

Examining Life Under a Different Lens – Fantasy

Author Bernadette Rowley

'All children, except one, grow up.' That's the opening line in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, and that's the brilliance of fantasy writers – they grab our attention, drawing us into scenes that examine life through a different lens, under different rules.

Author Q&A:

What draws you to writing Fantasy Romance?

First of all, I love fantasy so that comes first. I spent decades living in the fantasy worlds of Feist, Tolkien, Eddings and Robert Jordan to name but a few. When I was challenged by my mentor, Louise Cusack, to write a romance, I naturally chose the fantasy genre. *Princess Avenger* was that romance and from there, my world of Thorius has given me seven other stories so far. What could be better than 'happily ever after' with a big serve of magic?

Why do you think your characters resonate so well with readers?

That's lovely of you to say that, Carolyn. I'd like to think readers can relate to the faults and failings in my characters as well as their heroic qualities. I try to get to know the characters before I start writing and some really do capture my imagination and take on more of a life of their own- most do actually. Princess Alecia from [Princess Avenger](#) is a favourite and shares much of my idealism from my younger days. There are others like Lady Katrine Aranati from [The Master and the Sorceress](#) (soon to be released) who were secondary characters in previous books and demanded a story of their

own.

Are there any rules you have to follow to ensure fantasy characters are believable and relatable?

Not rules as such. It's the same for any character. The author has to know and understand the character to be able to portray them realistically and consistently. Before I start writing, I brainstorm each main character from physical characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, greatest loves/hates, ambitions, family structure they grew up in, place in family, their deeply held beliefs and much more. I get a sense of their experiences leading up to the start of their written story. The hero and heroine may be larger than life but they still have the same basic flaws and failings as the reader. It's about placing challenges in front of them and having them solve them in an authentic way, but perhaps with magic or even in another form.

What's the difference between an expertly written character that draws the reader in, and a poorly written character that readers don't connect with?

Once I know the character, I can write deep in that head space. As I'm writing, I become the character and express what the heroine is feeling/thinking in the moment. This deep point of view allows the character to get their hooks into the reader and gives them a deeper experience. Of course my editor is such a help in drawing to my attention anything that isn't consistent or believable for a particular character.

What are the Top 3 Best and the Top 3 Worst features of being a writer?

Editing is my favourite part of being an author. I love seeing the prose take shape into something I can be really proud of. The first glimpse of a new cover is such a buzz. Receiving praise from a reader who has enjoyed your book is totally wonderful.

Balancing that, the worse features would be the struggle to get your work out there (marketing), the poor monetary return and self-promotion which is so difficult for introverts- which most authors are.

Would you care to share with us your proudest moment in your writing career, and perhaps also a low-light moment for perspective?

I was really proud when Penguin Australia offered to publish Princess Avenger. It had taken six years of deliberate focus on writing to be published to get to that point. Penguin published [The Lady's Choice](#) as my second book as well and I was over the moon. Then they declined further books. That was probably the lowest point. I knew I could self-publish but I wanted to have books with a major publisher as well. I pitched to Pan Macmillan Australia who offered me a two book contract- another very high point. [The Lord and the Mermaid](#) and [The Elf King's Lady](#) were born.

Do you have a personal favourite from your booklist?

My favourite is [The Lady's Choice](#). The heroine, Benaë, has a very strong relationship with Flaïre, her horse, and is also a healer. She can communicate telepathically with Flaïre and her healing style is also with her mind. Being a vet, I would love to be able to delve deep into the body and heal with nothing more than the power of thought. I also had a very close relationship with my horse, Captain, when I was a young woman.

[Princess Avenger](#) will always hold a special place in my heart, being my first published work. I love how sassy Alecia is. I also adore shapeshifting hero Vard.

[Princess in Exile](#) was the second book I wrote and continued Alecia's love affair with her dark and dangerous hero. Once I self-published, I was able to bring this story to the world. I'm totally in love with the cover.

[The Lord and the Mermaid](#) is fabulous as it is such an impossible love story. The hero is sailing captain Nikolas and he is so delicious. He shelters Merielle when he finds her washed up on the beach even though he is sworn to hate mermaids.

[The Elf Kings' Lady](#) tells the love story of two secondary characters from *The Lord and the Mermaid*, Alique and Kain. They are also impossible together but they manage to find a way to overcome that. This is another story where my healing background takes centre stage.

