergraduate and graduate students at Howard University from 1984-94, retiring from there as Assistant Professor to come to Australia in 1995. He taught fine art printmaking and drawing at Campbelltown TAFE in Sydney from 2002-11 and is now a fulltime artist in Campbelltown. Examples of his work can be seen at http://falakaarmideyimer.com/

The exhibition, curated by Lachlan Warner, is showing in the McGlade Art Gallery until 17 August.

Picturing Compassion: Liberation Prison Project

‘In Photography there are no shadows that cannot be illuminated.’ August Sandler.

Thinkers and social commentators stress the imperative for more compassion and kindness. Picturing Compassion exhibition curators Juno Gemes and Dean Sewell asked themselves: ‘What does compassion look like? How do we recognise it when we see it? How do we envision compassionate action?’ They put these questions to their friends and colleagues - leading photographers around the world - and invited them to donate their most powerful images on the subject to this exhibition. Twenty photographers donated 100 images. The curators’ selection is on view here. The 60 images include work by brilliant young photographers Raephella Rosella, Nici Crumpston and Andrew Quilty, and legendary veterans Tim Page, Paula Bronstein, Michael Amenolia, William Yang, Rio Helmi, Robert Mc Farlane, Jon Lewis, Kate Geraghty, Anthony Browell, Marco Bok, Simon O’Dwyer, John Ogden, Margo Berdeshevesky, and curator/photographers Juno Gemes and Dean Sewell.

These photographers display their concern for, and their empathy with, their subjects. It is trust, essentially, that is evident between each subject and each photographer.

The Picturing Compassion exhibition invites us to ask where the practice of compassion sits in our world and how it manifests in our own life. The curators thank Ven. Thuben Chokyi for her guidance and support, as well as all contributing photographers. Proceeds from sales from the exhibition will help Liberation Prison Project assist men and women in prison around the world to transform their lives through meditation and Buddhist practice.

The St John’s Bible

Australian Catholic University has purchased a limited edition, fine art reproduction of the St John’s Bible, a hand-written and illuminated Bible commissioned by St John’s Abbey and University in Minnesota from calligrapher Donald Jackson. One of the 7 volumes is on view during the conference on Level 1 of the Campus Reference Library.
Paper Presenters

**Jason Archbold**  
*Christ and the Count - Sacred Rituals in Bram Stoker’s Dracula*

The way in which the Vampire symbolically and physically complicates and undermines the sexual categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ in Stoker’s novel has been discussed at length. While many critics have interpreted the weapons of the vampire hunter as phallic symbols or ‘signs of the fathers’ (Anne Williams), they often overlook the ways in which vampire hunting in Dracula makes reference to the Father. As Christopher Herbert has observed, much of the scholarship that has obtained a position within the canon for Stoker’s novel privileges it as a ‘pioneering exploration of the forbidden zone of sex’, ignoring much of the novel’s religious content (101). Stoker writes of the ‘Vampire’s baptism of blood’, and there is a general preoccupation with the violation of the sacred bodies which corresponds to a spiritual challenge to the Creator of these bodies. In this paper I propose to interrogate Stoker’s portrayals of the acts of vampirism and vampire slaying in comparison with Biblical depictions of crucifixion and baptism, focusing on the ways in which Van Helsing and his band of disciples seek to return the undead to a place beneath God by administering final deaths (as immortality precludes the possibility of judgement, thus setting up the Count as a god in his own right and therefore as an opponent to God).

**Jason Archbold** is a first-year PhD student at Macquarie University, working on a thesis on the subject of ethics and existentialism in apocalyptic literature and film. He has recently presented a paper on the effects of speed on ethics in Robert Kirkman’s zombie apocalypse series *The Walking Dead* at the Southwest/Texas American and Popular Culture Association Annual Conference, and his other research interests include the works of James Joyce and Friedrich Nietzsche.  
[jasonp309@hotmail.com](mailto:jasonp309@hotmail.com)

**Lachlan Brown**  
*The Edges of Belief in an Age of Post-belief: Charles Wright, John Burnside and Kevin Hart*

‘What will become now of art,’ asks Maurice Blanchot, ‘now that the gods and even their absence are gone, and now that man’s presence offers no support?’ (*The Space of Literature*, 233). This paper considers works by three contemporary poets (John Burnside, Charles Wright and Kevin Hart) with this question in mind. Burnside and Wright seem to stand on the edges of Christian belief, appreciating some of the contours of this faith, without calling themselves believers in any straightforward sense. Hart is a Catholic convert whose poetry has often been examined through theological lenses. Yet all three poets also present remarkably similar apophatic experiences, brushing against the language of faith, attempting to radically reconfigure or approach transcendence within what Wright calls ‘an age of post-belief’. What are we to make of this deep desire for transcendence and the limits of (negative) experience? Through a reading of three poems, this paper hopes to examine the exquisite sense of negativity cultivated by these poets, setting this into the question of what might constitute a poetry of ‘believing unbelief (or ‘unbelieving belief’).

**Dr Lachlan Brown** is a lecturer in English Literature and Creative Writing at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. His current research interests include the poetry and prose of Kevin Hart, authenticity in Nam Le’s *The Boat* and the creative writing strategies of refugee students in Western Sydney. Lachlan’s own poems have appeared in journals including *Mascara*, *Southerly*, *Heat* and *Westside*; his first volume of poetry, *Limited Cities*, was published by Giramondo in 2013.  
[labrown@csu.edu.au](mailto:labrown@csu.edu.au)
**Lynn Brunet**  
*A Sheffield Dreaming: Celtic Lore, Mummers’ Plays and Initiatory Rites in the Art of Peter Booth (b. 1940)*

The work of the Melbourne artist Peter Booth has played a major role in Australian art since the 1970s. His work is well known for its dark and disturbing imagery and apocalyptic themes, which were derived from his childhood dreams and nightmares. At the age of seventeen Booth migrated with his family to Melbourne from Sheffield, where his father had worked in the steel mills. Scholars have described Booth’s work as possibly being influenced by the fact that he witnessed the bombing of Sheffield during WWII and in general terms as representing the unconscious, a spiritual journey through darkness, even as echoing aspects of medieval Christian mysticism.

This paper will suggest that Peter Booth’s visual imagery shares many similarities with a very specific set of beliefs and social practices from the Sheffield region that celebrate the sacred through a blend of medieval Christian themes, neopagan religious beliefs and magic practices. Accompanying the history of labour in the region was the development of a wide range of groups, including Friendly Societies and trade unions that used a blend of religious beliefs for their rituals, oaths and initiation rites in order to pass on the secret knowledge relevant to their trades. It is possible that Peter Booth’s continuing depiction of this material might be associated with a traumatic exposure to a modern enactment of ‘The Mysteries’ conveyed as a terrifying set of working-class dramas and fraternal initiation rites that sought to promote solidarity in the unstable world of factory employment.

**Dr Lynn Brunet** is an independent art historian living in Melbourne. Her research examines the coupling of trauma and ritual in modern and contemporary art and literature. She was a full-time lecturer in art history and theory from 1994 to 2006 and is the author of *A Course of Severe and Arduous Trials: Bacon, Beckett and Spurious Freemasonry in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009) and *The Masonic Presence in Contemporary Art: Initiatory Themes and Trauma* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller, 2008).

Lynn@chthonianartist.com

**Katharine Buljan**  
*On Sacredness in Sacred Seven Anime*

Numerous examples can be found in the history of humankind of various natural objects being venerated. However, according to Mircea Eliade in his work *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, this was not because of what they are (objects) but because of a belief that they are associated with the sacred (1959: 11–12). Eliade also notes in his work *Patterns in Comparative Religion* that stones were sometimes objects that were revered in this sense, and they were often attributed special powers (1976: 216). This ancient myth of a sacred stone and its powers also appears in the 2011 anime series *Sacred Seven*, (directed by Yoshimitsu Ohashi) where it is central to the plot. Alma Tandouji, a high school student and the story’s protagonist, awakens his dormant supernatural powers with the help of the sacred stone. Using Eliade’s ideas on the profane and the sacred for the theoretical framework, it is argued in this paper that Tandouji’s need for the sacred stone represents a human desire to be in close contact with the sacred reality that aids him/her in his/her search for meaning.

