

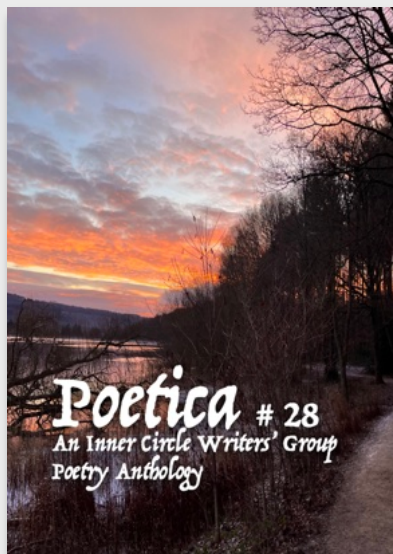
CLARENDON HOUSE PUBLICATIONS

'The world is better with all this beautiful work seen at last.' – A. Delf, author

This week from Clarendon House



Issue # 85 of the Inner Circle Writers' Magazine



Poetica #28: An Inner Circle Writers' Group Poetry Anthology



Welcome!

Welcome to the Clarendon House Newsletter for week ending 13th February 2026! Still foggy, grey and damp up here on the edge of the moors - but there's plenty happening!

This week, Issue # 85 of the world-renowned Inner Circle Writers' Magazine - featuring the return of one of the planet's toughest writing competitions! Subscribe [here](#) so you don't miss out on the chance to win a book contract with Clarendon House Publications!

PLUS Poetica #28: An Inner Circle Writers' Group Poetry Anthology featuring the work of David Painter, Gareth Macready, Dr. Afshan Aqil, Kerri Jesmer, Tim Law, Marlene Fabian Stiles, Ed Ahern, Mike Turner, Gabriella Balcom, Catherine A.

MacKenzie, Christine Karper-Smith, Jim Bates, Anahit Arustamyan, Hanna Biali, Warren Alexander, Giuseppina Marino Leyland, Justin Wiggins, the Birch Twins, Debby Hackbarth, Valerie Fuqua, Linda Sparks, Dawn DeBraal, Allan Edward Tierney, Suranjit Gain, Carl Scharwath, Michal Reiben, Kelli J Gavin, Jacek Wilkos, Peter Kenny, Fhen M., Annie Nardone, DJ Elton, Trish Parkinson, Tony Fyler, Craig Richard Tickner and Michelle Chermaine Ramos

Feedback is welcome. Drop me a line at

grant@clarendonhousebooks.com

Below is a popular blog item.



I once found myself within a foot or so of the famous 'Discworld' author, Terry Pratchett. Through a series of extraordinary events, I found myself trapped in a hotel during a Discworld convention: the entire building was swarming with people in wizard and witch costumes, chatting incomprehensibly with each other, behaving in that rather odd and distinctly uncomfortable way that people behave at such events, a kind of half-in, half-out of character 'performance', loud and slightly off-key. Everyone in the hotel worshipped Pratchett, not unnaturally, I suppose: as he walked down the corridor towards me, I felt myself unable to avoid backing up against the wall in the same deferential fashion as the other twenty people in that rather crowded hotel, until the Master had passed.

Though I wasn't part of the fanbase or the convention, I respected Pratchett for his output. I had at first resented him, believing that his novels were poking fun at the genre of High Fantasy - that was what I worshipped, and I didn't 'take' to anyone trying to belittle it. But then I read *The Colour of Magic* and realised that that wasn't what Discworld or Pratchett was about: rather than

belittling the genre, he was exploring it in a new way, and his work had a magic of its own.

So when I read one of his famous quotes - 'The first draft is just you telling yourself the story' - I paid more attention than I might have done before reading one of his books. It's a commonplace 'inspirational quote' and you have probably heard it many times. It's possibly easy to dismiss it. But it goes to the heart of what writing a story is, for many people at least.

There's been an explosion of guidance about how to write stories in the last couple of decades, largely due to the internet. My own book, [How Stories Really Work](#), adds to the pile of material new writers confront as they put pen to paper or finger to keyboard. Structure, style, grammar, Hero's Journeys and all the rest of it, are all dealt with in different ways by different people, most of whom have something worthy to say. I've encountered many writers for whom all of this is either off-putting or downright frightening: how on earth are they supposed to tell, they say, which bits to apply and which bits to ignore?

Well, one answer lies in Pratchett's quote: the first draft is no one else's business but the writer's own. Here, unbridled by anyone else's advice, the writer confronts the raw material which has presented itself to their imaginations in need of being 'written'. The writer's task at this stage is just to try to capture that usually amorphous and indistinct mass of images and ideas using a net of words. Words are such small things and the connections between them are so flimsy and gaping that writing a first draft can be much like chasing a butterfly through a meadow with a netless hoop: even when we get close to our prey, we toss our hoop at it only to see it flutter away harmlessly deeper into the trees. What we emerge with after strenuous pursuit is usually a ragged and totally inadequate effort - and that's just one

chapter. As we go on, it's crucial that we keep our eyes on the butterfly and not pay too much attention to anyone shouting from the sidelines about rules or maxims. It's important too not to have too many expectations of this first attempt. The worst thing we could do would be to imagine that the first product we come up with is all that can be done.

