



UWS Academic Portal

Hunting Captain Henley

Pratt, Kenneth

Published in:
European Journal of Life Writing

DOI:
[10.5463/ejlw.2.48](https://doi.org/10.5463/ejlw.2.48)

Published: 01/01/2013

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Pratt, K. (2013). Hunting Captain Henley: Finding Fascism in the Reflective Voice. *European Journal of Life Writing*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.5463/ejlw.2.48>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



“Hunting Captain Henley”: Finding Fascism in the Reflective Voice

Kenneth Pratt

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how a reflective analysis of the literary structure of one's own life writing can often lead to an exceptional intellectual discovery. The paper focuses on a particular narrative technique that developed during a journalistic investigation into the whereabouts of an English Army Captain who had allegedly bullied my dad in the British Army. Examples are drawn from a range of literary theorists and from the author's own prose and critical evaluation. It is argued that the occupation of one language by another can generate a form of linguistic hyper-energy and from it the birth of what is described as Scotland's Fascist Voice. Scots dialect's uneasy alliance with Standard English in turn highlights *Caledonian Antisyzygy*, a term first coined by Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* to spotlight the zigzag of contradictions at the heart of Scottish writing. The overall aim of the paper is to reveal a strong interdependence between literary theory and life writing. The subtext concludes that in isolation each offers restricted forms of expression, yet when blended can exhibit an independent intelligence free from the shackles of both conventional autobiography and traditional academic enquiry.

Keywords: Fascism; Journalism; Semi-fictional autobiography; Trauma

The night I broke his arm he was writhing around the bed spitting expletives about an English officer called Captain Henley. It wasn't the first or the last time I was to encounter Henley. But this had been a particularly violent flashback featuring a plethora of Egyptian words and place names: Port Said, Ismailia, El-Omari, Maadi. To this day the words stick in my head: demy (town) niwt (village) set maat (place of truth). My mum and I regularly struggled with his almost supernatural strength as he battled

with his torturous Egyptian demons visible only to him. Even when the bone snapped that night he flailed it around wildly: normal pain a mere pawn in his mission to rid the room of the evil he thought existed.

As I pieced the story together using late night conversations about his experiences in The Royal Signals in 1951, I came to hate Henley. But I was told not to say a word in case people thought my dad was mental. The enforced silence drove me into my 'boy's own' game of revenge against the posh Englishman who'd tormented my dad so much. I exacted revenge on him as I played with my toy British Commando soldiers on the mantelpiece, subjecting him to an array of agonising injuries and death. He was the one with the pistol and the binoculars. I pressed his head against the white hot bar of the electric fire watching him melt onto my mother's best carpet.

To me at least Henley was an English coward. Fresh from Sandhurst he subjected the other Scots soldiers in my dad's regiment to systematic humiliation. The Jocks were fair game in his view. Whenever there was a nasty or dangerous mission, he always sent my dad and his pals. I'd sit cross-legged on the living room carpet listening to his late night stories about Henley, relieved it was a talk night, not a fight night. His reminiscences took me into another world: a place where cruelty was common. There was the story about Henley refusing to give the men water rations as they dug a latrine in the blazing desert sun. Then there was the time during a billet inspection he ordered my dad's mate Scobie to empty his locker with letters from his mother. In front of the men he poked a hole in one of the letters, dangling it on the edge of his cane. 'I didn't think Jocks *could* write, he said sarcastically, adding, "at least not in the Queen's English anyway". As the story went, Scobie hit him before serving detention and a series of beatings.

Then it was my dad's turn. During a period of heightened tensions in the Suez zone he was ordered to guard a cable depot in a town south of Ismailia. Captain Henley ordered the men to shoot on sight if they suspected any terrorist activity or thieving. Following orders, my dad opened fire, "dropping" one Egyptian dead and "scattering" the rest. He was mentioned in despatches for "saving the day". But what the military records don't explain is why the great British Army later handed him over to the Egyptian authorities in whose custody he was savagely and repeatedly beaten. As a boy he protected me from that part of the story, retreating instead inside his own head, he'd stare up at the corner of the living room ceiling, the silent precursor to one of his terrifying flashbacks. The attacks always came at night. By day he was the finest, most hardworking and sensitive man I'd ever met. But as darkness fell, and especially when the wind blew from the east on a winter's night, he

invited the ghost of his leering and twisted Egyptian jailer into our living room.

My dad is dead now. But Henley lives on in my mind. A few years ago, as an investigative reporter, I set out to track him down, as if by confronting the man I could finally resolve the childhood machinations that had manifested into an obsessive interest in Scotland’s relationship with England and our role in Empire. What I didn’t know was that my search would take me to deepest India and that it would become an intellectual journey from which there was no turning back.

The creative writing academic Celia Hunt argues that fictionalising self-experience can “enhance the flexibility of the psyche more generally, and that therefore this approach could be useful in a therapeutic context” (Hunt 2000). As I logged daily the details of “Hunting Captain Henley” I noted my journal had become an exercise in semi-fictional autobiography. With the “letting go” of familiar, sometimes inhibiting self-concepts as Hunt describes it, I discovered a new reflective voice that, upon closer analysis, was, in places simultaneously chaotic, fractured, energetic. It embraced a bizarre mix of Henley’s Received Pronunciation and my dad’s Scottish dialect. As both jostled for contention it struck me that what I faced was the sociolinguistic occupation of a language, an extreme form of linguistic imperialism. But it wasn’t the complete control of one dialect over another that interested me—my focus was the energy generated as a result of the linguistic battle. The search to define this phenomenon led me to the work of MacDiarmid, Pound, Castillo, Riesman and Milfull to name but a few. Here I discovered discussions about linguistic imperialism and what constitutes “the fascist voice”. Upon conducting a detailed discourse analysis on my own reflective style—it begged the question had *it* become Scotland’s Fascist Voice? In “What is Fascism?” (Orwell 1944) George Orwell discusses the wide and often reckless use of the term. He concludes that ‘almost any English person would accept “bully” as a synonym for “Fascist”’, and points to those who argue there are clear links between imperialism and fascism. He writes: “It is usually assumed, for instance, that Fascism is inherently warlike, that it thrives in an atmosphere of war hysteria and can only solve its economic problems by means of war preparation or foreign conquests”. There are of course other examples of fascism that are non-racist and non-imperialist in approach (see MacDiarmid 1992) and those that are clearly connected to racism.