Apart from the sacred stone, this paper also examines in general the idea of sacredness, which is manifested in various aspects of the story and is hidden behind the conventions of a science fiction/mecha/high school/action generic hybrid. In this context, it is argued that the story reflects Eliade’s assertion on intermingling of the profane and the sacred (Eliade 1959: 23, 202–204).
Dr Katharine Buljan holds a PhD (University of Sydney), Master of Arts with Honours (University of Western Sydney), and Master of Animation (University of Technology, Sydney). She teaches sessionally at the University of Technology, Sydney and was a guest lecturer at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School and the University of Sydney. Katharine writes on animation, and has published in this field and the field of visual arts. She is also a practising artist and has exhibited in Australia, Italy, Hong Kong, Sweden and Holland. Katharine is co-founder of the recently established Studio Buljan, an art/animation studio in inner Sydney.

www.katharinebuljan.com  katharine@studiobuljan.com.au

Carmel Byrne
Search for the Sacred: The Emergence of Modern Abstract Art

Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian are widely accepted as the pioneers of modern abstract art. Both artists were familiar with the idea of a core non-dual existence known as advaita (not two), an ancient Eastern concept successfully spread throughout the West by Madam Blavatsky in the late 19th Century. Mondrian in particular developed a visual language to explore this 'pure' non-dual existence and used as little material 'reality' as possible in his visual expression for he believed the material realm worked in direct opposition to the spiritual.

In contrast Australian Aboriginal desert artists fully accept the sacredness of the material realm and engage a three-dimensional understanding of the material and the sacred, interconnected with a complex mix of cultural and personal narratives. Underpinning Australian Aboriginal creative expression are concepts of unity and connectedness and it is no coincidence that European modernists developed an abstract nonrepresentational language analogous to that of the Australian desert painters.

This presentation looks at connections between the visual abstract language of Australian Aboriginal desert painters and the motivation and evolution of abstract visual art in the West.

Carmel Byrne is a practising artist and runs Scratch Art Space, a contemporary art complex in Sydney. A constant theme throughout her work has been landscape as the context for unfolding human existence. Carmel has studied Advaita philosophy through the Study Society in Sydney since 1992.
carmel@scratchartspace.com

Grace Carroll
Getting the Message Through: Christian Waller’s Printed Books

Australian artist Christian Yandell Waller (1894-1954) produced a body of work that was informed by her spiritual beliefs, which encompassed Christianity and Theosophy. The former was expressed through her ecclesiastic stained glass, while the latter is seen in her printed books. Disillusioned with the world of material truths, Waller immersed herself in that of the spirit and embarked on personal mythmaking in an attempt to make sense of her world.

This paper examines the way in which Waller communicated her personal sense of the sacred through her art, focussing on her printed books The Great Breath and The Gates of Dawn (1932). Her stained glass, which expressed an orthodox sense of the sacred, combined with Waller’s arcane beliefs, is also discussed. Her disinterest in the ‘real’ world, and personal interpretation of English and European art movements and esoteric beliefs systems, instilled an abstruse quality to her oeuvre. Although meaningful for Waller, the spiritual themes of her art were inaccessible to audiences, a fact which has problematised analysis of her art, given its resilience to standard art history timeframes. As such, this paper situates Waller’s oeuvre within an alternative reading of
these histories that considers the artist’s subjective response to the belief systems with which she engaged and the ways in which she attempted to convey these beliefs through her art.

Grace Carroll is a doctoral candidate in the discipline of Art History and Curatorship at the Australian National University, Canberra. Her thesis examines the art and life of the Australian graphic and stained-glass artist Christian Yandell Waller (1894-1954). Her research considers both the artistic and spiritual influences on the artist’s oeuvre. Grace also contributes regularly to arts magazines and, in 2012, curated the contemporary photography exhibition *The Real & Ideal* at M16 Artspace, Canberra. She was the Research Assistant for the exhibition *Paris to Monaro: Pleasures from the Studio of Hilda Rix Nicholas*, currently showing at the National Portrait Gallery of Australia. Grace.Carroll@anu.edu.au

James Charlton

*The Immanence of Transcendence: Thomas Traherne’s non-dual sacred vision*

For Traherne the sacred is an inherent characteristic, both of ‘things’ and of humanity’s awakened heart and mind. The sacred is not, therefore, an addition to the phenomenal world. As with his non-dual predecessors Meister Eckhart and Mother Julian of Norwich, Traherne’s great paradox is this: divine transcendence is ‘realizable’. It manifests as immanence: a seemingly inevitable immanence within creaturely life.

In this paper I propose to read a selection of Traherne’s non-dual poetry, interwoven with a couple of poems of my own which might reflect Traherne’s non-dual vision of the sacred. Non-dualism can roughly be equated with other phrases, such as ‘integral pluralism’, ‘unity in diversity’ and ‘differentiated unity’. The word ‘non-dual’, although meaning ‘not two’, does not thereby mean ‘one’. There is a ‘back and forth’ movement between the divine and the human that is neither dualistic nor monistic, if by ‘monistic’ we mean complete synthesis.

Non-dualism is confronting. This is because we are often conditioned from childhood to assume the absolute truth of dualities such as God/humanity, spirit/matter, objective/subjective and self/other. But Traherne tended to collapse the assumed objective world into a world beyond form and name. His ‘internalist’ approach is in favour of inner transformation, pointing in the direction of Christianity’s version of the so-called Unitive Mystery. This is perichoretic in origin and outworking. It is not remote from other contingent creatures; nor is it separatist or lacking in communal concern. Engagement emerges through Traherne’s re-weaving of ‘feeling’ with ‘thought’ and of spirituality with theology.

Dr James Charlton earned his PhD from the University of Tasmania and his MA from the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Non-dualism in Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Traherne: A Theopoetic Reflection*, Bloomsbury, New York, 2013. His previous books are poetry collections: *Luminous Bodies*, Montpelier Press, 2001, and *So Much Light*, Pardalote Press, 2007. james.charlton@iinet.net.au

Josie Cirocco

*Spirituality for HeARTful Souls*

The systematic and explicit renewal of the aesthetic life of a local Catholic urban parish in South Australia resulted in the faith renewal amongst parishioners more used to devotional ‘art’. Essentially, the link that we created between art, prayer, spirituality, and theology and parish life was explicit in the manner in which we sought to bring about a sense of deep theologically oriented aesthetic renewal in the Catholic parish of Elizabeth, South Australia between 2010-2012. During this time, a pastoral team ministered in a contemporary and collaborative leadership model to
discern sound, ethical and just structures and expressions to reach out to the real needs of the community in the quest to follow the ecclesiological intentions of Jesus. The paper explores the historical and cultural context for this aesthetic renewal. It will present some of the art and review the educational processes and parishioners’ appreciation and engagement of art.

Josie Cirocco has qualifications and experience in engineering and human resources in both the industry sector and the local church in the Archdiocese of Adelaide. She enjoys being a Catholic who has been actively involved in various ministries within the local church. In the past five years, Josie has deepened her theological understanding through post graduate studies with Flinders University, simultaneously, with her recent pastoral ministry in a key leadership role in an urban Catholic parish. A major part of Josie’s role was to lead the parish, in collaboration with the ordained, the religious, lay men and women, through a renewal of parish life underpinned by a theology of communion, with an emphasis on the engagement and education of parishioners to explore and embrace the sacred through art and architectural spaces.

Mrinali Clarke

The Sacred Journey: The Ever-Transcending Quest in the Poetry of Sri Chinmoy

The idea of a poetic voice expressing or evoking the sacred, pure divine consciousness is explored through the poetry of Sri Chinmoy. The Quest arose as a perfect choice of theme to explore the development and fulfilment of a transcendental vision in his writings. The separation, trial and return are motifs that illustrate the spiritual evolution of the soul, standing alongside physical evolution. Firstly, a primordial oneness with the Absolute Consciousness, the subsequent loss or separation, and descent into ignorance; secondly, the trial which outlines and explores the steps of the mature spiritual aspirant as he is tested, the intricacies of the profound inner relationship and interaction with the Supreme such as loss of faith, intervention of God’s Compassion and temptation. Lastly, the return, the traditional part of The Quest where the archetypal hero must return home, transformed by a gift or knowledge; here the work is explored which seeks to describe the culmination of the spiritual quest in unconditional surrender. The rare human experience of union with the Absolute, the goal of God-Realisation or Self-Realisation, and the exalted states of blissful absorption into divine consciousness, are portrayed. Furthermore, unfolding from the poet’s own experience, is the manifestation of that high state in the physical world through the ever-transcending Will of the Supreme Consciousness, indicating humanity’s true purpose in the Divine Lila. As the reader follows the development in The Quest, he is called upon to make ever-deeper spiritual responses to the literary materials. The series, organised in this way, illustrates that the poetry of Sri Chinmoy has much more significance as a body of work than any single poem can reveal.

