

The 7 Question Interview with Chaz Brenchley/Daniel Fox



Chaz Brenchley has been making a living as a writer since he was eighteen. He is the author of nine thrillers, most recently *Shelter*, and two major fantasy series: *The Books of Outremer*, based on the world of the Crusades, and *Selling Water by the River*, set in an alternate Ottoman Istanbul. A winner of the British Fantasy Award, he has also published three books for children and more than 500 short stories in various genres. His time as Crimewriter-in-Residence at the St Peter's Riverside Sculpture Project in Sunderland resulted in the collection *Blood Waters*. He is a prizewinning ex-poet, and has been writer in residence at the University of Northumbria, as well as tutoring their MA in Creative Writing. His novel *Dead of Light* is currently in development with an independent film company; *Shelter* has been optioned by Granada TV. He was Northern Writer of the Year 2000, and lives in Newcastle upon Tyne with a quantum cat and a famous teddy bear.

Daniel Fox is a British writer who first went to Taiwan at the millennium and became obsessed, to the point of learning Mandarin and writing about the country in three different genres. (Read what Daniel Fox told *Sci-Fi Wire* about Taiwan; and more on this subject in John Scalzi's *Whatever*). Before this he had published a couple of dozen books and many hundreds of short stories, under a clutch of other names. He has also written poetry and plays. Some of this work has won awards.

Some of his novels are:

Chaz Brenchley

- Dispossession
- Blood Waters
- Light Errant
- Shelter
- The Books of Outremer series (volume 1 – 6)
- The Selling Water by the River series (volumes 1-2)

Daniel Fox

- Jade Man's Skin
- Dragon in Chains
- The Pillow Boy of General Chu

His official website can be accessed here: <http://www.chazbrenchley.co.uk> and <http://www.danielfox.net>

The WritingRaw.com 7 Question Interview

Please let us know who you are and how we might know you:

As Daniel Fox, I guess this is my second incarnation; I published a few horror short stories under this name in the '90s.



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As Chaz Brenchley, I've been publishing novels and short stories (mainly - also children's books, some early poetry, a couple of plays, a handful of TV sketches...) since the late '70s. Either I must be very old, or else I started very young; there is some debatable truth in both of these assertions. (Seriously, I was eighteen when I started selling enough stories to live on; twenty-three when my first novel was published. It all seems very long ago.)

My first novels were crime thrillers, which shaded into supernatural thrillers before I wrote my first out-and-out epic fantasies. I also write science fiction, ghost stories, gay lit, erotica - almost everything except westerns and straight mimetic fiction (so far). I like to say I live down the dirty end of genre, tho' I actually live in Newcastle on Tyne.

Any news you would like to share concerning upcoming projects:

Whoo, yeah. I resurrected the Daniel Fox name to publish a sequence of Chinese-influenced fantasy novels, a project that has obsessed me for ten years now. I went to Taiwan twice, I studied Mandarin - I can bore for England on this. Instead, I will limit myself to pointing out that the series is called Moshui: The Books of Stone and Water (for many complicated reasons, mostly to do with islands and the magic of jade and dragons...), that volume one - "Dragon in Chains" - has been available for a year now, and that volume two - "Jade Man's Skin" - is published on March 1st with the best cover ever...

Thoughts concerning the current state of the literary world:

Ah, now. It were so much better when I were a lad, y'know...

Actually, in many ways I mean that. When I was a babywriter, book prices were protected (at least in the UK) and publishers dominated the trade: which meant that a broad range of books was published and available through major stockholding bookshops. Even then, 'way back in the '70s, Frank Muir said to me that only bestsellers sell; and it was true even then, but it is so much more true now. Since the mid-nineties there's been a discounting free-for-all, power has shifted from publishers to booksellers and nobody is interested in anything but bestsellers. So you see the same few books piled high wherever you turn, the bookstores are little better than the supermarkets, and too many fabulous writers can't get published any more...

I could bore on about this too, but that's the gist. It's all about marketing these days, but I'm old-fashioned, me: I'm still interested in text.



Who is your favorite author/s and why?

Ooh, now. How long have you got...?

The writer I've read most consistently throughout my life must be Kipling. My parents introduced me to the Just So Stories and the Jungle Book; my father sent me four volumes of his adult stories when I was a teenager; I found "Kim" and "Stalky & Co" for myself. I still go back to all of these, time and again.

The first writer I ever met was Tolkien. In brief: I was a child in Oxford; my English teacher adapted "Farmer Giles of Ham" into a stage play, and I played the king; backstage after the first night, he brought Tolkien in to meet me. Eek. It was kinda like meeting God, y'know? I was twelve, Lord of the Rings was my Best Book Ever, I'd read it a zillion times already... Famously, Tolkien didn't like fans, but he sat down and talked to me for five minutes. I haven't a clue what he said, I was just sitting there stupefied. Then I spent the next five years writing bad Tolkien imitations...

So who else? I love Georgette Heyer and Patrick O'Brian and Iain Banks and Geoff Ryman. I love the Chalet School books and Modesty Blaise and Fu Manchu and "The Count of Monte Cristo". I love George R R Martin and E E Doc Smith (and e e cummings, of course). And T S Eliot and E M Forster and Jane Austen and Lawrence Durrell. I adore Neal Stephenson with a passion. And ... oh, there are ten thousand books in this house and I rate most of them pretty highly. Enough of lists.

Have you written a book you love that you have not been able to publish?

Whoo, yeah. I have numerous half-finished projects which have entirely failed to excite other people as much as they excite me, so they're all hanging fire waiting on a better day; but I do have one finished novel, that I just went ahead and wrote anyway. It's an urban fantasy that throws up werewolves and vampires in the very early pages, just to establish the world, but then moves on to far more interesting creatures - harpies and the Green Man and like that. And the hero is a young man on the run from his inheritance of power.

Which I've treated with so often, it's passed through repetition and self-plagiarism to become a Theme, I think.

Do you have anything specific that you want to say to your readers?

Through the books? Never one thing, I think, which is why what I've written has ranged so widely across genre and subject-matter. I did find myself saying last year that all



fiction was about betrayal, and I still think that may be true.

Outside the books, in my own voice? Well, thanks for reading, obviously. And buy more books: they make fabulous presents for absolutely everybody...

How do you feel about what WritingRaw.com and other literary sharing sites are attempting to do for new writers?

Oh, I love this kind of thing. It fascinates me, how much the business in general and the profession of authorship in particular has changed in the course of my career. I'm the last of the ivory-tower generation; when I was a babywriter, it was still a viable career-path for authors to keep themselves completely private, with no public persona at all. In those days, it really was a lonely business; you wrote and rewrote by yourself, and the first people to see the finished book were agent and editor. I don't think I knew another writer before I was published. These days people study creative writing at university, and build themselves networks of beta-readers and critiquing groups - and, of course, share work openly on the net. It's all opportunity. And, of course, it's not only for the new writers; I've just been invited to join Book View Cafe (www.bookviewcafe.com), which will give me the chance to make a lot of early work available again...

WritingRaw.com would like to thank Chaz Brenchley for taking the time out of his busy schedule for this interview.