

# ACTwrite



The magazine of the ACT Writers Centre  
March 2014 | Vol 20 Issue 2

## The Speculative Fiction Issue

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ACTWrite is the newsletter of the ACT Writers Centre Inc. The Centre is a not-for-profit organisation, promoting writing-based culture and supporting the professional rights and interests of writers in the ACT and region. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the ACT Writers Centre or its Management Committee. Information comes from a variety of sources and, while it is printed in good faith, the Centre can take no responsibility for its accuracy or integrity.

### Contact details

**Mail:** Gorman House Arts Centre, 55 Ainslie Ave, Braddon, ACT 2612  
**Ph:** (02) 6262 9191  
**Email:** admin@actwriters.org.au  
 communications@actwriters.org.au  
 director@actwriters.org.au  
**Web:** www.actwriters.org.au  
**Facebook:** ACTWritersCentre  
**Twitter:** @actwriters  
**Blog:** www.actwc.wordpress.com  
**ABN:** 31 707 029 530  
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## Musings from the Deputy Chair

The theme for this edition of ACTWrite is Speculative Fiction. Three years ago I had never heard the term, which just goes to show what a narrow nonfiction writer I am (was). It was only when I decided to run a science fiction short story competition that I came across 'speculative fiction'. I received an email asking if speculative fiction was going to be included in the competition? Bemused by the term, I researched it and discovered that it encompasses a huge variety of fictional forms and genres—plain vanilla science fiction, horror, fantasy but also alternative histories, magical realism, fairy tales, anthropomorphic animals, dystopian and utopian tales and really anything else in which the laws of physics and probability don't completely or always rule.

It was the famous American science fiction writer Robert Heinlein (1907–1968) who coined the term speculative fiction in his 1947 essay "On the Writing of Speculative Fiction". Intriguingly, Heinlein doesn't define speculative fiction nearly as widely as we do today. He simply says:

"In the speculative science fiction story, accepted science and established facts are extrapolated to produce a new situation, a new framework for human action. As a result of this new situation, new human problems are created and our story is about how human beings cope with those new problems."

Indeed he later went on (see *The Science Fiction Novel: Imagination and Social Criticism, 1957*) to make it very clear that while speculative fiction included 'science fiction' it specifically excluded 'fantasy' and anything that equates to an "impossible story".

So there you have it. Just as awful used to mean 'full of awe' but now means horrible; decimate meant to reduce by ten per cent but now means to annihilate, speculative fiction encompasses a huge range of genres when the inventor of the word quite deliberately defined it narrowly. Words and phrases, like organisms, evolve over time. I think Robert Heinlein would quite like that.

The Centre's program for the rest of the year is coming together wonderfully. Courses are filling quickly, so if you are planning to make your New Year's resolution to be a better-educated writer come to fruition, you need to book now.

Happy writing!

David Vernon

Deputy Chair, ACT Writers Centre

The ACT Writers Centre is supported by the ACT Government.



Australian Government



## Editor's Note: The Power of the Imagination

Did you know that the first ereader appeared in Douglas Adam's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*? Or that the taser is named after a character with an electric rifle from a 1910 book by Edward Stratemeyer? Or that scientists around the world are working to develop a real life invisibility cloak, such as the one worn by Harry Potter?

Speculative fiction has the power to transport us to alternate realities, to make us imagine a future or a world much different than our own. Beyond influencing our own imaginations, speculative fiction has the power to influence scientific discovery.

It's also a sad fact that genres like fantasy or science fiction or horror are often marginalised, deemed un-literary. We read it as children but then place it aside as adults, tending to focus on novels set in the real world. However, some of the best writers out there today are writing in speculative fiction—writers like Neil Gaiman, JK Rowling, Michael Chabon, Ursula Le Guin, Salman Rushdie and Margo Lanagan.

This month's issue gives you a broad overview of speculative fiction, from some of the genre's best writers. If you don't normally read speculative fiction, I hope that this issue will entice you to browse the fantasy or science fiction or horror section of your favourite bookstore soon. Perhaps you'll attend the next Conflux convention. Or, might I suggest the Aurealis Awards Night here in Canberra on Saturday April 5th?

Until next time,  
- Mandy King  
Editor, ACTWrite  
communications@actwriters.org.au

“If I'm honest, I have to tell you I still read fairy tales and I like them best of all.”  
Audrey Hepburn

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## COMING IN 2014

**a professional development program  
for fiction writers**

## APPLICATIONS TO OPEN SOON

Register your interest to receive more information about the program and the application process by emailing [admin@actwriters.org.au](mailto:admin@actwriters.org.au)

Isabel Roper is a Canberra resident, currently studying at ANU. She won the 2012 Mardi Gras Festival Short Story Competition (Under 26 division) and placed 3rd in the 2013 John Marsden Prize for Young Australian Writers.



**Tell us a little bit about yourself.**

I am starting the fifth and final (thank goodness) year of my undergraduate degree at the ANU. I am hoping to write my honours thesis on ethical issues faced in the Australian coronial jurisdiction. My other hobbies are bushwalking, swimming and cooking.

**How long have you been writing and what type of things do you write?**

I'm only twenty so I'm obviously pretty new to the game, but as a child I read and wrote a lot of fantasy stories (some of which, embarrassingly, my mother has kept). I started writing again as a hobby after finishing high school. At the moment most of what I write is Australian-themed fiction influenced by a little bit of magic realism.

**Which writers/authors do you look up to or draw inspiration from?**

Alice Munro would have to be my favourite, because her writing is so simple but manages to draw out the magic of the everyday. I also really like Kiran Desai and Arundhati Roy for their command of the 'family epic'—they populate their novels with an amazing density of characters and relationships that develop over time yet avoid becoming overcomplicated or stale.

**Do you have advice for people who are thinking of entering competitions?**

Enter as many as possible and then try to forget all about them.

**What is your favourite thing about the Canberra writing scene?**

Canberra is a great place to live generally because people come here from a wide range of places and consequently often have interesting stories to tell.

**Have you read any good books lately that you can recommend?**

I would recommend Jess Walter's 2012 book *Beautiful Ruins*, which is about a very long-term, implausible and fantastical romance, and I'd also recommend the surprisingly tender food writing in Nigel Slater's 2006 recipe book, *The Kitchen Diaries*.

## Saturday April 5 2014

Canberra becomes the speculative fiction capital of Australia



Conflux Writer's Day  
Professional Development  
for Writers  
9am-5pm  
University House, ANU



2013 Aurealis Awards  
Australia's premiere  
jury-voted spec fic awards  
7pm  
The Great Hall,  
University House ANU

# Join us!

[www.conflux.org.au](http://www.conflux.org.au)

[www.aurealisawards.com](http://www.aurealisawards.com)

# Giving Writers a Hand

by Nicole Murphy

ONE OF THE GREAT THINGS about being a speculative fiction writer in Australia is the speculative fiction community and the way it supports and encourages writers of all levels.

Here in Canberra, there are a couple of opportunities for people interested in writing spec fic to gather with others and not only talk writing, publishing, industry, but do courses, workshops and become better writers.

The Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild ([www.csfg.org.au](http://www.csfg.org.au)) was established in 2000 and since then has grown to be one of the most active and interesting writing groups in Australia. Whether you write short stories or novels, there's a part of the group that can help you write and polish your work. The monthly general meetings go into the various types of writing craft and industry talk with sessions on things such as characterisation, self-publishing, robots and even writing sex scenes.

The annual Conflux Science Fiction Convention ([www.conflux.org.au](http://www.conflux.org.au)) is another opportunity for writers in Canberra. Writers from all over Australia converge to join in panels and discussions about writing, the industry and our love of everything spec fic. There are writing workshops and the opportunity to meet and pitch to editors. As a result of last year's Conflux, a Canberra writer has signed with Angry Robot Books, one of the most famous publishers in the industry.

Then there are the two brand new events happening this year which will make Canberra the focus of the speculative fiction publishing industry in Australia.

On Saturday April 5, Canberra hosts the 2013 Aurealis Awards Ceremony. The Aurealis Awards are Australia's premier jury-judged speculative fiction awards. The awards cover children's fiction; young adult; horror, science fiction and fantasy (both short stories and novels); graphic novels and anthologies and collections. Tickets for this event are on sale now at [www.aurealisawards.com](http://www.aurealisawards.com) so if you want to come, make sure you book. You could find yourself rubbing shoulders with some of the biggest names in the industry.

To take advantage of everyone being in town, during the day on Saturday we'll be holding the inaugural Conflux Writer's Day. This is all about craft, publishing and the industry. The theme of the day is 'The Writer's Journey' and it will be explored through the subthemes of 'Writing Skills', 'Writing Processes', 'Submitting and Publishing' and 'Building a career'.

Presentations will be given by some extremely successful and experienced writers and editors. Topics to be covered include: The six inevitable mistakes of first-time writers; You are not alone: the power of writing relationships; Character motivation: getting away with murder; From verisimilitude to value adding: enhancing your fiction with research; Planning your writing business; Building

an online presence: social media for authors and The secret of survival.