Mrinali Clarke wrote the thesis The Ever-Transcending Quest in the Poetry of Sri Chinmoy for an honours degree at Monash University, 1989. As a student of Sri Chinmoy since 1986, she continued to study under his guidance, concentrating on his philosophy, poetry and meditation until his passing in 2007. Teaching meditation for the past twenty years and writing articles on the activities and philosophy of Sri Chinmoy, she also presented a paper at the World Parliament of Religions in Melbourne in 2009 on the music of Sri Chinmoy. She is looking to pursue higher studies in the area and is particularly interested in ideas of the new-age, spirituality, and of speculative fiction in general. Her paper has recently been updated and expanded to include the later writings of Sri Chinmoy and is now published on the Web at http://srichinmoy-reflections.com/quest  mrinali@goldenboat.net.
Patrick Condliffe

*B. Wongar – Dreaming profanely or writing the Indigenous sublime?*

B. Wongar is a contentious figure, primarily because of the accusations of cultural imperialism surrounding his use of Indigenous identity within his novels and short stories. These claims have an interesting resonance due to Wongar’s own identity shift from the Serbian migrant worker, known as Sreten Božić, to the author B. Wongar. This shift invokes notions of the sacred which infuse his work. To the peoples of Arnhem Land ‘Wongar’ means the mythic construction of the ‘Dreaming’ or ‘Dreamtime’, yet, curiously, Božić took this first as his *nom de plume* for writing, and then subsequently as his legal name. Similarly, the enigmatic B stands either for Božić or more interestingly Banumbir – meaning ‘Morning Star’ – which is similarly loaded with religious connotation. Wongar’s first successful piece of fiction was *The Track to Bralgu* (1978), a modern reimagining of traditional Indigenous myths. However, his first work was a co-authored collection of translated Indigenous myths titled *Aboriginal Myths* (1972) written with Alan Marshall and published under his ‘real’ name – Sreten Božić. Because of this it is surprising that much of the Indigenous criticism of Wongar’s work centres upon his use of Aboriginal characters and voice but comments little about his use of the Aboriginal sacred and sublime. This paper seeks to discuss issues surrounding this use of the Indigenous sacred within Wongar’s texts and, in particular, to consider the question of whether a foreign author can truly present an authentic vision of the Indigenous sublime.

*Patrick Condliffe* is a doctoral candidate at the University of Sydney. He is a co-editor of *Philament*, the University of Sydney student journal of the arts. pcon2780@uni.sydney.edu.au

James Cooper

*Profoundly Profane: Tracing the Sacred in the Writing of Flannery O’Connor*

For Flannery O’Connor, the chief philosophical error vexing the modern world was the sharp division between spirit and matter, and so between grace and nature – or in literary terms what she referred to as ‘mystery and manners’. Against such dualisms, O’Connor’s Catholic sacramental vision led her to regard the everyday world as our necessary point of contact with the Divine, indeed as the very unfolding of Christ’s continued sanctification of the created order. O’Connor’s sacramentalism underpinned her view of fiction writing as what she termed ‘an incarnational art’, concerned with doing justice to reality by highlighting the inexorable connections between the visible and the invisible, the temporal and the transcendent. Such an outlook gave rise to her extremely compelling and often confronting tales, populated with ‘large startling figures’ battling (often unawares) for their souls in the most ordinary and often violent of situations. However disturbing, her stories are always invested with a deeply embedded meaning and symbolism that reflects the way in which she saw material reality and the sacred order as being connected. In this way, O’Connor’s portrayal of the profane (as distinct from, though never unconnected with the sacred) alerts us to her guiding theological aesthetic, and its uncanny ability to inspire literary artworks capable of awakening in the reader a renewed awareness and questioning of things at once utterly ordinary, yet ultimately significant.

*Dr James Cooper* is a writer and teacher of philosophy and creative writing at Tabor Adelaide. After completing his PhD in Education at ACU in 2008 James worked for a time in educational research before pursuing an abiding interest in creative writing. He has published several poems and short stories and hopes soon to publish his first novel. jcooper@adelaide.tabor.edu.au
Doru Costache  
*Musical Analogies in the Alexandrine Tradition: Clement and St Athanasius*

Within their efforts to reach out to cultured Gentiles, the Christian Alexandrine apologists Clement (d.c.215) and St Athanasius the Great (d. 373) made use of certain musical analogies and metaphors meant to emphasize the creative presence of the Logos of God throughout a meaningful universe. Both Alexandrines considered art a powerful tool able to interpret the cosmic milieu from a theological vantage point. My paper undertakes to explore the significance of the musical analogies that feature in Clement’s *Exhortation to the Gentiles* and St Athanasius’ *Against the Gentiles*, aiming to highlight the appreciation of the two Alexandrines for the capacity of musical art to reveal the sacred or, strictly speaking, to mediate a theological message about the world we live in.

**The Rev Dr Doru Costache** has been a Presbyter under the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia (Ecumenical Patriarchate) since 2008, and a Senior Lecturer in Patristics at St Andrew’s Greek Orthodox Theological College (Sydney College of Divinity), Sydney, since 2005. Previously, he lectured for nine years in the University of Bucharest, Romania, as a member of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. He received his Doctor of Theology degree from the University of Bucharest in 2000, upon defending a thesis on St Maximus the Confessor and the anthropic cosmological principle. From 2001 to 2006, he worked within a series of research programs in the field of science and theology, funded by grants from the Templeton Foundation. He published and edited in Romanian, in cooperation, a number of volumes. His published articles, both in English and Romanian, primarily explore the area of patristic worldview/cosmology. He is currently working toward finalising a book on Genesis 1 as perceived within Byzantine tradition.  

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Jim Cregan  
*Landscape Design Through the Lens of Christian Faith: The Garden of Eden, the Resurrection, and the Unresolved Space*

Most religious traditions have an affiliated, or even foundational, culture of landscape design through which a significant amount of their theology or spiritual understandings is expressed. We see this, for example, in the Islamic gardens of North Africa and Moorish Spain, the Middle East, and Mogul India, in the Zen gardens of Japan, in the Taoist gardens of China, or indeed, in the painted landscapes of indigenous Australians. Despite the profound symbolism of the Garden of Eden, which bookends the Christian Bible, there is little that could be identified as a Christian tradition of this kind. Of the great monastic gardens of the Middle Ages, a representation of the heavenly Jerusalem on earth, very little remains – we can only guess as to their exact forms and intentions. The relocation of that particular Jerusalem, from the rural monasteries to the great cathedrals of Europe, exacerbated this decline. The question can be asked: what might a Christian garden look like today? If Christ is the new Temple, and concomitantly the new Eden, can there be such a thing? Recent research into the theology of Eden, as it can be found in the New Testament, suggests that perhaps the Christian garden is as much the expression of a religious attitude or predisposition as it is the manifestation of a particular form. As such it offers possibilities for an expression and experience of the sacred that is atypically unbound by form and convention. This paper explores these understandings, reflecting on the art of both Rembrandt and Gauguin, and recent examples of landscape design, through the lens of key passages from John’s Gospel and Revelation.

**Jim Cregan** took a Bachelor of Arts degree in Analytical Philosophy and Communications from Griffith University in Queensland in 1982. He subsequently completed a Diploma of Education specialising in teaching English and Drama and a Bachelor of Education in Special Needs Education. Jim completed a Master of Arts (Theological Studies) at Notre Dame in 2005 and a Master of Theology degree in 2012. He completed his M. Th. dissertation on the notion of ‘water as blessing’ as an aspect of the symbolism of the Garden of Eden. He is currently a PhD candidate researching further dimensions of the symbolism of the Garden of Eden as they are expressed in New Testament theology. Jim has had wide teaching experience in a variety of educational
settings including at one time being the principal of a high school for children who, for a variety of reasons, did not fit into mainstream educational environments. He lives in Perth, where, in conjunction with teaching at the University of Notre Dame (Fremantle), he also works as a gardener and landscape designer.

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Sarah Curtis

The Romantic Incline of Keswick Aesthetics in Women Artist Missionaries

From the mid 19th century the Keswick Movement offered a turning away from ‘worldliness’ through a process of ‘full surrender’ and ‘practical mysticism’. As the historian David Bebbington noted, Keswick had a particular ‘axiomatic’ appeal for women. I will explore this conundrum of sacrifice and pleasure by looking at two artistically gifted women missionaries who identified with Keswick - Lilias Trotter who went to Algiers and Amy Carmichael who went to South India. I will discuss how their engagement with visual art and literary activity informed their responses to living in a foreign culture and speculate how this might indicate a connection between the political and the mystical.

Dr Sarah Curtis is an early career researcher with a PhD in Social and Environmental Inquiry from the University of Melbourne. Her work is informed by Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of Freud and her research focus is on Christian history, psychoanalysis, women mystics, religious romanticism and art. She also has an established research background as a conceptually based figurative painter. curtissarah70@yahoo.com

Sarah Dowling

‘Captain Dog’ / ‘Heaven’s Eel’: From ‘the Idea of God’ to ‘the Invisible’ in the Poetry of Charles Wright

For celebrated contemporary American poet Charles Wright, the physical world seems always to point beyond itself towards something profound, the ‘light at the root of all things’. His poetry deals with an expectation that something sacred must exist, informing and completing the world at hand, although this is an expectation that frequently goes unfulfilled.

