

***So Much Light* reviewed by Sheelagh Wegman in *Tasmanian Anglican*, April 2008, p.13.**

James Charlton's latest collection of poems could change the attitude born of the damage of schooldays long past: 'I don't get poetry – it's boring. All that waffley dum-di-dum-di-dum stuff.' Our bookshelves groan with paper – fast-paced thrillers, lust-riven biographies, gluttonous glossies and photographic feasts. All great coffee table supporters and distractions that keep our minds filled with trivia. A slim volume, *So Much Light* reminds me of the description of the Scottish Island of Iona as a 'thin place'. In Charlton's book there is a dissolution of the boundaries between the real and the essential. The ordinariness of everyday life is illuminated; the inner quality is revealed and released. Rather like Mary Magdalene's vial of perfume – only when it is released is it truly appreciated.

Perhaps this latest volume from James Charlton is best summed up in 'Without Images' on p. 32:

the sight of the invisible
will be no blazing illumination
but inner sight I mean to say insight
which means seeing without images

the sight of the invisible
will be possible only to eyes large enough
or rather enlarged enough to see the sacred
everywhere

The language is spare yet richly crafted. It is difficult to disagree with Stephanie Dowrick's comment that 'these are poems not just to read, but to say out loud, sing, share ... and take into the deep silence of your own reflections.'