



There is some info about how the book came about on your website, but it would be great if you could give us here an idea of the circumstances that led you to write the novel. You were commissioned by the NZ Arts Council to write your album "How The Dead Live" about a pioneer community, and sent to Karamea to work on it, is that right? When did you realise that in addition to the album, you would write a book about it?

It came about in a sort of accidental or maybe "serendipitous" way. I'd come back to New Zealand after several months in Germany before the commission came about. Without going into the detail, it was one of those experiences that shakes the foundations of how you think the world works, and who you think you are. I came back with pieces of my own story, and the stories of others in my head not knowing how they fit together. There was a strong feeling of having to go back to the place I had been raised to find an anchor for it.

The west coast is one of those places where time stands still, and all the time I had been in Germany had been the opposite feeling – that time was not working as it should; that it was fractured somehow. On the coast, you have these epoch-spanning processes by which mountains rise up from the sea, and forests form and evolve. You can sense the weight of it. Your own sense of time becomes subsumed into it and kind of slows. That feeling gave me the peace I needed to piece a lot of things together – both my own story and the stories of the people I had been sent there to gather. It gave me a sort of distance whilst enabling me to reconnect with who I was and what I was there for.

Being there to hunt down the tales of the people who had come there under far more difficult circumstances than my own gave me a perspective on things. It taught me a lot about what it means to get on with things, even when it

feels like it's impossible to do so. I'd been sent to write an album, and songs are simple, short, confined things. They were tasks I could manage. The thing was, there was so much more to the history of the coast than what I ended up choosing for the album. It was rich with tales that had never been voiced. It seemed a shame to let them go unspoken, so they wove their way into what I was writing for myself at the time. Eventually, they took on a life of their own, guiding me into a story that seemed to tell itself.

Did you have a precise idea of what you wanted to achieve with the novel/the kind of story you wished to tell?

Actually, no – not when I started it, though it did become clear once I'd found the anchor point. The book actually took me 6 years to write because a lot of what it is about, I eventually realised, is the ways we make sense of time and our own place in it. It's about how we narrate both ourselves and our broader history, and the process of selecting what we think are important or pivotal events within that.

The main character – Lethe – is a gravedigger in the employ of History. She is very aware of the form that facts must be presented in, but has trouble finding the facts she needs. The dragon is a contrast to that: It has all the facts, but has difficulty putting them in order because it is unfamiliar with the linear way that human beings string things together. It doesn't know what constitutes a "beginning thing" and what constitutes an ending or a middle. It has no sense of cause and effect because not all of the things that occur to us have obvious or tangible causes. It is confused by how humans hone in on things that they believe to be causal, and make a tale out of them. The dragon is naive, whereas Lethe has the cynicism, for better or worse, to know what people are inclined to think are significant events and significant causes, so she hunts them out because her livelihood depends on it.

Even though the book is a novel, there are quite a few parallels with your own life in there. The character looks like you, is a musician, returns to the isolated area of her childhood on commission, leaves for Germany... Was it important for you to base the fiction in reality and incorporate elements of your own life?

Eventually basing it on some of the things that were going on in my own life became necessary, though I have to admit I wasn't comfortable giving so much away. Most of my music projects focus on the tales of other people, and I try, as much as I am capable, to put myself in their shoes and sing from their standpoint, as far as I can understand it. There is always the temporal disjunction and the fact that my own culture shapes what I will understand and articulate about their situation. A novel is a far longer project than an album. Because the book delves into the history of many people, it needed an anchor point. I didn't want that anchor point to be myself, but it was the thing that worked best – I also needed a disclaimer really, because of how the tales were gathered and what was going on in my own head at the time. It's a mix of fact and folklore; oral history and the chunks of information that have survived through time to stick in the museum.

The easiest anchor point to find – and the one I needed to find at the time – was my centrality in the project at hand. In a way, it was like writing into the book that there is a perspective, and one that is coloured by one's place in time, one's prior associations with the subject matter, and what is going on in one's head at the time. Objectivity is an illusion but one which we aspire to when dealing with history. I was well aware that objectivity was completely out of my grasp at the time and that all the subjectivity in the book was coming from my own character. Anchoring the story in the very clearly flawed perspective of a person too close to the sources seemed a more honest way to disclose things. It allowed the facts and folklore to come together in a way that could breathe and seem natural, because in a way, it is natural that we taint things, and the same person tainting them will have at least some consistency to it. So long as we remain aware that we are tainting facts – even by the sheer process of choosing one set of events over another when given the task of retelling – we are being honest. It's when we believe that we have achieved objectivity that we are most likely to be fooling ourselves. Lethe, the gravedigger, has a very subjective perspective, because my own was at the time. The best way to explain her lack of objectivity ends up being explaining my own.