This paper will explore Wright’s so-called ‘idea of God’, which, on the hand, designates his dealings with the Christian deity recalled from a religious upbringing (which he now largely rejects) and, on the other, his invocation of an ultimate reality half-begrudgingly reliant on religious terms. Wright’s poetry, though often irreverent, is ultimately an expression of spiritual longing, a kind of prayer and a quest for transcendence: he tells us, ‘I write poems to untie myself, to do penance and disappear / Through the upper right-hand corner of things, to say grace’. At the same time, he grapples with his agnosticism and an unshakable impression of the vacancy of spiritual ideals, sensing that God is but an ‘idea’.

This paper will present a reading of two poems by Wright: an early poem, ‘Northanger Ridge’, which reflects on the Christian indoctrination of his boyhood, and the recently published ‘Heaven’s Eel’. These will provide the foundation for insight into the development of Wright’s concept of and vocabulary for the sacred, from a fraught ‘idea of God’ to a more numinous sense of the ‘invisible’, over the course of his acclaimed fifty-year career.

Sarah Dowling is a PhD candidate and sessional lecturer and tutor in Literature at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. Her thesis, ‘Origins, Time, Forces, Absence: “The Imaging of the Invisible” in the Poetry of Charles Wright’, presents a comprehensive retrospective of contemporary American poet Charles Wright’s oeuvre, illuminating his ongoing engagement with the so-called ‘invisible’, which is his sense of the ‘other’ that underlies and determines the visible world. sarah.dowling@acu.edu.au
Anne Elvey

Retrieving an Earth voice: ecological hermeneutics, the matter of the text and reading ‘as if it’s holy’ (Jennifer Harrison, Book Sculptor)

Norman Habel and colleagues include in their ecological hermeneutics, a hermeneutic of retrieval of an Earth voice (in biblical texts). This hermeneutic of retrieval relies on a practice of creative imagination - which has resonances in the feminist hermeneutic of creative imagination described by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza - to ‘retrieve’ and ‘perform’ an Earth voice in human language. At one level this practice of retrieval in language requires not only a close reading of texts for the way Earth ‘pushes up’ through the text (as Kate Rigby describes it) but also an attentiveness to the materiality of things (and texts as things). In this context individual texts themselves and the media in which they present themselves are ‘things’ through which Earth ‘speaks’. This paper outlines, first, some issues around the relationship between texts as material things and an Earth voice in things, in relation to their use as performances of a hermeneutics of retrieval. Second, the paper considers the way in which a relationship between the matter of a text and an Earth voice might touch on the sacred. The paper explores these questions with reference to poems/songs both biblical (from the Gospel of Luke) and more recent (including William Carlos Williams ‘A Sort of a Song’, Denise Levertov ‘O Taste and See’, Jennifer Harrison ‘Book Sculptor’, Michelle Boisseau ‘Parchment’).

Dr Anne Elvey is an adjunct research fellow in School of English, Communications and Performance Studies, Monash University, and an adjunct faculty member of Trinity College Theological School, MCD University of Divinity. Her publications include The Matter of the Text: Material Engagements between Luke and the Five Senses (Sheffield Phoenix, 2011) and three poetry chapbooks, most recently Bent toward the thing (Rosslyn Ave Publications, 2012). She is a co-editor of Reinterpreting the Eucharist: Explorations in Feminist Theology and Ethics (Equinox, 2013). Anne was shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize 2011 and the Peter Porter Poetry Prize 2012. She is editor of Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review. aelvey@trinity.unimelb.edu.au

Neil Ferguson

Thinking Theology Through Practice

It is not possible to fully express the nature and sense of the sacred in any complete way through any one means: no writing, no painting, no music or choreography, no sculpture - none of these on their own is sufficient. Each approach contributes something to the picture. Few would dispute the idea that the sacred can be glimpsed in artistic endeavours, but is it possible to address the sacred within the confines and rigor of the academic environment?

Practice-led research is a comparatively new approach emerging from the creative arts. It attempts to combine the methods of creative practice with those of academic research grounded in the written and spoken word. It investigates questions through the means of practice; questions that arise within and through artistic practice as well as those that have arisen outside of practice.

In this paper I present a number of conclusions from my ongoing PhD research, where the methodology is being ‘translated’ into a new context, that of theological reflection and research. Specifically, it presents to theology an approach to answer questions through faith practice. I argue that it can preserve the strengths and unique flexibility of practice while at the same time allowing individuals to pursue rigorous academic research grounded in that practice.

Neil Ferguson, after a career in the public service, studied theology at Tabor Adelaide and Murdoch University and is now a PhD candidate at the University of Notre Dame, Australia in Fremantle. Neil has tutored in philosophy and theology at Notre Dame as well as lectured in critical thinking at Edith Cowan University. Neil's
interests are in knowledge and embodiment as well as research methodologies and their applicability to the theological enterprise. nkferguson@gmail.com

Kathryn Hamann

In the Eye of the Beholder Does Truth Lie?

Peter Steele in his essay, ‘The Rocks and the Riot’, wrote ‘I want to leave the world both with a blessing and in love with it’. Though the process is slow, I know that I, too, am in the last part of my life. My most recent book, Where Shadows Go, invites you to ‘a bare board’; to, in the very presence of illness and dying, ‘raise cups / To Light / Love / A full living / of this feast’. The poems in this book enter into that disorientation which is the only way to a new orientation. The movement as it is for us all is not a simple linear one. Again and again, the poems slip back into anguish. It is not once that we go to the cross. It is not once that we are moored to the empty tomb by our grief; that we fail to see who is speaking to us and how. The writing and the reading of poetry (and in this, it is not alone in the arts) is in itself a way of being attentive. A poem demands attention. It insists by the very fact that it exists, that a voice wishes – no, demands – to be heard; that life ams, even in the many times of our dying.

Where Shadows Go holds to the hope, even in the absence of hope, that light is in the darkness and that the darkness cannot overcome it. These poems will, as the last line in the last poem (‘Banquet’) states, settle for nothing less than more.

Kathryn Hamann is a poet who lives in Mitcham with her family and two cats. The latter, with able paw, provide the additions and deletions that indeed finish off a poem.

Her work pops up here and there – rather like the bright orange fungi that speckle-dazzle her lawn in autumn. Some poems have made it offshore and another appeared in Best Australian Poems 2011.

A Slight Fuzzing of Perspective (Mono Unlimited, Melbourne, 2011), with photography by Leonard O’Brien and paintings by Sue Watson, was awarded the Caleb Prize (Poetry Section). The highlights of 2012 were two collaborations, the first with Penne Gillies and the second with Kathryn’s husband, Conrad. Her most recent book, Where Shadows Go, was published by Mono Unlimited in June 2013. Currently, she is working on poems imaging the humanity of those who have dementia and the inhumanity with which they are too often treated. For more information on Kathryn see: www.shardlight.com info@shardlight.com

Rosanne Hawke

Faith-informed Fiction: How I Write

The term ‘faith-informed fiction’ as explained by George E Marsden (1997) highlights the idea that belief systems built around religious faiths should have equal standing in scholarship with other worldviews. ‘Faith-informed’ is a modest term in a pluralistic setting and yet my own Christian perspective can be reflected upon as part of my identity as a writer. This paper will explain how the term ‘faith-informed’ resonates with my work, showing the correlation between art and the sacred in my own and some other authors’ works. I explore first the practice of my own writing process by examining what I do in perceiving and showing the sacred in my world and work, through themes, characters and content. I draw examples from selections of my published writings such as The Last Virgin in Year Ten, Marrying Ameera, Soraya the Storyteller and The Keeper. I also discuss how the faith-informed perspective enables me to write with respect about characters from cultures other than my own. I will also touch on the mystery of readers coming to faith through non-utilitarian art. My personal sense of the sacred is a belief that I write in the presence of God as I co-create with
him. My words are not inspired but my belief in a creator God who loves relationship informs my work regardless of whether I use labels specific to my particular faith tradition or not.

Dr Rosanne Hawke is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Tabor Adelaide. She has written over twenty books for young people, including Shahana, Marrying Ameera, and Soraya the Storyteller. Her novel Taj and the Great Camel Trek won the 2012 Adelaide Festival Award for children’s literature. For almost ten years Rosanne was an aid worker in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. She is a Carclew, Asialink, Varuna, and May Gibbs Fellow, and a Bard of Cornwall. She holds a PhD from the University of Adelaide and in 2009 won an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning. hawknest@rosannehawke.com

Maeve Louise Heaney
Creative Tensions: The Presence of the Sacred in Composing Music

There are different ways in which artists can address the sacred in their work, but in seeking to understand it, differentiating two possible focus points may help: ‘the sacred’ in the work being ‘created’ or the very process of creativity within the artist from which it emerges. Creative thought and the process of creativity is a theme that is currently drawing the attention of authors in the field of theology and spirituality, with differing stances. Italian theologian Sequeri identifies ‘creative thought’ as a possible way forward in what often feels like an impasse between the worlds of confessional faith and that of the arts, calling it a terza via, a third way forward, with the potential to mediate or bridge between the two, whereas Balthasar seemed to think there is something about the artistic calling which is intrinsically incompatible with the Christian one. Drawing from both, this paper seeks to share insights into musical composition as lived and viewed from a Christian perspective and world-view. Two underlying thoughts mark its rhythm: the conviction that a spirituality of and for artistic creativity implies holding together apparently opposing tensions, without seeking to immediately resolve them; and that the quest for a theological truth to ground and access, at least in Christian terms, what happens in and through music and music-making could perhaps be found in the age-old but somehow neglected truth of the Ascension. The paper will draw on musical compositions of the speaker.

