



Book Reviews

Profile of an Author: Daniel Peltz OBE

*We talk to property expert, philanthropist and author, Daniel Peltz OBE who books include *The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria*, *Out of the Blue*, *Daffodils Before Swallows*, and *Blood Ties* – to find out why being an author is all in the day's work for this very busy man.*

All in a day's work

To say that Daniel Peltz OBE is a busy man would be an understatement. On a day-to-day basis he is the CEO of London Freeholds Ltd, the specialist property investment company he founded in 2002 following a highly successful career with GUS Plc and The British Land Plc. As a trustee, Daniel is involved with many charitable organizations including the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Oxford University, the City of London School Bursary Trust, The Warburg Trust, The National Gallery Foundation Trust, and most recently the MiSST, an organization that provides musical instruments and music lessons to children in the most disadvantaged schools.



Daniel Peltz OBE, CEO, London Freeholds

Awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List in 2016 for his philanthropic services, Daniel's work with charities continues to be a big part of his life. He is Treasurer for both the Anna Freud Centre, and the Institute of Jewish Studies at UCL. He is Governor of Birkbeck College, London University (see below), as well as the Technion, the Israel Institute of Technology. He is an Honorary Fellow of both Institutes, as well as of King's College where he is a member of both the Campaign Board and the Estates Strategy Committee. His love of cricket involves him at of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) where sits on the Heritage and Estates Committees.

Daniel has particularly close ties with Birkbeck, where he did his MA in 2009, after which, he and his wife provided funds for the creation of the Peltz postgraduate



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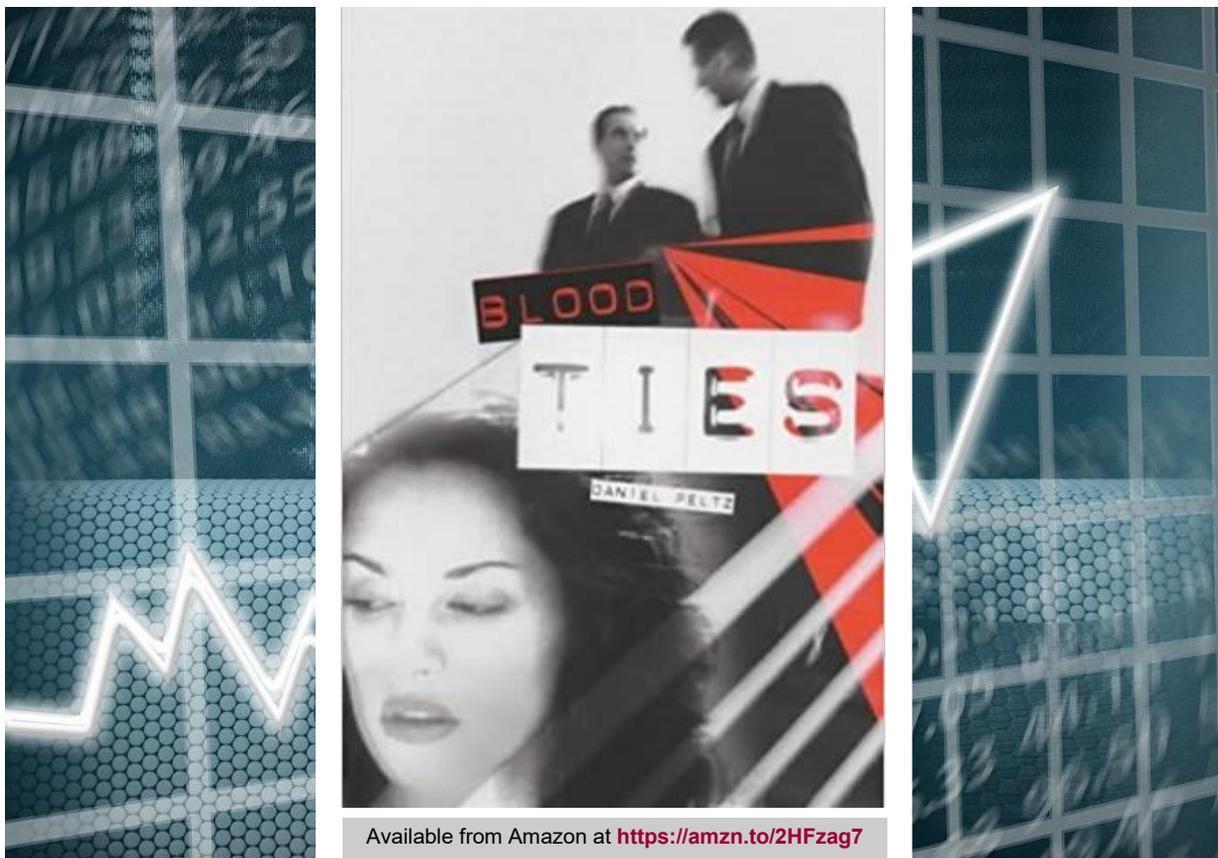
scholarships in the School of Arts at Birkbeck, as well as funding the Peltz Gallery which showcases the creative, interdisciplinary and experimental research of the School's academics and postgraduates. The Gallery continues to go from strength-to-strength and now has a growing reputation for exploring the critical role of visual art in political and historical contentious topics, and in humanitarian debates. To this day, Daniel remains heavily involved with Birkbeck as Chair of the Estates Committee where he advises the other governors on all matters relating to property.

