REMEMBERING IN THE BRITISH FICTION OF THE 1930S

Értekezés a doktori (Ph.D.) fokozat megszerzése érdekében
az **Irodalomtudományok** tudományágban

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Én, Tukacs Tamás, teljes felelősségem tudatában kijelentem, hogy a benyújtott értekezés a szerzői jog nemzetközi normáinak tiszteletben tartásával készült. Jelen értekezést korábban más intézményben nem nyújtottam be, és azt nem utasították el.

Doktori (PhD) értekezés

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The present dissertation addresses the paradoxical nature of remembering in the context of the British fiction of the 1930s. It specifically examines authors belonging to the "Auden generation," as Samuel Hynes defined them in his basic study (1972), novelists born roughly in the first decade of the twentieth century, and their problematic relationship to the past as it surfaces in their novels. It is remarkable how much the otherwise acute generational consciousness of these writers was formed, among others, by an almost pathological clinging to past experiences, arising from the fact that this generation, and the whole of the 1930s as a decade, in fact, can be defined as an in-between, parenthesised, belated and, in many respects, unplaceable phenomenon, a kind of "no-man's land" between the two world wars and between the first, classic generation of high modernism and the post-1945 one. The focus of the dissertation will be one of the determining experiences of the late-modern generation: the ambivalent relation between the compulsion to break from the oppression of the past, to deny the achievements and the role of their elders and literary predecessors and, at the same time, their inability to escape from the equally tormenting influence of the past. This awareness of the awkward place of the generation and their ambivalent relationship to the past can be best examined by putting into focus certain modes of misremembering. The theoretical nodes of the dissertation will be three such maladies of remembering: trauma, melancholia and nostalgia. All three of these notions are able to conceptualise the subject's inability to respond to the past in a "healthy" manner: in trauma, the patient re-experiences and unconsciously repeats or enacts painful past events; in the case of melancholia, the subject clings to a loss, unable to perform an act of mourning; and in the case of a nostalgic occurrence, the person yearns for a place or a period conceived of as the plenitude of meaningful existence and, unable to return to it, suffers in the present. The common points of these approaches – the cessation of an unproblematic relation with the past, the dialectics of the inability to recover significant past experiences, the sense of being invaded by what is supposed to have been passed by, being fixated on the present, the impossibility to break out from a frustrating present situation – are suitable to describe the in-between-ness, the temporal, contingent and provisional nature of the general sentiment pervading much of the fiction of the 1930s.

Naturally, the scope of the present dissertation is not sufficient to give an account of 1930s fiction as a whole, not even from the aspect of the maladies of remembering. Nor is it possible here to make generalised statements as regards the role of remembering in the

entirety of the chosen literary historical period, not to mention more profound theoretical assumptions as regards remembering, trauma, melancholia or nostalgia as clinical or philosophical problems. This dissertation does not aim, either, at reconsidering the existing canon of the 1930s, it does not want to include forgotten or neglected voices, paying attention to political, artistic, gender, etc. considerations, only at times to shade the existing consensus as to who may be validated as discussable within the "Auden generation." Therefore, I have selected three authors of the period, Henry Green, Christopher Isherwood and James Hilton, the examination of whose novels in the 1930s (in the case of Green and Hilton, in the early 1940s), carried out within the above-mentioned theoretical framework, may bring one closer to the understanding of the problematic nature of remembering in the period. The selected triad of the malfunctions of remembering, in addition, may prove particularly apt for a reading of certain periods of Green's, Isherwood's and Hilton's oeuvre.

In spite of the growing critical interest in 1930s British literature, the years between 1929 and 1939 still seem a blind spot in literary criticism and a sort of "no man's land" in literary histories. Various attempts have been made to identify and canonise this extremely heterogeneous "in-between" period, from Samuel Hynes's milestone study of the Auden generation (1972), through Bernard Bergonzi's (1978), John Lucas's (ed., 1978) and Richard Johnstone's (1982) attempts, to more recent (r)evaluations of the 1930s, such as Valentine Cunningham's monumental *British Writers of the Thirties* (1988), studies of James Gindin (1992), Janet Montefiore (1995), John Baxendale and Christopher Pawling (1996), Patrick Quinn (1996), Keith Williams and Steven Matthews (1997) and Anthony Shuttleworth (ed, 2003), just to name a few. While studies in the 1970s tended to examine the political context of the 1930s writings (Hynes, *The Auden Generation*; Bergonzi, *Reading the Thirties: Texts and Contexts*; Lucas [ed.], *The 1930s: A Challenge to Orthodoxy*), the late 80s and 1990s brought a renaissance in thirties studies by discovering new perspectives (although Cunningham's monumental synthesis, published in 1988, is unique in the sense that it identifies the basic motifs of the literature of the period, regardless of class or gender distinctions). Contemporary critical evaluations of the 1930s seem to be preoccupied with rediscovering, situating and canonising forgotten or marginalised voices, which entails an ongoing "rewriting" of the decade. Janet Montefiore's study (*Men and Women Writers of the 1930s* [1995]) lifts female authors into the 30s canon, its greatest merit being that it is careful not to privilege any particular group of authors. Recent studies of the 1930s, however, still appear to work on the sole of principle revising the 1930s canon. Williams and Matthew's *Rewriting the Thirties: Modernism and After* (1997) emphasises the very impossibility of canonising the 1930s, taking examples from fiction, poetry and drama alike, proving how

individual authors systematically undermined the 30s myth forged by Auden, Spender and Isherwood. An overwhelming part of Shuttleworth's (ed.) *And In Our Time: Vision, Revision and the British Writing of the 1930s* (2003) concentrates on marginalised voices (mainly female), neglected genres (the thriller) and peripheral national literatures (e.g., Scottish) but also discusses iconic authors such as Orwell. The greatest problem is that these studies do not apply one clear criterion of selection. This is especially true of the studies of James Gindin (*British Fiction in the 1930s* [1992]) and Patrick Quinn (ed.) (*Recharting the Thirties* [1996]), both bringing together radically different authors. By this point it is probably legitimate to step beyond the effort of broadening the canon and vindicating marginalised authors and genres, and it is time to begin to address thematic, cultural and political issues without getting bogged down in the question of canon. That is why I have chosen a central theme which is relevant for the whole period and is able to provide a more or less homogeneous backdrop for my dissertation. [1]

I intend to place my dissertation in the twofold theoretical framework of (mainly Freudian) psychoanalysis and cultural studies. Since my aim is not to give a survey of individual authors' oeuvres, but examine a period from a definite perspective, I use the individual novels and non-fiction as examples of a certain phenomenon in a given literary historical context. Correspondingly, my dissertation, like the texts investigated in it, will display a constant oscillation between the personal and collective dimensions. I do not, naturally, wish to neglect the close reading and careful text-centred inspection of the corpus of the investigation, but on the whole I want to concentrate on a given period rather than on the revaluation of the oeuvres of its authors.

The dissertation begins with a survey of certain writers of the period from the point of view of the framework of trauma, melancholia and nostalgia. Although, with such a limited number of authors and texts, one has to be especially wary of making generalised statements about "the" 1930s as a whole, yet, three more or less universal claims will be attempted in Chapter 2, pertaining to the period and different groups of authors. Referring to trauma, I am going to assert that this mode of misremembering becomes emphatic in the discussed decade due to the generation's missed experience of the Great War. One may risk the hypothesis that the traumatic idiom, surfacing in both fiction and non-fiction of the examined writers, served, in a vicarious manner, mainly through creating a myth of the public school, to counterbalance this missed trauma of the First World War experienced by the previous generation. As one may judge on the basis of the examination of a certain section of the period's writing, this

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[1] To my best knowledge, the only study of the late-modern period from this perspective is Victoria Stewart's *Narratives of Memory: British Writing of the 1940s*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

malady of remembering seems to be determining in the 30s pieces of Henry Green, Graham Greene, Stephen Spender and Edward Upward. The second suggestion will be made in connection with the melancholic idiom of the time: this mode of misremembering affected the authors of the decade who made a point of not following the stylistic, poetic and aesthetic assumptions of the previous, "high modernist" generation, which is plainly visible in the styles of their novels. The conscious rejection of the cult of depth, of aesthetic totalisation and Proustian epiphanic moments of remembering, the deliberate fixation on surfaces, clipped and laconic dialogues, the calculatedly reserved fictional language found its way, through the melancholically employed tropes of metonymy and allegory, into the thirties novels of Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh and Christopher Isherwood. According to this hypothesis, it is through the idiom of melancholia, the inability to perform a work of mourning, clinging to experience of loss that the detached, observant and surface-bound narratorial attitude emerges in the 1930s novels of these writers. The third claim, following Nicholas Dames's and Susan Stewart's notions of the difference between pathological and "healthy" nostalgia, contrasts these two modes of the inability to come to terms with the past within the framework of the 1930s. This claim suggests that the latter kind of nostalgia interrogates diverse attitudes concerning notions of the "organic," "healthy" and typically English countryside as posited against the image of the city, traditionally conceived as corrupted and sinful (as exemplified in the work of J. B. Priestley), while the former sort of nostalgia serves to express a more characteristic attitude of the 1930s, the sick yearning for an allegedly more meaningful past place and time in the romances of Daphne du Maurier and James Hilton.

After giving a summary of the theories employed in the dissertation in Chapter 3, I am going to go on to briefly examine George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939), which I conceive of both as an allegory and a symptom of the decade's controversial relationship to the past, mainly as regards its interrogation of the Proustian scheme of profound, metaphysical and epiphanic kind of remembering and its questioning the validity of nostalgia on the threshold of the Second World War. The following three chapters scrutinise the thirties and early forties writings of Henry Green, Christopher Isherwood and James Hilton, from the aspects of trauma, melancholia and nostalgia, respectively. Examining Green's *Party Going* (1939) and *Caught* (1943), I concentrate on the in-between, transitory, temporally suspended situations that the novels create, interpreted as scenarios of post-traumatic states, enacting the invasion of the present by the past (through the metaphors of water and fire, respectively) and on the characters' attempt to cope with these extraordinary occurrences. As regards Isherwood's *Mr Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), my focus lies in the narrator's melancholic evocation of his pre-1933 Berlin experiences and his clinging to

this profound experience of the loss of the city representing freedom and liberalism for him, especially with the employment of the metaphor of photography as an essentially melancholic method of recording what is becoming past. In Chapter 7, I examine James Hilton's romances written in the 1930s and early 1940s, *Lost Horizon* (1933), *Goodbye Mr Chips* (1934), *We Are Not Alone* (1937) and *Random Harvest* (1941), which contrast "healthily" nostalgic narrators and pathologically nostalgic protagonists.

Summarising the above, I am going to attempt to identify three kinds of maladies of remembering in the analysed texts, referring the traumatic/melancholic/nostalgic world, as constituted in the novels; characters affected by these malfunctions of remembering; and (in the case of the former two, at least) scrutinise the characteristic features of the kind of language generated by trauma and melancholia.

2. Trauma, Melancholia and Nostalgia in the Fiction of the 1930s

2. 1. "The War Wound Never Received": the Traumatized Generation

The most forceful and enduring memory of the majority of the members of the (male) literary generation born roughly between 1900 and 1907 was the Great War, in which, due to their age, they could not participate, and thus they obtained no first-hand experience about it, but the after-effects of which left a permanent mark (or scar) on their literary production. As Henry Green puts it in his autobiography *Pack My Bag* (begun in 1938 and published in 1940), right in the first sentence, "I was born […] in 1905, three years after one war and nine before another, too late for both" (1). The members of this generation soon began to feel "as though the war had in some way pre-empted them" (North 7). As in his autobiography *Lions and Shadows: An Education on the Twenties* (1938), Christopher Isherwood formulates, "we young writers of the middle 'twenties were all suffering, more or less subconsciously, from the feeling of shame that we hadn't been old enough to take part in the European war" (46). The traumatising effect of the Great War is all the more paradoxical since the members of this generation were only indirectly affected by it; they suffered no personal injuries, they were not forced to fight, but were compelled to remain passive spectators of the nation's catastrophe – the most typical scene occurring in most autobiographies is the memory of reading out names of the dead heroes in the school chapel or in the classroom.

Loss and bereavement surrounded these authors everywhere: by the end of the First World War, some 80,000 cases of shell-shock had been treated in the units of the Royal Army Medical Corps in Britain and some 200,000 veterans received pensions for nervous disorders after the war (Edkins 1). Interestingly, however, it was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that war literature, memoirs, collections of letters, autobiographies[2] – the symbolic gesture of coming to terms with the painful event – began to be published in England (a gesture that will be repeated by the younger authors in the late 30s and early 40s in the remarkably great number of autobiographies or fictional autobiographies[3]). The members of the Auden generation, to borrow Valentine Cunningham's metaphor, each had to become little Hamlets, suffering from the "cult of the dead" and the older generation's unrejectable dictum as if coming from a gigantic Ghost: "Remember!" (*British* 48). The two typical figures that had been engraved in the generation's memory were the Lost Father/Brother and the Shell-Shocked Soldier. The whole attitude of the generation can metaphorically be conceived of as that of young Hamlet, wanting to remain faithful to the memory of their elders, but also wishing to live their own lives, trying to avoid the tyranny of memory. It is as if the whole thirties were delayed, hesitating, protesting against the destructive voice in their heads, because, as Kirby Farrell puts it, "living through his son, the ghostly father would nullify him" (182).

The consequence of this generation's belatedness[4] and insubstantiality was that they ended up forming a rather paradoxical relationship with the past. Yet, however much the writers of the 30s generation wanted to break free from the past, they could not help remembering (or, more precisely, repeating almost obsessively) their earlier, mainly infantile and adolescent experiences.

The whole generational feeling of these male authors can largely be traced back to the missed experience of the war, and so, as Robert Wohl asserts, "the generational ideal feeds on a sense of discontinuity and disconnection from the past" (cited by North 6). On the one hand, they desired to forget, to execute, to use Cecil Day Lewis's lines from *The Magnetic*

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[2] Ford Madox Ford, *Parade's End* (1924-8); R. C. Sheriff, *Journey's End* (1928); Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928); Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That* (1929); Richard Aldington, *The Death of a Hero* (1929); E. M. Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929); James Hanley, *Man in Darkness* (1930); Henry Williamson, *The Patriot's Progress* (1930); Frederic Manning, *Her Privates We* (1930)

[3] Christopher Isherwood, *Lions and Shadows* (1937); W. H. Auden, *Letter to Lord Byron* (1937); C. D. Lewis, *Starting Point* (1937); Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise* (1938); Edward Upward, *Journey to the Border* (1938); Louis MacNeice, *Autumn Journal* (1938); Henry Green, *Pack My Bag* (1940); Stephen Spender, *September Journal* (1940) and *The Backward Son* (1940).

[4] In his *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom generalises this belatedness as a basic constituent of creation: "Cultural belatedness is never acceptable to a major writer […]. Belatedness seems to me not a historical condition at all, but one that belongs to the literary situation as such" (xxv).

Mountain, "the break with the past, the major operation."[5] Their predominant desire was, in one way or another, to do away with the past, or at least, safely remember it by turning it into memory (and thus safely relegating it to forgetting), both on the personal level and in the realm of art. As Henry Green describes the general sentiment after the Armistice: "we may have revolted against fear but it is more likely we thought for once the world was ours who were so young we did not have to mourn the dead" (*Pack My Bag* 68). For the Auden generation, this desire to forget was also supplicated by the nagging question how to deal with its literary past, what (or how much) it should "cut off" in the "major operation" and how to work against the "anxiety of influence" (Cunningham, "Age of Anxiety" 11). As Harold Bloom, the inventor of the term puts it, "the dead may or may not return, but their voice comes alive, paradoxically, never by mere imitation, but in the agonistic misprision performed upon by powerful forerunners by only the most gifted of their successors" (xxiv). The era of the Auden generation may indeed be seen as a series of performative acts that involved "immense anxieties of indebtedness" (Bloom 5), enacting the struggle against the anxiety caused by the presence of strong literary parents, and besides, the period's popular use of psychoanalytic discourse may also be indicative of the powerful oedipal conflict fought with modernist predecessors towering above them. The Auden group attempted to turn against its literary predecessors, most notably, T. S. Eliot, by "deconstructing" the agenda of modernism and subverting high modernism's literary orthodoxy by introducing particularising details, the technique of private allusions as a means of exclusion, self-conscious performances, and by denying the myth of modernist depth (Smith 54-56). On the other hand, however, this generation had to recognise painfully that the past cannot be obliterated with these enthusiastic and to some extent adolescent gestures, for the Auden group did continue to be influenced by modernist poetry (Bergonzi 108). They ended up in a situation that could be described as the dead-end of trauma, the no-man's land between remembering and forgetting, past and present. However they wished the trauma of the Great War (the older generation and their own childhood and adolescence traumatized by the war) to become part of the past, painful memories simply would not go away.[6]

The basic dilemma of this generation, as pointed out by Virginia Woolf in "The Leaning Tower" was that, being born after the Victorian Age, they could not make use of any stable past to reach back to, they were forced to write looking out of a "leaning tower": "But

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[5] "They that take the bribe shall perish by the bribe, / Dying of dry rot, ending in asylums, / A curse to children, a charge on the state. / But still their fears and frenzies infect us; / Drug nor isolation will cure this cancer: / It is now or never, the hour of the knife, / The break with the past, the major operation." (161-2)

[6] Green generalises this experience in *Pack My Bag* by referring to his school days: "It seems to be that everyone under the age of forty and in some cases many for the rest of their lives are influenced by what they went through at school and this was of course largely made up of the growing pains they suffered or enjoyed" (111).

what a difference in the tower itself, in what they saw from the tower! When they looked at human life what did they see? Everywhere change; everywhere revolution. In Germany, in Russia, in Italy, in Spain, all the old hedges were being rooted up; all the old towers were being thrown to the ground" (167). In the 1930s, only those authors resorted to the nostalgic mode who were not, strictly speaking, members of, or were working at the periphery of, the Auden generation: James Hilton, dramatising the conflict of generations by juxtaposing two different modes of nostalgia, George Orwell, illustrating the desire for but also the futility of nostalgia in *Coming Up for Air* (1939) and J. B. Priestley, presenting a Fielding-like, nostalgic panorama of England, contrasting the countryside and London in his novels, all three of them focusing on an idealised, pastoral, rural and "organic" vision of England. According to James Gindin, the authors of the 1930s, sceptical about any contemporary coherence, dominated by the shock, pain and sense of betrayal caused by the First World War, needed to invent or recall stable pasts (21). This, however, seemed impossible for most of them; consequently, they expressed the general attitude of the generation that entered the dead-end of remembering in various ways that can be interpreted as traumatic responses to and symptoms of the temporal dislocation of the 1930s.

To what extent, however, can the label "traumatic" be seen as more than a vague metaphor of a troubled relationship to the (personal and collective) past? Can these moods of expression be said to conform to the psychoanalytical notion of trauma? Can we see the features of the writing of the 1930s generation as displaying "traumatic" symptoms in a psychoanalytic sense? Although we must be wary of such transpositions, the starting point of my investigation is that "trauma" is a rewarding critical metaphor in the analysis of 30s fiction, one that helps unravel the textual strategies of this body of literature.

First of all, the writing of the Auden generation is replete with feelings of guilt, shame, inferiority, the sense of failure, fear, being neglected and isolated, the typical symptoms a traumatised victim shows. Most writers of the period, Bradbury points out, "shared, it seemed, a guilty self-suppression, a sense of betraying or having betrayed" (226). This sense of guilt originated, on the one hand, from their awkward class positions, being educated at public schools and then some of them attempting to foster left-wing sympathies in the politically committed 1930s. In his autobiography, Henry Green largely focuses on his personal guilt, caused by the alleged uselessness of his class: "I had a sense of guilt whenever I spoke to someone who did manual work. As was said in those days I had a complex and in the end it drove me to go to work in a factory with my wet podgy hands" (*Pack My Bag* 130-1). In Isherwood's *Mr Norris Changes Trains*, the narrator also gives an ironic self-description: "A young bourgeois intellectual, he thought. Enthusiastic, within certain limits. Educated, with

certain limits. Capable of response if appealed to in terms of his own class-language. Of some small use: everybody can do something" (67). It is especially in *Journey to the Border* (1938) and *In the Thirties* (1962) that Edward Upward's heroes also struggle with their inability to find a suitable class position for themselves; both novels present a more or less neurotic tutor struggling between fantasies, imagination and political commitment. In the latter novel, the main character, Allan Sebrill, ponders: "It was that he might never have the nerve to make a contact with the Communists. How could he, a bourgeois misfit, a favoured weakling who in spite of his expensive education and many other undeserved advantages had become a wretched failure, presumed to ask to associate with people who […] had not succumbed but fought back?" (*In the Thirties* 42). Stephen Spender also gives a similar argument in his autobiography *World Within World* (1951):

> From notes which I keep at this time […] I find that there were two things which incessantly preoccupied me. One was the problem of the freedom of the individual […]. The other was the problem of the sense of guilt. For if, on the one hand, the Communists told me that my sense of freedom was only a projection of the interests of the bourgeois class, there was also the Freudian argument which told me that I only troubled about these things out of a sense of guilt. Rid myself of guilt, and I would no longer worry about my privileged position in society. (137)

Another source of this sense of guilt, the sense of being betrayed and of inadequacy is deeply rooted in the education of the generation. For the majority of its members, the most determining emotions at school were also guilt, shame and embarrassment. As a child, for instance, Henry Green had written a sermon about Peter, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, and was also fascinated by the story of Judas (see *Pack My Bag* 15-6). The leading note, as Green confesses in his autobiography, is "shame remembered" (102)[7]. This excessive sentiment of fear coupled with shame and guilt led to a highly confessional mode of writing of the generation (expressed in the unusual number of autobiographies and memoirs between 1937 and 1940), which attempts to make sense, order and narrate the basic emotion of this generation, as if in a talking cure manner (to borrow Green's metaphor, chewing it over until "thick with one's spittle" [*Pack My Bag* 5]). The sentiment of being betrayed exerted such a powerful influence on Graham Greene that he interprets several moments of the Second World War in his autobiography within the framework of the public school: "My elder

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[7] Jeremy Treglown points out that Green had originally intended to entitle his autobiography "Shame Remembered" (120).

brother Raymond was a school prefect and head of the house – in other words one of Quisling's collaborators" (*A Sort of Life* 55); later he also notes "But I was not a member of the resistance – I was Quisling's son (59). Elsewhere the excitement of hiding from the look of the elders, the fear of being discovered and the guilt arising from this, are connected to a similar episode in the Second World War: "So in my sixties I seem able to smell the leaves and grasses of my hiding-place more certainly than I hear the dangerous footsteps on the path or see the countryman's boots pass by on the level of my eyes. I remember how in 1944 I spent a rather guilty night of security in Berkhamsted away from the fly-bombs and the fire-watching with my brother Hugh" (56-7).

The third, and perhaps most important, source of this sentiment of being guilty and betrayed was the generation's inability to participate in the Great War. For Isherwood, this feeling of being left out, neglected generated the most intense feelings of guilt and shame: "Like most of my generation, I was obsessed by a complex of terrors and longings connected with the idea 'War' 'War,' in this purely neurotic sense, meant The Test. The Test of your courage, of your maturity, of your sexual prowess: 'Are you really a Man?' Subconsciously, I believe, I longed to be subjected to this test; but I also dreaded failure" (*Lions and Shadows* 46). However, it was precisely these tormenting feelings that set a barrier to the confession of trauma. Although the greatest obstacle of the healing of the wounds caused by trauma seems to be trauma itself, there may exist two other, equally strong barriers: fear and shame (Heller 15). All traumatic experiences, as Ágnes Heller writes, is the experience of isolation and impotence, and even if the subject manages to fight these experiences, there is the constant fear that once this battle will not be won, that "one fails the test" (17). Trauma often leads to passivity, impotence, a feeling of weakness, loss of freedom, lack of self-esteem, which gives rise to the sense of guilt; all of which are perfectly appropriate as descriptions of the 1930s generation.

The constant sense of fear, guilt and shame, however, must not be confused with trauma; these emotions are not traumatic in themselves. Although in the individual lives of 1930s authors several events may have proved to be traumatic[8], and many of their experiences (like public school education) were not so much generational as class-based, yet the real origin, "the primal scene" that gave rise to the pervasive sense of guilt was their strange

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[8] Montefiore points out that the childhoods of all the members of Auden's circle were "darkened by the loss or disappearance of a parent. Isherwood's father was killed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916, Louis MacNeice and C. Day Lewis lost their mothers in early childhood, while Spender's semi-invalid mother died when he was twelve. Although neither Auden nor Connolly was actually orphaned, both suffered severely from their parents' absence […]. Their autobiographical case-studies barely hint at these traumas. […] Yet even allowing for the numbing effect of boarding school on young boys' family feelings, such traumatic events must have scarred these men" (50-1).

"survival" of the First World War, which, paradoxically, may have turned to be even more traumatising than the missing wound itself. In Henry Green's short story entitled "Mr Jonas" (1941) the protagonist is rescued in a fire operation, "unassisted once he had been released, out of unreality into something temporarily worse, *apparently unhurt*, but now in all probability suffering from shock, […] *to live again* whoever he might be, this Mr Jonas" (Yorke, ed. 89, emphasis mine). The members of this neglected generation thus were the survivors of a special kind of "trauma," they were thrown into "something temporarily worse," they had "to live again" and feel ashamed of the death of their elders and betters while they stayed alive. As Henry Green writes, "we thought for once the world was ours who were so young we did not have to mourn the dead, who did not guess the price we in turn have to pay for other boys to celebrate the victory by" (*Pack My Bag* 68). My argument is that what traumatised the 1930s generation, including Green, was "the war wound […] never received" (North 29) and the experience of survival provided by the war heroes, which they continued to live up to in their fiction.

Apart from the mere expression of guilt and shame, the writers belonging to the Auden group often performed symptomatic repetitions of the original trauma of survival. Trauma is generally supposed to resist narration, linearity and symbolic representation, thus the attempt to fight and work through trauma frequently leads to repetition and transference symptoms.[9] They could not help pathologically returning to the experience of the First World War: Sigfried Sassoon's statement, although he was not a member of the younger generation, may stand for the whole atmosphere of the 1930s: he felt his life severed into two parts by the Great War, maintaining that "postwar life exists only as a long meditation on that material" (quoted by North 32). Trauma creates the narration's symbolic time, but at the same time it demolishes temporality, once and for all separating two periods, what happened before and the aftermath (Bényei, "Sebek" 359-60). The lives described by the Auden generation are radically severed in this fashion, characterised by a retrospective air (North 32). A typically symbolic act was a conscious, "performative regression" to infantile and adolescent states, perfectly expressed in Cyril Connolly's "theory of permanent adolescence," formulated in his *Enemies of Promise* (1938): "the experiences undergone by boys at the great public schools, their glories and disappointments are so intense as to dominate their lives and to arrest their development" (253). As Rod Mengham points out in connection with Green's novel *Caught*, regression to infantile security haunts the writing of the entire period (*Idiom* 73), most frequently expressed by a regression into public school experience, the authors and fictional

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[9] See e.g., Caruth, ed. 16, 63-4, 134; Edkins 214; Hodgkin and Radstone, "Introduction" 6; Antze 120; Caruth 4, 7, Leys 32-3, etc.

characters imagining themselves as schoolboys again. One could say that the distorting effect of public school education, although shared both by preceding and subsequent generations, became a distinctly and typically generational experience for this particular group of upper-middle class writers.

It is difficult to mention any (male) author who was not formed in one sense or another by the public school experience.[10] These upper-middle class authors "spent a good deal of their literary energy excoriating the public schools that they thought had largely imprisoned and formed them" (Gindin 9). As Richard Johnstone points out, "schooldays became a touchstone by which [Waugh, Spender, Isherwood and Orwell] judged and defined the experience of later life, and became, too, in many cases a rich source of personal mythology" (15). For Isherwood, the school remained a sentimentalised world; Waugh, until his conversion, displayed a premature nostalgia for the excitement and purpose of school (14); Orwell and Spender, however, remembered suffering, loneliness and revulsion towards schooldays. Whether they remembered these days with revulsion or affection, it is remarkable that the memory of the school continued to exert such a strong influence on them, and they tended to define their position and experiences of the 30s in terms of school memories. Isherwood says the following about the transposition of the absent war experiences to the public school: "'war,' which could never under any circumstances be allowed to appear in its own shape, needed a symbol – a symbol round which I could build up my daydreams about 'The Test.' Gradually, in the utmost secrecy, I began to evolve a cult of the public-school system (*Lions and Shadows* 47). Orwell returned to his experiences in his essay "Such, Such Were the Joys" (1946); Graham Greene saw in the world of the public school the clash of good and evil, and the schoolboy jargon of the Auden group prefigures the 30s world of spies, murders and frontiers (Johnstone 11); and it was especially Auden and Isherwood who "showed a common tendency to look at the world in terms of school life" (Bergonzi 14).

These public school memories, then, are rarely treated as something pleasant to return to, yet most of the male writers of the 1930s continued to dwell on these experiences, giving a further example of what Isherwood called fearing failing the Test but at the same time longing for it. For instance, in "Such, Such Were the Joys," Orwell dwells on his public school experiences with the freshness that temporal distance can provide (5), and highlights the tortures, bullying, punishments and most importantly, one's chances of preserving integrity and independence among them. Henry Green boldly stated of the public school that it was a

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[10] W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, John Betjeman, John Lehmann, Louis MacNeice, Christopher Isherwood, Edward Upward, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, George Orwell, Anthony Powell, Cyril Connolly and Henry Green all went to public schools, and with the exception of Orwell, they all went to Oxford or Cambridge (Bergonzi 11).

"humane concentration camp" (*Pack My Bag* 59), and Auden passed the verdict: at school "the whole of our moral life was based on fear [...]. The best reason I have for opposing fascism is that at school I lived in a fascist state" (*The Old School* 9). Alan Sebrill in Upward's novel also remembers the military atmosphere of the school: "Instead of the self-discipline which in their circumstances they above all needed, it had given them [...] authoritarianism. It had placed over them from among themselves prefects who were allowed to use the cane; [...] it had subjected them to a would-be boarding school 'house' system, which included fagging" (*In the Thirties* 114). For Graham Greene, the public school life became transformed into a mythic fight between Good/Evil or Civilisation/Savagery. He virtually made the "green baize door" that separated the school in which his father was the headmaster and the family home into a cosmic symbol, distinguishing "home" and the fearful region lying behind it. As he puts it in his autobiography, *A Sort of Life* (1971): "Years later when I read the sermon on hell in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* I recognized the land I had inhabited. I had left civilisation behind and entered a savage country of strange customs and inexplicable cruelties: a country in which I was a foreigner and a suspect, quite literally a hunted creature, known to have dubious associates" (54).[11]

The compulsion to return to the painful public school experiences served, in a vicarious fashion, to work through the trauma that others suffered in the war, to inflict on themselves the pain that they were denied out at the front. Attending public schools and the

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[11] The experience of the public school had such an important and long lasting influence on Greene that this almost universal struggle between Good and Evil appears in almost all his subsequent works and lays the basis of his later Catholic orientation. The symbolic green baize door reappears in, for instance, his short story "The Basement Room" (1936) in which it becomes a powerful motif in an act of betrayal on the part of Philip Lane, the protagonist, who, after his parents leave for a fortnight's holiday, remains in the house alone with the butler and his wife, and later witnessing the love affair of the butler, tells about it to the police, after the mysterious death of the butler's wife, thus becomes complicit in his death. At the beginning of the short story, the door appears as a powerful symbol of separating the two worlds: "He could go anywhere, even through the green baize door to the pantry or down the stairs to the basement living room" (96); "he strained his ears for Mrs Baine's coming, for the sound of voices, but the basement held its secrets; the green baize door shut off that world" (103). As a metaphor of entering another world, the same motif appears at the beginning of Greene's travelogue *The Lawless Roads* (1939): "If you pushed open a green baize door in a passage by my father's study, you entered another passage deceptively similar, but none the less you were on alien ground. [...] I was an inhabitant of both countries: on Saturday and Sunday afternoons of one side of the baize door, the rest of the week of the other. How can life on the border be other than restless?" (13). Besides the recurring motif of the green door, most of Greene's writing is replete with childhood traumas, returning fears and phobias. As he puts it in his autobiography: "I think it may have been the interminable repetitions in my life which finally broke me down" (*A Sort of Life* 64). In the same book, he often mentions how in his adult life he was still possessed by infantile phobias: recalling the terror of seeing bats and birds, he adds, "The fear of bats remains" (24). This terror is also referred to in *Journey Without Maps* (1936): "It was an inherited fear, I shared my mother's terror of birds, couldn't touch them, couldn't bear the feel of their hearts beating in my palm. [...] The method of psychoanalysis is to bring the patient back to the idea which he is repressing: a long journey backwards without maps, catching a clue here and a clue there [...] until one has to face the general idea, the pain or the memory" (96-7). Greene claims that around 1968, planning a novel about a school, he revisited the scene of his childhood education. He, however, abandoned the novel for he "couldn't bear mentally living again for several years in these surroundings" (*A Sort of Life* 54) and wrote *A Burnt-Out Case* instead, thinking even a leper colony a more preferable location.

subsequent fascination with the school itself, taking a strange pleasure in repeating torments at school had the benefit of creating a private mythology for themselves, centred around common suffering, akin to that of First World War veterans. Recalling the coterie feeling of public school might have been similar for them to Armistice Day silence on 11 November each year which, by repeating the traumatic experience, converting individual trauma into a collective one and thus monumentalising it, transcends the feeling of guilt and shame, and turns them into an act of victory and solidarity (see Heller 31-2) – the most spectacular example of such monumentalising being the anthology *The Old School* edited by Graham Greene, published in 1934. Thus, the ideologisation of the school experience as a period of suffering, on the one hand, served to create a common traumatic experience retrospectively that would, paradoxically, justify their "survival" in the First World War. On the other hand, they imposed on themselves a "theory of permanent adolescence," later building, as teachers, "an uncomfortably close relation with students," imagining themselves to be "boys among men, a man among boys" (Bergonzi 28), which had the aim of maintaining a child's perspective that could behold the "true heroes." Nearly all elements of the Auden group mythology derive from this infantile perspective: Isherwood's idea of the "Truly Weak Man," "the Test," the sense of a failure to grow up, the much-noted delight in secrecy, spies, frontiers, exclusion (see for instance, Mengham, *Idiom* 36, 46; Johnstone 12, 25, Bergonzi 66-80; North 32). The desire to look up at the wounded/shell-shocked war hero and creating at the same time a similar "traumatic memory" for themselves went hand in hand. Even the often mentioned theme of illness and death so typical of the Audenesque (see Auden's "Letter to a Wound"), either "as a means of articulating the social complexities of the 1930s" (Mengham *Idiom* 34-5) or as a possibility to align characters with the war-wounded (North 32), are elements of this transferential traumatic scheme, so much so that, according to North, even literature "comes to stand, both politically and aesthetically, for uninvolvement, privacy, weakness, for the *wound* that removes the writer from real life" (43, emphasis mine).

The retrospectively created and traumatised public school experience (Bergonzi 143) was also used as an interpretive frame to make sense of the imminent catastrophe of the second war. Seen from 1939, the interwar years seemed to be one long vacation (North 38). In his essay from 1960, "Before the Fire," Henry Green asserts: "The last few months of peace in Britain was to go back to be a little boy again, however old you were. It was so to speak those last few years of the term, but no holidays promised, and the knowledge that having failed in everything, willy nilly next week would fix you a poorer, harsher academy in which all would indeed be different and for the worse" (Yorke, ed. 278). But it was not only the educational experience that came to stand for an explanation of the apocalypse of the second

war, but also the First World War; in fact, the Second World War could very conveniently be conceptualized as the repetition of the war twenty years before. As R. J. Lifton remarked, one cannot understand the Second World War except as a survival of the first one (Caruth, ed. "Interview" 139). The interwar years may be described with reference to the feeling of suspense, a seemingly endless waiting, being in-transit, pushed between parenthesis; or, to borrow an analogy from detective stories, as a period between a crime and its solution, immobile, frozen time, without directions; or, again, to borrow a psychoanalytical term, a "latency period," a "traumatised" age, in which past and present collapse into each other. It is in this context of historical trauma (both communal and individual) that I wish to discuss Henry Green's 1930s works in Chapter 5, emphasising the narrative, epistemological and ontological aspects arising from the traumatic self-awareness of the thirties generation.

2.2. "The Interminable Reel": Melancholia and Metonymy in the 1930s

The second idiom with which the troubled attitude of certain novels of the 1930s towards the past can be made conspicuous is melancholia. Here again, as in the case of the traumatic idiom of several public school-bred authors of the period, this particular mode of misremembering has limited validity, and it may not be stated that the whole of the thirties should in any way be described as "melancholic." In the case of certain authors, however, melancholia may prove to be a rich metaphor with which the vicissitudes of remembering may be examined and which also throws light on the ramifications pertaining to the stylistic features and narratorial attitudes of individual texts.

Besides trauma, melancholia is, in fact, another malady of remembering. As Freud theorised it in his "Mourning and Melancholia," it derives from failed mourning: the ego is unable to withdraw its cathexes from the lost loved object and invest them into another one, but "the object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance, and was abandoned; but the free libido was withdrawn into the ego and not directed to another object. It did not find application there, however, in any of the several possible ways, but served simply to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object" (Freud, "Mourning" 287). The result is that the ego cannot come to terms with this loss and pathologically clings to the lost object, or, more precisely, to loss itself. The patient is constantly looking for the lost object, feeling that no object could replace the original one. Consequently, an ambivalent relationship is

formed towards the object from which the libido had to be withdrawn: according to Freud, in melancholia, "countless single conflicts in which love and hate wrestle together are fought for the object" (Freud, "Mourning" 293). The paradox of the melancholic's situation is that the person knows that he/she has lost something but not what he/she has lost in that object (Freud, "Mourning" 285).

Like in trauma, much that is at stake in the clinical picture is basically linguistic: how the melancholic is able to give voice to, to verbalise this loss. The outcome of the loss, according to Julia Kristeva, is the failure of signification (*Black Sun* 10), that the melancholic comes to feel as if he were speaking a foreign language in trying to signify the loss, which leads to further depression. A dialectical process emerges for the melancholic: the patient knows that the only available means for him is signs, which he perceives as already corrupted, fallen, infected with loss, but it is as a result of his melancholic mood that these signs come to seem as fallen. His inability to symbolise the loss very often manifests itself as silence.

Desperately looking for the lost object, the melancholic attempts to re-cathect several ones that come into his/her way; one might say he/she goes from object to object in the hope of recovering the original one (while being aware of the impossibility of this project). In literary terms, the object choice of the melancholic is thus governed by the logic of contiguity. The melancholic replaces the primary loss for objects that are metonymically related to each other, while getting further and further from the originary object. This constitutes his mood in which he sees the world: for the melancholic, the world is essentially made up of objects and possessions randomly distributed and linked to each other by contiguity (Pfau 329), seen as empty, worthless, carrying no meaning. This fragmented landscape consisting of objects placed (symbolically) next to each other, of (to borrow Walter Benjamin's term) ruins is what serves as a starting point for allegorical transformation in which these ruins might be supplemented by the allegorical gaze to mean absolutely anything else (Flatley 37). Thus, the melancholic's world is governed by two tropes, metonymy and allegory. They always already incorporate the denial of two other tropes, which is also going to shed light on the relationship of melancholia and remembering: the melancholic refuses metaphorical identification, based on similarity (since, by definition, the lost object cannot be replaced) and symbolisation (see Pensky 28), which cannot lay claim to transfigure and conjure up the object in an epiphanic moment (Pfau 321).

It is precisely these tropes, metonymy and allegory, with the help of which David Lodge examines the dichotomy of some specimens of interwar literature, claiming that the majority of high modernist novels are governed by metaphor, while in certain texts of the thirties, "there was a pronounced swing back from the metaphoric to the metonymic pole of

literary discourse" (191). He specifically examines Orwell, Greene, Isherwood, Upward and Waugh as exponents of this mode of writing, but at the same time making a difference between them. Lodge seems to set up three groups within the mode of "thirties writing." The first one would include Orwell, Greene and Isherwood, with their insistence on metonymic and synecdochic detail; the second involves Upward and other examples "of the allegorical mode of the period" (207), such as the early poetic works of Auden, Day Lewis and Rex Warner, and the third "group" includes Evelyn Waugh, who, although bearing certain characteristic features explaining why he does not fit neatly into Lodge's scheme, through his exposure of the "disorderliness, the contingency, the collapse of value and meaning in contemporary life" (210-1), through his ironic detachment, absurd and seemingly cruelly comical effects of his early novels, also makes "extensive use of metonymic and synecdochic detail" (211).

Although, like every neat categorisation, this dichotomy between the modes of twenties and thirties writing also has its weak points[12], and it is also questionable whether the kind of allegory mentioned by Lodge has any direct relationship with the Benjaminian allegory resulting from the melancholic mode of seeing, yet, the metaphor/metonymy dichotomy may bring one closer to the understanding of the role of melancholia in certain thirties novels. Melancholia may prove to be a useful tool in describing the works of some of the aforementioned authors, if one would like to place these texts in relation to the representative works of the twenties high modernism.