Dr Maeve Louise Heaney, V.D.M.F., S.T.L., S.T.D. was born in Ireland, and is a consecrated missionary of the Institute of consecrated life, Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity. Over the years, she has worked in an apostolic capacity in Spain, England, Italy and Ireland. During this time, she worked extensively with music at the service of pastoral work and outreach, recording three CDs: I Believe in You, Stand and Nel Frattempo.

She completed a Licentiate and Doctorate in Sacred Theology in the area of Fundamental Theology and Theological Aesthetics at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 2010, where she also taught for two years. She was the Bannan Fellow at Santa Clara University, California for the academic year 2011-2012, teaching at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, while also working with faculty and students of the Music, Theatre and Dance departments.

As a musician and composer, she develops her ministry and theological work in the attempt to bring together theologically as well as in praxis, music-making, theology and spirituality, at the service of lived faith and outreach to future generations.

Dr Heaney took up an appointment as lecturer within the School of Theology, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, ACU (Banyo Campus, Brisbane), in July 2013. Maeve.Heaney@acu.edu.au
Anne Jackson

*Between Bone and Marrow: Exploring No-Space*

When we reach the limit of our time or our endurance we employ metaphor. Imagination seeks a new juxtaposition of terms to articulate the extreme nature of the situation. The point of artistic imagination is that it allows the juxtaposition of seemingly disparate elements to cohere and create new insight and life.

Religious imagination is what provides new insight into the manifold ways in which the sacred is manifested to us, or even concealed from us. In the encounter with the absolute as testimony to heroism, or as the stark reality of cruelty to be opposed, language and imagination take us to the boundaries of human existence and meaning. Art in all its forms is a primary vehicle for human apprehension of the divine.

This presentation will examine one such liminal text. This is the novel *Cannery Row* by John Steinbeck. Although this novel portrays American society immediately after World War II, its time-frame presents the in-between 'hour of the pearl', the twilight hours of dawn and dusk. It explores the liminal place of the coastline where Cannery Row is situated. It recounts the lives and circumstances of the inhabitants of the Row, with their limited social status because they inhabit the demi monde of thedropout or the prostitute.

Principally, the novel concerns the liminal space of the broken Western dream. This issue is, if anything, as topical today as formerly. This dream, either as aspiration or in its broken state, applies to contemporary Australia.

Anne Jackson is a full-time PhD student in Theology at ACU, and she also does sessional teaching in Education, Theology & Nursing. Anne.jackson@acu.edu.au

Patrick Kavanagh

*The Presence of the Sacred in the World in the Understanding of St Thomas Aquinas*

According to St Thomas, God is present in the world not as form but as cause. St Thomas articulates this structure through his notions of participation and analogy. The structure is organised around God as creative efficient cause of the universe, and the consequent division of created ‘being’ and its associated perfections by act and potency. The desideratum of this structure is that each creature participates in a *likeness* of God’s nature.

In my presentation I will seek to explain what this structure means. I will illustrate from St Thomas’s works where appropriate. I will also comment on St Thomas’s notion of a ‘trace’ (*Summa Theologiae* Ia, q. 45, a. 7), according to which the Divine Love within the Trinity is represented in our everyday ordered relationships. And I shall comment briefly on the way in which St Thomas speaks of God and of God’s attributes. This speech is rooted in our sensible experience of God’s creative work, which is our world.

In these ways I will seek to give some insight to St Thomas’s understanding of the presence of the sacred in the world. In doing so, I hope to show the following:

- St Thomas’s view is neither pantheist nor emanationist.
- Participation by the creature is not merely passive but also active.
- While St Thomas teaches that God is known by way of remotion, it does not follow that the sacred is a dark pit of unknowing.
Finally, I hope to suggest the profound spirituality which informs St Thomas’s work.

**Patrick Kavanagh** holds an LL.B., University of Sydney (1965); Diploma in Jurisprudence, University of Sydney (1966); B.A., ACU (2006); B. Theology, ACU (2006); B.A. Honours, ACU, 2007; Master of Philosophy, ACU (2012). Before beginning his studies at ACU in 2001 he taught law at university law schools in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, including twenty-four years at Macquarie University Law School in Sydney. He is now a PhD candidate at ACU.  pkavanagh2003@hotmail.com

**Yael Klangwisan**

*Marc Chagall’s Song of Songs*

This paper celebrates Chagall’s paintings, particularly those of the Song of Songs, via a Cixauldian theorizing of ‘Gift’. In this light Chagall’s representation of the Song of Songs and also several other of his paintings of love could be imagined as a kind of creative birthing that allows multiple escapes from the Realm of the Proper. The goal, that his audience will both succeed and fail, is to enter the realm of ‘pure’ Gift rather than being confined to cycles of exchange and return, of absolutes, of economies. Chagall’s representation of the Song of Songs continually overflows boundaries and breaks laws allowing the divine to be glimpsed through the gaps and tears. The new and unique are birthed all the time inside his work, rupturing the meaning of the text (the biblical book) into unlimited possibility and endless creativity. Love escapes.

**Dr Yael Cameron Klangwisan** is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Laidlaw College in Auckland, New Zealand, teaching Cultural and Human Development studies as well as Hebrew. She recently completed an interdisciplinary, creative works PhD exploring the Song of Songs through the lens of French feminist literary theory and creative writing (Auckland University of Technology). Her research interests are eclectic but mainly involve intersections between critical theory, philosophy and biblical literature. She is currently working on two book projects: the first, a Cixauldian reading of the Song of Songs, the second, a novella on astronomy, love and a dying star.  yael@laidlaw.ac.nz

**Anthony Lawrence**

*Ebb and Flow: Celebrating the Sacred in Poetry through Physical and Emotional Engagement*

My paper will address the essential balance I need to find, as a practising poet, between the physical and emotional when immersed in a poem. I will discuss the trance-like state I enter when ‘giving over’ to powers beyond myself, and how the results of this state are then harnessed into a critical, self-aware assessment of craft and technique.

Writing poetry involves a tactile marriage of body and spirit. To move beyond observation to the deeper layers of association and successful imagery demands a great deal of the body and mind. Rhythm is evoked through the flow of blood, electrical impulses, the heartbeat... Full immersion is required. Once the physical has harnessed the illuminating power of the mind, anything is possible. The Sacred can be glimpsed in a daydream, tracked through a wild first draft, and hopefully embraced when the poem is searching for its own way through the maze.

**Dr Anthony Lawrence** is a Lecturer in Reading and Writing Poetry at Griffith University on the Gold Coast. He has published thirteen books of poems and a novel. His most recent collection, *The Welfare of my Enemy*, was shortlisted for the 2012 Judith Wright Calanthe Award, the Age Book of the Year Award, and the 2013 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize (New South Wales Premier’s Literary Awards). He lives at Casuarina, on the NSW North Coast.  Inspectoroftides44@gmail.com
Nathan Lyons
*Addressing the ‘Dark One’: Apophatic theology in the poetry of Kevin Hart*

‘O Dark One’, writes Kevin Hart in a recent poem, ‘let me hear you speak to me’. Who is this Dark One to whom Hart makes request? And what is the sense of ‘darkness’ being invoked here?

My paper will attempt to answer these questions by, firstly, indicating the inclination toward *apophasis* or un-saying which Hart’s poems often demonstrate, and secondly, by locating this inclination in relation to the Christian heritage of apophatic theology. Some attention will be given to the way that Hart’s own philosophical and theological writing is reflected in his poetry, particularly his unique coordination of the Catholic mystical tradition with twentieth-century Continental philosophy.

Hart’s address to ‘Dark One’, I will argue, presents us with a literary retrieval of Christian apophatic theology which is at once distinctly postmodern and distinctly antipodean.