[The Lady and the Pirate](#) brings together a pirate hero and a desperate lady smuggler. I love these two so much! Again they beat the odds to find an enduring love. And this book gave birth to *The Master and the Sorceress* which will be released in April 2018. Katrine is the younger sister of Esta, the heroine of *The Lady and the Pirate*, and demanded her own story as only younger siblings can. I love her and I adore the cover of this book!

What's next for Bernadette Rowley?



I have two books for release this year. The first is *The Master and the Sorceress* in April and the second is *Elf Princess Warrior*. *Elf Princess* is a spin off from *The Elf King's Lady* and has a dark elven princess as the heroine. I

can't wait for you to read this one!

[Carolyn Martinez is an author, editor and speaker.](#)

Rachel Amphlett – Crime Fiction and Espionage Thriller Author

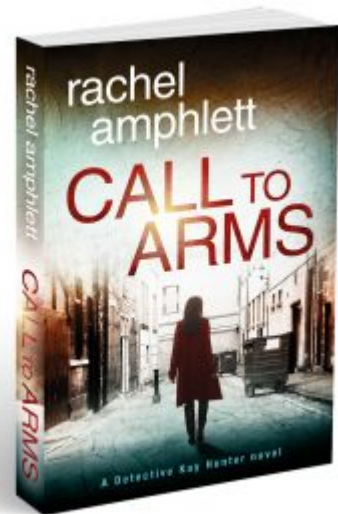
Before turning to writing, Rachel played guitar in bands, worked as a TV and film extra, dabbled in radio as a presenter and freelance producer for the BBC, and worked in publishing as a sub-editor and editorial assistant.

She now wields a pen instead of a plectrum and writes crime fiction and spy novels, including the [Dan Taylor](#) espionage novels and the [Detective Kay Hunter](#) series.

Originally from the UK and currently based in Brisbane, Australia, Rachel cites her writing influences as Michael Connelly, Lee Child, and Robert Ludlum. She's also a huge fan of Peter James, Val McDermid, Robert Crais, Stuart MacBride, and many more.

She's a member of International Thriller Writers and the Crime Writers Association, with the Italian foreign rights for her debut novel, *White Gold* sold to Fanucci Editore's TIMECrime imprint, and the first four books in the Dan Taylor espionage series contracted to Germany's Luzifer Verlag.

Her latest release is [Call to Arms](#). (**Synopsis** – Loyalty has a price. Kay Hunter has survived a vicious attack at the hands of one of the country's most evil serial killers. Returning to work after an enforced absence to recover, she discovers she wasn't the only victim of that investigation. DI Devon Sharp remains suspended from duties, and the team is in turmoil.



Determined to prove herself once more and clear his name, Kay undertakes to solve a cold case that links Sharp to his accuser. But, as she gets closer to the truth, she realises her enquiries could do more harm than good. Torn between protecting her mentor and finding out the truth, the consequences of Kay's enquiries will reach far beyond her new role... *Call to Arms* is a **gripping murder mystery**, and the fifth in the Detective Kay Hunter series).

AUTHOR Q&A

What draws you to writing Crime Fiction and Spy Novels?

That's easy – it's what I was brought up on. Both my parents' and grandparents' bookshelves were teeming with books by the likes of Dick Francis, Ed McBain, Jack Higgins, Alistair McLean, Len Deighton, and Frederick Forsyth, so it was only a matter of time before I headed off down that path.

Why do you think your characters resonate so well with readers?

I'm hoping it's because readers can relate to them, and that I make sure that they're motivated characters – even the bad guy has to have a reason for what he's doing, and if you have a motive for every single person on the stage, then it's easier

to get the reader to empathise with them even if that makes them uncomfortable.

With the Detective Kay Hunter series, I was determined to have someone who didn't have a broken home life – there are enough like that around. Instead, I wanted her to be resilient without being arrogant and gave her somewhere safe to return to after a day's work.

I have a lot of fun writing the various series, and I hope that comes across in the stories as well.

What are the essentials for success on Amazon and the other big depositories?

I think the best things to do to give yourself a head start on any of the retailers' websites is to make sure you have your work professionally edited and get the best book cover you can. Take a look at what other publishers are doing and emulate your cover design to be "on trend" – you can always change it in later years if tastes change.