While a group of authors discussed in the previous sub-chapter conceived of the role of the past within the framework of traumatic repetitions and repressions, it was Evelyn Waugh, Anthony Powell (whom Lodge leaves out from his "thirties idiom") and Christopher Isherwood (and to a lesser extent Graham Greene) for whom working through a loss and the consequent attitude to the past meant a compulsion to represent all these within the discursive field of melancholia in their early novels. This attitude may be traced back to their very position in a generation which followed the one that could still define itself, according to Virginia Woolf, along the lines of pre-1914 certainties and could reflect on their positions with a high modernist language, widely employing the authenticating and prestige-giving

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[12] For instance, the alleged contrast between Proustian memory and the workings of reminiscence in Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* is not clear: Lodge states that "whereas Proust's evocations of the past are drenched in metaphor, George's [George Bowling is the protagonist of the novel] are catalogues of literal facts, with little or no figurative meaning" (191). It could be argued that the main difference is not this, since Proust's madeleine scene also works on the basis of material memory, conjured by a "literal fact," but that in Orwell, the transfiguring, epiphanic and metaphorical power of memory is simply not able to function. Furthermore, the grouping together of Upward and Warner under the tag of "the allegorical mode" may be justifiable to a certain extent, but whereas Upward's novels lean towards what Malcolm Bradbury calls "psycho-political allegory" (233), Warner's 1930s novels stage rather the conflict of rural nostalgia and totalitarian dystopia.

gestures of the "mythic method," symbolic and aesthetic totalisation and conferring order on the "myriad of impressions" (Woolf, "Modern" 154). Waugh's and Powell's generation, aware of the limitations of high modernist language in the 1930s, could never hope to execute these totalising acts, and thus consciously rejected the allure of modernist depth (see Bényei, *Ártatlan* 134; Gorra xiv). As Bényei claims in connection with Waugh, his novels written in the 1930s are the best specimens of a consciously reduced fictional language that is also characteristic of Waugh's contemporaries, including Ivy Compton-Burnett, Anthony Powell, Henry Green and Jean Rhys. In that sense, Waugh and these writers may be called, in the literal meaning of the word, "post-modern" (Bényei, *Ártatlan* 341), that is, representatives of a language that consciously defined itself as superficial, emptied, even grotesque and cruel, rejecting high modernism's cult of depth. The question might also be raised as to what extent this relationship with the older literary generation might be equated with the Bloomian "anxiety of influence" that he regularly identifies with melancholia.[13] In this case, the melancholic idiom instituted by Powell, Waugh, Isherwood and others may also mean that not only did they not wish to follow the footsteps of the high modernist generation, but also their painful (melancholic) realisation that those unifying and myth-making gestures were no longer possible.

One of the motivating forces behind these impulses was a profound sense of loss to which these writers responded more or less melancholically (which, at the same time, points to a contrast with Spender, Greene, Henry Green and Auden, who primarily conceived of loss in traumatic terms). From this group of writers, it was Evelyn Waugh first who began "to feel that he and his generation were not perhaps destined for great things" (Johnstone 14), and consequently saw the contiguity, disorder, chaos and the vanishing of gentlemanly values with a profound sadness. Although Waugh's and Powell's conservative melancholia only becomes visible in their post-war novel sequences and in Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), one may meet aspects related to working through the loss of pre-First World War values already in their 1930s novels. Tony Last, for instance, in Waugh's *A Handful of Dust*, manically clings to objects of his childhood and medieval chivalric notions, trying to achieve some sense of stability in the modern world, and on the cover page of Waugh's travelogue *Ninety-two Days*, the author looks like as if he were dressed for a costume party, with a resigned (we may add, melancholic) expression on his face, an "Imperialist without an Empire" (Johnstone 133). In fact, the title of his novels also reflect the melancholic brooding

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[13] See for instance the following phrases in Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*: "one way in which poetic influence is a variety of melancholy or an anxiety-principle" (7); "melancholy engendered in the mind of the Enlightenment" (8); "the inescapable melancholy, the anxiety that makes misprision inevitable" (54); "the melancholy of poets, or the anxiety of influence" (58).

over the lack of permanence: *A Handful of Dust* conjures up a line from Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the vast chronicle of after-war decay, *Decline and Fall* goes back to Gibbon's work on the Roman Empire, but the influence of Spengler's determining book, *The Decline of the West* (1918; 1923) can also be felt; *Vile Bodies* is a quotation from "Epistle to the Philippians" (3:21), referring to the present condition of mankind, until Jesus's second coming. Although in *Decline and Fall* (1928), one cannot see brooding as a determining emotion, in the later *A Handful of Dust* (1934), written after Waugh's conversion to Catholicism in 1930, one may detect an apologetic tone with which Waugh rejects some of the cruelty, irresponsibility and grotesque characterising his earlier works (and his own previous selfish and partygoing lifestyle) (Berberich 104), creating his "first elegy to a dying breed," the English country gentleman (Berberich 111).

Anthony Powell's thirties novels also capture the futility, boredom and disillusionment of the 1930s with the help of the melancholic idiom. They are worth analysing here in more detail because they are one of the best examples of the presence of melancholia in 1930s fiction. The most obvious manifestation of melancholy in Powell's early fiction is the sheer number of melancholic characters: nearly all the characters in his 30s fiction are melancholic in one way or another. A common and typically melancholic feature in them is that their ambivalent attitude to action. They are passive, sad, morose, lazy, showing signs of *acedia*, but at the same time they are hyperactive, they want to create, and often they are attracted by the material world in spite of the fact that they are disgusted by it. At a party in *Afternoon Men*, for instance, Atwater is not in control of himself and lacks even the simple determination to stand up: "Atwater, who had fallen into a coma, watched the door opposite him. He was tired of the party, but had not the independent volition to leave it" (*AM* 23).

An evident melancholic feature in these novels, related to *acedia*, is an obsession with death, coupled with milder or stronger forms of death-wish. In *Afternoon Men*, Atwater keeps emphasising his desire for death: "'Are you coming to the party tonight?' Atwater said: 'I can't. I'm a dying man'" (4). Elsewhere he says: "'I'm not coming to the party. I'm going home to die'" (7). Atwater's colleague in the museum, Nosworth immediately thinks of death when he feels sick: "'I had some lobster last night. I may have poisoned myself'" (34). In *Venusberg*, a Count Scherbatcheff (reminiscent of Isherwood's Mr Norris) is always complaining of being sick, and he indeed dies during the novel; in *From a View to a Death*, Mrs Brandon does not leave the flat for a moment, and she dies almost unnoticed.

Indecision and hesitation are further important melancholic (acedic) traits that apply to most of the characters – and at this point the melancholia, evident on the plot level, is beginning to affect the plot structure of the novels: acedia will not make fast-paced, exciting

stories. Almost all of these early novels are love stories on the thematic level, but as far as their plots are concerned, practically nothing changes by the end of them. In *Afternoon Men*, Atwater has an affair with Lola, but they break up by the end, which neither of them regret too much. In the same novel, Susan Nunnery cheats on Pringle, a painter, with one of his friends, Barlow, after which Pringle attempts suicide, but then he changes his mind. In *Venusberg*, a special correspondent, Lushington is sent to an unnamed Baltic country, leaving his girlfriend, Lucy behind in England, and after an affair with a certain Ortrud, who is shot by accident, he returns to England, where he recommences his relationship with Lucy. Zouch, the eccentric painter in *From a View to a Death*, arriving in a country house, starts a relationship with Joanna Brandon, but then marries his host's daughter, Mary Passanger, finally dying in a riding accident. There is almost no sign of climax, revelation, development in Powell's early fiction.

Melancholia as a mood and as an organising principle, however, is not only apparent on the level of characters and plot in Powell's early fiction, but affects further layers of his 1930s texts. Melancholia pervades remembering, the levels of representation, and results in two governing tropes of the early novels, allegory and metonymy.

Most of Powell's characters are what we could call hypermnesiac. Hypermnesia is crucial as far as interpersonal relations are concerned and has very important consequences as regards the problem of representation. It seems that melancholic characters are simply unable to perceive the other person as he or she is, for they are always reminded of somebody else.[14] One result of this hypermnesia is that the outlines of the perceived object or person become blurred, and at this point melancholy radically infiltrates into the level of representation: in all the early novels we have the impression as if a huge cloud of dust was hovering above all of them blotting out the precise outlines. A short sentence in *Afternoon Men* is of key importance in this respect, offering a self-reflexive metaphor of Powell's early fiction. Barlow says to Atwater: "'What I really wanted to talk about was not women but the picture that Naomi Race picked up the other day.' 'It's not bad.' 'Good condition?' Atwater said: 'A trifle *sfumato*. Rather in the manner of Valdès'" (112). That is precisely the effect that we get in these novels; the result of this hypermnesia is this *sfumato* effect. Most of the characters do not only

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[14] Lushington, a special correspondent of *Venusberg*, who has travelled to an unnamed Baltic country, and left his mistress, Lucy, at home, keeps thinking of her no matter whom he is speaking to or thinking of. His friend, Da Costa, turns to be a mere reminder: he is the man "with whom Lucy was in love. Lushington could not therefore avoid reflecting, on hearing of his good fortune that he was both leaving Lucy and going to a place where he would be reminded perpetually of her feelings for Da Costa" (*V* 9). Later on, the sight of a dock also recalls Lucy for him: "There were streets and houses among the docks and looking between these it seemed that ships were moored in the thoroughfares of the town itself, so that quite suddenly Lushington thought again of Lucy, vividly, as if she were standing beside him as they moved forward" (36). In *From a View to a Death*, Zouch, the painter is reminded of Saint Joan when looking at Joanna Brandon: "He was reminded of a primitive of one of the less remote female saints" (49-50).

lose their outlines and are sucked up by the environment around themselves but, as pure reminders, they also turn into allegorical representations.[15] The result of allegorisation is that characters can only be captured through an external frame of reference and have to be given some sort of meaning from the outside, otherwise they remain nondescript and *sfumato*. That is why Susan Nunnery in *Afternoon Men* is described in this way:

> The doorway was clear for a moment and as he [Atwater] watched it a girl who was coming through stopped on the threshold and, before she passed into the room, paused and looked round at everyone. She was not tall and she had big eyes that made her seem as if she were all at once amused and surprised and at the same time disappointed. [...] Also, she had not the appearance of belonging to the room at all. She was separate. [...] It was the effect of a portrait painted against an imaginary background, an imaginary landscape even, where the values are *those of two different pictures and the figure seems to have been superimposed.* (23-4, emphasis added)

The dominant figure in the novel is precisely the one that works as superimposition, that is, allegory. No wonder Atwater cannot remember Susan later on: "he went into the street and walked a long way, thinking what a pity it was that he could not remember what Susan looked like" (214).[16] The pageant production in the same novel also emphasises the mechanism of allegory: "Lord Chisleholm, a mild-looking man, who wore horned-rimmed spectacles, was taking the part of his ancestor the Lord Chisleholm of the period, a noted rake, and he had chosen to wear a full-bottomed flowered coat *over his ordinary hunting clothes*" (141-2, emphasis added). As the anachronistic clothes referred to above show, the actors do not play the roles properly, they do not identify themselves with the characters, but put on themselves

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[15] In *Venusberg*, Cortney and Da Costa on a trip, finding peasants sitting at the railway station, immediately turn them into a still life, a frozen image, an allegory: "'See them. The children of the soil. The patient toilers now the day is done. Don't they make you think −'" (105). In *From a View to a Death*, Major Fosdick becomes the simulacrum image of the perfect English squire: "He had the air of a legendary creature of the woods, Herne the Hunter almost, with a touch of the romantic gamekeeper, some Lady Chatterley's superannuated lover, and yet at the same time looked more of a country gentleman than perhaps any country gentleman could ever hope to look" (15). *What's Become of Waring*'s imaginary travel book writer, T. T. Waring (who does not exist in real life, only as a pseudonym used by Alec Pimley) is transformed into an allegorical figure in Hugh's mind: "T. T. Waring was exalted in his mind to the incarnation of the Young Triumphant, the sort of figure photographed on the cover of magazines advising Germany for your Holiday. It was a form of adolescent hero-worship that Hugh must have caught from his pupils when he was a pedagogue" (27-8).

[16] Joanna in *From a View to a Death* is described in similar terms: "It was towards the end of the Lesson that Zouch caught sight of Joanna. [...] The rays of coloured sunlight [...] fell on her, cutting off and separating her head and shoulders from the rest of her body and the people around her. [...] Zouch thought of the cathedral scene in *Faust* and smiled to himself" (49-50).

an external pattern that can be taken off at any moment; in other words, instead of symbol it is allegory that is working here.

Since allegory and metonymy become the governing melancholic tropes of Powell's early texts, on the level of text organisation very often there is no apparent connection between sentences or phrases, and cause and effect relationships are often eliminated. Remarkably, many of these disjointed passages are in connection with death. In *Afternoon Men*, the death of Pringle's father is related in this way: "Pringle came of a go-ahead family. His father, a business man from Ulster, had bought a Cézanne in 1911. That had been the beginning. Then he divorced his wife. Later he developed a religious mania and jumped off a suspension bridge" (2). The fissure in the father's life that leads to suicide is reflected by the organisation of the text as well. A similar passage occurs in *From a View to a Death*, when we read about the death of Mrs Brandon's husband: "Joanna's father was said to have been one of the best-looking men in the Navy. He was just about due for promotion when one day, bathing, he had dived into the sea and on to a rock, killing himself instantaneously" (29). A similar lack of explanation and metonymic construction is characteristic of the passage that announces Count Scherbatcheff's death in *Venusberg* at the very beginning of Chapter 27: "And then one day Count Scherbatcheff died" (115). Since death is the final loss, the final disorder that the melancholic has to face, the text can do no more than reflect this disorder and the impossibility of explanation. A short descriptive passage in *From a View to a Death* turns into a self-metaphor of the world as the melancholic sees it. Mrs Brandon, an exemplary melancholic, is lying on a sofa and her daughter is watching her:

> Joanna inspected her mother through a glass of the french [sic] windows. Mrs Brandon was wearing a négligé of yellow material edged with fur, which stood out against the red and green roses of the chintz with which the sofa was covered, and the tartan rug and rather dirty counterpane that had also been spread over it, but which had by now almost slipped away from under her. The loose cover of the sofa was torn, so that a blue material could also be seen underneath it, and again, below this, some of the actual stuffing of the sofa itself, all this stratification suggesting the princess on her forty mattresses. (27)

The description of the sofa parallels the world as the melancholic is trying to cope with it. The *loose* cover of the sofa is torn, and, although the melancholic tries to hide it and maintain order, hide it with several layers (the tartan rug and the *dirty* counterpane, that does not hide but calls attention to the gap), these layers "almost *sli[p]* from under her," and the layers

beneath the crack can be seen, and this opening up becomes faster and faster ("*and, again, below this*") until he gets to the final point, the "actual stuffing of the sofa," metaphorically, the base, the final loss (which indeed happens in the case of Mrs Brandon, *FVD* 215).

The fact that fissures may open up at any moment renders this melancholic world extremely provisional. Temporariness and contingency pervade all of Powell's early novels. In *Afternoon Men*, Barlow's room is melancholic in this sense: "Atwater looked round the room, empty, but at the same time full of things. Not unlike a box-room, everything in it seemed provisional and as if it had been put in its present position only for a few minutes and left there because nobody would take the trouble to put it somewhere else" (49). The World is imagined here as a collection of objects placed metonymically next to each other, that can either gain significance only by their relation to each other, or whose position can only be guaranteed by representation, but since fixing their position can only be temporary, representation is inevitably infected by melancholia, and might collapse at any moment.

As Henry R. Harrington notices in connection with the Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence, the reader's experience which is not unlike looking at "a series of framed, contiguous tableaux separated by gaps of silence, like Nick's visiting of the Deacon retrospective exhibition at Henderson's gallery (436). This is the general impression in the early novels as well: one goes from picture to picture or snapshot to snapshot in a metonymic manner. As Atwater's mind very effectively draws a key contrast in *Afternoon Men*: "Through Atwater's mind passed a picture, or rather an *interminable reel*, a lugubrious procession of close-ups, of all the trouble he would have if the doctor [Crutch] were allowed to examine in his own hand the images" (41, emphasis added). Similarly in *Venusberg*: "The boat went on past a fort and from here the harbour widened into the open sea. [...] It was the final and rather masterly shot of the reel" (147). I believe the cinema metaphor is important not in the sense that it only provides shallowness and two-dimensionality or a means of the ironic description of shallow characters[17], but is a means to give the melancholic trope of metonymy its full significance. Reading early Powell is like watching a film in the sense that we jump from image to image almost interminably, since one picture is meaningless in itself so we go to the next, similar picture.[18] As Fotheringham puts it in *Afternoon Men*: "'Where is it all going to lead? I ask you that, Atwater. [...] I don't know. None of us knows. We just go on and on and on and on'" (60). As Gorra remarks, in Powell's early novels "the particular way the incident develops does not matter. All that matters is that it does develop, one

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[17] In *Venusberg*, Lucy "show[s] signs of becoming a film star" (15); in *Afternoon Men*, "the cinema accustomed [Sophy] to violent emotions, but when she realised that Pringle had committed suicide she cried a bit" (187-8).
[18] Powell abandoned his low-paying job at Duckworth's in 1936 to be a script-writer for low-grade motion-pictures, called "quota-quickies" aimed to balance the influence Hollywood films (Selig 18). Neil Brennan claims that even before this, film-techniques influenced his novelistic style (27).

moment leading into another, and another [...]" (58). This is the reason why Powell's style is so fragmented, "staccato," featuring sentences and phrases linked endlessly by and's, full of repetitions of seemingly awkward phrasings like "Atwater said: […]." After the colon it is impossible to stop, there is an urge forward, inability to pause (Gorra 65) The and's can at best hide the gap, the fissures between sentences, but do not help understanding; more importantly, they undermine the characters' attempts to make any moment, thing, or person, count more than any other (Gorra 64), which takes us back to the problem of the hierarchy between foreground and background. That is why the novels stop almost arbitrarily with almost no conclusion or, at best, with a return to the starting point, because they seem to be sections of an interminable reel of pictures and sentences. In *Afternoon Men*, Atwater and Barlow have the following conversation:

> 'Miriam was here yesterday. I think really I'd better marry her.'
>
> 'Why? Have you ruined her?'
>
> 'No.'
>
> 'Why not?'
>
> 'I didn't think she'd like me to.'
>
> 'She's a nice girl.'
>
> 'Yes. I shall certainly marry her.'
>
> 'Do you see much of her?'
>
> 'No, not much.'
>
> Sophy came in again. She said:
>
> 'The kettle is leaking. We shall have to get another one.' (50-1)

Sophy's remark summarises the effect created by the interminable reel of sentences. It is not only the kettle that is leaking, the whole conversation does; in this endless series of jumps from sentence to sentence metonymically connected to each other there is always a gap through which meaning flows out. In this melancholic world totality is impossible, something is always left out, since in the eyes of the melancholic, who wants to include in his construction as much as possible, a fissure always appears which undermines the whole construction. As a result of the ambivalent vision of the melancholic, who wants to create a world in the work of art, the process of creation is also doomed to fail. This failure can be technical, i.e., the work of art will not be finished, but even more importantly is reflected in the pervasive sadness that is called forth by the fact that the melancholic artist cannot take the

place of God; "he begins Creation, but is unable to create everything, fulfil every requirement" (Földényi 178).

This impossibility of totalisation pervades Powell's early novels. The melancholic urban landscape in *Venusberg* is full of ruins, half-finished buildings (which is a good deal more than a parallel with Eliot's *The Waste Land*, as opposed to what Brennan claims [46]): "A nondescript outlying district was now reached. This end of the city, not yet completed, was full of tin huts and the shells of unfinished modern buildings. Then they came to an immense block of flats [...]. Work seemed to have been abandoned on it, for these were rusty and some of the masonry was already falling away" (79). In *Venusberg*, Count Scherbatcheff is buried in "a cemetery in a distant part of the town [...] by the stacks of empty petrol tins and the big shells of uncompleted buildings" (115-6). It is not that a modern landscape replaces a traditional one, but that there is a permanent presence of ruins, for these ruins will never be completed. In *From a View to a Death* Zouch's picture of Mary is never finished[19]; the narrator's book on Stendhal in *What's Become of Waring* is never completed; Hudson, writing the military history of his regiment, remarks in the same novel: "There is no hurry, you see. It will probably go on all my life and never be finished" (34).

The permanent presence of half-finished objects powerfully define Powell's literary landscapes as melancholic through the collage of metonymical and allegorical details. It is this detached, brooding, almost self-annihilating narratorial attitude over ruins and a conscious withdrawal from the scene, refraining from entry into "depth" is the framework with which I am going to examine Isherwood 1930s novels in Chapter 6.

2.3. "We Can Never Go Back Again": Some Aspects of Nostalgia in the 1930s

Basically, two modes of nostalgia[20] co-exist in most of the fiction of the 1930s: one may be termed depathologised, which thinks of the past with pleasure and makes it, to borrow Susan Stewart's phrase, "reportable," rather than "repeatable" (135). This depathologised nostalgia excludes the return of painful memories and attempts to order the past into manageable and harmless fragments. The other, pathological type of nostalgia conceives of

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[19] He "spent a good deal of his time in the schoolroom, playing about with various half-finished pictures, which he had brought with him" (203).

[20] The contrast between these two versions is discussed later, in Chapter 3.3.

the present as a void, impossible for signification, and stages the sick nostalgist's futile attempt to return to that past, thought of in terms of plenitude and totality, either temporally or spatially. The first kind of nostalgia is mainly characteristic of J. B. Priestley in the 1930s, and to a certain extent, George Orwell, while the second type describes certain novels of Daphne du Maurier, while the mixture of the two may be apt to analyse James Hilton's works, who represents both kinds of nostalgia to describe his characters and thus contrast two generations.

The unreflected, "natural" sense of nostalgia towards the English countryside and rurality goes back at least to the age of Fielding, who posited a marked difference between the corrupt London and the untainted, uninfected countryside, and which continued to live on in the Victorian condition-of-England novel. This tradition is carried on in Stephen Graham's *The Gentle Art of Tramping*, first published in 1927, in which the author sought to redeem many of the activities of everyday life (eating, walking, meeting people, preparing food, etc.) from routinisation by defining them within a contemplative relationship to nature rather than in the urban division of labour (Wright 21). In the same vein, Stanley Baldwin, G. K. Chesterton, H. A. L. Fisher, Peter Scott, Rex Weldon Finn, Orwell (especially in "The Lion and the Unicorn"), and even Ramsay MacDonald evoked indigenous sounds, sights and smells of a timeless, traditional English countryside in the twenties, thirties and in the forties as well (Wright 81-2, see also Berberich 24). The common feature of these texts is that they firmly place the phenomenon called England within an empirical world that may suggest that this tradition is available for anyone[21]. By fragmenting the English landscape in this way, they create a still life that eternalises their vision called England. It is worth quoting Susan Stewart here, who claims that still life as a cultural and artistic product is quintessentially a nostalgic artefact: "whereas [it] speaks to the cultural organisation of the material world, it does so by concealing history and temporality. The message of the still life is that nothing changes" (29). According to Stewart, a still life effects both a narrative and spatial closure (48). On the other hand, there is always a sense that the beauty of the English landscape is incommunicable, unfathomable and unique for everyone – except for the English. As Wright puts it, "to be a subject of Deep England, is above all, to have *been there* – one must have had the essential experience" (85). There is no initiation into heritage, it is given and can at best be admired. Hence the frequent definition of heritage and nostalgia for that heritage as something "natural," unreflected, transparent, given. As David Lowenthal points out, "if the past is a foreign country, nostalgia has made it the foreign country with the *healthiest* tourist trade of

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[21] See Stanley Baldwin's statement: "The sounds of England, the tinkle of the hammer on the anvil in the country smithy, the corncrake on a dewy morning, the sound of scythe against the whetstone" (101), strikingly similar to Orwell's lines in *The Lion and the Unicorn*: " The clatter of clogs in the Lancashire mill towns, the to-and-fro of the lorries on the Great North Road, the queues outside the Labour Exchanges, the rattle of pin-tables in the Soho pubs, the old maid biking to Holy Communion through the mists of the autumn mornings" (36).

all" (4, emphasis mine). This unproblematic definition of nostalgia offered the nostalgists of the 20s and the 30s a chance to break out of class boundaries, to gain a unifying force: Ramsay MacDonald celebrated the traditional rural values of England; the term "heritage" was often used by Communists as well in the 30s to articulate their vision of future (Samuel 207), progressive intellectuals also supported the country house cult in the 30s (297), J. B. Priestley also took up the preservationist cause in the 30s (Wright 89), and even Cecil Day Lewis could only opt for a kind of revolution that returns to the traditional values of the country.[22] All these examples show that caring for heritage was by no means exclusively a Conservative cause in the British context.

J. B. Priestley's *The Good Companions* (1929), for instance, presents an image of England in the spirit of this natural, organic continuity that offered the 1930s to construct an image of the country other than either the Eliotian Waste Land and other than Auden's and Spender's bleak industrial landscapes.[23] The opening of the novel offers an image of the Pennine Range, as involving "lonely places, almost unchanged since the Doomsday Book was compiled" (1). At the beginning of the second chapter, the narrator emphasizes again the stability of the organically conceived image of England, in the form of a "guided tour" through the critical turning points of English history, in which the most recent national catastrophe appears as another link in the chain: here we can see "parish churches, that have rung in and rung out Tudor, Stuart and Hanoverian kings; manor houses that have waited for the news from Naseby and Blenheim and Waterloo and Inkerman and Ypres," and which "have kept their stones unchanged" (40). Thus, the Great War is represented not as a black hole that disrupts temporality and has a subsequent traumatic effect on the next generations, but as an item in the totality of English history that can be safely and harmlessly recalled. This unchanged, nostalgically imagined landscape, does not only emphasise the kind of historical continuity which is able to conceal gaps, scars and fractures in an idea of a nation but also attempts to outline a national characterology of the English according to which the "healthy" or "organic" aspect of Englishness – just as Orwell conceived of it – resides in popular and working or lower-middle class activities, like playing and watching football, going to pubs and drinking beer. *The Good Companions*, after opening with the grand panorama of the English landscape, describes a local football match, elevating it into literally mythic levels: "it

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[22] Bergonzi quotes Day Lewis's "Letter to a Young Revolutionary," in which the poet points out: "if you want to see the country sound again, to put its heart back in the right place, […] You must break up the superficial vision of the motorist and restore the slow, instinctive, absorbent vision of the countryman. […] The land must be a land of milk and honey, of crops and cattle, not of strings of hotels and 'beauty spots'. Can your revolution do something about all this? If not, I've no use for it" (142-3).

[23] According to Gindin, Priestley essentially paints landscapes in the manner of Constable, Vermeer and Canaletto, what is more, his landscapes reflect the attitude of a "hearty" Fielding (46).

turned you into partisan, holding your breath when the ball came sailing into your own goalmouth, […] watching a ball shape Iliads and Odysseys for you" (4).[24] What is more, this activity is able to forge a community, "all brothers together for an hour and a half" (4), creating out a football match a mythical, "deep structure" beyond the observable reality, "hurtling with Conflict and yet passionate and beautiful in its Art" (4). Later, the protagonist and a character named Joe are also defined in terms of typical lower-middle class activities: "Mr. Oakroyd discovers that Joe, whom he recognises at once as a man after his own heart, is not only partial to a pipe of *Old Salt* (to say nothing of a glass of beer) but is also a fellow enthusiast in the matter of football" (282). This kind of yearning for "natural" Englishness is able to close the gaps, not only temporally, but also socially, inasmuch as it bridges the fractures between classes as well: the novel brings together three characters, as members of a theatre troupe, who belong to different classes: Oakroyd represents the working class, Miss Trant the landed gentry and Inigo Jollifant the Cambridge-educated young intelligentsia.

On the other hand, *The Good Companions* is undisguisedly inscribed into the literary tradition of the 18th- and 19th-century novel, mainly its picaresque tradition (to which the novel's self-consciously long title refers) and the Victorian condition-of-England novel. Throughout the novel, references are made to Dickens (46, 66), Walter Scott (Miss Trant's favourite novelist; 56), Miss Trant at times appears behaving as a 20th-century Jane Austen's Mrs Bennett (53). At the beginning of the novel, Miss Trant is offered three possibilities: opening a shop (a possible allusion to Miss Matty in Gaskell's *Cranford*), travelling to Italy (a probable reference to Forster's *A Room with a View*), and finally, taking a tour in England (54-5). The hidden literary undercurrent of the novel stretches from Fielding through Austen, Scott, Dickens, to Forster and Arnold Bennett (of whom Priestley kept complaining that he never received the Nobel Prize [Gindin 46]). As a modern condition-of-England novel, carrying on the tradition set by Gaskell and George Eliot, Priestley's text consciously contrasts the Northerner working-class Oakroyd with the alleged sophistication of London culture, clearly voting in favour of the former.[25] With the unreflected mixture of such diverse

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[24] The quasi-mythical structure of everyday existence (though at times suggesting a comic epic rather than a modernist "mythic method") is also alluded to elsewhere. When Inigo attends a lecture of the so-called Second Resurrectionists, the preacher, "Mr. Grudy continually referred to captivities and migrations across great deserts and Inigo felt them in every limb" (222), thus the troupe's wandering throughout England is contrasted with a Biblical narrative of redemption. Elsewhere, the troupe's performance has the capacity to transform the dreary, monotonous existence of the people in Gatford into "this other Gatford, shining and fair, a suburb of Old Cockayne, with fountains sprouting he alternate black and gold Guiness and Bass, goldflake and honey-dew heaped in the streets, arcades of meat and pudding done in a turn […]" (551).

[25] In one scene, the alleged reticence of Northerners is contrasted with the pompousness of London: "For a minute or two nothing more was said. No doubt both of them felt that this last speech had reached the limits to which confession might be pushed. Beyond were extravagance and indecency, and a good Bruddersfordian left such wild regions to actors and Londoners and suchlike" (9). Elsewhere, Oakroyd finds it particularly difficult to

authors, Priestley is able to make a kind of canonising gesture, attempting to pinpoint the literary facets of "true" Englishness, which is healthily nostalgic at the same time, in the sense of concealing the gaps between these various authors, amalgamating them into icons suitable to authenticate a novel written in 1929.

In many cases in the novels of the 1930s, however, nostalgia takes a pathological form; or more precisely, its original meaning, implying the pain of leaving a homely place, is revealed. These nostalgic narratives, more often than not, work on the double logic of return and repetition: time is spatialised, the story is that of expulsion, and the present is the place and time of being outside, in exile (Bényei, *Ártatlan* 344). The present is thought of in terms of emptiness and loss, the past, however, conceived of by the nostalgist as the plenitude of meaning, is, by definition, unattainable. In certain cases of both fictional and non-fictional writings of the 1930s, the painful realisation is there that the present is the time of crisis, to be escaped from, but also that nostalgia does not offer satisfying solutions in executing this break. This contradiction surfaces in the works, for instance, of George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* – naturally, with various emphases.

The mixture of yearning for a meaningful past and the revulsion against its suffocating atmosphere takes a spatial dimension among some of the writers more or less related to the Auden group, especially towards the end of the decade when the ambiguities of political commitment become all the more apparent. Most left-wing members of the 1930s generation realised that "going over" class boundaries could not be executed without problems, and that their upper-middle class origins could not be shaken off; meanwhile the European political crisis, especially after Munich, made the possibility of action questionable. This led to an even greater emphasis on retreating to cosy, habitable places, for throughout the 30s there was a general fear of being enclosed, imprisoned, stuck between two wars, being left between "parentheses." As Gindin puts it, "both socially and psychologically the writers of the thirties, almost universally, convey a fear of invasion" (14). This fear of invasion urged most writers to look for retreats, homely, warm places that at once sheltered and imprisoned them. MacNeice, for instance, "for all his interest in Marx […] was unable to leave the consolations of 'our private garden' (cited by Shuttleworth, ed. 22). The most important text of the 30s in this respect is Orwell's essay, "Inside the Whale" (1940), which displays the cultural fantasy of a whole decade: refusing to be involved in history, and, since one cannot control it, being content with observing and recording it; all this in the simplified Freudian idiom of the time:

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say thanks ("an agonising task to any true Bruddersfordian" [151]); later in the novel, a fashionable London club is described in terms of Hell: "it was like lunching in a painted and gilded pandemonium" (541).

For the fact is that being inside a whale is a very comfortable, cosy, homelike thought. The historical Jonah, if he can be so called, was glad enough to escape, but in imagination, in day-dream, countless people have envied him. It is, of course, quite obvious why. The whale's belly is simply a womb big enough for an adult. There you are, in the dark, cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference, no matter *what* happens. […] [Henry Miller] has performed the essential Jonah act of allowing himself to be swallowed, remaining passive, *accepting*" that can be made into a comfortable prison. (244-5)

The employment of the spatial metaphor of the desire to return to a habitable and sheltered place is also characteristic of Daphne du Maurier, whose works (although starting from a completely different gender, social and political background) are replete with "pastness in all its forms, personal, familiar, biographical and national" (Light 156). From her 1930s novels it is pre-eminently *Rebecca* (1938) which stages the nagging desire to return to Manderley, the grand old country house of Maximilian de Winter, a symbol of the richness of the (personal and national) past. The opening scene of the novel is an act of going back to Manderley, at least in imagination. Not only is it an act of reviving the past but a repetitive gesture that points to its pathological nature: "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley *again*" (5, emphasis mine). There is a strong sense in the unnamed narrator that the past, as she knew it, cannot be retrieved: "The house was a sepulchre, our fear and suffering lay buried in the ruins. There would be no resurrection" (7); "We can never go back again, that much is certain" (8). The narrator's and her husbands position can suitably be described with that of the pathological nostalgist: they are, after the burning down of Manderley, literally in exile in the south of France, the narrator continues to dream of returning to the Happy Valley and the chance of return is excluded.

At the same time, two other modes of remembering are mingled with the sense of exclusion from the past. On the one hand, living in the present means a sort of liberation from the tormenting past and the horrid memory of Maxim's first wife, Rebecca. The narrator's discourse at times suggests the tone of a "healthy" nostalgist who is able to look at the past, to quote Elizabeth Bennett, "as its remembrance gives you pleasure" (Austen 284): "These things were permanent, they could not be dissolved. They were memories that cannot hurt" (8). Later, the narrator remarks: "Well, it is over now, finished and done with. I ride no more tormented, and both of us are free" (12). The present is here seen as a liberation from the past, a relief from the sinister presence of Rebecca and Mrs. Danvers.

On the other hand, there is an equally strong presence of the past at the moment of recollection that no artificial barrier or physical distance can make less harmful, as if the previous remark of Elizabeth were responded to by a sceptical Darcy ("Painful recollections will intrude" [Austen 284]): "The past is still close to us. The things we have tried to forget and put behind us would stir again, and that sense of fear, of furtive unrest […] might in some manner unforeseen become a living companion, as it had been before" (8). Not even a retreat into a comfortable room and reading the newspapers ("Read English news, yes, and English sport" [11]) may mean a shelter from the tide of painful memories. When the narrator begins to read an article about wood pigeons, her memories about them are inevitably revived: "How strange that an article on wood pigeons could so recall the past and make me falter as I read aloud" (10). Elsewhere she defines memory "spanning the years like a bridge" (13). What she seems to forget is that this bridge may not only serve for her to go back to the past, but also for the past to return and haunt her. In a more general sense, the very act of narration signifies the strength of the lingering memories; Alison Light compares the narrator to the Ancient Mariner, "destined compulsively to repeat her tale" (178).

What is equally remarkable about the unnamed narrator's story is that she yearns for a place and time that were far from being happy. Light asserts that "the act of remembering in du Maurier's fiction is never a source of simple pleasure" (183). The past holds a grip on the narrator and the nostalgist's desire feeds precisely on this grip; her present is clearly described as an empty, sad and emotionless time, her past, however, for which he longs, is equally presented in terms of anxiety, repression and fear. It is this "dual nature of remembering" (Light 184) that raises her work above a story simply about an either pathological or healthy nostalgist: the narrator of *Rebecca* compulsively reiterates a story about the failed longing for an idealised place and, at the same time, reveals that this place was far from being ideal. It is as if she showed something of the complicated desires of the 1930s male generation, educated in public schools, on whom these places had a similarly powerful grip, who were to a great extent formed by these infantile and adolescent experiences and continued to recall them in their later writings. They were also fully aware of the fact that going back to the past was impossible in two ways: that time is past, one cannot regress into adolescent states any longer, and also, it is realised that this past is the time of suffering (retrospectively traumatised) not worth returning to. Thus, one might say this kind of nostalgia seemed to be doubly pathological for most members of the generation: first, for the reason that the present was perceived by them as worthless, empty, but the past to which they wanted to return was also seen as a false or traumatic. This resulted in a state of suspension between the past and the present, or more precisely, a fixation on the empty present invaded by the past which takes a

form of pathological symptoms in the case of trauma, futile yearning towards the past in nostalgia and a fixation on loss and inability to finish mourning in the case of melancholia.

Along with all these (failed) fantasies of return, retreat, regression, many novels of the 30s are also pervaded by a similarly ambiguous relationship with the last period of stability, the Edwardian era. It is evident that in any climate of instability and insecurity, looking back (or rather, envisioning coherence retrospectively) into a previous era is widespread; in the 1930s, too, "writers were sceptical about any contemporary coherence and needed to recall or invent stable pasts" (Gindin 21). The mainstream 30s generation's "exaggerated consciousness of origins" led to a crucial paradox. As Johnstone puts it, "the recognition of the inadequacy in the modern world of values inherited from another age was coupled with an instinctive faith in those values – the values, in short, of the English gentleman" (133). William Plomer, looking back from 1958, also speaks about the thirties as a period when "pervading everything was an ideal, seldom explicit, of gentlemanliness" (cited by Johnstone 2). Charles Rainier in James Hilton's *Random Harvest*, for instance, is also brought up as a gentleman and finds consolation in his Edwardian infancy: he "found relief in recollecting earlier, clear-seen days of childhood and boyhood, the pre-war years during which he had grown up to be […] an English gentleman" (96), and he is able to preserve this ideal even among down-to-earth itinerary actors whose troupe he later joins: "He was busy, yet never hurried; always pleasant, yet never effusive; always reserved, yet never disdainful. In short, a perfect gentleman" (259). Yet the search for lost Edwardian values often ends in failure: as in Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*, whose ordinary protagonist, George Bowling, is unable to rediscover his Edwardian boyhood (at the place of his once-beloved lake he finds a rubbish heap), or in the exposure of the music-hall tradition as a false construction in *The Good Companions* (see Gindin 49) or the pathological clinging to lost values in Waugh's *A Handful of Dust* where Tony Last surrounds himself with childhood memories in Hetton, converts the house into a museum and finally ends up in reading Dickens in the jungle to Mr Todd.

3. *The Theoretical Frameworks of Trauma, Melancholia and Nostalgia*

3.1. Theories of Trauma

After a certain point, every catastrophic or painful event may be regarded as "traumatic," thus the interpretational field of trauma is very often broadened to such an extent that trauma often loses its precise meaning and becomes a too quickly and easily applicable tag. To be able to discuss the texts of the 1930s from this aspect, a more precise examination of the nature of trauma is needed. I wish to emphasise three aspects, attempting to focus on *trauma as an epistemological, existential and narrative problem*.

In most definitions of trauma, four characteristic features are emphasised: its sudden occurrence, its violent nature, the permanence of the injury it causes and the delayed reaction of the sufferer. On a very general level, trauma "describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucination or other intrusive phenomenon" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 11). It breaks the protective shield of the psyche, not primarily by its sheer force, but mainly by its suddenness, "occasions an inflow of excitation sufficiently strong to defeat normally successful defence mechanisms" and "brings about a disorganisation of psychic economy" (Brette 1800); the experience in many cases is so sudden that trauma may be likened to a gunshot that leaves a permanent scar on the psyche that never heals (Heller 14). According to Freud, the term "traumatic" has no other sense than an economic one. It describes an experience which, within a short period of time presents the mind with an intense stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in a normal way (Leys 23). Allan Young recalls the official definition of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) that lists elements such as intrusive memories, re-experience of the traumatic event, emotional numbing, irritability and hypervigilance (96).

The *basic epistemological paradox* of trauma is that the sufferer does not necessarily experience the original occurrence as traumatic and does not necessarily know that he has undergone a trauma. As Freud very early explained in "The Aetiology of Hysteria," it is not the original event itself that exerts a traumatic influence on the victim, because it very often comes too early in his childhood to be understood and assimilated; nor is the second event inherently traumatic, but it triggers a memory of the first one that is retrospectively given a traumatic meaning (see Leys 20). Between them is the period of temporal delay, which defers

interpretation and prevents immediate reaction. As Freud points out later in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "it may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident" (see Caruth, *Unclaimed* 17). Amnesia, latency, or as Freud put it, "incubation period" follows the scene of trauma, due to the fact that the patient could never become conscious during the occurrence of trauma of its significance, he/she simply *does not know* that he underwent trauma, thus existing in a state of epistemological void. The experience of trauma, Cathy Caruth maintains, "would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (*Unclaimed* 17). The victim may leave the site of the accident, apparently unharmed, without realising that he has in fact became a victim, perhaps never to return again, but he cannot leave trauma behind. Amnesia is most clearly indicated by the fact that the psyche cannot treat the "event" as memory, it is not able to integrate it into the life history of the patient, on the basis of the simple past-present dichotomy. What signals that a traumatic event took place at all is that the shock returns in nightmares, flashbacks, bodily and conversion symptoms, nightmares, repetitions, traumatic re-enactments, etc. in the latency period. Survival thus has a very ambiguous meaning: the "passage beyond the violent event" is accompanied by "the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 63).

What is traumatising, then, is not the *event* itself but how the psyche is able to fight and treat this violent intrusion; as Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone put it, trauma is a response not so much to the *event* as to the *meaning* given to that event, asserting that trauma "may be seen as a product of the inner workings of the mind, rather than the outcome of a happening" ("Remembering" 97). In the somewhat different formulation of Linda Belau, "trauma, pertaining to memory is less an inherent aspect of the event itself than it is an effect pertaining to the impossibility of integrating the event into a knowledgable network" (xvi). Trauma thus causes a temporal delay of reaction and understanding and hinders creating a teleological, linear story of the self since the experience always exists in its belatedness, which is the reason why therapy is needed to create a story including memories, putting an end to latency and endless repetition; in short, to create a past instead of the permanent present of trauma.