Nathan Lyons is a postgraduate research student in the Philosophy department at Australian Catholic University. He completed his undergraduate studies in English and Philosophy at the University of Sydney and is currently writing a thesis on philosopher-theologians Jean-Luc Marion and John Milbank under the aegis of ACU’s Centre for Philosophy and Phenomenology of Religion. nlyon001@myacu.edu.au

Carolyn Masel
*Like the Language of Trees: Reimagining the Sacred in Vincent Buckley’s Poetry*

While there has been some attempt to articulate Vincent Buckley’s contribution to Australian literature, there is still a large amount of his poetry about which little or nothing has been written. There was possibly even a time when his third critical book *Poetry and the Sacred* (1968) was better known than his own growing body of poems; the 2009 publication of the *Collected Poems* has, however, made it easier for us to focus on his poetry, which was the centre of his life. While some recent critical work focuses on his conception of his Irishness, or else traces developments in his thinking, other recent criticism has been concerned with features of his work as a whole - for example, Penelope Buckley’s essay on his poems as ‘holy spaces’ (*Spaces in the Poetry of Vincent Buckley*, [http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/jasal/article/viewFile/1451/1958](http://www.nla.gov.au/openpublish/index.php/jasal/article/viewFile/1451/1958)).

My concern in this presentation is to identify reiterated features within the oeuvre that, taken together, are tantamount to the poet’s signature. I am interested in delimiting the habits of thought and feeling that are the mark of the unique individual. I have written before about Buckley’s unpredictability, which was elevated to a principle of freedom, about disciplined readiness, and about his melancholia intermingled with jokey wit. On this occasion I want to talk about the process of pattern-making in the poems, as it is reiterated across the oeuvre; it is in this process that the mystery of personality resides.

Carolyn Masel grew up in Melbourne. She has lived in Canada and in the UK, teaching at the University of Manchester for many years. She joined the staff of ACU in 2003. She has long-standing interests in poetry, postcolonial writing and American literature. Carolyn.masel@acu.edu.au
Walter Mason

Living with the Lama: Tuesday Lobsang Rampa’s sacred fantasies of Tibet

In 1956 Cyril Hoskin, son of a Devon plumber, released The Third Eye, a fantastical account of his experiences growing up in Tibet, under his assumed name Lobsang Rampa. This book, and Rampa’s subsequent work, represented a particularly colourful and quite outrageous manifestation of a long-held Western fascination with Tibet as ultimate mystical landscape.

While lampooned and derided as a fraud, Rampa and his books were extraordinarily popular and became counter-cultural artefacts, helping to inspire a new generation of serious Tibet scholars. Rampa prefigured the popularity of exotic religious figures that followed him, people such as the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Ram Dass and even the Dalai Lama himself. He also fed on an earlier generation of Theosophical imaginings about Tibet, and drew on mythic images of the Tibetan landscape that emerged in popular literature of the 1930s.

Rampa’s refusal to acknowledge himself or his work as fraudulent called into question Western intellectual assumptions about authenticity, and instead drew on the validation of Eastern religious possibilities, including multiple states of rebirth, memories of past lives and theories of astral travel. His claims to psychic powers also harked back to the earlier literature of spiritualism.

This paper will examine three critical aspects of Rampa’s work: the place of the religious exotic in the popular Western imagination; the historic romanticisation of Tibet as Shangri-la; and anxieties about truth and mystical claims in popular religious writing.

Walter Mason is a PhD student at the University of Western Sydney’s Writing & Society research unit. He is currently completing his doctorate: ‘The Place of Self-Help Books in Australian Literary Culture’. Walter is also a writer whose travel memoir about Vietnam, Destination Saigon (Allen & Unwin, 2010), is to be followed by Destination Cambodia, due for release in September 2013. 15982070@student.uws.edu.au

Angela McCarthy

Visual Language and the Religious Aesthetic in the 21st Century

Do we have a visual language in contemporary art that adequately presents the religious experience? Prior to 200 years ago, museums and art galleries as we know it did not exist. Art was commissioned for specific purposes and related strongly to that purpose in the environment in which it existed. Sacred art was mostly in the confines of chapels, cathedrals, local churches, shrines and other places dedicated to the sacred. There was a sacred language so that the visual theology could be ‘read’.

In our contemporary world art has become exhibitionist, which brings a very different dimension to both the viewer and the artist. The 20th century saw further diminishment of art in sacred places as pious illustrations and statuary that was mass-produced and untouched by an artist’s hand became the norm, particularly in liturgical spaces in Australia.

The Blake Prize and the Mandorla Art Award have sought to engage artists in contemplation and expression of the sacred through various media in order to rebuild contributions of artists to the world of the sacred. The Mandorla Art Award particularly focuses on a Scriptural theme and so anchors the contemplation of the sacred in our ancient texts but calls for a contemporary expression. A difficulty for such expression is that artists and the wider community do not have the
rich language of symbols present in older traditions and hence artists have to find other ways to communicate.

This short paper will examine winners of the Mandorla Art Award and explore how the artists have engaged in expressing the sacred nature of Scripture in a way that is relevant to the contemporary world.

**Dr Angela McCarthy** is currently a senior lecturer in theology at the University of Notre Dame Fremantle campus. She completed her PhD in 2006 at Notre Dame and is now focussing her research on religious art and theology and has travelled to Italy to enhance the basis of that research. Angela is currently the President of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, the Chairperson of the Mandorla Art Award and has published in the areas of liturgy, art and theology, qualitative research methods, education and music. She is a regular presenter in adult faith and professional development in the areas of liturgy, music and religious art. For over two decades Angela has been regularly involved with prison ministry as a musician leading liturgical celebrations. She considers this an important part of keeping faith firmly rooted in Gospel action and bringing an experience of the sacred to prisoners.  

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**Christine Mercer**  
*Changing Images and Perceptions of Sacred*

This paper will focus on the sacred at the time of Jesus Christ compared to the heterogeneous approaches to the sacred of today.

Sacred ceremonies, while incorporating Christ’s Last Supper, have, on occasions, moved from the simple to communal through to complex, thus, for many, taking away their feeling and perception of sacred. Throughout the centuries, numerous artists have represented Jesus in simple clothing, which virtually remained unchanged. Many people revere these works of art and, although the artists may not have been Christ inspired, the works of art have become sacred objects of devotion. In Matthew, Jesus actually criticised the Scribes and Pharisees for their lavish attire and for bringing attention to themselves, which took away from the fundamental teachings of Jesus. Yet the apparel worn by church leaders has definitely changed from Christ’s simplicity to varying degrees of the ornate.

Sacred has also has moved away from the province of the Church and we see this in yearly ceremonies such as Gallipoli and regular pilgrimages to war memorials and shrines commemorating the death of service people in action. However, a large number of people still view art and cathedrals as an important element of the Sacred.

Through His public time on earth, Jesus’ mission, when amongst ‘peasant’ people, offered hope, belief, compassion and healing with forgiveness, while expressing the importance of faith. Artists have immortalised the many activities of Christ teaching by the sea, in the mountains and curing the sick. Since His death, a number of visionaries have reported that Jesus has sometimes appeared to them on earth always reiterating His original teachings and message. Interestingly, these apparitions mostly occur in poor countries and often the visionaries are uneducated and illiterate, which once again confirms the importance of simplicity if we are to have any understanding of Christ’s view of the sacred.

Selections of art works, together with the synoptic Gospels and other resources will be used throughout the paper to portray what was and is Sacred.
Dr Christine Mercer studied sacred music at Australian Catholic University and undertook interdisciplinary research on the life and work of Melbourne-born polymath Henry Tate (1873-1926) for her PhD at the University of Melbourne. Presently she is researching Melbourne’s cultural, political and religious radicalism in the years 1895–1926. merc@datafast.net.au

Julian Murphy

*Reimagining the Sacred in the Creative Practice of Oscar Perry*

This paper will address the recent works of Melbourne-based visual artist Oscar Perry. The focus of the paper will be Perry’s ‘Imperial Leather’ project at Utopian Slumps Gallery in late 2012 and his recent installation, ‘Harvest Showdown’, as part of the Plinth Projects sculpture series in Melbourne’s Edinburgh Gardens. Perry’s work will be positioned in opposition to traditional devotional sculpture which aims to inspire respect, admiration, and veneration in its viewers. Perry’s work will be argued to problematise Émile Durkheim’s longstanding binary between the sacred and the profane.

But Perry’s project is not simply one of desanctification for there is a redemptive trajectory to his work. In the place of the aloof sacerdotalism of marble and bronze works Perry offers a celebration of the everyday in return. Perry’s sculptures of cheap wood, wax and plaster invite a reverent engagement with everyday objects. Perry both encourages and turns a mirror to our modern veneration of objects by reimagining the sacred in the fun, tactile, plasticity of his sculptures.