I love the character of "History", which you show as wearing Victorian Gothic garb and being the manager of some kind of rigid corporate administrative department. She also appears in your video for the song "The Proximity of Death" (one of my personal favourites!). How did you get the idea for that character? I think it's a really original idea.

Thank you! I'm not sure how original it is, but I enjoyed writing her character. It's a fairly well-known idea that history is written by those that come out on top after any set of chaotic events. History itself is coloured; the character "History" is restricted in her actions by her need to report to shareholders – that is, the people who hold the purse strings and who are responsible for her having the position she has.

She is someone who seems ultimately powerful because she is someone who can render you forgotten or remembered with the sweep of a pen. But her power is tethered. Facts do not speak for themselves, we speak for them. Which facts we voice and the facts we remain silent about are influenced by many things – the political climate of the time, our ability to even *find* "facts", and the structure of narrative itself. History has a difficult time. She has a sea of information to wade through and make sense of. She is expected to *make* sense out of that which may or may not be sensible because that is how humans want information presented. She is also expected, by the powers that be, to make a kind of sense that fits with an agenda.

Making "History" a character was also a way of indicating that history has always been coloured by the value set of those reporting it. Again, it points to the impossibility of objectivity, but at a higher level, at the level of authority. It's easy enough to believe that everyday people are flawed in their ability to report facts, but it proliferates both upwards and downwards. Just because someone is in a position of power and authority does not exempt them from subjectivity. All human beings are motivated by a plurality of forces. What those forces are may differ at the top and bottom of the food chain, but there are always forces present to sway what we do, say and report.

The character of the scientist also appears in one of your videos ("The Arsonist"). The sections about the scientist and his mad household inhabited by clever mice almost read like a separate story for most of the book. It is definitively bonkers. What gave you the idea of including those chapters?

The scientist has managed to isolate himself utterly by attempting to be an observer and not a participant in terms of the world around him. He seems separate because of that choice, and he occupies that space just outside society that is usually reserved for those we label "mad". In a way, he is there to

represent madness. The thing about the scientist is that he is mad because he is under the illusion he can be objective. Lethe risks falling into his world when she too forgets to participate in the world around her. The scientist has a huge sense of superiority because of the field he operates in. Science is something we often elevate to a position of infallibility. The scientist's world is dangerous, because his belief that he cannot be wrong leads him to ignore things he should not.

So yes, the scientist reads like a fictive character, in contrast to the historical aspect of the book and the careful (but flawed) way the gravedigger is gathering stories. His objectivity is the fiction, though. That, combined with his arrogance about his abilities, risks impacting the world that goes beyond his own tale. It risks impacting Lethe's own understanding of herself and her story because the tools he uses to understand the world around him are ones he sees as the *only* way of procuring understanding. Science is, of course, an incredibly useful tool, and it leads us to a far deeper understanding of certain phenomena than we would ever otherwise have. But it is also only a tool. You don't use a spade to bang in a nail. The scientist wants to apply his spade to all tasks, and because of that, he risks missing things that have a value and meaning only discernable if one is aware that a spade is not the applicable tool for the task at hand.

There are a lot of things I like about the book, and one of them is the fact that it is very accessible; no pretentious prose here, but at the same time, it is quite ambitious in terms of meaning, it is very deep and at times very poetic. The book is full of philosophical insight, there are some great passages in there, reflections about the human condition, doubts, hopes... You studied philosophy at university, didn't you? What attracted you to philosophy and do you think it still has a place/relevance nowadays in our dumbed-down society?