A traumatic occurrence, conceived as *a narrative and temporal problem*, subverts several basic notions of "normal" existence: linearity, teleology, narrative logic, symbolic integration, remembering, representation and the sense of possession and ownership of one's life story. Since the effect of trauma is permanently present (at least until the end of therapy), it is impossible to tell it, remember it, for it is inconsistent with the field of knowledge

pertaining to memory (Belau xv), or as Slavoj Žižek puts it, it "is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe" (quoted by Belau xvi-xvii). In the precise sense, it is not an event that may be narrated, it always already precedes narration, it has always already taken place before narration, and thus shatters narrative into isolated and unmanageable fragments (Bényei, "Sebek" 360). At the heart of traumatic memory (which is, it shall be added, an oxymoron) there is the idea of unrepresentability, for trauma interposes the disruption of memory between an event and its representation (Hodgkin and Radstone, "Introduction" 6).[26] To put it in another way, traumatic narrative at best can only exist as a story, the different elements remaining isolated to only be linked by continuatives ("and… and"),[27] but it is the task of therapy to emplot the fragmented story of trauma. Trauma induces a strong urge to tell, which is supposed to lead automatically to some sort of cure, but, as Dori Laub puts it, "there are never enough words or the right words" ("Truth" 63). Another important dilemma of trauma narratives is whether telling would not lead to an even greater pain (the victim going over his "memories" again), and whether he/she should remain silent, risking the "perpetuation of [trauma's] tyranny" (Laub, "Truth" 65). Trauma in fact reveals "inhumanity, the bare life" (Edkins 214), therefore trauma exists outside the realm of language, and the attempt to bring it back to this realm, by setting it within a linear narrative form, is to destroy its truth (Edkins 214). The victim thus becomes entrapped in a vicious circle of repressing the desire to talk about trauma or remain in constant search for words apt to insert the meaningless, subversive traumatic occurrence into symbolic narrative.[28] Dominick LaCapra terms this paradox "a fidelity to trauma" (22), which creates "a more or less unconscious desire to remain within trauma" (23).

The reason for the resistance of traumatic events to being emplotted into symbolic narratives is that these memories are as if frozen, not altered by the passage of time. Hence the "surprising literality and nonsymbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks" (Caruth, "Introduction" 5), which raise obstacles to curing the patient, "to the extent that they remain,

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[26] Basic differences exist between narrative and "traumatic memory," as van der Kolk and van der Hart summarise (163): as opposed to narrative memory, traumatic events take a long time to tell, the narrative is disrupted by hesitations, gaps and silences. It is not adaptive at all, for it is invariable and inflexible. Another important difference is that it is evoked under certain conditions. The victim is characterised by a permanent duality and simultaneity of "normal" and "traumatised" selves, which is "related to the fact that traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time […] If it can be told at all, it is still a (re)experience" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 177).

[27] See Ruth Leys's criticism of Caruth's notion of trauma narrative as a literal repetition of the past: "Caruth's theory of how the traumatic past is ineluctably registered and transmitted thus comes to seem like an extremely literalist version of history as a chronicle, conceived as a nonsubjective, nonnarrative and nonrepresentational method of memorialising the past […]." (273, Note 9)

[28] "That the speakers about trauma on some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to – and of listening to themselves. That while silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, a binding oath." (Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness" 58)

precisely, literal." Caruth maintains that traumatic dreams and flashbacks are perplexing for they cannot be explained in the context of wish-fulfilment, they constitute "the literal return of the event against the will of one it inhabits" (*Unclaimed* 59). Ruth Leys traces the historical background of such a view of trauma, going back to Kardiner's notion of trauma who described traumatic dreams "in ways that suggested they were almost cinematic replays of the traumatic origin, devoid of fantasy or symbolic meaning" (194). What is essential for our purposes is to recognise that the tendency became comparatively strong in the 1930s and during the Second World War to view traumatic repetitions as exact depictions of the origin. Van der Kolk and van der Hart, and in their wake, Caruth radicalised Kardiner's work, and literalised and materialised the nature of traumatic dream and memory (Leys 203).[29]

The third aspect of trauma that needs to be addressed here is its *ontological context*, by which I mean the manner in which the traumatised victim lives the event, the shocking situation, and the way he is able to live after its survival. First and foremost, the trauma victim feels hopelessly passive, betrayed (Edkins 4), immobile, frozen, characterised by "panic inaction," "catatonoid reactions," immobilisaton and automaton-like behaviour (Krystal 80); they submit themselves to the circumstances, even claim that the traumatic event was justified by its causes (Krystal 83), they are accompanied by symptoms of anhedonia (fear of joy) and alexithymia (rejection of emotions) (Krystal 86). At the moment of the trauma, the ego is dissociated into a subjective emotional system (that feels the trauma but cannot represent it, of which the result is the appearance of conversion symptoms) and an objective intellectual system (that perceives the trauma but cannot feel it, as if it were happening to another person) (Leys 131). Further consequences characterising a trauma victim include, to cite Freud's idea, the fragmentation or loss of unity resulting from the radical unbinding of the death drive but also the simultaneous binding (or re-binding) of cathexes (Leys 34). This dialectic of binding and unbinding, hate and love constitute traumatic reaction. A profound split characterises trauma victims, as if they were living in two different worlds. The success of the therapy naturally depends on to what extent gaps can be bridged between emotional and intellectual selves, the desire to tell and the imperative to stay silent and between past and present. Trauma victims are also bound to confront, not primarily with their own trauma, but their "enigma of survival" (Caruth, *Unclaimed* 58) and the insight they gained through the traumatic experience (Caruth, "Interview" 134).

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[29] For a detailed criticism of Caruth's theory, see Leys 249-282.

3.2. The Theoretical Framework of Melancholia

In spite of its rich cultural heritage in Western culture[30], melancholia seems to be an essentially modern experience; modernity (and modernism), loss and melancholia seem to go hand in hand in the history of the term. Max Pensky holds that melancholia is something undeniably modern (2), while Jonathan Flatley links melancholia to the temporality of modernism: the very word "modern," meaning "of today" entails a kind of temporality where returning to anteriority is problematic, time is linear, sequential and irreversible, the past is lost and gone, the present, however, is contingent, elusive, fugitive and cannot be grasped (28-9). "To be modern," he maintains, "is to be separated from the past" (29), while at the same time pathologically being engaged to it ("the past remains steadfastly alive" [Eng and Kazanjian 3-4]), because "the melancholic's past never passes" (Kristeva, "Melancholic" 113). Patricia Rae claims that the literature produced between the two world wars is essentially a "work of mourning," or more precisely, the resistance to this work (13); quoting Elizabeth Bishop, she uses the term "the art of losing," which in this context means that modernist elegies, instead of resurrecting the dead and substituting them in some form, "practice losing farther, losing faster" (14). Loss is like an open wound, refusing to heal and, it has to be added, the melancholic often does not even want it to heal. "Modernist literary discourses are haunted by the spectre of object loss," Esther Sánchez-Pardo points out (18), also mentioning that modernist texts focus on and are haunted by an unprecedented spectre of anxiety neurosis, shell-shock, manic depression and melancholia (10), all of which are in fact part of the larger discourse of the opposition between body and mind, inside and outside, memory and desire, and the longing to remember and the wish to forget (11).

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[30] It has been theorised as one of the four basic temperaments or psychological dispositions in Antiquity, signifying both a character type and a temporary mood, caused by the excess of one of the body liquids, black bile. In medieval times, melancholia was regarded as one of the seven deadly sins, bearing the name acedia, sloth or laziness. According to László Földényi, the first turn in the term's cultural prestige takes place in the Renaissance when the melancholic's excessive passivity is coupled with his desire to create and exceptional intelligence. While the medieval melancholic went mad because of the closed world he had to live in, here it is the world's boundless character and its entailed cosmic lack that becomes the source of melancholy (Földényi 114). The emblematic figure of the age was the human being who lacked all points of reference, who wanted to see the world from God's perspective, and realising he was unable to do that. In the Baroque age the conflict between indefinite infinity and concrete personality becomes unbearable (Földényi 160). The Enlightenment, just like the Middle Ages, could not tolerate the placeless, eccentric melancholic and through various repressive power techniques – for instance, naming, classifying, scientific discourses – it deprived man of being able to define himself as a "normal" melancholic, which also resulted in the disappearance of the sacred, magic, metaphysical qualities in life. Romanticism can basically be seen as a symptom of this lack or loss of enchantment in reintroducing personal myths and individual cosmologies in art. Melancholia's history, then, spectacularly illustrates modern man's maladies, loneliness, alienation, "the dissociation of sensibility," to use T. S. Eliot's formula, and his inability to deal with loss, to mourn what is no longer. For brief summaries of melancholia's cultural history, see e.g., Pfau 315, Flatley 35-6, Radden 5-6, Pensky 22-26, Földényi's book and Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl's study, especially 217-240.

According to Flatley, Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" could also be seen as the allegory for the experience of modernity (2). It was Freud who first defined the basic difference between "successful" loss, that is, mourning, in which the ego is able to withdraw the cathexes from the lost object, and melancholia, in which the ego cannot come to terms with the loss and pathologically clings to the lost object, which, according to the patient, cannot be replaced, re-cathected, and therefore, continues to haunt the ego. The withdrawal of cathexes into the ego results in a narcissistic object choice[31], for the ego incorporates into itself the lost object (thus thinks he preserves it).[32] It keeps looking for the lost object, while also seeking himself in every object that could replace the original one, but the incorporation also sheds light on the ambivalent nature of this object choice (and the melancholic's love in general, see Kristeva, "Melancholic" 106), for it reveals the hidden sadistic aspects of this relationship. The ego loves the object, but also hates it because he has been abandoned by it, and through the identification, the ego turns against itself (which is the seed of the birth of the superego). This results in the characteristic attitude of self-reproach, self-degradation, and even suicide. In fact, the melancholic *dies for* the superego (Sánchez-Pardo 49). In psychoanalytic theory, the basic paradox of the melancholic's attitude is that the patient is not aware of what he has lost. He knows that he has lost something, but not what he lost in that object (see Radden 150). That is why it is often the loss itself that preoccupies the melancholic and not the lost object. Flatley calls our attention to a metaphor used by Freud, according to which it is "the shadow of the object" that the patient really identifies with (46). Therefore, in every case we have to speak about an imperfect identification, not an exact copy; hence the ambivalent nature of incorporation. The question arises whether melancholia is an exceptional case of object loss or if there is something general in melancholia that is valid for all kinds of losses. Freud, already in *The Ego and the Id*, began to generalise the idea of melancholic object loss, finally arriving at the point of claiming that there is no nonmelancholic loss, and that melancholia is essential to the constitution of the ego (see Flatley 49).

This idea was later carried on by Melanie Klein (who traced melancholia back to the loss of the first nurturer), Judith Butler (who combined gender issues and melancholia) and Julia Kristeva (who worked out the concepts of asymbolia, chora, and the Thing); all of them,

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[31] As Kristeva puts it in *Black Sun*, "depression is the hidden face of Narcissus" (5).

[32] Abraham and Torok make an important distinction between introjection (characteristic of mourning) and incorporation (a correlative of melancholia), pointing out that the lost object is kept within the ego, like in a crypt, the ego pretending that the loss did not take place. It is only when this "crypt" is threatened by an external trauma that melancholic identification with the object takes place (Adkins 3); which recalls the incorporation's cannibalistic, sadistic, retentive, anal erotic component (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 12), see also the purse and the keys on the woman figure's belt in Dürer's "Melancholia I," clear signs of parsimony (Klibansky et al. 285).

in various ways, expanded the conceptual field of melancholia. Klein theorised the universality of the depressive position, claiming that we are all weaned from our mothers very early in our childhood, so it can be said our earliest loss is melancholic in nature (300). According to Kristeva, the loss of the melancholic remains unspecified, and this loss cannot be symbolised; in other words, the real does not lend itself to signification (*Black Sun* 13); the source of the melancholic's grief is the extreme flimsiness of signifiers (*Black Sun* 20). The object of desire, the so-called Thing, cannot be reached by a metonymic chain of signifiers, for all possible substitutes to be recathected fall short of the ideal. Thus, it is only by way of sublimation into a poetic, rhythmic, lyrical language that the lost object might be regained (*Black Sun* 14).

The melancholic produces a wide variety of symptoms. Indeed, these symptoms can be so manifold that one of the earliest theoreticians of modern melancholy, Robert Burton, compared this variety to a Tower of Babel.[33] The melancholic exhibits symptoms such as dejection, passivity, brooding over the very impossibility of action, lack of interest, self-degradation, ambivalence towards the self and the other including idealisation and devalorisation (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 11), general slowness; no reasonable action, rashness, fancy, uncontrolled lust, greed, no proper memory, stuttering, irritability, fantasy, brooding, turning away from people (Klibansky et al. 34). The melancholic is also tormented by delusions of grandeur, overestimation of criminal capacities (Sánchez-Pardo 26), defamiliarisation and alienation. According to Kristeva, melancholia "is the institutional symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that becomes established now and then or chronically in a person alternating, more often than not, with the so-called manic phase of exaltation" (*Black Sun* 9). Sánchez-Pardo terms melancholia an illness of love (5), even asserting that melancholia and love are often interchangeable as "illnesses that storm the subject in its passage through object relations" (19), while Flatley borrows Heidegger's phrase, *Stimmung*, claiming that depression is the *Stimmung* or attunement to the world in which the world and the people it in appear to have lost the capacity of sustaining each other's interest or desire (5). According to Földényi, the melancholic is simply attuned to the world differently: it is not that his internal "mood" is projected onto the outside world, or that the external world causes sadness, but melancholia reflects a mode of being in the world, in which the self and the world are not separated from each other, therefore speaking about this "mood" as an object becomes impossible (336). The melancholic is characteristically one who is simply not at home in this world, his whole life to him seems lacking an inhabitable space,

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[33] "[T]hey will act, conceive all extremes, contrarieties, and contradictions, and that in infinite varieties. […] scarce two of two thousand that concur in the same symptoms. The tower of Babel never yielded such confusion of tongues, as the chaos of melancholy doth variety of symptoms" (Burton 511)

appearing as uncanny; they are deviant subjects occupying "an enigmatic social nonplace" (Sánchez-Pardo 19), who are described by their simultaneous rejection of both the ends and means of sanctioned social behaviour, a kind of passive rebellion (Pensky 33-4); they are hovering in society like ghosts (Kraepelin 274). As Kraepelin puts it, writing of "Melancholia gravis," the melancholic thinks "[he] must remain his whole lifetime in an institution, die, *has already died*" (268, emphasis mine).

The melancholic is a "stranger to the world of signs" (La Cassagnère 45), he always has to face, and this is the chief source of his depression, the failure of signification (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 10). For him, speech is a foreign language, a mask, a beautiful façade carved out of a foreign language (*Black Sun* 53). He always has to face the transience inherent in the symbolic world, the lapsed nature of representation (Pfau 327). Language simply refuses to "express" melancholy, there is no symbolic act that might restore the lost object. The melancholic, however, does not remain silent: he would like to make the loss disappear, preserve the object as something that cannot be killed. He wants to signify the lost object, reintegrating it into language which, however, keeps denying him this possibility, thus he is suspended between silence and speech. Although his desire towards the Thing motivates him to keep up the language game, the signifiers' inability to symbolise throws him back into silent stasis (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 43, La Cassagnère 47-8). This is something like a dialectical process: the melancholic knows that the available object-world for him is the realm of death but also that this is the only available world for him, therefore he is characterised by an obsessive fixation on the profusion of dead objects (Pensky 92), which are always already tainted with the shadow of future separation (Levin 112), demonstrating his "loyalty to the world of things" (Pensky 105). It is also a dialectical process in the sense that the melancholic subjects constitutes a melancholic world and vice versa (Pensky 16).

The melancholic perceives this world as essentially metonymical. Writing about the melancholic's memory, Klibansky et al. assert that it is crowded, agitated, though it does not last long: like an arrow shot, it takes an automatic and autonomous course (35), therefore the melancholic associates every given idea with the next (36). Once he/she starts wandering from one signifier to the other, he or she cannot stop on this ever accelerating path (see also Kraepelin 263). His or her logic works along the logic of contiguity, refusing metaphorical identification. On the way to retrieving the lost object, he/she substitutes it for metonymically related signifiers, thus getting further and further from the Thing. It is according to this logic that the melancholic wants to build up the world around himself or herself; the subject perceives things, objects and possessions around him or her "erratically distributed" in "random contiguity" (Pfau 329). These fragments, shards, ruins, these sets of objects with no

necessary function or meaning, emptied of significance (Flatley 37) will be the chief source of his brooding that he is forever bound to. Pensky, following Benjamin, mentions three steps that prepare this "petrified, primordial landscape" (116) for allegorical transformation: *Trauer* (sadness), *Entwertung* (devaluation) and *Verstückerung* (fragmentation) (116-7). Once the melancholic subject goes through these phases, brooding on ruins and fragments, he/she enters the phase of allegoresis, allegorical production.

Referring to Benjamin, Pfau asserts that allegory, above all, involves a profound loss of the mystical and symbolic power of pictorial representation (321). Allegory does nothing else than enact "the expiration of the symbol's claim to conjuring up and transfiguring its object in a single creative and affirmative instant" and it does so over and over again, endlessly (321). The result is that allegory injects slow time into the very mode of representation, and this allegorical mode of representation, in turn, renders "the experience of time as endlessly recursive and invariant" (321). Essentially, the melancholic would like to restore the "original" meaning before the object/subject separation that used to exist before the loss of the first nurturer, "the original libidinal wound" (Pensky 26) but that is, of course, impossible, and thus resorts to repetitive allegorisations of loss. The very act of subsequent symbolisation merely indicates that the loss can be allegorised but not signified (Pensky 28). As Kristeva states, the subject, through primary processes and idealisation, weaves a hypersign around and with the depressive void, which is identified by her as allegory (*Black Sun* 99). This allegory essentially endows the lost signifier with signifying pleasure, a ressurrectional sublimation, serving as a "temporary fetish" (*Black Sun* 102).

Summarising Benjamin's theory, Flatley writes that the melancholic gaze means that the world has been transformed into a set of objects, emptied of significance, with no necessary meaning; in this sense prepared for allegorical transformation. The melancholic mind, dwelling on ruins and fragments, does not remain passive, but, in every moment, is free to imagine how the world made up of the piling of these ruins might be transformed, so that "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (37). As Benjamin asserts, "allegories are in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things" ("The Ruin" 180). Contrasting Baroque and 19th-century melancholia, he asserts that while in the former the key figure was the corpse under the melancholic-allegorical gaze, in the modern age (where the emblematic melancholic might be Baudelaire), it is the internal world of memories that is in ruins, it is the souvenir which constitutes the melancholic world. His example shows how the modern melancholic does not even try to overcome loss, takes pleasure in it (Flatley 6) and melancholy becomes the source of endless accumulation of losses (Flatley 29), or more precisely, endless souvenirs, memories, allegorising those losses

(as Baudelaire wrote in his famous opening line in "Spleen II," "J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans").

3.3. Two Kinds of Nostalgia

Discussing nostalgia, one has to make a distinction between its depathologised and pathological modes. In its depathologised, pleasant and harmless form, of nostalgia that can be captured by contrasting the original meaning of the term, "the pain of going home or the pain of returning" (nostos-algos) and the definition of pleasant nostalgia, where "nostalgia is memory with the pain removed" (cited by Davis 37). A relevant contrast here is also that between two facets of *amnesia* that are closely related to nostalgia.

In the pathological form of nostalgia, amnesia is frequent (two main characters in Hilton, Conway in *Lost Horizon* and Rainier in *Random Harvest* are amnesiac in the present of the narration); it is characteristic of the nostalgist cast into the narrative-less, desireless space of the present, which is inferior to the past and painfully exists as the simulacrum of the presence of a past that he or she tries to recapture. This amnesia is a crisis of signification; or, as Connerton points out, amnesia is a crisis of (verbal, visual, semantic) encoding, "a sign of the fact that [the patients] have lost the general ability to subsume a sense datum under a category. For to name a thing is to see it as a representative of a category" (27).

The other, depathologised kind of amnesia is entirely practical, which seals off, consolidates the past and makes it available for depatholgised nostalgia. After the nostalgist is able to take a position from which he can view the past as harmless and regainable, then the past, as Wright puts it, becomes something to be dug up (leading to archaeology) or visited (resulting in tourism) (76). This also means a kind of timelessness, but one that consolidates the past as timeless in order to make it available for present use, rather than conceiving the timeless, self-enclosed quality of the past as something to be longed for. From this perspective, the closing of gaps between the past and the present (that happens at the end of *Random Harvest*) leads to the creation of a historical time, a linearity that becomes the site of displacement of a memory crisis (Terdiman 31). This is dematerialised and public history, "the time of nobody," in which the subject is a mere onlooker, cast into a neutral and spatialised (isotropic, Cartesian) historical time that is particularly apt to give birth to "objective" historical values (Ermarth 33). In this notion of nostalgia, "abstracted and redeployed, history seems to be purged of political tension; it becomes a unifying spectacle, the settling of all disputes. Like the guided tour as it proceeds from site to sanctioned site, the

national past occurs in a dimension of its own – a dimension in which we appear to remember only in order to forget" (Wright 69-70). This is the regulation, the containment of the past, indeed the dilution of it, to make it available to social groups (Dames 11).[34]

This kind of remembering is clearly not pathological, not traumatic, it is a *claimed* experience (Stewart 165); and from here it is only one step to say that it is "natural." Since it involves no recollection, for it is there all around us. This easily leads to a situation where it is not necessary to justify its existence, since taking part in this kind of remembering requires having already been there (cf. Wright 85: "to be a subject of Deep England, is above all, to have *been there* – one must have had the essential experience").[35] This "healthy" nostalgia is practical, it serves ideological purposes and is oriented towards the future. This pragmatic amnesia turned toward the future might also be similar to the Jewish tradition of remitting debts. In each 49th year all debts were cancelled and these years were called "iubilaeum" (hence the word jubilee) (Weinrich 255). This is getting rid of the accumulation, the surplus generated by the period between the past and the present; we could say that whereas the pathological nostalgist is unable to get rid of the surplus in the present, not able to subtract the past from the present, the "healthy" nostalgist is successful in doing that, in cancelling the debt of the past, which leads for him to a possibility of a new start, a tabula rasa.

In terms of literary history, this is the key mode of remembering (or forgetting) in most Victorian novels, a mode which slowly gave its place to the Bergsonian or Proustian kind of "pure," profound memory in modernism with an emphasis on its desultory, uncontrollable, possibly traumatic, "unclaimed" nature. In Hilton's novels, the choice between the two kinds of nostalgia is a conscious decision between the traditional Victorian and the modernist poetics of the novel.

In its pathological, modernist form, nostalgia is based on the ontological difference between the past and the present. The present, the time of narration, is conceived as a void, as an inorganic, non-narrative temporality, a "route-less, non-narrative space" (Bényei, "Landscape" 19). It can only made visible with a futile attempt of the nostalgist to try to narrate himself back to the past, which is superior to the present and thought of as plenitude, knowledge and presence that cannot be recovered. As Richard Terdiman argues, these

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[34] Susan Stewart lists the most important containers of the past in this depathological nostalgic mode: these are the still life, the toy, the journey, the dollhouse, and above all, the souvenir, the miniature, and the collection (135). The souvenir and the miniature exclude repetition, or, as Stewart puts it, they are "reportable" rather than "repeatable" (135), they generate stories of/about the possessor, and they displace the gap from inside the past between that past and the present. The souvenir does not remind, it is rather a memorial (58), it does not serve remembering but rather a pleasant amnesia accompanied by the illusion of generating remembering.

[35] It is significant that the drafters of the National Heritage Act in England in the 1980s confessed that they "could no more define the national heritage than we could define, say, beauty or art… So we decided to let the national heritage define itself." (Cited by Lowenthal 37)

dichotomous formulations are ideological constructs (44) that make the loss that characterises the present narratable. The longing that generates nostalgia is aimed towards an ideal, self-enclosed world that is often characterised as pure, untainted and timeless. In the nostalgist's mind, the linear progress of time amounts to an accumulation of a surplus that corrupts the present; thus, working towards the ideal, enclosed space is a work of subtraction. This subtraction cannot, however, be done with the language of the present, which is based on signs (what is more, each revisiting of the past gets the rememberer further and further from the original, founding event [Freeman 90]). The lost paradise of the nostalgist is a timeless, transcendental, autogenic and self-enclosed present. The loss that we speak about is not primarily the loss of plenitude or knowledge, but the crisis of the sign (Stewart 23). The longed-for space is not based on language, its fundamental structuration is pre-semiotic. It works on the basis of logical identity, where "A=A"; and this concept of the pre-semiotic field involves no temporality (Terdiman 66); that is why nostalgia's dream is "closing the gap between resemblance and identity, […] an erasure of the gap between sign and signified" (Stewart 145). This is a field of strict reproduction, where everything is "real" and where memories are preserved eternally in an endless archive; it is the space of "hypermnesia" where "nothing is forgotten, nothing is destroyed" (Proust, *Contre Saint-Beuve*, cited by Terdiman 195), and every content is preserved in its original form. This is precisely the structure of the Freudian unconscious, too, where memories are preserved in their original form (and are therefore not really memories but present impressions). Every memory is stored there and it is the success of their translation, their articulation into the semiotic field (by the patient with the help of the analyst) that determines to what extent these memories remain pathogenic.[36] On the other hand, this is also the model of the modernist work of art propagated by New Criticism in that it is severed from temporality and social relations.

On the other side of the dichotomy we have the field of the present, the domain of the social and the historical with its temporality, dynamic relations, determinations, structures of domination and hegemony. This is the field of semiotic representation, the world of signs. It is not only that the use of signs, for instance, writing, is the natural enemy of (organic, natural) remembering (a widespread idea from Plato to Rousseau [Nalbantian 25]), and the surest way to lose one's memories is writing a memoir (Freeman 88), but the fundamental issue seems to be the anxiety surrounding the translation from the pre-semiotic aesthetic into the semiotic historical field. The question for the nostalgist is how he can give birth to signs, what happens on the thin borderline separating the pre-semiotic and the semiotic, how he can tell a coherent

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[36] This, of course, raises the question of how trauma and nostalgia might be related to each other. Both seem to be generated by a past that refuses to be become a past.

story of himself, how it is possible (both for the analyst and the analysand in an analytical situation) to find a story with a plot, i.e., one that has sequence and pattern (DeConcini 125). The nostalgist's desire is, however, not that of telling stories, since telling the story of the pre-semiotic, archival, enclosed field is, by definition, impossible; what he can execute at best is to construct an allegorical narrative of narrative's own its own birth, of how he arrived at a position when there arose a need to tell a story (similarly to the patient that seeks the analyst's help and tells why he came to see the analyst). The telos of nostalgia is a void, a desireless, non-narrative place (Bényei, "Landscape" 17) and a point of entropy, where history becomes a spectacle (Wright 74). Since all the nostalgist has is signs, which are of no use to him, he is left with the mere possibility of repetition or return. This is not the pathological repetition of a traumatised patient whose memories are not able to become memories. It is a conscious choice that either takes the form of waiting for the original event to recur (this is the Proustian involuntary memory) when the logical identity of "A=A" can be re-established, excluding temporality that intervened between the two apparitions of the event; or the form of going back literally to the place where the nostalgic memory was generated, which is seldom successful, since places resist temporality much less than events, and these spatial revisitations often turn to be failures. As Nalbantian points out, in modernism a shift takes place from the Romantic concept of memory in which the rememberer is able to recreate the original experience in himself to the idea of a memory that is preserved in material containers that the rememberer expects to exert a stimulus on his mind (hence the heightened interest in body memory) (43). These body memories that work through materialised containers, that is, Proustian metaphoric relations, are rare in the 30s and generally after modernism; the emphasis rather falls on specific (failed) revisitations of places and the impossibility of metaphoric correspondences between past and present.

4. Goodbye to Proust: George Orwell's Coming Up For Air

George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939), written in the shadow of the impending war, spectacularly and powerfully illustrates both the impossibility of Proustian memory, based on the closing of the gaps between the past and the present, the metaphorical identity of occurrences belonging to two different temporal worlds and the futility of the nostalgic yearning towards the an era that was later constructed as the last period of stability before the

Great War. The middle-class, middle-aged insurance salesman, George Bowling, on the threshold of the Second World War, having won seventeen pounds, sets out in secret to rediscover his hometown and his childhood. The trip eventually turns out to be a failure, since he has to find that Lower Binfield, the village where he grew up, "has been swallowed" and changed beyond recognition, and his beloved pond in which he used to fish a lot has been turned into a rubbish-dump. Therefore this novel can easily be seen as a record of nostalgia for the Edwardian era, generated by the historical burden of the impending war. Besides being an obvious metaphor, the novel's central organising motif, Bowling's favourite pastime, fishing, can easily be interpreted, in the words of David Lodge, as a metonymic trope that stands for "the healthier state of culture and society in those pre-World-War-I days" (192). George Bowling comes to be regarded as an epitome of the kind of man who frees himself from all the nervousness of the age and arrives at a position where he sinks into passivity, after his failure to regain his past. Analysed with a historical awareness of the significance of the year when the novel was written, 1939, *Coming Up for Air* can easily fall into the category of mere historical illustration, a "prophetic book" announcing the outbreak of the war.

The novel goes through three major phases in presenting the workings of memory, these being remembering, repetition and supplementation. The present is characterised by fragmentation, and what is conceived by the protagonist to be an authentic layer that stands for the past is under constant threat from the intruding present. Remembering (conceived literally as "re-membering") as a cure for this fragmentation proves to be ineffective, since the fragmented state of things does not cease even after Bowling's return to his native town. As an alternative to remembering, repetition offers itself or rather is unwillingly chosen as a possibility to bridge the gap between the past and the present (indicating that remembering is not successful within the context of the novel). The problem occurs when it becomes obvious that fishing, the central motif is not something that is repeated, but rather to be supplemented or completed, since it was not even originally successful. This completion can never come about, which results in an endless chain of repetition. I am going to discuss the central motif, fishing, in depth, trying to demonstrate that it serves a twofold purpose in that it can be seen as an allegory of remembering and forgetting at the same time. It is this paradoxical situation of remembering *as* forgetting that I explore at the end of the sub-chapter, finally arguing that the novel suggests the futility of all three options presented in the text: remembering, repetition and completion.

The inauthenticity of the present is illustrated by various metaphors in the text. The whole process of remembering begins with the first sentence. "The idea really came to me the

day I got my false teeth" (3). This false element can be seen as something artificial, constructed, intruding into what Bowling conceives to be his "authentic" body (interestingly, however, this is what initiates the process of remembering). The first chapter contains other metaphors of intrusion as well. For instance, Bowling discovers that his neck is still soapy after washing: "It gives you a disgusting sticky feeling, and the queer thing is that, however carefully you sponge it away, when you've once discovered that your neck is soapy you feel sticky for the rest of the day" (7). Before that, one of kids wants to enter the bathroom: "Dadda! I want to come in!" "Well, you can't. Clear out!" "But, dadda! I wanna go somewhere!" "Go somewhere, else, then. Hop it. I'm having my bath." "Dad-*da*! I wanna go *some-where*!" (6) Thus, even his own children are imagined as aliens and intruders. When Bowling enters a milk-bar and wants to eat a frankfurter, he discovers that it is filled partly with fish. "Ersatz, they call it" (27). Something alien is added to the original, apparently with the intention of making it somehow more "original." The genuine material has to be supplemented, because the original somehow seems to be insufficient (which may lead to an endless chain of supplementation). Bowling says later: "I've got something else inside me, chiefly a hangover from the past […]. I'm fat, but I'm thin inside. Has it ever struck you that there's a thin man inside every fat man, just as they say there's a statue inside every block of stone?" (23). These metaphors of intrusion set up a binary structure of inside (the authentic) and outside (the alien, the other). What, in fact, is this "authentic" inside? These metaphors, which are connected to the body on the one hand (false teeth, soap), and to space on the other (bathroom), imagining contamination as coming from outside (Ersatz) suggest that Bowling constructs a genuine, original core, which regularly comes under the threat of the intruding present.

It seems that this present is dominated by difference, and the task of remembering would be to get rid of or repress this difference and re-instate the original binary opposition of inside and outside ("genuine" and "false"). Thus, remembering, on the one hand, is conceived of as removing the outer surface layer (which is the supplementary excess provided by the present), a kind of digging, carving out, reaching an "authentic" core. These metaphors shed light on the logic of remembering in the novel: the present is seen as an addition to the past, while remembering is conceived as subtraction.

On the other hand, the present as narrated by George Bowling appears hopelessly fragmented. In the newspaper, he reads about a woman's leg that was found wrapped in a brown-paper parcel in a railway waiting room. The spokesman in the Left Book Club talks about "bestial atrocities… hideous outbursts of sadism… Rubber truncheons… Concentration camps… Iniquitous persecution of the Jews… Back to the Dark Ages… European

civilisation…" (171) The present can only be represented as a montage of fragments, a heap of fixed, mechanistic slogans. Bowling himself likes speaking about himself as *part* of the modern world as well, thinking of himself as one of the little items of the montage. Ideally, remembering should offer the promise of re-assembling, re-membering these fragments and provide the disintegrating ego with (the promise of some kind of) wholeness. But can remembering serve this purpose? Re-membering proves to be impossible even after Bowling's return to Lower Binfield. At his parents' grave he is unable to remember: "I don't know what you ought to feel but I'll tell you what I did feel and that was nothing." (224) Fragmentation as a metaphor of this impossibility of remembering features in the later sections of the novel as well: when Bowling is reading a fragmented text in the church and when a severed leg appears after a bombing in Lower Binfield. A house is bombed by the RAF in a such way that it re-enacts the motif of intrusion as well: "Its wall, the one that joined the greengrocer's shop, was ripped off as neatly as if someone had done it with a knife. And what was extraordinary was that in the upstairs rooms nothing had been touched. It was just like looking into a doll's house" (264). Since remembering in this psychoanalytical sense (reconstructing the patient's self from fragments and memories) is not possible in *Coming Up for Air*, even after Bowling's revisiting his scene of childhood, repetition appears as an alternative structuring force in the text.

The introduction of the concept of repetition gains significance in a psychoanalytic perspective. According to the well-known concept of repetition in psychoanalysis, repetition occurs when remembering is blocked by the return of the painful repressed material during the analysis. In the classic Freudian theory, "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten or repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" (Freud, "Remembering" 150). Remembering in the novel is structured (and undermined) by the logic of repetition on several levels. On one level, the novel itself is a repetition of the very painful experience of the loss of what Lower Binfield was before 1914, inasmuch as every nostalgic novel stages the loss as a result of which it comes about. Apart from repetition in this sense, the novel can be taken as the repetition of certain biblical stories, for instance the repetition or restaging of the narrative of the expulsion from Paradise, or the Fall, and, surprisingly, the story of Jonah. When the possibility of return is denied, and Bowling has to realise that "the old life is finished, and to go about looking for it is juts a waste of time. There's no way back to Lower Binfield," he says, "you can't put back Jonah into the whale […] And it was a queer thing I'd done by coming here." (267)

The story of Jonah calls attention to the ambiguous nature of Bowling's narrative logic of remembering as repeating. What does he want to return to, after all? To the "reality" of the past, something solid (cf. "Fishing was the real thing" [80]) as opposed to the fakery, sham and fragmentation of the present? Or is the case just the opposite? It seems that he does not want to face the reality of the present (which is powerfully symbolised by the sinister presence of the bombing planes), and wants to regain something half-unreal, fictitious and fantastic ("I am twelve years old, but I'm Donovan the Dauntless…and I can smell the dust and sainfoin and the cool plastery smell, and I'm up the Amazon, and it's bliss, pure bliss" [105]). Thus the story of Jonah as an allegory becomes thoroughly ambiguous: the impossibility of "putting Jonah back into the whale" can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, one cannot return to the world of illusion, one has to face the present; on the other hand, one cannot return to the "reality" of the past, bogged down in the absurdity and chaos of the present.

Similarly to the way the present is dominated by difference and intrusion, Bowling himself becomes an intruder in his own past when he returns to Lower Binfield. When he visits his home town, the local people ignore him, he becomes an intruder. He finds that he is invisible, his former lover does not recognise him and he cannot find his way in the meaningless present. The local people cannot really help him.[37] He realises that he has become a ghost, something belonging to the past and the present at the same time, something subversive in the "normal" space of human life, a thing that is in-between, not dead, but not living any more, either. This shows the basic ambiguity of the past, revealing that it is also an addition, intrusion, and something constructed. The problem with this kind of remembering rests in the very conception of somebody's past as part of oneself, yet profoundly alien. According to Paul Ricoeur, revoking one's childhood is dominated by a strong feeling of alterity, but this does not destroy the relationship of the present and the past, the temporal continuity and the "Jemeinigkeit" (always mine-ness) of remembering (54). He says that another characteristic of the relationship to the past, namely that one's memories always belong to one's own consciousness, is just as crucial as the relationship between oneself and one's body (55). One example of this kind of otherness via continuity is again Bowling's set of false teeth. In an emblematic moment during his stay in Lower Binfield he pauses and takes his teeth out: performing an act of subtraction, staging the whole process of his remembering. In this perspective, his set of false teeth may stand precisely for his own past, which is alien to him (and cannot be rediscovered), yet deeply a part of him. The paradoxical significance of

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[37] "Beg pardon," he asks, "can you tell me the way to the market-place?" "She 'couldn't tell'" "Then I saw a bloke in overalls with a bag of tools coming along and tried again […] 'Market-place? Market-place? Lessee, now. Oh – you mean the *Ole* Market?' I supposed I did mean the Old Market." (215)

this kind of remembering is that the past here is conceived as something added later, something constructed, yet something the experience of which temporally precedes recollection. This addition of the past (remembering) subverts the present, and the past as addition is doomed to be forgotten or repressed: finally Bowling seems to come to terms with the situation, withdraws into quietism, and decides that he does not care.

The most powerful motif which stages repetition is fishing. The problem with this is that it is not simply that the activity of angling is the primary object of remembering, but that Bowling wants to return to doing something, in which he had failed in the past: the child Bowling is allowed to accompany his peers and his acceptance by the others depends on his success in fishing. His attempt to catch the big fish, however, is only half-successful: though he "gave a terrific haul and the fish – a great huge silvery fish – came flying through the air," the next moment "there was old Brewer" – the owner of the pond – "standing over [them], and they "suddenly cowered like partridges when there's a hawk overhead," (72) after which they have to escape. The catching of the fish remains incomplete, and the fish ends up in a suspended position, left behind, "fallen into shallow water where he couldn't turn over, and for perhaps a second he lay on his side helpless" (71). The fish ends up in a suspended position like Bowling himself, who is expelled from his private Paradise, and becomes a ghost. His maturation remains incomplete, and his development is arrested at this point, which will serve as a fertile ground for repetition. Fishing itself, the experience of it becomes non-narratable afterwards: "Is it any use talking about it, I wonder – the sort of fairy light that fish and fishing tackle have in a kid's eyes? […] It's not a thing you can explain or rationalise, it's merely magic." (66-67) It cannot be rationalised precisely because it was not mastered by Bowling – it is doomed to be repeated (completed?) again and again. Fishing is not "repressed" or forgotten; on the contrary, "every detail has stuck clear in [his] memory" (81). He attempts to catch his fish after this failure four times in his life, at the ages of 14, 16, 24 and 45, but each attempt turns out to be a failure, creating a chain of futile attempts to complete the action.

As opposed to this sequence of deferral, Bowling outlines another narrative logic, namely that before the age of 16 he used to fish, after that he gave it up, and then attempted to return to Lower Binfield to fish again. This, however, is simply not true, for we have seen that fishing as a failed attempt keeps lingering on. The pattern of seemingly endless deferral undermines the logic of the sequence of past-present and future: deferral and substitution become constituent parts of both the past and the present. In this light, the construction of an "original" place, the "eternal summer" of his youth and the narrative linearity that Bowling imposes on his story are only necessary to repress the inherent difference that inhabits the

present. Contrary to the suggested linear logic, the novel is structured around the memory of what in fact Bowling had never managed to do. No firm point of origin exists in the novel, but only a series of failed attempts, and therefore the construction of an "original," innocent place becomes illusory. The subject in search of the final unreachable object of desire goes through a metonymic sequence of signifiers, none of which is able to name the desired object.

Apart from the fact that fishing serves not simply as the object of remembering, but also as a series of attempts to repeat – or rather complete – something, which in fact was not finalised, I want to argue that fishing can also be conceived of as the allegory of the inability or the impossibility of remembering. It is repeated four times with no success, just as remembering is doomed to fail both before and after Bowling's return to Lower Binfield. It is as if fishing acted out this failure of remembering, inasmuch as repetition is conceived as the inability to remember. Thus, the half-finished, suspended act of fishing prefigures the failure of the act of remembering that tries both to retrieve and repeat something which never happened: by pretending to return to this past moment, it is destined to find a replication of itself as failed retrieval.

It seems, however, that the activity of fishing is even more contradictory than that. Bowling states that "the fish I remembered best of all are the ones I didn't catch" (85). According to this logic, the precondition of remembering (as the counterpart of forgetting) is leaving the fish where it is, that is, the catching of the fish would mean forgetting about it. However, we find a logic diametrically opposed to this, when Bowling says: "At some time this pool had been connected with the other, and then the stream dried up and the woods had closed round the small pool and it had just been forgotten. It's a thing that happens occasionally. A pool gets forgotten somehow, nobody fishes in it for years and decades and the fish grow to monstrous sizes" (91). According to this logic, the catching of the fish would mean the possibility of remembering: the fish would stop growing and the narrative could be closed down, but that is impossible within the context of the novel. We have arrived at a paradox: the catching of the fish would mean both an escape from forgetting, that is, remembering (Bowling wants to catch the huge carp that has been forgotten) *and* forgetting (the ceasing of the process of remembering), remembering *as* forgetting.

It is this undecidability that structures the novel, as is illustrated by the title. What does "coming up for air" mean? Coming up for air from under the water that symbolises the absurdity of the suffocating present would have a healing, restoring effect. Air, however, is strongly connected to the sinister presence of the bombing planes and authority in the novel. Nor is it possible for Bowling to remain under the water of the past (as it is illustrated by the story of Jonah mentioned above: "You cannot put back Jonah into the whale"). He ends up in

a suspended position, just like the fish he could not catch: he "had fallen into shallow water where he couldn't turn over, and for perhaps a second he lay on his side helpless," suspended between water and air. This uncertainty is reflected in the protagonist's relation to memory: it seems that he is able neither to remember, nor to repeat, nor to round off the suspended action. What kind of solution does the novel offer to this dilemma? We can perhaps answer this question by elevating Bowling's story to a historical level: the painful solution for Europe, whose problem was precisely this inability to forget and remember was what the novel is often considered to be the prophesy of: the Second World War. If I claimed at the beginning that the novel is not "prophetic" in the usual sense, I have to modify this and say that *Coming Up for Air* is a prophetic novel in the sense that it stages the crisis of memory which was partly responsible for the outbreak of the war.