Julian Murphy is currently studying at The University of Melbourne. Julian will deliver two more conference papers this year: one paper on landscape in the fiction of Gerald Murnane and a second on the trope of the Road in Anthony Macris’ *Great Western Highway*. Julian is interested in Australian art and writing and is a regular attendee of a number of reading groups in Melbourne including HAPLAX and the Garage Black Board Lecture series. julianrmurphy@gmail.com

Leyla Rasouli Narimani

*Imagery in Manichean Literature: an example from Middle Persian texts*

Mani - the third century Iranian prophet - is known for his emphasis on the ‘word’ and ‘picture’ as the main ways of promoting his religion. Not only did he make an effort to have his teaching preserved in the form of pictures and written documents, he and his followers also adopted an imagery style of writing. Some of these colourful imageries are preserved in Middle Iranian languages such as Middle Persian. This paper will discuss one of these imageries in Mani’s own word as attested in the text M 733 of the Manichean Turfan archive. The text refers to a certain ‘bloody she-demon’ who gains her power from ‘destructive words’. The analogy and the ‘bloody she-demon’ are not preceded in Iranian religious tradition as far as the remaining texts indicate. Whether the analogy is the product of Mani’s own mind or is taken from another religious tradition will be discussed in this paper.

Dr Leyla Rasouli Narimani was born in 1978 in Iran. She did her MA thesis on Zoroastrian Middle Persian book of ‘Bundahishn’ at the University of Tehran (2005). She then did her PhD on ‘Religions among Sogdians’ at the Institute for Humanity and Cultural Studies (Tehran, 2010). In the course of her studies in Iran she was teaching Middle Iranian languages (Middle Persian, Parthian and Sogdian) and she was a researcher in the ‘Persian Academy’. Leyla’s PhD thesis involved her in a variety of subjects such as Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism. This also raised her interest in a vast area of Iranian influence - from Mongolia in the East to Asia Minor in the West. Her ongoing work with Professor Iain Gardner of the University of Sydney has focused on Manichaeism. leyla.narimani@sydney.edu.au
Fiona Pfennigwerth  
*Visualising Blessing in John’s Gospel*

I am working on a project to produce a book of the Gospel of John, accompanying its text with drawings of Australian landscapes that illustrate concepts raised in it, rather than visually retelling the story. The Gospel’s text will be formatted to highlight its literary forms and major themes, and bordered by reproductions of my paintings.

It is based on my desire to see God as the early church fathers did: in terms of his truth, beauty and goodness, which are all evidenced in John, and which I seek to convey in my final manuscript.

The writer states his purpose in 20:31:

> these are written so that you may believe/continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John is not simply a theological treatise on Jesus, God the Son. It is an open invitation by God through the Son of life, light, and other blessings in relationship with him. I aim to reflect the blessings of the life on offer versus its rejection by watercolour paintings of the semi-arid regions of outback Australia, centring on the dry landscape around Broken Hill and the full lakes of Menindee after two consecutive years of rain.

I present and discuss several of the finished artworks and draft manuscript.

_Dr Fiona Pfennigwerth_ studied Natural History Illustration at the University of Newcastle, entering as an Honours student and continued into her PhD, which she was awarded in February 2009. Her project, *Illustrating Australian nature: illuminating the Scrolls*, resulted in her book published in 2011 - *The Scrolls illuminated: an illuminating presentation of Solomon’s Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther from the Bible with illustrations of Australian nature*. Her exegesis combines her theological and literary exploration of the texts and her visual response to them. Her current project on John is an extension of her desire to make Bible books accessible to a contemporary Australian audience.

For 30 years she has exhibited in various galleries, sold commissioned work, and participated in a number of privately organised small group shows, and lead many seminars teaching adults to read biblical books holistically and thematically. In 2010 her work was chosen for hanging in the Australian Blake Prize for Religious Art.

_Dr Pfennigwerth_ teaches Natural History Illustration Dissertation at the University of Newcastle, and is working towards a Master of Theology (Honours) at Charles Sturt University (CSU). She is an associate member of the Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre of CSU. [fionapfennigwerth@gmail.com](mailto:fionapfennigwerth@gmail.com)

Debra Phillips  
*In God’s House there are Many Rooms*

‘for it is the sacred that enables us to move beyond a utilitarian understanding of the world and infuses our everyday life with mystery.’

The phrase ‘In God’s house there are many rooms’ has multiple meanings. The paintings of this series refer to the diverse aspects of our own self – the spaces, the segments, the many parts of who we are: in the soul, and to the spirit of who we are. There are many ‘rooms’, many aspects of our own self that we nurture, look after, look into as we go about our day-to-day life.
God’s House is the metaphor for the spiritual core. As a physical entity humans will have a physical union with both the material and spiritual world. Consider this concept in relation to Psalm 23, I will dwell in the house of God forever. The sense of who we are, our subjectivity, dwells within a spiritual core – this is God’s House.

These paintings of interiors have become a story, an anecdote, a vignette of an episode of my life in pictorial form. The paintings reflect my interior or spiritual life at a time of great turmoil and distress. It was a time of darkness and loss and confusion and chaos.

This is evident in the art work. Most of my friends, family and colleagues have been quite open in telling me they do not like this theme, or the art works. The work is appreciated for its technical skill and interesting perspectives. They recognise the sense of loss and chaos that became the catalyst for the paintings.

Debra Phillips holds a Master of Education (Hons), Master of Religious Education and a Graduate Diploma in Expressive and Performing Arts. As a post-graduate student she has studied with Barbara McKay and with George Gittoes. Her work has mostly featured figures and portraits using themes or series. The series discussed in this presentation is called Many Rooms and is an analysis of interconnecting rooms in an interior. Her medium is Jo Sonja gouache on MDF board, although she uses pen and ink with water-colour washes when she travels. Her work reflects the influences of her immediate world. She has paintings in private collections (Australia, New York, UK London), and in 2011 one piece was purchased by the North Sydney Council for its representation of Milsons Point Station. Her current theme is children in Europe mid 20th century. dphillipswriter@gmail.com

Stephanie Rocke
Sacred Metamorphosis: concert masses in the (later) twentieth century

In 1954 Werner Jaegerhuber’s Messe sur les airs Vodouesques was deemed inappropriate because of the prevalence of both voodoo melodies and multiple repetitions of the voodoo expression ‘oh’. In 1974 David Fanshawe’s African Sanctus: A Mass for Love and Peace presented the music and texts of both Islam and pagan religions alongside the traditional texts of the Ordinary of the Roman Rite. Whereas the Haitian mass, although unsuccessful, was intended for liturgical use, African Sanctus, now a multi-media work of over one thousand performances, never was. This is a juncture worthy of exploration. Certainly, since at least the nineteenth century, masses intended to be liturgically suitable might receive their first performance in a concert hall; nevertheless, the choice of venue was a consequence of economic pragmatics not ideology. From the 1960s onwards, however, masses that challenged the praxis and autonomy of Christianity, or made other political statements, began to be composed specifically for the concert hall. Arnold Van Wyk’s otherwise standard concert mass Missa in illo tempore was created as a subversive work protesting apartheid and colonialism. Paul Creston’s Missa cum jubilo protests the reforms of Vatican II. Bernstein’s Mass and Peter Maxwell Davies’s Missa super l’homme armé critique ritual, while the Electric Prunes’ psychedelic rock Mass in F Minor is a product of the transcendence-seeking hippy counter-culture. Through exploring both the historical and personal factors underlying the creation of such works, the process by which the sacred mass became an ideologically-driven, politically self-conscious yet still sacred concert work is revealed.

Stephanie Rocke completed honours and masters dissertations on two different twentieth century concert masses and is now researching the history of the concert mass for her PhD. She teaches history and religion at Monash University. stephanie.rocke@monash.edu
Nicolette Stasko  
*Dwelling in the Shape of Things: The Scared Spaces of Poetry*

George Oppen once wrote that ‘[p]oets are the legislators of the unacknowledged world’, an ironic but wonderfully apt twist on Shelley’s infamous remark. From Foucault’s notion of the poet to simple folk wisdom (‘No two eggs are ever the same’) to the concepts of inscape and instress of Hopkins and the cryptic gnomisms of Emily Dickinson, my paper/presentation will explore the ways in which poetry helps us ‘to dwell in the shape of things’. Using statements from well-known poets (like those above) and some examples from my own work, I will discuss how poetry allows space for Things to speak for themselves.

The work of poetry is not to provide definitive meanings but to question what is taken for granted, to defamiliarise and to suggest possibilities—revealing a mystery or otherness that the poet, with even the greatest art and skill, can never fully capture, because language is never transparent. But it is possible to celebrate this gap (the challenge or despair of some) as positive: as a numinous space that manifests itself as something more or something else, intangible or inexpressible. What may be called the sacred exists between the lines and even in the whiteness of the (almost) empty page. It is this awareness of ‘something else’, the sense of something beyond ourselves that we find in the best poetry. It performs its sacred function in our everyday lives by helping us to live more intensely, with ‘a deeper and deeper penetration of spirit into matter’ (Frost).