I did study philosophy, yes, at Auckland University in New Zealand. What attracted me to it was that it allowed you to look for meaning simply by asking. You didn't need equipment or gadgetry to inquire about why things are as they are. You just needed to be able to ask, and look at the structure of the answers that came back. It allows you to search for meaning in any area you care to. It also alerts you to the fact there may be no answers, but that that in itself is often useful. Knowing the emperor is not wearing any clothes is an old adage, but as that adage goes, when everyone around is proclaiming he is clothed, and

requiring certain behaviours from you because of that, it can be very refreshing to know you aren't in the wrong for saying "this is bullshit".

It might be my bias to the subject but I think philosophy is utterly vital, and even more so in a society where values are being pushed upon us from so many directions without giving us the time or space to gravitate towards our own. Philosophy is about questioning where ideas come from. It's about looking for what is behind the things you think you know. It's about coming closer to discerning what is potentially bullshit and what might have some validity, and why.

One of the most dangerous sentences in the human vocabulary is "we do it like this because it has always been done like this". It reads like the answer to a question but it has no information in it. That sentence does not ask why a behaviour arose in the first place. It is a sentence that has perpetuated race hate, gender hate, homophobia and all manner of restrictive and damaging practices. Philosophy can be as simple as asking "why have we always done this?" instead of accepting the sentence as some kind of answer. If people ask questions, then things that aren't working can change. If we don't ask questions, we are trapped. What we call "dumbing-down" looks to me like the process of squelching questions, of telling us to accept certain things as answers. Philosophy is even more vital than ever when that kind of process is going on.

At your gigs, you often joke that you have quite dark thoughts and think about death a lot, etc. but you also project a very chatty, sociable, rational persona interested in technology and science. Remembering The Dead is about, well, the dead, and them coming back to tell their story and haunting the living. One silly question: do you actually believe in supernatural phenomenon, life after death, etc? And, related to this, do you think that if you find yourself in an isolated rural area with a lot of history, folk tales and legends, even the most rational mind can get influenced by nature/isolation?

Personally, I don't believe in supernatural phenomena as such, no. I don't believe in ghosts or in zombies that walk the forests at night, desperate to tell their tales to the living. My father was a scientist, and my first qualification was as a software engineer. It means I grew up in an environment that favoured very logical, empirical arguments.

What I do believe in is that there are many ways of procuring meaning from the world around us. There is no one tool that will give us all the answers in an utterly objective way. What I believe in is the power of how we string facts together, and the power we have to use symbolism to facilitate ways of seeing. There are an infinite number of ways to shape a fish hook. If the pond we throw our fish hooks into is all the things there are to know or see or experience, it is useful to realise that each fish hook will pull out a different kind of thing. There is no single fish hook that will pull out everything there is in that pond. For a start it will only pull out fish, when there is plenty more on offer than just that. Science and rationalism are incredibly useful tools, invaluable even. But they are not the only hooks to throw into a pond.

In terms of life after death – I suspend my disbelief. I am a product of my culture, upbringing and heritage as much as anyone else, and my atheism is part of that. I don't believe I have any kind of window on the truth though, just because my culture is one that says we do, by virtue of preferring certain kinds of hooks. I also don't imagine that anything that happens after death is the sort of thing I could fathom. The way we see the pond is limited by the hooks at our disposal. I will find out when I get there, or not. In the meantime, and for my own purposes, it helps to live my life like it is the only one I will get. Doing so helps me decide what is important because the idea of death limits the things I am able to do and experience, so I have to narrow it down to what I find important. That fact helps me become aware of what I value.

To answer the second part – whether I think the most rational mind can be influenced by isolation – we would be failing to recognise our connectedness to our own contexts if we thought we would be/ behave/ feel the same in all environments and social settings. We are human beings. Our environment will always affect what we see or are capable of seeing. We like to think that rationality gives us a window to simple, discrete truths, but that idea is actually dangerous because it ignores the way human beings select and string facts together, and the colour that is added when we do so. It ignores the things that drive us to seek certain kinds of facts in the first place, and the pre-existing interest that is shaped by the environment and cultures of which we are a part.

None of us are isolated, discrete entities. We are bound to our environments, to societies, and the processes that are part of that. Wherever you are, there will be things that influence you because you can't switch off being affected. You can't decouple yourself from the world even by trying to only observe it. If all that surrounds you is mountains, and the roar of the surf, those things become influential.

I loathe reading books with stereotypical characters, put in to please the reader/publisher. I like the fact that Lethe is not defined by her gender but by who she is and what she does, and I have to say the relationship she has with Marko rings so true to me, two intelligent, curious people learning to know each other, their doubts, etc. This was really well written, sober and touching at the same time... Did you think it was important to include a "love story" in the book?