5. "Apparently Unhurt": Trauma In Henry Green's Party Going (1939) and Caught (1943)

5.1. Henry Green's Fiction and Trauma

In his autobiography, *Pack My Bag* (1940) Green evokes the traumatic episode when he got to know that his parents were dying, following an accident in Mexico (97). He recalls that he had never had a similar experience before, when "a shock blankets the mind and when I got back to my room I walked up and down a long time" (97). However, he did not think of the experience of this event as necessarily traumatic, for "I began to dramatize the shock I knew I had had into what I thought it ought to feel like" (97). He remembers the isolation he had to suffer among his schoolmates due to this dramatic piece of news: "I had wounds to lick," as he formulates (100). He recalls that he "was given a push further down this hill about five weeks later" (98) when his parents got better and sent him photos with bandages around their heads" (98). "This gave me a return of hysteria," he claims. This is a classical traumatic situation when the second event recalls and re-interprets the first one as traumatic. By a fine metonymic link, the narrator begins to talk about his parents' visit to Mexico every other year. Once, when the parents were on leave, there was a girl in the house who seemed reluctant to show Green her private garden, her little kingdom. In the end she agreed, but the child Green grabbed a spade and wanted to dig up the garden. "Rightly she would have none of this and tried to stop me. She was the stronger and was succeeding when in a last attempt to get my

way I swung the spade with all my strength against her leg and cut her to the bone" (101). Similarly to the episode in school, this also leads to isolation, "as though I had been cut off forever" (101). The only solution to the shock, he thinks, is a similar wound on inflicted upon himself, *repeating the wound*: "I saw nothing for it but to cut my own leg open and was carried to bed screaming for a knife" (101).

What connects the two episodes the news of the parents' accident and the spade scene is the motif of wounds, that is, traumas. At the beginning of this section, Green talks about the metaphor of foxhunt in which presumably it is the rememberer who, "like the huntsman, on a hill" "blows his horn" (97) to evoke memories. By the end, however, it is the fox that he identifies with: "They say the fox enjoys the hunt but the sound of the horn as he breaks covert must set great loneliness on him" (101); "Later, when the accident I have described disrupted me, I felt, and it is hard to explain, as though the feelings I thought I ought to have were hunting me. I was as much alone as any hunted fox" (102). Thus, instead of the rememberer hunting, retrieving, violently recalling memories, he becomes the hunted – or perhaps more appropriately, haunted – , inflicting wounds on himself, and what remains is "shame remembered" (102).

With a little exaggeration, Henry Green's idiosyncratic novels function almost like a traumatising wound in the literary landscape of the 1930s, seemingly evading easy classifications and rational explanations. Although, as with every dichotomy and generalisation one has to be extremely careful in his case. In Green's case, literary and aesthetic dichotomies are also cut across by other, primarily class, binarities. According to John Updike, for instance, the scenes of Green's novels (pub, factory, railway station, fire station) may serve as sites for the breakdown of class barriers and thus proofs of Green's "strong democratic tastes," but also, he adds, "his avant-garde propensities" ("Introduction" xii). His novel *Living*, published in 1929, was first hailed, notably by Christopher Isherwood, as "the best proletarian novel ever written" (quoted in Wipf-Miller 137), and indeed, Green's explanation for his famous omission of definite articles was that this way the text fits much more proletarian life (Mengham, *Idiom* 17). It would be, however, completely mistaken to align him with the left-wing middle class or proletarian writers of the time (the "Birmingham Group," James Hanley, Walter Brierley, Walter Allen, etc). In his autobiography, speaking about Marx's and Lenin's influence in England after the 1920s, Green claims: "All this is common ground and none of my business. But it had its effect on my contemporaries and is of interest for that reason" (*PMB* 130). He carefully avoided the cul-de-sac of most left-wing authors of the time, namely, to use Stephen Spender's phrase, cutting himself off from the root of his own sensibility and thus committing a "literary suicide" (see Wipf-Miller 143); he

realised the risk that, as Gindin puts it, "one might not emerge from a process of deliberate submerging" (17).

The other, modernist end of the spectrum appears to be a more appealing alternative in placing Green in the 1930s, for it would be very difficult to call Green's novels "realist" texts. For most of the critics, he seems to stay closer to the "modernist author image." In 1941 Walter Allen declared Green to be "the only pure artist among the novelists of the thirties" (quoted in Wipf-Miller 137); James Wood calls Green "in so many ways the last English modernist novelist" (50). According to Gindin, "Green's stable point is to focus of the metaphors themselves" (134), and his novels make use of "deliberate limitations of perspective and subject matter" (135). Gindin summarises his achievement by saying that "although he was not a literary theorist or programmatist, Green was a modernist, linked to his avant-garde literary time by his interest in style […] and his confidence in the possibility of symbolic representation outside the self" (148). It is undeniable that some of his early works show features of 1920s modernism (especially his first published novel, *Blindness*, and early short stories like "Bees," "Adventure in a Room" or "Mood"), but from about 1930 Green felt that this sort writing could not be continued. In his essay "An Unfinished Novel" (1960), writing on his incomplete work "Mood" that he had intended to develop into a novel, he says, "to establish a girl […] in a static situation where nothing is happening to her except her thought and feelings, is an impossible project for the novelist" (Yorke, ed. 254). As Ferenc Takács claims, Green took up the rather unpromising project of neither joining the so-called "social novel," nor carrying on the modernism of Joyce, Woolf and Lawrence, but was determined to experiment with the novel form, whose result was his marginalisation and treatment as an outsider in the canon of the novel (259).

Some critics, on the other hand, emphasise his distance from high modernism, as far as the role of sensations and memory is concerned. The main difference between modernists and Green seems to be the lack of ordering (aesthetic, epiphanic, revelatory) function of memory, and that in his case the emphasis falls on the uncontrollability of memories that invade the characters' consciousness in the present in a traumatic manner. Michael Gorra, for instance, juxtaposes his work with that of Woolf, asserting that "Green has no faith in the mind's ability to re-order 'the myriad impressions of an ordinary day'" and that his characters "remain overwhelmed by their sensations," not able to establish a meaningful relation between the self and the world (27). He practically says that Green's fiction foregrounds the suppressed and subversive supplement of Mrs Dalloway (who is able to establish an order over chaos), the shell-shocked soldier: "Green's characters are nearly all like […] mad Septimus Smith" (27). Victoria Stewart points out that "the inclusion in the narrative of the

psychologically damaged war veteran Septimus Smith allows Woolf to explore a different kind of memory, one which intrudes with a violence that is counter to the free-flowing associations experienced by Clarissa" (8), while, according to her, Orwell "uses involuntary memory in a realist context" (8). The modernist concept of the Proustian "mémoire involontaire" thus can be seen as lingering on in the 1930s, only with a modified function: 30s characters no longer aestheticise the present in order to make it fit for nostalgia, like John Haye in Green's *Blindness* (North 22), or Mrs Dalloway for that matter, but suffer the painful intrusion of past into the present and their uneasy co-existence. Randall Stevenson also contrasts the thirties and the period of High Modernism by saying that "equipped with clearer recollections of a better world in the past, the modernists restructured their fiction to retreat from a disturbed life after the First World War into inner consciousness – or, through memory, the 'door' Lily Briscoe so often opens […]. Thirties authors, on the other hand, faced the difficulties of contemporary life and the threat of a future second war with less opportunity of 'retreating or advancing'," and so they felt obliged "to engage more directly with contemporary history" (58). This may be valid on the surface, but this statement again recalls the superficial contrast so often made between the modernism of the 1920s and the "realist" literature of the 1930s that is based on their orientation towards the past or the present, stating that the 30s were more "present-oriented" than the previous decade.[38] The past was no less important for the 1930s authors, including Green, only emphases shifted: the happy coexistence and transcendence of the past and present in Proust's madeleine scene came to be replaced by a more painful and traumatic intrusion of past into the present.

Green's place in the literature of the 1930s is even more difficult to determine.[39] Although on the surface Green shared many elements of the idiom of the Audenesque (a concern with frontiers, journeys, focusing on illness as a social metaphor, experimenting with definite articles, making secrecy and group psychology and important motif of novels [see also Mengham, *Idiom* 370]), yet he was essentially different from his contemporaries centred around Auden. Mengham sees him as someone who revitalised 30s fiction, regarding "Green's work as bringing a kind of leaven to the comparative inertness of the novel" (*Idiom* viii), and claiming that his fiction was deliberately "blind" "in the way of disinheriting itself,

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[38] As Bergonzi rightly explains, "literature does not easily assimilate things-in-themselves, or 'the absolute present', without mediating codes or models" (108), pointing out that both Auden and Spender, at the very beginning of their careers at least, seemingly looking forward, did reach back to the great reservoir of European modernism.

[39] As Gorra claims, Green was a "honorary member of the Auden generation" (30), a phrase which originally comes from Walter Allen, who claimed that Green's allegedly "proletarian" novel *Living* (1929) gave him "honorary membership of a movement to which he never truly belonged" (quoted in Wipf-Miller 137). Marina MacKay contends that Green belonged neither to modernists concerned with formal experimentation, nor the politically left-minded type of novelists, maintaining that Green "is a misfit on both counts" (92).

giving up the enjoyment of a seemingly more legitimate tradition of the novel" (*Idiom* 12). Bruce Bassoff goes even further when he asserts that "Henry Green's novels do not fit comfortably into any major poetic of the novel that we have had in Anglo-American criticism" (4)[40]. It might be claimed that, although he seemingly borrows elements of the modernist novel and partly relies of the idiom of the Auden group, Green appropriates these in an idiosyncratic manner. According to Mengham, Green, especially in *Party Going*, reconsiders basic myths of the 1930s (including the extensive use of bird imagery, for instance) ("Thirties" 369, see also North 80). Lyndsey Stonebridge asserts that "Green was one of the handful of British writers during the war to risk an encounter with the limits of the novel form" (57), which statement, however, may be extended to Green's whole career. Most critics agree, then, that Henry Green is a writer very difficult to place, an enigmatic, obscure, and always surprising author who systematically frustrates the reader's expectations.[41]

The problem of how Green's texts in the 1930s and the early 40s are related to the idiom of trauma, exhibiting the problematic relationship with the past, might be examined through three interrelated motifs: the characters' being frozen, suspended in one situation; the occurrence of frontiers; and the frequency of closed spaces.

Lyndsey Stonebridge boldly asserts that "Green is a trauma writer, not before, but very much of his time" (57).[42] In his novels we can see characters caught up in a certain situation, immobilised, but not even necessarily suffering in that state.[43] From these situations the characters find it very difficult to break out, and thus they remain suspended between

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[40] On the difficulty of the general critical assessment of Green, see Bassoff 19-33, where he lists several approaches to Green's novels.

[41] As Gorra puts it, "Green seems to me both the most elusive writer of his generation, and the most emblematic of its position on the leaning tower" (25). To borrow Updike's phrase, over his novels there is always a "certain abstract shimmer, a veil as if it were of transcendental intention […] Each paragraph has something of a poem's interest and strangeness" in it (xii). It is not by chance that Green greatly admired C. M. Doughty, a poet, writer and traveller, whose *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, published in 1888, arguably served as a model for Green's strange syntax, experimentation with articles and surprising associations. Published in 1941, Green's "Apologia" for Doughty, "this monumentally lonely man" (Yorke, ed. 92), at places reads like a self-description: "with Doughty the man's integrity is such that he writes on his own, if the dates were not available it would be hard to say when" (92). The following paragraph sounds like a piece of criticism on Green: "His style is mannered but he is too great a man to be hidden beneath it. It does not seem possible that future generations will be able to date one of his paragraphs, he seems so alone. His style is constant throughout, seems to be habitual, but, on analysis of this last, is found to vary with his subject. He is often obscure. He is always magnificent" (Yorke, ed. 96).

[42] Several "classical" psychoanalytic themes are undoubtedly woven into the fabric of his novels, like the conflict of the old and the young revolving around Oedipality (Mengham, *Idiom* 7), "traditional" psychoanalytical symbols like long halls representing the womb or the sea standing for the mother (Mengham, *Idiom* 37-8), and so on. Green, however, carefully avoids the simple psychologism of works like *The Orators* or *The Ascent of F6*, indicating this distance in some remarks in his autobiography, as when he says that "we are warned that what happened in those days [when he was a child], like the wilder wild animals, lies in wait, in ambush for when one has grown up. So they say, but it never does" (*PMB* 7), or "As was said in those days I had a complex" (*PMB* 130-1).

[43] When asked by Terry Southern whether he started his novels with a character or a situation in mind, Green replied "Situation every time" ("The Art of Fiction" 242). His titles are almost all gerundive or express states of being (*Living*, *Loving*, *Party Going*, *Doting*, *Blindness*, *Pack My Bag*, *Caught*, "The Lull," "Excursion," "Fight"), and can be seen as "disclaimers against the ambition for closure" (Bassoff 113).

destinations, they stay passive, subject to outside circumstances (John Haye in *Blindness* loses his eyesight due to a train accident; the Bright Young Things in *Party Going* can hardly leave for France due to the fog around the station; Richard Roe in *Caught* serves as a fireman during the Blitz).

This sense of immobility could very easily make one conclude that these characters are deprived of any chance to build a meaningful relationship with the past or anticipate something in the future, that they are frozen into a situation. Gindin contends that "as individuals, [Green's] characters often 'have no history', they seem to have sprung full blown from the reverberations of their occupations or classes," which is, too, "unchanging and determining" (149). Treglown claims that "the adult characters in Henry Green's novels […], with a handful of exceptions, […] have had no childhoods, no formative early experiences; they exist in a perpetual amnesia – […] always seemingly unconscious of most of what went before. […] To Green, almost everything is now" (26).[44] To my mind, however, it is impossible to view Green's novels in any context of "presentness," for the simple reason that the characters in the majority of the novels do have a past and early, formative, and equally painful or painfully evoked experiences: the protagonist of *Blindness* loses his eyesight as a result of a stone thrown at his train, the travellers in *Party Going* frequently evoke their childhood or near past, Roe and Pye in *Caught* fight the spectres of their past throughout the whole novel (the only possible exception is *Living*). Green's only novel of the 1930s, *Party Going*, and the early 40s novel *Caught* powerfully evoke situations with traumatised characters.

The second determining motif of Green's novels – something that links him to the members of the Auden group – is an intense interest in frontiers, borders, margins, possibilities of passage, thresholds, problems of accessibility and the dilemma of "going over." It has been frequently noted that Green's life was replete with episodes of transgression. The son of a wealthy industrialist, he risked stepping over class barriers and started to work in the family's factory with his "wet, podgy hands," where he necessarily had to transgress his accent as well and absorb the working-class dialect of his colleagues; later on his life was divided between managing the firm and writing novels (which he often did in his lunch hour or at nights). In his autobiography he recalls the sight of convalescing soldiers quartered in their country house with the general statement: "we grow up by sharing

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[44] Bassoff raises the possibility of linking Green to the nouveau roman, since the mode of writing, practiced for instance, by Alain Robbe-Grillet or Jean Ricardou "is a mode of absolute presentness" and "the values in the nouveau roman are entirely ad hoc and provisional" (28). Bassoff, ultimately, the idea of a common ground between Green and Robbe-Grillet, claiming that Green, because of being English, remained alien to Continental thought and that, finally, it is "the English empirical tradition" that "accounts in particular for the epistemological reticence" in Green "and for his final distrust of structure" (33).

situations, what we share of another person's increases us" (*PMB* 42). He adds that it was there that he "began to learn the half-tones of class" (42), emphasising that "when little boys go to school they begin to live two lives with two sets of values [one for the school and one for home], as we do now in business and when in the evening we go home" (43). This split life is clearly reflected in his writings, but while he himself managed to learn how to go over from one side to the other, his characters find this an infinitely more difficult task. He "appears with many of his generation suspended in a space between sides – the 'going over' space where advance and retreat are equal options and the magnetic pull of opposing allegiances is more strongly felt" (Wipf-Miller 138). I shall argue that the significance of this process of crossing frontiers, "going over" barriers and being suspended between two places and the past and the present is not, primarily, political or moral in Green, but a corollary of the characters' past, mainly gaining temporal and psychological significance. The routes for almost all of the characters are closed both backwards, in the direction of the past and forwards, thus they remain suspended in a temporal no-man's land.

The spatial symbol of this inertia is the abundance of closed spaces in Green's fiction. The blind Haye spends his time in his room, the young people's lives in *Living* takes place in the factory or at home, the scene of *Party Going* is the hall and hotel of a railway station, the characters in *Caught* can be seen either at home, or in pubs or at the fire station. The characters do break out in one way or another, but most of these attempts prove to be temporary solutions. In the later section of the chapter I shall discuss the contrast between suffocating, closed spaces and the dangerous flexibility, fluidity of frontiers (both temporal and spatial) that pre-empts narrativity and, consequently, self-understanding.

Characters appear in Green's texts as hopelessly isolated, even misunderstanding each other, as a result of which they are unable to enter a proper dialogue and share their pasts with others. They are seldom properly delineated, it is a demanding task to remember them at all and tell them apart (especially in *Party Going*); strange syntax, unorthodox use of definite and demonstrative articles, meandering sentences, unusual choice of words characterise Green's prose. The ultimate stake of such a style of writing is the success of communication – between writer and reader and between characters. In "A Novelist to His Readers: II," Green illustrates how a story can be made three-dimensional (by "superimposing of one scene on another, or the telescoping of two scenes into one" [145]) by evoking a day in winter, when, on an upper deck of a bus, he saw a middle-aged woman waving a handkerchief towards the hospital they were passing by. When Green followed the direction of the woman's eye, he caught sight of another handkerchief within a dark window of the hospital waving back (143). Although Green does not say so, in this scene he invents a stunning metaphor for communication that

may be valid for all his novels: enclosed people, quickly passing by each other are sending silent signals to each other from "hospitals" that evoke "the notion of pain and of the people inside not being able to get out, to leave, because they cannot walk" (146). Illness, death, sensory impairment, misunderstanding, mishearing pervade his novels.[45] His characters misunderstand each other also when they are trying to share their past with each other, not being able to "go over" in confessional situations. Most interpersonal problems remain unresolved, unexplained, suspended; it is as if characters could never get out from the symbolic hospital or get off that is the bus passing by.

It is not only that the characters are unable to enter a meaningful dialogue with each other or their pasts, Green's texts also question the more possibility of acquiring knowledge, thereby providing a broader context for the epistemological paradox of traumatic occurrences in the novels as well. In the words of Andrew Gibson, his is "an art, above all, of surfaces, surfaces that are suggestive and yet, in the end, blandly impenetrable" (198). Is it as if Green provided a meta-commentary to his texts on the first page of *Party Going* by describing the situation after the death of the pigeon as "everything unexplained" (384). This may mean that there is no explanation, or that the explanation is kept secret, the problem, however, is that each attempt to reveal secrets only induces other layers of secrecy (Dragomán 236). As György Dragomán points out, Green presumably suggests in his novels that everything in life is modelled "on this (un)structure of secrecy," which "may evolve into the ultimate structure sustaining the whole construction of a fictional reality" (242). In psychoanalytic terms, the death of the pigeon and other unexplained occurrences serve as traumatic spots in the text's fabric, unable to be contained by any linear, rational and progressive sort of plot. Furthermore, these plots seem to be deceptively simple, therefore the reader feels compelled to go "deeper" and attempt to look for parallels, structuring symbols, correspondences between different layers of the text; as Frank Kermode, writing about *Party Going*, puts it, "it belongs to a class of narratives which *have* to mean more or other than they manifestly say" (7). The possible points of entry, however, are false landmarks: they let the reader in but the road of interpretation forks in so many different ways without consistency or any significant meaning that they throw the reader back to the surface of the text (Takács, Ferenc, "Henry Green" 260). "Our preliminary, ready-made interpretive schemes, our traditional methods of

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[45] Green was hard of hearing, which he made a powerful model of misunderstanding (Bassoff 2). He said in the Terry Southern interview: "For instance the very deaf, as I am, hear the most astounding things all around them, which have not, in fact, been said. This enlivens my replies, until, through mishearing, a new level of communication is reached. My characters misunderstand each other more than people do in real life, yet they do so less than I" (239). In the same interview, causing some embarrassment, Green misheard Southern's word "subtle" for "*suttee*" (a kind of suicide) (237).

reading novels […] pathetically fail, although it was the text that forced us to use them; we are victims of deception" (Takács 261).[46]

It is this profound epistemological uncertainty that dominates all of Green's texts, which is never resolved at the end of novels, creating a refusal of closure, revelation, purification or catharsis. Green explained in "A Novelist to His Readers: I" that the author can never be omniscient, the account he gives is necessarily falsifying: "what actually happened or may have happened probably lies somewhere, east or west, of what is told of an experience" (140). From this vantage point he formulated his often-repeated "oblique approach" theory (see Yorke, ed. 106, 237, 281). Everything is given as slanted, veiled, obscured, as if the implied author were observing life from the Leaning Tower. Naturally, the link with the slant, oblique approach of other 1930s writers is easily made inasmuch as the nineteen-thirties in general turned against the cult of depth so typical of high modernism; the important difference, however, is that Powell and Waugh used the conscious refusal of depth for comic purposes, Isherwood introduced the impersonal "camera" view to record the social illnesses of the 1930s; with Green, the frustration of the readers' hopes to find a "deeper" meaning serves to express a more profound epistemological doubt about existence – and, it has to be added, memory.

5.2. Being Engaged: Memory in *Party Going*

As the author's signature at the end of *Party Going* indicates ("London, 1931-38"), the writing of this novel spanned almost the entire decade of the thirties, thus encapsulating (and subverting) the major preoccupations, anxieties and myths of the decade. In what follows I shall treat *Party Going* as symptomatic of the traumatic 1930s and discuss it as a text that enacts a post-traumatic state at several levels. The novel enacts the suspended, parenthesised, suffocating and apprehensive atmosphere of the 1930s through a plot set in a London railway station, and by this it presents a traumatised scene in which the borders between the past and the present appear extremely fragile. The present continues to be invaded by the past, in spite of the fact that the majority of the characters attempt to fight against this intrusion by evoking nostalgic memories. Only two characters are exempt from this, Julia and Miss Fellowes; the

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[46] This is why Green's novels cannot be treated as mere allegories, for there is always a surplus that defies such strategies. Keith C. Odom asserts about *Party Going* that "thematic threads remain apart, and they are never completely interwoven. […] seemingly dominant images, such as the railway station or the fog or terms related to death, are not dominant but merely contributory" (59). He also points out that the characters "rather than creating, are seeking what is already created; they have already arrived, but they do not know it" (59).

former escapes the situation "apparently unhurt," but the latter falls ill and becomes engaged in a traumatic occurrence, thus the only "travelling" in the novel is done by her.

The plot of the novel is deceptively simple. A group of rich young men and women are about to set out by train for a holiday in the south of France, the London railway station is, however, shrouded in fog, and the trains are delayed. The commuters and working class people are forced to gather in the hall, while the wealthy young people are given rooms in the station hotel. There they pass the time, gossiping, offering confessions to each other, getting angry, creating and revealing secrets to each other, while the impatient crowd threatens to break down the hotel door. Finally the fog lifts, the trains leave, and the party is free to continue its journey.

It is apparent even from this nutshell summary that the novel manifestly lacks any turning point or major revelations; in a strange manner, most of the plot is filled with impatient waiting. One of the major features of the text is the masterful way it dramatises the inertia of waiting, a state from which, apparently, there is no escape. Like the thirties generation itself, the characters are entrapped, bracketed in the large hall of the station, doomed to remain literally in transit, journeying from one place to another, but without the energy and determination the word "journey," or "going" would imply. The feeling of being entrapped is even more emphasised by the fog that shrouds the station and the streets ("dirty cotton wool saturated with iced water" [401]), making everything impenetrable (386, 392), as well as by the scenes depicting London at night and in rain. The novel powerfully subverts one of the main myths of the thirties, and perhaps that of modernism itself, that of fast travelling, speed, the symbolic sense of departure, going in new directions, to a new country (*New Country* was the title of an influential anthology of poetry in the early 1930s). If we approach the sense of waiting bearing in mind Farrell's prosthesis theory, we might say that the failure to travel is powerfully indicative of a traumatic situation. According to Farrell, we are continuously engaged with the world through prosthetic extensions, "tools and relationships" to "make up for our creaturely limitations" (175). These can be voices but also cars, trains, aeroplanes: contraptions that transcend our own body. In case of an accident, the vulnerability of these prostheses is revealed, and attention is called to their supplementary nature. Since a prosthesis reveals the scar of an earlier trauma, by wishing to make it seem undone (see also Takács, Miklós "Trauma" 6), the basic situation of the novel, "a railway accident" is especially suitable to depict a post-traumatic state, since "trauma reflects a disruption of prosthetic relationships to the world" (Farrell 176).

Entrapment and the disruption of prostheses are symbolised in the opening scene where we can see the characters entering tunnels that, perhaps paradoxically, have

"DEPARTURES lit up over" them (384), a word which, instead of the joy of leaving for a sunny place, entraps the characters in a space with artificial lighting, full of smoke and noise, and, more importantly, also conjuring up the notion of departing, dying, as if the travellers were entering the land of the dead. Other references to tunnels reinforce this impression: Angela and Robin (who are engaged to be married) "also had to engage in one of those tunnels to get where they were going" (384). The expression "engage in" opens up peculiar associations here, for normally one is engaged in a conversation, or in reading a book, one is busy doing something when he is engaged, or is bound by a promise, especially to get married. The characters of the novel – against their will – are engaged, bound, fixed to the situation and to each other, and once they are engaged, there is no way back (not one of the party leaves for home, in fact they are "engaged" more and more in the world of the station). Angela and Robin want to "get where they were going" (384), by entering one of the tunnels; the text does not let us know where they are travelling or which tunnel they enter, it says considerably less (and more) than it could. They "too went in under one of those tunnels" (385), as if descending to the underworld; the passengers "came into the station by way of those tunnels, then out under that huge vault of glass" (388, the word vault might associate to a vault in a cemetery); the taxi driver who brings Alex to the station "also went in under into one of those tunnels and was gone" (402). The words "departure," "engage in," "went in under," "vault of glass," "was gone" open up a wide referential field pertaining to death, passing, "going," and set up a marked contrast with the original idea of the party going for holiday. The novel suggests several times that the characters and the place might be likened to the dead and a cemetery. Alex Alexander, one of the party, heading for the station in a taxi,

> likened what he saw to being dead and thought of himself as a ghost driving through the streets of the living, this darkness or that veil between him and what he saw a difference between being alive and death. […] He did not know where he was, it was impossible to recognise the streets, fog at moments collapsed on traffic from its ceiling. (401)

The inside of the station is also infected with death, and looks like a huge cemetery full of ghosts: "there was so much luggage round in piles like an exaggerated grave yard, with the owners of it and their porters like mourners with the undertakers' men […]. Several other passengers were nearly in hysterics" (402); Robert Hignam's man is "making his way from one grieving mourner to the other, or, as they sat abandoned, cast away each by his headstone, they were like the dead resurrected in their clothes under this cold veiled light and in an

antiseptic air" (498). The uneasiness and helplessness infect Claire and other members of the party as well: Julia shortly exclaims: "My darling, my darling, in this awful place I wondered whether we weren't all dead already" (414). Later on the faces of passengers depicted as uniform lozenges also recall coffins (437); after the steel shutters are put on the hotel door, to prevent the angry crowd from breaking in (the crash sounds like closing a monumental coffin), Alex and Julia order the sick Miss Fellowes to be taken up to a room, a scene which bizarrely resembles a funeral process:

> As they went up short flights from landing to landing on deep plush carpets with sofas covered in tartan on each landing, Miss Fellowes was being carried by two hotel porters up the back stairs. For every step Alex and Julia took Miss Fellowes was taken up one too, slumped on one of those chromium-plated seats, her parcel on her lap, followed by the two silent nannies, and, coming last, the same man who had sat next her, he who winked. (416).

Green, recalling an episode in his autobiography when he was saying goodbye to a family he spent the vacation with (interestingly) in the South of France, meditates on the act of bidding farewell and leaving a pleasant place. He links it to dying: "Every farewell, as the French have it, is to die a little. Calling these to mind now may be in a way to die a little less" (*PMB* 133). There are many references to "going" and travelling in the novel, all of which, thus, may be seen in the context of dying. It is told about Max that "he goes about a great deal" (387); when Edwards, his servant, warns him that maybe his train will not run, he answers: "That's not the point, I've got to go" (400); when he is in the mood not to care about the others, we are informed that "His feeling was he must get across the Channel and it was better to go with people than alone" (406). Later Alex declares, "one always goes" (440). It is as if "going" was an inevitable compulsion, an urge that Max cannot resist. The point about the travel seems not really reaching the destination, the South of France, but to "get across the Channel" (which evokes the tunnels at the station and other frontiers). The most obvious point where the alignment of "going" and death is established is the judgement of the mystery man at the hotel, who repeats several times that "She's a goner" (478).

The importance of these scenes lies not so much in the fact that certain parallels may be drawn with either a cosmic vision of the anxiety of purgatory, "the fear of a threshold" (Mengham, *Idiom* 35), with another representation of the "Waste Land" (Odom 63) or a surrealist fantasy of the underworld (Swinden 70). Although the text may be read as suggesting these literary and cultural parallels, it should not be forgotten, that this novel is

very much of the thirties. What is apparent in the above quotations is the hesitation and uncertainty surrounding life and death; we are not simply in the land of the dead, but in that of people lingering between death and resurrection; between finality and imperfectivity. What should become memory (the memory of the dead) is brought back again by the journey and the site of the railway station (and the hotel) that by their very nature reflect transition and the impossibility of closure. These sites are not habitable, they are not "homes," however the passengers would like to make them more comfortable (the rich partygoers ordering tea, taking baths, the commuters starting to sing, trying to evoke the much repeated "fellow-feeling," a girl kissing the elderly porter, Thomson), the scene remains for every one of them uninhabitable, unhomely, that is, unheimlich, powerfully dominated by traumatic returns of pathological memories.

The general movement of the novel is from large transitory spaces (street, hall) towards "recession to cavities" (Mengham, *Idiom* 37) that become smaller and smaller (hotel corridor, rooms, then finally the bathroom where Amabel looks at herself in the mirror). Yet these enclosures offer no stability or protection, and are marked by a lack of finality and a suspension of time. In the long hall of the hotel we can see a man who "had a cigar in his mouth, and then she [Julia] saw he had one glass eye, and in his hand he had a box of matches which now and again he would bring up his cigar. Just as he was about to strike his match he looked round each time and let his hands drop back to his lap, his match not lighted" (414). The others are constantly looking at the huge illuminated clock in the hall, which, according to Julia, resembles an enormous doctor's waiting room (414). She contends that "it would be like that when they were all dead and waiting at the gates" (414), but the metaphor of the waiting room recalls or anticipates Leonard Woolf's simile when he likened the war to "endlessly waiting in a dirty railway station waiting room with nothing to do but wait endlessly for the next catastrophe" (quoted by MacKay 93). Mark Rawlinson mentions that *Party Going* takes place at Victoria station, which was a starting point for many journeys to war in the 1930s (74). The party heading for France is suspended between Mayfair and their destination, like during an air raid (75). As Rawlinson recalls, John Strachey spoke about air raids as bringing relief because at least they stopped what seemed to be endless waiting for the catastrophe (76). With these details in mind, we can say that the novel enacts the "waiting room atmosphere" of the whole interwar period in a very spectacular way. The characters are suspended between two catastrophes, waiting for relief; as one of the occupants of the hotel remarks, "what targets for a bomb" (483). We are witnessing in the novel how the members of the party are trying to put an end to this temporariness, suspended time, using basically two methods: they withdraw into smaller and smaller places, attempting to shield themselves from

uncertainty and suspended time, and, in close connection with this, they create secrets and fictionalise their situation.

To attempt to break out from the traumatised, "waiting room atmosphere" of the situation, the members of the company begin to use memory both as a means of setting frozen time into motion and as a means of exclusion. Robert Hignam, for instance, is beginning to generate secrecy about the past at the moment when steel shutters are being put over the main entrance of the hotel:

> I say, you know about Claire not wanting to know about her Aunt May? Well, when we were small there was a bamboo patch in the kitchen garden and do you remember we used to imagine there was something out of the way in the middle of it they grew so thick? I was only thinking of it just now. Well, Claire was practically brought up with us, wasn't she, when we were small and when she was sent over to play with us you know we never told her about those bamboos. Curious, wasn't it? (415)

In itself there is nothing significant in this episode, but memory (or what is thought to be a significant memory) is used as a means of exclusion and strengthening class solidarity.[47] The character who generates the most secrecy throughout the entire story is "Embassy Richard." The members of the party always talk about him and about the strange advertisements he puts in the newspapers, saying he regrets not being able to attend this party or that, even though he was not invited at all. Surprisingly, at the end of the novel he does appear, and Max, the host of the party, takes him with them to keep Amabel occupied, who, in turn, wanted to seduce Max. Evoking memories and creating shared secrets are the main strategies of the party to secure themselves from disintegration and uncertainty. Julia and Max start to play a game of seduction via sharing invented childhood memories. Julia tells him that she has never told anyone about her toy eggs with three little ivory elephants in it, "which was a lie" (443). Max in turn lies to her that in his boyhood he used to have a doll (444). Later Julia wants to hold Max's attention by attempting to evoke common memories while Max keeps looking out of the window: "'Max,' she said, 'we're here, this way, and not out there. Oh, d'you remember,' she went on, 'that time we were out at Svangalo's when the mad waiter, that one who never finished arranging one's knives and forks, began to lose his trousers, they simply began to slip down like petticoats and he never knew?'" and she goes on

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[47] When Amabel arrives, she begins to confide to Angela, trying to involve her in a conspiracy as long as she does not know how things would turn out (460). Julia would like to seduce Max and promises to tell him about her top: "'And it's most frightfully important'," she says, but in the next sentence deflates all her secrecy: "'Do you really want to know? Then I'll tell you. There's no story about my top. I've just always had it, that's all'" (445).

in this manner until Max decides to go away (485-6). She goes on like this until these sorts of questions become "almost automatic as though it was her part she had to play to evoke good times, alone, on top of this ivory tower with his dreaming world beneath" (495). Her last attempt sounds so low that no-one follows her. It is at this point that the narrator's much-quoted "definition" of memory occurs:

> Memory is a winding lane and as she went up it, waving them to follow, the first bend in it hid her from them and she was left to pick her flowers alone.
> Memory is a winding lane with high banks on which flowers grow and here she wandered in a nostalgic summer evening in deep soundlessness. (495)

There are two aspects of this quotation pertaining to the traumatic situation of the novel. On the one hand, the company's strategies aim at evoking common memories, either as a means of seduction or exclusion; the novel, however, shows, that these essentially nostalgic evocations will not work in the context of *Party Going*. The above quotation also emphasises nostalgia, primarily with spatialising memory, evoking the sense of returning to a longed-for place, taking a trip down "memory lane." The characters, however, have nowhere to return to, they are suspended and frozen between two destinations.

On the other hand, would expect these statements to offer themselves as universally pertinent, but the repetition with variation pattern effects a destabilisation, rather than the definition, of memory; in this respect, it is similar to a prism that diffracts meaning (Mengham, *Idiom* 49). It is not a "de-finition" at all, since, rather than finalising or fixing meaning, it enhances its dissemination and proliferation. The following two sentences powerfully indicate the dissemination of meaning and (common) memories' impotence to put an end to this proliferation: "Angela went back to her mirror and began touching the tips of her eyelashes with her fingers' ends. Alex picked up a newspaper and behind it picked his nose" (495). Julia's desire is to create a cosy, self-enclosed, protected world defined by the joy of recognition, for the answer she expects is "Oh, yes, I remember." It would mean a happy and harmless co-existence of past and present in which, however, the two are carefully separated. But the futility of her desire is marked by the fact that she remains alone in this attempt and as, the above sentences point out, the members of the party are narcissistically and fetishistically occupied with themselves. More importantly, Julia's attempt at stability is frustrated by a fluidity on the level of words: her "picking flowers" is downplayed by Alex's "picking up a newspaper" and "picking his nose." Finalising meaning by evoking memories is not possible, for the trauma, the wound, dominating the scene, opens up a scar through which

memories and meanings can dangerously penetrate, breaking the integrity of the present. The members of the party engage in further narcissistic and fetishistic practices: Amabel takes a bath, looking at herself in the steamed mirror and inscribing her name on the mirror (479-80), Julia is pathologically attached to her own charms, and Max gazes at Amabel's feet instead of her eyes. While the purpose of evoking common memories would be to freeze or stabilize character (Mengham, *Idiom* 49), fetishistic practices abruptly put an end to such nostalgic reveries. Mengham, quoting Freud, asserts that when a fetish comes to life, some process has been suddenly and painfully interrupted, which reminds one of traumatic amnesia (49).

In his *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, Richard Terdiman asserts that at the heart of modernity's memory crisis is the powerful process of gradual decontextualisation: modern information media and modern industry alike produce detached, independent, reified "articles," depriving them of their origin. This is what, for instance, leads to the experience of the modern city, where space is fragmented, and gives rise to the modern detective story, based on the obliteration of traces. All this defeats the associative structures of "natural" memory and entails a randomized isolation of individual items (36-7). Terdiman devotes two chapters to the analysis of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, starting with an unusual passage from the second volume of *Recherche*. In it, the narrator describes the brightly lit dining room of a hotel, comparing it to a huge aquarium, "against whose glass partition, the working population of Balbec […] [is] pressed up against the panes to watch the luxurious life of the diners" (Proust quoted by Terdiman 161). In a strange parenthesised remark, the narrator wonders how long the glass partition will protect the rich, whom the workers, breaking the panels, would perhaps some day "pluck […] from their aquarium and gulp […] down" (162). This scene shows a striking resemblance to two scenes in *Party Going*; to one in which the angry crowd begins to threaten the hotel, chanting "We want trains" (437), and to another episode (significantly, following Amabel's narcissistic bath scene) taking place in and outside of the lounge, whose one wall

> had windows high up along which it looked out over the station, and on their outside ledges were perched young men, mostly amusing themselves at the guests inside. These youths were putting out their yellow tongues at one old lady seated by him [a mysterious "hotel detective"], and while he thought how he could get out he watched her shake her paper at them. […] 'Go away,' she said, and once she had said that began mouthing soundlessly, go away, articulating with her lips at those youths behind glass. They caught on to this and mouthed back through the shut window, only what they brought soundless out were obscenities. […]

Although all those windows had been shut there was a continual dull roar came through them from outside, and this noise sat upon those within like clouds upon a mountain so they were obscured and levelled and, as though they had been airmen, in danger of running fatally into earth. (481-2)

According to Terdiman, the basic fantasy of modernism is constituted by "the effort to suppress extra-artistic determination." He refers to Théophile Gautier, who had uncannily anticipated, nearly forty years before Proust was born, the entire somatic and psychological attitude of modernism: "artistically indisposed, recumbent, *disengaged* – and distinctly paranoid concerning the menace of the world outside the writer's bedchamber" (160, emphasis mine). It is, however, precisely memory that subverts the fantasy of modernism; and so Proust's monumental work, a quest narrative, demonstrates that "relations won't go away" (183), the present remains dominated by the past. According to Terdiman, it is Proust's theory of involuntary memory, which works like a screen-memory, that is meant to cover another kind of memory that painfully colonises the present, appearing at the beginning and at the end of the series of novels: the drama of the night kiss (224-5). The fantasy of the group in *Party Going* seems to be something like this, to create a self-enclosed, "disengaged" world dominated and stabilised by the happy co-existence of past and present, if not in involuntary memory, at least in nostalgia; relations, that is, the pressure of the outside, however, simply would not go away.

Two other devices that the novel uses to illustrate the impossibility of self-enclosed nostalgic worlds are images of fluidity and instances of repetition. Both – directly or indirectly – suggest the (violent) intrusion of the past into the present. Images of fluidity are so ubiquitous that it would be impossible to list them all here.[48] The description of the mass is dominated by images of fluidity: "As pavements swelled out under this dark flood […] these crowded pavements would have looked to you as if for all the world they might have been conduits" (388). Angela and Robin are described as two lilies on a pond, "engulfed in swarming ponds of humanity" (395), while later the crowd is referred to as "dim whirling waters" (474). When at last the train arrives, "at the gates a thin line of people were being extruded through in twos and threes to spread out on those emptier platforms" and they

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[48] To mention a few examples: fog floats into the station (396), noise, fog and smell invades the hotel (437), through the thick curtains noise can still be heard (466), the noise of the crowd resembles aeroplanes (483), Robert feels as if drowning (450, 457), etc. The notion of fluidity invades other layers of the novel as well. Mengham, in connection with Green's first novel *Blindness*, mentions the "fluidity of names" (*Idiom* 8), which makes it very difficult to make a difference between Joan, John and June. The characters in *Party Going* particularly resist memorialisation, too: we have Alex Alexander, Angela Creevy, Claire Hignam, Robert Hignam, Robin Adams, Max Adey, Amabel, Edwards, Evelyn Henderson; the recurrence of the "a" and e" vowels makes it especially difficult to remember them and separate them from each other.

