

Daniel Shand – Proposal – Saltire Travel Bursary 2016

Both of the novels I have written so far have been set in Scotland. In my third, I hope to broaden the focus of my work and produce a more international story. This third novel, provisionally titled *The Pilgrim*, will follow a historian that travels to a fictional Central European city in order to interview a mysterious stranger, known only as ‘the Professor’ – a man who claims to have been present during the most harrowing moments in his country’s history. At this very early stage I am yet to iron out the novel’s entire plot but I envision the historian, despite his best intentions, being drawn in to the stranger’s memories (or perhaps lies), putting his relationship and employment at risk. This underdog protagonist, desperate both to impress and maintain his academic reputation, will disregard his training and follow the stranger blindly; such are the value of the stranger’s recollections. *The Pilgrim* will ask questions about the authenticity of belief and storytelling, while maintaining the voice I have built up in my work – one that is, I hope, both sardonic and terse.

In securing a 2016 Saltire bursary, I would hope to spend an extended period of time in Berlin next summer, using the funds for travel and accommodation. A significant component of the novel will rely on my understanding of European history and I will therefore visit institutions such as the Museum of European Cultures, as well as the Stasi Museum, Jewish Museum, and the Topography of Terror. I can’t help but feel this is an important time to invest in UK-European bonds and I would also like to visit with organisations like The Reader Berlin to investigate how they develop their visitors’ writing practice.

Outside of this research, being in the city itself will be a huge boon to my work on *The Pilgrim*, allowing me to write truthfully about the setting and people my characters will encounter. While the novel could certainly be successful without this first-hand research, I feel it will give my writing an authenticity that will be otherwise unavailable to me writing from Scotland.

I was very excited when I became aware of this opportunity as, if successful, I will be undertaking a similar journey to the protagonist of *The Pilgrim* – travelling to mainland Europe and undertaking local research. This travel and research will itself inform *The Pilgrim*'s plot. As such, the requirement to produce a blog and/or provide social media updates would be very attractive to me and, as a creative writer, I would like to investigate the possibility of turning these into a project in their own right – perhaps submitting fictionalised versions of events containing their own internal narrative – though I appreciate this may not quite cover the function you look for in these updates.