Our four keynote presenters are Ditmar Award-winning author Joanne Anderton (Building Working Worlds from Weird Ideas); Shirley Jackson Award-winning author Kaaron Warren (Using the Minutes When You Don't Have the Hours); Aurealis Award-winning author Ian McHugh (Rejectomancy and the Dark Art of Getting Your Stories Published) and *New York Times* bestseller Keri Arthur (The Career Path of a *New York Times* Bestseller).

And because we love the ACT Writers Centre so much, members will receive a discount to attend. Register at [www.conflux.org.au](http://www.conflux.org.au)

Payback is a big thing in the Australian speculative fiction community. Everyone who has reached some level of success has had a helping hand along the way and its important to everyone that help gets passed on.

In a formal way, a lot of us teach workshops, at conventions and at writer's centres. Here in Canberra, not only do I teach the Year of the Novel courses at the ACT Writers Centre, but people like Gillian Polack, Ian McHugh, Alan Baxter and Rik Lagarto give workshops on lots of aspects of the craft. At the conventions, professionals like World Fantasy Award-winner Jack Dann and bestseller Karen Miller give workshops, sometimes for free but always at very reduced prices.

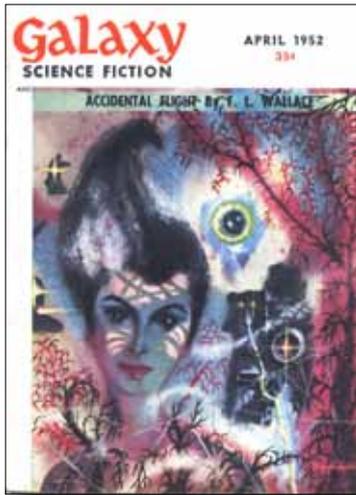
Informally, a lot of action happens in the bar at a convention. People meet, catch up, share their war stories and cry into a scotch over the latest unfairness. So at any of these events you'll find people like publishing powerhouse Trudi Canavan, literary giant Margo Lanagan, multiple bestseller Sean Williams or editrix extraordinaire Stephanie Smith willing to chat, give advice, tell you that you're doing well and encouraging you to keep it up. Everyone is very approachable, and they want to help you.

Because we all know that the success of every Australian author means a greater chance of success for the rest of us.

So if you're interested in writing science fiction, fantasy or horror, come along to one of these events and become part of the gang.

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**Nicole Murphy** has had five novels published—three as Nicole Murphy (the Dream of Asarlai trilogy with HarperCollins Australia) and two as Elizabeth Dunk (contemporary romance with Escape Publishing). Nicole is currently organising the inaugural Conflux Writer's Day and is convening the 2013 and 2014 Aurealis Awards. She is a long-time member of the Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild (CSFG). You can find her online at [www.nicolermurphy.com](http://www.nicolermurphy.com)



# Speculative Fiction: What is it?

by Valentine Williams

## In this article:

Post-apocalyptic . Margaret Atwood . Martians . Purists . Changing fashions . Chilling and unnerving tales . Clocks that strike thirteen . Fluffy bunnies

HERE YOU MAY NEED TO TAKE a deep breath. In some ways it's easier to say what speculative fiction is not. It includes horror fiction, science fiction, supernatural, fantasy (very popular at present) gothic and psychological narratives. There's also a whole spectrum of work about post-apocalyptic settings, dystopian fantasies, and imagined kingdoms. Speculative fiction can also turn the ordinary inside out and make it extraordinary. It's life, Jim, but not as we know it.

The genre encompasses such diverse writers as Margaret Atwood, Douglas Adams, Tolkien, Poe, Mary Shelley, Ballard, Azimov, Stephen King, JK Rowling and Terry Pratchett. Margaret Atwood has defined her speculative writing as 'science fiction without Martians', but purists may say that science fiction always contains visitors from other worlds, both internal and external. Other writers such as Tolkien wrote epic quests that hark back to mythical tales from Greece and Rome, *Beowulf* and the *Mabinogion*. All cultures have their mythical monsters and heroes, and speculative fiction enables the writer to draw on these magical elements.

Fashions change. Vampires, zombies and the undead populate the pages of teenage fiction now, as superheroes used to not long ago. Harry Potter had his day. Steampunk is in fashion, zombies are on the way out. The film industry thrives on original, speculative fiction now. Witness the adaptations of the novels *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Life of Pi* and *The Hunger Games*.

But the ordinary everyday world becoming strange and unreal can also be used to great effect. *House of Leaves*, by Mark Danielewski, contains no monsters, aliens or grisly murder scenes, yet it is the most chilling and unnerving of tales—too heavy to read on the bus and too frightening to read in bed, as my son explained.

Always in speculative fiction there is the element of absence; we step out of the known everyday world into the unknown, and missing are many of the elements that we use to sustain our everyday lives. Speculative fiction takes us out of our comfort zone, and that can be exciting, frightening and intriguing.

What speculative fiction allows us to do as writers is to use our imaginations more fully, to explore the 'what if?' and turn reality on its head. In doing this, we can combine historical, mythical, scientific and romantic elements, and subvert them in any way we choose. Avoiding clichés can be difficult—"I know, let's split up; you go that way..." while in the basement, attic or forest there lurks something hideous and evil. As readers, we want some surprises; a new look at an old situation.

“ ...speculative fiction allows us to use our imaginations more fully, to explore the 'what if?' and turn reality on its head. ”

The first few lines of a speculative fiction novel should introduce the reader to a world that is familiar, yet alien. Maybe the clocks were striking thirteen, maybe the main character had become a cockroach in the night. The writer really has to get the reader's attention at the start, and then keep it. It can be subtle, fantastic, terrifying, or anxiety provoking, arousing our curiosity and our sympathy, but it will not be (to answer my question at the start) about cosy family life, fluffy bunnies, chick lit or any of the pleasant normal mundane activities we all enjoy. Speculative fiction is 'other'.

Although a rich vocabulary is a good thing, the words that littered dark fiction in the past tended to be of the eldritch, spectral, monstrous, hideous or phantasmagorical persuasion, and the words 'creature' and 'thing' appeared quite often. Some fine comedy writing is still to be had here, but vocabulary now is more restrained.

So how do you, as a writer, find an original approach and starting point for your own speculative fiction? History, for one, gives us plenty of material. Here are some ideas:

**Visit your local museum** and choose an object whose purpose you can only guess at: a mask, a ritual vessel, some antique medical equipment, an old letter, and use it as a starting point. Who used it last? Who was there? What happened?

**Write a list of unlikely 'what if?' possibilities**—what if all walls are transparent? What if the tunnel under the river closes at intervals and all those trapped inside disappear? What if money really does grow on trees? What if everyone is twinned with another person in a much poorer country and shares all their emotions and sees through their eyes? What would happen if we could travel through time and we rescued something that changed the course of evolution? Using one of these as a starting point, the story will unfold, like pulling a piece of string.

I once worked with a group of prisoners, one of whom told me he felt he hadn't been in prison that day; his mind had taken him somewhere else. Even if you're housebound, you can escape through your writing and be somewhere else for a spell. What if?

Once you've got your starting point you can let your imagination take over. Then the hard part begins, where the plot has to be thought about, the setting and the characters take on their own life and the writer has to run with it. I have lost count of the number of first chapters I have read featuring a mythical mistress with strange powers, or a hero who changes into something else,

and frankly, it's boring, even if it's set on a distant planet or mythical kingdom. It's been done before. Dare to be different. If you're still not sure about the genre, go back and read some of the old masters—HP Lovecraft, Daphne du Maurier, Ray Bradbury, Roald Dahl, John Wyndham, even *Alice in Wonderland*.

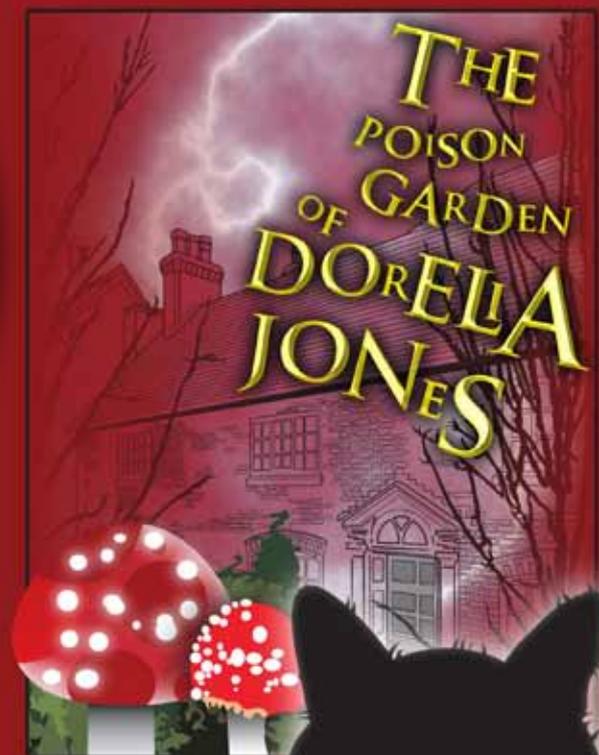
There are plenty of openings for writers of good alternative fiction of every type, and online sites like [www.worldswithoutend.com](http://www.worldswithoutend.com) have lists of magazines and anthologies specialising in speculative fiction. Reading what's out there and getting a feel for the market is a good way to start. *Dark Tales*, a UK-based magazine, welcomes submissions of short stories and it's where I started.

