The Name of the Wind by Patrick Rothfuss

There has not been a book over the last decade that has brought about as much response as Patrick Rothfuss’s *The Name of the Wind*. Released in 2007, this book broke all the rules and really should have fallen flat on its face. But instead, by word of mouth this author was propelled into the spotlight and has had his work quickly become one of the most highly recommended titles in the genre. Rothfuss himself is now listed alongside names such as Goerge R. R. Martin, Robin Hobb, Brandon Sanderson and the rest of the fantasy genre elite.

So, why should this book have failed? Firstly, at 260,000 words it is too long for a début novel. Secondly, *gulp* it is about a young boy who against all odds achieves the status of a hero. Thirdly, each page is literally laden with description. And finally, we are told the ending and a summary of everything exciting that will happen during the heroes journey on the book’s back cover.

Perhaps then it is no surprise that Patrick Rothfuss was rejected a number of times before being published. Originally called *The Song of Flame and Thunder*, he submitted it to a ton of publishers publishing and was knocked back time and time again. With determination and belief in-tact he decided to play a different strategy to break into the market and instead entered the famous Writers of the Future competition in 2002. He won his quarter and a little bit of prize money, but more importantly he got his name out there and was noticed by an agent. After acquiring an agent he quickly sold the book to DAW Books and renamed it *The Kingkiller Chronicle*. A year later, it won the 2007 Quill Award for best sci-fi/fantasy and actually made it onto the *New York Times* Best Seller list (no easy feat in this genre!).

So how the hell did he do it? Well, *The Name of the Wind* is simply beautiful. Reading this book is similar to reading poetry. It is written in the first person (as most modern poetry is), it is descriptive and the words literally seem to flow. When we read poetry we are let into the mind of a person, a human being and given an expression of their feelings; an insight into the things that have shaped them. Essentially this is what *The Name of the Wind* is.

*The Name of the Wind* begins by introducing us to a quiet man, a man who lives a routine life. Every morning he sweeps the floor of his inn, he polishes the bar that probably doesn’t need polishing and he awaits the same customers that come in each and every day and tell the same stories he has heard hundreds of times before. However, Kote, your typical innkeeper is happy and content living that routine lifestyle.

We quickly realise though that things might not be as they seem here. When one of the regulars is attacked by a spider like demon on the road, Kote seems a little too interested and a little too knowledgeable on the subject. We witness this seemingly insignificant innkeeper sneak out to the road where the demons attacked a few nights later. Upon arrival, he finds a scribe being attacked by demons. The scribe believes the two of them are about to die for these demons are seemingly impenetrable and en-masse are relentless killers. The scribe witnesses Kote take an attacking stance before blacking out.
When the scribe awakens he is at Kote’s inn. We quickly realise that he was in fact heading to this inn all along and that he recognises Kote. He refers to Kote as a hero of many tales, he calls him; Kvothe the Arcane, Kvothe the bloodless, Kvothe the Kingkiller! Kote laughs at his suggestions and tells him to leave, however the scribe refuses. He tells Kote that he has come to get Kvothe’s story and share it with the world. He tells Kote that if he should die without sharing his story no one will ever know the reality behind the great deeds he achieved and the person behind them will be lost.

Kote considers this and finally reveals himself as Kvothe – and tells the Scribe he will need three whole days to explain the extent of his life for, “I have stolen princesses back from sleeping barrow kings. I burned down the town of Trebon. I have spent the night with Felurian and left with both my sanity and my life. I was expelled from the University at a younger age than most people are allowed in. I tread paths by moonlight that others fear to speak of during day. I have talked to Gods, loved women, and written songs that make the minstrels weep."

From here the majority of *The Name of the Wind* is told from a first person perspective. We are treated to seeing Kvothe’s world through his own eyes with the odd interjection of hindsight. We are lead by Kvothe through his incredible life story whilst all the time having our hand held and everything beautifully explained to us. One thing that really works well with this book is that Kvothe’s life has been extravagant in many different ways. Because his life has been so full of action, so full of variety and so full of accomplishment, so too is the content. We are taken with Kvothe from his life as a child travelling with his parents who were troupers – entertaining the nobility, to scenes of death and murder, to life on the brutal streets of Tarbean and even scenes reminiscent but by no means copies of; Harry Potter within the University.

Because it is told in the first person, you really get to feel that emotion. You get to taste the hate he has for those who have hurt him, the pain that drives his to success, the desire the first time he falls in love, the sense of joy as he begins to achieve, but also you get to feel his darker side - his greed and unreasonable desire for attention. Kvothe simply feels real and his story is so believable that along the way you will laugh with him, smile with him, cry with him and hate with him.

So let me finish by telling you that you have to read this book. This book is what fantasy should be and I truly believe that Patrick Rothfuss has shaped the future of the fantasy genre. By showing us the incredible life of Kvothe through his own brilliant eyes and being able to put that into beautiful prose – Rothfuss created a piece of literature that is currently unmatched. Keep your eye on Patrick Rothfuss because he may well be the most talented writer out there today.