Firm in the knowledge that uses of the word were wide and varied I then moved to distance myself from racist relations by dressing my own findings up intellectually. Presenting a paper at the ACLA (American

Comparative Literature Association) conference in Vancouver (April 2011) I underlined to colleagues:

Let me also be clear that this is not the stereotypical fascism of European neo-Nazism or racism but, as MacDiarmid described it “a Scottish Nationalist Socialism that will restore an atmosphere in which the fine, distinctive traits and tendencies of Scottish character which have withered in the foul air of our contemporary chaos, will once more revive”. (MacDiarmid 1992, p. 37)

Of course, the truth is different. My dad’s wartime stories were sprinkled with racist terms, as were the chants from the back of the school bus and on the football terraces where I grew up. As my writing mimicked the cadences of that linguistic backdrop, so it too was imbued with the radical ideas behind the dialect. If only I could marry MacDiarmid’s idealistic (and concise) definition to the realism of Orwell’s argument that the word “fascism” is used in a range of ways (by a range of people) to describe everybody from the Catholic Church to Socialists, Conservatives and the Capitalist System. In this paper I use it to describe the fascist (and racist) voice of the culturally repressed (Billy), “the fascist voice” as discussed by Castillo and Riesman, the potential for the “ideological fascism” of Scottish soldiers returning from war (as described by MacDiarmid) and the institutionalised fascism of English teaching in Scotland.

To me semi-fictional autobiography also became a way of utilising personal experiences to explore a hidden narrative behind the reporter’s prose. My *autobiographical pact* with myself freed me from the chains of self-censorship associated with mainstream journalism. It also led me into a fascinating exploration of the relationship between Scots and Standard English, one in which the vernacular artillery on both sides bombarded viciously.

In “Fascists of the Final Hour” Robert Castillo analyses the poetry of Ezra Pound and, in so doing, offers us a detailed picture of the style of the fascist voice (Castillo 1992). In his own explanation Pound observed that Dante’s *Inferno* evoked the ‘aimless turmoil and restlessness of humanity’ in the ‘whirling and smiting wind’ smacking against those who had failed to govern their emotions (SR, pp. 133, 130). The idea of one man standing against this torrent, finding a pivotal position in its midst, is central to the style of expression used to describe this experience. It is in conjunction with this model that my own narrator’s repeated references to “chaos” take hold. Castillo writes: “Whether aesthetic or natural, objective or subjective, Pound’s vortex is a patterned energy characterised by the organisation of dynamic forces into an intense formal unity focused on a single point or node” (p. 120).

Pound’s vision of fascism is that of a patterned energy emerging through the staunch and powerful fascist will, a way of seeing nature as a bubbling cauldron of contradictions, yet ordered and hierarchical in every possible way. It is this obsession with order created from chaos that inspires the voice of my semi-fictional narrator Billy Queen. In the following extract he explains how even the confusion caused by alcohol is eventually rationalised, throwing his perceptions into an even clearer light where order is ultimately achieved.

There are always two sides to a story, just as there are always two sides to one’s demented identity. The duality of man is, indeed, a mystery to you. But it is the conflicting fundamental values of the Scottish man which intrigues you most, that enigmatic variable as changeable as the array of pressure systems which rape the moonscape north of Crainlarich. It is often induced by a regular injection of alcohol poisoning but this is a mere supplement to the chemical intrigue and experimentation already raging around the interior of your temporal lobe rhythm. It very often begins with a semi-comatose condition sparked by drink. The start then progresses through the ranks of sobriety until it becomes a condition, a way of seeing things, a third eye reflecting who you really are. The host must deal with the chaos of the party; restore order, before his ability to stay human dissipates forever. It is this ability that secures the victory (Pratt 2010, p. 136).

The above extract also demonstrates the development of the reflective/discursive voice, a product of the life writing research. *Hunting Captain Henley* tells the story of a Scots boy (and eventually) young man who tracks down the English officer (Henley) who allegedly bullied his dad in the army. But it is also quite crucially an examination of the resultant reflective voice born out of my own experiences. As Standard English and Scots dialect begin to clash, a new reflective voice emerges. This does not become an all embracing, enlightening experience culminating in a fluid hybrid identity where the narrator is at ease in his complex dialectal condition. It is not a text where Scottish colloquial speech merges neatly with the voice of Standard English. It is an awkward consciousness reflected in the often jarring, jagged nature of the narrative. The voice reverberates with grinding unease, and psychological restlessness, a clash of linguistic concoctions generating contradictory messages, schizophrenic chaos and reactionary responses.