Good luck with all your writing. No good may come of it, and I say that in all sincerity.

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*Valentine Williams had a misspent youth, in which she had many adventures. Later, having worked as a teacher, mental health worker, market trader and foster mother, she gained an MA in Creative English and was commissioned to write two self-help books. Poetry and novels followed and today she lives with her art therapist husband and whichever one of their four sons is visiting, in an inconvenient cottage with a well under the floor, and writes dark fiction and poetry, while trying to keep the garden at bay. She has won awards for poetry and short fiction. The Poison Garden of Dorelia Jones was her fifth full-length novel and Losing It, a psychological drama, (Tirgearr Press) was published last year.*

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# Talking Cats

Melding historical and scientific accuracy in fiction

by Scott Baker



## In this article:

Flying cars . Plausible time travel . A whole lotta research . Einstein's Theory of Relativity . Julius Caesar . Star Wars . Science versus speculation

SO YOU'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA for a novel. It's a little story about flying cars jousting in ancient Egypt and battling enormous dinosaurs. Oh, and the winner gets to conquer France. Maybe you've thought of some great Roman adventure where the armies of Julius Caesar march to do battle with Napoleon? Or you have a tale of wisdom involving a talking cat. Only problem is, there were no flying cars in ancient Egypt (at least that we know of), and Julius Caesar was well and truly in the ground being digested by the creepy crawlies of the crypt by the time Napoleon came along. Cats can talk, so that's no problem.

"So what?" you say, "It's my story, I can do anything I want!" And this is true. The wonderful world of stories means there is absolutely no limit to what you can put on the page, but there is a price. The price is this—if you want people to read, and love, your outrageous fiction, it doesn't have to be real, but it does have to be *plausible*.

*What's the difference?*

“The science grew so complex that it bogged down the pace of the story.”

By plausible, I don't mean that things have to be set in the real world. I don't mean that your sky must be blue, or your cats aren't allowed to talk, but I mean that whatever the rules you set up for your world, whatever the parameters you create, things must be consistent and credible within that setting. That is, if you want a reader to stay inside your story without constantly scoffing and finding it ridiculous, or being confused.

In *Star Wars*, the mystical Jedi were able to do amazing things because of the power of the "force". Their abilities were justified, and the other characters were suitably amazed. If however, you're setting your novel in the real world there are a whole host of other considerations. The real world, after all, is one your readers know. They live there, and they know what's

possible and what's not. Many of your readers also will know a lot about what has happened in the real world—they'll know all about its history.

For my novel, *The Rule of Knowledge*, I tackled two very tricky challenges, science and history. Both of these things are fraught with danger. I knew that I simply was not smart enough to make things up, so I trusted the best friend of any fiction writer—research.

Without giving too much away, *The Rule of Knowledge* deals with the idea of time travel. This notion is not new. Indeed, it has been around since stories began. I did, however, want to take a new approach to the topic. This meant I had to do it better than I'd seen it done in the past. I needed to get the science right. I also wanted my novel set, more or less, in the real world, and so when I dealt with several distinct time periods, I had to ensure that these were as accurate as possible. Having a line like, "Caesar checked his watch and decided it was time to go", just wouldn't cut it.

Interestingly, the more I researched the area, the more I realized that the whole idea of time travel wasn't as far-fetched as it seemed. There had been a wealth of science, and science speculation done on the subject. I didn't want the old movie cop-out with the whole explanation consisting of one character saying: "Scientists have found a way to travel through time ..." as my explanation.

I have always enjoyed reading books in which I learn something. Indeed, I found the whole science of time travel so interesting that I thought my readers might, too. This is where I came across my first real hurdle. I wanted to make the idea that someone could travel through time as plausible as possible. So I went to great lengths to explain the science in the first version of my book. In my earliest drafts, I had a step-by-step explanation of the science. The trouble was, that to take a reader on this journey, it was a hard mental exercise. I found that although I had a very successful explanation of the science of time travel, beginning with Einstein's Theory of Relativity and moving through to the very real uses of the time dilation effect in our every day society (in things like satellites and Global Positioning Systems), the science grew so complex that it bogged down the pace of the story. Eyes glazed over, or people just skimmed that bit. I knew I had a problem.

So through revisions, I had to pare back the science to the essentials. Some of those essentials were (in a basic sense): time runs slower in areas of greater gravity, and gravity is actually a warping of a very real physical fabric called 'Spacetime'. If this fabric is warped and bent enough, it can fold over on itself and connect with another point.

Okay, so all the research I did, eventually was boiled down to less than three pages of explanation, from an original forty. But my point is this—I *did* the research and had forty pages to boil down. That meant that the three pages I was left with, was a good summary of very real science, while still keeping the story moving. If you want your science fiction to be believable, and you're set in the real world, do the research. Get the best understanding you can, and then when you pare it back it will ring true because you'll genuinely understand what you're talking about.

“  
**If you want people to read,  
and love, your outrageous  
fiction, it doesn't have to  
be real, but it does have to  
be plausible.**”

Time travel is only fun when you do something interesting with it. In *The Rule of Knowledge* I ask the question, "If you could meet anyone who ever lived, who would it be, and what would you ask them?" That led to great fun exploring several time periods. We delve into the times of the Roman Empire, and also the reign of Napoleon, amongst others. We also look at the world of gladiators and ancient Jerusalem. Very exciting stuff!

The blessing and challenge here, was that there was a lot of information available about these time periods. This was great for research, but a challenge in the sense that, if I got details significantly wrong, it made my whole story less plausible. So how much attention to detail should you pay when writing about 'known' time periods? My answer is simply, a lot.

You should research any time period as thoroughly as you can—but only include detail that is relevant to your story. The smallest factual error with well-known time periods can lead to your readers falling out of your story and nitpicking on something that may not be important to the tale you're trying to tell. So my advice is to get your details correct, or leave them out. You cannot, for example, have two historical characters interacting who lived at different times. I have read stories about Jesus meeting Julius Caesar, and although the histories from the time of Jesus talk about Caesar, it was Nero, not Julius, who was Caesar at the time. Julius Caesar had been dead for many years before the events of the trial of Jesus.

If you cannot be accurate with your science, or your history, there is one thing to keep in mind: Follow

the golden rule and *keep it plausible!* Everything you do must serve the story, first and foremost. If you have to put in a date, fact or setting you're not sure about, find a way to build this into the story (e.g. John didn't know how long the trip would take, three or four days he guessed). I think you can use your uncertainty in your characters.

If you know that water boils at a lower temperature on the surface of the planet Mars, but can't find out exactly what that temperature is, use that uncertainty in your story, rather than putting in a number you're not sure about and hoping no one will notice. Believe me, someone will. (e.g. John had learned in high school that because of the lower pressure of the Martian atmosphere, water boiled at a much lower temperature. That meant the water in his eyeballs would boil if they were exposed ... he just wished he could remember what that temperature was.)

In *The Rule of Knowledge*, I used an approach that I found interesting, worked for the story, and conveniently sidestepped a lot of factual issues. That approach was the *rule* of knowledge itself, which states that, as a time traveller, you cannot change something you know to have happened. This is then tested by the characters who push the boundaries of 'what do we really ever know? Perhaps the history books were wrong!'. This was a conscious choice and a story element, not an excuse to get historical facts wrong.

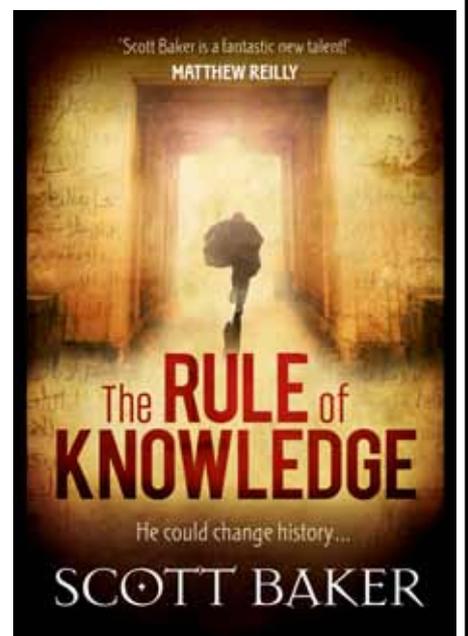
At the end of the day, it's *your* fiction, and you can have anything happen that you like, but if you want people to stay inside your story, your research into both science and history must be thorough enough that you can keep your fiction plausible. Your cat can talk, so long as there's been an invention somewhere along the way that allows that to happen. Of course, considering many of our cats sleep on our beds, and visit us in the toilet, perhaps it's best that cats never learn to talk after all.

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*Scott Baker is a writer and filmmaker who has recently returned from middle earth, working with Peter Jackson on his epic trilogy, The Hobbit. Scott studied TV and film production at university, and worked as a consultant in the film industry before lecturing at the Australian National University in digital video. The Rule of Knowledge is Scott's first novel. He is currently working on the development of two feature films and his second novel.*

## *The Rule of Knowledge* by Scott Baker

Available from all good bookstores (please order it in if it's not in stock), or a signed copy can be purchased from the website. Digital copies are available from the website, iBooks, Amazon and Kobo stores.



