

Interview Questions for Anthony Bottagaro

1. Your first two books are nonfiction works. Does this book take you in a totally new direction? Are there any similarities in the three books?
2. Your main character, Mario, the peddler, is a radical of sorts, a revolutionary. Do you identify with him? Do you expect that readers will do so as well?
3. Can you shed some light on your title, *The Poet, The Count, and The Peddler*?
4. Your character, Mario, is an immigrant. Do you feel like your book speaks to the issues related to immigration so prevalent in the news today?
5. You are not only an author but also a speaker who has spoken to audiences with members who have an impact on world opinion. The topics of your talks seem to revolve around love, truth, and liberty. Can you elaborate on the problems related to these traits in today's world? Do you offer solutions?
6. Sicilian history and folklore are interspersed throughout your book. Do you have a special interest in Sicily and its people?
7. How do the imaginative journeys of your main character fit within the narrative? What is their purpose?
8. What do you mean when you say *The Poet, The Count, and The Peddler* is something of a personal tapestry?
9. You speak of a period of self-imposed silence that began at the height of your social activism and worldwide recognition. What brought this on? Why are you now speaking out again, and why have you written this novel now, at this juncture in time?
10. Do you consider Mario's message about the power of unconditional love to be enlightened and motivating or overly simplistic and not one that speaks to today's world?
11. Mario concludes at one point in the book that creating a new order based without unconditional love would be futile because new power brokers always arise to fill the vacuum created when the old order is destroyed. Do you agree with this assumption? If you do, do you feel that attempts to make a difference in our world are foolish and a waste of time and energy?
12. The following quote is central to this book: "Always remember the darkest places in hell are reserved for those who retain their neutrality in times of moral crises."
 - a. Why the statement?

- b. Do you feel each of us has a personal responsibility to attempt to right what is terribly wrong in our world?
13. Mario has been compared to a Don Quixote fighting windmills of his mind. Do you think he is a weak figure handicapped by a strong naiveté and an over-active sense of the dramatic or the embodiment of wisdom who had the courage to face the demons in our society and give up the comfort and security of anonymity because he refused to accept the status quo and determined to fight for good?
14. Mario says unconditional love is “the absolute blueprint of success.” He says it takes one person at a time living every act in the divine to change society and that unconditional love will lead to a spiritual journey of inner peace and ultimate liberty.
 - a. Do you think it is possible for individuals and/or society to achieve and express unconditional love?
 - b. Do you think unconditional love has as much power for change and for good as Mario ascribes to it?
15. Mario begs his listeners not to confuse spirituality and religion. He gives his reasons for feeling religion has failed society but holds high hopes for man’s spiritual nature.
 - a. Do you agree that religion and spirituality are two very different things?
 - b. Does religion drive society?
 - c. Does religion contribute to war or peace?
 - d. Do you think that if religious leaders express more of their spiritual nature, religion has the opportunity to succeed in its higher mission to humankind?