

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN WRITERS QUEENSLAND (FAWQ)

This edition of SCOPE magazine is volume 71 No. 5

SCOPE

October/November addition

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**Premier Networking Event.
A Crime Writing experience
With Acclaimed Author
Jack Roney
BOOK NOW!**

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Queensland
Supporting emerging writers since 1921

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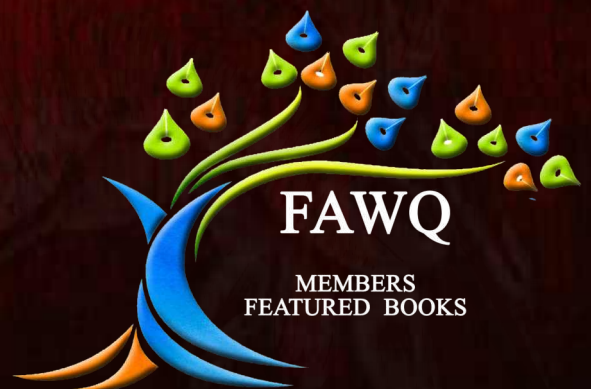
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Supporting emerging writers since 1921

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SCOPE is a bi-monthly magazine, depicting all things literary, from Members' writings to articles and information for writers and readers.

Featuring stories, poetry and articles submitted by FAWQ members.

SCOPE is published by the Fellowship of Australian Writers - Qld.

The Fellowship is dedicated to the nurturing and support of writers of all ages and levels, bringing them together in a connected community since 1921.

Join Our Fellowship



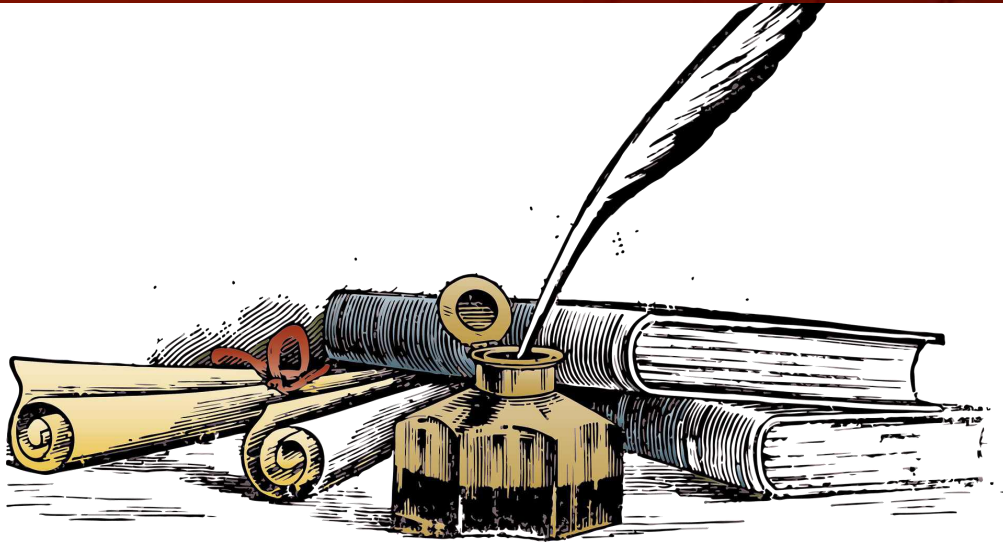
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Join the Fellowship to immerse yourself in the Queensland writing community and become eligible to submit your work for the chance of publication.

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Editor's Notes.

MEMBERS:

Please feel free to submit your recent achievements or milestones, as well as letters to the editor regarding points of interest, events or suggestions. We will attempt to fit them in. Please insure that these are submitted by the 15th of the month before each issue. That is:

February/March -15th January

April/May — 15th March

June/July —15th May

August/September—15th July

October/November—15th September

December/January—15th November.

Short stories, flash fiction, poetry and articles can be submitted at any time, as, if they miss an issue, they can be considered for the next.



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AND HAVE YOUR WORK PUBLISHED

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[Click Here for Submission Guidelines](#)



Members: Christmas Edition Writers' Competition.

This years "Christmas" edition writers competition will **NOT** be 'Christmas' themed.

The theme for this year (entries to be published in the December/January edition) will be '**New Beginnings**'

Please read and adhere strictly to the terms and conditions listed on the website, the link is below.

[Terms & Conditions](#)

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President's Report.

Welcome to this edition of Scope Magazine. We also welcome new FAWQ members for this time of year. Do keep in mind that one of the advantages of membership is the online profile with the FAWQ website. It's basically self-managed, and it's a useful way to market your work and/or to post links to publications or (if you have one) your own website.

Members can also submit material to Scope Magazine. If you receive any critical recognition, publish a new book, winning an award, or even being shortlisted, let us know and we can mention this. Scope is a registered publication with an ISSN, and this is citable.

Speaking of this, congratulations to FAWQ member Jo Singer, for her new book *A World of Silence*, published through Hawkeye Publishing.

Many thanks to those who attended our recent poetry workshop with Lauren Daniels. The feedback was that folk found her an engaging presenter. We think we have an equally engaging presenter on 15 November, with crime-writer Jack Rooney. More details in Scope.

Mindful of the financial demands on writers, the Management Committee recently decided to reduce membership fees for 2026. The new membership fees: individuals \$30 (early bird \$20), groups \$50 (early bird \$40), and Young People \$15 (early bird \$10). That's less expensive than other writing associations.

Final note is that we hope to be at the Writers Group Convention, at Northgate Hall on 26 October, from 9.30 am to 2.30 pm. See you there!

(Dr) Jim Page

**Visit Our
Members**

**Read Their
Profiles**

**Peruse Their
Writing**

**Join Their
Ranks**

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Members Achievements.

Congratulations go to Elizabeth G Arthur.

I was delighted to receive notification that my poem, BEFORE...AND THEN...AFTER... was awarded Highly Commended in the Shortstories Unlimited 2025 Fresh Water theme Poetry competition.

Congratulations to Mocco Wollert

Achievements – Milestones – August 2025

Your Time Magazine:

Column – Medical Centre August 2025

Senior Digest USA

Column – Medical Centre August 2025

Poem – Riverstone Dreaming August 2025

Scope

Blue Skies August/September 2025

Black Cup August/September 2025

Art August/September 2025

The Writer' Grapevine

Queen of the universe – Charlotte August/September 2025

Poetica Christi

Poem – Summer sound – selected for 2025 Anthology

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Professor Gary Crew Awarded an OAM



On behalf of all members of FAWQ, both current and previous, we extend sincere congratulations to Professor Gary David Crew, member and co-patron of FAWQ until 2023, on being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for service to literature as an author.