"would slowly begin to drain away again, their tide had turned" (524-5). As opposed to this image of the mass as liquid, the members of the party would like to imagine the crowd as a monument of some primeval, original and innocent Englishness: Julia imagines herself as Queen and the mass as loyal subjects below (430); after the danger of their breaking in is gone, she thinks, "Dear good English people […], who never make trouble no matter how bad it is, come what may no matter" (525). At other places the people in the crowd are described as worms (388) and sheep (524). The various instances of the crowd recall modernism's fascination with crowds and masses (MacKay 94) and the terror they pose: they are faceless and, thus, threatening. There is, however, another aspect to the description of the masses as MacKay points out:

> Their [Green's novels] fieldwork may well be determined by the diligent accretion of ethnographic trivia legitimised by the left-wing Mass Observation, but they also offer a domestic parallel to the elegiac nostalgia at the heart of the aristocratic Bronislaw Malinowski's pioneering anthropology: 'Just now, when the methods and aims of scientific field ethnology have just taken shape, when men fully trained for the work have begun to travel into savage countries and study their inhabitants – these die away under our very eyes.' (98)

It is also the elegiac, nostalgic and melancholic view of the "dear good English people" that is expressed in the passage as well when narrator compares them to ruins:

> They were like ruins in the wet, places that is where life has been, palaces, abbeys, cathedrals, throne rooms, pantries, cast aside and tumbled down with no immediate life and with what used to be in them lost rather than hidden now the roof has fallen in. Ruins that is not of their suburban homes for they had hearts, and feelings to dream, and hearts to make up what they did not like into other things. But ruins, for life in such circumstances was only possible because it would not last, only endurable because it had broken down and as it lasted and became more desolate and wet so, as it seemed more likely to be permanent, at least for an evening, they grew restive. (497)

It is this nostalgic tone that characterises the attempts of the members of the party to stabilise the past and defend themselves from instability through common individual and collective memories of the nation. They cannot, however, achieve this: they seem to be just as faceless as the crowd they despise, symbolised by the endless row of the same hotel rooms

(414) and the same rooms in London, whose rich inhabitants could even be replaced with each other (457). They are like tailor's dummies (408): Angela's hands are ridiculously white, her face is bland, untouched, calm (395), Amabel (whose body reflected in the mirror as "a faint pink mass" [479], recalling the mass outside) is "like a beauty spot in Wales," but, as Evelyn thinks, there is no question of beauty here "because there were no features" (464).

In the passage above about ruins it is apparent that the narrator also shares the view which conceives of the crowd in a nostalgic and elegiac manner, though we would expect him to keep his distance from the characters. The notion of fluidity enters here, too, since if we have a careful look at the narrator's voice, we find that it is not consistent at all. We do not have here someone who speaks from a detached, isolated point of view, giving a satirical or ironic picture of the Bright Young People and the crowd; we could say that the narrator, too, is *engaged*, enmeshed in the story. As Green explained in the two parts of "A Novelist to His Readers," art is not representational (136), life can only be created by dialogues and not by explanation, and that the author is by no means omniscient (139). That is why it is surprising to find narratorial passages in *Party Going* that sound like those of an omniscient 19th-century narrator: "So now at last all of this party is in one place, and, even if they have not yet all of them come across each other, their baggage is collected in the Registration Hall. Where, earlier, hundreds had made their way to this station thousands were coming now, it was the end of the day for them, the beginning of a time for our party" (402). Elsewhere, he acts as omniscient again: "there was power over him as we shall see" (457). Sometimes he assumes the colloquial voice of an ordinary man, as if being one of the passengers: "This is not to say that Max was one of those men with ungovernable actions" (442); "Julia, of course, he had been continually meeting for eighteen months" (442); "But she did tell him and it was like this" (443); "And that was all, come to think of it" (475).

This strange inconsistency of tone reminds one of the mystery man at the hotel, who keeps reappearing, changes his accents, once he speaks in Brummagen, sometimes in an educated accent, other times in Cockney or in a Yorkshire accent. He has seemingly free entry everywhere, but no-one knows who he is, where he comes from and what he wants; he is, therefore, assumed to be the hotel detective. In almost all studies of Green he receives special attention. Frank Kermode identifies him as a Hermes figure (8), the patron of travellers, the god of boundaries and messenger between worlds, but also a trickster figure and a psychopomp (he is the one who claims that Miss Fellowes is a "goner"). He simply cannot be placed, and the most threatening aspect of him is that he has no social context, by which he

gains power over the party (North 87).[49] In my interpretation, there is a strong connection between this mystery man and the narrator (we might also say the "detective" is "the objective correlative" of the narrator); both can change accents at will, transgress frontiers (which the characters cannot) and serve as powerful symbols of the pervasive fluidity of the station's world; but above all, what counts is their presence, the presence of mystery that precludes narrative and interpretational closures.

This fluidity is not only present on the level of the characters or in descriptions of the crowd; it can be detected on the level of the arrangement of the text. It happens several times that the same word is used within the space of one or two paragraphs to refer to different entities or people. At the beginning of the novel the word "ensconced" refers to the narratee ("if you had been ensconced in that pall of fog"), while two paragraphs later it is used in connection with the station master: "Mr Roberts, ensconced in his office" (388). Later we can see Miss Fellowes holding a dead pigeon wrapped in a paper parcel, thinking that "it was going to be a nuisance," right after which a man begins to speak to her, and Miss Fellowes "hoped he was not going to be a nuisance" (394). When Julia looks down at the crowd, she imagines it as corpuscles in blood, "for here and there a narrow stream of people shoved and moved in lines three deep and where they did this they were like veins." A few paragraphs later we can see Miss Fellowes having a nightmare: "In terror she watched the seas rise to get at her, so menacing her blood throbbed unbearably" (430). The stability of frontiers, thus, is not only threatened in the physical world but also on the level of representation (the crowd, noises, fog, smoke) and even on the very level of language and text organisation. It is language itself that enacts the permeability of frontiers, refusing to assign precise and stable meanings to signifiers; it is as if an ever permanent belatedness or dislocation existed between paragraphs that corrupts the signification of morphemes.

In close relation to the motif of fluidity we find repetition (with variation) as the structuring principle of the novel. Few critical evaluations recall that the trip planned by the members of the party is the repetition of a journey they made to the south of France: "They had all, except Angela Crevy, been in the same party twelve months ago to the same place, so fantastically different from this" (421). At the end of the novel, Amabel and Max share a very similar scene to what Max and Julia had a couple of pages earlier ("'No, go on, how much, tell me, you must, how much,' she said, as Julia had about her top" [507]). In one passage, Claire and Evelyn greet each other "with cries not unlike more seagulls" (394), which recalls the seagulls that Julia saw on her way to the station (391). Another instance of the repetition

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[49] Treglown points out that such an interpretation is still not satisfying, since Amabel and Toddy penetrate the hotel's defences with ease, thus unique mobility is not confined to the mystery man (109).

with variation patterns sheds light on its significance: it is evoked that the management of the hotel shut the steel doors down

> because when once before another fog had come as this hundreds and hundreds of the crowd, unable to get home by train or bus, had pushed into the hotel […] and had smashed everything, furniture, lounges, reception offices, the two bars, doors. Fifty-two had been injured and compensated and one of them was a little Tommy Tucker, now in school for cripples, only fourteen years of age, and to be supported all his life at the railway company's expense (437).

Thus this pattern, together with the "definition" of memory quoted above (495) serves to set up a barrier to further damage, calling attention to the fragility of frontiers and the lasting effects of injury. Yet, as has become evident, boundaries cannot be erected against the intrusion of the past. Robert, while forcing his way through the crowd, has an experience similar to one he had in childhood. The gap between the nostalgically imagined past and the traumatised present has an anticlimactic effect:

> When small he had found patches of bamboo in his parents' garden and it was his romance at that time to force through them; they grew so thick you could not see what *temple* might lie in ruins just beyond. It was so now, these bodies so thick they might have been a store of tailors' dummies, water heated. They were so stiff they might as well have been soft, swollen bamboos in groves only because he had once pushed through these, damp and warm.
>
> His ruined *temple* then appeared, still keeping to whisky [Max] (406-7, emphasis mine).

The insistence of the past in the present and the mechanism of trauma is best illustrated by two characters, Miss Fellowes and Julia Wray. All critics agree that the founding moment, the scene of origin establishing the mood of the whole novel is the first sentence: "Fog was so dense, bird that had been disturbed went flat into a balustrade and slowly fell, dead, at her feet" (384). There are at least four aspects from which this sentence may be approached. The enigmatic lack of articles has a powerful effect, as if the sentence were not able to refer back to any point of origin, any past and could not be interpreted with reference to the outside world. A structure of secrecy is created, for following this scene, Miss

Fellowes wonders what could have happened, picks up the bird, washes it and wraps it up in a brown paper parcel, an act that baffles and confuses everyone.[50]

According to Mengham, the image of the bird is displaced from somewhere else, probably from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," where the Albatross also appears suddenly out of the fog (*Idiom* 32, see also Odom 60). Another point of contact with Coleridge's poem may be the traumatic event, the death of the bird determining the life of the mariner and the subsequent "talking cure," which however, is markedly in contrast with the reticence of Miss Fellowes. The dead pigeon, right from the beginning, means some kind of threat, for it cannot be placed (just like the mystery man at the hotel, who is as if he were coming from nowhere and is also linked to death), it "is robbed of its interpretational value and returns the narrative to an impasse" (Mengham, *Idiom* 33), becomes a dead weight, a nuisance that hinders progress just like the fog it comes from. According to North, the dead pigeon stands for stopped progress and also for stopped explanation (84). MacKay gives a social meaning to the death of the bird, relating to Max and his company who is not willing to listen to the crowd outside, shutting the window, maintaining that to be rich is to be looked after, "not as any bird tumbling dead from its branch for the foxes" (96). The common feature of most interpretations is that they focus on the hermeneutic difficulty posed by the fall of the bird ("everything unexplained") and Miss Fellowes's treatment of it (equally unexplained), and that they deem this hermeneutical puzzle to be valid for the whole novel. The quotation, however, which places the bird's death in the context of hunting, modifies our reading. Two paragraphs after the opening sentence, we learn why she washes it:

> She thought it must be dirty with all that fog and wondered if it might not be, now it was dead, that it had fleas and they would not come out on the feathers of its head but she did not like to look as there might have been blood. She remembered she had seen that with rabbits' ears when they had been shot and she remembered that swallows were the most verminous of all birds – how could it have died she wondered and then decided it must be washed. (384)

Thus the appearance of the bird is not entirely without context, since, for Miss Fellowes, it conjures up memories of hunting when she was a child. After washing and appropriating the bird, she feels ill, orders whisky, which is again an act of repetition (and,

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[50] Thirdly, the motif of birds is introduced, which is omnipresent in Green's fiction; finally, together with the previous one, the motif of falling and death appears.

besides, refers to the fluidity of borders, among them, to those between the past and the present):

> It had been a fancy to order whisky and she was trying to remember what her father's brand had been called which was always laid out for them years ago when they got back from hunting. […] And there was that poor bird. One had seen so many killed out in shooting, but any dead animal shocked one in London, even birds, though of course they had easy living in towns. She remembered how her father had shot his dog when she was small and how much they had cried. (393-4)

Later, the motif of drinking whisky is again connected with her childhood: "she argued why shouldn't she order whisky if they always had it when they were children" (453). The connection between remembering and hunting is all the more interesting here for Green uses precisely this metaphor in his autobiography. In a revealing passage of *Pack My Bag* he compares recalling memories to a foxhunt:

> As we listen to what we remember, to the echoes, there is no question but the notes are muted, that those long introductions to the theme life is to be, so strident so piercing at the time are now no louder than the cry of a huntsman on the hill a mile or more away when he views the fox. We who must die soon, or so it seems to me, should chase our memories back, standing, where they are found, enough apart not to be too near what they once meant. Like the huntsman, on a hill and when he blows his horn, like him some way away from us (96).

In this passage, Green emphasises the difficulty of retrieving memories and at the same time points to the violence of recalling them. If we examine Miss Fellowes's reaction to the dead bird in the context of the metaphor of hunting, we can say the she follows a strategy of repetition and identification. She picks up the dead bird, the prey standing for memories, and she instantly appropriates it, incorporates it in her world, "carrying her dead pigeon" (384). But instead of treating it as a mere object, she attaches to it some transcendental significance, she "decided it must be washed" (384). "Descending underground," she enters a lavatory, and cleans the bird with hot water, causing pain to herself, too, which is an act of unconscious identification with the prey: "Air just above it was dizzy with a little steam, for she was doing what she felt must be done with hot water, turning her fingers to the colour of its legs and blood" (385). After she comes up from below, she begins to feel ill, so she asks

Robin Adams (significantly, having a bird's name) to dispose of the parcel with the bird. By this time she is connected even more closely with the bird, she "said to herself that it was coming over her now and when it did come would she fall over backwards and down those stairs" (386), like a quarry falling for the foxes. When Robin throws it in a wastepaper basket, she immediately feels relief. When she is better, however, she retrieves her dead pigeon (387). It continues to possess and haunt her, instead of her possessing it and hunting it, illustrating what LaCapra termed "the fidelity to trauma" (22); she dares not break her promise, and remains engaged within the haunting presence of memory.

As the bird is gradually becoming a nuisance (394,) she is also becoming one, a dead weight for the party (North 85). It is for this reason that the members of the party would like to "dispose of her," suppress her; as Max informs Julia, "Just arranged for three men to carry her up the back way where she won't be seen" (413). Later Claire decidedly declares, "I don't want a soul to know" (414). In her worst state, Miss Fellowes has a vision of a dark sea, threatening to engulf her: "Lying inanimate where they had laid her she waged war with storms of darkness which rolled up over her in a series" (421); she "felt she was on a shore wedged between two rocks, soft and hard […] she would notice small cloud where sea joined sky and these clouds coming far away together into a greater mass would rush across from that horizon towards where she was held down" (422). The dark sea and the masses recall the masses of people outside, threatening to engulf the members of the party. However they would like to deny their attachment to Miss Fellowes, and exclude her from consciousness, their bond is evidently represented by Robert, who, when sent out to find Angela and Max: "the first thing I asked him [Max] whether he had seen Claire's aunt although no one had ever asked me to find her" (422). When Miss Fellowes feels a little better, she keeps returning to a scene of hunting: "She was having a perfectly serene dream that she was riding home, on an evening after hunting, on an antelope between rows of giant cabbages" (440). She is not able to get rid of images of her childhood, which now appear as the age of shame, guilt and reproach: "It might have been an argument with death. And so it went on, reproaches, insults, threats to report and curiously enough it was mixed up in her mind with thoughts of dying and she asked herself whom she could report death to. And another voice asked her why she had brought the pigeon, was it right to order whisky […] the voice asked why she had washed it and she felt like when she was very small and had a dirty dress" (452-3). All the while she is soothed and looked after by two nannies who appear as messengers of death, "like the chorus in Greek plays," having "an unfailing instinct for disaster" (421). She gets to a point where she is not able to order her memories that break up into isolated fragments or appear as undistinguishable dark masses, denying her the ability to tell a story: "her lips moved, only

she had no voice to speak with" (452). She unconsciously seeks death, the vantage point to be occupied in order to be able to tell her story. It is a narrow escape, but it sheds light on the others' story as well. When the train arrives, they also escape, not knowing what they risked in entering the station. Mengham is right when he claims that "the only travelling is done by Miss Fellowes" (*Idiom* 37); Max and his companions only delude themselves with crossing a bridge (504), and going past frontiers into "that smiling country" (510), not recognising that they became engaged in a traumatic situation.

Just as Michael Gorra states that the subversive supplement of Mrs Dalloway's memory is the traumatised Septimus (27), it might be argued that the traumatic subtext of Julia's story is provided by Miss Fellowes. They are the only two characters who, to a greater or lesser extent, affected by the novel's traumatic setup. What links them are an intense, fetishistic interest in objects, the motif of birds and the attachment to childhood and parents. Julia's "journey" begins even before she arrives at the station. As she steps out, she "lost her name and was all at once anonymous" (388), an image that carries the image of Mrs Dalloway's wandering in Bond Street even further than in the original, since there Clarissa is at least "Mrs Richard Dalloway" while Julia is only distinguished from the mass of typists in darkness by her expensive coat. On the way to the station she seems irrationally frightened: "she had been nervous of her journey and of starting, so that she had said she would rather go on foot to the station to walk it off, she was frightened now. As a path she was following turned this way and that round bushes and shrubs that hid her what she would find she felt she would next come upon this fog dropped suddenly down to the ground, when she would be lost" (389). Just like Miss Fellowes, she can be identified with disturbed birds that, "deceived by darkness, woken by these lights, stirred in their sleep, mesmerised in darkness" (389). Besides, her path towards the station reminds one of the text's "definition" of memory as a winding lane where she is later to pick flowers alone. Indeed, her disturbed journey towards the station is a journey in memory, for when she is crossing a bridge she sees three seagulls "and that is what had happened one of the times she first met him [Max], doves had flown under a bridge where she had been standing" (391). Later she recalls this episode, but, to create a comforting fiction for herself, she misremembers the birds and thinks they were two doves, evidently representing Max and herself (473).[51]

Like Miss Fellowes, who is engaged with her bird, Julia is attached to her charms as objects of memory (they were given to her by her mother [442]). They are an egg with

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[51] Odd and even numbers seem to have great importance in the text. At the beginning of the novel people are coming out in "ones and threes" from their offices (387); Miss Fellowes remarks that if Robin does not go with them they will not be even numbers (387); at the end they leave in twos and threes (525). The presence of three seagulls instead of two doves calls one's attention to a disturbing surplus, like Miss Fellowes or the dead pigeon.

elephants in it, a wooden pistol and a little painted top – typically, objects of childhood – which establish a link with Miss Fellowes: the egg is connected to the motif of birds, elephants recall Miss Fellowes's dream with antelopes and probably hunting, the wooden pistol also refers to hunting and the top maintains a metonymic link with the sense of whirling experienced by her (the mob is described as "dim whirling waters" [474]) and thus the motif of falling and of the bewildered birds. Later she confesses to Max that, as a child, she buried one of them, the wooden pistol, in the middle of the bamboo patch (442). The motif of the bamboo patch refers back to Robert pushing his way through the crowd (407) when the following strange description is to be found: "It was so now, these bodies thick they might have been a store of tailors' dummies, water heated. They were *so stiff* they might as well have been *soft, swollen* bamboos in groves" (407, emphasis mine). The description suggests a parallel with that of birds "tumbling dead for the foxes, *light and stiff*" (493, emphasis mine) and Miss Fellowes's dream where she imagines herself "wedged between two rocks, *soft and hard*" (421, emphasis mine). These contrary adjectives refer to passages, the passage from life, a state of being "light and soft" to death, a dying animal or person becoming "stiff and hard," thus Julia's charms through multiple metonymic relations engage her in a close connection with death, and through this, memory (the act of burying the charms and subsequently retrieving them also refers to the uncanny presence of ghosts and mourners in the station).

Julia, just like Miss Fellowes to her bird, is pathologically attached to her charms. Their function, she thinks, is protection; recalling a childhood fantasy, she tells Max she imagined that if she had her egg in her pocket she could not be drowned (443). That is why she is especially anxious when on her way to the station, she discovers she had left them at home; the urge is so intense that she has to turn back and try to find them, but to no avail (397). In the waiting hall of the station she still keeps looking for them in her cases, which turns out to be a "rummaging" among memories: "They were her summer things and as she lifted and recognised them she called to mind where she had last worn each one with Max. […] Turning over her clothes as they had been packed she was turning over days" (405-6). The lack of the beloved objects makes her extremely nervous during the whole waiting (413, 415, 475). The important difference between her and Miss Fellowes is that Julia is not conscious of the importance of what has happened to them at the station; she senses the uncanny presence of death ("I wondered whether we weren't dead already" [414]) but she protects herself by creating fictions and self-deceptive memories, and flirting with Max. When the trains arrive, she rejoices over the "dear good English people." In this sense only Miss Fellowes, "travels" as far as the strength of her symptoms is concerned.

5.3. Through the Stained-Glass: Trauma in *Caught*

Henry Green's fourth published novel, *Caught*, which he began working on in 1941 and which was eventually published in 1943 is, on the one hand, a semi-autobiographical novel about the experiences of Richard Roe, an auxiliary fireman in the Blitz, like Green; on the other hand, it is a continuation of or sequel to *Party Going*. It deals with the major themes of the previous novel, while the major motifs and certain correspondences between characters also make a link between the two texts. If we compare the two novels, it seems that there is no essential difference between Green's pre-war and war novels, as if within his oeuvre Green were illustrating the same principle of fluidity that is so characteristic of his novels. Seen from the perspective of *Caught*, *Party Going* could metaphorically also be evaluated as a "war novel," or, put in another way, *Caught* is not primarily a war novel but can equally be described as detailing the state of being of traumatised individuals to which the blitz is a mere backdrop.

The plot, though somewhat more complicated than that of *Party Going*, is still easy to follow. It has two main threads: the first belongs to Richard Roe, an Auxiliary Fire Service fireman who is stationed in London during the Phoney War and the Blitz, and regularly commutes between the station and his country home. He is a widower bringing up his son, Christopher with his sister-in-law, Dy. The other main line belongs to Albert Pye, an middle-aged fire service instructor, whose sister was put into a mental asylum after she had tried to abduct Christopher from a shop. Later in the novel Pye convinces himself that he had had an incestuous relationship with his sister and commits suicide. The novel shows the internal life of the station as well, full of intrigues, gossips and secrets, as well as several fire operations and the experience it has on the main characters.

Like *Party Going*, *Caught* also explores the problem of memory in an apocalyptic setting: it asks to what extent memory and remembering are possible as a refuge from the impending catastrophe in a situation imperilled by death, and in what ways people can shield themselves against the insistence of traumatic wounds in the present. As Stonebridge points out, "*Caught* is not only a psychoanalytically informed genealogy of trauma, an exploration of the belated effects of the past upon the present lives of war-anxious characters [but] it is also a text which […] gives poetic form and shape to the trauma, not of the told, but of the telling" (58-9). The condition of the malfunctions of memory is the condition of waiting, being in transit, a suspended state between event and non-event, non-war and war, "which stubbornly refuses to unfurl into an event" (Stonebridge 61). Historically, the time of *Caught*

is the period between the declaration of war and the first systematic air-raids on Britain (September 1939 and July 1940). The life of people in this span of time is defined by the structure of anti-climaxes ("after three months of war and no raids, that is of anticlimax" [5]); as Green later put it in one of his essays: "The whole point of a fireman is that he is endlessly waiting. And most have lost their nerve" ("Before the Great Fire" 276). The anxiety is mainly centred around the problem of memorialisation, that is, the quest for events suitable to be delegated into the realm of memory.

War, however, as an exceptional state when "there were no week-ends off" when "public holidays were not recognised" (5), creates extreme difficulties for remembrance. According to Rawlinson, the present is a fictive, unrealised state in the novel, because the characters are cut off from their past by alien identities forced on them by the war, apprehending themselves through memories which are not of their own (103-4). It seems that, on the one hand, storing memories is almost impossible, characters either forget very quickly, or they are burdened by too many and too painful memories intruding into their lives and preventing the "normal" workings of remembering and the accumulation of new memories, or, alternatively they begin to construct false memories. For instance, "at the height of the first blitz" Roe cannot recall how his son was given a bicycle, he cannot recollect how much pleasure it gave, and he is not able to distinguish between this bicycle and a tricycle he gave a year before (25). He "found his memory at fault. But the rest he thought he remembered very well" (26). When on a leave, walking around the garden with his son, Roe "had forgotten his wife," which is all the more surprising because he lost her only a couple of months ago (178). It is as if this forgetfulness were transferentially repeated when, in a conversation with Roe, his brother-in-law, Dy does pay attention and "she forgot Richard" (188). This absent-mindedness or light amnesia is extended even to Christopher, his son, who is also found wanting as far as memories are concerned: "Roe asked whether he remembered how in the summer they had all gone to get something for his rabbit […]. Christopher said he did not know and then added coldly that his rabbit was sent away" (8). This is why Roe is so anxious about creating suitable memories for his son: when the boy falls ill, "Roe was afraid his son would only remember the leave by how ill he had been" (6). He would like to engage his son in shared memories, by the presents he gives and by creating a mystery place in the garden "where the hob-goblins lived" (9), but the son systematically downplays these attempts (in a rather anti-climactic way), denying the presence of mystery: "Christopher said, 'but nanny knows, Rosemary knows, oh everybody knows'" (9). When the boy demands that they build something, Dy eagerly supports the common game, since "she meant to make the few days they were to have together as much a memory to the boy as they would be to the father" (29).

Creating these memories serves a practical purpose in the novel, since they are to compensate for the loss the boy had suffered (similar to the girls dancing in night clubs after they bid farewell to their men: "they were driven to create memories to compare, and thus compensate for the loss each had suffered" [63]). The problem is, however, that creating pleasant memories is bound to be a failure under the circumstances, for the war infects the past, present and the future as well: Christopher constructs a battleship from bricks ("he used shadows cast by these bricks to build up substance; thus he set three bricks a little apart and these shadows gave two guns" [26]) and when they go into to garden to build a bonfire, they are similarly caught up in images evoking burning houses in the blitz ("From a window came a blind of smoke, as though rolls of black-out material, caught in the wind, had been unwound and been kept blowing about. Just like the smoke from one of their bonfires at home" [79]).

Roe often returns to the memory of his wife, an attempt that verges on obsession: "Now that he was back in this old life for a few days, he could not keep his hands off her in memory […] he could not leave her alone when in an empty room, but stroked her wrists, pinched, kissed her eyes, nibbled her lips while, for her part, she smiled, joked, and took him to bed at all hours of the day, and lay all night murmuring to him in empty memory" (33). However, this idyllic memory cannot remain a pleasant one, similar to the episode when he recalls their first meeting in the early spring in a rose garden (64). The setting is idyllic with a rose garden in spring, swallows, blackbirds, his wife appearing in white clothes, yet, the whole scene is corrupted, colonised by the present: roses recall images of fire, "the hot, lazy, luxuriance of a rose" (64), and Roe being sticky in flannels also recalls the hot air "as he was now, dressed in thick labourer's uniform, proofed against fire and water" (64). According to Mengham, fixation to memories, self-deception and remembrance paralyse the present (*Idiom* 77). For most of the characters there is no proper place between past and future, they are entangled in a complex web, the present unconsciously repeats past episodes, memories are reinterpreted in the light of past events and both of them are caught up in the expectation of an apocalyptic future. For the characters there is no middle ground between "caught" (the present of the fire station) and "adrift" (in falsely remembered worlds) (North 112), they are both caught in the trap of the present and set adrift towards the past and the future. No wonder that Christopher, though his memory is at a loss evoking even most recent events, is perfectly able to recall the rooks in a trap (10) or pretends to be a German policeman and the birds in the garden to be Polish people to be killed (188). While Roe would like to break out from this trap by creating memories for himself and for his son, there is not much hope for the boy in this respect, who enacts and repeats the hollowed-out present of the war in symbolic gestures, and builds memories relying entirely on the war. This difference is signalled by their the two

strategies: "Neither was sorry to go his own way. The boy would be building up memories particular to himself. […] Neither was much with the other, the one picking up the thread where the war had unravelled it, the other beginning to spin his own, to create his first tangled memories, to bind himself to life for the first time" (33-4).

Two main kinds of fear dominate the text: fear of invasion and fear of repetition. It is the tension between immobility, being caught in the trap of the present and the dangerous fluidity of frontiers that sets up the traumatic situation in *Caught*. The barriers between the past, present and the future are in peril, and the text presents several symbolic manifestations of this peril. However Roe would like to set up borders between his life at home and at the station, the two slip into each other; either there is nothing to do at either place (33, 36) or there is a war, a constant state of emergency, signalled by the anxiety over creating memories and created by memories and the tense relationship with his son. When walking outside together,

they threw wet sticks to see who could send these amongst the deer that moved off faster than they came up, merging ahead until these heraldic cattle were a part of the mist, unidentifiable in the rain. Christopher was light-hearted. His father had regrets. He wished it had all been less, as a man can search to find he knows what behind a netted brilliant skin, the eyes of a veiled face, as he can also go with his young son parted from him by the years that are between, from her by the web of love and death, or from remembered country by the weather, in the sadness of not finding. (9)

Fluidity is again not difficult to discover as far as names are concerned, just like in *Party Going*: Roe's name recalls "the heraldic cattle" they see together in the field as well as roses; combined with Pye, Roe's name gives the Greek for "fire" (pyro); Pye again recalls Piper, who is often called "Pied Piper," referring both to the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin and the "pied garden" (26) of Roe, but the word "pied" also recalls birds, so characteristic of Green's novels. The motif of fluidity also characterises life at the station where there is a high stake in knowing, not knowing, secrecy, letting out secrets and spreading gossip. Secrecy pervades the whole station, the auxiliary firemen are spying on each other, and most of the rumours centre around Pye's story, his sister's abduction of Christopher and his own relationship with his sister. It is a rapidly accelerating process exacerbated, for instance, by old Piper, who "let fall so many hints that a story of Christopher's abduction eventually got out" (150); "This was how the story got around, in bits and pieces, and it was this way that it grew, and it grew in a short time, for there was not

much time left" (151). There is no putting an end to the "growing" of rumours, which, just like fire, destroys Pye's life. While in *Party Going* the dominant image of the transgression of the frontiers is the motif of water, metaphorically engulfing and invading the present, here it is the image of fire that respects no boundaries.

The text of the novel is likewise entrapped in complex webs of repetitions and parallels. Old Piper at the station always annoyingly echoes what the instructor says ("worse [...] he echoed wrong" [21]); his story of abduction of Africa repeats Christopher's abduction (37); Pye's experiences in the First World War are prefigurations of the Blitz and also to his traumatisation, for it was around that time that he first had a sexual experience with a girl by moonlight (41), Pye visits his sister in the asylum the same day the cook, Mary Howells visits his son-in-law, who "deflowered" (79) Brid, her daughter (the word "deflowered," in turn, evokes the pink roses on the china pot she was given as a wedding present, which is a link to Roe's rose garden scene), what is more, both leave without permission; Pye's liaison with a girl named Prudence evokes his sister's abduction scene, and so on. Examples could be listed almost endlessly to illustrate that one of the master principles of the novel is repetition against which the characters try, consciously or unconsciously, to protest. Their anxiety is in fact the same as that of the whole 1930s generation, which was largely defined by "the horrifying sense of living the same old nightmare all over again" (Stewart 33) as a result of which images of encirclement, invasion, infection are abundant within the fiction of the decade (Gindin 14), symptoms of a deep fear of repetition, mainly the repetition of the horrors of the Great War within only twenty years. Against the constant peril of repetition Roe (and people in general at war) would like to create memories for the future in the present. This, however, is a futile attempt, as we have seen, since out of the present, always already infected by the past and the future, no pleasant and nostalgic memories may grow. However much the characters repeat that "all was over, seemingly forgotten, done with" (17), "it's all over and done with" (104) or "it's all over now, anyway" (159), nothing is over, because of the insistence of the past in the present.

These two kinds of fear, that of repetition and invasion – embedded in the war condition as the fear of the repetition of previous war(s) and fear of being invaded by hostile forces – define the experience of trauma in *Caught*. In what follows, I would like to examine the three main characters, Roe, Pye and Christopher, who exemplify the traumatic effects of "tangled memories" (for the traumas of all three characters are interwoven into each other).

Christopher's obvious traumatic experience is his abduction from a shop by Pye's sister. The boy's trauma is signalled by the colour symbolism that is used in the description of the shop. All sorts of warm colours, mainly pink and red flood the interior of the shop from its

stained glass windows which, together with the sight of the sailboat that he covets, completely fascinate the child. This is how Roe imagines what must have happened: he was "held to ransom by the cupidity of boys, and had been lost in feelings that this colour, reflected in such a way on so much that he wanted, could not have failed to bring him" […] He was done. He stood rooted, one finger up a nostril, his hot sloe mouth pressed against mahogany, before those sails the colour of his eyes. […] the father imagined his son must have pointed a finger and shouted, 'I want, I want'" (13-4). When he is led off by a stranger, Pye's sister, he is robbed of this object of desire, the sailboat, and it is this profound loss, not necessarily the fact of abduction, that traumatises him: "the saleswoman had engulfed it in a bag so that he could not see the glory, that is, the transfiguration" (14) and later, "he sat, holding the bag on his knee, gradually losing what he held" (15). It is this object loss that underwrites the whole mechanism of trauma in the novel (see Stonebridge 69), a loss that repeats the anxiety of the primal separation from his mother, recalling Freud's interpretation of the fort-da game. The memory of the primal separation is even more intensified in the room where the woman takes him, which uncannily repeats the experience in the shop: "It was very hot. It had coal fire. […] She did not turn on the light, so that he could see her eyes only by their glitter, a sparkle by the fire, which, as it was disturbed to flame, sent her shadow reeling, gyrating round sprawling rosy walls" […] 'My tea,' he announced, surprised to find none" (15). The story seems to "progress" by metonymic replacements and repetitions, which unsuccessfully attempt to master the loss of the mother: Pye's sister cannot offer him tea, an object of desire that could replace the lost ship, which Christopher smashes (16), unconsciously realising that it is a futile substitute for the lost object, losing its transcendence, while Pye's sister also wants to convince herself that the boy is also a replacement for her lost or unborn child, "in the sadness of not finding" (9). After the event, Christopher, on the one hand, shows the classic symptoms of trauma, he can never play with a sailboat again (17); on the other hand, he perpetuates this traumatic experience by acting it out, when he builds a battleship from bricks (instead of a sailboat), using shadows "to build up substance" (26), recalling the shadows cast in the shop and the room, and then smashes the whole thing (29).

What the sailboat meant for Christopher is exactly what Christopher means for Roe. The child also becomes a lost object; what is more, Green complicates the meaning of "loss" in three different ways: when he travels back to London, Roe "felt he had lost everything, in particular the boy" (10), the child was really lost in London (10) and Christopher "had been lost in feelings" in the shop (13). Every time Roe says goodbye to him, it is like losing him over and over again: "he was soon saying farewell to Christopher away out in the country

whenever he was alone, losing him" (28). Another episode when he has to bid farewell to his son is described like this:

> There was a tall hedge out at the back to hide the stables. Two gardeners were clipping the hedge. One of them came down off his ladder and gave a holloa. He might have seen a fox. Richard saw Christopher come out of the small iron gate. The other man got off the ladder and stood by his side. The two men holloaed together. A third time the did this and then Christopher joined in, his voice high above theirs. At last Actress came galloping, once more from a distance. The nurse came out of the iron gate to fetch him for his goodbye to his father. Then Actress was there. And as Richard turned back, and the car came out of the back drive to go to the front door, he did not know how he was going to get through his goodbye. What he had just seen was so like all he had known and might never find again, and, as he clutched at her [his wife's] arm, which was not there, above the elbow, he shook at leaving this, the place he got back to her nearest, his ever precious loss. (34)

Retrieving an object and losing it perfectly summarises the significance of the fort-da game; as has been pointed out above in connection with *Party Going* and as Green formulated it in his autobiography, "every farewell is to die a little" (*PMB* 33). While replacing the memory of his lost wife with the metaphorically loss of his son again and again, Roe risks dying several times – no wonder that at the end of the novel he calls his son Opher (173), a chunked version of the original name, splitting off the "Christ" part, the hope of salvation and transcendence: what remains is Opher, "to carry," carrying the burden of the loss, like Miss Fellowes is carrying about her dead pigeon in a brown paper parcel. This is the reason why he would like to re-experience his son's abduction unconsciously, to re-enact the loss of his wife. "When, from curiosity, he went to see for himself the store out of which Christopher had been abducted, he stopped, unknowing, by the very counter with the toy display which had so struck his son as to make him lost" (12).

The stained glass windows link this experience to a much earlier one, which connects his unconscious repetition of his son's loss and his work as a fireman. When Roe was sixteen years old, a friend of the family took him to study the stained glass windows of Tewkesbury Abbey. A very narrow step was running along the wall, with no balustrade, no rail "and then, in his own case, as he faced right to bring his right leg over, he had that terror of the urge to leap, his back to the deep violet and yellow Bible stories on the glass, his eyes reluctant over the whole grey stretch of the Abbey until, they were drown, abruptly as to a chasm,

inevitably, and so far beneath, down to that floor hemmed with pews" (11-2). The similarity between his losing himself in the heights and his son dazzled by the colours in the shop is obvious; what is interesting is what the stained glasses represent: in the Abbey, Bible stories can be seen, in the shop, the windows depict "trading scenes, that is of merchandise being loaded on to galleons, the leaving port, of incidents in the voyage, and then the unloading" (12). Both of them are full, teleological narratives with a firm beginning, middle and an end, illuminated (both metaphorically and physically) by the light of either transcendence or practicality. Reformulating the words of Walter Benjamin, who wrote about the link between war and narrative, quoted by Stonebridge (57), we can say that trauma threatens and provokes narrative at the same time; it threatens because it degrades experience to such an extent that narrative communication is thrown into a crisis and it provokes precisely for the same reason. As Edkins puts it, using Lacanian terms, trauma "is outside the realm of language, and to bring it back within that realm by speaking of it, by setting it within a linear narrative form, is to destroy its truth. There is a gap or abyss at the heart of subjectivity, according to this account, because every formation of a subject in relation to language is flawed. It produces an excess or surplus: the real. Trauma is what happens when this abyss, normally hidden by the social reality in which we live our daily lives, is suddenly revealed" (214). Roe has to face this gap, this abyss, this chasm when trying to come to terms with his traumatic experience and he cannot do anything but transferentially repeat the experience. In his mind, the loss of his wife is linked to his son's abduction, which recalls the abbey scene that becomes retrospectively traumatised, for which he tries to find the cure in becoming a fireman: "He signed on because he had for years wanted to see inside one of these turretted buildings [resembling the Abbey], and also because he had always been afraid of heights" (27). The repetition of the Abbey scene as a prototype of war trauma is reinforced by the interesting twist that the hard pews they have at the substation were lent by a church (29). After nine weeks of air-raids in London, "Roe was unlucky one morning. A bomb came too close. It knocked him out. He was sent home, superficially injured" (172). He returns home as the shell-shocked soldier, superficially injured, apparently unhurt, but struggling with the great task of the traumatised to narrate his experiences to Dy, who proves to be a rather impatient and indifferent listener ("patting his arms as you would pat a dog" [189], "She forgot Richard" [188]), asking the most meaningless question under the circumstances: "I wonder what's the meaning of it all?" (194). As Roe claims, "'The extraordinary thing is […] that one's imagination is so literary. What will go up there to-night in London, every night, is more like a film, or that's what it seems like at the time. Then afterwards, when you go over it, everything seems unreal, probably because you were so tired, as you begin building again

to describe to yourself the experience you've had. It's so difficult" (174) and "there is always something you can't describe and it's not the blitz alone that's true of" (180). The problem recognised by Roe is precisely the problem of invasion, and it is not the war alone that this is true of. Just as the warplanes invade Britain, so do traumatising experiences invade the ego that is helpless in the face of the attack, being invaded like stained glass images flood a church or the interior of a shop. After the event, narrativising in the manner of a Bible story or any teleological plot is impossible, since trauma always leaves a residue that will be acted out or repeated or transferred to another person. Both Roe and his son are thus "invaded" by different kinds of traumas. What remains for both of them is "the deep colour spilled over these objects [fire engines and sailboats] that, by evoking memories they would not name, and which they could not place, held them" (12).

Lyndsey Stonebridge suggests that Freud's *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* to some extent "can be read as a meta-psychological companion to Green's text" (66). She maintains that the signal theory of anxiety helps to interpret the characters' reaction in *Caught*, inasmuch as the signal, the protective action that warns the ego of the imminent danger (like an air-raid siren) protects it because it prepares the ego for the peril. However, because it is predicated on the repetition of a past trauma, it casts the ego into traumatic anxiety anew and thus devastates its defences (66). The main difference between Albert Pye and Richard Roe is that in the case of the latter his "dreading forward" (by literary imagination) protects him against trauma, while Pye is left helpless, consumed by his anxiety. One could say that Pye was not so much ruined by his "dreading forward" as by "dreading backwards." In his mind, the memory of his First World War experiences are connected to the "cold, wet, frozen, thawed or warm" ground (40) and, metonymically, to the "first girl he had known" and the black night illuminated by moonlight (40). Sexuality and war are connected in his discourse, recalling the formulation of his girlfriend, Prudence: "war, she thought was sex" (119). The whole novel seems to equate sexuality and the idiom of war, for instance in the episode in which Roe can see, at the height of the blitz, a couple making love in a surface shelter: "He had been kissing her mouth, so that it was now a blotch of red. […] Hair came down and trembled over his closed eyes with the trembling wall. Man and girl were motionless, forgotten, as though they had been drugged in order to forget" (97). But while Roe is able to channel this equation of war and sex in a relatively normal way, in the act of "rosy pictorial memory-making" (Stonebridge 62), Pye is not able to treat sex as nostalgic memory. He shifts his memory from the First World War, connected to making love, first to Prudence and then to her own sister: "With all her warmth they set a glow about him just as, in childhood, when, watching the impossible brilliance climb slowly high then burst into fired dust so far away, so

long ago, over that hill the time his sister put her hand inside his boy's coat because he was cold, to warm his heart" (121).