# Speculate No More

by PS Cottier

## In this article:

Speculative  
poetry . Zombies .  
Graveyard of lost  
books . Australia's  
best known poets .  
Tortured metaphors

*THE STARS LIKE SAND: Australian Speculative Poetry* is soon to be released by Interactive Publications. Those fifteen words hide such a lot of work. Tim Jones and I have been editing this anthology for well over eighteen months now. It will be the first anthology of Australian speculative poetry to be produced, we believe. Unless a zombie book pokes its seemingly long-dead spine from some graveyard of the lost anthologies, that is.

In February last year we sent out our call for submissions to the anthology, addressed to poets in Australia, and Australian poets living elsewhere. I was, at one point, put in the uncomfortable position of adjudicating on whether someone was 'Australian' enough to have a poem considered, as if I were a shadowy immigration minister who might send the work (or its creator) to some hideous off-shore detention centre. Having been born here, the poet was certainly eligible for consideration, as were many more recent arrivals.

We received a great many submissions from all over Australia and beyond. Indeed, we could have filled an excellent and varied book with poems submitted directly to us, but we wanted to include poems that we found by poets who didn't submit as well. I am still haunted by the 1,500 poems I read containing the word 'ghost' which we found on the Australian Poetry Library. They rattle their golden chains inside my febrile head. It's like tinnitus, but a lot weightier.

There is a section of the completed book called 'His ghost may be heard', the title of which comes from a reasonably well known speculative poem by a Mr AB Paterson. Here the reader will find not just ghosts, but fairies and mythical creatures. This part is graced by some of Diane Fahey's poetry, notably her wonderful 'Rumpelstiltskin'.

There is also a division looking at space travel, one on anomalies (aliens, sundry weirdness, and slippery poems that refuse to be categorised), another on time travel, and a section specifically about Australia. The poems by those who submitted are mixed with those located through research, either at the National Library of Australia, or

electronically, through the Australian Poetry Library. A chronological approach could have been adopted, stretching back to poems such as 'The Mouse Tower' by Catherine Martin (1874), up to those specifically written in response to the call for submissions. However, the thematic approach won out.

This avoided opening the book with huge blocks of nineteenth century poetry, which might have turned off all but the most avid reader. It also allowed for poems to speak to each other through time and to bring out contrasts and common concerns in that conversation. For example, Les Murray's poem 'The Future' deals with the impossibility of seeing that state-yet-to-be, whereas other poems have a red-hot go at describing a particular vision of the future. J Brunton Stephens, writing in the nineteenth century, envisages the twenty-ninth century, where sex has been replaced by blood transfusion achieved by means of gutta-percha tubing. Weird, and the first example of a sub-genre known as steamy-punk. (Yes, dears, that is a slightly hysterical editorial joke.)

We were very much aware that speculative includes works beyond the realms of science fiction itself. Magic realism, fantasy, horror and all poetry that creates a world different in some way from the 'real' one are to be found in the pages of the anthology. There are fairies and zombies, overburdened ghostly swagmen, angels, musicians and philosophers, and poems whose very language seems to push us into new worlds.

Many of Australia's best-known poets are represented here, such as Judith Beveridge, Joanne Burns, Peter Minter and John Tranter, alongside those who are relatively new poets, and those whose primary interest has been in writing in other forms. For example, Sean Williams, best-selling science fiction novelist, submitted a lovely haiku sequence. New Zealand born, Canberra resident Simon Petrie—better known as a short story writer and novella-ist—takes us on a tour of the Dark Matter Zoo.

There is a very strong Western Australian contingent, with Philip Salom and Caroline Caddy represented, amongst others. As a member of the ACT Writers Centre, it was

a particular delight to read the many excellent poems submitted by local poets. Indeed, the poet with the most representation in the selection is Canberra's SK Kelen. Other poets from the area include Lizz Murphy, Alan Gould, Moya Pacey and Melinda Smith. It was a hideous exercise rejecting good poetry by those I know, as well as poems by people I had never met, who now magically appear at functions everywhere. We simply could not take every poem submitted or found by us.

At least I had the objective and sober judgements of a co-editor, Tim Jones, to rely on here. Tim, as a New Zealander, knew very few—if not quite none—of the poets involved. Having a co-editor in another country is to be recommended for many reasons; not least the distance which disallows the hot-headed from engaging in acts of physical violence. (That's most definitely me, not Tim.) I met Tim for the first time as we crunched our final selections, and he somehow escaped alive.

While both editors have a great love for the genres of science fiction, fantasy, magic realism, horror and all the rest, it soon became apparent to us that much fine speculative poetry has been written by those who don't usually think in terms of genre at all. Poetry allows for a flexibility and ability to slip between the rigidities of genre in a magical way; language pulling it one way and the other, sometimes simultaneously. When done badly, that is as painful to the reader as the tortured metaphor would imply. But when done well there is nothing as free from ordinary constraints of time, place and genre as poetry, even when it is detailed and carefully located.

Without reviewing our anthology (perhaps under a very

clever pseudonym such as The Canberra Autocrit 3000), I think that the collection we have assembled will delight and tantalise. Imagine the glint of ten moons on the shiny surface of an oddly attractive winged robot ...

No, don't do that. Just buy the book.

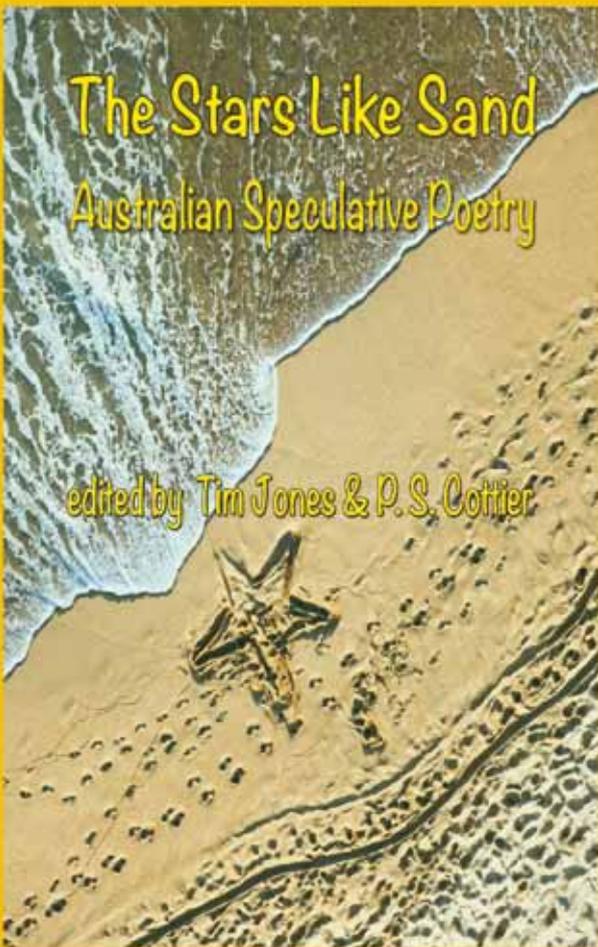
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*P.S. Cottier is a poet who occasionally stoops to editing. She loved science fiction and fantasy as a child, turned away that love for a while at university, and rediscovered it with the avidity of Aslan on amphetamines a tad later. She wants Stephen King to be the next Governor-General of Australia.*

## SAVE THE DATE

The ACTWC Annual  
General Meeting will be  
on 29 April 2014 at 6pm.

See page 16 for  
information on how to  
nominate board members.



The Stars Like Sand  
Australian Speculative Poetry  
edited by Tim Jones & P.S. Cottier

Experience Australia as you've never seen it...  
A stunning collection of speculative poetry  
by renowned Australian poets.

## The Stars Like Sand

edited by Tim Jones & P.S. Cottier

Featuring Judith Beveridge, Les Murray,  
Paul Hetherington, John Tranter, Diane Fahey,  
joanne burns, Caroline Caddy, Alan Gould,  
Luke Davies, S.K. Kelen, Peter Minter,  
Jan Owen, Dorothy Porter, Philip Salom,  
Samuel Wagan Watson  
... and many more

Available in April  
from Interactive Publications:  
<http://ipoz.biz/Store/Store.htm>



Interactive Publications

by Donna Maree Hanson



# On Writing Retreats

**In this article:**  
**Writing buddies**  
**. Exercising . The**  
**game of musical**  
**desks . Neutral**  
**territory . Wine .**  
**More wine . Ping**  
**pong**

AS WRITERS WE KNOW that writing is all about the writer and the writing medium, be it pen and paper or keyboard and blank screen. Put in a nutshell, writing is the transferring of ideas from one's head to the written word—a lonely endeavour that only other writers can understand.

But writing doesn't have to be so isolating an endeavour. Other writers can make great buddies. They can talk about writing, critique your writing (in return for critiques of theirs) and write alongside you. What better way to do this than go on a writing retreat?

I've been on seven retreats now in different places in Victoria and New South Wales. I even went to one in New Zealand. We call ourselves Fantasy Writers on Retreat (<http://fantasywritersonretreat.wordpress.com>) and we are a bunch of writer friends who go on writing retreats once a year.