*Nicolette Stasko*’s work is widely anthologised and she is well known as a reviewer and critic. A recipient of the Anne Elder Award for best first collection, she has also been short-listed for the National Book Awards and the NSW Premier’s Prize. Nicolette has published six volumes of poetry including Glass Cathedrals: New and Selected Poems and most recently a chapbook under rats. She is the author of the best-selling non-fiction *Oyster* and a fiction, *The Invention of Everyday Life*. Nicolette is an Honorary Associate at Sydney University where she completed her PhD in English and has been a sessional lecturer and tutor. This year she has been asked to be one of the jury for the prestigious international Montreal Poetry Prize. She currently lives in Sydney. [Nicolette.stasko@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Nicolette.stasko@sydney.edu.au)

Jeff Stewart  
*The Everyday Moment in Writing and Making Art*

To the disruptive everyday silent call of the sacred, we respond. Be it while doing the dishes, or in the aftermath of the death of a loved one. Can this call and response be discerned in reflective narrative and painting, could these be moments of the sacred’s showing? By reading and viewing four short narratives and paintings by the presenter that are an attempt to articulate call and response, the maker/presenter hopes to open a dialogue with the audience that questions how the sacred is experienced and how it may be reflected upon and found with making celebrating the everyday. The narratives write silence, the picking of blackberries, a daughter’s visit to her mother, and works that have been described as ‘great art’. The paintings, exhibited in a community hall in the country town where the artist’s father lived, reflect upon his father’s death and their relationship, becoming a celebration. The narratives and paintings will be framed by a discourse that attempts to highlight a writing and painting that comes from and remains within the everyday, while shifting our perceptions, opening our thinking, to what may be called the sacred.

*Dr Jeff Stewart* is working on a PhD (Philosophy) at ACU Melbourne, concerned with the performativity of writing, looking, currently, at Heidegger and Rosenzweig. He has also recently completed a PhD from Monash University, (Performance Studies), *Moments of the Everyday and the Possibility of Making*, from which some of the material for this presentation will come. He is a practising artist and writer, currently making a toy theatre for performances. [jeffstewart11@gmail.com](mailto:jeffstewart11@gmail.com)
Mark Stone

*The Singing Reed: On Rumi, Storytelling and the Sacred*

‘Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations …’ (Proem to the *Mathnawi*, Bk 1.)

Rumi begins his vast poetic masterwork the *Mathnawi* with a proem in which a reed-flute explains its origins, and the secret of its beautiful voice. According to Rumi’s tale the Turkish *nay* flute sings out of longing for the reed-bed from which it has been torn, and speaks to the hearts of lovers who empathise with its desire for union. Through this proem, Rumi introduces his understanding of the sacred, artistic inspiration, and the mystic’s yearning for God. The rest of the *Mathnawi* can be understood as the song of the flute which is also Rumi’s own inspired poetic voice. For Rumi the poet/story-teller is the reed who sings out of a kind of spiritual homesickness and separation, and awakens in the heart of the reader or listener an awareness of the relationship between eternity and the ever-changing forms of time and space, the sacred and everyday life. Rumi’s proem to the *Mathnawi* is therefore a story which tells us about the impulse to artistic creativity, and the mysterious and sacred origin of poetry and storytelling. A consideration of Rumi’s proem to the *Mathnawi* may contribute to contemporary discussions about the relevance of the sacred to literature, as well as suggest ways in which the sacred might more broadly be understood to illuminate any form of artistic creativity.

Mark Stone is a PhD candidate (3rd year) at Monash University Melbourne (Clayton campus). His speciality is religious pluralism in the classical Islamic tradition, Sufism (Rumi and Ibn al ‘Arabi), comparative mysticism and traditional understandings of aesthetics.

He gained a degree in literature and philosophy from LaTrobe University before being awarded a scholarship to undertake doctoral studies at Monash in 2011. He is also a professional artist with many years practice and teaching experience in fine art painting. This experience also informs his academic studies in mysticism, art and aesthetics. masto6@student.monash.edu

Anna Taylor

*Rereading 'Materia': The Catholic Modernist Crisis in the maternal imagery of Umberto Bocconi*

Italian Futurism was a twentieth century artistic movement that sought to radically modernise Italian culture. In their manifestos, the Futurists proclaimed their desire to eradicate traditional institutions, including the Roman Catholic Church. As such, historians have long considered the movement to be at odds with institutionalised religion. This paper reassesses this notion by examining the religious dimension of the work of the Futurist artist, Umberto Bocconi. In particular, it examines the mother images that the artist produced during the early years of the Futurist movement. The paper argues that in Bocconi’s 1912 work *Materia*, the maternal figures of the Virgin Mary and the Catholic Church coalesce through a process akin to what Sigmund Freud described as ‘condensation’. In the years preceding the work, the Catholic Church came under significant pressure to adapt to the moral and social needs of the new century. In this paper, *Materia* is reread as an investigation into the rightful place of the Catholic Church in the modern world. In seeking to account for the religious significance of Bocconi’s maternal images, this paper challenges the claim that the early Futurist movement was wholly anti-Christian in orientation.

Anna Taylor is a graduate of the Honours program in Art History and Italian at the University of Melbourne. Her research to date has focused on the relationship between early Futurism and institutionalised religion. She has worked for the Ian Potter Museum of Art in Melbourne and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice. anna.frey.taylor@gmail.com
Thérèse Taylor  
*Box of Secrets – the Ossuary of Saint James*

In 2002 a limestone ossuary box was put on public display, and was claimed to be the ossuary of St James. In appearance, it was austere, weathered and faintly marked with enigmatic Semitic writing. This archaeological relic became a much-disputed object, subject to many contradictory interpretations, allegations of forgery, and even a lawsuit.

The ossuary of one of the twelve apostles would be a most important relic of sacred history. It would also be an inspirational link to the past which would allow other forms of artistic and scholarly discussions. This paper will discuss the ways that the ossuary has been viewed, interpreted and appreciated. The inscription on the side, on which the identification depends, may be a recent addition. However, in its entirety, the ancient box allows a material link to the imagined Holy Land of New Testament narratives.

The ossuary is now hidden away. Its status is unresolved. There is a long history of controversies about artefacts from Holy Land. This paper will look at similar cases, and suggest reasons why objects such as the ossuary can become so famous, while yet being so difficult to authenticate. The existence of fakes and created objects, and the role of the media in featuring and redefining archaeological remains, inserts a great deal of creative license into the outwardly authoritative world of museums and their displays.

Dr Thérèse Taylor lectures in media studies and history at Charles Sturt University. She has published extensively on religious history and life writing. ttaylor@csu.edu.au

Paul Walsh  
*On the Principles of Sacred Art and Architecture*

The SACRED is that which is holy or consecrated to the Divine, and ART is the skilful crafting of a task in its parts and in its whole. But what makes an art sacred? Simply put, we could say that it must reflect the full human condition of spirit, mind and body in the context of the whole created order. And that is true - but not complete.

For on a higher level, the art of making ‘something’ holy or sacred is, literally and linguistically, a sacrifice (L. sacra = holy and facere = to make). So, in order that an art and its artifact be classified as sacred, it requires that it also be subject to Sacred Tradition, in which, by definition, the Holy is handed down.

This endeavour is essentially achieved by the engagement of three God-given faculties: Intellect, Will and Memory. In our creation, God infused humankind with Intellect and Will in supernatural correspondence with His attributes of Truth and Goodness. And Memory corresponds with Beauty, the third Divine Quality.

The first two, Intellect and Will, are exclusive to, and defining of, the human condition. The Intellect seeks and intuits the Truth; the Will seeks to do Good. The third faculty engaged is the Memory; and it is the Memory that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, brings to mind the Sacred Tradition.

If the finished product is to be acknowledged as Sacred Art, then it is the faculties of Intellect, Will and Memory employed in the service of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty that should shine through in
the artisan, the art and the work. Sacred Art therefore illuminates the Way, and beckons the pilgrim onward in his search for the Divine.

In trembling, all artists and artisans should heed the ancient saying, embraced and passed on by Michelangelo: ‘It is not enough to be a great and skilful Master, one must also be a Saint’.

Paul Walsh, B.Arch(Hons)UNSW lectured in the field of Sacred Architecture at the University of New South Wales for 35 years. To mark the centenary of the Catholic Church in New Guinea, he designed and supervised the construction of the proto-Cathedral on Yule Island, in the Gulf of Papua. In 2008 he delivered the Opening Paper at the Colloquium on the Cathedral, hosted by the Diocese of Broome and the Diocese of Darwin. Paul is a Registered Architect and a Licensed Builder, and has been the recipient of HIA and MBA Awards for his Heritage and Renovation Designs. Together with friend and colleague Harry Stephens, he now operates the professional partnership of Sacred Space Architects, currently engaged in a number of church and chapel projects. paul.walsh@sacredspacearchitects.com