When he imagines a visit to the doctor in the mental asylum, the doctor asks him: "'Is there any history in your family, Mr. Pye?'.'" Pye's answer is another question: "' 'Istory, what d'you mean, 'istory?'" (86). First he does not understand the full meaning of history, here meant as a particular history, or a genealogy of madness (his misunderstanding, his difference from the discourse of analysis is marked by his non-standard use of the word). Later, however, he himself becomes implicated, engaged in history, in at least two ways: he is "caught up" in the history of the world wars ("Pye was a simple man. He had been wrought up by the outbreak of the war" [87]), of which the second he can only conceive of as a repetition of the first, inscribed in the "sex is war" idiom: the blackout (and the insistence of the doctor, who cannot think of mental illnesses otherwise than hereditary) is repeated as the black night of his first sexual experience, lit by the moon, which, however, proves to be "impartial," "intolerant" and illuminates nothing [163, 165] (just as the fog obscures the scene in *Party Going*, rendering "everything unexplained"), and is, indeed, linked to history outside, "for the evacuation of Dunkirk was on. In the deadly moonlight brothers were dying fast, and not so far off" (165). The evoked scene is, significantly, an episode of the failure of military defences. The second manner in which Pye is implicated in history is the way he creates a (case-)history for himself. While Roe creates self-deceiving memories, Pye, symbolically speaking, evacuates his forces (cathexes) from the lost object (the girl in the First World War), and then shifts them onto Prudence and then his own sister, who, like in the fort-da game, is in the state of "fort," "gone," put safely in a mental asylum (just as Miss Fellowes is suppressed in one of the hotel rooms). While Roe progresses through the metonymic links of lost wife/abducted son/stained glass windows/blitz, Pye's "progress" comes full circle and closes upon itself in the dead-end of a fantasy of incest. After "realising" that he may have committed incest, a realisation that comes "without any warning" (140), just as the siren goes off "without warning" (79), a recognition that comes too abruptly, he pathologically repeats, recreates the rape scene ("He went into the vast, moonlit night" [162]), he has a "fit of rememberin' back" (166) and replays his sister's abduction scene in the street with a boy whom he takes to the station (168-70). When, at the end, we get to know that Pye committed suicide, Roe summarises this simply as "it was sex finished him off" (195)[52]. Although he is

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[52] In *Party Going*, Thomson is similar to Pye: „But Thomson's trouble was sex. He could not hold that kiss she had given him as it might be an apple in his hand to turn over while he made up his mind to bite, he was like any starving creature who wanted one more apple and this made him restless. And this was why, though he did not know it, he went on about his tea. He always had a cup of tea of his mind ran for too long on girls, that is when he had no girl ready to his hand.
'It's not my tea so much,' he said, expressing this.

right in the sense that Pye's tragic fate was brought about by sex equated to war, the confusion, "the tangled memories" that the Blitz made return painfully as repetition involved both Pye and Roe, with different results, in similar traumatic re-enactments.

6. Goodbye to Berlin: Melancholia in Christopher Isherwood's Berlin Stories

6.1. Isherwood's Novels in the 1930s

The most famous sentence in Christopher Isherwood's 1930s novels is to be found in *Goodbye to Berlin*, at the beginning of which the narrator declares, "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking" (7). According to Andrew Monnickendam, this sentence determined Isherwood's entire future reception (125), relegating him to the category of the typical 1930s writer whose main aim is diagnosing the maladies of society, recording them with documentary precision, eliminating narratorial presence, subjective distinction and artistic pretensions. According to Richard Johnstone, Isherwood was able to avoid the ever-present trap for the decade's authors: the trap of extensive "earnestness," the desire to make grand statements in a serious manner and thereby adhering to the confessional mode which may result in sentimentality and over-simplification (107). The greatness of Isherwood's art lay, according to him, in understatement, withdrawing from the scene, maintaining a detached tone from the first page to the last, in a mode of writing where "large issues […] are not confronted head-on but approached obliquely[53] through [his] famous camera-eye" (107). Katherine Bucknell mentions the new impulse in his work in the 1930s "towards historical realism" (14), although she adds that most interpretations of the famous camera metaphor ignore the "shaping imagination of the artist" (14). That Isherwood should not be classified as a documentary novelist in the vein of Walter Brierley or Walter Allan is indicated by Bradbury' claim that the Berlin stories "are rendered

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'You want the moon,' said Edwards." (498)

[53] The use of the word "oblique" recalls Henry Green's frequent adjective to describe his art. It seems that there was a general mistrust in the allegedly detached, emotionlessly recording camera eye in some pieces 1930s literature. In Priestley's *The Good Companions*, for instance, this attitude also gets an ironic treatment: Miss Trant asks Hilary, an enthusiastic supporter of "feelingless, all calm and clear" (58) non-representational art, what he would like to do. He replies, "'I want to see people doing all kinds of things. […] I'm an observer. I want to see but not to feel. That's my duty now, to watch and record." (62). The other members of the company evidently dislike these "enigmatic observations" (62), considering the "comic stage" (63) to be a more suitable medium.

on a note of almost neurotic passivity" (229), which points to the fact that his narrators do not enjoy (or even do not master) their position as passive recorders aiming to mirror contemporary reality.

It would be mistaken, however, to classify Isherwood along the category of documentary realism. He seems to be a writer who (or whose narrators) feels the necessity to observe and record the present with just as much attention to the past; in other words, their project appears to lie in saving, embalming the endangered present or melancholically remembering its fading away. He kept returning to the same experience over and over again; as Paul Piazza puts it, he "wrote one novel which he constantly amended, incorporating new, original insights so that the final copy is a palimpsest recording the results of his modified interpretation of the anti-myth" (quoted in Carr 16). Piazza goes as far as to claim that Isherwood actually wrote a Proustian remembrance of things past (quoted in Carr 16). While it is undeniable that even in his later writings (*Prater Violet* or *Christopher and His Kind*) he constantly returned to a certain period in his life, the years spent in Berlin between 1929 and 1933, which Carr names a "mesmerising, if ever-receding past" (20), and that his way of resuscitating this past is nevertheless pathological, obsessive (Carr 20), the important difference between Isherwood and Proust is that in the former there is no "temps retrouvé," no higher epiphanic unity that marks the end of the quest. His way of tackling the past is marked by fragmentation, open-endedness and the sad awareness that the past is radically other, fallen, something that cannot be redeemed, only revived in a melancholic fashion with a profound understanding of its loss. In other words, this melancholic revival of the past means an unwilling adherence to it, sensing the loss, but being unable or unwilling to accept it as such, thereby pathologically clinging to it, brooding over it (see e.g., Radden, ed. 50; Flatley 29; La Cassagnère 45).

Isherwood's compulsion to revive the past is indicated by the story that he felt important to tell when he gave a lecture at the University of California in 1960. Speaking about the influences he was subjected to during his career, he recalls that one of his ancestors, John Bradshaw was the one who presided over the trial of Charles I. When sentenced to death, the king showed evidence of "great courage and enormous style, uttering the best of all such execution remarks, the single word *Remember*" (*On Writing* 43). Isherwood goes on to explain that the story had such a great influence on him that he planned to write a historical novel on Bradshaw. Apart from the effect that this historical occurrence had on Isherwood and his family members in the past, who either were proud of Bradshaw or tried to compensate for this crime in various ways (for instance, by converting to Catholicism), the king's remark seems to be significant because it summarises the commandment that the

young generation of the 1930s had to face and desired to avoid, and this conflict resulted in diverse ways of coming to terms with the past, a mixture of envy, guilt and rejection. As David Garrett Izzo asserts, "these martyred fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, sons, cousins and friends were eulogized endlessly and represented to Isherwood and his peers a constant source of latent or not-so-latent sense of guilt by compassion" (xvii), on which the whole private mythology of the Auden generation was founded, ranging from the Mortmere[54] kind of oedipal fantasies of killing the past, represented by ancestors, to the sense of deprivation and envy arising from their having been born too late for the Great War. Isherwood's method of coping with these conflicting urges was to "choose" the perspective of an outsider, accompanied by the constant need of self-observation. Bucknell points out that Isherwood kept a diary, with uneven regularity, from the early 1920s to his death in 1983, that is, for almost sixty years, which indicates his "obsession with the passage of time and […] a puritanical need to account for himself" (15): these diaries served for him as an evidence of not wasting his time, his life, demonstrating that he was doing something worthy, that he was keeping a record (15). From this perspective, for Isherwood, the rejection of "reality" in the Mortmere period of joint surrealistic fantasies together with the working out of the private mythology of "the Test," "the Truly Weak Man" and "the Northwest Passage," all of which were part of the Auden group's desperate self-defining attempts, or "pseudoheroical posturings" (Izzo xvii) and his post-WWII embracing of pacifism and the philosophy of the Vedanta as a retreat from the historical scene go hand in hand, opposed to the topicality and harsh realities of the 1930s. In connection with the latter, Isherwood remarks that spirituality and pacifism may widely be seen as the acknowledgement of inaction, passivity, something apolitical, an act of betrayal, "cowardly, even downright wicked" (Carr 28). These descriptions may recall the characteristic behaviour of the melancholic. Johnstone also interprets Isherwood's relationship with Oriental spiritualism as the "full acceptance of the unimportance of action" (114). In other words, Isherwood (together with some members of his generation) may be regarded as a passive, reluctant onlooker of the historical scene of the post-WWI era, fleeing active participation, but jolted out of this secure position by the events of the 1930s. That is, the real break in Isherwood's career may not be what the general critical agreement suggests, i.e., between pre-WWII and post-1945 writings, beautifully illustrating

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[54] Mortmere is the name of the fictional village that Edward Upward and Isherwood created as undergraduates at Cambridge; it is a paranoid, surreal world, with gruesome murders, fantastic disguises, black humour and bitter satire on the English countryside. As Hynes puts it, "These alternative worlds are, in my term, parables: highly structured, non-realistic, significant systems that constitute judgements of life as it exists" (36); Isherwood also called the Mortmere stories as "private places of retreat" (Hynes 36). Many of these stories were later destroyed, and only one of them, "The Railway Accident" by Upward was published in 1969. Finally, it was in 1994 that Enitharmon Press published the remaining Mortmere stories.

his development from immaturity, from an oedipally tormented, weak self to the mature, fully liberated, fulfilled American self (see Carr 19), but is represented by the period of the 1930s, where most members of this generation unwillingly had to be engaged in contemporary reality. Naturally, no equation mark can be placed between the group's surreal fantasies of the 1920s and Isherwood's (and Auden's) withdrawal from the English literary scene after 1939; however, in the light of the above, Isherwood's 1930s novels may be seen as documents of the reluctant engagement of a shy, melancholic, brooding self with the history of the decade.

Isherwood's main motive in going to Berlin and live there poorly, maintaining himself from teaching English, was to escape from the stifling English lifestyle, since "for Isherwood and his friends Berlin meant liberation" (Hynes 177). Berlin in the 1920s and the early 30s was one of the centres of European artistic and cultural life, with its free spirit, tolerance and openness to several kinds of otherness, including homosexuality.[55] There was another reason why, for Isherwood's group, Berlin seemed a compelling alternative: it was a defiant gesture to turn to the defeated enemy, the victim of the post-WWI European remapping of power relations; to be intimate with Germans meant turning one's back to the imperialistic rhetoric and the memory politics of the First World War, "and so to reject childhood and become free and adult" (Hynes 177). In this particular case, however, Isherwood also illustrated the fate of his generation, that is, he had to appear on the scene as someone who came too late. Had he been born ten years earlier, he would have experienced a completely different city, but arriving in 1929 and leaving in 1933 when Hitler was already in power (Isherwood, *On Writing* 164), he could only portray the last phase of the "new Berlin" (Argyle 176), the gradual fading away of liberalism, licentiousness and vivid cultural life (which, of course, in many cases served only to hide the profound sadness and starvation pervading the city after the Great War).

Isherwood's plan was to write a huge episodic novel entitled *The Lost*, or, as he would have preferred to call it in German, *Die Verlorenen* (*On Writing* 164). In his explanation, the title *The Lost* would have meant the whole German nation abandoned by Europe and stepping on the paths of violence and destruction after the war, but also the characters themselves, who are "lost" in the sense of being rejected by "normal" society. Isherwood's intention, however, following his master, E. M. Forster, was to be comic and amusing rather than sombre and tragic (*On Writing* 164), depicting curious characters dancing in front of the menacing

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[55] Stephen Spender in his autobiography from 1951, paints a mildly ironic picture of interwar Germany: "Roofless houses, expressionist painting, atonal music, bars for homosexuals, nudism, sun-bathing, camping were all accepted, and became like bright, gaudy, superficial colours in which the whole country was painted. […] It was easy to be advanced. You had only to take off your clothes" (*World Within World* 108-9).

takeover of the Nazi regime – and this is the point where Isherwood's position in the English novel of the 1930s can be more precisely delineated: he does not appear here as a documentary author mirroring the present but following the comic tradition of Forster, Powell and Waugh, contrasting the comic scenario of the dance of the marginalised, superfluous and eccentric characters, a kind of "dance to the music of time" in the 1930s and an empty, lost, fallen and sinful backdrop. What makes Isherwood different from the equally melancholic portrayals of Powell of seemingly unimportant characters is perhaps hidden in the German title of the planned work: the word "die Verlorenen," "the forlorn," implies not only loss but a tone of sadness, abandonment, futile and aborted actions. As he puts it in his autobiography, *Christopher and His Kind* published in 1976, "The link which binds all of the chief characters together is that in some way or other they are conscious of the mental, economic, and ideological bankruptcy of the world in which they live. And all this must echo and reecho the refrain: I can't go on like this. I'm the Lost, we're the Lost" (177). That is, Isherwood records on his photographic plates images of the city and people at the time of their very disappearance.

Isherwood could not bring himself to complete the panoramic picture of Berlin at the turn of the 1920s and 30s. As he cites himself in *Christopher and His Kind*: "On May 23 [in 1934], Christopher told his diary: 'I'm stuck. I can't write *The Lost*'" (175). Instead of producing a great epic of the lost generation of Berlin and the whole post-war scene, Isherwood published only fragments of the original story; according to Bradbury, these "shattered fragments" represent Isherwood's major work (229). He published *Mr Norris Changes Trains* in 1935 and then the six episodes of the Berlin stories independently of one another in 1937 and 1938 (Izzo 140), which were published in a single volume in 1939 as *Goodbye to Berlin*. The simple explanation for this fragmentation is that Isherwood's friend John Lehmann needed short pieces for his magazine *New Writing* (see Bucknell 22).[56] On the other hand, the fact that the "whole" panorama of *The Lost* was not completed has less practical reasons, too: it was inherent in this material that it could not be represented by a whole, healthy unity; a culture on the brink of its collapse, in the process of its dissolution could only be grasped by juxtaposing melancholic fragments with each other. The narrator's role, as Isherwood conceived of it, served this very purpose as well. As he explained in one of his California lectures, the narrator's function in the kind of novel that could be called portrait painting is similar to that of a magician who plays a trick on the audience. "The object of such a piece of fiction […] is to penetrate more and more deeply into this character, removing layer

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[56] In connection with the latter novel, Isherwood explained that "I fell upon the understanding that as far as I was concerned you can get the same effect [as when representing a "whole" world] by little broken bits of something, that the gaps are not worth filling in, that's all just plotting" (quoted in Carr 96).

after layer, and resorting to a certain amount of artifice, so that the reader is perhaps always a little bit wrong" (*On Writing* 55). The reader cannot guess what the "real" character is like, with the result that he or she does not "dig out a little shining nut of wisdom at the end," but "by placing all these different people in a kind of order, a relation in perspective as well, you create a composite portrait" (*On Writing* 55). Thus, the real objective of such writing lies in constantly frustrating the reader's expectations by denying him or her the chance of acquiring a whole picture: the character is shown in his or her fragmentation, being presented in a continuously shifting perspective.[57] The continuous shifting perspective in Isherwood's novels then is in close correlation with the depicted world itself, which is on the brink of collapse and dissolution; in *Goodbye to Berlin*, the narrator at one point misunderstands Fraulein Schroder's reference to the profession of one of the lodgers, and asks, "Do you mean she's a tight-rope walker?" (13). Although this is a misunderstanding that serves to illustrate the naivety of the narrator, it highlights well the characters' lives and the whole Berlin setting, in which everything is fragile, contingent and thus does not lend itself to a totalising vision.

Discussing *Goodbye to Berlin*, Malcolm Bradbury highlights its photographic aspects, maintaining that "[the camera] stays, as intended, provisional, immediate, almost impoverished" (230). After this, quoting Walter Benjamin, he asserts that Isherwood carries out the task of "moving the inquiry out of the realm of the aesthetic distinctions and into social functions" (230), remarking in a footnote that it is as if "Isherwood was deliberately reflecting the conditions examined by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'" (230). It is not only, however, that Isherwood illustrates, along with Benjamin, the effect of the replication of the work of art, "which substitutes a mass experience for a unique existence" (Benjamin 22), and the famous disappearance of "aura." It is not only, as Shuttleworth points out, that he explores "what conditions made it possible new roles for artifice, and how artifice could give rise to suffering in the first place" ("Populous City" 151) and – referring again to Benjamin's essay – how Nazism can be seen as humanity's self-alienation, as aesthetic pleasure in its own destruction (152). Finally, it is not even only that Berlin is represented as a sick town, haunted by images of hysteria, hallucination, persecution, neurosis, loneliness that made Fascism itself possible (Izzo 144, Hynes 354). In Isherwood's 1930s novels the world – through the example of

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[57] According to Földényi, this mode of representation is essentially melancholic: it was in the period of the Renaissance that the problem of perspective began to mean the problem of the melancholy artist. Establishing perspective is on the one hand a creative activity, generating a world in itself that no longer belongs to God's vision, only to the perceiver. On the other hand, this mode of representation is exceptionally flimsy, fragile, for a single step left or right destroys the original image. This is not an "objective" but a temporary and contingent way of seeing, always ready to collapse, deprived of God's total vision (or any perspective sanctioned by external authority) (135). It is clear that Földényi speaks about the art of modernity in general; it could be said that Isherwood's continuously shifting perspective means the radicalisation of this idea.

Berlin – and the very conditions of representation and memory in it are conceived of as basically melancholic.

6.2. Remembering the "Old Crook": *Mr Norris Changes Trains*

Isherwood claimed that in the 1930s he experimented with two types of novels: in one, which he called "constructed" novels, he systematically led the reader astray, on false paths, like a magician, playing a trick on him, essentially urging him to look at more carefully on the character (Poss 6). He classified *Mr Norris Changes Trains* and *The World in the Evening* (1954) here; while the other category he named "portraits," like *Goodbye to Berlin* and *Prater Violet* (1945). He also asserted that he essentially made a mistake when writing *Mr Norris* (*On Writing* 165). He says he was "still under the spell of writing a novel with a plot and all kinds of false direction" but he did not understand fully what he was trying to do "and therefore attempted to tell a story" (165). The other fundamental problem, according to Isherwood, was the problem of involvement: "I was making myself participate in the story of Mr Norris in a way in which I in fact didn't participate" (165).[58] The problem that the narrator, then, encounters in this novel is, on the one hand, that of emplotment: how the melancholic experience of loss, of losing Arthur Norris as an ideal (and reviving him in memory) may be represented, how the melancholic attunement to the world may be "expressed." This is also the problem of how melancholia's slow time, injected in every moment of the novel's world, could be inserted into the narrative. On the other hand, the narration's problem is the position of the narrator, his degree of involvement. He has constantly to struggle against involvement. Norris as a melancholic person and Berlin as a melancholic place have a magnetic effect on him; he is essentially fighting against the lure of narcissism, of glimpsing himself in the melancholic world.

Shuttleworth mentions that both *Goodbye to Berlin* and *Mr Norris Changes Trains* begin with an emphasis on the faculty of sight, the ability of looking behind a façade, and the motif of hiding and uncovering ("Populous City" 156). The first encounter between William and Norris takes place on a train, where the first impressions the narrator gains of him are his unusually light blue eyes (5), which meet his "for several blank seconds, vacant, unmistakably scared" (5). The eye contact transposes William into some seconds' atemporality: the

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[58] He also points out that the narrator of the story, William Bradshaw (a sort of alterego for Isherwood) appears dumber in the text than he should, because normally he would have seen through Norris's and others' dealings and had not got involved with them. As a consequence, Isherwood condemns the "contrived" novel type, and concludes that "William Bradshaw turned out to be unsatisfactory as a vehicle of my perceptions" (Isherwood, *On Writing* 165).

adjectives "blank" and "vacant" suggest a stopped moment, a temporal abyss that metaphorically slows down the passage of the train. In the next sentence he tries to "place" his companion, insert temporality into this vacant moment, using his closest readily usable memories, but to no avail: these eyes "half reminded me of an incident I couldn't quite place; something which happened a long time ago, to do with the upper fourth form classroom. They were the eyes of a schoolboy surprised in the act of breaking one of the rules" (5). After this, he attempts to approximate the stranger in metaphoric space also, bringing himself to Norris in fantasy as closely as possible: "It was as though we had collided with each other bodily in the street" (5). Norris, however, proves to be unattainable, which is signified by the narrator's strategy of describing the parts of his face (eyes, teeth, nose, face, temple, forehead). First, the narrator cannot go any further; what is more, Norris's face seems unusually blurry and fragmented. These descriptions do not lead to understanding, which is expressed by the narrator's use of similes: "His smile had great charm. It disclosed the ugliest teeth I have ever seen. They were like broken rocks" (5). That is, this object of desire does not let itself be grasped as a whole figure, this experience is always broken, and further, this approximation can only be done with imposing an external pattern, simile ("like broken rocks"), which, rather than emphasising identity, highlights the incongruity of the two planes.

In spite of the fact that Norris would like to suggest wholeness, soundness with his "white, small, and beautifully manicured" hands[59], for the narrator, he does not offer any kind of totality, and denies him the possibility of gaining a whole sight or any kind of deeper contact, which is symbolised by their arrival at the Dutch-German frontier. Norris remarks: "All these frontiers… such a horrible nuisance" (6), but the narrator is not "quite sure how to take this" (7), and mistakes his companion for some internationalist, a believer in the League of Nations. So he is driven back to the material details and continues to examine Norris's face, again using images of fragmentation and similes: his nose seems blunt and fleshy and he has "a chin which seemed to have slipped sideways. It was like a broken concertina. When he spoke, it jerked crooked in the most curious fashion and a deep cleft dimple *like a wound* surprisingly appeared at the side of it" (7, emphasis mine). In his article on the melancholy of Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence, Bényei points out a characteristic difference between Proustian remembering, "triggered off by the intuitively felt identity of two moments" ("Memory" 174) and melancholic reminiscing encoded in Powell's text, which is characterised by "far-fetched similes," which "are melancholic because their grammatical structure calls attention to the impossibility of identity or identification which metaphor

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[59] That is, his devotion to "cosmetics," a word going back to "cosmos," meaning order, hence, stability, totality, the opposite of chaos; also the word "manicured" may suggest healing, curative effect.

promises" ("Memory" 174). It is as if something akin to Powell's melancholic narrator, Jenkins, were also present in that of Isherwood's novel. He would also like to make present, represent the experience pertaining to Norris, to identify him in his memories as a sort of totality, but his melancholy prevents him from doing so. He is only able to remember Norris with this trope of belatedness, "the impossibility of total coincidence and identity; the lateness of simile" (Bényei, "Memory" 181), with the fundamentally melancholic trope of simile.

Norris also seems to be exceptionally contradictory; contrasting colours, white and dark describe him: his forehead is "sculpturally white, like marble. A queerly cut fringe of dark grey hair lay across it, thick, and heavy" (7). On the one hand, he is a blurred image (like a photo taken while moving), with hazy, broken, fragmented outlines, on the other hand, he is static, heavy, hard, impenetrable, like a sphere, Saturn's iconographic counterpart, also represented in Dürer's famous picture, which since antiquity has been the symbol of fortune and death, because it is uncontrolled, unpredictable[60] but the most perfectly closed and integral body (Földényi 104). No wonder the narrator is not able to have access to him through common memories: "I was quite resigned, now, to playing the relationship game. […] Already I saw a whole chain of easy moves ahead of me […]. But, to my surprise, Mr Norris didn't seem to want to play this game at all" (9).

Norris remains inscrutable for the narrator (and the reader) throughout the whole novel. Although it often happens that William Bradshaw, the narrator thinks he can see through him, and he finds Norris's behaviour ridiculous most of the times, he cannot pinpoint Norris's "essence." Even after Norris is revealed as a secret agent working against the communists, he continues to exert a fascination on the narrator. He appears in various (more or less melancholic) roles in the novel: he is a *nostalgic melancholic, a histrionic, a machine-like figure, a masochistic and anal-erotic pervert, a persecution maniac, a traveller and a Narcissus figure.*

He often refers to "the old days," the Edwardian years (he is 53, as it turns out from the novel, quite late [73]): "Yes… I'm speaking now, mind you, of nineteen hundred and three. Things are very different nowadays, I'm told" (22); "I wish you had known me in the old days, in Paris, just before the War" (49); "I remember one exceptionally beautiful autumn – in nineteen hundred and five" (109), "I shall go straight to Mexico City (a most depressing spot; although I expect it's altered a great deal since I was there in nineteen-eleven)" (173), and so on. These recalled memories – if they are real at all – do not add anything to our knowledge of his personality, it never turns out why he is telling these stories, what their

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[60] See the end of the novel: Norris future travels are unpredictable (192).

function is; in fact, they are not stories at all, they are memory fragments, reminiscences, scraps of information that might equally disorientate the narrator and the reader.

Norris is also a perfect hypochondriac. More often than not, he only acts out his melancholy, for instance, he sits waiting for the narrator "in the most secluded corner of our favourite restaurant, bored, abstracted, uneasy; his hands folded with *studied* nonchalance in his lap" (39-40, emphasis mine). Later he claims that he suffers from a "touch of *Weltschmerz*" (102) and speaks about "the whole melancholy truth" (104), and when he is persecuted, he is unable to act and makes up his mind very slowly, showing clear signs of inertia (131, 166).

He is also an great actor, in fact, his whole appearance in the novel is one great performance. It is not by chance that his room also resembles a stage (12). He revels in puns; like every melancholic, he likes ambiguity, irony, everything that hides chaos behind a well-ordered cosmos, even at the level of language. After such a pun ("Anni's beauty is only *sin-*deep" [31]), he asks his audience to laugh (31); at another place the narrator's impression is that "he might have been a popular actor or a rich violinist" (94). After escaping from Berlin, he, characteristically, finds employment in the film industry in California (191). His lecture at a communist meeting is also an exercise of his rhetorical skills: "Arthur, exchanging his graceful bantering tone for an oratorical seriousness, was approaching his climax" (54). A visit to the police headquarters provokes in him "a manner of one who mounts up the steps of the scaffold" (63); what is more, he pretends and playacts even when his life is in danger and he has to leave Berlin ("I can truly say that I am and always shall be loyal to the Party, at heart" [180]). The problem with these "performances" is that on the hand, they are automatic; indeed, Norris often appears when performing them as some kind of machine. As Kraepelin puts it, a patient suffering in "melancholia simplex" "sound leaden […]. He appears to himself to be an automatic machine" (261). On the other hand, some sort of universal lack or death is encroaching on these performances (see Norris mounting the stairs to be "executed"), and very often a void reveals itself once these performances do not work. One of Norris's favourite jokes is "we live in stirring times; tea-stirring times" (22). However, when a gap opens in the world, when order is threatened by however small an incongruity, which the melancholic perceives as a grievance (Földényi 320), and as the manifestation of the final loss, death, which is called forth of sudden emergence of the ever-present melancholy. Such a gap opens in his world when he begins "to murmur automatically, 'we live in stirring times…'. […] Something was wrong. His eyes wandered uneasily over the array of plates and dishes, like an actor deprived of his cue. There was no teapot on the table" (72).

Perhaps one of the most memorable traits of Norris is his masochism: he collects books on masochism and whips, having himself been beaten and humiliated by Annie on a regular basis. Such a characteristic feature naturally might be indicative of his strange personality, or by synecdoche, of the whole licentiousness of early-1930s Berlin, but it also forms part of his melancholic personality. With melancholics, the withdrawn libido from the lost object, after the ego's identification with that object, often turns against the self, which is expressed in a sadomasochistic scenario between the ego and the superego in statu nascendi. The frequent masochistic scenes where he gets himself flagellated and humiliated by Annie (23, 33, 62, 101) suggest such a personality. Not only masochism, but also retentiveness, orderliness and anal-erotism, and the passion for collecting characterises such a person (see Kristeva, *Black Sun* 15). Frl. Schroeder, his landlady complains that Norris "takes in four daily papers, you know, not to mention the weekly illustrateds, and I'm not allowed to throw any of them away. They must all be piled up in their proper order, according to the dates, if you please, on the top of the cupboard" (98). Once he refuses to go to Bayer's office because "It upsets me to go. The disorder in that office is terrible. It depresses me. It offends a person of my sensibilities to see such entire lack of method" (77). Kristeva asserts that it may happen that for sufferers of depression, denial affects subjective identity through inversion (homosexuality) or perversion (fetishism or exhibitionism) which even annihilate the introjections and leave them worthless, "empty" (*Black Sun* 48). It is only at the cost of these perversions, the melancholic seeking for partial objects, "at the cost of dependency on perverse theatre" (*Black Sun* 48) and narcissism that depression may be bracketed.

His persecution mania is also part of this scheme. Kraepelin explains that "melancholia gravis" is often accompanied by ideas of persecution: the patient thinks that dangers threaten him everywhere and concludes from the most innocent remark that his life is in danger (268). "Poor Arthur!," the narrator remembers him, "I have seldom known anybody with such weak nerves. At times, I began to believe he must be suffering from a mild form of persecution mania" (39), other times he remarks, "Arthur's police obsession was exceedingly catching" (64).

The title of the novel refers to Arthur Norris's dislocated position. He is always on his way, there is hardly a European city that he has not seen (10). He indulges in telling different anecdotes about various journeys ("fishing in troubled waters" in Shanghai in 1903 [22]) and after he leaves Berlin, he wanders from Mexico City to Costa Rica, to California, to Peru, to Chile, to Buenos Aires, to Rio, and so on, pursued by his diabolical secretary, Schmidt, who keeps blackmailing him (191-2). Norris, as a nostalgic melancholic, has no home, the world is always haunted for him, he is doomed to eternal travelling (Földényi 104).

Finally, Norris is a typical narcissistic figure in that he pays too much attention to his toilette, but also, he would like to maintain his idiosyncrasy, like Narcissus, by avoiding, abhorring physical contact[61]. Norris cannot even bear being associated with someone else. He objects when William refers to his secretary, saying: "Don't call him that, William, please. I don't care to be reminded of the association" (104). As part of a long and tedious description of how he prepares himself in the bathroom, we can read the following:

> Arthur usually spent a few moments rubbing ointment on his toes to avert blisters and corns. Nor did he ever neglect a gargle and a mouthwash. ('Coming into daily contact, as I do, with members of the proletariat, I have to defend myself against positive onslaught of microbes.') All this is not to mention the days on which he actually made up his face. ('I felt I needed a dash of colour this morning; the weather's so depressing.') Or the great fortnightly ablution of hands and wrists with depilatory lotion. ('I prefer not to be reminded of our kinship with the larger apes.') (100-1)

It is this melancholic Arthur Norris that the narrator wants to build intimate relationship with. The first moment when the ice breaks between them is when Norris refers to his hitherto "unnameable" wig: "Is it crooked?" […] Then I laughed outright. We both laughed. At that moment I could have embraced him. We had referred to the thing at last, and our relief was so great that we were like two people who have just made a mutual declaration of love" (22).[62] Step by step he is "building up a romantic background for Arthur" (39) which he inserts into his generation's literary consciousness, stating that "Nearly every member of my generation is a crime-snob" (39). Thus he attempts to imagine his relationship with Arthur in a way that is strongly reminiscent of the early myths of the generation, worked out by Isherwood, Auden, Spender and Upward, of persecution, neurosis and almost universal paranoia. As Izzo puts it, "paranoia became the dominant strain in literature of the 1930s. While the writers of the mid-to-late 1930s responded to actual fascism in Europe, the Auden Generation's writings of the early 1930s were initially responses to the home-grown fascism of the public schools" (11).[63]

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[61] One determining trait of Narcissus is this avoidance of physical contact: "Many youths an many maidens desired [Narcissus], but […] no one [either a boy or a girl] dared to touch him" (Morford and Lenardon 223).
[62] The counterpart of Norris's wig is the false nose William wears on New Year's Eve (25).
[63] The other example of William's attempting to look at his situation in the framework of the Auden generation is when he is commissioned to take Kuno, without his awareness of it, to secretly arrange a business deal in Switzerland. While they are waiting for the appearance of the business partner, "The situation was getting positively uncanny. […] There was no earthly reason why Kuno should suspect anything pre-arranged. Why

The narrator subsequently attempts to identify Norris as a schoolmate, a symbolic son and a father at the same time. When they are being chased by a secret agent, the narrator imagines them, laughing, as naughty schoolchildren: "We sniggered together, like two boys poking fun at the schoolmaster."(169) What is more, William would like the pleasant experience to last as long as it may, emphasising the undercurrent of desire for Norris: "The joke, such as it was, lasted right through our meal. I prolonged it, consciously, as much as I could. So, I think, did Arthur. Tacitly, we helped each other. We were both afraid of a pause. Silence would be too eloquent. And there was so little left for us to talk about" (169). The narrator would like to insert the gradual spread of Nazism in Berlin that in this public schoolboy myth propagated by the Auden group: "To my disappointment, we didn't see Hitler, or any of the Nazi leaders. Ten minutes later, we came out again into the street. I found myself squinting rapidly, to right and left, in search of possible detectives" (64). When they expect the secret police to search their lodgings, they hide a copy of the Communist Manifesto under the wood-pile in the kitchen. The narrator points out that "Un-building and re-building the wood-pile took half an hour, and before it was finished, our precautions had begun to seem rather childish" (183). The narrator would also like to conceive of their relationship in terms similar to that of a father and son, with interchangeable roles. Once William acts as a father: "I had to admit to myself that my feeling for Arthur had been largely possessive. He was my discovery, my property. […] I began to look round for excuses for his conduct, and, like an indulgent parent, easily found them" (83). At other times, he takes the role of an obedient son:

'My dear boy' – he pretended to be mildly hurt – 'I'm sorry that you mock my genuine concern for your health. After all, I'm old enough to be your father. I think I may be excused for sometimes feeling myself *in loco parentis*.'

   'I beg your pardon, Daddy.' (128)

However, in the atmosphere of the novel, nothing is what it seems. Artificiality, pretence, lying, hiding everything with façades, wearing masks make individual intentions highly ambiguous. There are several metaphors that create this aura of uncertainty. Arthur Norris, characteristically, wears a wig (7), the narrator puts on a false nose in the midst of New Year's Eve celebration (25), Frl. Schroeder disguises herself with thick make-up, only to hide her poverty and illness (94). Norris appears as a sham Communist (perhaps even as a

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should we go on performing this rather sinister charade?" (148), William asks, a possible reference to Auden's play published in 1930, *Paid on Both Sides*, subtitled "A Charade."

satire of some members of the Auden group)[64] In Switzerland, Kuno and the narrator feel as unimportant actors in a play (144), participating in a "sinister charade" (148). It is, however, mainly language which renders this world uncertain. On the one hand, it is inflated, words become empty, their exchange value drops drastically (reflecting the image of the bankrupt middle class at the beginning of *Goodbye to Berlin*): "The word *Liebe*, soaring from the Goethe standard, was no longer worth a whore's kiss. *Spring*, *moonlight*, *youth*, *roses*, *girl*, *darlings*, *heart*, *May*: such was the miserably devalued currency dealt in by the authors of all those tangoes, waltzes, and fox-trots which advocated the private escape" (89). This "currency" is simply not fit for Norris and William's "verbal card-play" (167). They are like objects in "the age of mechanical reproduction," of which countless copies may be made, each of which deteriorate even further in the act of copying. On the other hand, language is extremely ambiguous within the context of the novel. When Frl. Schroeder refers to a mysterious letter, written to Norris by a certain "Margot," she says, "I believe it's a kind of secret language. You know? Every word has a double meaning" (99). When Norris, after a bath, described in meticulous detail (at least, compared to the narrator's usual reticence), informs William: "Come in, dear boy, I'm *visible* now. Come and talk to me while I powder my nose" (100, emphasis mine). Interestingly, this episode occurs right after the conversation about the ambiguous letter by "Margot," in which "every word has a double meaning," and even more curiously, Norris claims that he is "visible" at very the moment when he attempts to cover a part of his face with powder, which suggests that in the novel, mere visibility, perception is possible when the perceived object is hidden, masked, or "crooked" in some way. The ambiguous nature of language leads to the final dramatic irony of Norris's letter, sent from Mexico City, at the end of the text. As he puts it, "Let me advise you, my dear boy, with all the solemnity of which I am capable, *never* to set foot in this odious town" (190), which may easily applied to Berlin as well. He goes on to talk about Germany: "It makes me positively tremble with indignation to think of the workers delivered over to these men, who, whatever you may say, are nothing more or less than *criminals*. […] It is indeed tragic to see how, even in these days, a *clever* and *unscrupulous liar* can deceive millions (191), not recognising that, in fact, he is talking about himself. It might be said that these words are also fragments, ruins that the melancholic spectator's imagination may turn into anything in a system where "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else" (Flatley 37).

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[64] For instance, claiming that he only became a Communist because even as a child he could not bear injustice for it offended his sense of the beautiful (56), see also 101.

Not only the character of the title, but the entire world as represented in *Mr Norris* is clearly melancholic. The two adjectives that might describe the narrator's surroundings are "indifferent" and "slow." In the midst of historical upheavals of 1932, the inhabitants of Berlin remain numb and indifferent: "The first week in November came and the traffic strike was declared. It was ghastly, sopping weather. Everything out of doors was covered with a layer of greasy, fallen dirt. […] The streets were deserted, wet, raw, and grey. Von Papen's government was expected to declare martial law. Berlin seemed profoundly indifferent. Proclamations, shootings, arrests; they were all nothing new" (113). Numbness goes hand in hand with sloth: "Like a long train which stops at every little dingy station, the winter dragged slowly past" (88). This acedia pervades almost every episode of the novel: the passing of time turns extremely languid (approaching the new year in 1930 is compared to "a car which has slowly, laboriously reached the summit of the mountain railway" [28]) and movements become almost frozen, sluggish ("The dancers, locked frigidly together, swayed in partial-paralytic rhythms" [26]). Crossing frontiers (a characteristic image of the 1930s) proves to be an especially laborious task, as can be seen from the above quotation where the characters enter a new year, but can also be noticed right at the beginning of the novel where the narrator meets Norris on a train heading for Germany and when, on the frontier, Norris barely escapes being arrested by the *Deutsche Passkontrolle*. As it can be seen, this slow time pervades even the characters themselves; for Norris, even asking a simple question of the narrator takes almost two pages (129-30). Elsewhere, he asks the taxi driver not to drive too fast (63). Once William jumps at hasty conclusions, Norris warns him, "You go too fast. You misjudge him" (104).

Hynes asserts that the major theme of the novel is how "the noise of history," the public side of life, inevitably invades the private sphere of the narrator (178). While this theme is undoubtedly there in the novel, another central preoccupation of the texts is also how the leaden, lethargic, acedic world invades the characters and to what extent they can resist this infection (or succumb to its temptation). As Max Pensky keeps emphasising (16, 83), it is not only that the melancholic external world has an effect on the subject, it is also the melancholic subject who constitutes a similar world which has a melancholic effect upon him as well.

The narrator makes several efforts to remain indifferent to the scene, to remain a spectator, to avoid getting involved. However, he is only able to maintain this distance when he is either referring to his own being a foreigner on the scene, or when he defines himself in terms of his class position. Watching some dancing couples in a bar, he murmurs to himself, "Yes, […] let them dance. They are dancing. I am glad" (27). The next episode where he

reflects on his own position takes place at an IAH (Internationale Arbeitshilfe, International Workers' Relief) meeting, where the double agent Norris, pretending to be a supporter of the communist cause, delivers a very impressive speech. The narrator, although elated, declares himself incapable of more enthusiasm: "I stood outside it. One day perhaps, I should be with it, but never of it. At present, I just sat there, a half-hearted renegade of my own class […]" (52). Later, he speculates what the communist lawyer, Bayer, might think of him. The ironic description sounds as if he was a commodity with a manual attached, or only a definition in a lexicon: "A young bourgeois intellectual, he thought. Enthusiastic, within certain limits. Educated, with certain limits. Capable of response if appealed to in terms of his own class-language. Of some small use: everybody can do something" (67). He is only able to define his outsider position in class terms but he is not able to resist involvement with the melancholic Norris, who is clearly an object of desire for him (Shuttleworth, "Populous City" 155).

The novel, then, besides featuring an especially memorable figure (who resembles in several ways Powell's and Waugh's comic characters, or even Dickens's Micawber), and being a gripping document of the mid-30s Berlin life, also presents the process whereby the narrator comes into contact with a melancholic person, becomes magnetically attracted to him – as a consequence of which his view of the world also turns melancholic – , attempts to identify with him and loses him. Mr Norris is in fact a small-scale monument erected to the memory of the character of the title, and also a document of the narrator's commitment to this loss.

6.3. Herr Issyvoo's Photo Album: *Goodbye to Berlin*

Isherwood's Berlin novels appear to exemplify two other aspects of melancholia, through their connections between the melancholic/allegorical mode of seeing and travel writing on the one hand, and the motif of photography on the other. Once the melancholic subject internalises and incorporates the lost object and begins to regard it as an ideal, which forms the basis of the superego, he has to recognise that all available objects necessarily fall short of this ideal, hence the lost object cannot be replaced. This pining for this ideal leads the nostalgic falling back on the Thing (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 43), so we may talk about a "specific variant of depression constituted by nostalgia" (*Black Sun* 60; see also Földényi on "melancholia nostalgica" [324]). Nostalgics adhere, are riveted to a memory event, which belongs to lost time, but the object of grief here is not a concrete place or the lost mother but some kind of blurred representation of them (Kristeva, *Black Sun* 61). This longing for the

unattainable, being fixated on the past strongly "suggests the aesthetics of travel" (Levin 112). In the modern idiom of melancholic travel, then, the journey acts as a gesture of commitment to a loss rather than its cure, the journey symbolising the melancholic state, "expresses" it (Levin 105). The journey, however, is not only the "expression" of the traveller's melancholic state, but shows its hidden oedipal, sadistic and masochistic facets as well. A travel, according to Levin, more often than not, takes the from of a revolt, either against traditions, social structures, family, father or mother, and so on. This drives the traveller into a paranoid, defensive state and threatens his authenticity. He either directs the sadistic, oral, incorporative tendency of melancholia against himself, converting it into masochism, with which he "punishes" himself for his revolt (Levin 107), or gains an ethical stance from this fragmented, alienated selfhood, or it may happen that he conforms to, or re-identifies with the law and the symbolic universe. From the point of view of melancholy, it is the former cases that are crucial, that is, how the repetitive, futile and frustrating task of nostalgia, the melancholic discovery of the failure of counter-experience and the masochistic nature of travel are interwoven (Levin 114). The result is that the melancholic traveller (like melancholics in general) remains an outsider, on the threshold of the frustrating present and the unattainable past, condemned to keep travelling and "'slumming in places marked socially and culturally distant" emphasising a "melancholic structure of detachment and rejection" (Levin 108).[65]

Melancholia has a strong connection with narcissistic identification, and Narcissus's story contains a memorable visual act: Narcissus looking into the water and catching a glimpse of his own image.[66] What also connects narcissistic and melancholic attitudes is a fall back upon the ego; neither the former nor the latter type of patient can formulate his desire, they pine and suffer for an unattainable object which is often transformed into a desire without an object. The lost, dead object may only be retrieved for the melancholic as a sign, as artifice (La Cassagnère 47). In the modern age, this heroic attempt at bringing back the dead and carrying out this "pious work of salvage" (Sontag 59) is often made with the help of photography, which may even be called the allegory of the melancholic's futile attempts at retrieving that which is no longer. Photography both promises and denies, both offers the sufferer the chance to save something for the future and deprives him of the future possibility

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[65] In connection with R. L. Stevenson, John Kucich also mentions masochistic tendencies which combine two distinct elements, the "melancholic" and the "magical" (33). In the former, suffering is cherished; this phase revolves around self-sacrifice, self-punishment, abjection, exclusion and dependence, while the latter concentrates impulses of fantasies of omnipotence, exaggerated autonomy, inclusion and self-esteem. The split between the two leads to Stevenson's frequent use of doubles in "mutually destructive rivalry," through which he evokes "an economy of melancholic suffering and magical omnipotence in order to rupture that economy, not to enforce it" (33).