Faced with such a heavy work schedule many people would be ready to crack. Not so Daniel Peltz, who despite his hectic working lifestyle and position in life has a down-to-earth lively spirit which equates to his boundless amounts of energy and is totally committed to whatever role he undertakes.

What then is the driving force behind his writing career as an author?

"I have always wanted to write, and I have always had lots of ideas. We are all told everyone can write a book – but not everyone can write a book. It takes a lot of discipline. I have always prided myself on discipline."

"Just before I set up London Freeholds, I had a bit of time on my hands, so I just started writing. Of course, as most authors will tell you – at first, it always seems

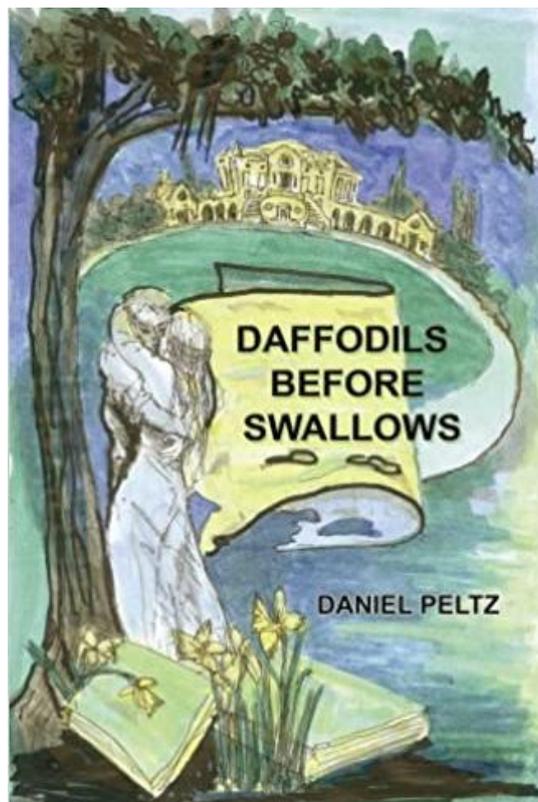


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easy. You get an idea and you just start writing like mad. When I look back, particularly when writing my first book *Blood Ties* – the story made sense, but I found, like most authors that when I had written around 200 pages, I almost came to a halt. For a novel you need around 80,000 words – so if you read carefully ‘Blood Ties’, it is actually two novels stuck together. I am not very pleased with *Blood Ties* in that my style is very raw. I now find it slightly embarrassing. My writing improved much more with my later books.”

Like most authors, their first book can have autobiographical traits – write what you know proves true – and for Daniel, *Blood Ties* was no exception. Daniel freely admits that some of the characters in the book bore more than a passing resemblance to some of his acquaintances. Set against the background of high finance, Daniel was able to make good use of his valuable commercial experience especially in deal making and leadership.



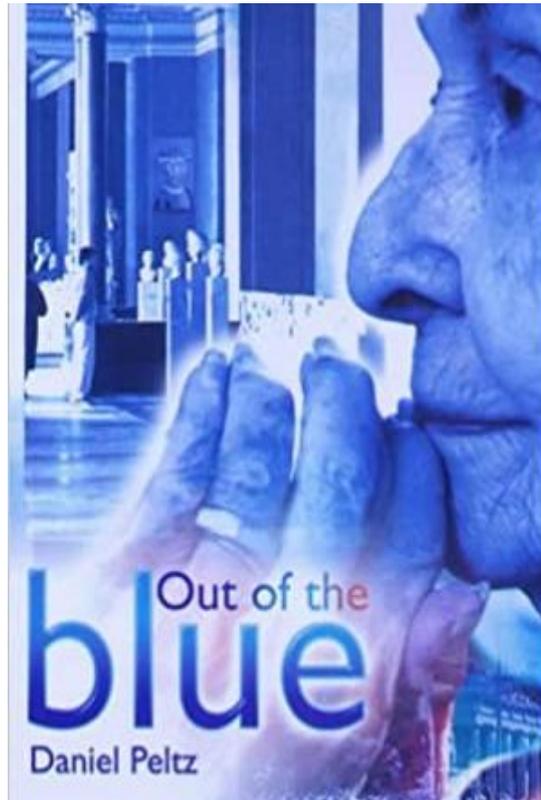
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“Time is an important factor when it comes to writing. In between *Out of the Blue* and my third book, *Daffodils Before Swallows*, I did a two year part time Masters at Birkbeck College which not only helped my writing style but also enflamed my passion for both the Renaissance period and my love of History and Art.”



