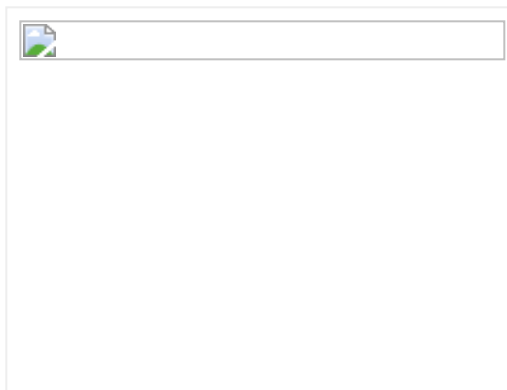


# THEN CAME THE NOVEL

Posted on **January 19, 2010** by **Marla Akin**



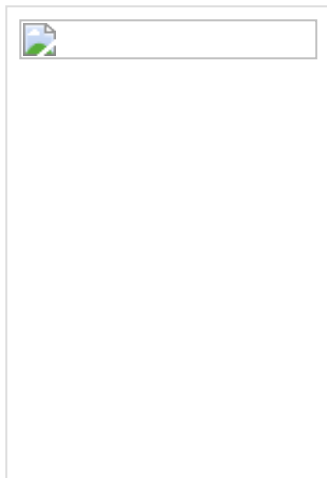
— Brian Hart, author of "Then Came the Evening"

UT alumnus **Brian Hart** likes to work against the grain. Maybe that explains why he was able to sell his first novel in the aftermath of Black Wednesday—December 3, 2008—when many of publishing top names announced layoffs, firings, suspended acquisitions, salary freezes, or major restructurings. A week later, Hart signed a deal with Bloomsbury for his debut work "**Then Came the Evening**." The book released in December 2009 with a coveted starred review from *Publishers Weekly* and advance praise all around, and an author tour brings Hart to Austin on January 21, 2010.

A 2008 graduate of the **UT Michener Center for Writers'** MFA program, Hart grew up in rural Idaho and put off college for a series of vividly blue-collar jobs across the American West—trapper, fisherman, drywall hanger, line cook, trim carpenter, welder, and hotel desk clerk are among those variously mentioned in his biographical blurbs. Then in his late 20s, he completed a Bachelor of Arts at Portland State and joined the Michener MFA program in 2005. At the end of his first year, he won the \$90,000 inaugural Keene Prize in Literature from The University of Texas at Austin. Doomsayers predicted it was enough cash or hype to ruin a budding author, and, sure enough, agents and publishers came calling right away for stories or novel pages, but Hart held back. He stuck to his old work habits and finished his MFA in May 2008 with the novel all but done and an agent willing to wait for the final draft.

Set in Hart's native Idaho, the novel opens as Vietnam vet and local troublemaker Bandy Dorner wakes up from a bender to find his cabin burned to the ground and his pregnant wife dead, or so he believes. Two cops are killed in his ensuing rage, and Dorner serves eighteen years in prison.

But his wife isn't dead, and when Dorner returns home to a son he never knew, the three damaged characters struggle for reconciliation and forgiveness.



"**Then Came the Evening**" is an edgy and affecting debut from a writer already bursting with promise and achievement. His novel of love squandered and oh-so-nearly retrieved is a triumph," says author Jim Crace, the distinguished visiting novelist with whom Hart worked during his final year of the MFA.

As Hart waited for the book's release, he went back to framing houses and trying to carve out writing time for a second novel every day—one way or the other, hammering away at it. "Published novelist" can now claim a spot between "potato sorter" and "roofer" on his colorful resume.

His reading and booksigning is at 7 p.m., **Thursday, January 21, 2010** at **BookPeople**, on the corner of West 6th and North Lamar.

This entry was posted in **Alumni Books**, **In the News**, **Literary Events** and tagged "**Then Came the Evening**", **Brian Hart**, **Keene Prize**, **Michener Center for Writers** by **Marla Akin**. Bookmark the **permalink** [<https://sites.utexas.edu/shelflife/2010/01/19/then-came-the-novel/>].



### About Marla Akin

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1 THOUGHT ON "THEN CAME THE NOVEL"



**Michelle Bryant**

on **January 20, 2010 at 10:29 am** said:

BRIEFLY NOTED in the New Yorker last week!

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