[66] Melancholics are also often characterised by their vivid imagination and keenly visual fantasy and connected to this, their alleged prophetic abilities (see e.g, Klibansky et al. 36, Földényi 103).

of having recourse to the past. Földényi explains that any kind of possibility introduces the infinite in the melancholic's life and this infinity is its greatest value rather than its potential to become reality. The desire without an object, the futile hope is the experience of this infinity in a finite world; and the chief source of grief is this orientation towards the future because, since the melancholic feels he has missed all kinds of chances, wasted his life, the future means for him the death of real objects, a kind of "past-to-come," which entails that "the future has become past and the past is identical with the present" (338-9). Hence the atemporality of Renaissance portraits which seem to have frozen into the present; indeed, for the melancholic, both the future and the past freeze into the present, which turns into something infinite and atemporal (Földényi 341). The melancholic, on the one hand, would like to save for the future what is transient or in the process of passing away, but, on the other hand, he is unable to leave the temporality of the present. This is made even more emphatic by photography, which is "often a modern counterpart of that characteristically romantic architectural genre, the artificial ruin" (Sontag 62). The cult value, the last refuge of the photo, as Benjamin asserts, is the possibility of remembering the dead, the loved ones; but the aura of this kind of resurrection is only characteristic of the earliest prints, which "gives them their melancholy and incomparable beauty" ("Work of Art" 27). Since then, according to him, the aura of photography in the age of mechanical reproducibility has vanished, which perhaps has made photography even more melancholic: since any number of prints may be made of a negative, to ask for an "authentic" copy is simply meaningless (25). This argument curiously recalls the melancholic's vain search for the ideal, the "authentic" lost Thing, but what he finds on this journey are copies of copies, substitutes and ever the "real" origin. In the search for the lost ideal, the melancholic cannot act otherwise than piling up ruins, fragments (Sontag calls photos fragments, quotations [56]) in an essentially retentive, anal-erotic manner (see Földényi 330); a melancholic is basically a hoarder, a ragpicker, a collector (Sontag 56). A further characteristic feature of a melancholic is also his/her love of order and his/her desperate efforts to keep up pretences. This is important because if he or she failed in this, that would point to his or her worthlessness, that a gap would open up in life which would drive him/her into an even greater catastrophe. Thus the connection between melancholia and photography leads on the one hand through the link between looking, voyeurism, narcissism, sadism, anal erotism, parsimony, the desire of collecting[67], and on the other hand, through the atemporality of photography. Barthes explains that a photo does not call up the past, it does not restore (85), it even blocks memory (91) not providing a nostalgic path to it. A photograph is a proof of the existence of what it shows ("it was really there"). The photo, however, is

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[67] Illustrated, for instance, by Michael Powell's film *Peeping Tom* (1960) or John Fowles's *The Collector* (1963).

without future ("this is its pathos, its melancholy" [90]); it is a motionless, frozen image, the figures in it "do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies" (57). It is this frozenness into the present that the melancholic encounters in the narcissistic moment of looking at the photograph.

If the central theme of *Mr Norris* was the narrator's melancholic attachment to the loss of Arthur Norris, Isherwood extends this concept in his next novel, and presents a portrait gallery, or, to use a metaphor more closely associated with the novel's imagery, a photo album of people affected by the all-pervasive melancholy of the Berlin of 1930-31, "a city, in which no one acts, and no one feels, a frozen and lifeless place, like the bottom of Dante's hell" (Hynes 355). Photography, from this perspective, becomes the chief instrument, indeed, "the extension of the eye of the middle-class *flâneur*" (a recurring word in Benjamin's discussion of Baudelaire). Like a *flâneur*, Isherwood's narrator is also interested in the "unofficial reality behind the façade of bourgeois life" (Sontag 43) and this "photographer is the armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitring, stalking, cruising the urban inferno" (Sontag 43). According to Sontag, any collection of photographs "is an exercise in Surrealist montage" (53), and, following Sontag's logic, also a melancholic montage. The narrator's intention is that of "conserving a vanishing past" (43), and, with the help of photography, turning it into a set of consumable objects (Sontag 53).

In this sense the narrator of *Goodbye to Berlin* is to some extent similar to one of the chief melancholic characters in *Mr Norris*, Baron von Pregnitz, otherwise named Kuno. He is a great enthusiast of English novels about young boys.[68] His leading melancholic fantasy is escaping to an island in the Pacific Ocean with young men and live with them there. He is also a hypermnesiac (another typical melancholic feature), asserting that "memories are the most precious things we have" (27), always comparing real people with and reminded of characters from his beloved novels. Another revealing aspect is that he is also defined through his faculty of sight, with abundant references to his rimless and ribbonless monocle, which seems to be an integral part of his face, "as though it had been screwed into his pink, well-shaved face by means of some horrible surgical operation" (26). One of his most precious objects is his "sumptuous album which he kept locked away in an obscure cupboard" (119), in which he collects the photos of these young men. No wonder that, riveted to his childish fantasy and to the inexpressible experience of loss (and because he falls victim to blackmailing for his homosexuality), he commits suicide at the end of the novel (190). He could not transform his grief into mourning, he was destined to keep looking at his photo

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[68] The title of one of his favourite novels, which he thinks a masterpiece is, interestingly, *The Seven Who Got Lost* (119), a curious reference to Isherwood planned epic, *The Lost*.

album through his monocle, and in this sense, he may be treated as a sort of alter-ego of the Herr Issyvoo of *Goodbye to Berlin*.

Recognising the end of liberal Berlin at the beginning of the 1930s, Isherwood's narrator travels to Germany, takes photographs, and makes himself (and the reader) brood over the testimonies, the ruins of a certain period of European history. This act is, in fact, the work of the ethnographer, who wishes to embalm the present, perceiving its fallen, lapsed nature, realising that the present is just in the process of vanishing, but, paradoxically, by attempting to conserve it into a set of objictified fragments, he cannot help quickening its deterioration. This is the point where the nostalgic aspect of travel writing is connected to its "darker," melancholic nature in which the traveller performs the journey only to heighten the sense of loss. As it has been already suggested, in the modern idiom of melancholic travel, the journey acts as a gesture of commitment to a loss rather than its cure, the journey symbolising, "expressing" the melancholic state (Levin 105).[69] The "rich" or "convincing" and memorable portraits of Isherwood's narrator, then, in reality, do not serve the purpose of enhancing remembering. These pictures "show people being so irrefutably *there* and at a specific age in their lives" (Sontag 55), or, borrowing Barthes's words, these photographs only say for certain "what has been" (84), they do not call up the past, even block memory (91). The position of Isherwood's narrator is something like that of Barthes, who says, "I suffer, motionless. Cruel, sterile deficiency: I cannot transform any grief, I cannot let my gaze drift […]. […w]hen it is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning" (90). As Hynes puts it, "this book is a kind of elegy, a pained, backward look at a city that had been a home of sorts for a shy, inverted young man and to which he could not return, because it was dead" (358-9).

If we take a look at the narrator's photo album, we can see snapshots taken of this dead city and his inhabitants. As in *Mr Norris*, Berlin here is also a melancholic, inactive, petrified space. Two men entering the Troika bar "were lethargic, pale" (18); the narrator writes of Baabe, a nearby village in the following way: "it is like a ramshackle, lost settlement somewhere in the backwoods, where people come to look for a non-existent gold mine and remain, stranded, for the rest of their lives" (96). The emphasis falls on the isolation and the immobility, acedia of these people. Frl. Schroeder's flat exhibits a melancholic landscape as well, full of random and heavy objects, distributed in random contiguity, acquiring allegorical meanings: "Everything in the room is like that: Here, at the writing table, I am confronted by

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[69] According to James Clifford, "ethnographic texts are inescapably allegorical" (99), and a recognition of their allegorical nature "emphasizes the fact that realistic portraits, to the extent that they are 'convincing' or 'rich,' are extended metaphors, patterns of association that point to coherent (theoretical, esthetic, moral) additional meanings" (100), "adding a temporal aspect to the process of reading" (100).

a phalanx of metal objects – a pair of candlesticks shaped like entwined serpents, an ashtray from which emerges the head of a crocodile, a paperknife copied from a Florentine dagger, a brass dolphin holding on the end of its tail a small broken clock. […] Every morning, Frl. Schroeder arranges them very carefully in certain unvarying positions: they stand, like an uncompromising statement of her views on Capital and Society, Religion and Sex" (8). Her room is also a treasure house in the sense that it is replete with "various marks and stains left by lodgers who inhabited this room" (8). These marks work like a surrealist or melancholic photo album, they are visible, indexical representations of the Barthesian "having been there" temporality of the photo, conjuring up various stories by past inhabitants (10-1). Strictly speaking, photography is also indexical: it is the print, the trace of the object, rather than its mimetic, iconic copy.

As in the previous novel, slow time infects all layers of actions: "Sunday was a long day at the Nowaks" (122); "[the Alexander Casino] was usually very quiet. We all sat round or lounged at the bar, waiting for something to happen" (125). This sloth is even made more emphatic by characters like Kurt Rosenthal, a successful author, who writes novels in his spare time, dictates them while having breakfast or shaving (65). The most forceful expression of this slow time is a funeral scene witnessed by Sally, Clive and the narrator, which has been "going past for the last hour" (52). The scene is like an allegory, the funeral of pre-Nazi Germany, epitomised by the politician being buried, the Social-Democrat Hermann Müller, Foreign Affairs Secretary and twice Chancellor of Weimar Germany; the mourners, "ranks of pale steadfast clerks, government officials, trade union secretaries – the whole drab weary pageant of Prussian Social Democracy – trudged past under their banners towards the silhouetted arches of the Brandenburger Tor" (52). What follows is the equally melancholic reaction and perhaps one of the most important self-definitions of the narrator and his friends, planning to leave Berlin and travel all round the world:

> We had nothing to do with those Germans down there, marching, or with the dead man in the coffin, or with the words on the banners. In a few days, I thought, we shall have fortified all kinship with ninety-nine percent of the population of the world, with the men and women who earn their living, who insure their lives, who are anxious about the future of their children. Perhaps in the Middle Ages people felt like this, when they believed themselves to have sold their souls to the Devil. It was a curious, exhilarating, not unpleasant sensation: bt, at the same time, I felt slightly scared. Yes, I said to myself, I've done it, now. I am lost. (52)

This self-definition perfectly corresponds to the conventional image of the medieval (and Renaissance) melancholics: the turn away from God or any larger ideological system, they want to be enough for themselves, building up a world on their own, and in fact, they are fleeing not only a stifling, controlling system, but themselves as well, finding, however, no satisfaction in the world; with the inability to act, resignation also grows in them, sensing emptiness, a gap in their souls, but feeling extremely heavy, leaden (Földényi 84-6). They are as if they had been frozen into themselves, petrified outside temporality, overshadowed by death, attracted by sin, but also feeling a revulsion against it, defined by *curiositas* (like the narrator acting as a camera) and *fastidium* at the same time (Földényi 89). According the Földényi, the medieval melancholic is tired of the omnipresence of God, this is the chief source of his melancholy (89); Isherwood's characters, we might say, are exhausted by the omnipresence of history, which they feel inevitable to engage with but also experiencing revulsion against it.

The narrator also falls into the category to which William Bradshaw from *Mr Norris* belongs to. He is a melancholic narrator, contemplating – and constituting – an equally melancholic landscape with his allegedly objective camera look. He points out that after listening to the complaints of his landlady, Frl. Schroeder, "I find myself relapsing into a curious trance-like state of depression. I begin to feel profoundly unhappy. Where are all those lodgers now?" (11), he asks, referring to people from the past who used to rent rooms at the landlady's. What begins as one of the most typical patterns of nostalgic-melancholic elegy built on the "ubi sunt (qui ante nos fuerunt)?" formula is now directed towards the future, finished with an anticlimax, typical of the distance-keeping melancholic narrator:

Where are all those lodgers now? Where, in another ten years, shall I be, myself? Certainly not here. How many seas and frontiers hall I have to cross to reach that distant day; how far shall I have to travel on foot, on horseback, by car, push-bike, aeroplane, steamer, train, lift, moving-staircase, and tram? How much money shall I need for that enormous journey? How much food must I gradually, wearily consume on my way? How many pairs of shoes shall I wear out? How many thousands of cigarettes shall I smoke? How many cups of tea shall I drink and how many glasses of beer? What an awful tasteless prospect! And yet – to have to die… A sudden vague pang of apprehension grips my bowels and I have to excuse myself in order to go to the lavatory. (11)

Like melancholics in general, he is also unable to finish his creation, dragged back by sloth, which pervades all his actions. He is "dreamy and unpractical and unbusinesslike" (48), and he has been unable to bring his novel to completion while staying in Berlin. He does not "seem to have any energy or want to get anywhere" (66). It often leads to self-accusation, self-degradation, feeling of inauthenticity, also frequently occurring with melancholics, but this time it is connected with the narrator's social status: "Wasn't I a bit of sham anyway […] with my arty talk to lady pupils and my newly-acquired parlour-socialism? Yes, I was" (68). Writing about a reformatory for young men, he says, "But I couldn't look them in the eyes. I felt horribly guilty and ashamed: I seemed, at that moment, to have become the sole representative of their gaolers, of Capitalist Society" (193-4). On the other hand, he does not fall to the other extreme, he does not begin to idealise these working class youths, does not fall into the trap of creating a myth of them. An especially ironical picture is drawn of the contemporary hero-cult at the end of the novel when he visits a boy scouts club:

> They showed me dozens of photographs of boys, all taken with the camera tilted upwards, from beneath, so that they look like epic giants, in profile against enormous clouds. The magazine itself has articles on hunting, tracking, and preparing food – all written in super-enthusiastic style, with a curious underlying note of hysteria, as though the actions described were part of a religious or erotic ritual. […] At the end of the room was a table covered with a crimson embroidered cloth – a kind of altar. […] The whole place made me feel profoundly uncomfortable. I excused myself and got away as soon as I could. (195-6)

Instead of photographing the scene from below, creating epic giants, the novel's narrator prefers taking shots from above, from his window. With the exception of "Sally Bowles," each chapter begins with the presentation of a profoundly melancholic landscape. The majority of commentators[70] concentrate on the most memorable sentence from the first episode, "A Berlin Diary (Autumn 1930)," that of the narrator turning himself into a metaphor: "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking" (7). The rest of the opening paragraphs, however, reveal further important aspects of the narrator's position and the text's dynamics (or the lack of it). The first sentences – instead of establishing a narrator whose gaze is directed outwards – are built up of nominal expressions: "From my window, the deep solemn massive street. Cellar-shops where the lamps burn all

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[70] For the discussion of the camera metaphor, see Monnickendam 125-30; Carr 37-8, 72; Izzo 17, 144; Bucknell 14; Shuttleworth, "Populous City" 156; Williams 170; Fordham 181-3; Johnstone 107-12; Hynes 178.

day, under the shadow of top-heavy balconied façades, dirty plaster frontages embossed with scroll-work and heraldic devices" (7). The relationship of the agent and the world is not clear at this point, it is not clarified whether the "deep solemn massive street" can be seen by a passive onlooker or he can actively perceive it. The spatiality of the paragraph is also important: work, activity is taking place in small spaces, under a heavy, leaden, immobile façade that weighs on it, in the way melancholia depresses activity, a kind of melancholia that is based on pretence ("balconied façades") which is characteristic of the whole Berlin life. The narrator goes on: "the whole district is *like* this: streets leading into street of houses *like* shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and second-hand furniture of a bankrupt middle class" (7, emphasis mine). The yet undefined melancholic observer, then, cannot take a photo that grasps some peculiarity ("the whole district is like this"), attempting to represent the surroundings with the trope mentioned in the previous novel, the characteristically melancholic trope of simile. The houses are compared, not only to monumental safes, but also, implicitly, to monuments, that is ruins of a past, bygone age, in which useless objects are placed next to each other in a metonymic matter.

The perspective suddenly shifts inside and the narrator "is born" in the second paragraph, but characteristically, as a metaphor, transposing the metaphorical idea from the previous section. The question concerning the purpose of "photography" arises: is his purpose to document social reality or something else? Most critics agree that seemingly this is the case, but also that this alleged objectivity is impossible within the novel. The dilemma, however, as to why the narrator feels compelled to "record" what he can see from his window is rarely touched upon. It is essentially a way of saving, recording, like in a diary, for the future; since in this melancholic world, every object is tainted by a shadow of death, of corruption and bankruptcy, the melancholic feels necessary to save them for the future, like a collector, an ethnographer, or, to use Benjamin's phrase, a "ragpicker." The introduction of a similar character at the end of the novel, Herr N., a police chief under the Weimar regime, who is preparing to leave for the United States with his family, highlights the problem better: "Behind everything he says I am aware of an immense sadness," the narrator remarks (203). Before taking leave, he also feels the necessity of recording for the future: "Sometimes he will bend forward to the window and regard a building or a square with mournful fixity, as if to impress its image upon his memory and to bid it goodbye" (203). So, paradoxically enough, recording is nothing else in this context than an act of saying goodbye, of losing, and after the act, clinging melancholically, not really the lost object, but to the experience of loss itself.

That seemingly passive "recording" act is interrupted by desire in the third paragraph, making the text more dynamic, setting it in motion: "And soon the whistling will begin.

Young men are calling their girls" (7). This augments the narrator's loneliness and melancholia, for he is reminded of being a foreigner here; however, he cannot resist the temptation coming from outside: "Sometimes I determine not to listen to it, pick up a book, try to read. But soon the call is sure to sound, so piercing, so insistent, so despairingly human, that at last I have to get up and peep through the slats of the venetian blind to make quite sure that it is not – as I know very well it could not possibly be – for me" (7). The seeming passivity of both the outside and the inside space, which begins to be dynamised by desire works, in fact, as an expression of the narrator's melancholic situation. He would like to remain a detached observer, calmly preparing a photo album for future remembrance, creating his own world of memory for himself, when the world calls and bids him to act. This same world, however, throws him back as well, rejects him, relegating him to remain chained to his existence as an automaton. This liminal situation, this suspended state determines the narratorial position in the novel.

There are two important aspects from which this section of the novel and the chapter entitled "On Ruegen Island (Summer 1931)" are connected to each other. On the one hand, the opening paragraphs establish a similar pattern of tension between curious gaze and auditory call, one trying to establish a melancholic image on a photographic plate, the other intruding violently into this contemplative brooding: "I wake early and go out to sit on the veranda in my pyjamas. The woods cast long shadows over the fields. Birds call with sudden uncanny violence, like alarm-clocks going off" (79). Like in the opening section of the novel, the landscape can only be grasped here with metaphors. After this, contemplation continues, registering aborted, unfinished actions, alternating with intruding sounds:

> A soft bar of cloud is moving up from the line of trees along the lake. A man with a bicycle is watching his horse graze on a patch of grass by the path; he wants to disentangle the horse's hoof from its tether-rope. He pushes the horse with both hands, but it won't budge. And now an old woman in a shawl comes walking with a little boy The boy wears a dark sailor suit; he is very pale and his neck is bandaged. They soon turn back. A man passes on a bicycle and shouts something to the man with the horse. His voice rings out, quite clear, yet unintelligible, in the morning stillness. A cock crows. The creak of the bicycle going past. The dew on the white table and chairs in the garden arbour, and dripping from the heavy lilac. Another cock crows, much louder and nearer. And I think I can hear the sea, or very distant bells." (78)

The contemplating subject is more and more exposed to sounds coming from the world, while recording "reality" around himself. The two nominal sentences, similar to snapshots ("creak of the bicycle," "dew on the white table," "dripping from the heavy lilac") are cut short by a louder an nearer crow of a cock.[71] Before this final suffocation by shrill sounds, the perspective becomes broader again, but the end does not lead to the assertion of empiricism as Ishwerwood claims[72], for, by the end, the narrator is not sure what he is able to perceive: "And I think I can hear the sea, or very distant bells" (79).

On the other hand, the chapter set on Ruegen island inevitably recalls the painting of one of the greatest Romantic melancholics, Caspar David Friedrich's "The Chalk Cliffs on Rügen" (1818), (and also "Monk by the Sea" [1808-10]) (see Földényi 221). It is as if this painting were an allegory of the narrator's position in the novel. The middle figure contemplates the scene from above, looking into the abyss, drawn by the depth (see "From my window the deep solemn massive street"), at once attracted by the sublime, awesome nature of this vertigo and repulsed by it. These figures (literally) exist on the edge of an abyss, in a frontier position, like the characters in the novel. Like the narrator appearing at the beginning of the Ruegen chapter, they are listening to the murmur of the endless sea, to which they are connected the little ships appearing in the distance, which is also a prominent iconographic reference in Dürer's "Melancholia II," referring to Saturn, held responsible for floods and tides (Klinbansky et al. 324). What also connects the picture with the world of the novel is in fact the number of figures: in most chapters, the narrator appears as a third party (in the relationship of Sally and Clive, of Peter and Otto, and so on).

The beginning of "The Nowaks" also presents a melancholic landscape, this time in an urban context. This space, which itself nostalgically recalls the past of the city, is made up of ruins of things, placed next to each other in a melancholy metonymy: "The entrance to the Wassertorstrasse was a big stone archway, a bit of old Berlin, daubed with hammers and sickles and Nazi crosses and plastered with tattered bills which advertised actions or crimes" (102). The "dark and clammy" courtyard is also a heap of forgotten fragments: "Broken buckets, wheels off prams and bits of bicycle tyre lay scattered about like things which have

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[71] However far-fetched an idea it may seem, perhaps the featuring of two cock-crows is not by chance. Recalling the Biblical story, it may refer to Peter, who may be claimed one of the greatest melancholics in the Scripture, committing an act of betrayal, or rather, denial, defining himself as free of all association (Klibansky et al. discuss Peter as an essentially phlegmatic character in Dürer's "The Four Apostles" [368-71], but some of his features point to a melancholic: his "weary and relatively fleshy face is yellowish, and in general decidedly pale" [369], and he is marked by a certain "weary resignation" [372]).In Albert Barnes's notes to the New Testament (Note to John 21:17), Peter's act is referred to as "a most melancholy instance of the instability and weakness of his faith" (1383) and "his prominent and melancholy act in denying him" (1383). It is also intriguing that one of the main figures of the chapter is called Peter Wilkinson, who also would like to break free from his relationship with Otto Nowak.
[72] "After all, what do I know about the outside world? Only what I see, nothing else. I must not pretend to know anything else. I must only recognise exactly what I perceive" (Isherwood, *On Writing* 167)

fallen down a well" (the well of oblivion, we might add) (106). Even human beings are transformed into useless objects: "It was a deep, shabby, cobbled street, littered with sprawling children in tears" (102). The game played by these children opens a metaphysical space that is also allegorical of the position of the melancholic characters in the novel: "The pavement was chalk-marked for the hopping game called Heaven and Earth" (102). This is what, in fact, the novel's characters are bound to do day after day: find their balance between the material and the metaphysical, called by the infinite and dragged back by the earthly, of which they remain prisoners. At the end of the paragraph, the image of the church reminds one of the fragility of this composed world: "At the end of it, like a tall, dangerously sharp, red instrument, stood a church" (102), which refers back to the description of Frl. Schroeder's room in the first chapter, in which almost everything is a reminder, a ruin saved from a previous epoch, but dangerous in their sharpness, suitable for opening a wound in temporality:

> The tall, tiled stove, gorgeously coloured, *like* an altar. The washstand *like* a Gothic shrine. The cupboard is also Gothic, with carved cathedral windows: Bismarck faces the King of Prussia in stained glass. My best chair would *do for* a bishop's throne. In the corner, three *sham* medieval halberds (from a theatrical touring company?) are *fastened together* to form a hatstand. Frl. Schroeder unscrews the heads of the halberds and polishes them from time to time. They are heavy and sharp enough to kill." (8, emphases mine)

The dominant tropes here are also similes, those of the impossibility of making something totally present and identical, as opposed to a metaphor, stressing the difference and incongruity of the two planes. This inherently melancholic trope deepens even more the sense of contiguity and temporariness of the description of the surroundings, including "sham" halberds "fastened together," (like the two compared objects in the simile) threatening to collapse at any time.

The start of the last chapter ("A Berlin Diary: Winter 1932-3") augments this melancholic feeling to the extreme (obviously not independent of the passing of time). In the very cold winter, Berlin appears isolated, lacking all individual features, just like a lonely melancholic disappearing in the crowd: "In the cold the town seems to contract, to dwindle to a small black dot, scarcely larger than hundreds of other dots, isolated and hard to find, on the enormous European map" (185). The landscape turns into a repository of memory traces, actual ruins needing the spectator's imagination to become complete and be transformed into

real reminders: the narrator feels the Prussian plains outside, in the night "all round you, to-night, creeping upon the city, like an immense waste of unhomely ocean – sprinkled with leafless copses and ice-lakes and tiny villages which are remembered only as the outlandish names of battlefields in half-forgotten wars" (184). It is at this point that the narrator cannot resist any more the creeping in of the outside world, here manifested as coldness. This is an instance of painful identification – subsequently denied to the subject: "Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold: it is my own skeleton aching. I feel in my bones the sharp ache of the frost in the girders of the overhead railway, in the ironwork of balconies, in bridges, tramlines, lamp-standards, latrines. The iron throbs and shrinks, the stone and the bricks ache dully, the plaster is numb" (187). The listing of these objects recalls the opening of the novel, where, sitting at his writing table, the narrator is "confronted by a phalanx of metal objects" (8). By the end, these allegorical objects are not able to protect him, cold and melancholia creep into them, freezing and slowing down the whole city, transforming it into a corpse: "the city, which glowed so brightly and invitingly in the night sky above the plains, is cold and cruel and dead. […] It has nothing to give" (185).[73]

All the major characters in the novel, Sally Bowles, Clive, Peter Wilkinson, Otto Nowak, Bernhard Landauer, are melancholic to various degrees. Sally usually appears with long, thin, thick-powdered, "dead white" face (27), her behaviour is defined by nonchalance (30), hesitation, indecision (33). Her green fingernails are just as incongruous with her hands as the new Bauhaus buildings in the country landscape (20, 79): they "seemed not to belong to them all; to have settled on them by chance – like hard, bright, ugly beetles" (34). The abortion of her child is an inevitable consequence of her personality and lifestyle. One of her friends, Clive is equally depressed, inactive, acedic: he "had about him that sad, American air of vagueness which is always attractive […]. He was vague, wistful, a bit lost: dimly anxious to have a good time and uncertain how to set about getting it. He seemed never to be quite sure whether he was really enjoying himself, whether what we were doing was *really* fun. He had constantly to be reassured" (50). Like Mr Norris in the previous novel, he is also restless, always en route to some imagined object of desire. In the Ruegen island episode, Otto Nowak and Peter Wilkinson seem chained to each other in a sort of sado-masochistic relationship, like Norris and Schmidt hold each other in mutual captivity. In this chapter, Peter appears as the moody, pensive self-torturing mind, wishing to control the healthy, natural body: "If Otto

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[73] The presentation of melancholic landscapes is not the only link between the chapters. They are also connected metonymically by the characters themselves. For instance, the pale boy appearing at the beginning of the third chapter resembles Sally (79), the Otto of the third chapter is the Nowaks's son, who give the title to the fourth section (80), the Landauers are referred to in the fifth chapter (120), while they become the principal characters in the sixth one, and so on.

wants to humiliate Peter, Peter in his different way also wishes to humiliate Otto. He wants to force Otto into making a certain kind of submission to his will, and this submission Otto refuses instinctively to make. Otto is naturally and healthily selfish, like an animal" (89). However, it is far from a dynamic struggle: "The really destructive feature of their relationship is its inherent quality of boredom" (90). That practically nobody is exempt from the influence of Saturn is shown by the example of seemingly lively, "healthy" Otto, who tells the narrator how he "saw the Hand" (113): "suddenly I woke up and saw a great big black hand stretching over the bed. I was so frightened I couldn't even scream" (113). Later this episode returns when he works as an apprentice. "Otto's face had gone quite pale during this recital and, for a moment, a really frightening expression of fear had passed over his features" (114). He is positive that "the Hand will get [him] in the end" (114). Interestingly, he turns out to be just the same type of photograph collector as Kuno in *Mr Norris* (115). After these preliminaries it is no wonder that he attempts suicide (128-9). Perhaps the most melancholic character is the one appearing at the end of the novel. Bernhard Landauer lives an extremely isolated life, there are "four doors to protect [him] from the outside world" (153). Like Norris, he is also defined through the contrary qualities of softness and hardness, on which death casts a shadow: "He was soft, negative, I thought, yet curiously potent, with the static potency of a carved ivory figure in a shrine" (153). He is extremely delicate, with refined sensibilities, a great lover of art and books, in fact, a failed artist (154). Needless to say that he is also an enthusiastic traveller (154). His speech is careful, controlled, speaks "beautiful English" (153), but his speech is hesitating, and he talks in a "tired, soothing voice" (154). One's impression is that he is suffering from some fatal disease (154), and several times "the impassivity of mortal weariness fell like a shadow across his strangely youthful face" (155). At the end of the chapter, the narrator overhears a conversation of two men in a Prague restaurant from which it turns out that he died "of heart failure" (182), but one of them adds, "'anyone's heart's liable to fail, if it gets a bullet inside it" (182), so probably Bernhard was murdered by the Nazis.

In one sense, the chapters between the two "Berlin Diaries" (the first and the last chapter) may be treated as monuments erected to the prominent characters of the sections in between: Sally and Clive, Otto and Peter, and Bernhard Landauer. Each chapter's end confirms the final loss of these characters. The end of the Sally Bowles chapter informs us that it is six years ago that the last postcard arrived from Sally, and with a melancholic gesture, the narrator turns the whole passage into a "postcard" and a "tribute" at the same time: "So now I am writing to her. When you read this, Sally – if you ever do – please accept it as a tribute, the sincerest I can pay, to yourself and to our friendship" (78). The final lines of

the chapter set in Ruegen Island is, in fact, the start of the passage, for it ends with a mildly Proustian moment, the narrator finding a note from Otto slipped between the pages of a book, containing a note from him ("When you are back in Berlin I shall come and see you" [101]), recalling memories pertaining to him. The final lines confirm the sense of loss: "I miss Peter and Otto, and their daily quarrels, far more than I should have expected. And now even Otto's dancing partners have stopped lingering sadly in the twilight, under my window" (101). In the Laundauers section, the chief focus of melancholic remembering, Bernhard is turned into a corpse, which is a perfect object for this melancholic-allegorical gaze (see Flatley 6), and, in turn, in the final section of the book, Berlin itself (together with the narrator) also transforms into a dead body, a skeleton. One stake of *Goodbye to Berlin* and of *Mr Norris Changes Trains* is how people and places may be recalled melancholically and in what ways the melancholic surroundings and the melancholic subject influence and create each other in a dialectical manner.

In another sense, however, the focus of remembering in these two novels is much more relevant to the Auden group itself. There are three characters in the two novels whose lives show considerable similarities, regarding their upbringing and relationship to their mothers. As a boy, Arthur Norris "was delicate and had never been sent to school" (*Mr Norris* 43). His mother was widowed, and as an only son, he was brought up by her in an atmosphere of unnaturally strong, suffocating love. "This invalid idyll was doomed, by its very nature, soon to end. Arthur had to grow up; to go to Oxford. His mother had to die" (43). Peter Wilkinson is described with almost the same terms: he "was delicate, as a boy. He did not go to a preparatory school but, when he was thirteen, his father sent him to a public school" (*Goodbye to Berlin* 81), but there he "developed a heart trouble" (a possible foreshadowing of Bernhard's death) and had to be removed. "Once escaped, Peter began to hate his mother for having petted and coddled him into a funk. She saw that he could not forgive her and so, as Peter was the only one of her children whom she cared for, she got ill herself and soon afterwards died" (82). Later he developed a rather ambiguous relationship with a private tutor, went to Oxford, where he found that whenever he talked, he caused a slight embarrassment, and "meanwhile, at home, […] the Wilkinson family was slowly falling to pieces, like something gone rotten" (82). Another similarity is that both Norris (*Mr Norris* 43) and Peter are saved financially by their uncles (*Goodbye to Berlin* 83). Bernhard Landauer, in a beautiful confession scene speaks the narrator about the major phases of his life: "I was a queer sort of boy, I suppose… I never got on well with other boys, although I wished very much to be popular and have friends. Perhaps that was my mistake – I was too eager to be friendly. […] But being what I was, school was a kind of Chinese torture… […] And then

there was the War" (167). The motif of the elder brother dying in the War, the close relationship with the mother, and her death also appears: "She was dying of cancer… As soon as she knew what the matter was with her, she refused to see a doctor. She feared an operation… At last, when the pain became very bad, she killed herself…" (168). In these passages it is impossible not to recognise certain aspects of Isherwood's life, the death of his father in the First World War, his relationship with his mother and the public school experience. According to Carr, "his revolts against the social institutions and the values of the English upper-middle class, of which he was part, are read largely as a resistance to his mother as well as a self-perceived inability to live up to the myth of 'the truly strong man' epitomized in the memory of his World War I war-hero father" (19). Izzo also details the effect of Isherwood's parents on his life, their close relationship, their indulgence in games and fantasies, and the subsequent death of the father, the mother's sadness, the generation's childishness in prolonging fantasies and the experience of the public school (5-11). The parallels between Isherwood's previous novel, *The Memorial* (1929), in which he included these character types (war widow, Truly Week Man/Son, homosexuality), *Lions and Shadows* (1938), one of the foundational mythologies of the Auden generation and the Berlin novels are unmistakable. So, in another sense, these two novels, *Mr Norris Changes Trains* and *Goodbye to Berlin* – apart from being examples of the gentle "art of losing" (Elizabeth Bishop, qtd. by Rae 14) and melancholic remembering – are also monuments of the key myths of the Auden generation, and being all these, a melancholic pathological clinging to these experiences.

7. Goodbye to the Valley of Blue Moon: Nostalgia in James Hilton's 1930s Novels

James Hilton, together with George Orwell and J. B. Priestley, can be placed among those writers who staged a rediscovery process of an "organic" England in their novels. Orwell mainly envisioned a "healthy" working class popular culture as a possible retreat from the modernisation process of England of the 1930s marked by mock Tudor-houses and inauthentic suburban existence (of for example George Bowling in *Coming Up for Air*). For Priestley, it was a conscious choice to attempt to revivify the picaresque plot of Fielding by, among other things, a giving a 18th-century-like long title to his *English Journey* (1933) and by sending his hero in *The Good Companions* on a journey in England where an authentic

mode of existence is achieved being a member of a wandering music-hall troupe of common people.

In Hilton's novels, nostalgia always plays an important role, but with different emphases. *Random Harvest* (1941) follows the logic of the Victorian, depathologised nostalgia, while his novels written in the 1930s, *Lost Horizon* (1933), *Good-bye, Mr Chips* (1934) and *We Are Not Alone* (1937) contrast two kinds of nostalgia, a "healthy" one, whose aim is ordering and controlling the past and the pathological one, which, by emphasising the ontological difference between the past and the present, spatialises time through the desire caused by yearning towards the past.

In his study on nostalgia in the Victorian novel, Nicholas Dames discusses the process of depathologisation that characterised nostalgia in the 19th century, of which the result was that nostalgia became a pragmatic, practical means to control and seal off the past and orient the present towards the future by means of nostalgic strategies of dilution, naming, disconnection, spatialisation, isolation, taxonomization (14). All this served, in the end, amnesia, coupled with sharable, depathologised nostalgia that served communal retrospects and curative function by means of life-review of the individual character, on which the whole genre of the Bildungsroman is founded. (The typical sentence of the entire century, according to him, is Elizabeth's verdict in *Pride and Prejudice*, "Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure"). From this aspect, the key element of a Dickensian novel is "turning away from the enigmas of Wordsworthian memory and turning toward a cleansed, organised mind free of […] uncategorizable detail" (128). The aim was to "halt the possibility of a 'trifling' mind," in a Dickensian novel there is no leftover at the end, everything falls into its place, "the principle of relevance is a Victorian narrative virtue, binding the past to present even in the absence of directly causal connections" (135) and "what is remembered […] is remembered only insofar as it confirms this monad that I call my self" (137).

This is a strikingly exact description of the protagonist's, Rainier's, progress in *Random Harvest*. Rainier is an amnesiac, who lost his memory after in a battle in the First World War, and the period between 1917 and 1919 is entirely deleted from his min. In the present he is completely left to blind chance to be able to recover his memory. In 1919 he goes to Liverpool to visit an editor when he stumbles and falls in the street and wakes up on a bench not knowing where he is, thus being able to start out with a blank sheet. The decisive moment of regaining his memory comes in 1939, when he goes to watch with the narrator and two other people a production of *Salute the Flag*, a wartime patriotic play, in which he once participated as a standby actor after the Great War, that by 1939 degenerated into a ridiculous farce. As the narrator comments, "the entire mascarade was Rainier's last and rather

preposterous effort to tease a way into self-knowledge and that the climax, though completely accidental, was yet a fitting end to the attempt" (193). Due to watching this performance, his memories of the years between 1917-19 come back, he returns to the place where he spent idyllic days with his love, Paula; and finally realises that his wife whom he married after the war is Paula herself: "the gap was closed, […] the random years were at an end, […], the past and the future would join" (Hilton 351), thus the possibly harmful and traumatic memory of the missing two years is transformed into a safely possessable, relevant, categorised, organised memory event.

It is important to notice that this healthy, gap-closing nostalgia appears in *Random Harvest* through the novel's constant use of Dickens as a metonymy for the mechanisms of 19th-century nostalgia. This happens in two ways; the knowledge of Dickens's novels, that is, the degree of immersion into the English cultural tradition and the extent of knowledge about the novels are used as means of exclusion, contrasting Victorianism and modernism. On the other hand, Hilton's character formation also shows parallels with Dickens's method.

The company that Rainier joins are strongly reminiscent of Dickensian comic figures; they are all eccentrics and excellent performers; the first dinner the main character has with them is like a meeting of the Pickwick Club (254-7). Later Rainier and the narrator introduce themselves to a foreign couple as Dickens characters (191), to find out if the couple has read Dickens (but they have not). The same gesture of exclusion takes place here that has been mentioned with nostalgia and heritage, one "has to have been there already" to take part in nostalgic remembering. The decisive gesture, however, that signifies the Dickensian tradition as a cultural foundation of the novel's text is a description of London:

> For London, Blampied claimed, was of all cities in the world the most autumnal – its mellow brickwork harmonising with fallen leaves and October sunsets, just as the etched greys of November composed themselves with the light and shade of Portland stone. There was a charm, a deathless charm, about a city whose inhabitants went about muttering, "The nights are drawing in," as if it were a spell to invoke the vast, sprawling creature-comfort of winter. Iindeed, no phrase, he once said, better expressed the feeling of curtained enclosure, of almost stupefying cosiness, that blankets London throughout the dark months – a sort of spiritual central heating, warm and sometimes weepy, but not depressing – a Dickensian, never a Proustian fug. (306)

The sentence often kept repeated by London inhabitants invokes no Proustian moment, it is part of the cultural tradition of the image of a Dickensian London, and serves to express a

declared contrast with the Victorian and modernist poetics of the novel. The "Dickensian fug" is no pure memory, no revelation, it is constantly there as an available resource of tradition ("deathless charm," "spiritual central heating"), as opposed to Proustian memory, for which the protagonist has to work very heavily to dig out the lost time. While for Henry Green in 1939-40, at the time of writing *Caught*, and at the time of the "People's War," the moment of national consensus against a common enemy, it was not even enough to fashion memory in Woolfian terms but his emphasis was laid on versions of Mrs Dalloway's shell-shocked supplement (Pye, Roe), Hilton did not even risk to go as far as imagining memory as epiphanic and aesthetically transcendental revelation; he opted for the "less dangerous" and "home" version of Dickensian memory with its "healthily" nostalgic aspects.

This version of nostalgia is able to create kinds of characters who are strongly reminiscent of ones produced by some more traditional poetics of the novel. Like those in Dickens, all of Hilton's main characters, Mr Chips, Conway, David Newcome or Rainier are all particularly *memorable* figures. They are (with the exception of Rainier) constant, they show little sign of development. Chips is the eternal schoolmaster of the late Victorian era who is making a joke of everything, Conway is the eternal nostalgist looking for an idealised place; and Newcome is the eternal martyr of the First World War[74] (With the exception of *Random Harvest*, Hilton's novels are exercises of remembering on the part of the narrators; they are recalling of exceptionally memorable figures: the narrator of *Lost Horizon* points out several times that Conway's memory in him is very vivid (11, 14, 16, 17).