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“In history there are so many sub-plots and ideas that you can extrapolate because you learn about the environment, period of the time, and you can take figures out of that. One of the books that inspired me is *Romola* by George Eliot. Set in the fifteenth century, it is a deep study of life in the city of Florence from an intellectual, artistic, religious, and social point of view. In *Romola*, the story takes place amidst actual historical events during the Italian Renaissance, and includes in its plot several notable figures from Florentine history. *Romola*, unquestionably was the biggest influence on my most recent book, *The Indomitable Chiesa di Santa Maria*.”

Despite being one of the greatest novels, *Romola* is hardly ever read. Critics often cite that *Romola* is difficult to read, yet, Daniel believes its complexity is off-set by the novel’s intriguing treatment of the issues of gender, language and history – issues which are at the core of contemporary literary criticism and theory today.

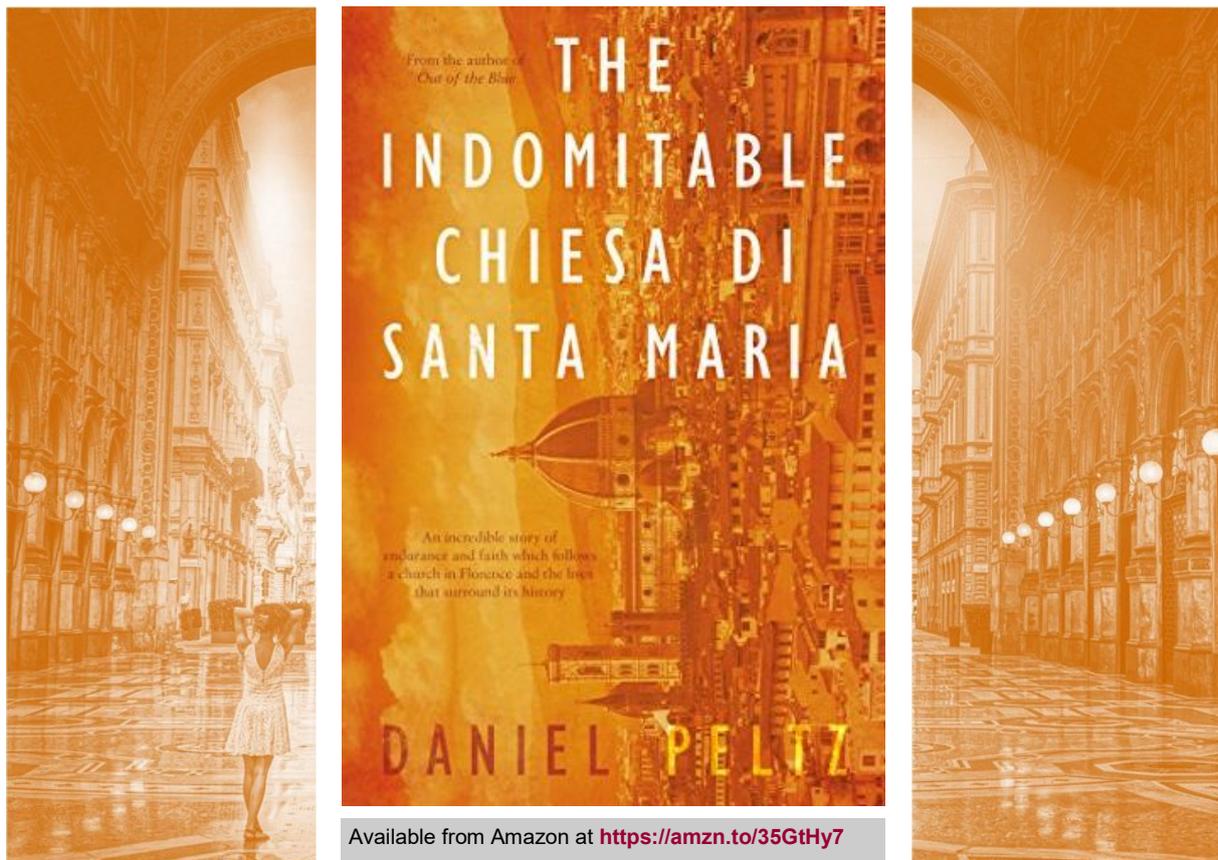
Some authors say they dislike the planning stage in writing a book. Do you plan and plot each of your books exactly, or do you prefer to dive straight in with the story?