In Chapter 2 of *Hunting Captain Henley* we witness the earliest signs of young Billy’s attempts to rationalise his predicament. He does so in a performative way, mimicking English Simon on the beach at Whitley Bay:

Simon I says I know your name because I heard your mother calling it, Simon, do you want to build a dam with me Simon The Surfer, look if we

dig a trench all the water flows into it and we can stop The North Sea from assaulting the poor families on the beach. Mmmm, yeah, all right, he says, dropping his surf board on the sand, is the tide coming in or what? Looks that way, look at the frothy waves crashing in, you mean the white horses, yeah the white horses Simon if that's what you feel you want to call them. Doesn't matter if it smells as long as it stops those white horses eh Simon, dig, dig, dig deep, deeper, mix the dry sand with the wet stuff, makes it all stick together, look this is Durham castle says Simon The Surfer, look this is Edinburgh Castle, says I, as the swirling water surrounds us dragging his surfer's board with it (Pratt 2010, p. 47).

This early excerpt conveys the developing unease during the confrontation of Standard English and colloquial Scots. Young Billy tries to take control of both and it is within this framework that his own linguistic assimilation is born and with it his psychological restlessness develops. As the next section demonstrates, some theorists believe this restlessness is at the heart of the fascist consciousness; the tension that is created and the resulting assimilation are the beginnings of the new fascist voice. Later in the paragraph, his reference to "poofy turrets" exposes a Scots male working-class linguistic code that equates Englishness with homosexuality and effeminacy.

A couple of hours later I retreat to the sand dunes with the binoculars to watch the North Scottish Sea, swirling, birling, bubbling grey, and white, overrunning their moats, smashing into their poofy turrets, angry, vicious, attacking, wave after wave after wave, until there was nothing except big choppy currents slapping into each other, sizzling like lava (Pratt 2010, p. 48).

The unease created by the linguistic assimilation therefore begins to express itself homophobically and Anglophobically. When this assimilation is combined with the culture of destructive criticism (similar to that experienced in the presence of Uncle Alex), added to the overt racism of the Dubai ex-pats and the anti-Catholicism of Uncle Ron, then the conditions are right for the cultivation of the fascist consciousness.

This is represented in the pace and style of the orders issued by Uncle Alex and at the very start of the novel.

My Uncle Alex speaks like this, dae this, dae that. Hey. You. Kimere. Gon get me chips. Hey. Listen. Kimere ya wee shite. Take this right, get yersel a sweet. Listen. Don't forget. Yer a Queen. Now cummon. Hey. Kimere. A man's a man for aw that. Listen. Listen tae me. Ok? Right. On yer way (Pratt 2010, p. 1).

But it is Billy’s high levels of automation conformity, as defined by D. Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) that contributes most to Billy’s fascist nature. His dual consciousness (repeatedly expressed in his language) leads to a partial loss of identity and a resultant tendency to conform to the expectations of others around him. This, combined with a form of missionary universalism, expressed by his unerring quest for Henley, exemplify the fascist temperament at work.

In Dieter Noll’s *Adventures of Werner Holt* (1960), the hero’s adventures follow a recognisable pattern comparable to *Hunting Captain Henley*. Werner, like Billy, strives to prove his masculinity by impressing a male peer group.

One afternoon at the Country Club Uncle Ron passes me handcuffs and a baton and tells me to pretend I’m arresting Indians. He laughs when I march the waiter around the tennis court and push him into the swimming pool. The guy can’t swim, but that doesn’t matter because when I hear the applause of the other ex-pats I know I’ve done the right thing (Pratt 2010, p. 78).

It is the insecure element of his masculinity that is of interest here. In “My Sex The Revolver” John Milfull writes: “It is not female sexuality which is the ally of Fascism, but the fear of it, and the attempt to compensate this sense of male inadequacy through the construction of a male myth of power and dominance” (p. 181). Uncle Ron has been created as a conduit to this frame of mind. He teaches Billy to beware of women, especially foreigners and Catholics. But behind the facade is an inadequate male, trapped in his own cultural contradiction, turning his own insecurity into brutality. In *Henry de Montherlant* Richard J. Golsan (1992), referring to Alice Kaplan, writes: ‘This desire to eliminate entirely the role of the female in the process of procreation, is frequently a part of what she describes as “fascist fantasy narratives” (p. 156).’ This, combined with what Janet Perez describes in *Fascist Models and Literary Subversion* as “an attitude of scornful superiority” (1992, p. 134) constructs the basis of the fascist mindset. Perez’s scornful superiority is built into *Hunting Captain Henley* at regular intervals to illustrate this very point.

Outside the walking wounded limp around. Injured in body. Limping, twisted, hunched, gargoyles peering from the gutters: one gesticulates at me, filthy rainwater splashing onto its white shell suit. Wounded in spirit, the ingrained frown mark splitting its forehead, the mouth contorted slightly to the left, a walking stroke victim drenched in the squalor of the city’s filthy sewers. Poleaxed by conscience they peer into cheap shoap windaes, pointless gifts for poor offspring their preferential objective, reflecting the grief of their dull and desperate demeanours (Pratt 2010, p. 67).

Billy's "linguistic displacement" is also a cause of his initial alienation. This 'displacement from the norm' is central to Martin Heidegger's theory in *Sein und Zeit* (1984). According to Heidegger, instead of modernity freeing human consciousness from the church and feudalism, it creates a new set of restrictions, the subjugation of its members to technology and the collective will. Under this tyranny, Heidegger argues, humans are deprived of their individuality. Humans therefore "fall" from being at one with themselves into an inauthentic existence. During this process, language also undergoes a change. Instead of unveiling the real human experience, language hides it behind an institutionalised social discourse. Within this discourse repetition plays a part in the expression of the dehumanisation process. We see examples of Heidegger's theory today, in robotic call centres, or in the language of retail shop assistants who have been led to believe it is their shop. Heidegger points out that people become confused and detached from reality in this environment. While Heidegger argues that "institutionalised social discourse" is responsible for this process it is my specific contention that in Billy Queen's case detachment from reality occurs as he moves towards use of the third person voice or, in terms of plot, as the search for Captain Henley escalates. Heidegger writes:

The human being stands as part of an everyday collective under the sway of others. It is not itself; the others have taken away from it. The will of the others regulates the daily possibilities of the human being's existence. These others are not particular others. On the contrary, any other can replace them... The who is neither this one, nor that one, not oneself, not a few and not the sum of all. The "who" is the neuter, the "one" (das Man) (Heidegger 1984, p. 126).