I find I'm at my most productive at a retreat. Except for one retreat, they have been two weeks in length. The core set of people have been the same, but others have come along to fill in gaps and have become core themselves. That continuity allows us to plan ahead when someone drops out or can't make it one year.

Here are some tips if you are thinking of starting your own writing retreat group. Firstly, you need to find a bunch of writers and get to know them. If you write speculative fiction, the Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild ([www.csfg.org.au](http://www.csfg.org.au)) has a bunch of writers, a really big bunch actually.

Once you have some writer friends, you can do warm up exercises so you don't have to dive into a writing retreat with your eyes closed. You might want to find out first whether you can tolerate your companions (and they you) and whether you can actually work with other people around you. Some writers don't want to work in a group and deal excellently on their own and like it that way. Some don't know until they try it so it's best to start in small doses. A good test is getting together with writer friends for a writing afternoon, either at someone's house, a café or the library. This way you can feel your way around the notion that you can write in company.

You could then work yourself up to a weekend retreat. It's not a big commitment, particularly if you can organise one close to where you live. A bunch of writers I know went to Yass to a bed and breakfast for the weekend. It's a good way to start.

The key things you need to do to organise a retreat is have a group of writers between 4–6 (more if you can find a place large enough) who get along well and feel they'd like to try to get away for a while to write. If you've done some writing dates with these guys and they look like they are your kind of people, then the next thing you need to do is find a time that suits you all. We seem to have our retreats in January as it matches school holidays, slow periods in the public service etc. You should also work out the length of time, one week or two. I find two weeks works for us. We get enough done to make it worthwhile. The next step, a hard one, is finding a venue. If one of you has a house large enough to accommodate the others then that's the least expensive. However, the downside is that, the person whose house it is will feel obliged to play host etc. In my case I have family who will want to come around and that can be disruptive to others on the retreat. So neutral territory is probably the best.

Finding a venue is pretty easy on the internet. Don't be afraid to contact the owners or the agents to ask questions and obtain quotes as sometimes you can get a deal on a house that isn't advertised. For example, taking over a whole bed and breakfast for two weeks, sans breakfast. However, venues are not cheap. From memory, accommodation costs for two weeks have ranged from \$750 to \$1,100 per person. Food has been around the \$250 mark per person, including some wine. Add to that travel costs.

We've been through quite a few iterations of what works for us on the writing side. At the first retreat, we all worked in our rooms and required tables and chairs. Invariably one person (or sometimes two) had a room not very conducive to working in and they had to commandeer a common area. That person then had to get disturbed as people went to make a cup of tea, etc. In our subsequent retreats, most of us have been working on the same table. There is total freedom to work anywhere else, but we find that it works for most of us to work together. Although the pressure of someone typing madly while you're stuck on a sentence can be a little unsettling, especially if you have a competitive streak. For a while, we only took houses that had two dining room tables so we could work on one and eat on the other. This last

retreat we didn't seem to care. We just packed up at wine o'clock and had dinner. Computers could return later, but often didn't. Sometimes we set goals, serious goals. I believe we even had white boards with progress, but maybe that was my white board.

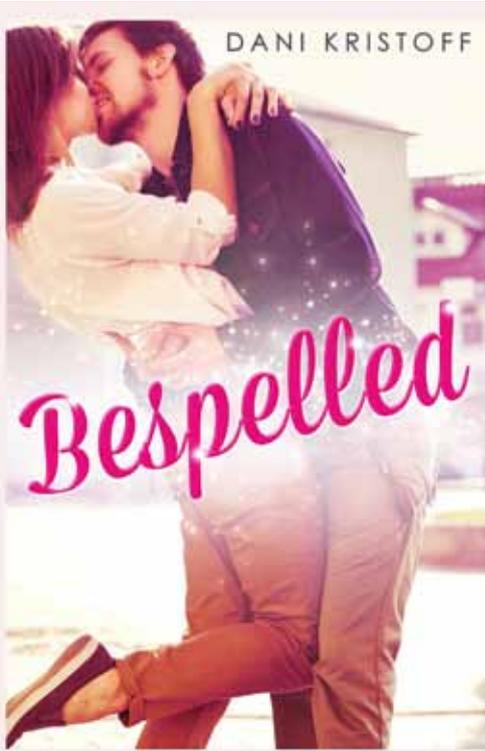
The format of our retreats has also evolved over time, but you never know, they can also evolve right back again. In our first retreats we read a sample of what people were working on before the retreat and started off with a little critiquing then rolled into the writing. Some retreats we have sat around near the end and read what we were working on to each other and got comments. It really is up to the people at the retreat to decide what works best. But mostly it's just writing when you want to. We do take days off to veg out as needed.

Food wise, we split the cooking and the expenses and find time to go out at least once for a meal. Food and drink is a problem. That problem being too much food and drink! On our retreats, we all cook our best meals to share. There's a lot of drinking. A lot of unwinding. Sometimes there's ping pong. I believe I eat way too much junk at retreats because I'm letting my hair down. I'm writing all day, or I'm talking writing or I'm reading. I'm not thinking about the bills, or the housework or anything. I'm totally in the zone with too much chip and dip.

Personally, writing retreats work for me, but I know they aren't for everyone. I get so much done. I have fun being with people I like and who I have writing in common with. What I write during a retreat maybe a rough first draft but it gives me something to work on and revise and edit. That's my style though. Some other retreatees come to revise their work or take up copyedits. It's a writing retreat and it's no one's business but your own what you write.

So get to it. Don't be shy.

**Donna Maree Hanson** is a writer of fantasy, science fiction, horror, paranormal romance and soon to be romance. In 2013, Harlequin Escape published her novel *Rayessa & the Space Pirates*, a young-adult, science fiction adventure/romance. Donna will be presenting a session at the Conflux Writing Day called "You Are Not Alone: The power of writing relationships."



**DANI KRISTOFF** *Out now! A new paranormal romance from Canberra author-Dani Kristoff. (@dani\_kristoff)*

*Elena, a mild-mannered half-witch, would never dream of meeting with a high-powered Sydney lawyer like Jake Royston, except as a favour for her beloved cousin. When a powerful love spell goes astray and leaves the normally controlled Jake focusing his amorous attentions on her, Elena is out of her league and has to do something fast—before Jake's good looks and powers of persuasion break down her resolve and threaten her heart.*

Buy it from  
[www.escapepublishing.com.au](http://www.escapepublishing.com.au) or  
 your favourite e-retailer.

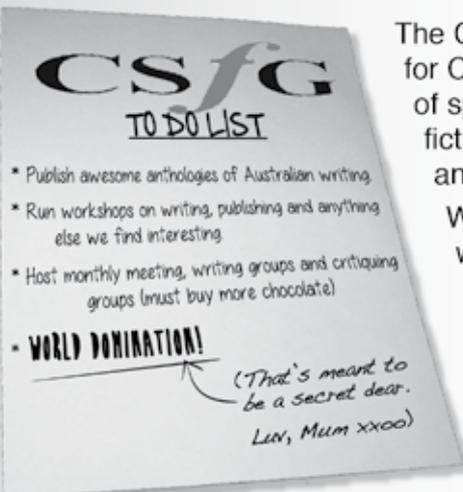
*This ain't your mum's Bewitched!*

**ESCAPE**  
publishing

## Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild

### Is there anything we **DON'T** do?

*(Yes, there is. But we do all the important stuff)*



The CSFG is the association for Canberra-based creators of speculative fiction (science fiction, fantasy and horror) in any medium.

We offer craft lessons, workshops, critiquing groups and social events for writers based in the Canberra region, and publish regular anthologies of Australian spec-fic.

We welcome visitors to our meetings.  
 Check out our website or like us on Facebook for more details.

**[www.csfg.org.au](http://www.csfg.org.au)**  
**[www.facebook.com/canberraspecfic](http://www.facebook.com/canberraspecfic)**

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# ACTWC WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

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All workshops are held in the workshop room of the ACT Writers Centre, Gorman House, Ainslie Avenue, Braddon, unless otherwise specified.

Bring your lunch for day-long workshops or purchase it from the Saturday markets. Tea/coffee and biscuits are provided.

## BOOKINGS & REFUNDS

All workshops require payment at time of booking. Bookings can be made by phone on 6262 9191 (Tuesday–Friday), online at [www.actwriters.org.au](http://www.actwriters.org.au) or in person at the Centre. The Centre has credit card facilities and EFTPOS. If paying by cheque, make payable to ACT Writers Centre. Enrolment will not be confirmed until payment is received.

If there are insufficient enrolments, the Centre reserves the right to cancel the course and participants will be reimbursed in full.

A refund of 75% will be given for workshop cancellations two weeks or more before the workshop. Alternatively, participants who cancel two weeks or more beforehand can choose to transfer their credit to another workshop if a vacancy exists. No refunds are given for cancellations less than two weeks before the workshop, if we cannot fill the space.

## CODES

The Centre's workshops and seminars carry a code to help you choose the right workshops to match your abilities.

- 1 = Established writer with at least one published book.
- 2 = Developing writers who may have been published in journals, etc.
- 3 = Emerging writers with little or no published work.
- 4 = Writing for enjoyment/basic improvement.

