



The State of Play: Australian Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century

SYMPOSIUM

Thursday 6 October, 10am–4pm
Gryphon Gallery, 1888 Building
University of Melbourne

**PUBLISHING AND
COMMUNICATION
PROGRAM**

SYMPOSIUM

The State of Play: Australian Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century

**Thursday 6 October, 10am–4pm
Gryphon Gallery, 1888 Building
University of Melbourne**

Contemporary Australian popular fiction is an under-acknowledged success story. Works of Australian popular fiction are international award winners and bestsellers, and popular fiction is one of the most significant growth areas in Australian trade publishing. In the midst of recurring reports of crisis in book culture and the challenges of a rapidly changing industry, popular fiction is thriving. This event pops the bonnet on the complex working machine of popular fiction to investigate how it is produced, consumed and understood in Australia today.

Over the course of this one-day symposium, a range of Australian popular fiction writers, publishers, critics and academics will come together to discuss how the field is being defined. The day will feature four panels on topics such as routes to market for genre fiction; genre communities and networks; the role of gatekeepers and critics; and the realities of writing life for the popular fiction author.

This event is presented by the Publishing and Communication Program, School of Culture and Communication, and supported by the Australian Centre, and the ARC Discovery Project “Genre Worlds: Australian Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century”.

Speakers:

Jack Dann (Fantasy author)

Rjurik Davidson (Fantasy author)

Candice Fox (Crime author)

Anne Gracie (Romance author)

Adrian McKinty (Crime author)

Angela Savage (Crime author)

Angela Slatter (Fantasy author)

Kat Mayo (Critic, blogger and podcaster)

Kate Cuthbert (Escape Publishing)

Rochelle Fernandez (Voyager Publisher)

Angela Meyer (Echo Publishing)

Ken Gelder (University of Melbourne) **Beth**

Driscoll (University of Melbourne) **Lisa**

Fletcher (University of Tasmania) **Kim**

Wilkins (University of Queensland)

Programme

10.00-11:00	Welcome Beth Driscoll
	'Popular Fiction and New Routes to Market', with Kate Cuthbert, Rochelle Fernandez, Angela Meyer, and Beth Driscoll (chair)
11:00-11.30	Morning tea (provided)
11.30-12.30	'Genre Communities: How Is Popular Fiction Organized and Supported?', with Anne Gracie, Jack Dann, Angela Savage, and Lisa Fletcher (chair)
12.30-1.30	Lunch
1.30-2.30	'Systems of Value: Gatekeepers, Critics, and Popular Fiction', with Kat Mayo, Rjurik Davidson, Adrian McKinty, and Ken Gelder (chair)
2.30-2.50	Afternoon tea (provided)
2.50-3.50	'Breaking Through: Crafting a Career as a Popular Fiction Writer', with Angela Slatter, Candice Fox, and Kim Wilkins (chair)
3:50-4.00	Close & Thank You Lisa Fletcher, Kim Wilkins, and Ken Gelder

Speaker Bios

KATE CUTHBERT is Managing Editor of Escape Publishing, Harlequin Australia's digital-first imprint. Her dynamic career in writing, editing, speaking, and publishing was forged by being the first person in Australia to publicly admit to reading and loving romance novels.

JACK DANN has written or edited over seventy-five books, including *The Man Who Melted*; international bestseller *The Memory Cathedral*; *Counting Coup*; *The Silent*; and *The Rebel: an Imagined Life of James Dean*. He has received the Nebula Award, the World Fantasy Award, the Shirley Jackson Award, the Australian Aurealis Award (three times), the Ditmar Award (four times), the Peter McNamara Achievement Award and Convenors' Award for Excellence, and the Premios Gilgames de Narrativa Fantastica award. He has also been honoured by the Mark Twain Society (Esteemed Knight). Dann is the co-editor (with Janeen Webb) of the anthology *Dreaming Down-Under* and the Publishing Director of the new imprint PS Australia. He has just received a PhD from the University of Queensland.

RJURIK DAVIDSON is a writer and editor. His debut novel *Unwrapped Sky* was published by Tor Books in 2014, and a sequel *The Stars Askew* is scheduled for release in 2016. Rjurik's work draws upon elements of speculative fiction, including science fiction, fantasy, and magical realism. He has won a Ditmar Award for best new talent, and has been nominated for an Aurealis award several times for his short fiction.

BETH DRISCOLL is a Lecturer in Publishing and Communications at the University of Melbourne. Beth's research investigates contemporary cultures of reading, publishing and writing and is organised into four strands: middlebrow and popular fiction; digital literary culture; festivals and book events; and publishing practices.

ROCHELLE FERNANDEZ is the associate publisher for the speculative fiction imprint, Voyager, which belongs to HarperCollins Australia. She worked in the industry as an editor for several years before securing the position at Voyager.