Awarded on 9th June 2025 as part of The King's Birthday honours, an OAM is one of the highest honours our country can give and is the nation's way of recognising and thanking those who go above and beyond.

Gary has written over 80 internationally published novels and illustrated books in the Young Adult Fiction genre, was Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing at The University of the Sunshine Coast for 20 years and has also facilitated national and international writing and literature workshops.

Gary has received many writing awards including

- Wilderness Society's Award for Environmental Writing, *Extinction Series*, 2004.
- Aurealis Award for Speculative Fiction, *Beneath the Surface*, 2005.
- Ned Kelly Award for Crime Writing, 1997.
- Children's Book of the Year Award: Picture Book - *First Light*, 1994, and *The Watertower*, 1995.
- Children's Book of the Year Award: Older Readers - *Strange Objects*, 1991, *Angel's Gate*, 1994.
- American Children's Book of Distinction, *Angels Gate*, 1993.
- Alan Marshall Prize for Children's Literature, *Strange Objects*, 1991.
- New South Wales Premier's Literary Award, *Strange Objects*, 1991.
- Whitley Award, Royal Geographical Society.

It is wonderful to see Gary's contribution to storytelling celebrated as his work inspires many readers and writers across this country and globally. Great lifetime achievements!

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FAWQ Special Event.

FAWQ Gathering: Saturday November 15th 2025:

Meet acclaimed author Jack Roney as he discusses how factual events and real life experiences influenced

his ideas for his historical mystery and crime fiction novels 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Followed by lucky door prizes, afternoon tea, and networking @ Redcliffe library meeting rooms



BIO:

Jack Roney's Detective Jarrod O'Connor series is inspired by 33 years experience as a police officer. His historical mystery novel *'The Ghost Train and the Scarlet Moon'* was runner-up in the Hawkeye Publishing Manuscript Development Prize. His first crime novel *'The Angels Wept'* was shortlisted in the Watpad Awards and his upcoming new release *'Black Gully'* was shortlisted in the Plaza Crime Award (UK) and the Hawkeye Prize. He is currently studying a Masters in Creative Writing at University of

Queensland. He delivers 'Writing Authentic Crime Fiction' workshops as well as providing one-on-mentoring with emerging crime writers. He co-hosts ['The Genre Fiction'](#) Podcast and his short stories

JACK RONEY- AUTHOR

A DETECTIVE JARROD O'CONNOR STORY
JACK RONEY
THE ANGELS
WEPT



BOOK ONE IN THE SERIES

A DETECTIVE JARROD O'CONNOR STORY
JACK RONEY
THE DEMONS
WOKE



BOOK TWO IN THE SERIES

A DETECTIVE JARROD O'CONNOR STORY
JACK RONEY
THE SHADOWS
WATCH



BOOK THREE IN THE SERIES



have been published in various anthologies.

Entry is \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members

[Click here for Details and booking.](#)

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Lauren Daniels – Lessons in Poetry

Event review and photograph by Sally Eberhardt



If you missed the FAWQ Gathering – Poetry Workshop with L.E. Daniels, then you truly missed a special event.

When Lauren turned up in a jumper depicting ravenous wolves, we knew this would not be a session for the faint-hearted. Much information was digested, and many ideas were prompted during the readings, discussions and writing exercises so ably facilitated by Lauren, yet like the wolves, we were left hungry for more.

Lauren took us through many examples of different styles, formats and inspirations of poetry as deep authentic expression. Rhyme was of little concern compared to finding the rhythm of your thoughts, strengthening your voice and honing your message.

Synapses fired with flashes of scenes and happenings and deliberate words and imagery came to mind as Lauren revealed poetry to us as many things including change, courage, wit, wilderness, wisdom and more.

Conversations during the networking around the scrumptious afternoon tea afterwards indicated that many of us had been blown away with the wonderful

content packed into this workshop and its thoughtful delivery.

Huge thanks to Lauren for imparting so much wisdom and prompting so much creativity. Thanks also to FAWQ Function Managers Verity Croker and Rosalie Webb, for organising this event and to Russell Perry for promoting. Thanks too to Lexcia Dalton for the excellent catering.

Don't miss our next event - these workshops are what FAWQ is all about ie providing resources and opportunities to help writers of all levels to achieve their dreams.

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The Wolf You Feed

An article by Sally Eberhardt

In today's world, the choices you make matter more than ever



Photo by [Luemen Carlson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

THE WOLF YOU FEED

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, “My son, the battle is between two “wolves” inside us all.

One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”



Photo by [Virginia Johnson](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The story of two wolves popped up in my Facebook feed AGAIN today. I brushed over it. After all, I'd seen it plenty of times before. I already knew this.... Didn't I?

Then the woes of the world crowded in on me — recession, homelessness, racial tensions, doom and disaster. What is the answer? What can I do? I went back and reread this story, this time with eyes ready to see and a heart ready to listen... and suddenly the message felt relevant.

It's a message of not only knowing but DOING.

Here's the story I'm talking about

These are powerful words ... but words are only as powerful as the actions they inspire.

You may have seen this story too. Most of us nod our heads sagely, hit the Like or Love emoji, perhaps Share it to spread the wisdom. That's what I've been doing, but today it isn't enough.

Because if I don't make changes in my behaviour, what good do the words do?

How do we feed the right wolf? What does it mean in terms of transforming thoughts and actions? I'm not a bad person ... but I could be better...I could DO better.

Before change comes action, and before action comes thought.

Here are some of my thoughts around this proverb, thoughts that inspire me to change my thinking, change my actions –

Sorrow ... it's a natural emotion. I never thought of it as evil but can understand why you would be advised NOT to feed the wolf of sorrow. Feel sorrow and let it go ... don't feed it or it may devour you.

It's the same with some other things listed as evil. They will raise their ugly heads and demand our attention. They remind us we are not perfect, that we are only human.

Recognize the evil wolf for what it is. Then send it away. Resist the temptation to throw it a few scraps of self-indulgence. Chase that cunning creature away with its tail tucked between its legs. Don't let it eat you.

Not feeding the Evil Wolf is NOT about ignoring what is going on in the world or just giving it lip service. There is so much happening around us – war, riots, poverty, so many circumstances causing fear and uncertainty. It's about choosing to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. It's about choosing to feed the Good Wolf.



The story of the wolves also made me ponder the whole ‘What is Good and what is Evil?’ question.