### BLOGGING FOR AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS WITH TANIA MCCARTNEY

Presented in partnership with the Australian Society of Authors (ASA)

10am–4pm Saturday 22 March

In this course, Tania McCartney will give a comprehensive overview of such topics as blog format, construction, design, content, audience, hits, website and social media links, and making the most of your web presence. She will also discuss marketing strategies linked to blogging and how to design and promote your author brand within a blogging platform.

**Tania McCartney** is an author, editor and publisher with over twenty-five years' experience in the book industry, in various incarnations. She has written for several online sites including *Australian Women Online*, *BeijingKids*, and *Maeve Magazine*, and founded popular children's literature website *Kids' Book Review*. She has run her own blog since 2005, and has since created and run several successful blogs-turned-websites.

**Cost:** \$155 ASA & ACT Writers Centre members, \$185 Partner Organisations, \$230 non-members

**Bookings:** Book online at <https://asauthors.org/event/11578/blogging-for-authors-illustrators> or call the ASA on 1800 257 121 (toll-free).

### EDITING YOUR OWN STORIES WITH IAN MCHUGH

10am–4pm Saturday 12 April

This workshop a set of tools fiction writers can use to help them analyse and polish their own stories. The workshop also covers receiving and incorporating critique and includes an exercise in analytically reading other stories. Participants apply the tools to their own stories in the workshop, so all participants need to bring along an unpublished short story, or complete novel outline and first 20 pages, to work from.

**Ian McHugh** is a 2006 graduate of the Clarion West writers' workshop. His first success as a fiction writer was winning the short story contest at the Conflux science fiction convention in 2004. Since then he has sold stories to magazines, webzines and anthologies in Australia and internationally. His stories have won grand prize in the Writers of the Future contest and been shortlisted four times at Australia's Aurealis Awards (winning Best Fantasy Short Story in 2010). Links to read or hear most of his past publications free online can be found at [www.ianmchugh.wordpress.com/stories/](http://www.ianmchugh.wordpress.com/stories/)

**Code:** All

**Cost:** \$110 members, \$95 concessional members, \$170 non-members (includes 12 months of membership)

### IN CONVERSATION WITH GEOFF PAGE

6pm–8pm Wednesday 7 May

The Australian Society of Authors' national 'In Conversation' series features professionals from your industry talking about writing, publishing and the business of authorship. A combination of presentation, public interview and Q&A, these events allow you to join our speaker and fellow writers for wine, cheese and a chat.

Our guest for this event will be Geoff Page. Geoff is a Canberra-based poet who has published twenty-one collections of poetry as well as two novels, five verse novels and several other works including anthologies, translations and a biography of the late jazz musician, Bernie McGann. His recent books include: *A Sudden Sentence in the Air: Jazz Poems*, *Coda for Shirley*, *Cloudy Nouns* and *1953*. His books *New Selected Poems* and *Improving the News* were published in 2013. He also reviews Australian poetry extensively and organises monthly poetry readings and jazz concerts at The Gods Café in the Australian National University.

**Cost:** \$10 ASA & ACT Writers Centre members & guests

**Bookings:** Online at <https://asauthors.org/event/11671/in-conversation-geoff-page> or call 1800 257 121.

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For further workshop details and online bookings, visit [www.actwriters.org.au/events/upcoming-workshops-events.shtml](http://www.actwriters.org.au/events/upcoming-workshops-events.shtml)

# EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

If you have a literary opportunity you would like included in ACTWrite, please send it to [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

## Call for proposals: Melbourne Writers Festival

Melbourne Writers Festival will take place from 21–31 August. For information on how to submit a proposal to be a speaker, visit <http://www.mwf.com.au/2014/?name=Be-a-Participating-Writer>

## 1–6 March

### Adelaide Writers' Week

[http://www.adelaidefestival.com.au/2014/writers\\_week/program](http://www.adelaidefestival.com.au/2014/writers_week/program)

## 7pm Wednesday 5 March

### Tanka Poetry Evening

*Manning Clark House, Forrest*

Join Manning Clark House for the launch of two new anthologies: *100 Tanka by 100 Poets from Australia & New Zealand* by Dr. Carol Hayes and *Tanka to Eat* by David Terelinck. \$10, (MCH members free). [info@manningclark.org.au](mailto:info@manningclark.org.au) or 02 6295 1808.

## 7 March

### Call for Expressions of Interest: Brisbane Festival

Brisbane Festival invites artists interested in performing at the festival in September. For more information and submission guidelines, <http://www.brisbanefestival.com.au/content/independent-artists>

## 10 March 2014

### Creative Partnerships with Asia

Grants are offered to support partnerships between artists working in Australia and artists working in Asia. The objective is to increase artistic collaborations with Asia leading to the creation of new work. Each project must be a collaboration between artists in both countries. <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/2014/creative-partnerships-with-asia-initiative>

## 8pm Tuesday 11 March

### Poetry at the Gods

*The Gods Café/Bar, ANU Arts Centre*

Featuring Omar Musa (Cbr), John Stokes (Cbr), and Lizz Murphy (Binalong). Bookings essential on 6248 5538. \$10 waged; \$5 unwaged. <http://thegodscafe.com>

## 6pm Wednesday 12 March

### Book Talk: *The Great Barrier Reef* by Iain McCalman

*ANU Manning Clark Lecture Theatre 3*

Iain McCalman argues that the Great Barrier Reef has been created by human minds as well as coral polyps, by imaginations as well as natural processes. Enquiries to Colin Steele on 02 6125 8983 or [colin.steele@anu.edu.au](mailto:colin.steele@anu.edu.au)

## 14–16 March 2014

### The Beaconsfield Festival of Golden Words

*Tasmania*

A unique writers festival in Tasmania's beautiful Tamar Valley, this festival includes free marquee sessions, poets' breakfasts, literary lunches, a literary dinner, a national address, writers workshops, vineyard food and wine writing sessions. <http://www.festivalofgoldenwords.com.au/>

## 18 March

### ANU/Canberra Times Meet the Author: *Prisoner X*

*Manning Clark Centre, Building #26a, Union Court, ANU*

In *Prisoner X*, Rafael Epstein uncovers the intriguing story of Ben Zygiel, a young Australian swept up in international intelligence. Rafael Epstein is an award-winning journalist and ABC broadcaster. Free, but registration is required. [prisonerx.eventbrite.com.au](http://prisonerx.eventbrite.com.au), [events@anu.edu.au](mailto:events@anu.edu.au), 02 6125 8415

## 25 March

### Call for Submissions: *Jumble (Vol I: Taste)*

*Jumble (Vol I: Taste)* is an anthology of migrant memoirs in recipes. rip publishing is inviting submissions from 1st or 2nd generation migrants under 35, for recipes and an accompanying short story or personal essay relating to the recipe. You can submit by e-mailing your 1,000–15,000 word story and recipe to [rippublishing@gmail.com](mailto:rippublishing@gmail.com). [www.rippublishing.tumblr.com](http://www.rippublishing.tumblr.com)

## 27 March

### Australia Council Publishing Grants

This grant supports Australian book publishers and overseas publishers to publish literary work by Australian writers and supports innovative publishing projects that contribute to the development of Australian culture. These grants are for a publisher's annual literary publishing program. <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/2014/literature-publishing-27-march>

## 27 March

### Australia Council Literature Residencies

This grant provides support for individual writers and picture book illustrators to undertake residencies in Australia and overseas. <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/2014/literature-residencies>

## 27 March

### Australia Council Literature Promotion Grants

This grant supports the promotion of Australian literature and activities that foster awareness of Australian writing. Applications will be accepted from Australian and overseas organisations for support for the participation of Australian writers at festivals, conferences and other promotional activities. <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/2014/promotion-literature-27-march>

## 29 March

### NSW Writers' Centre Playwriting Festival 2014

*NSW Writers' Centre, Rozelle*

The festival features directors, literary managers, artistic directors, dramaturgs, producers, and, of course, playwrights. <http://www.nswwc.org.au/whats-on/festivals-2/playwriting-festival-2014/>

## 9:30am–12pm Sunday 30 March

### A Brush with Poetry Workshops + Afternoon Performance

*Black Swan Gallery, Binalong NSW*

Workshops include—"Broaden Your Palette" with Lizz Murphy and "Poetically Speaking" with Australian Women's Bush Poetry Performance Champion, Robyn Sykes. Cost per workshop: \$35. Bookings essential on 6227 4393 or [lizzmurphy@tadaust.org.au](mailto:lizzmurphy@tadaust.org.au); Robyn Sykes on 6227 4377 or [robynsykespoet@gmail.com](mailto:robynsykespoet@gmail.com). Workshops will be followed by a free, open mic performance at 1:30pm.

# EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES, cont.

If you have a literary opportunity you would like included in ACTWrite, please send it to [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

**31 March**

## **KYD Copyright Agency Investigative Journalism Mentorship**

*Kill Your Darlings* and the Copyright Agency have created the Copyright Agency Investigative Journalism Mentorships (CAIJM), each worth \$2,500. Successful applicants will produce an investigative article on any subject, ranging from 12,000–15,000 words. Journalists will be mentored by award-winning writer Gideon Haigh. Finished reportage will be published in future editions of *Kill Your Darlings*, as well as retailed internationally. <http://www.killyourdarlingsjournal.com/investigative-journalism-mentorship/>

**31 March**

## **Call For Submissions: Best Australian Science Writing 2014**

*Best Australian Science Writing* is looking for the best pieces written for a general readership by everyone from scientists and journalists to bloggers and students. They can be articles, posts, book extracts or essays, as long as they meet the criteria of great writing and robust science. Novelists and poets are welcome to submit. Pieces must have appeared in print or online in 2013 or 2014—but not in an earlier *BASW* anthology. Pieces in-press will also be considered. <http://www.newsouthpublishing.com/articles/basw-2014-call-entries/>

**31 March**

## **Australian Book Review Dahl Trust Fellowship**

*ABR* seeks proposals for a cogent piece of journalism on any aspect of eucalypts. Any Australian writer with a significant publication record (books, creative writing, essays, or journalism) is eligible to apply. The Fellow's article will appear in the print magazine and *ABR Online*. <https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/programs/abr-patrons-fellowship>

**5 April**

## **Conflux Writers Day**

*ANU*

A professional development day just for speculative fiction writers. Speakers include: Joanne Anderton, Kaaron Warren, Ian McHugh, and Keri Arthur. [www.conflux.org.au](http://www.conflux.org.au)

**8pm Tuesday 8 April**

## **Poetry at the Gods**

The Gods Café/Bar, ANU Arts Centre

Featuring Tricia Dearborn (Syd) and Barbara Fisher (Syd). Bookings essential on 6248 5538. \$10 waged; \$5 unwaged. <http://thegodscafe.com>

Make a difference  
in your Writers Centre

## Call for nominations for ACTWC Board Members

To be voted upon at the  
Annual AGM, 6pm Tuesday 29 April.  
For more information and a nomination form,  
contact Kelli-anne Moore at  
[director@actwriters.org.au](mailto:director@actwriters.org.au)

Nominations must be lodged by  
5pm Tuesday 8 April

# COMPETITIONS

The Australian Society of Authors publishes guidelines for literary competitions at [www.asauthors.org/lib/ASA\\_Papers/ASA\\_Literary\\_comp.pdf](http://www.asauthors.org/lib/ASA_Papers/ASA_Literary_comp.pdf). Some of the competitions listed in this newsletter, for one reason or another, fall short of these guidelines. Members should secure full information regarding a competition and satisfy themselves that they are happy to enter. Date refers to closing date of competition. Entrants are advised to check closing dates and criteria.

Competitions are published one month out to give members ample opportunity to prepare their submissions. For a list of competitions closing each week, sign up for our weekly e-newsletter by emailing [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

**31 March**

## **Ned Kelly Awards**

Categories include: Best Fiction, Best First Fiction, and Best True Crime. Eligible books must have been published between 28 February 2013 and 1 March 2014. <http://www.austcrimewriters.com/content/ned-kelly-awards>

**1 April**

## **RWA Valerie Parv Award**

First 10,000 words of your unpublished romance/romantic elements novel. Open to unpublished writers only. Winner receives a 1-year mentorship with Valerie Parv, plus \$300. <http://www.romanceaustralia.com/p/110/Valerie-Parv-Award>

**1 April**

## **Wergle Flomp Humour Poetry Contest**

One poem, any length. Published and unpublished works. \$1,000 prize. <http://winningwriters.com/our-contests/wergle-flomp-humor-poetry-contest-free>

**4 April**

## **The Text Prize for Young Adult & Children's Writing**

Awarded annually to the best manuscript written for young adults and children. \$10,000 and a publishing contract to the winner. <http://textpublishing.com.au/about-text/the-text-prize>

**15 April**

## **EVENT 2013 Nonfiction Contest**

EVENT journal is accepting creative nonfiction to 5,000 words. First prize up to \$1,000, plus publication. <http://eventmags.com/contest-2014>

**18 April**

## **Ticket to Write Playwriting Competition**

Selected plays will be performed at Liverpool's Unity Theatre in July. For details, visit <http://www.acedrama.co.uk/HowToEnter.html>

**23 April**

## **Positive Words Short Story & Poetry Competition**

Open theme, stories up to 2,000 words. Poetry up to 48 lines. First prize is \$100 and publication in *Positive Words* magazine. <http://positivewordsmagazine.wordpress.com/competitions>

**25 April**

## **Raspberry and Vine Short Story Competition**

Open to fiction of any genre up to 4,000 words. First prize \$300 and publication on Raspberry and Vine website. <http://home.swiftdsl.com.au/~raspberryandvine>

**30 April**

## **Rubery Book Award**

Rubery Book Award is for independent and self-published books. First prize £1,000. International submissions accepted, all books must be in English. [www.ruberybookaward.com](http://www.ruberybookaward.com)

**30 April**

## **Bristol Short Story Prize**

Open theme up to 4,000 words. Entry fees: £8 per entry. Prizes: 1st £1,000; 2nd £700; 3rd £400. [www.bristolprize.co.uk](http://www.bristolprize.co.uk)

**30 April**

## **CYA Conference Unpublished/Aspiring Competition**

Open to writers and illustrators of children's and YA books with no more than one title to their credit. There are eight categories, each offering a first prize of \$50. All finalists will be submitted to a publisher. <http://www.cyaconference.com/program-2014/competition/Aspiring>

**30 April**

## **CYA Conference Published Author Competition**

<http://www.cyaconference.com/program-2014/competition/published-author/>

**30 April**

## **CYA Conference Hatchlings Competition**

For unpublished writers and illustrators aged 8–18. Three categories offer first prize of

\$50. All finalists are submitted to a children's publisher. <http://www.cyaconference.com/program-2014/competition/hatchlings/>

**30 April**

## **Tom Howard/John H Reid Fiction & Essay Contest**

All themes accepted. Up to 6,000 words. First Prize \$1,000; <https://winningwriters.com/our-contests/tom-howard-john-h-reid-fiction-essay-contest>

**30 April**

## **Umoja Writing Competition**

Short fiction, essay or travel article up to 1,000 words on the theme of 'Africa'. Entry fee, prize money. <http://umojawritingcomp.wordpress.com/>

**30 April**

## **2014 Alan Marshall Short Story Award**

First prize is \$2,000 and a 2-day writers' retreat with Toni Jordan. Open to Australian writers for stories up to 2,500 words. [http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Things\\_to\\_do/Arts\\_and\\_culture/Awards\\_and\\_Prizes](http://www.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/Things_to_do/Arts_and_culture/Awards_and_Prizes)

**30 April**

## **Charlotte Duncan Award for Children's Writing**

Celapene Press invites short stories for young readers aged 9–12 years. Entry fee: \$9.90 per story. 1st prize - \$75, 2nd prize - \$50, 3rd prize - \$25. Winning and commended entries will be published on the Celapene Press website. [www.celapenepress.com.au](http://www.celapenepress.com.au)

**30 April**

## **Hollywood Writers Competition**

Submit your best screenplay pitch including one page synopsis and up to 10 page outline. Entry fee \$100, proceeds benefit the ROAR Foundation. <http://hollywoodwriters-contest.com/>

# MEMBER MILESTONES

We love to hear about the success of our members and friends. Let us know about your achievements, large or small.  
Email us at [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

**Kathleen Bleakley** has a prose poetry sequence accepted for the upcoming anthology *Writing to the Edge*.

**Andrew Croome's** story *Two Pound Rainbow* was published in the *Review of Australian Fiction: Volume 9, Issue 1*.

**Nigel Featherstone's** story *In the Happy No-Time of His Sleeping* was published in the *Review of Australian Fiction: Volume 9, Issue 1*.

**Lisa Fuller** has been accepted to the 2014 Residential Editorial Program run by the Australian Publishers Association (APA) and the Australia Council.

The School of Music Poets, led by ACTWC member **Hazel Hall**, has published *In Response to Triage*, a selection of ekphrastic poems based on paintings by Canadian artist Karen Bailey done when she was an appointed military artist at the Role 3 Hospital in Afghanistan.

**Anthony Hill** has published his poem *Nganbra: A Canberra Canticle* as an ebook, available on Amazon. A new edition of his novella *Spindthrift* is also now available on Amazon.

**Jeni McMillan's** book *Under My Fingernails Like a Well Dug Garden* was published in December.

**Maura Pierlot's** one-act play *Leaving* has been selected by Theatre 451

for inclusion in their 2014 'A Play, A Pie and A Pot' program. *Leaving* will run in Melbourne area venues in mid-July.