Well described too is the way the language barrier can be so infuriating to break when you are desperate to make yourself understood by someone you love... You moved to Germany in 2005 from NZ, was it a very big culture shock?

I would have preferred NOT to include a love story to be honest, but it was the catalyst that led me into writing, and leaving it out would have made Lethe's somewhat shattered state much more difficult to understand. This was my first novel, so coming up with things that are totally outside my own experience and making them convincing is probably not a skill I have developed enough to do it confidently.

I moved to Germany in 2003, which only lasted 4 months. I returned to New Zealand to recover, finish my degree and look after my mum who had been diagnosed with cancer at the time. I returned to Germany again in 2005 for good. And both times, yes, culture shock. When you are communicating in a second language, you are robbed of yourself until you learn enough words to articulate what you think feel and believe. You become what you know as "the amusing foreigner", and it's hard to break out of being seen as that until you get further with the language you are learning.

In terms of value sets, some culture shock too. There is an inclination in Germany to do things because they have always been done that way. It's the weight of habit and history that we don't have in New Zealand because it's a colony. Most people went there to look for different ways of doing things as they weren't happy with the way things were done in their home countries. I found that propensity difficult. At the same time, I did like some of the things that were connected to that – festivals and rituals. Old symbols that had centuries of story behind them and buildings that had tales longer than the history of even our indigenous people.

Every culture has things that you will rail against and things that are comfortable for you. Germany was a different mix of that than New Zealand. Different but no better or worse. What I enjoyed a lot, once I was able to speak

the language properly, was the fact that meaning cleaves differently just by virtue of the words at your disposal. It reveals things you may not have seen before just by the nature of its structure. To this day, I find I am a slightly different character in German than I am in English. There are things I can say in one language that aren't even on offer in the other, but there is also a directness to German that would be deemed impolite in English, for example. I can say what I think more easily because the language and culture allows it. On the flipside, it means people can be what I see as offensive, coming from an English-speaking background, but that is the other side of the same coin.

I guess the move from Germany to the UK was not as big a jump, or was it?

It was and it wasn't! Culturally, the UK is a lot closer to New Zealand, and obviously the language barrier didn't exist. What was difficult was that the cost of living in the UK is a lot higher. As a musician, it had been relatively comfortable surviving from music alone in Germany. In the UK, it's been tumultuous.

The hardest thing I have ever done has been to try and continue with music in the UK because the overheads are so much higher. The standard of living too, in Germany, was a lot higher than the UK, but a lot of people in the UK itself don't like hearing that. It felt like giving up a lot in terms of comfort, ease, and security moving here. For that, the British are a LOT more accepting of different ways of life. Being a musician in Germany is often looked down on. Here that is less often the case. There is a lot more acceptance for eccentricity in the UK and I really value that.

Could you tell us a bit more about the actual writing process? I think it took you a long time to actually finish off the book. Did you set yourself specific times/days to write? Did you plan the novel in advance or let it come to you as you were writing? Did you have several drafts?

I learned a lot about structure writing *Remembering the Dead*. In a sense, the character closest to my own is the dragon because it had to get its head around structure but had no intuition for it. It's actually really difficult to write a book that is about the unreliability of structure, with characters who are living in

spaces outside of it, which is why it took so long. I needed to let the structure emerge because that was what the book itself was about.

Draft one was once that structure had become clear. I walked away from the book for 6 months after that, so I could forget what had gone on behind the scenes. Then I could read it again and see if the structure worked without killing the points about structure sometimes being an illusion. Draft two was strengthening that to make it easier on the reader really, because as the characters in the book depict, total lack of structure is a very uncomfortable existence, sometimes. At the end of the day, it is still fiction, so I wanted it to be readable as such and interesting enough to make the facts and philosophy in it interesting.

For the book I am working on now, I have actually started with structure. It's planned and paced in advance, though partly because the characters in this one are all about form and function. They don't allow anything to be unmonitored.

For the book, you followed the same DIY/independent path as for your music, i.e you did everything yourself and self-published. Could you let us know how things worked for you once you had finished the manuscript? Is there anything you'd do differently?