“I don’t plan the entire book, but I do need to do a rough sketch of each chapter, so that when I start writing I can dive straight in. It is rather like going into a forest and waiting to see where the path leads you. In that sense, I have a very big plot in my mind and there are different paths I go down.



Authors often say that their characters talk to them as they write, do you find that your characters – such as Marianna in your book *Out of the Blue* told you her story, and was it being told to you quicker than you could write?

“Not so much Marianna, but if anything, Daniel Bromberg, the art dealer in *Out of the Blue*, was talking to me at the time of writing. With that love of art, there is definitely a bit of me in Daniel Bromberg.”



“When I was writing *The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria* it was during the revision stage that Molly, the tour guide, became the central character. I had written around 30,000 to 40,000 words before rewriting it to expand Molly’s role. Before the rewrite, Molly had no depth of character, but after the sixth and seventh rewrite she became far more multifaceted.

“In a way, the character Molly actually started to speak to me as a writer, almost asking ‘what about me?’ Molly is more like me than any other character in any of my books. Molly went to King’s College – I went to King’s. Molly loves the Renaissance period; I love the Renaissance period. Yes, there was a lot of me in Molly.”



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Do you set goals when writing a book – such as you need to be at a certain point by a given time?

“Yes. I have got to write 1,000 words per sitting otherwise I feel like have failed. I don’t write every day, but I do like to write around four days a week. Then I take a break. Each book takes me about a year to write. Then the editing and revisions start.”

A book’s title is also a key factor – how many titles did you consider before settling for your final choice?

“*The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria* was only done at the last minute. My publisher decided on that, but with *Out of the Blue*, the title came to me immediately because of my love of Picasso’s Blue Period – the painting featured in the story. Some book titles can take a long time, so I feel that titles are always a work in progress.”

What type of books and authors are you particularly drawn to?

“I am an avid reader. I read all types of history – I just love history. I do read the occasional novel and have just finished reading *Alone in Berlin* by Hans Fallada. He was a sensational writer. It is a sensational book.”

Coming from a property background how much are you able to draw on your own experiences in your books?

“On the property side – I think very little, although readers tell me differently. I would certainly say from the business acumen side of things, it could be particularly seen in *Daffodils Before Swallows*. *Blood Ties* of course, is about the world of Hedge Funds and Finance.

Some authors say that they can get so caught up in the process of research that they find it hard to know when they have reached the cut-off point for them to start writing the story without coming up against ‘writers’ block’?

“I don’t get writers’ block, but I do a vast amount of research for my books particularly for *The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria*, and *Daffodils Before Swallows* as well. This enables me to have plenty of ideas even when writing gets difficult.”

“In *Out of the Blue*, Picasso’s Blue period had always fascinated me. The prices that artwork fetch is simply breath-taking, and the simplistic image in the blue of the beggar and the bowl – just captured my imagination.”

“*Out of the Blue* came from a mixture of my fascination of Picasso and the impact the war had on every Jewish person. I wanted the whole story to be one of image that would be constantly in my readers’ minds as they followed the story, very much in the same way that a painting can be remembered in the mind’s eye. I knew



about the Holocaust history of course, but had to go far deeper into the subject that many writers perhaps would have felt uncomfortable studying.”

“In *Daffodils Before Swallows* I had to read up on the values of Shakespeare, and in *The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria* I had to brush up on my Renaissance history. In a way, I am an avid historian at heart so the research is never a burden.”

With your latest book *The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria* now potentially going to a third print run (after making the Bookbag’s Top Ten) what can readers expect in your next book?

“I am still thinking, and still struggling. My great love of history can be both a delight and a burden. A delight – because of the amount of research that can be drawn about a period. A burden – because I have so many ideas, it can become difficult to choose which one to follow. It’s also hard work! But whichever one I choose, I hope it tells a story that will remain with my readers long after they have turned the last page.

You are indeed a busy man and have so many interests, how do you manage it all?

“There are many things with which I am involved. The charities that I am involved in are very close to my heart. However please don’t exaggerate the time factor. Everyone has time. It is amazing how much one can do in a day.”

Distinguished property expert, trustee, philanthropist, and now an author who’s books have received rave reviews in the national press – somehow I don’t think Daniel Peltz ‘the author’ will be remaining behind the scenes for much longer!

Note to readers – Daniel’s book *The Indomitable Chiesa Di Santa Maria* contains many business lessons, and we will be discussing these when we review the book in the next issue of **CREDIT CONTROL JOURNAL and ASSET & RISK REVIEW**.