**Feedbooks Interview**

**BIO:**

Lee is an online writer who was born in New York and educated in the United States, France, and Germany. She spent eighteen years living and working in Zimbabwe, where her five children were also born. Now she lives in the hills above the Rhine near Cologne, Germany. When she’s not busy trying to restrain her dog Gypsy, a border-collie mix, from herding the local cows, horses, and vociferous crows, she can be found at her desk with her router disconnected while she writes.

**Hello Lee, you were one of the first author to self-publish on Feedbooks and *Mortal Ghost* was downloaded over 10.000 times. How did you discovered the service and how does it fit in your distribution/marketing strategy ?**

I can't remember how I first learned of Feedbooks, and now it feels as if the service has always been available—a bit like Google, you can no longer imagine a world without it! It must have been one of those website lists of e-book sources, possibly from Lifehacker, which I studied when I first began to publish online.

My distribution/marketing strategy is, sadly, very haphazard, though I do try to list my work with all the e-book and podcasting sites. There are online writers who spend a fair amount of energy promoting their work, often in quite innovative ways, but aside from the occasional email and/or comment at relevant blogs/websites, I tend to do less and less of this sort of thing, because it's time stolen from writing and reading, time I can ill afford. There is so much I want to learn, so much I want to read, so much I want to try! And I've withdrawn from all social websites and communities, because they're unhelpful, providing me with few readers and generally worthless criticism. In any case, I measure success against the very best writing, not in terms of numbers or sales. Readers will have to look after themselves.

**Why do you self-publish? Have you ever considered conventional publication?**

Despite its stigma, self-publishing has respectable and even venerable antecedents—Marcel Proust, for example—though undoubtedly a much larger number of truly deplorable ones.

Publishing is essentially a means to an end: a technology for distributing a writer's words to readers. Once this was only practicable via a printing press. Obviously, this is no longer the case. Writers are now able to take charge of their own work, a thoroughly enabling process once they relinquish their prejudices and refuse to play the 'insider game', yearning to become one of the elect, one of the chosen; anointed by publisher's ink. This places the burden of responsibility for writing well precisely where it belongs: on the writers themselves.

This doesn't mean that I would refuse to publish my work conventionally, though I don't actively seek to do so. After all, I still buy and collect, read and cherish printed books. However, I'm a fervent advocate of 'open culture'—perhaps because of my many years in Zimbabwe—and would always insist on free online and electronic access to my fiction.

**You distribute serialized fiction on your blog, weekly podcasts and complete versions of your books on Feedbooks. Do you think that they appeal to different kind of readers ?**

It's something of a truism that blogged fiction needs to be short and punchy—plot-driven—to hold online readers, but it's very difficult for me to judge just how far this is true. In general, I suspect that the slower readers, the ones likely to linger over a sentence or paragraph, tend to prefer a complete version, though the large number of *Mortal Ghost* downloads may also be due to other factors. And how far do downloads translate into readers? Any feedback is so anecdotal that I'm really unable to evaluate the type(s) of readers I have. Nor do I have any idea if those who listen to the podcasts, which are very popular, also download the texts or (re)read online as well.

**Is the serialization simply a good way to distribute your book or do you gather feedback from it ?**

Minimal feedback. Community destroys the imagination, which is always solitary.

Then why do I like serialisation? For all the usual reasons relating to tension and anticipation, plus it gives me a chance to revise over a long period of time.

**For how long have you been working on *Corvus* ? Did you finished writing the full novel before the serialisation started ?**

Four years—I'm a plodder, an obsessed plodder, but a plodder nevertheless! I finished the full novel before serialisation began, because I wouldn't be able to sleep at night otherwise. The revisions I make afterwards tend to be rather minor, though on occasion I've added a sentence or two, chosen a more effective phrase, deleted something which no longer seems to work. Looking back at earlier writing can be painful, and there are times when I'm tempted to rewrite *Mortal Ghost*, say, from the ground up. But then I'd never move on to new work.

**What are you working on now?**

At the moment I'm writing short stories, a form I love but neglected while working on *Corvus*. It will take me a while to decide where I'd like to go with my next novel, particularly since it will likely be another long-term commitment, at least three or four years of hard work. Writing is never easy for me, and the more technical skill I acquire, the harder it becomes.

When I have eight or ten short stories ready for publication, I plan to publish them in a single e-book edition via Feedbooks.

**For both *Mortal Ghost* and *Corvus,* you found a different voice for the weekly podcast. How does an author find the right person for an audiobook edition?**

In both cases I've been very lucky to find such committed narrators, who earn nothing from the hours and hours of work. In my case I found them through a mutual online acquaintance, a blogger playwright/publisher interested in my fiction. One suggestion I have for others writers who don't care to read their own podcasts is to approach student actors, who are often happy for the experience and exposure. The drama schools and university theatre departments may be the first places to try.

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