This is an extract from a blog on Psychology Today by Steve Taylor Ph.D. entitled ‘The Meaning of Good and Evil’.

Photo by [munshots](#) on [Unsplash](#)

You can view the full blog here — <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/out-the-darkness/201308/the-real-meaning-good-and-evil>

“What do we really mean when we use these simplistic terms, ‘good’ and ‘evil’?

‘Good’ means a lack of self-centredness. It means the ability to empathize with other people, to feel compassion for them, and to put their needs before your own. It means, if necessary, sacrificing your own well-being for the sake of others’. It means benevolence, altruism and selflessness, and self-sacrifice towards a greater cause — all qualities which stem from a sense of empathy. It means being able to see beyond the superficial difference of race, [gender](#), or nationality and relate to a common human essence beneath them.

‘Evil’ people are those who are unable to empathize with others. As a result, their own needs and desires are of paramount importance. They are selfish, self-absorbed, and [narcissistic](#). In fact, other people only have value for them to the extent that they can help them satisfy their own desires or be exploited. ‘

Relating this back to the Cherokee proverb, people lacking in empathy are more likely to feed the wolf of Evil whereas people with empathy will more often choose to feed the wolf of Good.

We are humans, each imbued with human flaws. Every day we have the choice as to whether we allow our flaws to inflict pain on ourselves and others.

We can choose joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.

Our choices matter, not just to us but to everyone around us, those who watch us, those who follow us, those who read our words. Choose empathy. Choose to feed the good wolf.



Photo by [Tim Marshall](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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Plotter or Pantser?

Planning your manuscript

An Article by Russell Perry

Writers are often divided into two categories, Plotters or Pantsers. Meaning that you have those who plot their whole story before writing, and those who write by the seat of their pants, writing the story as it comes to them.

I must admit to being a Planser, one who follows a vague plot but find it changing as I write, usually the fault of my errant characters having a will of their own, shooting off in directions not foreseen.

However, I find it useful to have a recorded plot to loosely follow and change as my story changes. It becomes a record of the story, which is particularly useful if you are writing sequels or series, to keep a record of characters and the spelling of names, locations and the flow.

With this purpose in mind, I discovered a free program which I use for writing novels and short reads alike. It is an open-source program called 'Freemind' and can be downloaded for free. I will leave a link at the bottom of this article.

Firstly, I show a screenshot of one of my plots below. I use it to outline the story to the left, with the characters and their relationships to the right, with the locations below them.

You can play with it to make it suit your needs. The 'Nodes' are to enter your 'ideas' text, and you can open them by right clicking in the centre (I use this for my working title) and clicking on 'Child Node'. The program will throw up a node in the right hemisphere firstly, then with the next click will produce a node to the left.

You can then add subsequent nodes to either side by right clicking on an existing node and clicking 'Sibling Node'. You can add a sibling node at any point in the progression by right clicking on the node above or below where you wish to introduce a sibling node. You can enter text to nodes by clicking inside them.

I find 'FreeMind' very useful to record story ideas. I may not use them at the time, however, they are often useful to rumage through when I'm ready for another adventure.

'FreeMind' is also useful if you are 'stuck' with your story and you wish to add more obstacles in the path of your protagonist, working away from your manuscript to develop new ideas to invigorate your story or to add more length to the book. Working with the skeleton to decide what to put in and where, or perhaps, what to remove.

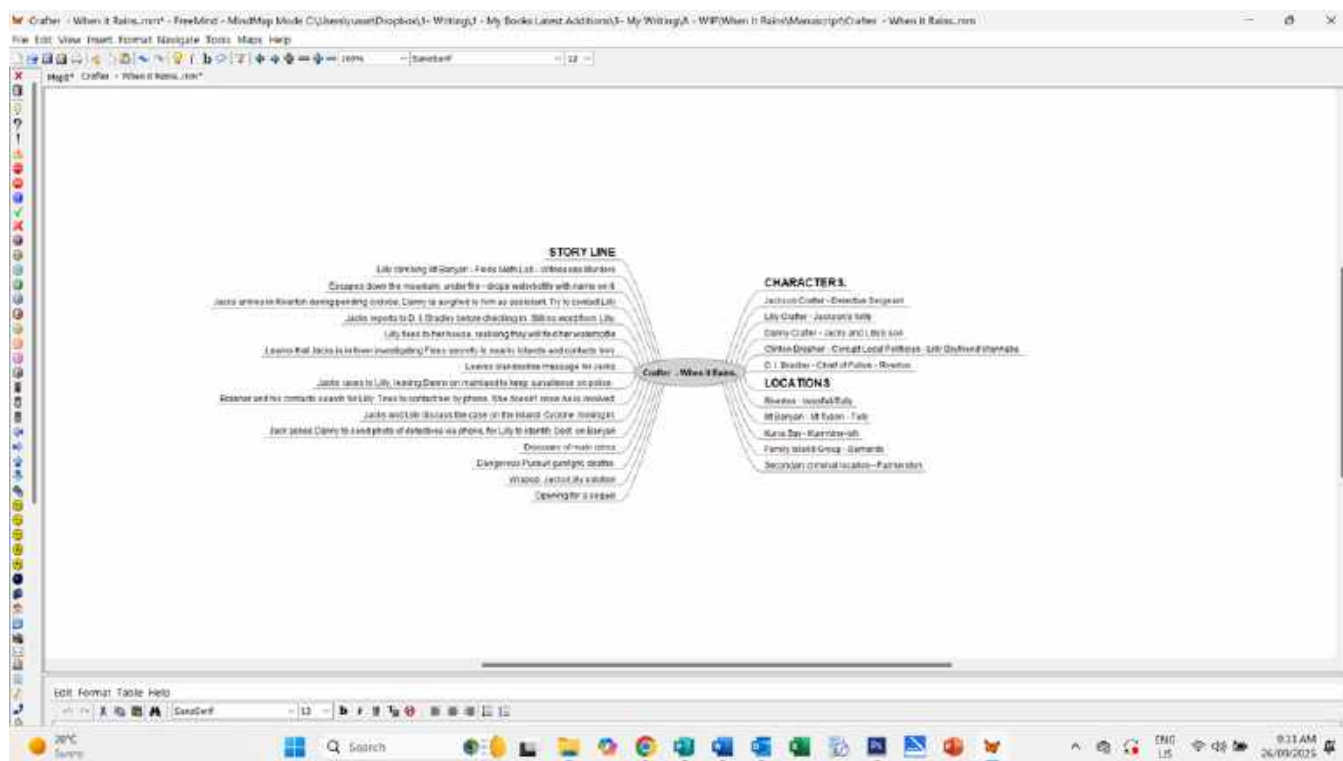
I will leave it to you to play with the program and to bend it to your needs. A demonstration of one of my plots is below. It's an idea I'm working on for a 'Short Read' project.