Some writers operate differently and will protest: some, I have heard, consider that everything can be done in this first draft so that barely any editing is required afterwards. But these are rare: the most usual product at this early stage is a lot of words. In reading over it, you might find that quite a few clichés have crept in there somehow while you weren't looking; you will probably also find a great deal of unintended incompleteness.



There's a big difference between 'unintended incompleteness' and 'intended incompleteness': the first is simply an indication that the story isn't finished yet and that there are gaps in the author's own knowledge about the tale; the second is a fine art, the art of punctuating a completed story with the gaps, holes, absences, risks, unknowns and other vacuum-like spaces which make it a compelling read. The real product of a first draft is really nothing like the story as it will eventually appear: a first draft can be completely overblown, more like a blueprint than a draft. Ideally, every single question will have been answered for the writer; every single loose end tied up; every gap and crevice filled in and smoothed over. Having satisfied himself or herself that all is now known and settled, a master author can go back and selectively remove certain parts of the overall thing. A loss there, a gap here, a mystery over there, an unknown at the end of a chapter here - it all equates to the creation of a reader

magnet - a set of vacuums with the power to pull in readers and glue them to pages.

To use another obscure analogy, if the first draft was selecting and gathering a piece of rough stone to be sculpted, the second draft is the beginning of the sculpting process. But like a sculptor, the writer must see the shape of the final story within the stone. Anything that does not contribute to that must be shaved away; anything that is part of it must be smoothed into a cohesive section of the whole.

Unless you know the story yourself, you won't be able to shape it so that the reader will see it. Write the first draft with as much freedom and energy as you can muster, let it wander where it will, let it be glorious and decadent and rich and large. Then pare it down so that it draws in the crowds.

Pratchett certainly did, and it did him a lot of good.

For more, get [How Stories Really Work](#) -and my course, [Become a Professional Author](#).

How Stories Really Work

*Exploring
the Physics
of Fiction*
by Grant P. Hudson



*'I'm reading through **How Stories Really Work**. I've studied writing books for years but I've never seen anything like this! This book is REVOLUTIONARY. Everything is made so simple and precise that other methods of writing seem clumsy by comparison. It's not just a way of writing, but a way of seeing.'*

-A. P. (Author)

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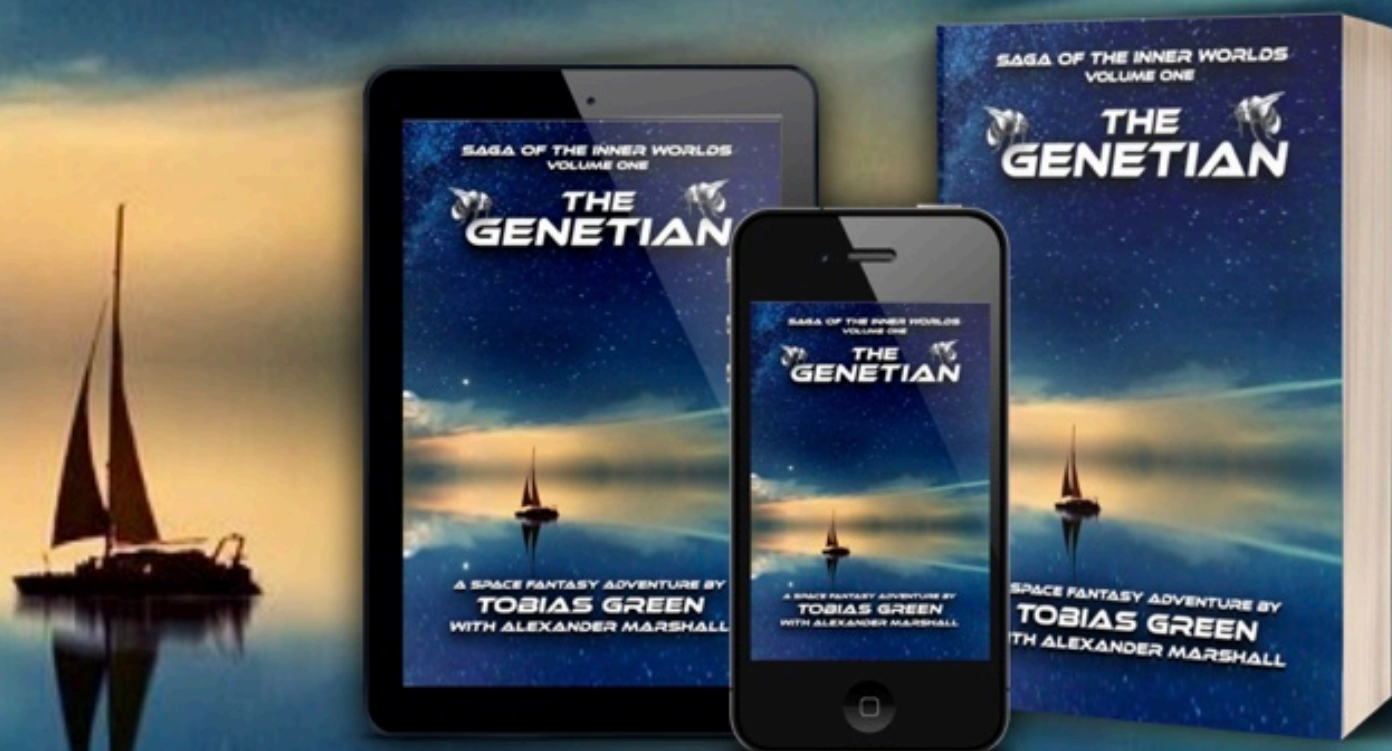


