

A Seismic Shift in Thinking – Shriek an absurd novel – In Conversation With Davide A. Cottone

Davide A. Cottone introduced me to the Absurd genre. Frankly, before I read his book [Shriek: an absurd novel](#) I didn't even know what the Absurd genre was. The cover enticed, the exemplary writing held me.

Davide wrote the book to join the discussion/debate on how the world could change for a better future. 'When the dominoes fall, it will be the lateral thinkers not the reactionaries who will triumph,' he says. In the past, writers have written fables and parables to make social commentary. Davide has used the Absurd genre, and in so doing the parallels with current world events surrounding the rise of Donald Trump, Kim Jong Un, Bitcoin, the demise of conservative religious values, people's social response to broken government promises, and new technologies are so compelling, it's ludicrous.

"The world can be a mad place and sometimes we need to proffer absurd solutions to confront or at least contain situations that are spiralling out of control," Davide says.

He argues that technology, and the social implications of the populist mindset, has necessitated a seismic shift in thinking and the corresponding changes to the structure and organisation of society are inevitable. He says we need to 'take the wisdom of the ages and reapply to the problems of today's world.'

Shriek: an absurd novel is a fictional work about Aleph, an 'idiot savant' confronting a maelstrom of social, political, economic, technological and religious upheaval. The content

and the genre mean that this book is for the lateral thinkers. Conspiracy Theorists, philosophers, academics, and those with an interest in social commentary are likely to enjoy the book.

I'm keen to hear from people who've read *Shriek*. One could put hundreds of interpretations to this book. It's one I can envisage as a catalyst for debate in universities, especially in sociology or political courses.

THE MAN BEHIND THE TAPESTRY THAT IS SHRIEK:

What is it about writing that draws you to the craft?



It's an opportunity to do some genetic engineering by mingling my thoughts (DNA) with those of my audience. Especially when I write in the absurd genre, the end product can very well be something one never intended. That's very exciting. Try reading *Shriek: an absurd novel* and you'll know what I mean.

You've had published or performed 5 novels, several musicals and plays, and two volumes of poetry. Tell us two of your most outstanding experiences/memories.

The musicals and plays which I have written have been performed in Australia and overseas and they comprise my most outstanding experiences and memories by far. With a live audience, the interaction and feedback is immediate. You know if you have achieved your goal of getting your message across

without having to wait for faceless reviewers to determine your success or otherwise.

My latest novel, *Shriek: an absurd novel* where I wrestle with the statement by Salvador Dali is my most challenging. He claims, *Madmen think they are sane, I know I am mad*. As a result, I don't know where I stand. Hence the novel. It could be a trap to tie you to the same dilemma!

Is your greatest love plays, poems or novels?

Poetry is my first great love; it's really heart-to-heart stuff. Plays and especially musicals are my other great love. It's the in-the-raw, face-to-face interaction with a live audience that consumes you whether you are writing it or seeing it performed. My third and greatest love is fiction based on fact. It allows me to create super humans out of mere mortals. Can I have three great loves please?

Your writing career has spanned over fifty years. Summarise for us what you've learned during that time?

I have learned that it often doesn't matter how well you write, it's the chatter that matters. You have to have a pathway for getting your work out there. You have to get people talking about your work and wanting to own it.

What do you see as the characteristics that a writer needs to be successful?

The writer needs to be true to the genre as well as add something different, something new.

How do you choose what you're going to write about?

I listen to the buzz. What people are talking about at any particular time gives me the opportunity to put my views forward. I try to give them a picture of how I think it is, rather than pander to them with what they want to hear. Not always a good strategy and that's why you have to wait a

generation sometimes before the audience is far enough removed to grasp the point which is so often in their face, yet they don't want to acknowledge it.

Give us your take on traditional versus Indie publishing in 2017.

Traditional publishing is dead. Indie publishing is the new reality. It is augmented reality personified.

What is your background and how did you become a writer?

I am a farmer's son. He planted seeds in the soil and hoped they would grow. I plant words and ideas into people's minds and hope they will grow.

One of your novels – [Vietnam: Viet-Bloody-Nam](#) – has been adapted into a play. What was that experience like?

Brilliant and it was so easy. It is a good book with a strong and everlasting message that was easy for the playwright to get across and easy for the audience to grasp.

Which has been your most successful commercial product and why do you think it was popular?

My historical fiction novel [Canecutter](#) has been my most successful commercially. The feedback from the novel made me realise how the power of the phenomenological experience transcends all barriers to understanding, compassion and empathy. There is a social agenda in that book that cuts across all human experiences. The teacher, the lawyer, the doctor, the street-lounger and the bum are all able to walk the walk through the North Queensland sugarcane fields and identify it as their own albeit on another stage.

Carolyn Martinez is an [author](#), [editor and author's coach](#).