But it is not within Heidegger's negative description of modernity that the nuts and bolts of the Fascist voice are found. It is, instead, within his recommendations for change that the essence of it is located. In the emergence of Fascism he saw a way of restoring meaning to the world. In *Heidegger's Doubling of Myth* Kathryn Brown says that by walking alone the leader can "free the German people from tyranny" and "effect a revolution in language" through which the "empty speech of everyday communication will be replaced by the clarity of meaningful language" (Brown 1990, p. 14). In *Hunting Captain Henley*, I demonstrate how this process occurs in the narrator as he, alone, uses increasingly emotive and philosophical language. His language is inspired not just by being alone but by feelings of having no responsibilities to anyone other than himself.

In *Fascism and the Hypertrophy of Male Adolescence* Silke Hesse creates a theoretical model for the ideal, young fascist male. She says he has "outgrown

the family of his childhood and has not yet acquired new commitments; he is responsible for no one but himself. This makes him more mobile than other members of society. Secondly, he is still at a formative stage in which he seeks role models to imitate” (Hesse 1990, p. 172). Billy’s role models are Henley and his father and his resulting diction, of course, is this hybrid concoction of Scots and Standard English, at times presented in an imitative, exaggerated way. It is upon Heidegger’s grounds of emptiness and disillusionment that these thoughts, this language takes root. In the following extract Billy feels so alone that he spends time questioning his own consciousness. His imitative role models are so varied that they borrow and merge a cross-section of registers:

You can hear a pin drop in your own consciousness. Naw ye cannae, ya doosh, what are you on about? How can you hear a pin drap in your ain consciousness—don’t be ridiculous boy, eyes to the front, march in good order, dae as yer telt—ya whatdoyoucallit, pretentious brainwashed cheeky chappie prone to the use of literary clichés passed doon tae you fae yer fore-fathers (Pratt 2010, p. 178).

The here and now of institutionalised fascism is examined by Chris Shute in *Compulsory Schooling Disease: How Children Absorb Fascist Values* (1993). Shute specifically refers to the psychological damage done to children who are taught to suppress their own phonetic spelling in favour of Standard English, a scenario particularly relevant to colonised people who become, as Shute puts it, “cheap imitations” of the English (p. 45). Shute’s theory is not sociolinguistic in nature (his points are generally linked to teaching methods) but it is this predicament of imitation which, I contend, leads to the alienation from original culture required for the fascist consciousness and, in turn, the fascist voice to develop.

In *The Nature of Fascism* (1968) Germani discusses what he describes as a common trait among Italian fascists before and during the 2nd World War. He points to their “uprootedness” and goes on to explain how a process of displacement is “the human basis of fascism”. Fascists were seen as *sposati*, Italian for “displaced”. This hypothesis is of note to my thesis for two reasons. While it describes the physical, transient human condition required for the cultivation of fascism, a linguistic parallel can also be drawn. As the novel progresses Billy Queen not only becomes physically displaced, from Scotland to Dubai and back, from Hamilton to university and to London and India, but his original narrative voice is also displaced, leading to the identity crisis that is in some cases central to the Scottish condition. Early in the novel we see the effects this displacement has on young Billy’s consciousness as he is shifted to Dubai.

We left them there, Esther pretending to hit Paterson over the head with a golf club and ma dad, oot for the day, standin at the gate wae his hons in his poackets, cheerio son, see you soon, says he. I squeezed my nose against the taxi window and waved to them all, each and every one of them. But it was my dad I wanted. I wanted him to put my hand into his coat pocket and hold it tight the way he used to when we walked to the shop for sweets and a paper. When they were out of sight I faced the front. I couldn't see out of the front window properly for Uncle Alex's big black brylcreemed heid. He used to be a Teddy Boy. Now here we were - going to The Gulf together. He never spoke to me during the journey. I didn't care if he ever spoke to me again in my whole life (Pratt 2010, p. 46).

Although there is no obvious sign of a fascist consciousness at work, there is disillusionment at being uprooted. Of linguistic note is Billy's use of the word "together". Not only is he geographically and emotionally uprooted, but he refuses to use his usual West of Scotland term "the gither". This refusal becomes the root cause of his teenage and eventually adult linguistic displacement. Later in this section I will illustrate the link between this and the development of his pure fascist consciousness. It is this very awkwardness, this displacement of what is perceived to be the norm that, I will argue, creates the correct environment for the development of the fascist mind. That apart, I also contend that this awkwardness, far from not being normal, is precisely the psycho sociolinguistic process that many Scots experience.

While Germani's physical displacement theory is of use, both this and linguistic displacement as I have called it or linguistic assimilation formed through cultural assimilation as Gramsci refers to it, are not in themselves sufficient to explain the development of the fascist consciousness. Other ingredients are required. In *Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology* Svend Ranulf (1964) examines the definition of human resentment. In particular he analyses this in relation to the petite bourgeoisie and shows how it expresses itself, especially in this social group, as a casual inflicting of punishment. It isn't merely cruelty that is the essence of this; it is the disinterested manner in which the cruelty is executed that is central. In Chapter Four of *Hunting Captain Henley* Ranulf's resentment theory is combined with Germani's physical displacement theory to create the fascist mindset foundation. In Dubai, Billy is physically displaced from Scotland. This in turn produces the feelings of insecurity necessary for resentment and the subsequent innocuous punishment of the Filippino maid Shamal. To further refine the theory the punishment scene is sculpted using the narrator's reaction to his own linguistic displacement as the catalyst for violence.

