

Creative adaptation

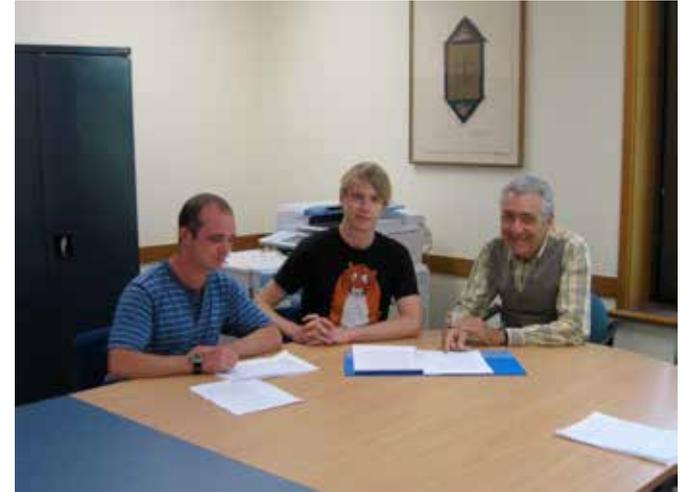
09 January 2014

Visiting writer, V O Blum, a senior lecturer in humanities from ‘Atenisi Institute in the Kingdom of Tonga, is adapting his latest novella for the screen in consultation with two students from Film, Television and Media Studies.

The object of his sessions with undergraduate Summer Scholar, Ben Atkins, and graduate teaching assistant, Tim George, is to begin the process of adapting the novella *DownMind* for the screen by producing a skeleton screenplay that can be later fleshed out by a screenwriter.

DownMind, a psycho-experimental novella in the speculative fiction genre, was written in New Zealand and depicts the struggle of an Otago chemist to liberate the world from a dangerous threat.

The skeleton screenplay will recount the narrative; the future screenwriter will retain some of the novella’s dialogue, but will further develop the plot through imagery.



Tim George, Ben Atkins, and VO Blum

V O Blum says the consultation process is a win-win situation for him and for the students. He is glad to be gaining the benefit of a critique of his screenplay from a kiwi perspective and from members of the “Z” generation, while the students appreciate the chance to play a part in the adaptation process and to discuss it extensively with the author.

Visiting advisors, Paul Janman from Public Films (producer/director of recent documentary *Tongan Ark*) and Emeritus Professor Roger Horrocks from Point of View Productions, are also adding value to the experience.

In addition to *DownMind*, published in New Zealand by Steam Press, V O Blum’s fiction includes an earlier novella *Split Creek* (2007), a collection of novellettes, *Sunbelt Stories* (1994), and a novel, *Equator* (1989), all published in the United States.

Dr Luke Goode from Film, Television and Media Studies writes in his foreword to *DownMind* that the book “combines dark with light in ways that are simultaneously disconcerting and entertaining...

“Science fiction has a unique place in our culture in its capacity to jolt us out of our collective slumber and to have us think and question differently. At its best it offers us neither refuge nor redemption but instead opens up pathways for the imagination, linking us in new ways to the present, past and future so that we may think more creatively about who and what we are... and want to be. In *DownMind* these pathways are exhilarating.”

DownMind may be obtained from Unity Books. It can also be ordered through Amazon.