I ran a series of advice segments about publishing and marketing for ABC Brisbane over the Christmas/New Year break in 2016 with lots of tips and tricks. The show notes for those can be found [here](#).

How big a part have your series – Detective Kay Hunter, English Spy Mysteries, and the Dan Taylor Espionage Thrillers, played in your success?

I think series give readers and me as a writer a better chance to explore character development and to let otherwise "minor" characters their time to shine in the spotlight. Often, I'll get to the end of a new book in a series and think "this person has more to say", and off I go again.

The standalones were fun to write, too though, so I wouldn't discount writing a standalone if that's what you want to do.

After all, if a story gets hold of you, it's not going to let you go until you write it...

What have you been your most rewarding and fruitful marketing experiences?

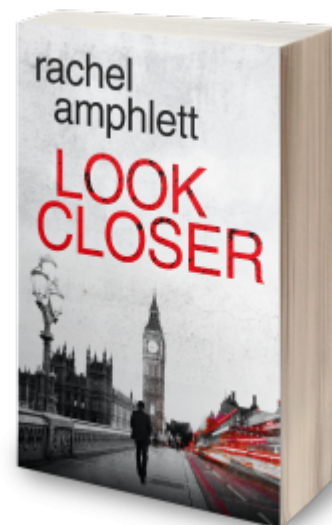
Building a mailing list has to be number one out of everything I've done – I love hearing from readers, and the members of my Readers Group and launch teams are phenomenal about supporting my writing and helping to spread the word. Some of them have been with me since the beginning, and are from all over the world.

Would you care to share with us your proudest moment in your writing career?

One of the proudest moments was when I was asked by the local Sisters in Crime group to read out an excerpt from my first spy novel at the Brisbane Launch of Stella Rimington's *The Geneva Trap* – she's such an inspiration and has obviously had a very interesting life as the former director of the British Secret Service.

Do you have a personal favourite from your booklist?

I think it's *Look Closer* – that was the standalone novel that gave me the confidence to plan and research the Kay Hunter series.



What's next for Rachel Amphlett?

Well, I'm halfway through writing book six in the Detective Kay Hunter series, so that will keep me busy for a while!

[Carolyn Martinez is an author, editor and speaker.](#)

In Conversation With Compulsive Reader's Founder – Maggie Ball

[Compulsive Reader](#) has more than 10,000 subscribers, and over 1 million book loving visitors each year. It consistently ranks in the Top 20 Google and Yahoo searches for book reviews. The driving force behind Compulsive Reader is Maggie Ball – Poet, Book Critic, Podcast Interviewer and Producer, Mother of 3, Wife, and Research Support Lead (the day job). She and her poetry have been described as '... polished and brave. Intellect melds with emotion to soar,' *Jan Dean, Author of [Paint Peels Graffiti Sings](#)*, and '... an intelligent poet whose writing is charged with imagery and language drawn from the sciences,' *Linda Ireland*. These are just two amongst many, many exceptional accolades.

Maggie interviewed me on her podcast when [Finding Love Again](#) was launched. I found her a generous, intelligent, interesting, engaging host. I was particularly enthused that she read my book before the interview (I've found this to be the exception rather than the rule), and I'm very pleased to learn more about this extraordinary woman to share with you.

Your podcast is littered with great names. Which have been your top 3 most memorable interviewees?

I'll never forget interviewing [Tom Keneally](#) (just after [Bettany's Book](#) in 2003). He was a joy – so interested in absolutely everything, loquacious and easy to talk to, utterly nice – we went way overtime and I wanted to keep going. That was a transcript though – I wasn't actually recording the shows at that point. It was pretty early on in my interviewing 'career', and I daresay his encouragement was part of why I continued to do it. Another transcribed interview that I loved doing was the great, Late [Dorothy Porter](#) (interviewed just after [Other Worlds](#) in 2007:). She also was incredibly nice, intelligent and insightful – I felt that if I could only talk to her long enough I might absorb some of her greatness. For the recorded ones – I hate choosing because I pretty much love everyone, but a few that have remained with me and come to mind immediately include [Emily Ballou](#), who came on shortly after [The Darwin Poems](#) were published for the second time, and something about her resonated with me – not just because I loved the book, which I did, but because she had a quality – even a bit ditzy – which was very down-to-earth and appealing. I also am partial to the face-to-face interviews as there are nuances you can't get on the phone – the eye contact, the subtleties of body language etc. [Ben Okri](#), who I interviewed at the Sydney Writers Festival in 2016, was rather wonderful in this respect – plus I got a hug (can't get that over the phone): I know that's four. Also [you](#) (Carolyn Martinez), which makes five :-).