[Available on Amazon](#)

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**SAGA OF THE INNER WORLDS
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'Genet, the worldsphere known as Emerald, is categorised as a winterworld...'

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CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHORS

ANDREW and HELEN BIRCH



Space Truckers 6 Marvis City Blues



Jack Booth turned into the shadows, and away from the blinking neon that permeated the mask covering his face. Avoiding the puddles of the alley, he stepped into a doorway, and opened the door. Looking around, he sighed. The sign that read 'Booth, Private Investigations', was faded and peeling...

Outside, Marvis City was alive. Vendors with street stalls hawked their wares among the neon signs, to the throng of night owls, with tastes and smells from across the galaxy. Con-artists and tricksters walked up and down the strip looking for the unsuspecting tourists, and the easy mark. Cabs lifted off and set down, taking drunken revellers from across the galaxy, to night spots and flesh pots, where a week's wages could be spent in a moment. Whatever you could imagine, it could be bought in Marvis City. Whatever kink or fantasy your heart desired, as long as you had the green, it was here for the taking...

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But when Victoria King's father Matt dies, her whole world begins to unravel - what she thought was her home is soon left far behind as she is pursued across snowy mountains and through dark, twisting valleys by evil men, focused on one thing: possessing her, and through her the whole valley. Strange, half-savage men, wild, half-demonic bears, and a man who has no heart at all await her on the road, and much more besides...

Join Victoria King, her loyal partner Abe Stone, the peculiar wild man Old Laramie, Captain Stirling and others on a ride you will never forget into 1880s Wyoming, where the only real law is written by the bullet...



The Shattered Stone

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CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHORS
BERNARD CRISPIN
WITH ALEXANDER MARSHALL

THE JOURNALS OF
SUSAN COVENTRY
VOLUME ONE

WINTER'S
DOOR

When Susan Coventry and her brother Reggie are evacuated to a huge rambling ruin of a house in Yorkshire after a bomb in the London Blitz kills their parents, little do they suspect the adventures they'll have...

Like meeting Professor Cassius Clocktower, the mysterious man from another world, and his tiny lightbird, Erith...

Or discovering the strange mystery of the Beckenwith Necklace...

Or encountering the Ghost of Greenbridge Gate...

Or trying to figure out how on earth to get rid of the horrible Skelthorpes...

And what is the real significance of the portal known as Winter's Door?

Begin following the exploits of Susan and her brother in this first of the journals of Susan Coventry.



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CLARENDON HOUSE PUBLICATIONS

Over seven years ago, I launched Clarendon House Publications from my home here on the edge of the Yorkshire Moors in England.

Since then, I have published almost 300 high quality items - books, magazines, course modules - and helped hundreds of authors and poets achieve publication, some for the first time.

Over 30 authors have had individual novels or collections produced through me - some of these have had several books published and have gone on to carve out careers for themselves as writers.

With the best-selling books **How Stories Really Work** and **Become a Professional Author** (and the **Become a Professional Author Course**) I have helped writers understand exactly what it is they are doing and how they are doing it - and boosted their confidence to do more of it.

Many Clarendon House writing tools have been released for free download, fully illustrated, in order to assist writers create real careers for themselves.

Now, here collected for the first time for your convenience, are all those publications with links to take you to wherever you need to go to acquire them. They make great gifts - for yourself and others!

Please email me if you have any questions or feedback:
grant@clarendonhousebooks.com

Here's to many more publications and many more years helping you achieve your dreams!

Grant P. Hudson

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