There is an interesting contrast between the music world, which I have been part of for over 15 years now, and the publishing world. Indie music has celebrated indie releases for probably a decade. Most people are aware that record companies will often produce uninteresting, non-innovative material because they play it safe in terms of markets. Of course, publishing houses do the same, but in the music world, so many of us have been releasing our own material for so long that no one thinks twice about it. Labels have become a tad pointless even, as the middle level ones can't do much more in terms of marketing that you can do yourself via social networking, podcasts and online magazine connections.

In the book world, it was surprising to me that self-published work is still not as accepted as what we call "indie releases" in music. There are so many great indie books out there, that publishing houses won't touch because it looks like a risk. As with music, a risk is just something that doesn't look like a pre-existing idea that sold well last time. Indie publishing is the key way for new ideas in all art forms to come out. If people like things, they spread the word at a

grass roots level, by word of mouth. It's bottom up rather than top down. Top down marketing is stuff being pushed on you from above, by the sheer force of what money can buy in terms of advertising. It won't always be pushing good things on you, but people are still attached to the idea that publishing houses pick up on all that is "good" or "worthwhile". The simple fact is, they don't. Just like record companies, they miss interesting things that people actually might like. I'm looking forward to the publishing world catching up with the music world.

Did you actually try to submit the novel to an agent? Did it cross your mind at all, and if yes/no, why/why not? What would you say to a publisher/agent interested in your work?

I did have offers from two publishers on the book. They were both small publishing houses, who I had a lot of respect for. Sadly, as with small labels, they didn't have the resources to market the book much more than I would have on my own, and of course, releasing it through a small publisher you lose a lot of the potential income. As with music, you make such a small margin on sales that it wasn't worth it to go with those publishers.

I'm not sure what I would say if an agent approached me. I would probably be grateful as I have no contacts or connections in publishing because it's not my field, really. I'm so busy with music that making those connections isn't something I manage to find time for. Agents know who does what, so as long as they were an honest character with good networks, I would certainly engage with them. At the end of the day though, the most important thing is having your work pushed by someone who understands and believes in what you are doing. That would be the key ingredient for me.

How would you compare the creative processes you go through when writing your music and writing your novels?

They are such different animals. I'm not really sure where to start. What I do know is that the buzz you get when you come up with something that you like, and that does what you want it to do is just as exhilarating in both mediums for me. An author friend of mine once said "you can hide a multitude of sins in a song", and I think to some extent he was right. With prose, I pay a lot more attention to each word, and there are a stack more words!

That said, I will choose my words for similar reasons as I do with music. Depending on the sentence, rhythm may be the most important factor – meaning is always important to me, but if I have several possibilities, and you generally do in English, I will select based on rhythm, or connotation, or sound just as much as I do in a song. What I don't have at my disposal in prose is melody or harmony, and those are valuable tools for evoking an emotional response. That means I really have to focus on how to do that with language alone.

You are a performer, and you have recorded an audio of the book. Any chance of you doing a reading one day? Is it frustrating to have written something but not to be able/have the opportunity to perform it in any way?

I actually have done live readings from the book in online libraries and cafés. I do a lot of cyber performance, as well as my European tours, as a musician. One of the places I play regularly is a virtual reality called "Second Life". They have venues, art galleries, universities and all manner of places to perform, so yes, I have "performed" the book, if you can call it that. I wouldn't miss NOT doing so though, as I am very nervous about my speaking voice. I can manage because of all the training of being on stage as a musician, but with writing, I don't feel the need to perform. In fact, part of what I love about writing is that it gives you far more of a private sphere than music does. I'm an introvert and whilst I do love performing, even when you aren't performing, you are still, in a sense, doing a performance. Posting on facebook, twitter, etc.

I don't have the luxury of always being able to say exactly what I think because I am aware of a certain amount of responsibility that comes with people watching what you are saying. If left to my own devices, I would probably not engage with social media at all as I really do need a lot of quiet time to generate ideas. Writing is far richer in terms of quiet time. When I do retire as a musician, I look forward to being able to reconnect to that quiet.

Your latest full album, the fascinating *The Annihilation Sequence*, is set in London and tells stories of alienation at the heart of the metropolis. It is an intriguing, very cinematic world. Any plans on writing a novel set in London in that very same world you describe on the album? I for one would love to read it!