Many writers are introverts, but we all must market our books. Can you offer any tips on how writers can ensure they're a good interviewee?

Lol – that's a whole course! But in brief, it helps to do your homework – know your interviewer and their style (listen to their shows for a bit so you can come in with that

knowledge). Always bring your book and be prepared to talk about it – so have a log-line or ‘elevator speech’ overview ready. Once you’re in the conversation, treat the interviewer as if they are a good friend – so respond to their questions with warmth (even if you don’t like the question), and respond candidly, openly and feel free to meander a bit. The listeners want to get to know you. The worst interviewee is either hostile or non-communicative. I’ve never had the former, but I have, once or twice, had an interviewee who basically responded with one word answers. I couldn’t use the interview.

How do authors go about having their book reviewed by Compulsive Reader? I imagine you get far more requests than you can manage.

I’m afraid I do get far more review pitches than I can handle – I only have a small, busy volunteer team and our reviews tend to be pretty thorough as you say – I won’t publish a review that just skims the surface, so they take time which limits how many we can do. We publish guidelines on the site (under submissions) and basically the process is to send a few paragraphs of synopsis. A few puffs or existing review blurbs doesn’t hurt either. The query should be professional – no typos, really clear writing (sometimes I don’t even know what a person is asking for), with the right blend of familiar and professional. They shouldn’t beg! (it happens a lot).

Nor should they tell me how much work went into the writing of the book, how long it took, that it was self-published (we don’t mind at all, but set up a company and treat your book like a publisher would!), or that you are new at this and hoping to get some feedback (there are places that do that). Don’t send the book until I ask for it! Do include a nice looking .pdf press sheet with any relevant backstory, a book cover, and the synopsis/blurbs. Most publishers will create this promo sheet for a new book. Don’t ask questions that can be easily found by visiting the site. Always visit the

site first and know who you're querying.

With your passion being poetry why are you interviewing and reviewing other writers besides poets?

I choose who I want to interview or review based on my reading tastes rather than my own writing. I do actually also write fiction and nonfiction as well as poetry and I read very widely in a pretty extensive range of genres. Also poetry is a harder sell, so I do get more feels from promoting it than say, from promoting a blockbuster novel that doesn't need help. Compulsive Reader is very much a passion project – it's not a business for me at all – I'm able to please myself creatively without worrying about things like sales, page hits, etc. It is definitely cross-promotional and complementary (and I know I'm a better writer from reading deeply and talking to other writers), and the perks are pretty good, but mostly, it's something I do because I truly love doing it.

Which of your books of poetry is your favourite?



I'm so humbled and moved by reviews I've received – they keep me writing. I think, poetry is such a hard sell, why do it – and then I think of those reviews and think – well, someone (intelligent and wonderful) has been moved. That's enough.

I'm not entirely sure I have a favourite. In terms of sole-authored, full-length collections, there are actually only two books – [Repulsion Thrust](#) and [Unmaking Atoms](#). There are quite a few chapbooks including about 8 collaborations but those are my two big books. Both cover a lot of ground, and explore different ground (though perhaps there are some similarities – the science inspiration, the ecological focus, the mingling of dark and light), so it's hard to choose one, but If I have to I'll say *Unmaking Atoms* just because it's more recent and as an author you're always trying to go a little further with each book.

Would you care to share with us the proudest moment you've experienced so far in your career?

Maybe, because it was recent, winning the Hunter Writers Centre's Member's Award in the Newcastle Poetry Prize. I know it's not a massive award, but the Newcastle Poetry Prize means a lot to me – I've been entering it for a long time, and I've been a member of the Hunter Writers Centre for a long time too – about 25 years!

What's next for Maggie Ball?

I've got another full-length poetry book ready to go which I'm going to be sending out very soon, and then I'm thinking it's time to go back to the world of fiction for a bit. I have finally decided to move on from my abandoned third novel, and start over.

[Carolyn Martinez](#) is an author, editor and speaker.