Jeremy O’Carroll Bio

Jeremy O’Carroll can still remember with clarity the moment he decided to become a writer. He was 18, studying Italian in Perugia (Italy), lying on his back in a dingy rented room and reading The Magician by Raymond E. Feist.

He was a little homesick, lonely – and in the perfect state to enjoy the fantasy world Feist had created.

With little else to do after class each day, he read first one, then another and then another of Feist’s books, until all of a sudden it came to him. He, too, should write!

Creating fictional worlds, helping people overcome homesickness and loneliness – these were good things.

It would be about nine years before Jeremy actually started to write, however. In that time he studied literature and philosophy at the University of Melbourne and did what he believed would prepare him for a writing career. He excelled in academia, won many awards (including a prestigious Australian Postgraduate Award scholarship), tutored, lectured and read as much as he could.

He did everything to fuel his long-term vision of writing, it’s just that academia – so it turned out – wasn’t the most fertile bed for creativity. What’s more, it was one thing to write about writers, and write about what critics wrote about writers, and write about what critics wrote about critics of writers – another thing to actually do some creative writing!

In fact, very little of anything Jeremy learned helped him to create, plot and write a gripping novel. On the contrary, he was so conditioned by university to thinking and writing in a certain style that the first draft of his first novel (Full Speed) bored even him to death.

Having undergone the excruciating task of reading his first draft from beginning to end, Jeremy set about educating himself in the art of writing. This process took a long time and many hundreds of thousands of words of practice, but bit by bit, draft by draft, Jeremy got the hang of plotting and pacing and characterization and the like, until ultimately he produced a profound, philosophical novel that was also a page-turner.

**The Om Reiki Centre**

One of the challenges Jeremy faced when writing his novel was how best to juggle his work and family with writing.

This wasn’t much of a problem in the early years of the novel when he single and able to roam freely in his old camper van, live off $100 a week and write as much as he pleased; but the moment he started going out with Hsiu-lung Tai, his ex long-term Taiwanese girlfriend, things changed.

Not long after getting together, their daughter Om was conceived, and not before she was born, Hsiu-lung’s son from a previous relationship, moved to Australia to be with them.

This meant that Jeremy went from being single and free, to having a de fact wife and two kids to look after in the space of a year.

Instead of rushing to get an office job, however, Jeremy started his own business, the Om Reiki Centre, and within a couple of years this become one of Victoria’s major Reiki centres. Soon Jeremy was so busy healing and training students to work with energy and meditate that it became hard to find time to write.

Since Hsiu-lung did not yet have a work visa and her English was limited, Jeremy needed to do all the earning – something that put extra pressure on him to bring home the vegetarian pasta sauce (no dead pigs in Jeremy’s house).

Jeremy wrote where he could, however, and bit by bit Full Speed took shape and, even though most of his friends believed it would never be finished, he finally got it done towards the middle of 2012 – roughly nine years after first beginning it!

**Interesting Facts**

* While never a prodigy like Sebastian (protagonist of Full Speed), Jeremy did play for Australia in the World Junior Chess Championships in Duisburg, Germany (1992).
* Jeremy held the Melbourne Grammar School Year 9 record for the Tan cross-country race for many years and for much of his life prioritized sport (Australian football, cricket, tennis, athletics etc.) above all else.
* Jeremy O’Carroll’s parents founded the hugely successful Fitzroy Community School in Victoria, Australia. Jeremy went there for his primary education before moving on to the much more formal Melbourne Grammar School.

**Writing Influences**

The two strongest influences on Jeremy’s writing career have been Ivan Turgenev (the famous Russian novelist), and Andrea De Carlo, a contemporary Italian writer. Jeremy was doing his PhD on De Carlo before he abandoned it to travel the world and write (no fault of De Carlo’s work!).