I go inside for a minute to put on Uncle Ron’s white helmet and gun belt—the one he got in Hong Kong. There’s a cane sitting by his bed. I tuck it under my arm and march up and down in front of the mirror—just like Captain Henley auld boy. Outside it rests nicely under Shamal’s chin.

– Do you miss home Shamal? I asks her.

She jerks at the handcuffs, trying to get free.

– Where’s yer ma?

– My ma? she asks.

– Aye, yer ma, says I.

– I don’t understand you, she says.

– Your mother. What does she wear? Back in the Philippines, what does she wear?

– I don’t have a mother, she says.

– Everybody has a ma, says I. Is she deid?

– What do you mean?

– Is. She. Dead?

– I don’t know. I haven’t seen her since I was a child. She went away (Pratt 2010, p. 97).

To be more specific it is not merely energetic creativity born from chaos that forms the backdrop to the fascist consciousness and thus language but a certain type of creative paranoia on the narrator’s part. Reed Way Dasenbrock describes Wyndham Lewis’s entire body of work as “a fiction of paranoia” (Dasenbrock 1992, p. 93). He goes on to describe Lewis’s “paranoid aesthetic” (p. 96). In *Hunting Captain Henley* this creative paranoia is deliberately taken to extremes not only to convey the necessary depth of Billy’s isolation but to underline his own mental deterioration. In Chapter Nine for example, he is convinced the security forces have hired a room next to his in his London bed and breakfast accommodation.

The methodical thump squeak thump squeak of the headboard against the wall has stopped now. You wonder why they chose to let you hear them fucking in such a manner. And the giggling beforehand, pretending to be my mum and Uncle Alex. The left-wing authorities of the Blair Brown cohort probably sent them to keep an eye on you—maybe it wiz the wee Wrangler rucksack on the shooder that roused their attention, and the one-way train ticket to London too. That woman in the ticket office at Glasgow Central looked too intelligent to be there. Too much rouge to be real. Now you have the two youthful shaggers to contend with—as if Henley wasn’t enough (Pratt 2010, p. 212).

If my journey (as son of a Scottish soldier) lead me to discover the fascist voice (and attempt to poeticise it) then the next step is surely to gather and analyse the creative writing of others worldwide who are also

witnessing the severe effects of post traumatic stress on their military mums and dads. There are major questions to be asked. While research is already underway at Sussex University to determine the precise therapeutic effects of writing fictional autobiography, how can this be applied to the sons and daughters of war veterans? What range of reflective voices are we about to uncover among what Alan Young (1995) describes in *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* “people tormented by memories that filled them with feelings of sadness and remorse, the sense of irreparable loss, and sensations of fright and horror”? In *Incest, War and Witness* (Life Writing, Vol. 5) Elisabeth Hanscombe points to the work of Paul John Eakin who makes the point that narrative identity is built upon rules of self-narration which we are taught as children (Eakin 123). Clearly, he adds, the experience of trauma impacts on a person’s capacity or preparedness to abide by them. If we accept Eakin’s hypothesis (and my own experiences in *Hunting Captain Henley* certainly bear witness to them) then what other categories of *narrative anarchism* are we likely to uncover?

As I prepare to visit Uganda to gauge the scale and impact of post-traumatic stress upon the life-writing narratives of boy and girl soldiers, the concept of *imitation* features highly in my thoughts.

In *The Ego and Id* (1923) Sigmund Freud demonstrates the link between mourning the death of a loved one and ego formation. While Freud’s work embraces many other themes, this particular aspect is of note in relation to the development of the narrator’s consciousness in *Hunting Captain Henley*. After the death of his father in Chapter Five, Billy takes to wearing his old army coat. He even starts to talk like him, incorporating the term, “says I” into his speech patterns. Freud argues that the ego envelops the ego of the dead loved one into the structure of its own. This process involves taking on the characteristics of the dead loved one and sustaining him or her through what Judith Butler describes in *Gender Trouble* (1999) as “magical acts of imitation” (Butler 1990, p. 73). The narrative structure of the dual consciousness present in Janice Galloway’s work is the ideal berth from which to explore Butler’s acts of imitation because it offers Billy the opportunity to imitate not just an imperialist consciousness but the specific imperialist consciousness of his Scottish father, a working-class Scot with petit bourgeois tendencies. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes:

This identification is not simply momentary or occasional, but becomes a new structure of identity; in effect, the other becomes part of the ego through the permanent internalisation of the other’s attributes. In cases in which an ambivalent relationship is severed through loss, that ambivalence becomes internalised as a self-critical or self-debasing disposition in which

the role of the other is now occupied and directed by the ego itself (Butler 1999, p. 74).

In *The Ego and Id*, Freud notes that by taking flight into the ego, love escapes annihilation (p. 178). This is not only Billy’s way of dealing with his father’s death. It also fashions the way he walks and talks. On one level he mimics, but on another level he actually becomes. Once becoming, he begins to recognise the full identity of his father, his true relationship with Henley, and with it, the full details of Scotland’s imperialist role, alongside England, in the creation of the British Empire. It is the unification of Freud’s ego formation theory and areas of Gramsci’s theory on linguistic assimilation, combined with the ideological setting of Billy’s upbringing, which leads to the creation of his identity and, ultimately, the fascist consciousness within.

