

# Earl of Seacliff

## Christmas Surprise 2011

Featuring new works by:

Michael O'Leary (Godfather, Editor in Chief)

B E Turner (Technical Editor)

Mark Pirie (Friend of the Family)

F W Nielsen Wright (Friend of the Family)



**Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop**  
**Paekakariki**  
**2011**

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Michael O'Leary, B E Turner, Mark Pirie  
and F W Nielsen Wright

The cover shows a work entitled 'What a scream'  
from the Earl of Seacliff's exhibition 'A Helen Clark  
Retrospective' held in 2002 at One Eye Gallery,  
Paekakariki. The Earl is seen holding an original  
Edward Munch painting signed by Helen Clark. The  
photograph appears courtesy of the Dominion  
newspaper.

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PO Box 42  
Paekakariki  
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E-mail: [pukapuka@paradise.net.nz](mailto:pukapuka@paradise.net.nz)  
Web site: [www.earlofseacliff.co.nz](http://www.earlofseacliff.co.nz)

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*You may be a boy and you may be a girl  
You may be bald or you may have a curl  
You may dance a jig, waltz, or do a twirl  
But wherever you are in the world  
It's Christmas Surprise from the Earl*

## *Michael O'Leary*

### **Ballad of P.H.D. to Ph.D. (2008)**

Once I was a P.H.D., a Pot Hole Digger  
Shifting one shovel-full at a time  
The more I dug, the hole got bigger  
Until it was nearing Smoko time

So I said to my working mates  
Who were smoking and bidding time  
This hole I'm digging, it grates  
To work alone all the time

They all understood what I had said  
And they all pitched in, and it was fine  
We put down the metal ballast bed  
And together laid that railway line

Another time we carried bricks all night  
To build a walkway in the street of Queen  
Twenty-five kilos passing hand to hand  
Hardly noticing the weight that had been

And then we put down sewer pipes  
In the garden of the suburb of Eden  
Dangerous and heavy work, no time  
For wondering what might have been

Each of our lives depended on each other  
Doing whatever had to be done  
No room for judgement of error  
Or else we would be less one

Nowadays I'm digging holes of the mind  
To become a different kind of PhD  
I'm fixing a hole where the thoughts find  
Their way, roaming, fomenting and free

But from P.H.D. to PhD is not such  
A long way, the song remains the same  
If people help each other the work is much  
Lighter - Yes, that is the name of the game

**Abstract for Michael O’Leary’s PhD thesis in the  
Gender and Women’s Studies Dept. Victoria  
University of Wellington, New Zealand Aotearoa:**

**‘Social and Literary Constraints on Women Writers  
in New Zealand: 1945 to 1970’.**

This study explores the reasons why so few women writers in Aotearoa New Zealand were seen as prominent figures in the literary scene from the end of World War Two up to the time when the feminist movement gained momentum, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Using feminist methodology, I examine whether women writers were deliberately under-represented and their work trivialised by the male writers, critics and publishers of the time. What were the factors accounting for this under-representation?

I also discuss to what extent there were successes and achievements, either literary or commercial, for the women writers of the time despite their real and/or perceived exclusion from the canon. Literary writers by definition create public documents, including manuscripts, working papers, and letters. The existence of such records means that perhaps more so than for many groups, we have evidence regarding attitudes, intentions, motives and responses to situations of the individual women writers of this period with which to answer these questions. The Georgians vs Modernists debate is examined.

The starting date of 1945 for this thesis is significant for it was in that year that Allen Curnow’s anthology *A Book*

*of New Zealand Verse* was published. One of the striking things about the collection is that only two of the sixteen poets represented are women: Ursula Bethell and Robin Hyde. He did invite and encourage Eileen Duggan to contribute but she declined. Curnow's book went into a second edition in 1951 with twenty three poets, three of whom were women, Ruth Dallas being the third. In 1953 a book titled *POEMS: Anthology of New Zealand Women Writers* was published. This could be seen as an attempt to make up for Curnow's omissions.

