

Bio Blurbs and Statement on the CWF Poetry Reading Evening
Jan Petry

Within the framework of Fakultät I's *Contemporary Writers Forum*, on 8 November 2011 the poets Desmond Graham and Gordon Meade conducted a poetry writing workshop at the University of Siegen and offered a poetry reading evening at Café Flocke (Siegen Oberstadt). They were invited by Prof. Anja Müller, who supported the workshop in her seminar "Scanning the Century."

"Until recently, **Desmond Graham** was Professor of Poetry at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, but is now a full-time writer with homes in Newcastle and southern Germany. Flambard Press has published four previous collections, *After Shakespeare* (2001), *Milena Poems* (2004), *Heart work* (2007) and *The Green Parakeet* (2009), as well as *Two Darknesses* (1994), a selection of poems by the major twentieth-century Polish poet Anna Kamieńska that he co-translated. *Heart work* was a Poetry Book Society recommendation. Graham is also known as the biographer and editor of the poet Keith Douglas." (from the back cover of Graham's *The Scale of Change*, Flambard Press, 2011)

"**Gordon Meade** lives with his family on the coast of Fife where he divides his time between his own writing and running creative writing courses for vulnerable young people. He is also a Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow most recently attached to the University of Dundee" (from the back cover of Meade's *The Familiar*, Arrowhead Poetry, 2011). Gordon Meade's previous Arrowhead publications include *The Cleaner Fish* (2006) and *The Private Zoo* (2008). He has also been the Creative Writing Fellow at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Writer in Residence for Dundee District Libraries. Furthermore, he has edited three anthologies of young adults' poetry and is involved in a multimedia arts project for schools.

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In my opinion, the poetry reading evening was fascinating. Never before had I listened to native-speaker British poets like Desmond Graham and Gordon Meade. It must not be easy to have a career as a professional poet, but with their productivity and numerous awards, as well as engagé creative writing projects, they showed that it is possible to do so. Their open personalities made it easy for us to ask them questions. Both of them told us that they specifically write for *themselves* as addressees, although they consider the poem as “finished” when it can be read and appreciated by a stranger. Gordon Meade was Graham’s student, and, although they have different styles, they value each other’s work: Desmond Graham stresses cultural-historical themes with elaborate metaphors, whereas Meade draws inspiration from the animal world with a deep sense of humour and often colloquial language. I began to see ways in which poems of very different styles can have direct influence on our lives.

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