At the moment, no plans on that one, probably because I am still living in London and don't have the emotional distance to be able to pick out what would make a good story. I am working on a novel set in Hamburg at the moment though, and probably because I am no longer living there, I finally feel confident to make something of the experience in novel form.

Now on to your current work! On Wednesday 14th May, you are releasing [CRONE], the first EP in a trilogy called "Maiden, Mother, [CRONE]". In this trio of releases, you wish to tackle a character that actually appears in Remembering The Dead, "The Old Woman". Could you please talk us through the ideas behind the project?

The "Crone" EP is the first release in the trilogy. I wanted it to have a certain pagan/ancient quality to it so I decided to make it entirely out of vocal loops and tribal drum sounds. I started with the crone character because she seems the most interesting to me. She is simultaneously the most free and the most marginalised. Calling her "the old woman" is deliberately unimaginative as a name because it is meant to show how we lump all "off the radar" people into one generic category, without giving them the chance to become a specific self. In this case, reflecting how we treat the elderly in society, and even just those too old to register on the radar of "attractive" in a society obsessed with beauty and youth.

"The Old Woman" does actually have a very distinct character, of course and she was one of my favourites to write in Remembering the Dead. She is political because she can be. In contrast to old mythologies though, where the old are deemed wise, in today's society the old are often made invisible. Partly *because* of that, the Old Woman feels free to speak her mind. Sometimes speaking her mind gets her attention. Sometimes it results in further marginalisation. She is also somewhat angry: angry that she feels she has as much life in her as she ever had, but that her own face and body betray her – by inviting opinions to the contrary from others.

In terms of the trilogy as a whole, the themes of assessment, moral judgement, and body alteration have all been magnets for me in choosing which songs go on which EP. Some of the songs are even sung as a male protagonist, which I do fairly often when I dig up the tales of men.

In the trilogy, those songs are about that male character's view on the central female character/archetype and what she means/represents to him. Others are sung from the protagonist's perspective themselves, or other women reflecting (with various degrees of insight, or lack thereof) on their own situation in regards to their life stage. For the crone album though, I enjoyed her character so much they are all from her perspective.

You are very involved with technology – you work with loop machines, mix folk and industrial sounds and melodies, perform online to various web communities, The Annihilation Sequence was much more electronic orientated, etc.

But if one considers the content of your music and your novel, the stories behind them, the characters they depict, even the look of your videos, you are very much in love with the old, the past, history, the analogue, and most importantly human emotion and experience. Are you not worried about technology one day erasing our past, erasing our humanity, our thinking processes, imagination and creativity? Or do you think we have been gifted the tools that will free us from our day job, the influence of corporations, etc.? There is also much talk about online technology robbing musicians of their livelihood...

I don't think the technology is what robs people of their livelihood. Technology is only ever a tool and it is humans who chose how to use it. You can use a hammer to build a house, or to injure someone, but the choice between those options is yours. It's not like technology is an atom bomb for musicians because we have been perfectly capable of starving to death since the dawn of time!

For me, technology has actually been a massive enabler. People from all over the planet can and do listen to my music and that would never have been possible before. I also play to people all around the globe, also something that would not be possible if I had to do it terrestrially. I can manage touring Europe each year but that has taken years to achieve. Playing online, you have international audiences immediately.

The real issue, I think, is awareness. For all the communication technology allows, many people don't get the connection between supporting indie music (by buying albums, and tipping at online performances) and the fact that that support

has a direct and immediate impact on that musician's ability to continue doing what they do.

I don't have anything against people pirating my music to see if they like it. If they really truly like it though, and they continue only to pirate all of what I do, and never tip at shows, there will come a time I can no longer sustain producing that music they like. Musicians spend hours preparing for shows, even online, and put a huge amount of energy into making sure people have fun, and get a good show and sound.

We also live pretty much hand to mouth, if we are indie musos. I'm not the only musician out there who is constantly negotiating the fine line between survival and disaster. I have been homeless twice because of being unable to perform for periods of time, or low sales, or touring risks not paying off. Technology makes it possible for musicians to get music out there, and it makes it possible for listeners to find things they like that they otherwise would not have found.