As evidence, I look to women writers of the time to see what restrictions on writing and publishing existed. In 1957 the literary magazine *numbers* published a letter by Willow Macky in which she criticises the critics of the New Zealand literary scene for their unfavourable reviews of the latest book by the poet Ruth Gilbert, *The Sunlit Hour*. Macky's letter was both a plea to her male colleagues and an indictment against them for their treatment of their female counterparts. She states: 'Most women, if they wish for success, will try to conform, monkey-like, to the masculine pattern; others, by remaining true to their feminine insight, risk opposition and failure in male-dominated fields' (Macky, 1957: 26). Was this the case and if so why?

The 1970 cut-off date for this thesis coincides approximately with the development of the feminist movement in New Zealand. However, according to lesbian-feminist poet Heather McPherson, prejudice continued. McPherson had poems published in *Landfall* and had approached Leo Bensemann, then Caxton Press and *Landfall* editor, with a collection of poems. She mentioned to him that she had

become a feminist. His reply was that Rita Cook (Rita Angus) had become a feminist ‘but it didn’t do her any good either’ (McPherson, 2007: 116). These two examples illustrate some of the difficulties and antipathies that existed between the male and female literary figures, like Curnow and Macky, of the period which inform this thesis.

To answer the questions posed above, I explore the social and historical context for women in this period, including the impact of the Second World War, and cover the careers of women poets and novelists, including some detailed case studies. I also examine the particular issues facing Māori and lesbian writers. I conclude that a supportive and encouraging environment was rarely available for women writers from 1945 to 1970, that most struggled to be published and appreciated, and that only later, if at all, were many of these important writers properly recognised.

**Dr. Michael O’Leary was awarded his PhD in May 2011**

## *B E Turner*

### **Medea**

A flash play from the 'Hall of Mirrors' series.

The scene is a restaurant/gallery. There is an exhibition of two 'paintings' which consist of full length mirrors covered by curtains.

#### **CAST:**

**JACKSON:** Jackson Hindmarsh. A businessman. Middle aged.

**ZENNAH:** Zannah Starlight, witch and tarot card reader. Dresses in bright colours with jewellery and rings. She has an outstanding coffiere which is dyed in at least two colours selected from red, orange, yellow, blue, green, indigo and violet. Middle aged.

**FRANCISCO:** A Waiter

*(Zannah is sitting at a table. Jackson enters and joins her.)*

**ZENNAH:** You are well today?

**JACKSON:** I'm here.

**ZENNAH:** We can order then.

**JACKSON:** Look I'm here damnit. If we have something to discuss then we can discuss it. I don't have the time to sit here supping coffee and passing the time of day. I'm a busy man.

ZENNAH: You will act like a gentleman Jackson Hindmarsh. And you will treat me with the respect you owe me.

JACKSON: Oh God. *(Pause)* What's on the menu then?  
*(Picking it up.)*

ZENNAH: Angel cake.

JACKSON: We could do with something like that.  
*(Francisco comes to the table.)* We'll have angel cake and coffee black. Do you have Turkish delight?

FRANCISCO: We did in one play. Unfortunately the actor only pretended to eat it so the custom has been discontinued.

JACKSON: A piece of cake for her to pretend to eat. And two black coffees. *(Francisco goes.)* Well what is it you brought me here to talk about then?

ZENNAH: I'll tell you when you decide to be civil. *(Pause)* You should inspect the exhibition.

JACKSON: What exhibition? I don't see any exhibition.

ZENNAH: There are two works of art behind those curtains. *(Indicates)*

JACKSON: What sort of nonsense is this?

ZENNAH: Modern art, Jackson, modern art.

JACKSON: You know I don't have any time for modern art.

ZENNAH: Well it's time you did. It might teach you something.

*(Pause)*

JACKSON: You've seen the paintings?

ZENNAH: Yes.

JACKSON: Well tell me about them then.

ZENNAH: They are mirrors.

JACKSON: A mirror? A work of art, a mirror?

ZENNAH: Why not? A mirror reflects the illusion of Maya. That's the magic of art.

JACKSON: You know I was quite fond of you until you descended in tarot cards and quackery.

ZENNAH: You'd better have been.

JACKSON: You're full of tricks. You mask the truth with your pretence of magic. I can never recognise the truth in anything you say.

ZENNAH: Your trouble is you're a lawyer. Someone whose profession lies in distorting the truth will always have problems in recognising it. *(Pause)* Do you have something on your mind?

JACKSON: No.