I hope you find 'FreeMind' useful. It's a major part of my process and has been since my first book.

See diagrams and the link below.

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My FreeMind Sample



Click
for Freemind
Download



Wishing you success in your writing,

Russell

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Amongst gods, Caesars and gamblers

A Novel Historical Fiction Affair in Las Vegas

An Article by Indrani Ganguly

I've been an avid reader of historical fiction from around the world since childhood. In recent years I've also ventured into writing historical fiction set in India and Australia. Like most writers, I firmly believe that while writing by necessity is a solitary business, no writer is an island, and we all need our tribes. The Historical Novel Society of North America (HNSNA) has been one such tribe, providing inspiration, entertainment and opportunities to improve my skills through presenting at its biennial conferences, reviewing books and writing for its online blog.

The first HNSNA conference I attended and presented at was in 2021 when COVID forced conference organisers to hold everything on ZOOM. The next one in 2023 was a hybrid one, offering a choice of in person and online attendance. I chose ZOOM as it wasn't possible for me to attend in person for various reasons.

This year was different. My husband, Jozef, and I had been wanting to visit the West Coast of the USA for a while. The announcement that the HNSNA Conference 2025 would be held at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada, from June 26 to 28, provided the catalyst for me to attend in person with Jozef doing some things by himself and joining me for the conference dinner. Prophets of doom who warned us against the perils of venturing into the Brave New World of contemporary US did not deter us from booking our tickets.



The immigration official at Los Angeles, our entry point, went through the necessary motions of checking passports, visas and taking our photographs, then asked 'Any relatives here?' My husband pointed to me.

'I have an aunt and uncle,' I replied wondering what I would be hit with.

The man leant back and gave me a broad smile. 'Enjoy your time, ma'am,' and waved me through.

We arrived in Las Vegas after a few days in Los Angeles and San Francisco on a boiling hot (though thankfully not humid) day.

I can say without reservation this turned out to be one of the most unusual and best conferences I have attended. To start with, the venue was Caesar's Palace, a well-known casino with statues of gods, goddesses, Roman Emperors and their servants scattered all over, including the swimming pool!

A very friendly reception officer checked us in and then handed us a map of the casino with a cross to show us where we were. ‘It’s easy to get lost in here,’ he beamed. ‘Remember to follow the signs saying Palace Tower!’ We could see what he meant as we walked through the gambling area with all manner of machines flashing lights and sounds, past a couple of rooms dedicated entirely to poker players, and various bars, cafes and restaurants, all buzzing with life till we suddenly came to a quiet area. This was the Palace Tower where we would be staying and attending the two-day conference. A giant statue of David towered over the entrance and became our landmark for making sure we were heading in the right direction.

Our room was very comfortable, but the facilities were very different to what we’re used to in Australia. For a start, there was no kettle, only a coffee maker. There was no tray with coffee sachets and tea bags, only some creamers and sugar. If we wanted coffee, we could buy the very expensive coffee pods arranged on the table or buy our own. There was no way to make tea. The fridge was not the mini bar we’re used to either. It was crammed full of stuff which we were careful not to touch as that would set off a sensor and we’d be charged for items even if we didn’t consume them. Luckily the conference organisers had warned us this would be the case, and we bought more reasonably priced coffee pods from a supermarket and didn’t open the fridge at all.

The conference sessions were a mix of conventional and offbeat presentations. Apart from the traditional keynote speakers and panel discussions, there were ‘cozy chats’ led by a speaker which were held in small rooms with limited seating capacity which were a great strategy to encourage debate and discussion.

The diverse topics included pointers for writing biographical historical fiction, a history of contraception and childbirth for writers, getting past the wall, historical detective fiction, using tarot cards for writer’s block, writing historical fiction based on family history, writing alternate history, mixing genres, strategies for research and marketing and wellness strategies for writers.



I was very interested in the session on writing biographical historical fiction about daring women as some of my work draws on the lives of real women. Key learnings from this presentation were:

The person's life provides a map, but writers need to be judicious about what to include and what to leave out.

The point of view character needs to be chosen very carefully, and her life needs to fit into a story arc.

The POV character doesn't have to be likeable, but her struggles should evoke interest and even empathy.

The writer should make it clear this is a work of fiction to cover the legal angle

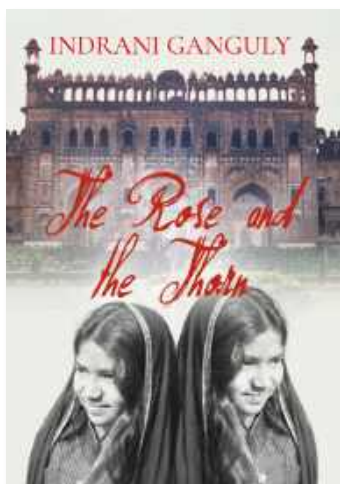
In the case of language and viewpoints which do not fit into contemporary sensibilities, the writer should make it clear it is the character's POV/language. The story should not be 'cleaned up' but the content needs to be carefully assessed for relevance.

If writing about women where there is no direct information available, it's best to read widely about the culture and history of the day and craft your story around that.

I was pleased to discover that this presenter's views were very similar to my own.

A topic which was completely new to me was writing alternate history which the presenters stressed was not the same as 'hidden history'. It was important to make clear this is being done for fun not deception, and there must be an echo of the real history. A possible plotline could be a story where the Nazis (a real group) had invaded North America or won the war. The presenters also pointed out that alternate history can be written to upend cultural assumptions. When writing about 'the other' writers should make sure they understand the other. I'm now thinking about how I might use the learnings from this session. India colonising Britain? The sticking point here would be what would Britain have that would attract Indian colonizers?

I had greatly enjoyed the cozy chats in previous conferences as they allowed for more interaction with presenter and other attendees than the conventional sessions in an auditorium. A cozy chat which I enjoyed focused on finding one's passion for more than the facts. The moderator stressed one should think about what one is obsessed with and not write to trends but stay true to what one loves. It's OK if the writing is a hobby. All of this resonated with my own passion for writing about aspects of Indian history.



Indrani's acclaimed historical fiction novel is now available in paperback and eBook on Amazon.

Just click the cover to learn more.