More than that though it is an exploration of the effects that post traumatic stress can have on the families of victims. It is a lonely world in which to live not least because it taints your worldview. It impacts the way you look at the Arab world and at Scotland and the UK. It is also a study of the schizophrenic nature at the very heart of Scottish identity and the linguistic tensions that exist between Standard English and Scottish dialect.

As part of my research I contacted Hollybush House in Ayr, one of the treatment centres run by the charity Combat Stress, also known as the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Association. The centre provides welfare support and treatment for all Ex-Servicemen and women who suffer from symptoms of mental health problems related to their time in Service. They have a catchment area covering all of Scotland, Ireland and the North East of England. The clients who attend Hollybush for treatment range in age from 19 to 90 with the current average age around 40 years old. Theirs is a world of psychological injuries often fuelled by drugs and booze. It is a place of recurring nightmares, persistent anxiety, violent outbursts, nightmares and flashbacks. Britain, unlike most of the Western World, does not provide a dedicated service for their veterans who have suffered psychological injury.

I’d gone to Hollybush House to somehow confirm to myself that my own experiences didn’t matter: that they were merely isolated childhood machinations that should be left in the distant past. What I discovered was a horrific catalogue of present tense psychological trauma suffered by the sons, daughters, and wives of war veterans. This is Scotland’s Secret War, a world where relatives live in silence, shouldering the stress of loved ones newly returned from Iraq, Afghanistan, The Falklands and Northern Ireland. While posttraumatic stress and the struggle of “our

boys in the field” have received plenty of media attention, another battle closer to home is cruelly and silently stabbing at the hearts and minds of loved ones. One fifteen-year-girl was prevented by her Gulf War veteran dad from speaking about her experiences. Another spoke of the “unbearable tension” in the house, of having to firstly find out what kind of mood her father was in before deciding to go into the living room or straight upstairs to her room to blot out the feeling of simmering potential violence and tension. “It’s like living in a secret society”, said one of the wives. “Nobody will talk about it. As an army or ex-army wife it’s as if we are supposed to obey a silent code of honour”. For others it is not merely silence but violence that are the enemy. “My dad gets angry, very angry”, said one 15-year-old. “He lashes out and it scares the hell out of me. What worries me is the way the sins of the father sort of pass onto the children. I’m on alert mode whenever my dad goes off on one. I’m just dead angry all the time and I don’t understand why”. The stories follow a similar pattern. They tell of dads “rocking back and forward”, “being loud and aggressive” then “slumping into tears”. They tell of worldly war stories on winter nights by the fire exploding in violence. They tell of fear, anxiety, horror in the house. Some of them have written simple prose or poetry to get it off their chests. One teenage girl wrote this about her father:

Veteran

A laughing pleasant man
 takes me to the train station
 one week later
 a surly remote man
 collects me in silence
 bombs are falling in
 the Middle East
 and the war in his head
 has resumed

What disturbed me most as I listened was that they also told part of my own childhood story. While I’ve learned to cope with the anger I still hanker after Henley. My search has become an intellectual journey as much as anything else. It is one which searches for Scotland’s true role in the creation and maintenance of the British Empire and it is one obsessed with the relationship between Henley and my dad, between England and Scotland: an Act of Union which still takes us to war today, back to the killing fields of what I see in my subconscious as the Invisible Empire, one which operates under the guise of various international organisations, treaties, and old friendships.

Garry Walker, an ex-army nurse and Head of Clinical Services at Hollybush House said: “People in the UK just don’t understand the far reaching consequences of war veterans’ trauma. It isn’t just the soldiers—it’s the families who suffer. We now work with carers and have introduced weekend family workshops, where they are encouraged to develop healthy coping strategies for dealing with the ongoing effects that their loved one’s condition has on them”. Garry’s wife Carolyn is also a Nurse Therapist at the treatment centre. She has recently returned from Australia on a Churchill Travelling Fellowship where the wives and families of Vietnam Veterans have set up support groups. With proper financial support Carolyn hopes to set up a similar system here. She said: “The Australian system made me more aware of the lack of resources available to the partners of British ex-servicemen. The Australians have access to a free confidential counselling service, The Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service, and are at the forefront of research into the effects on families”. One study in Australia claims that the sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans may be at increased risk of problematic alcohol or drug use. The Morbidity of Vietnam Veterans Study (1998) found that 36% of veterans who participated, self-reported problematic alcohol and drug use. As a result many sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans may have been brought up in an environment affected by alcohol and other drug use. One of them confesses: “Thinking about the bad times of my childhood is like picking a scab: I always end up bleeding. A lot of my childhood was normal, regular, every day, despite dad’s alcoholism and annual Anzac Day freak out, and mum’s “funny turns” (panic attacks) and “nerve pills” (tranquillisers). The rest of my childhood was bad enough that I suffered a minor nervous breakdown when I was eleven”. Some Australians have even been encouraged to write poetry as a way of getting things off their chests. One writes about his father:

Billy will be on hole watch
A thousand-metre stare
Waiting for the dawn to break
When Charlie won’t be there

Billy will be on hole watch
And as each bottle dries
Very few will understand
Why he sits and cries.

Although no equivalent study yet exists in Scotland or the UK the early signs are that the extreme distress placed on Scottish families is following

a similar pattern. The stories are numerous and shocking: from Iraq to Afghanistan and Bosnia the sons and daughters of Scotland's soldiers cope in silence, some too terrified or embarrassed to reveal the true horror of what has become a psychological war on the home front. But surely, as the silence of this secret war is broken, the true extent of the sins of the fathers and its effects on families and loved ones will finally be told.