ZENNAH: Let me look into my magic ball. *(Looks into an imaginary ball.)* I see a young woman. Her name is Penelope.

JACKSON: Penelope is none of your damn business. .

ZENNAH: I would think she is. You left me for her. And for that I turned the children against you.

JACKSON: I didn't come here to discuss our personal affairs.

*(Francisco returns with coffee and cake.)*

ZENNAH: Thank you Francisco.

JACKSON: Hmm. Do you know anything about this so-called exhibition eh?

FRANCISCO: The works of art on these walls signor?

JACKSON: Well explain it to me. Apparently it's just a couple of mirrors.

FRANCISCO: That is what it would appear to be signor. However the mirrors are constructed with a mystical craft. What you see when you inspect the image is a reflection of inner reality.

JACKSON: You are quite amusing. Do you know this chap Zennah?

ZENNAH: Yes. When he's not a waiter he's a magician in the carnival.

JACKSON: Ah, another quark.

FRANCISCO: Indeed signor, a dog may bark and a duck may quark but who is to say that the pretence of reality as espoused by the fairground barker is not to be most highly valued. Would you like to look at yourself in the mirror?

ZENNAH: Go on Jackson. You asked the question.

JACKSON: Rubbish. Tomfoolery.

ZENNAH: I'll tell you why I asked you to come here.

JACKSON: (*Stands*) Show me your mirror then.

*(They go to one of the mirrors and draw back the curtain. There is a young couple in the frame, embracing. Jackson is distressed and quickly closes the curtain.)*

FRANCISCO: Is that not a fine imitation of reality?

JACKSON: I can see what you are both up to. You brought me here to humiliate me.

FRANCISCO: But that which is in the mirror is what you see, not what I put there.

JACKSON: Do you mean to say that?

FRANCISCO: Yes, the mirror portrays the real truth. It reflects that which concerns you.

JACKSON: Some sort of quackery.

FRANCISCO: Magic signor. (*Francisco goes. Jackson returns to the table.*)

ZENNAH: Now you understand the meaning of modern art?

JACKSON: Modern delusion.

ZENNAH: Maya, I said.

(*Pause*)

JACKSON: Well, now you can tell me, why did you ask me to come?

ZENNAH: To crow at your discomfort. To show you the truth behind the illusion.

CURTAIN

Published in *Karawane. Or, the temporary death of the bruitist. A journal of experimental performance texts. Issue 10.*

## *Mark Pirie*

### **CHRISTMAS 2009**

The boys are loud with energy  
and laughter. It's *their* day:  
present opening, and lots of it.

As a man, I now only watch  
the presents with passing interest.  
Yet, once, I was much like them,

waking early to nag my parents  
into action. Christmases never did  
disappoint. My father was often

generous with his giving. As a boy  
I had all the latest toys I wanted.  
Just like these boys unwrapping

with gusto their latest gifts. Later,  
talking to older relatives, they  
tell me they were content

with just bananas as small girls,  
living in a rural township. Their joy  
still felt but without today's spoils.

(First published in *Valley Micropress*, July 2010)

## **AWARDS, A FEW MORE**

(A rap)

1

Most poetic  
Most artistic  
Most intrinsic  
Most prosaic  
Most dramatic  
Most didactic  
Most graphic  
Most cinematic

2

Most prolific  
Most charismatic  
Most pedagogic  
Most melodramatic  
Most dogmatic  
Most problematic  
Most honorific  
Most academic

3

Most heuristic  
Most scientific  
Most mesmeric!?  
Most beatific  
Most altruistic  
Most democratic  
Most autocratic  
Most pluralistic  
Most voyeuristic

4

Most ballistic!?  
Most melancholic  
Most traumatic  
Most angelic!?  
Most hectic  
Most frantic  
Most neurotic  
Most demotic  
Most vatic?!  
Most  
Most  
Most  
Most...aristocratic?!

## CELEBRITY CRICKET

*Michael Clarke v Lara Bingle, Test Series, 2010*

When Michael Clarke toured  
it was mostly about Lara,  
not Brian, I mean Bingle – and a ring.

She did look good in a swimsuit  
I thought, looking at the latest  
paparazzi pics plastered over the net.