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EGRYN LIGHTS

Short Story by Danijela Hlis

Duel in my mind. Voices. I can't move. A spiral of pain sinking into my guts. Sirens in the distance, people's voices, blood flooding my eyes. Fog is everywhere, or is it blood? In the hall of judgement before god Osiris.

"We are losing him, increase the oxygen!"

Why can't I see? Who are they talking about? I try to move, to touch.

"Look, he is opening his eyes, get the doctor!"

Momentary awareness. Someone takes hold of my hand, a flicker of hope is born.

"Brian, listen to me. I am your father; you were in an accident. Please show me if you hear me, try!"

My hand remains paralysed, can't reply to his caress. I want to tell them I am not Brian! Blood and pain and fear. Oh, now I can blink my eyes, magic, and I can see shadows. I must be in a hospital. Why?

"Did you see? He blinked. Doctor, do something!"

The voice of the man who calls himself Brian's father is desperate.

Silence and darkness. Time lost its kingdom. Footsteps on pebbles, my body melts. Footsteps in my soul, stranger awaits. An enemy or a friend? My body swirls, teeth quiver as strings, frozen fingers clenched. My name is JANICE, this is my only certitude.

I rise into the clouds and in the semi darkness between life and death, between conscious and subconscious, hormones and brain cells, in the passionate embrace of sun and storm I end up remembering:

Brian, the beach, and I am kissing him; our honeymoon. Our love like a beautiful sailing boat. Bliss and sun and kisses and pearls of laughter. Our trip to King Island, all so very perfect, until the storm blackened the sky and horrific thunder and lightening sent us running under the Shea oaks.



Image by [Umkreisel-App](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Brian tried to dial the hotel to send someone, and then I was blinded by the explosion. The flames were licking at me as I fell under excruciating pain. Fingers entangled, bodies dissolve, two hearts groan, the awareness of losing Brian, the acceptance of losing myself. Flames.

It was on third day of our honeymoon. We played with the kelp. Out of nowhere this sudden force lifted us; the whole world appeared on fire, screams of wounded animals, ours? Then darkness.

Now I am awake again: I can see myself floating:

I need you Brian, I am your Janice, see? Brian my love, I am bodiless. Only my soul is now in your heart. This is a miracle I did not ask for.

I am semi-conscious. I see the people around me. Am I going mad? I close my eyes, so very tired. What tricks is my mind playing?



Photo by [Taylor](#) on [Unsplash](#)

“Brian? Can you hear me? Please blink your eyes if you do hear me”.

I stare at the doctor. Why does he continue calling me Brian? Should I blink my eyes? I blink.

“Thank God. Brian, I am Doctor Morissetti; and your family is here. Your wife and you were ... there was a storm, the lightening ...”

Silence. The doctor is looking at me. Where is Brian? How can I talk to the doctor, tell him I am the wife, I am Janice. Brian may still be there in the ashes on the island?

Image by

Days go by. I have no idea how long it has been. People come and go. Tubes in my mouth and nose, drip in my arm. Spiders crawling in my head. Tears on my cheek, my memories hurt, there is no hope. For some strange reason, I visualise this article –in green ink-I wrote not long ago: LOST AND FOUND

Morris West writes in his novel Summer of the red wolf

Quote: "The sickness of the mind is a sickness of unknowing and uncertainty. The cure is that someone has to love you enough, to let you love yourself a little..." unquote

The loneliness is a dangerous illness of today's world. Its chill is felt in every bone. Born out of LOSS; loss of a loved one, loss of one's homeland, or independence, loss of one's self respect, loss of one's identity.

Are we a humanity of perfect, selfish people who are too busy to care and help those less perfect and less fortunate? Why is there so much loneliness? Yesterday a man in a residential care facility said to me:

"I never knew loneliness until I came to live here"

How many times we hear wonderful stories about animal rescue. Animals are incredibly easy to love and live with; they don't talk and are grateful to us. How many lonely old, or ill, or disabled people spend weeks without any human contact, any caring gesture, a touch, a smile? YET LOSS IS JUST A MOVEMENT. And as such, can change any minute. How hard it must be to live with a total loss of memory. With a loss of eye sight. And yet, one has no choice but to adapt, train other senses.

Life is one big journey of lost and found. May loneliness be a moment, not a life? To be lost in the beauty of a new morning when there is a knock on the door, a knock on the wall of a heart, and a friend is found, and invited in. The chill in the heart replaced with warm feelings and a sparkle in the eye.

"Brian, are you awake?"

I try, I hiss, I groan. It appears that to them, I am more unreachable than the sky. Brian once told me that lies are cheap and tears are useless what really matters is reflected in the touch. So I say to this group of people standing around my bed:



Image by [LaraGenina](#) from [Pixabay](#)

"Touch me."

I am shocked at my own voice, a choking, croaking sound of a deep baritone. Brian's voice. Flapping wings of wild birds before my eyes, nothing is clear, nothing is normal. I faint.

“Brian? You will be fine, please believe me. You have been here in the hospital 3 weeks now, and it will take time. But look man, you are doing fine. Say something else, can you?”

So, I ponder: even if I speak, he continues calling me Brian. On the dark side of the moon little men are dancing, and God is laughing at me. What have I done to deserve this? I am intoxicated with fear, the uncertainty, the puzzle that is my life just now. Memory mingles with reality and still I remain lost. I am living with the dead.

I recall a book; in the sea battle of Danno-ura off the port of Shimonoseki, the Minamoto clan wiped out the entire Taira clan. Ghosts, hovering demon-fires and battle sounds drifting on the winds from the sea chased the fishermen until some years later, a Buddhist temple was built and prayers were offered to pacify the souls of the dead. Am I a soul? Who can pacify me?

“Brian, listen, you need to help us. We must talk of Janice. You must let go of her, to start healing. I am very sorry, we were not able to save your wife. Brian?”

A grotesque sound unleashes from my throat. What idiots, how dare they tell me I am dead when I am here...or am I? There is no distinct boundary between the realism of the living and the mystery of dying. Untouched, unknown regions of spirituality.

I feel I am in the Labyrinth and Minotaur is my name. I have become a monster!

“I want to switch on the light of truth”, I whisper to the nurse, who calls out for the psychiatrist to hurry.

“Please Brian calm down, please”.

While the doctor is reassuring me, he lifts my arm, and I stare in disbelief. My arm is large and hairy and masculine! The engagement ring I gave to Brian is on the finger, as well as the wedding ring.

“Help me, please somebody help me, I am not Brian, I am Janice!” My voice, I found my voice!

