**A.** Intro.;

**B.** AAWP thank you;

**C.** List of thank yous, including UWRF;

**D.** Julia thank you;

**E.** Prize administrators thank you;

**F.** UWRF experiences;

**G.** Opportunities prize offers;

**H.** Enter and promote;

**I.** AAWP conference experiences.

**A.** Hello everyone. I’m Andrew. Firstly, thank you for offering me the opportunity to attend this conference and speak with you today.

I come here with a deep sense of gratitude for what I’ve experienced over the last couple of months, so if it’s ok, I’d like to focus on thanking those who have given me this opportunity.

**B.** Thank you to the AAWP for offering this prize. The theme of the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival this year was ‘Origins’. Everything I’ve experienced over the past couple of months has its origins with the AAWP. Thank you so much for offering this prize and the opportunities that come with it, and for supporting emerging writers in general.

**C.** Thank you to everyone who administered the prize, to Jen Webb for her assistance, again to Jen and her fellow editor at *Meniscus*, Gail Pittaway, for publishing my story, and also to the consulting editors Paul Munden and Paul Hetherington, and the editorial interns Bonnie Cassidy and Erin Mallet. Hopefully, I get to meet some of you at the conference.

Thank you to the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival for jointly offering the prize, to the Festival Director Janet DeNeefe for her hard work and hospitality, to Julia and Holly in particular, but also the Festival staff in general, both local and expatriate, paid and volunteers.

Thank you to the staff at my accommodation in Ubud, Honeymoon Guesthouse, particularly Peset.

And of course, thank you to the people of Ubud and Bali in general. I’ve had a close connection with Bali for a long time now – the people are so welcoming and generous, and I can’t help noticing how much we take from the island. I believe this prize and the Writers Festival are attempting to give something positive back, and that needs to be acknowledged.

**D.** I’d like to make special mention and thank the person I’ve had the most to do with, Julia Prendergast. I have great respect and admiration for Julia. Her tenacity and determination to find me in the first place, her genuine joy and enthusiasm for my win and my story, her support and responsiveness to any questions I’ve had, her openness and welcoming nature, and her wisdom and knowledge of writing (Julia and I had many long chats about writing of an evening at the Festival…and of course, they seemed to get more profound with every glass of wine we drank)

I also want to mention something most people don’t see, and that’s how hard Julia works at the Festival. I was blown away by her advocacy – for me, for the prize, for this organisation. Her ability to network and establish genuine connections with others is unbelievable. The connections I made and the experiences I had are what amazes me most about this prize – so many of these were facilitated by Julia.

One time at the Festival, I commented on the passion Julia has for this prize and the AAWP. She downplayed things and told me she loved her work on the prize because of the opportunity and support it offers emerging writers. Love and passion are great, but I once tried to pay my electricity bill with them, and it didn’t go down too well. My observation is that Julia goes above and beyond, and it’s important to me that the hard work and sacrifices people make are not lost because they love and are passionate about what they do.

It seems weightless in comparison to all you’ve done for me, but I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you, Julia. I hope you understand and can take joy in what this award has done for me.

**E.** I’ve spoken a lot about Julia because she’s been my contact, but I also understand that she represents a team who administer this prize and the other prizes offered by AAWP. The fact that so many people are willing to put in so much time and effort to provide these opportunities for me and others is extremely humbling. Thank you to everyone involved for all your hard work and support.

**F.** Attending UWRF was an amazing experience. The Festival is welcoming, rich, open and laid back. I attended so many wonderful sessions and events, met fantastic people, and learnt so much about writing and the world in general. There is such a great vibe and spirit at the Festival – unlike anything I’ve experienced before. It’s hard to encapsulate it all in this forum, but I’ll relate one thing that’s indicative of my time in Ubud. I approached a guy and thanked him for the two sessions I’d seen him in. He was gracious and began talking to me. I kept trying to pull back and leave him alone – I didn’t want to appear like a stalker fan – but he kept asking me questions, drawing me back in and engaging me in conversation, and we ended up speaking for about 10 or 15 minutes. That guy was Ian Rankin – he’s sold over 20 million books, but he still had that much time for someone who’s sold none (maybe I should have gone with *between* us we’ve sold over 20 million books). But that’s just one example of the accessibility and vibe of the Festival.

**G.** The opportunities this prize offers, and the impact it has on the winner, is immense. I’ll never forget the excitement and joy I felt when I was told I had won. Apart from the obvious rewards, such as attending this conference and the Festival, having my story published in *Meniscus*, and meeting so many wonderful and talented people, the prize offers so much more. Things that are less tangible – the boost in confidence and belief, a change in perspective, the motivation to continue writing and working hard, recognition for effort, personal satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment – the list is endless. So much so that I now think of things as before and after I won this prize. This award makes a difference.

**H.** I encourage anyone who writes to consider entering this prize next year. Even more so, I encourage everyone involved with the AAWP to promote this prize because it has the power to change someone’s life. That may sound corny, but I know it’s true because it changed mine.

Thank you so much for listening and for having me here today. I’m really looking forward to the rest of the conference, and I hope you enjoy it, too.

Thank you.

**I.** As an outsider to AAWP, I was unsure what to expect when I attended this year’s annual conference. When I arrived, I was made to feel very welcome by everyone I met. Throughout the conference, there was a great sense of unity and friendship.

The programme was diverse and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I also enjoyed the collegial spirit of the conference, especially the social elements. The conference dinner was a particular highlight.

The AAWP conference was a fitting way to bring the formal aspects of the prize I received to a close. It was great fun and enabled me to forge strong connections with a range of wonderful and inspiring people.

Thank you.