Before the game, Kiwi spectators  
couldn't be trusted. *Would they heckle?*  
But at the Basin on a fine

picture perfect afternoon, Clarke  
showed us he was in  
town for the cricket.

It took a while, and he  
scratched about at the crease. A few  
runs and already 30 balls faced!

The plan must be to bore him out. So  
he stepped up a gear, strongly driving  
the bowlers (one by one) through

the cover region with the occasional  
lofted drive to the fence. By the close  
when shadows slowly

seeped across the ground, the bowlers  
were dejected. Clarke  
had a hundred on

the board and the crowd  
was hushed. No more thoughts  
of Lara (or that ring), at least for a while.

*Author's Note:* NZ v. Australia, Trans  
Tasman Trophy, Test Match, Basin  
Reserve, Wellington, Friday 19 March  
2010. Michael Clarke went on to make his  
Highest Test Score of 168 the next day and  
successfully silenced his critics.

## **INTERVIEW WITH GOD**

“Put it this way,  
if you haven’t heard of me yet,  
then what planet  
are you on?”

## *F W Nielsen Wright*

### **DESIGNS**

Designs of sorts do mortals harbour ;  
    With one or two achieved at last,  
A lifetime's dream : to build an harbour.

    Designs of sorts do mortals harbour ;  
Where old age might in time of torpor  
    Find resting place awhile at least.

Designs of sorts do mortals harbour ;  
    With one or two achieved at last.

### **OF ARTS AND OF ARMS**

Arts of technique ask aid  
    On arms ; for what it's worth.  
In mounting ambuscade  
    Arts of technique ask aid.

My name and works cascade  
    Through heaven and through earth.  
Arts of technique ask aid  
    On arms ; for what it's worth.

## **PERIOD**

Perhaps by Herculean effort  
I have brought to a period  
The all sufficient task of tasks,  
Every last jot and tittle of it.

Perhaps by Herculean effort  
I matched your story telling, Ovid  
By carving intricate as tusks,  
Of cherrystones myriad on myriad.

Perhaps my Herculean effort  
I have brought to a period

## **DO FOR**

Nothing of serious import  
Have I left in my locker  
Nothing of moment : to impart.

Nothing of serious import,  
Mere fizz and fuss do for input  
With Wright : the offline blogger.

Nothing of serious import  
Have I left in my locker.

## **OCEANIA**

The nineteenth century had many  
A resemblance : as monarch agonistes  
Uniting tribes in harmony  
From Madagascar to Hawaii  
Half a world's width away  
Under indigenous dynasties.

## **MORTAL**

Mortal and of our time  
We are ; however we transcend.  
None can avoid such doom,  
Mortal and of our time.

Can art mere works redeem?  
Else to oblivion consigned.  
Mortal and of our time  
We are ; however we transcend.

## **IN OLD AGE**

Where every fellow fellow shoulder rubs,  
A garden overgrown with weeds and shrubs ;  
Belated a connection thus, old warrior  
Is formed ; as you and I grow wearier.

## **BIRTHRIGHT**

Certainty came with their birth  
    To Te Rauparaha and Nielsen Wright.  
The way ahead was shown to both.

    Certainty came with their birth ;  
That took alike to the whales' bath  
    From north and south at the dark strait.

Certainty came with their birth  
    To Te Rauparaha and Nielsen Wright.  
His : to adopt modern society ;  
    Mine : to adapt an ancient piety.

## **PERFORMANCES**

Performances to be surpassed :  
    Were Baudelaire's ; going beyond whose?

No balladeer guying the ; past  
    Performances still unsurpassed ;  
Nor vacuous word shufflers post ;  
    Performances going beyond his.

Performances to be surpassed :  
    Were Baudelaire's ; going beyond whose?

## THOUGH EACH

Though each as I English employs ;  
    I chose no other's work to ape :  
Not Shelley's poems, Shakespeare's plays.  
    Though each as I English employs ;  
To be myself : and myself please ;  
    Chose I devoid of hope ;  
Cast on a barmy shore  
    Without the means : to measure  
    Success or failure as my share,  
Or grounds : to leave me sure.  
Though each as I English employs ;  
    I chose no other's work to ape.

(From *Post Alexandrian Poems 781-832*,  
Cultural and Political Booklets, 2011)