They stare at me, very troubled, pale. How can Brian speak with this soft feminine voice? Just a minute ago he spoke with his own voice. They all disappear into the corridor and I am left alone with my horror. They just told me, I - Janice is dead. I have just seen my arm as that of Brian’s arm. Tentatively I start touching my body.

“Oh my God”, I am crying now, with my fingers on my penis. Snakes biting at my brain. No wonder they call me Brian! I am lost somewhere in Brian’s body!

All is silent. It must be night. Screams of incredible fear have been imprisoned in me for days now. I am, but I am dead. To be or not to be. Whether it is a spirit or a ghost or a soul or just a voice hidden in the body of Brian, I am.

I remain silent. No more venturing into their lives. All I want now is for Brian to accept me, and keep me inside him. A soft mist is lifting. There is beautiful music of bells and chimes. On the hospital bed, Brian’s body is getting colder. His heart is weak, yet he knows he must make one more effort.

Darling?

Brian's baritone.

A flicker like a falling star inside his heart.

Oh Brian, darling, you found me, here, deep inside you.

Barely a whisper.

I am so tired, Janice, please, can we just go, please.



* Image by [Markus Steidle](#) from [Pixabay](#)

“Good morning dear listeners. This is your local FM Community radio with news update: Brian Hawk, who was injured in a freak lightning storm on King Island five weeks ago, died in the hospital last night. It is believed his mobile phone was struck and a chain of events followed, resulting in a horrific fire of a 150 years old tree under which the couple found shelter. His wife Janice died in the fire. A local nurse, who wishes to remain anonymous, stated that the Egryn Lights phenomenon was seen at the time of Mr Brian Hawk's death. For those interested, this phenomenon goes back to 1905 in Wales, where a preacher by the name of Mary Jones somehow “caused” this ball of fire to occur each time she preached, high above the chapel roof. After about a minute the light disappeared, then two lights flashed out one on each side of the chapel. And last night two unidentified lights flashed above the hospital.

This is Charlie Jones on Launceston FM 95.2 – weather is next.”

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FULLY LOADED

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Linda couldn't believe her eyes! Whatever next?

The couple seemed friendly and had waved as they pulled into the campground in a rather shabby old coaster, and started to set up nearby. Perhaps there'd be an opportunity for a chat when they had settled in? But would they ever complete their setting up? They'd been busy for quite some time.

Firstly the dog kennel had appeared from the back door, and a small dog was now bouncing around on his chain, yapping cheerfully.

Next came the veggie garden and herb patch. The awning was extended and now four long troughs filled with flourishing plants lined the perimeter of their patio. Linda glanced at Frank and raised an eyebrow, but Frank wasn't keen. 'Don't even think about it,' he muttered, shaking his head. 'Too much bother...and you wouldn't be able to cross the border.'

The following manoeuvre was even more puzzling. The driver struggled down the step with a wooden structure which he proceeded to assemble. Surely that wasn't a chicken pen? Linda watched in amazement as the coop took shape, complete with a sizeable run. Three chickens were released from a cage and were soon pecking happily.

'Do you think we should offer them a cuppa?' Linda asked.

Frank shook his head. 'No. Wait a while longer. I don't think they've finished yet. I'm wondering if they're about to unload a cow.'

Susan Skowronski © 2025



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ON THE MAP

Flash Fiction by Susan Skowronski

Frank swung into the campground and looked around for a shady spot. There were several other vans already parked, but there was still plenty of space. Mt Willis was rarely what you might call overcrowded, a quiet little town suitable for an overnight stay.

A couple from a nearby caravan were strolling towards the main street, and soon Frank and Linda were heading in the same direction. Frank wondered if he'd see much change since their visit two years ago.

The street was almost deserted. The café had closed and only one car stood outside the only shop, a grocery store that stocked some hardware and sold stamps.

There was more activity at the hotel. A sign outside announced that coffee and cake was available but judging by the crowd on the verandah, Frank doubted that that was their main source of income. Cold beers were flowing freely and there was plenty of good cheer.

'Come and join the celebration,' a large man called to Frank and Linda. 'Have a beer with Phil.'

'Thanks,' Frank called back. 'What's the occasion? Is he getting married?'

'No way!' his new friend laughed. 'Nobody would be that silly. He's just bought a franchise. Going to set up here in town.'

'It's amazing,' another man said. 'It'll bring so much prosperity to the town.'

'I'll put Mt Willis on the map,' another drinker chimed in. 'Can't wait to see it open next week.'

'We're planning a grand opening... next Thursday,' said another.

Frank looked about. There were no signs of any new premises being built, no refurbishments of any old buildings. 'Hardware? Or a supermarket?'

'No. Nothing like that.'

'A take-away? Surely not McDonalds?'

'No. Even better than that,' his friend declared. 'Phil's bought a dog wash.'



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The Boy and the Bear.

Children's Flash Fiction by Russell Perry

Mikey found himself quite nervous at having to break the news to his old friend. They had been together, it seemed, for always, and now things were changing.



They were sitting on the deck at the back of the house, as he stumbled over his words. They didn't come easily as he tried to be as gentle as he could, not wanting to hurt Gruff's feelings. "I ... I just wanted to tell you Gruff, you'll start to notice a few changes around the house. We have a new addition to the family."

He was silent for a few moments as he stared out into the back yard, not wanting to look directly at Gruff. He gained his composure and continued, nervousness and a little guilt, causing his words to fall from his mouth in a jumble of 4-year-old babble. "Daddy bought me a puppy for my birthday.... his name is Goofy and he's a Beagle ... he's funny and he licks my face and jumps on me... you'll like him Gruff," he paused, then added as an afterthought, "and you can play with him too."

He stopped talking and looked across at the bear. Gruff hadn't moved, so Mikey moved closer, reaching his hand out to stroke Gruff's arm. "I still love you Gruff, it's just that I'll be playing with Goofy some of the time. We can have fun together. Mummy said he can't sleep in the bed with us. He's gotta have his own basket beside the bed, so, you see, you and I still get to sleep in my bed.

He picked up the teddy bear and hugging him tightly, he whispered, "You see silly, there is nothing to be worried about, we can all be best friends."

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The Dance

By Sally Eberhard



Photo by [Taylor Hugh](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Pointy sticks popped the tar bubbles blistering the seam between gutter and road. Air hung heavy, redolent with late summer fragrances of lemon blossom and cut grass. Even the bees seemed tired, flying in slow motion in the relentless heat.

Two bored teenagers wrangled with the restlessness of the last days of holidays and the listlessness of the oppressive atmosphere.

Jessica couldn't stand it any longer. She was too close to Jake...and not close enough.

