

Interview with Epic Fantasy Author Amanda Greenslade

Amanda Greenslade, 26, was born in Queensland, Australia and still resides there in the sunny South-east region.

Amanda graduated from Griffith University with a Bachelor's degree in Communication. She is the webmaster for an Australian Speculative fiction website called *The Specusphere* (www.specusphere.com). Run by volunteers, *The Specusphere* aims to 'map the genre' of speculative fiction and promote Australian authors and other creative professionals.

Amanda is the author of *Talon*, the first book in the epic fantasy series entitled The Chronicles of Astor.

What is your novel about?

It's about Talon, a nineteen-year-old male who is sent to find allies for his people, only to discover a much bigger conflict. His people, the Kriites have special gifts, including bonding with animals, weapons and telepathy.

Tell us a bit about how long it has taken to finish your novel

More than ten years! During this period of time I've grown as a person and matured in my writing. I have rewritten the novel so many times that if you add up everything I've cut, it would be at least 50,000 words. I believe in being fairly ruthless with extraneous writing. Having said that, I try to avoid taking the 'easy way out' like having the hero pass out every time I need to change the scene or move the story forward.

Why did you write it?

Writing has been one of my favourite past times for as long as I can remember. In my adolescent years I started reading fantasy. The things I revelled in most in the books I read were often only a small part of them. These were the animals and fantasy creatures, adventures taking place in amazing natural landscapes, the battle scenes and things like that. So I decided to write a fantasy novel for myself, just for fun. I just started writing and out came Talon. At first I didn't have any pressure on myself. I was just writing for the sheer pleasure of it. As time went on I thought about it more as something that could be moulded and crafted, then one day shared with others.

Have the works of other creators inspired you to write?

Yes, more than I could possibly remember. I think that everything I take in is, in some way, going to come out again. When I first started *Talon*, my number one inspiration was Jennifer Roberson's books, *The Chronicles of the Cheysuli*, the *Sword Dancer* series and the other novels 'of Tiger and Del'. The Cheysuli were a race of people who could shape-change into the same form as their special animal companion (called a lir). Tiger and Del in the *Sword Dancer* series had a special bond with a sword. I wanted to combine both of these in my novel and more.

It has been said that there are no new ideas. What are your thoughts on this?

This is an important point about the crafting of stories because it affects everything narrative-based—books, performing arts, movies and games to name a few. It's probably true that there aren't many *new* ideas, only new expressions of those ideas. It's like copyright. You can't copyright an idea, only a particular way of expressing it. For that reason, it can still be entertaining and relevant to have storylines and characters that seem to have been 'done before' as long as you change it up a bit, put your own unique spin on it.

I try to do this in my novel by avoiding stereotypes and by surprising the reader every now and then. For example, it was important to me not to have a typical fantasy hero: a tall white male. Also in my novel, the general setting does not place women in the typical medieval roles of cook, servant, mother, princess. Well there is a princess, but she is one of the greatest enemies Talon will face. The other enemies, the Zeikas, are the ones who go 'against the norm of the world of Chryne' by discriminating against females. In general, the 'right way of things' on Chryne is for women to have fairly equal opportunities to men, albeit there are still going to be your cooks, servants and mothers who are female. It just isn't the only option for their lives. They can become soldiers, teachers, nobles with estates etc. I wanted that in there as part of the setting, but it isn't a big deal. It's natural.

Will this be your first publication?

This will be my first novel publication. Apart from that, I have had a few articles published; one was an essay in a book on fantasy editor Lin Carter, another was a 'how to' guide for writers in using Microsoft Word and Windows to become more efficient and organised. I also have several articles published on *The Specusphere* and would have more if time allowed.

Can you give us the title(s) of your book(s)?

I have plans for a number of books in *The Astor Chronicles*. Book One is called *Talon* and it will hopefully be published soon.

What was the name of your very first book regardless of whether it was published or not and, if not published, why?

The first 'book' I wrote was really more of a novella as I wrote it when I was nine and it was about 8,000 words. My mum sent it to a publisher for consideration, but it was understandably not up to a professional level! 😊

In this series, Talon faces many dilemmas, such as how a peace-loving person can wage war, self-sacrifice for a greater mission—hope, in an increasingly hostile world. It has a fast-paced, action-packed plot, engrossing high-fantasy setting and story and is a novel about friendship, courage, faith and change.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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