

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.

Fantasy Author, Bernadette Rowley, grew up reading fantasy and training her beloved horses. Both formative experiences come through in her writing, as does her profession – Veterinarian. I reached out to Bernadette recently when I read her book *Princess Avenger* in two days. I could not put it down, and I had to know what happened to Princess Alecia next. That's the wonderful thing about my job – I get to query my heroes. I just love it when I find an exceptional author with a large book list to choose from.



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 Flaire 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.](#)