Like the narrator's journey to India, the discovery of my own reflective voice has also been an intellectual journey, during which I have explored what I've referred to as the 'cultural amnesia' at the heart of Scotland. It has been a long journey, one in which, at times, it seemed my intentions were overtaken by events. The National Theatre of Scotland's brilliant production *Black Watch* (2007) took the country by storm. Based on interviews conducted by Gregory Burke with former soldiers who served in Iraq, the production reflected the same psychological torture experienced by my dad after Suez. What made it special for me was its refusal to shirk from the raw reality of the part played by our troops in Iraq. In his *Plea for a Scottish Fascism* MacDiarmid himself pointed to the spirit of the Scottish soldier returning from battle as the one that had the power to fashion a fascist consciousness in Scotland. Although *Black Watch* stopped short of examining this aspect, it nonetheless perfectly presented the raw materials MacDiarmid wanted to mould in his imagined utopia of a new Fascist Scotland.

There were other startling developments too. Ken Loach's brilliant cinematic evocation of beautiful brutality in *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* (2006) (written by Paul Laverty) was surely more than a sympathetic look at Republicans in early 20th century Ireland, and two brothers torn apart by the anti-British rebellion. If we accept Orwell's deduction that "fascist" and "bully" are synonymous in the minds of many then the film also depicts the work of the fascist Scots and English Black and Tans, torn and twisted after their experiences at the Somme, as they rape and pillage parts of Ireland. It also brings a stark and uncomfortable realism to MacDiarmid's ideological plea for returning Scottish soldiers to re-claim large swathes of the Highlands in which to settle—in the spirit of a new National Socialism. More importantly (for this investigation) the film momentarily examines the relationship between a bullying English sergeant and a Scots private who obeys him before both men proceed to beat up a Republican suspect (engine driver) at a train station.

There have been, of course, intellectual developments too. In his essay on literature and diversity "Border-Crossing: New Scottish Writing", (2007) Willy Maley points to emerging Scottish Asian writers who consider Scotland to be a colonised rather than a colonising country. Maley

politely describes this as “complicating the picture of Scotland” before acknowledging the “Scotland as a colonising country too” perspective. If my thesis achieves anything it is to at least try to counter the “cultural amnesia” of what may be considered over simplistic perceptions of Scottishness. During my research, I have also questioned the cultural psychology of such deductions. As Robina Qureshi says, we should at least admit our racism, as should Pakistanis.

I’ll conclude with a confession. While I have examined the complexity of my reflective voice uncovered in the process of creating semi-autobiography, the highly personalised nature of the findings are, in-fact, partly false. This is, in-fact, *Scotland’s Secret War*, a world where many loved ones live in silence, shouldering the stress of dads newly returned from Afghanistan, the Falklands and Northern Ireland. In those wives and children I’d found living examples of the enforced “cultural amnesia” I’d theorised about. Not only that, I’d discovered that fear and loyalty played their parts in these kids choosing to bottle up the experiences of their fathers. To me this was more than just a piece of investigative journalism. It was an intellectual investigation, one in which I rediscovered the schizophrenic temperament and voice of fascism. Filled with emotion, these men weep, then hate and love with equal intensity, their wartime experiences driving them to impassioned pleas for a better Scotland. At times their semi-hallucinatory states are peppered with weird foreign words and place names. They speak of family, of love and war, of nation and loyalty. I’d found the voice of my father. It was the one that haunted me as a child and inspired me as an adult. There were other developments that, in a way, overtook the writing of this thesis. The locations for my research were the golf clubs, pubs and bowling clubs of what I describe as “the upper working class”. I wanted to prove in concrete terms that the extreme solutions voiced to Scotland’s problems were not merely the stuff of fiction in *Hunting Captain Henley*, or restricted to “special institutions” like Hollybush House, but that they actually existed in real life, on our streets, in our parks, in our housing schemes. I wanted to experiment with the idea of *actualising* the fictional “political positioning” of Uncle Alex and Uncle Ron in *Hunting Captain Henley*. That very opportunity arose when I met Dannie Lennie. Dannie is chairman of the Dalmuir Multi-Tenants and Residents Association in Clydebank, where I presently live. Dannie is pals with men like welder Terry Hamilton and electrician Jim Campbell. He told me about a form of “class war” that was emerging in Clydebank. As Dannie himself said, it survived Hitler’s Blitz and Thatcher’s economics, but residents are turning vigilante because their town is becoming a “dumping ground” for Glasgow’s social underclass. Dannie knows the flats in the area well and says he has witnessed a “degrading” decline in living conditions. It was the

pitch and tone of Dannie's language (and that of his friends) that led me to interview them in some depth. What I discovered was a language (and a mindset) that is rarely if ever reported in the mainstream press. They are the men who define an almost 'old fashioned' working class pride for the entire nation. They too are bristling with emotion: anger at the political correctness of a society they feel restricts their human rights, their right to free speech, in favour of the new influx of "junkies" and "wasters" who repress them in their communities. Dannie wants to 'round them up' and imprison them on a remote island off the West Coast of Scotland. He isn't the only one. Other men, sick at what they see as the repeated infringement of decency in what used to be a proud community, speak of even more radical solutions. Their language isn't just the fictional language of Uncle Alex or Uncle Ron in *Hunting Captain Henley*. It is the marginalised language of many men in Scotland today. It is the fascist voice of the new culturally repressed. The story I wrote, entitled "Class War in Clydebank" (Big Issue: January 2008) failed to capture the true emotion of the voices. In some ways, it represents the real limitations of journalism in its failure to capture the intensity of these men's thoughts and opinions. In his description of "the Glasgow man" in *The Heart of Scotland* George Blake says the Glasgow man is "downright, unpolished, direct and immediate. He has the furious quality of the Scot in its most extreme form. He can be terribly dangerous in revolt and as terribly strong in defence of his own conception of order" (p. 112) This man could be the perfect fascist. He is, as MacDiarmid described him in his "Plea for a Scottish Fascism" a "lawless believer in law, a rebel believer in authority."