The missing link is the awareness that the 4 quid you spend on an artist's digital EP makes a world of difference. I have actually had to stop performing on certain platforms online before as the crowds there don't make this connection. Web cam shows, for example, take up about 3 hours of time in total to advertise, prep, light, and perform. Many people go there, enjoy themselves a lot, but don't consider that for full-time musicians, performance and sales are the only way we can pay rent. Those 3 hours have to generate some income or we simply can't put in the time.

Fortunately there are communities online where they really do, heart and soul, get what goes on behind the scenes. I am very lucky to have some true supporters, who make my music possible.

I think you have managed to ditch the day job to work full-time on your projects. What kind of advice would you have for people who would like to follow in your footsteps?

God. Really, I would probably just say "don't". If I had known how hard this would be, I would probably not have done it, but I'm a terribly stubborn person, and I also happen to be very bad at 9 to 5. It sucks my will to live, so I have to pay the price for not doing 9 –5. There are months on end where the stress of your financial situation makes it very hard to concentrate on writing, and you are often chasing the smallest scraps of cash just to survive. It's kind of like

bailing water out of a sinking ship, and trying to find the time to build another ship while you are doing it. As I say, things have fallen apart badly on two occasions since I went full-time 5 years ago. I knew the potential for that when I started, though.

In terms of practical advice, I would say to choose a place to live with low overheads so that when things do get tough you have a buffer. In the UK, there really isn't anywhere where those overheads are actually low enough to make it easy in any sense, unless you want to live someplace like Bolton and I would never recommend that! In Germany and Poland, it is much easier because rents are controlled, and if it comes to that, I will head back there, but I'm hoping not to have to.

The reason for going full-time is so that I do have the time to try and build things and take it to a level where that discomfort is not so ever present. The catch 22 is that you need a great deal of time to do non-musical things in order to get things to a better level in terms of career. I spend 4 hours a day doing emails and admin, and that is usually 7 days a week. I'm a soloist which makes it harder, so advice there would be: if you are in a band, delegate. As a soloist, you do your own videos, photos, press, website, blog, recordings, mixing, artwork, newsletter, posters, booking, scouting for shows, scouting for radio play, social media. It's a 10 hour day if you are lucky, and 18 when you're on deadline for anything.

If there is anything you are as passionate about as music, do that instead, but if it is your passion, respect. One thing never to forget is that your listeners are also your support. Always treat them well and with the respect they deserve for being open to new music and for caring enough about the arts to make it happen.

Finally, could you let us know about future projects beyond the trilogy, and give us some live event dates? (Will you be performing with The Eden House at Alt-Fest? I'll be there!)

The next two EPs from the trilogy will come out in August (just before Alt Fest) and November. There will also be an audio book release of Remembering the Dead in June/July.

I'm working on a novel for next year called "The Money Tree" which is set in Germany. The protagonist is a Polish national, desperate to withdraw from a society that has forced a certain kind of identity on him by virtue of his nationality

and background. He is obsessed with a tree that starts pushing through the walls of his room once a mysterious visitor arrives proclaiming to be his brother. Again, it deals with themes of identity and isolation, and the influence history/culture has on who we are allowed to be.

In terms of events, there is the official EP launch party on May 23rd at the Garage in Highbury Islington in London. We are starting at midnight as Nine Inch Nails are playing that night and we want people to be able to get to both as it's a gig and party, with industrial music after the show. *[See also the list of dates underneath the interview].*

And finally: What are your (literary or otherwise) influences? What are you reading at the moment?

Musical: Laurie Anderson, Imogen Heap, Killing Joke, Ministry, 16 Horsepower/Wovenhand, Steeleye Span, Nine Inch Nails, Fever Ray, Sigur Rós, Bob Dylan...

Literary: The authors that have had a huge impact on me have been Keri Hulme, Phillip Pullman, Louis de Bernières, Ursula Le Guin, Alice Sebold, Albert Camus, Diana Wynne Jones, and Elizabeth Knox.

Right now I am reading "Der Richter und sein Henker" by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, though it's just as much to keep my German fresh as it is to try and get through some of the classics. Strangely I read a lot more non-fiction than fiction at the moment and am concentrating on Polish books for kids to try and get better at the language. I'm also reading a tech manual on mixing tips for the home studio by Mike Senior, which I think is the most useful book on mixing I have ever read. I've been reading it for a year, because I keep going back to the pertinent parts each time I have to record and mix!