Putting her stick down, she deliberately stood, stretched languidly and yawned without bothering to cover her mouth. She reached out to Jake and braced herself to pull him up from the curb. He turned to say something but on seeing bony knees instead of her freckled face, he scrambled up, oblivious to her proffered hand.

"Let's walk," said Jessica.

"Where to?"

"Anywhere. Everywhere. Nowhere. I don't care."

Jake shrugged and followed her along the ribbon of path they had trod together at least a thousand times, best friends since kindergarten.

Past Jake's home they strolled, catching a glimpse of his Mum wiping her hands on the apron she only wore while baking.

"I hope she's making chocolate chip cookies" enthused Jake. It was the only good thing to come out of his parents' frequent arguments — his Mum baked her frustrations away, furiously whipping, stirring, chopping and kneading.

Jessica half-heartedly twitched a shoulder and morosely plodded on, muttering something about taking up cooking.

“Is anything wrong, Jess? You usually get excited about my Mum’s cookies.”

“I’m fine” snapped Jessica.

Jake, like his father, was yet to learn that when a woman said she was fine, she was anything but.

They walked toward the corner store, taking sanctuary in the shade of the wide eaves, wishing they had twenty cents to buy a Paddle Pop ice cream.



Image by [omar sahel](#) from [Pixabay](#)

A poster in the shop window caught Jessica’s eye. “Blue Light Disco this Friday Night” it proclaimed in brilliant cobalt with splashes of neon pink and yellow. Jake read all the details out loud, excitement building in his voice.

He turned to face Jessica, looking into her eyes, seeing the green pigment brightened by gold flecks of hope. Her world stood still as she held her breath, waiting for her dreams to come true. The silent pause was interrupted by the sound of the shop radio playing the hit song of the latest pop icon. Jessica’s heart beat in time to the syncopated rhythm of ‘Love is in the Air’....

Everything was perfect. The world was beautiful. She almost dared to let happiness flood her being.

“Jessica?” said Jake, very solemnly.

“Yes, Jake?” breathed Jessica, her face lifted expectantly.

“Jessica ... do you think your friend Kylie would go to the Blue Light Disco with me?”

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Engravings

Poem by Margaret Clifford

As Lauren Daniels Poetry Workshop taught us, Poetry can be interpreted in many forms.
This is an offering from Margaret Clifford.

1.

Three rough-edged slabs of cement
extracted from the sand dunes, placed, touching,
attempting
to recreate a tombstone,
a poem for *Emily*
cherish daughter
Lost to soon
Only fragments of engraving remaining
dates, words, worn away by wind, sand and time.
So many gaps, so much of life, withheld
just enough to know
she was loved so long ago.

2.

These words pouring out
attempting to capture
the present
the intersecting
moments
with loved ones
I grab at words secure them,
not trusting the memory to hold the details,
the depth of feeling, the moments of joy, so easily
passed over, unnamed. I'll engrave the words
deep into time,
so they'll last forever.

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Question Answered

Poem by Margaret Clifford

There was always the unanswered question
brushed away like an annoying fly.

A part of the story untold, pieces
of the puzzle, withheld
now lost amidst the dust of decades.

In the soft hours of twilight
a tune of an unknown song, played
over and over in his heart, a longing,
calling him home.

Then an email – results from DNA
asking a question, offering a name.

Ever so faintly at first, the memories began
to sharpen, gather strength,
then rushed out, revealing
a man of muscle and strength,
of voice and mannerisms, ever so familiar.

Army records confirmed dates,
photos revealed a likeness, truth
unable to be cast aside, spoke -
father.

A family, that called this man, *Dad*,
reached out, embraced
a brother.

The question answered
but the story still unfolds, missing pieces
found, placed, filling gaps.

A song rises in his heart, a song
of knowing, of coming home, of being held.

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A Collection of Poems

by Mocco Wollert



Silence

Not like *Silence of the lambs*,
more threatening, out of control,
taking over quickly.

Killer on minute surfaces,
diffusing in the air, unseen.

Not talking, a different silence
to not breathing, not moving.

The respirator sucks dead air
from flat lungs, time to turn it off,
clean the bed for the next one.

The room is full of silence,
death came without sound.

I Have Not Looked at You

I have not looked at you
for a long long time
although you are beside me
every day.

I know your eyes
but never saw
how lines appeared
around them.

²
Your skin is different,
I never felt
the smoothness leaving,
colour changing.

²
Have I spent all those years
in ignorance;
how often have I looked
and yet not seen?

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A Collection of Poems

by Mocco Wollert



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Riverstone

Wavelets running, rushing over the stone
lying patiently in a green world.
When the cool waters of the river
eddy around his smooth surfaces
he feels caressed.

He has been dreaming, lulled by
the river's melodious songs,
tries to remember the seasons,
the years that gave him form,
polished his ruggedness.

Time has no solid shape,
winter brings darkness, summer light,
the in-between just a whisper,
just waiting time for the moment
he will roll away.

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The Book of Lamentations

A Poem by Maffy Vaz

We flooded the streets,
Carrying brave banners to awaken
Our leaders, for we had much to say.
No visionary motive perhaps, then,
But a curious commotion wrapped
In a colourful, experimental tirade.
Happening elsewhere. Could happen here.
On this, our sacred ground.
Toiled with joy, then, with human blood,
Soiled, spewed now with animal cud.

How – did we reach here, when we had,
Embraced our imperfect differences,
Escaped those strange ordinances,
Promised to live content, be safe, save?

When – did we disintegrate and stop to
Admire our shimmering seas, our golden skies,
Aspire under the Southern Cross to rise,
Plan to integrate, be grateful, helpful?

Why – did our hearts not burn, berate, to see our
Desecrated revered war memorials,
Dishonoured uniting emblems,
Failure to sanctify, to remember lest we forget?

Now we march for reasons, wounds, both
Known and unknown, owned, and disowned.
Idealism the fake taskmaster,
Realism the agonising task setter.
Nothing is the same. Nothing has changed.
Sensitivity shamed. Annihilation the war cry.
Commonsense common no longer, and
So, we march mindlessly mute to face,
The music created by the spearheads,
Who nonchalantly say,
Even this shall pass away.

© Maffy Vaz

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Fowl Play

A Poem By Phyllis Morton

Rooster Red, Rooster Blackie – two cocks with jaunty style,
Keen to impress pretty hens with their rakish guile,
“Gmme me an egg, y’adorable chick,
Hey, saucy babe, I’ll show ya my trick.”