**Leonie Pye** has published a children's picture book called *The Little Shell*. Leonie is donating 20% of the sale price of each book to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

**Karen Viggers'** new novel *The Grass Castle* was published by Allen & Unwin in February.

**Kaaron Warren's** story 'Air, Water and the Grove' from Pandemonium's anthology, *The Lowest Heaven*, has been included in Paula Guran's *Year's Best Dark Fantasy and Horror: 2014*.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Chris Baulch, Tracey Benson, Greg Burgess, Stephanie Davis, Oska Dean, Jacquie Drohan, Furkhan Jabbar, Terry Johnson, Susan Linacre, John Martin, Tom Mithen, Hedda Murray, Alison O'Hara, Bobbie O'Leary, Albert Palazzo, Cynthia Piromalli, Rosalia Piscopo, Hendra Radjawane, Helen Roumeliotis, Roslyn Russell, David Skinner, Ann Smith, Nicole Spencer, U3A Goulburn Mulwaree Inc., Alex Tewes

## EXPIRY OF MEMBERSHIP

Members receive 12 months of membership from their joining date. Your expiry date shows up on your receipt, your membership card and your magazine flysheet. We allow a period of one month's grace for members to renew, during which time you will still receive *ACTWrite*. If you do not renew, your details will be transferred to an 'expired members' database and you will no longer receive *ACTWrite*. We can reactivate your membership should you choose to rejoin. You can still receive the weekly enewsletter even if you are not a current financial member of the Centre.

## Advertise with ACTWrite

*ACTWrite* reaches a readership of over 1,000 members in the ACT region. The magazine is distributed in both print and PDF forms 11 times per year.

To inquire about rates and advertising deadlines, email [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

If you have a literary competition you would like included in *ACTWrite*, please email it to [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

Deadline for content is the 1st of the previous month (i.e. 1 March for April issue). Inclusion is not guaranteed.

## In the Media

ABC Radio National—Frequency 846AM  
*Poetica* presented by Sarah Kanowski and Daniel Browning:  
Saturday at 3:05pm,  
repeated Thursday at 9:05pm

TELEVISION: The Book Club—ABC 1  
First Tuesday of every month  
10pm & the following Sunday 4:30pm

## POETRY SLAMS

### The Front Poetry Slam

7:30–11pm on the last Friday of every month at The Front Café and Gallery, Lyneham shops. Step up to the mic and try to win over the audience (and cash prizes!). Three minute time limit. \$3 entry. For information, visit [www.traversepoetry.org](http://www.traversepoetry.org)

### BAD!SLAM!NO!BISCUIT!

At the Phoenix pub, East Row, Civic, third Wednesday of every month. Sign up 7pm, slamming starts at 7:30pm; it is all over by 11pm.

For information, email [badslamnobiscuit@gmail.com](mailto:badslamnobiscuit@gmail.com)

# READING & WRITING GROUPS

*If you are starting a reading or writing group, let us know about it by emailing [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au) with any details you would like included on this page.*

**ACT Storytellers Guild.** Meets southside on the 1st Sunday of every month and meets northside on the 1st Wednesday of every month. Contact: Mollie, 6285 3956, [molliebee@westnet.com.au](mailto:molliebee@westnet.com.au)

**The ACT Region Playwrights.** Meets occasionally at the ACT Writers Centre. Contact Eris Harrison for meeting info: 6299 1917, [erisjane@bigpond.net.au](mailto:erisjane@bigpond.net.au)

**The Australian Writers' Forum** is an internet-based group allowing Australian writers to meet with one another electronically. Members can post and answer writing-related questions, and seek feedback. To join: <http://awf.catplace.net>

**Canberra Children's Writers Group.** Meets on the last Monday of each month from 7–8:30pm at the ACT Writers Centre. Enquiries to Janine O'Dwyer at [janine.odwyer@internode.on.net](mailto:janine.odwyer@internode.on.net)

**Canberra Story Circle.** Every 2nd Wed in Higgins. Contact Mary French: 6254 2349, email [hillmouse@grapevine.com.au](mailto:hillmouse@grapevine.com.au)

**Canberra Romance Writers.** Meetings held monthly in the city. Please contact via: [canberraromance@gmail.com](mailto:canberraromance@gmail.com) or via: [www.canberraromance.wordpress.com](http://www.canberraromance.wordpress.com)

**Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild.** 7:30pm, 3rd Wed of each month at the ACT Writers Centre. Contact: [canberra.specfic@gmail.com](mailto:canberra.specfic@gmail.com)

**Canberra Writers.** 6–8pm, Fortnightly on Thursdays at the ACT Writers Centre. Prose writers of all genres are invited to join our discussions on a variety of writerly topics. Contact Evana Ho for info and meeting dates: Ph: 0412 272 020 E: [evana.ho@graduate.uwa.edu.au](mailto:evana.ho@graduate.uwa.edu.au)

**Fellowship of Australian Writers (ACT).** 1–4pm last Sun of the month in the Brindabella Room, 4th Floor, National Library. Phone Adrienne Johns (6231 2470) or Chris Burt (6231 1937) or email [redfirefox@bigpond.com](mailto:redfirefox@bigpond.com)

**Fellowship of Australian Writers (Eurobodalla).** 10:30am, 1st and 3rd Wed of each month at The Community Centre, Page Street, Moruya. Contact Rosie Toth:

[rosietib@bigpond.com.au](mailto:rosietib@bigpond.com.au) or 4473 6474.

**Fellowship of Australian Writers (Lambing Flat).** Meets 3rd Mon, 5:30pm, Catherine McAuley Hall, Demondrille Street, Young. Enquiries: Mary Reeves (President), 6382 7703, [thatsisterofmine@yahoo.com](mailto:thatsisterofmine@yahoo.com) or Branch email: [lambingflatbranchfaw@hotmail.com](mailto:lambingflatbranchfaw@hotmail.com)

**Fellowship of Australian Writers (Southern Highlands).** 1pm, 3rd Sat of each month in the Henriette Rose Room, Bowral Library. Contact Ken Challenor: 4883 6765, [kch34564@bigpond.net.au](mailto:kch34564@bigpond.net.au)

**Fiction Book Club.** 6–7:30pm, 3rd Tues of each month at Manning Clark House, 11 Tasmania Circle, Forrest. \$5 per session, light supper provided. Contact 6295 9433. Books for discussion at website [www.manningclark.org.au/events](http://www.manningclark.org.au/events)

**Focus on Fiction.** Fortnightly on Fri from 2–4pm at the ACT Writers Centre. All fiction writers welcome. Contact Bob: 6257 4467.

**Limestone Tanka Poets.** Usually meets on the last Sun of each month at 2pm at the ACT Writers Centre Workshop Room. Contact Kathy Kituai on 6247 8124 or email [kituai@optusnet.com.au](mailto:kituai@optusnet.com.au) prior to joining the group to make sure you arrive on the correct day.

**Queanbeyan Bush Poets.** 7pm, 4th Thurs of the month at RB Smith Community Centre, Crawford Street, Queanbeyan. Contact Maureen Burdett: 6291 1705, [maureenburdett@bigpond.com](mailto:maureenburdett@bigpond.com)

**Queanbeyan Writer's Group.** 4th Sat of each month. A diverse, active and enthusiastic group of writers from Canberra, Queanbeyan and surrounding areas. We encourage all writing genres. Contact: Michelle Brock 6297 1405, 0407 101 323, [michelle@noblesoft.com.au](mailto:michelle@noblesoft.com.au)

**School of Music Poets** meet fortnightly at Biginelli Espresso at the ANU School of Music to explore the relationship between poetry and music, liaise with composers and musicians to create and perform new works. Contact Hazel Hall, Café Poet in Residence (Australian Poetry Ltd): 0417 140 741, [hazelhall@hotmail.com](mailto:hazelhall@hotmail.com)

**Scribblers Writers Group.** Tues from 12:45–2:45pm at the Belconnen Community Centre. Cost \$3. The group produces two anthologies

each year. Contact Steve Grigor: [stevegrigor@gmail.com](mailto:stevegrigor@gmail.com)

**Script Reading Group.** Local screenwriters who meet about once a month to discuss professional, unproduced screenplays in an effort to improve and learn more about the craft of screenwriting. Writers of all levels are welcome. Please contact Matt Anderson on [matt.anderson05@gmail.com](mailto:matt.anderson05@gmail.com) for more information.

**Taste of Poetry** at Cherry Ripe in Watson 4–6pm every Wed with Fiona McIlroy, Café Poet in Residence at Joeys. For more details contact Fiona on 0427 088 149. All poets welcome.

**Writers of the Far South Coast.** Meets every 3rd Sat in Sapphire Room at Club Sapphire Merimbula. Membership, \$25 per year. President: Cristopher Nicholls, [writersofthefarsouthcoast@gmail.com](mailto:writersofthefarsouthcoast@gmail.com)

**Writers for Peace.** Meets regularly at Manning Clark House in Forrest each month. Contact John Collard: [jonlez@live.com.au](mailto:jonlez@live.com.au)

**Yass Valley Writers.** 10:30am–2:30pm, 1st Tues of each month at the Goodradigbee Centre, Rossi St, Yass. An informal group of writers, new members are always welcome. Bring your own lunch. Tea and coffee provided. Contact Jane Baker: 6226 2724, [yasshaven@hotmail.com](mailto:yasshaven@hotmail.com)

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If you've found a great new writing resource you'd like to share with other members, let us know at [communications@actwriters.org.au](mailto:communications@actwriters.org.au)

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## DID YOU KNOW?

The ACT Writers Centre is registered to accept tax-deductible donations and bequests. If you would like to make a donation, please contact the office on 6262 9191 or email [admin@actwriters.org.au](mailto:admin@actwriters.org.au)

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