LISA FLETCHER is Deputy Head of the School of Humanities at the University of Tasmania. Her research interests include popular fiction studies (especially romance), nineteenth-century popular illustration, island studies, and intersections between literature and geography.

CANDICE FOX is a Sydney-based crime fiction author. Her first novel, *Hades*, won the Australian Crime Writers Association's Ned Kelly Award for best debut novel in 2014. Her second, *Eden*, won the Ned Kelly for best crime novel in 2015, and her third novel, *Fall*, has just been shortlisted for the Ned Kelly again. Fox is currently working on a collaborative project with James Patterson. Their collaborative novel, *Never Never*, came out in August 2016, and they have also co-written a prequel novella, released as part of Patterson's BookShots series. She is undertaking a PhD in literary censorship and terrorism, and lecturing on creative writing, at the University of Notre Dame.

KEN GELDER is Professor of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. He has been a visiting fellow at University College, London, and the University of Edinburgh. Ken currently teaches courses in modern and contemporary literature, popular/genre fiction, Australian literature and subcultural studies.

ANNE GRACIE spent her childhood and youth on the move, thanks to her father's job, which took them around the world. The nomadic life taught her that humour and love are universal languages, and that favourite books can take you home, wherever you are. Anne started her first novel while backpacking solo around the world, writing by hand in notebooks. Published by Berkley USA, Penguin Australia, and Harlequin, her regency-era romances are national bestsellers in the USA, have won numerous awards in both Australia and the USA, and have been translated into more than eighteen languages, as well as being published as Japanese manga editions. A passionate advocate of universal literacy, Anne also writes books for adults just learning to read.

KAT MAYO is an avid reader of romance novels. She blogs at *Book Thingy* (bookthingy.com.au), and hosts a podcast that explores the place of romance fiction in literary culture. Kat's reviews have appeared in *Books+Publishing*, and she received the 2014 Romance Media Award for her essay, 'Dear columnists, romance fiction is not your bitch', which appeared in the ABC's *The Drum Online*. She reads the ending first.

ADRIAN MCKINTY is a crime and mystery writer, originally from Belfast. He studied at the University of Warwick and then spent a number of years teaching English in the United States. Since 2008 McKinty has been living in Melbourne. His sixteen books have been shortlisted for numerous awards, and *In The Morning I'll Be Gone* won the 2014 Ned Kelly Award for best fiction. His most recent novel *Rain Dogs* has been shortlisted for the 2016 Ned Kelly, as well as the Theakston Old Peculier Crime Novel of the Year Award.

ANGELA MEYER is a writer and commissioning editor for Echo Publishing. Echo Publishing grew out of Five Mile Press and is an imprint of Bonnier Publishing Australia, and publishes fiction and narrative non-fiction. Three of their writers, Kate Kyriacou (*The Sting*), Gary Kemble (*Skin Deep*), and Emma Viskic (*Resurrection Bay*) were shortlisted for the 2016 Ned Kelly awards, with Viskic taking out Best First Fiction, and also winning three categories at the 2016 Davitt Awards. Echo also published Adam Sarafis' *Something is Rotten*, which was longlisted for the 2016 Ngaio Marsh Award for New Zealand crime fiction. In addition to her work with Echo, Meyer writes short stories, flash fiction, articles, essays, reviews, interviews and poetry. Her book of flash fiction *Captives* was published by Inkerman & Blunt in 2014.

ANGELA SAVAGE studied criminology and the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne, and has worked in humanitarian and community sector roles in Australia and Asia. Her manuscript, *Thai Died*, won the Victorian Premier's Unpublished Manuscript Award in 2004; this was later published as *Behind the Night Bazaar*, and was shortlisted for the Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction in 2007. She has written two more novels, *The Half-Child* and *The Dying Beach*, as well as short fiction and essays, winning the 2011 Scarlett Stiletto Award for her short story, 'The Teardrop Tattoos'. She is currently undertaking a PhD in creative writing at Monash University.

ANGELA SLATTER is an award-winning Australian fantasy author. She has an MA and a PhD in Creative Writing, and is the 2016 Established Writer-in-Residence at the Katherine Susannah Prichard Writers Centre in Perth. Specialising in dark fantasy and horror, her works include *The Girl With No Hands and Other Tales*, *Sourdough and Other Stories*, *The Bitterwood Bible and Other Recountings*, and the recently published urban fantasy novel *Vigil*.

KIM WILKINS is a senior lecturer in writing at the University of Queensland. She is the author of twenty-six novels in a variety of genres, and has been published in twenty languages. She teaches in the field of writing, editing, and publishing, and researches in the fields of popular fiction, medievalism studies, and writing pedagogy.