But, adorable hens in mood perverse
Swiftly swivel dainty heels to reverse,
Fluttering feathers in cross indignation,
Pullets flip--flapping in loud perturbation.

Old Mother Hen enforces chookie decorum
With politeness and rules, (and then some)
Banning flirty advances beyond the pale.
Dutiful hens agree - Order must always prevail.

Mother Hen clucks, “Enjoy false adoration.
It even arouses a pleasant sensation.
BUT - many good eggs you are intended to lay.
Work is your destiny, whereas randy roosters may play.

Pity caged hens laying eggs in enslavery state,
No romance, words of endearment - just their unjust fate.
Blackie and Red’s cock-a-doodles are crudely PROFLIGATE!
For you, it’s a much better deal to stay CELIBATE!”

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ALONE TOGETHER

A Poem by Barb Ralph

I go to tell him about the
ducks I saw on my walk,
but he is working
and does not like to be disturbed.

He finishes work and
I start to tell him about the
Noisy Miners I saw today
chasing a possum across the
neighbour's roof,
but he is already watching the news.

While we eat dinner, I wait for an
opening in the quiz show he likes to watch
to tell him the King Parrots
visited again today,
but he looks from his plate
to the television and back.

After the dishes are done
we sit on the couch
and watch a show,
and now and then I look at him,
but his face is fixed on the screen.

During an ad break,
I think about telling him how much the
potato plants have grown,
but it seems such a small thing now.

We are in bed and he leans over and
kisses me goodnight and tells me he
loves me, before he rolls away,
and I know he will be
asleep before I gather the courage to speak.

I lie still on my back, thinking about
the ducks, the possum, the birds and the garden and
even though they may be small things,
their weight lies
heavily on me.

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Woodlands in Spring

A Poem by Susam Skowronski

fresh scent of cypress
mingled with damp leaf litter
eucalyptus and wattle

lorikeets twitter
in the flowering ironbark
magpie entertains

blue banded bees
hover over a wild orchid
beneath a banksia

superb fairy wrens
hop-hop along the path
tritt-tritt-tritt

silver-eyes flit
around golden wattle blossoms
play hide and seek

wallabies pause...
alert, wary, unmoving
watch as I pass by

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Magpies in the Jacaranda

Poem by Susan Skoeronski

joyful sound of magpies
frolicking in the jacaranda
diving
swooping
twisting and turning

sweet cascading song
floats across the garden
over tree tops
rising to heaven...
inspiring
enriching
enchanted

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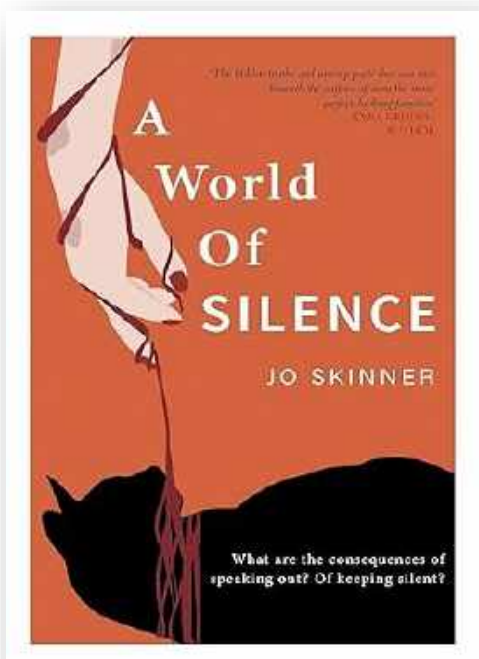
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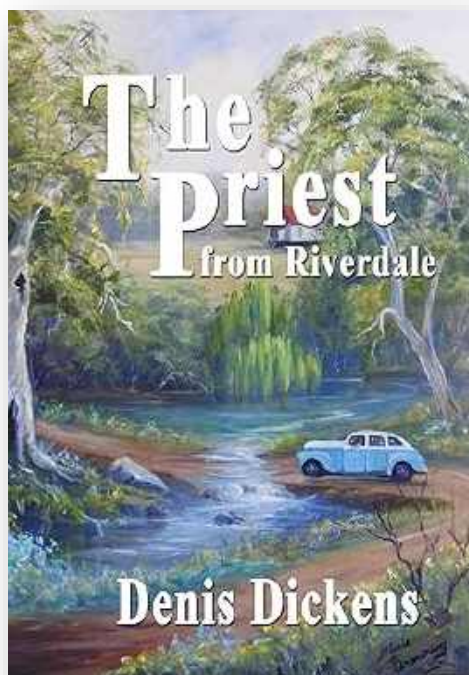
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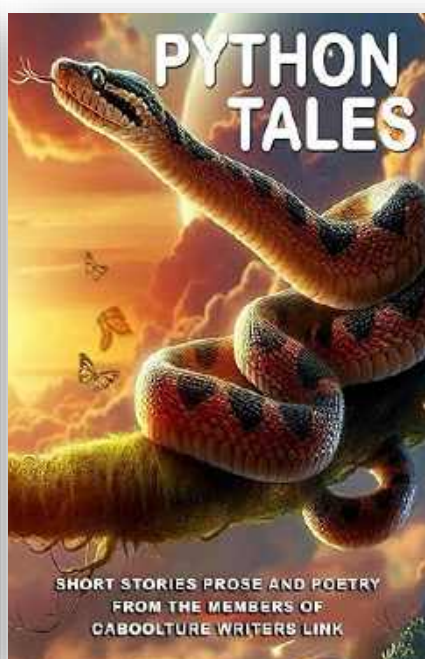
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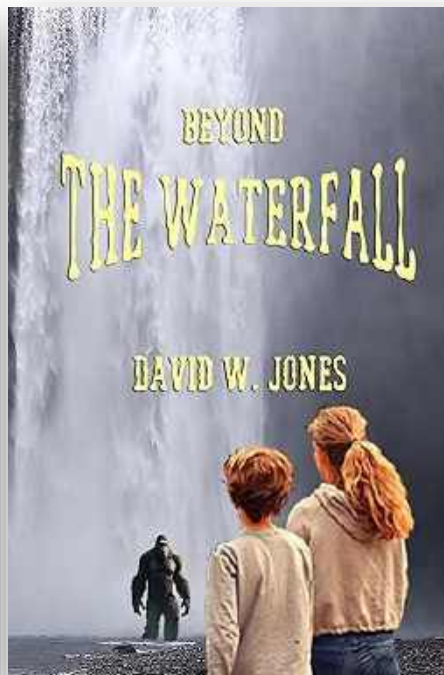
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