In the course of my research I have carried this quote from MacDiarmid close to my heart. Many of the men I have befriended on the golf courses and bowling clubs (the last place you might expect to find revolutionary politics) fit the description well. Scotland is the home of golf, and many club golfers are sticklers for the rules. The Royal Scottish Golf Union laws are fiercely, some may argue fanatically applied. Yet incumbent on every golfer is the requirement to play the game in his own style, free from any restraints. It is that rebel spirit which is welcomed in most of our clubhouses. It is then a fiercely individualistic sub-culture that demands the same standards from everyone for the greater good of the club. It is also a bringer together of the classes: a place where men weekly cast aside class differences to overcome the often harsh Scottish weather and to share a dram and a chat in the warmth of the clubhouse afterwards. Where else could a dentist, a plumber, a doctor, and an electrician engage in steamy debate about the state-of-the-nation? And where else is the refreshing zest of political incorrectness allowed to flourish? To me, these men represent MacDiarmid's "rebel believers in authority". Rightly

or wrongly, their views have been sidelined, dangerously marginalised by a Scottish Government obsessed with political correctness and driven, it often seems, by a desire to ‘neuter the intellect’ of the Scottish male.

As a writer I have at least tried to re-engage with that spirit. Other writers should too. At a time when the Scottish National Party has won complete political dominance in our wee nation, it is our responsibility to fill the gap left by our weak willed politicians and those mainstream journalists chained to self-censorship. This has to happen if we are to connect with, as Margery McCulloch calls it in her introduction to *Modernism and Nationalism* (2004) “the regeneration of the social, economic and political life of the nation”. (p. xiii). The Scottish fascist spirit MacDiarmid sought isn’t dead. It beats in the heart of many Scots (see Pratt, 2010). But it is a spirit that has been ignored because of its post Hitler political incorrectness. Also, its heart is not purely that of the racist British or English National Party. It is one that stands for clarity of Scottish identity, for an intelligent, highly organised, no-nonsense decency which overrides the brute instincts often associated with other debased forms of fascism. It is also one that connects with Alan Riach’s point in “The Scottish Renaissance” that “Scots became both the victims and the perpetrators of Empire itself”. In the end I never found Henley. What I did discover, however, was the project he had once worked on shortly before his death in Beggar’s Colony, a leper colony in Bangalore. My journey through India gave me time and space to contemplate my dad’s real relationship with the Englishman I had so obsessively tracked down. Like the railway bridges and steam engines engrained with the names of both Scottish and English engineers, my own consciousness remains strangely riveted to our sometimes brutal yet wildly romantic adventures rooted in Empire.

It is this duality of experience, and with it, our national reflective voice, that the new generation of Scots must surely acknowledge and carry forth with them into the 21st century.

REFERENCES

- Brown, Kathryn. *Heidegger’s Doubling of Myth: The Attractions of Fascism*. Gordonsville, VA: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. London/New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Castillo, Robert. *Fascists of The Final Hour: Fascism, Aesthetics and Culture*, London: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Dasenbrock, Reed Way. *Wyndham Lewis’s Fascist Imagination: Fascism Aesthetics and Culture*, London: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Golsan, Richard. *Henry de Montherland: Fascism, Aesthetics and Culture*, London: University Press of New England, 1992.

- Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit*. Germany: Tubinger. 1984.
- Hesse, Silke. *Fascism and the Hypertrophy of Male Adolescence: The Attractions of Fascism*. Gordonsville, VA: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1990.
- Hunt, Celia. *Therapeutic Dimensions of Autobiography in Creative Writing*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2000.
- MacDiarmid, Hugh. *Selected Prose*. Manchester: Carcanet, 1992.
- McCulloch, Marjory. *Modernism and Nationalism*. Glasgow: Glasgow University, ASLS, 2004.
- Milful, John. *My Sex The Revolver: The Attractions of Fascism*. Gordonsville, VA: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1990.
- Noll, Dieter. *The Adventures of Werner Holt*. Berlin: Weimar, 1960.
- Orwell, George. *What is Fascism?* London: Tribune, 1944.
- Perez, Janet. *Fascist Models and Literary Subversion: Fascism, Aesthetics and Culture*. London: University Press of New England, 1992.
- Pratt, Kenneth. *Hunting Captain Henley*. Self Publish Books, 2010: ASIN: B008BT2CHG.
- Riesman, David. *The Lonely Crowd*. Yale: New Haven, 1958.
- Shute, Chris. *Compulsory Schooling Disease*. Nottingham: Educational Heretics Press, 1993.
- Svend, Ranulf. *Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology*. Schocken Books, New York: 1964.
- Young, Allan. *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dr. Ken Pratt is a Lecturer in Journalism at UWS (University of the West of Scotland). He was previously a news reporter and finalist at the Guardian International Development Journalism Awards for his disturbing reportage from DR Congo and Uganda. His work uses personal experiences to explore a hidden narrative behind the reporter's prose.

He received a Ph(D) from Glasgow University for his first novel *Hunting Captain Henley*, described by one Professor of Literature as being as good as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The book was selected by the American Comparative Literature Association for inclusion in its 2011 conference in Vancouver where it was described as "insightful and inspirational".

<http://www.mylivebook.co.uk/MyLiveBook/HuntingCaptainHenley/index.html>