This is not true of the other three novels, where there is a clear distinction between the modes of nostalgia of the main character and the narrator that also marks their generational identities. The narrators are always the representatives of the 30s young generation, whereas the main characters belong to a previous era: Chips was born in 1848, Newcome in the 1870s, Conway in 1895, Rainier in 1894. My argument will be based on the difference between two kinds of nostalgia that the characters represent: the narrators with depathologised nostalgic means evoke the pathological nostalgia of the main characters.[75]

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[74] His son, Gerald points out at the end that "It seems to me that we're all children of the dead – the dead who shouldn't have died – the dead who were put to death" (186), which is also the definition of the young, 30s generation.

[75] It is remarkable that the reception of Hilton's 30s novels often shows the split between the two kinds of nostalgia sketched above. *Lost Horizon* is mentioned by Cunningham as a fundamental 1930s text that "presented a myth of attractive longevity" for the closed space of Shangri-La cut off from modernity and the crisis of the 30s itself, offering a haven for Conway from the coming war (98-9), thus emphasising the pathologic aspect of Conway's nostalgia. According to Cunningham, however, "no-one can rival Hilton's '30s achievement of having planted in the English language two such definite catch-phrases: Shangri-La and Mr Chips" (124). Thus, on the one hand, Conway becomes a sign of pathological nostalgia of eternal yearning, on the other, Mr Chips (and the Buddhist cloister in the mountains, the *place*) is made safe for remembering and are miniaturised into catch-phrases.

7.1. Learning Nostalgia: *Lost Horizon*

Nearly all of Hilton's 30s novels dramatise the contrast between the modes of remembering of two generations. This contrast is made visible right in the first pages of *Lost Horizon*, where a company of old schoolmates meet at an airport in Berlin, unable to recall their common school memories: "we were beginning to sample the disillusionment that usually afflicts old school friends who meet again and find themselves with less in common than they used to think […]. It seemed likely that nothing but the fact of being three celibate Englishmen in a foreign capital could have brought us together" (1). The conversation is revitalised only when Conway is mentioned. His memory is clearly inserted within the mode of harmless, depathologised nostalgia: Sanders, who brings up the matter, is convinced that his memory "perhaps […] doesn't matter now" (5). Conway is at a safe distance, there is a marked boundary between the present and Conway in the past, thus Conway becomes a particularly memorable figure. As the narrator puts it, "he had a peculiar charm, a sort of winsomeness that's pleasant to remember even now when I picture it" (14) "I have often found since then that others who met Conway, even quite formally for a moment, remembered him afterwards with great vividness. He was certainly remarkable as a youth and to me, at the hero-worshipping age when I saw him, his memory is still quite romantically distinct" (8). Rutherford, another member of the company, tells the others that he met Conway in China and recognised him immediately despite his changed looks (16). The fact that his memory is particularly vivid does not mean that he is a living memory; he cannot be captured, and no one in the company has information about his whereabouts. Conway is monumentalised in the memory of the present rememberers; indeed, his story, framed by the prologue and the epilogue of the novel, is a written document that Rutherford put down after a conversation with Conway. His memory exists only in signs, in a written document, in a condensed, manageable, summarisable object inserted between two present moments. What is more, this is not a first person narration. Conway is homeless even in the text about him, he is expulsed and turned into a third-person character in his own narration.

As opposed to the characters remembering him nostalgically in the present, Conway is an "authentic," pathological nostalgist. After he regains his memory of Shangri-La, "his face had stiffened into what I can only describe as an expression of overwhelming sadness – a sort of universal sadness, if you know what I mean – something remote or impersonal, a *Wehmut* or *Weltschmerz*, or whatever the Germans call it" (20). This nostalgia gives rise to his narration ("Somewhere about dawn he began to talk consecutively and it was mid-morning

and hot sunshine when he had finished" [21]), but after that he becomes a nomadic subject (or rather regains his status as a wanderer) and the only thing that can be known about him is that "he was about to set out on a long journey – to the north-west" (22). His present is directionless, he has no place; and, for that matter, the whole present of the narration can be considered as a sort of empty space; it is no wonder that the old schoolmates meet at an airport in a foreign city. The difference between the idealised place of Shangri-La and the directionless present can be best captured through the difference between site and place. A site is an open, geometrised, isotropic, neutral space, which is not habitable, one can at best be travelling through a site (cf. Casey), while a place is a closed, enclosed space, habitable and memorable (Prager 184).

Conway's memory before the Shangri-La experience can be best described as a mode of pleasant remembering. Before the crucial event, he is able to execute a life-review, miniaturise his life into a summary, which is clearly oriented towards the future:

> Nor did he sigh retrospectively when he viewed the equally pleasant but not wholly satisfying vista of the past decade. Changeable, fair intervals, becoming rather unsettled; it had been his own meteorological summary during that time, as well as the world's. He thought of Baskul, Pekin, Macao, and the other places – he had moved about pretty often. Remotest of all was Oxford, where he had a couple of years of donhood after the War, lecturing on Oriental history. […] The vision attracted, but did not stir him; there was a sense in which he felt that he was still a part of all that he might have been. (29)

The basic strategy of his memory is condensation, control, summary, firmly distancing this ten-year-long period from the present, and the determining trope is synecdoche: part of him still (or already) contains his future wholeness. This is basically a Bildung-structure, oriented toward the telos of wholeness and knowledge. It is important that the present of narration for the rememberers is also integrrated into a firm Bildung-system, for they look back on Conway's story with some epistemological superiority, in the light of knowledge: "I suppose I felt I was beginning to understand the man himself" (23); "in the light of events" (25). Conway's Shangri-La experience seem to stand in strong contrast with the Bildung-narratives before and after this event in that the secluded cloister promises to be a way or place of unlearning, forgetting, getting rid of temporality and the future-orientedness of Bildung and depathologised nostalgia.

The Buddhist monastery where Conway and three other passengers land offers a haven from the crisis of the 30s, a place untouched by contemporary modernity, a clean, "distant, inaccessible, as yet unhumanised" (44) virgin territory which is not tainted by products of popular culture like "dance-bands, cinemas, sky-signs" (87). It is a "land-locked harbour, with Karakal brooding over it lighthouse-fashion" (97), a place that stands against the sheer speed, "fever-heat" and practicality of Anglo-American culture (100). The place itself is a non-place, a Utopia; its narration will not be entirely possible in the future ("He never exactly remember how he and the others arrived at the lamasery" [82]), it cannot be represented in words, just as it cannot be represented on maps ("You will not find Shangri-La marked on any [maps]" [115]). In Conway's mind it generates ideas of the Apocalypse, of the End ("soon he merged in the deeper sensation, half mystical, half visual, of having at last some place that was an end, a finality" [82]), after which there is no story to tell (the place is almost like a story to end all stories). Shangri-La seems to be a perfect place, dominated by a perfectly-shaped mountain ("an almost perfect cone of snow" [60]); Conway later compares the hill to a "Eucledian theorem" (63) whose beauty for him is cold and steel-like, intellectual rather than emotional. Conway's later impressions about the place are replete with images and ideas of perfection; he conceives of the place as an "enclosed paradise of amazing fertility" (128), a gigantic sanitary system (128), whose inhabitants, who are in fact a mixture of Chinese and Tibetian, are cleaner and shapelier than either race. Conway also falls in love with a tenant of the monastery, Lo-Chen, a Manchu girl. Not surprisingly, he projects into her ideas of purity, perfection when she starts playing the piano:

> The first bewitching twang stirred in Conway a pleasure that was beyond amazement; those silvery airs of eighteenth-century France seemed to match the elegance of the Sung vases and exquisite lacquers and lotus-pool beyond; the same death-defying fragrance hung about them, lending immortality through an age to which their spirit was alien. Then he noticed the player. She had the long, slender nose, high cheekbones, and egg-shell pallor of the Manchu; her black hair was drawn tightly back and braided; she looked finished and miniature. (119-20)

This is obviously a place of atemporality, perfection, like a work of art (there are references to Lo-Chen as a precious stone [217], a drop of dew [229]). Not entirely by chance, right after this first encounter with the girl, Conway goes for a walk, which appears as a Proustian moment that emphasises synaesthesia: "The scent of tuberose assailed him, full of delicate associations; in China it was called 'the smell of moonlight'" (122). It is not accurate,

though, to call Conway's feelings for the girl love, since this is nothing but a desireless affection. Desire would insert temporality into the atemporal space conceived by Conway thus his strategy is mainly that of preserving the girl for later remembering: "He had suddenly come to realise a single facet of the promised jewel; he had Time, Time for everything that he wished to happen, such time that desire itself was quenched in the certainty of fulfilment" (217). "For years his passions had been like a nerve that the world jarred on; now at last the aching world was soothed, and he could yield himself to love that was neither a torment nor a bore" (187).

The most ironic episode of the novel, however, a scene that undermines Conway's fantasy of an atemporal, utopian, desireless place is his encounter with the Lama in the centre of the monastery. The encounter with the supreme knowledge does not fulfil his fantasy but undermines it by inscribing temporality, apparently without Conway's being aware of its significance. The Lama (who is in fact a Methusaleh whose original name is Perrault and arrived in the monastery in the 18th century) begins to teach Conway and tries to insert him into a Bildung-like structure. From the explanation of the Lama it turns out that the monastery does have a history (Chapter 7) that dates back to the 18th century. (In the interpretation that the Lama offers Shangri-La is the place that offers a refuge for all Europeans fleeing from the turmoil and revolutionary upheavals of the 18th and 19th century Europe, thus a centre of surviving humanity, the storehouse of culture and a preserver of values.) The Lama offers a process of learning for Conway: "The years will come and go, and you will pass from fleshly enjoyments into austerer but no less satisfying realms; you may lose the keenness of muscle and appetite, but there will be gain to match your loss; you will achieve calmness and profundity, ripeness and wisdom and the clear enchantment of memory. And most precious of all, you will have Time – that rare and lovely gift that your Western countries have lost the more they have pursued it" (187).

What may question this structure is that these values are not something to be learnt for Conway since they already exist in him before his arrival to Shangri-La; the monastery may be a place for fulfilment, but not of gaining new knowledge. The description we get of Conway before his lamasery experience is curiously similar to one that comes much later: "What most observers failed to perceive in him was something quite bafflingly simple – a love of quietness, contemplation, and being alone" (43-4); "Part of Conway was an onlooker, however active might be the rest. […] he refused to be fussed into deciding what he might or mightn't do in any number of possible contingencies. […] It was, if the worst view be taken, a form of indolence – an unwillingness to interrupt his mere spectator's interest in what was happening" (68). What may take place in Shangri-La can at best be a repetition of a previous

experience, but not an entirely new one: when Conway and the others arrive to the mountains, Conway's opinion is that "there are times in life when the most comfortable thing is to do nothing at all. Things happen to you and you just let them happen. The War was rather like that" (78); "he remembered that he had attained a similar though far less pleasant equanimity during his years at the War" (200). Thus, the image of the monastery as a haven from the outside world cannot entirely work, since Conway should participate in a process of learning (getting rid of his passions) which had, in fact, already taken place. According to Chang's, an assistant of the Lama's, what Conway should master is a faculty of *pleasant* remembering: "to give time for the dispersal of mental and emotional regrets" (200). Chang claims that perhaps a human feeling may survive extinction even after five years, "but only as a fragrance whose melancholy we may enjoy" (200). This the precisely the pleasant, depathologised form of nostalgia that is able to convert memory into pleasure ("Think only of the past as its remembrance gives you pleasure"), which is reinforced by Chang's advice that Conway should have a look at his past in order to make a summarisable, managable, controllable life-review, characteristic of depathologised nostalgia:

> [O]ne of the first steps towards the clarifying of the mind is to obtain a panorama of one's own past, and that, like any other view, is more accurate in perspective. When you have been among us long enough, you will find your old life slipping into focus as through a telescope when the lens are adjusted. Everything will stand out still and clear, duly proportioned and with its correct significance. (207)

This is precisely the kind of nostalgia to be found in Victorian novels "that share a nostalgic goal: eliminate the possibility, in psychological terms, of traumatic fixation, and in narratological terms, of the eruption of desultory, chaotic reminiscences," and that present "a life no longer burdened by the past, a life lived as a coherent tale, summarisable, pointed and finally moralisable" (Dames 7). This kind of life review explicitly serves the forgetting of the personal past in the service of a future aim, of preserving culture for the period after the external apocalypse (e.g., "[the treasures] will all be here, my son, hidden behind the mountains in the valley of Blue Moon, preserved for a new Renaissance" [241]).[76]

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[76] The anecdote of the cherry seed told by Chang also emphasises the importance of miniature and condensation (231): seeing that lamas do research in extremely various fields, ranging from Gibbon and Spengler through Briac to Emily Brontë, he makes a remark about it; "the High Lama replied with a story of a Chinese artist in the third century B. C. who, having spent many years in carving dragons, birds, and horses upon a cherry-stone, offered his finished work to a royal prince. The prince could see nothing in it at first except a mere stone, but the artist bade him 'have a wall built, and make a window in it, and observe the stone through the window in the glory of the dawn.' The prince did so, and then perceived that the stone was indeed very beautiful" (231). The morale of the story for Conway is that "when he regarded his past, he saw it strewn with images of tasks too

Other factors that emphasise that temporality is indeed present within Shangri-La are plenty. Some of the disciples are working on historical works; the mere fact that time is passing, though very slowly, is yet another sign, just like is the decisive moment when the Lama dies and appoints Conway as his heir. This is on the one hand the familiar 19th century deathbed scene, while on the other, it is the moment of inscribing Conway into a genealogical system. By this point, Conway seems to have reached, as a result of his Bildung, a supreme knowledge: "I understand you, Father" (193), he says, kneeling down in front of the Lama, in the manner of a conversion scene.

The most obvious interpretation of the function of Shangri-La, reinforced by the explicit "message" of the novel, is that it is a place of preservation, saving the values of European culture from the Crisis raging in the outside world, a kind of humanist paradise, a last refuge of tradition. If we look at the archive, the library of the monastery, nothing can be further from preserving tradition: Conway

was confirmed in his impression that lamas were of quite exceptional culture. Their taste in books was catholic, at any rate; Plato in Greek touched Omar in English; Nietzsche partnered Newton; Thomas More was there, and also Hannah More, Thomas Moore, George Moore, and even Old Moore. Altogether Conway estimated the number of volumes at between twenty and thirty thousand; and it was tempting to speculate upon the method of selection and acquisition. He sought also to discover that recently there had been additions, but he did not come across anything later than a cheap reprint of *Im Westen Nichts Neues*.[77] During a subsequent visit, however, Chang told him that there were other books published up to the middle of 1930 which would doubtless be added to the shelves eventually. (132)

Although this kind of collection aims at self-sufficiency, at totality, an order beyond temporality, converting temporality into spatiality, alphabetical order, and at an archival structure where "all time is made simultaneous or synchronous within the collection's world," a "total aesthetisation of use value" (Stewart 151). The problem is that it is not a closed collection, new items are constantly added each year, what is more, even the newest item is

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vagrant or too taxing ever to have been accomplished; but now they were all possible, even in a mood of idleness" (232). The stake of Conway's strategy in Shangri-La is the matter of perspective, how he is able to condense and miniaturise his past life in the service of pleasant forgetting and regarding the future.

[77] This remarkable detail might be understood as signalling the library coming to a stop with the First World War – even the title suggests the end of history, an arrest of the historical process. The title also, allegorically, encapsulates the contrast between the West and the East, here referring, besides the Western front, to the whole of Western civilisation.

entered as a piece added to the archive, doomed to be forgotten. The mere alphabetical juxtaposition reinforces a metonymic sequence, artificial rather than a metaphorical, totalising order; quoting Eugenio Donato, we might say that this archive or museum upholds the fiction that "ordering and classifying, that is to say, the spatial juxtaposition of fragments, can produce a representational understanding of the world" (cited by Stewart 162). What is more, this fragmenting of culture into names is similar to the kind of genesis amnesia that first occurred in the 19th century, and whose signs were visible, among others, in the media industry, in the practices of the daily newspaper, "which is a structured experience of confusion that naturalises new forms of cultural and perceptual contents: newspapers trained their readers in the apprehension of detached, independent, decontextualised 'articles'" (Terdiman 37). This leads, as opposed to associative structures of natural memory, to "archival consciousness," a technology of recollection whose main principle is the "increasingly randomised isolation of the individual item of information" (Terdiman 37) as a mode of control, regulation and, ultimately, amnesia.[78]

The final step that signals for Conway the impossibility of the myth of Shangri-La as a closed, totalisable, autogenic and perfect refuge whose main function is preservation is when he finds that one of their companions, Mallinson, a young man belonging to the next generation, has fallen in love with Lo-Chen, but not in a desireless, aesthetic manner. This is the end of his fantasy of atemporality, and he has to leave the place which did not fulfil his dreams: the windowpane separating the aesthetic field and the historical world proved to be very fragile. He steps out into "history," which is signalled by the fact that the immediate context for the end of the novel is the notorious 30s event of the Shanghai bombing (Richards 33).

7.2. In Search of an England: *Good-bye Mr Chips* and *We Are Not Alone*

There exists another level in which we can look into the significance of Shangri-La as a utopian place. Although it is presented as the archive-like storehouse of European literature containing randomised items, there are many references in the novel to the main attraction of the lamasery: its key virtue of temperance. There is a somewhat subdued, controlled, not to say suppressed quality in Shangri-La that celebrates moderation, meditation and contemplation. Conway captures the aesthetic quality of the lamasery, emphasising its natural, calm and gentle features:

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[78] Thomas Richards discusses *Lost Horizon* in the context of Empirical regulation and archive.

To Conway, seeing it first, it might have been a vision […]. A group of coloured pavilions clung to the mountainside with none of the grim deliberation of a Rhineland castle, but rather with the chance delicacy of flower-petals impaled upon a crag. […] The floor of the valley, hazily distant, welcomed the eye with greenness; sheltered from winds, and surveyed rather than dominated the lamasery […]. it looked to Conway a delightfully favoured place, though if it were inhabited its community must be completely isolated by the lofty and sheerly unscalable ranges on the farther side. (80-1)

This is an insular, Christian and strikingly *English* landscape, with modesty, organic quality and green colours. Later similar features of the place are emphasised: "There was no boastfulness, no striving at an effect, no concentrated attack upon the feelings of the beholder.[79] These delicate perfections had an air of having fluttered into existence like petals from a flower" (113). The library is a place of learning rather than of wisdom, of good manners rather than of seriousness (114). A description of a little garden is particularly revealing in this respect:

The party […] followed Chang through several courtyards to a scene of quite sudden and unmatched loveliness. From a colonnade steps descended to a garden, in which by some tender curiosity of irrigation a lotus-pool lay entrapped, the leaves so closely set that they gave an impression of a floor of moist green tiles. Fringing on the pool were posed a brazen menagerie of lions, dragons and unicorns[80] – each offering a stylized ferocity that emphasised rather than offended the surrounding peace. The whole picture was so perfectly proportioned that the eye was entirely unhastened from part to another; there was no vying or vanity […] (117).

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[79] The passage strongly reminds one of the description of the English landscape in a much later novel, Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989), where the landscape can be read as the projection of Stevens's, the butler's mind (who is a typically 1930s character for that matter): "the English landscape at its finest […] possesses a quality that the landscapes of other nations, however more superficially dramatic, inevitably fail to possess. It is, I believe, a quality that will mark out the English landscape to any objective observer as the most deeply satisfying in the world, and this quality is probably best summed up by the term 'greatness'. […] And yet what precisely is this 'greatness'? […] I would say that it is the very *lack* of obvious drama or spectacle that sets the beauty of our land apart. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint. It is as though the land knows of its own beauty, of its own greatness and feels no need to shout it" (28-9).

[80] Perhaps it is not by chance that the metonymic signifiers of England, the lion and the unicorn, appear as parts of the idyllic garden, thus strengthen the image of pastoral and nostalgic England in the novel. It is remarkable that in spite of their ferocity they do not offend the proportion and the harmony of the place.

This is wilderness tamed, contained in an artificial order, constructing the appearance of naturalness. One cannot help recalling Elizabeth's first glimpse of Darcy's house in *Pride and Prejudice*: "[Pemberley House] was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into a greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. […] She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste" (187). Shangri-La might be read as a recreation of an ideal, pastoral, traditional England. Further evidence of this view are the system of education in the monastery, where the goal is teaching the student good manners and from where bullying and violence is missing (137, so this is not the Audenesque myth of school as a battlefield of little groups and cliques); and the constitution of the place: "rather loose and elastic autocracy" (137) whose basis is a flexible view of the past: "[i]t is our tradition […] that we are never slaves to tradition. We have no rigidities, no inexorable rules. We do as we think fit, guided a little by the example of the past, but still more our present wisdom, and by our clairvoyance of the future" (239). The ceremony of having tea (a Chinese tradition imported into England) and the metaphor implied there can also be an example of ideal tradition: "Conway lifted the bowl to his lips and tasted. The savour was slender, elusive, and recondite, a ghostly bouquet that haunted rather than lived on the tongue" (160).

From this perspective, all the main characters of Hilton's can be interpreted as Conway figures: pathological nostalgists looking for an ideal, pastoral England represented by closed, secluded, isolated places. Mr Chips, the 85-year-old teacher reminiscing beside the fireplace is like Conway in many respects: childless (his baby and wife died one year after his marriage), he leads a "pleasant, placid life" (30), "he was pre-War" (99), that is, he belongs to the past and is expelled from it at the same time: he is, like any pathologic nostalgist, expelled, expunged, exiled, he is an ex-, outside and belonging to the past (Bényei, "Landscape" 21). He gradually arrives at a point of entropy, he gets hollowed out, and is slowly transformed into a legend, a type from whom everyone expects a joke. By the end of the novel, he is only a site through which history shows itself; he becomes a kind of container of the memory of previous generations. It would be tempting to see the school itself, Brookfield, as a place of nostalgic yearning and as a preserver of tradition similar to Shangri-La. This interpretation is suggested by the text: "Ralston had been in […] complete ignorance of the forces he was dealing with. So, for that matter, had Chips himself. Neither had correctly estimated the toughness of Brookfield tradition" [79-80]; "And it was the sense of proportion, above all things, that Brookfield ought to teach" [79]; "To keep a sense of proportion, that

was the main thing" [97]. It has been pointed out, however, how flimsy the barrier between the lamasery and the outside world is, how easily external temporality could creep in (or had always already been there). During the First World War air raids, the strong walls of the school firmly protect the students from the bombs; besides, the Latin text that Chips is just reading out ("'Genus hoc erat pugnae – this was the kind of fight – quo se Germani exercuerant – in which the Germans busied themselves" [103]) is an accurate description of the outside events, thus Brookfield is firmly implicated in history. The description about the Brookfield of the 20s is a rather contradictory passage; it emphasises the school's resistance to change, and then it talks about the changes that have taken place,[81] which questions Brookfield's status as a haven of tradition.

The founding nostalgic event dates back to a much earlier period in Chips's life, after he met his future wife: Chips "recollected those days […]. […] he re-saw the glorious hump of the Gable (*he had never visited the Lake District since*) and the mouse-grey depths of Wastwater under the Screes." (39-40, emphasis mine) During the time Chips is saying goodbye to his fiancée, a side remark signals the invasion of history: "A hansom clop-clopping in the roadway; green-pale gas-lamps flickering on the wet pavement; newsboys shouting something about South Africa; Sherlock Holmes in Baker Street" (41).[82] After one

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[81] "More and more saw the rest of the world as a vast disarrangement for which England had sacrificed enough – and perhaps too much. But he was satisfied with Brookfield. It was rooted in things that had stood the test of time and change and war. Curious, in this deeper sense, how little it *had* changed. Boys were a politer race; bullying was non-existent; there was more swearing and cheating. There was a more genuine friendliness between master and boy – less pomposity on the one side, less unctuousness on the other. One of the new masters, fresh from Oxford, even let the Sixth call him by his Christian name. Chips didn't hold with that; indeed he was just a little bit shocked" (109-10).

[82] It is interesting that the middlebrow status of some of Hilton's main characters and one Priestley character (Fauntley in *The Good Companions*) is hinted at by their habit of reading Victorian detective stories (*Goodbye* 16, 88; *We Are Not Alone* 20; *Random Harvest* 150, *The Good Companions* 86). Frequently, Sherlock Holmes comes to stand for Victorian stability, or rather an ironic retrospect on the petty fears of the Victorian age compared to those in the 1930s ("there was nothing to fear while the stately Holmes of England, doped and dressing-gowned for action, readied his wits for the final count with Moriarty" [*Random* 35]). Interestingly, the detective story, as a narrative construct, may well illustrate the two kinds of nostalgia. The crime occurs as a symptom in the fabric of society and conventional morality, and what it leaves in the present is not a sign, it is a decontextualised item of information that cannot be reinserted into the present, much like the pathological nostalgist is unable to make a coherent life story on its own, and is unable to translate between the presemiotic field of the past and the language-bound system of the present. It is the detective's (or analyst's) task to reinsert the trace into the present by constructing its prehistory (to "remember," to make the trace lose its traumatic quality and let it become a memory). Once that is done, memory and thus forgetting becomes possible, since the trace has been connected to its prehistory, and it is possible to tell a story – in a large proportion of Sherlock Holmes stories, the work of the detective and the exposure of the criminal (a repetition in that he is a second victim to exclude all further repetition of the crime) is followed by a pleasant, forgiving amnesia. Also, the very reception of detective stories serves amnesia, since the cultural consumer is impelled by the repetition of the same experience after forgetting the first "sensation" (in the sense of the genre sensation literature and sensation of the nerves, see Dames 185). As far as the temporality of nostalgic narratives is concerned, they also show similar features with the detective story in that the nostalgist's desire is returning to the original place, working backwards in time, while historical time is going forward in a linear fashion (in *Random Harvest*, the "random," suspended years are the whole period between the two world wars), thus detective stories – and apparently nostalgic stories – take place in an empty, suspended time (see Bényei, *Rejtélyes* 63-4).

year his wife and his child both die; and the Lake District becomes the pace that Chips never manages to regain, together with a vision of England, that he adopts after the marriage: "And Kathie broadened his views and opinions, also, giving him an outlook far beyond the roofs and turrets of Brookfield so that he saw his country as something deep and gracious to which Brookfield was but one of many feeding streams" (46). He is now cast out from this timeless vision of England, and as a consequence he tries to resort to creating the nostalgic review of his life, with the help of the nostalgic strategy of selection, ordering, taxonomising, but he is not successful in this: "When Chips remembered things like this he often felt he would write them down and make a book of them […]. But he was soon brought up against difficulties – the chief one being that writing tired him, both mentally and physically.. Somehow, too, his recollections lost much of their flavour when they were written down […] Funny and sad, comic and tragic, they all mixed up in his mind, and some day, however hard it proved, he *would* sort them out and make a book of them…" (56); but when he retires, the book is still not finished: "In fact, I remember so much that I often think I ought to write a book. […] Well, well, perhaps I shall write it some day. But I'd rather tell you about it, really. I remember… I remember… but chiefly I remember all your faces" (86). The only quasi-nostalgic, vicarious way he can create these nostalgic memories is by ritualistically listing the boys' names in an alphabetical order (64, 109, 124-5), which, by the time he is dying, is transformed into a bizarre dance macabre ("come round me now, all of you, for a last word and a joke…," 124-5).

The narrative voice, by contrast, presents a nostalgic narrative, not of Chips' life, but of English history. Chips' life story is interwoven with a "guided tour" through the important events and periods of recent English history, the suffragette movement (34), the Boer wars (41), the Diamond Jubilee (70), the Edwardian years (presented in a miniature, clipped into metonymic signifiers: "Strikes and lock-outs, champagne suppers and unemployed marchers, Chinese labour, tariff reform, H.M.S. *Dreadnought*, Marconi, Home Rule for Ireland, Doctor Crippen, suffragettes, the lines of Chatalja …" [42]), the sinking of the Titanic (71), the General Strike of 1926 (110), and, of course, the First World War which functions as a kind of black hole, sucking in many of Chips' disciples. The nostalgic voice is transposed from the main character's life to history, thus remembering Chips becomes equal with recalling major dates of English history of the late 19th and early 20th century (so much so that the day of Chips' death is exactly the Remembrance Day in 1933). We have basically the same structure as in *Lost Horizon*, recapturing a pathological, placeless nostalgist who is not able to arrive at his own life review by non-pathological nostalgic means (the difference is that the narrator's voice, linking Conway to English history, is not that marked). The difference between the

generations is grabbed with the debt-metaphor and repetition: regarding the First World War as the repetition of the Napoleonic Wars, "Chips thought when the news came: a hundred years ago boys from this school were fighting *against* the French. Strange, in a way, that the sacrifices of one generation should so cancel out those of another" (90). The temporal gap between generations thus becomes an economic system which has to remain in the state of entropy, the loan "prepaid" by the previous generation has to be paid back by the next one so that forgetting, deletion may occur.

Roughly the same pattern can be discerned in Hilton's 1937 novel, *We Are Not Alone*. Doctor Newcome, a middle-aged, average, popular figure in the small town of Calderbury, due to an accident in the local theatre, makes the acquaintance of Leni, a young German dancer, and falls in love with her. When the First World War breaks out, he knows Leni will be accused of spying and tries to get her to London so that she could escape. But on the way they are caught and because of an ambiguously composed letter (that referred to Leni's employment but can be interpreted as their secret plan to commit a crime) and a fatal coincidence (the doctor's wife takes poison by accident instead of painkiller, because their son, Gerald, mixed up the pills) they are accused of murder and both are executed. We hear the story from a narrator who was a patient of Newcome's in his childhood, and who meets Gerald, Newcome's neurotic son in the present at the site where the doctor's house is just being demolished.

Remembering Newcome is definitely nostalgic. First, he is elevated onto the level of a martyr, monumentalised (ironically) as a war-hero, which is also a self-definition of the next generation ("we're all children of the dead" [186]). Secondly, the doctor invariably appears as an infantile, childlike, regressed adult, a miniature adult, thus controllable, safely recallable, bearing no traumatic residue (e.g., 8, 18, 92, 122, 126). The poem at the end captures him as something unchanging and complete, like a painting: "Both youth and age were his / With no more change of scene / Than from the blue of mountains / Down to the level green" (182). Gerald, when the house is being torn down, salvages a picture and takes it away with him as a token of remembrance, as a souvenir, which is also a typical means of nostalgic recall. The motivating force behind nostalgic narrative in the present is both an atonement and exclusion of repetition. Atonement of the narrator, because as it turns out, he had a part as a crown witness in sentencing the doctor to death ("I was too young to know what it was all about" [180], a clear Bildung-story); and the exclusion of the repetition of the outbreak of the war, since many passages about 1914 were clearly able to able to be read in 1937 as unmistakable references to the next war. Thus the memory of the doctor and the traumatic event of 1914

that threatens with uncanny return and repetition becomes, in the words of Stewart, "reportable" rather than "repeatable" (135).

Doctor Newcome is a pathologic nostalgist, an outcast, an ex-, like Conway or Chips. The contrast between the two kinds of remembering is pointed put right at the beginning of the novel: "Nothing is terrible if it is not felt to be" (12). In other words, what is not existent can cause pain (past as nonexistent in the present causing pain, pathologic nostalgia), and the existing pain can also be eased with imagination (depatholgized nostalgia). The founding moments of Newcome's nostalgia are

1) stepping into a "natural," unmediated relationship with Leni that is beyond words, and this naturalness is linked to English painting: "They couldn't either of them be sure tht the other grasped an exact meaning; but David didn't care. He had never found it possible to put everything he meant into speech; indeed, he had sometimes felt that words offered merely a surface exactness that was both an illusion and a danger. […] And so, listening to Leni's German, which she no longer tried to simplify for him, he caught the mood rather than the detail, and felt no more eager to dispel an occasional word-obscurity than Whistler must have wanted the mists to disappear before he would paint a sunset." (68-9);

2) playing Mozart together with Leni (reminiscent of the Shangri-La world, where Mozart's music appears as a perfectly habitable, well-built up construction ["Mozart has an austere elegance which we find very satisfying. He builds a house which is neither too big nor too little, but he furnishes it in perfect taste"; *Lost Horizon* 181]) also figures as a fantasy of isolation: "Then she went to the piano and he took out his violin and they began to play Mozart. The music streamed into the room, enclosing a world in which they were free as air, shutting out hatreds and jealousies and despondencies, giving their eyes a look of union with something rare and distant" (129) and Leni's dance as a "an embodiment of light and air, on tiptoe with a dream" (132);

3) spending a night in the open air while escaping together with her ("There are some moments that are hung in memory like a lamp" [144]). From this idyllic, self-enclosed world, he is excluded by the temporality of the outbreak of the war, and this being cast out is recollected nostalgically by the next generation.

7.3. England Regained: *Random Harvest*

As opposed to the previous novels, *Random Harvest* (1941) is the story of a "successful" nostalgist who is able to return, both spatially to the place in the countryside

where he had spent some idyllic days, and temporally to the period between 1917 and 1919, more specifically to Armistice Day when he made the acquaintance of Paula. Charles Rainier, the main character of the novel, loses his memory after a bomb attack in Arras, in 1917 and is taken to Melbury Hospital. He simply walks out on 11 November 1918, no one caring about him, and meets Paula, a simple girl, who works as an actress, and, through her, a touring company. He joins them, unable to recall his prehistory and after a time, but not really caring about it, thinking that forgetting to be the best cure. Then he marries Paula and they go to London, where Rainier (who even forgot his name and lets himself be called "Smithy") takes up journalism. In 1919, in Liverpool, where he is supposed to meet an editor, he stumbles and wakes up, his memory deleted, on a bench. The two-year period now a blank in his mind, he goes home, just when his father dies, and later makes a career in business and in politics. He marries his secretary, always tormented by his two lost years that he cannot recall. Finally, in 1939, he and the narrator go to see a performance of a patriotic war play, when Rainier remembers that he indeed featured in the same play as an amateur actor back in 1919. His memory slowly returns, goes to Melbury Hospital and finally to Beachings Over, the idyllic place of his days with Paula, who turns out to be his present wife.

The novel starts with a crisis of (public) memory on 11 November 1937, when the passengers on a train feel rather awkward and uncomfortable having to remember, which foreshadows Rainier's inability to recall the "original" Armistice Day. At first, Rainier seems a pathologic nostalgist type like Conway or Newcome, whose present is inauthentic, devalorised and directionless. He feels that he left his "real self" in 1918/19 and now he has to live as a split personality,[83] he has no proper home ("a hotel with different guests every day" [27]), and he does not find a proper language to express himself ("he talked a good deal in an attempt to race his thoughts - an attempt which usually failed, leaving a litter of unfinished sentences, mixed metaphors and unpolished epigrams" [32]). The whole idea of possessing Stourton, the family home is a "legal fiction" (50), a butler cannot be told from a cabinet minister (51), and the rust in the pipes of Stourton is disguised to the guests as thermal water (53). This inauthenticity is slowly extended to the whole period between the two world wars. His going home in 1919 is a very awkward repetition, an uncanny reappearance of a long-forgotten event, evoking the etymological meaning of nostalgia, "the pain of going home." He is not given a proper welcome, or is received with meaningless platitudes ("Hello, old chap, how are you?" [83] "It's good to be back" [82]). His father is dying and they have to discuss

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[83] In *Lost Horizon*, upon leaving Shangri-La, and urged by Mallinson to carry on, Conway seems to enter a phase in which he is split against himself, forever tormented by nostalgia: he "smiled, but did not reply; […]. It was true what the youth said, that he had made up his mind; but it was only what was left of his mind. That small and active fragment now dominated; the rest comprised an absence hardly to be endured. He was a wanderer between two worlds and must ever wander […]" (264).

the inheritance. The situation is once again awkward, since everyone thought him dead; as the lawyer puts it, "Legally, you are – well, I won't say dead exactly – but not normally alive" (92). From that moment on, he is not an authentic individual: as a nostalgist, he is "not normally alive." He tries to stimulate his mind, recall memories, he returns to Brighton, a scene of childhood, goes back to Cambridge where he took the entrance exam before the war, but no revelation comes. In Cambridge, paddling up the Upper Cam, without being aware of it, he repeats Rupert Brooke's journey (115), and from that moment in the novel, Rainier's personal history and England's national history are connected. We go through the major events between 1920 and 1939, so much so that the main character's individual history is almost sucked up by the chronicle of England ("In the same year Rainier…" [153]). There is an ironic perspective on the 1920s as an era of benevolence (155) and the 30s as an era of failed appeasement. This is the typical rhetoric of 1940, "England's finest hour," when two ground-breaking books stigmatising the 1930s appeared, Malcolm Muggeridge's *The Thirties, 1930-1940, in Great Britain* and *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, establishing an especially negative view on the 30s (see Montefiore 17, Gindin 4) that survived well into the 50s public thinking, when the two icons of the 30s were planted, the Slump and Appeasement, metonyms of a phoney, absurd, farcical decade (Baxendale and Pawling 9, 119). In *Random Harvest*, the whole interwar period is equally inauthentic and displaced, unable, like Rainier, to recover the last phase of an idyll, the Armistice Day (a good example of this value crisis is an economic metaphor used by one of the characters in the 20s: "it is hard to separate the price from the worth" [132]). The solution offered by the novel is Orwellian or Priestley-like: returning to a "healthy," indigenously English working-class culture, which is signified by the music-hall troupe (just like in Priestley's *Good Companions*) that Rainier joins in 1918. The mode of forgetting for Rainier is submerging, literally descending (251) into tradition. The "Owl," the pub he takes shelter in on Armistice Day is "a two-storied, ivy-clustered, steep-roofed building, ablaze with light from every downstairs room […] traditional, without self-consciously old-world" (222, reference to the mock-Tudor mania of the 30s). Biffer, the pub owner, is the English type, "delighted to join in any outwitting of authority," "jovial, obese, and somewhat thick-witted," "had a few fierce hatreds (for such things as the red tape, government interference, and Mrs Grundy) and a few equally fierce affections, such as for Horatio Bottomly, 'good old Teddy' (meaning the late King Edward the Seventh) and Oxford in the Boat Race" (233). Rainier takes up gardening, which, as a national pastime, fits the anti-heroic imagery of 1940, propagating a quiet patriotism that caught on in wartime Britain, and "established itself between the wars as a most widespread English leisure pursuit" (Samuel 219). The members

of the company he joins are "average citizens" (259); one man in the cellar of the pub they meet is blind, reading the Braille edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, "which gives you a really new insight into literature. You see, you cannot skip, you have to read every word" (252), which suggests a deep, empirical contact with tradition.

In this context, Paula, Rainier's girlfriend can easily be transformed into an allegorical figure representing England. Their affection seems to be completely sexless (just like the relationship of Lo-Chen and Conway, of Newcome and Leni); when they go to sleep on 11 November 1918, she "comforts him" as a mother: "I'm just like a mother tonight, so cuddle up close as you like and keep warm [...] he fell asleep in his arms" (226). The idyllic place Rainier is not able to recover after the war is one in the countryside, Beachings Over, a "heavenly place" (279), a paradise with a table full of food (281), a home ("He felt: This is home; if they will let me stay here, I shall be at peace" [274-5]) and also a place of a dyadic mother-child relationship: "She took his troubled head in her arms and rocked it gently against her" (287); later in London too: "He took her into his arms quietly, sexlessly, as they sat before the fire. Those were the happy hours" (311). This is Rainier's refinding his status as an infant (he does not belong previously, he is not a proper son, he only met his father when he already died, also, in Melbury hospital, "some people did come to see me at the hospital once, but - I wasn't their son" [216]), and also achieving a depathologised nostalgist's status: "Smith then spoke briefly of his war injury and resultant lack of memory. He called it a lack now, not loss" (295).

It is from this idyllic, Dickensian world with the touring company that he is cast out. The revisitation takes place exactly on 1 September 1939, a point of complete historical entropy, which Rainier compares to the unwinding of a clock (326). Rainier's return to Beachings Over and consequently to the period of 1917/19 is the nation's return (in the form of repetition) to another war and a promise of a new Armistice (350). By the end of the novel, the figure of Paula and the allegory of the country, searching for the lost place and searching for England totally pervade each other, which is signalled by the linguistic ambiguity in the conversation of the narrator and Mrs Rainier: "'Are you talking about – er – the country – or – er –' 'Both, in a way.' 'So do you think that's where he's gone – to look for her?' 'It's possible... But to look for her as she *was*, and that's impossible'" (346). As a result of Paula and Rainier's meeting "the gap was closed, the random years were at an end," which signifies both the random years of Rainier and of the nation. In the mode of depathologised nostalgia, the interwar years can be closed, summarised, controlled, and forgotten about as phoney decades, and as a result, the repetition of the outbreak of the first war will not seem to be

traumatic or uncanny, since this kind of nostalgia excludes repetition but will be able to be inserted into a "national" life review.

James Hilton's 1930s novels dramatise the contrast of the patholgic nostalgia of the war generation and the depathologised one of the next one. The main characters in the 30s novels are outcasts, homeless sufferers (no wonder that all of them are either lost somewhere in Asia or do not live in the present), being excluded from an atemporal, closed space that can be read as the English tradition itself. This tone changes in the 1941 novel, where the main character is able to regain England and "develop" into a "healthy nostalgist."

8. Conclusion

This dissertation examined a relatively small section of the British fiction of the 1930s from the aspect of the controversial nature of remembering. The close reading of Henry Green's, Christopher Isherwood's and James Hilton's thirties novels, and further brief analyses of certain works of George Orwell, Anthony Powell, Daphne du Maurier and J. B. Priestley offered some points of entry pertaining to a broader scrutiny into the paradoxical relationship of coming to terms with the past and the 1930s as a distinct and idiosyncratic decade. The dissertation thus serves three other purposes as well: it offers new perspectives concerning the critical evaluation of the above-mentioned writers; it also shows a novel possibility of placing the highly problematic 1930s into British literary history with the help of the framework of remembering; and finally, it sheds light on the contrast between the twenties high modernist and the nineteen-thirties employment of memory, as regards the growing uncertainty of the possibility of the redeeming, totalising and epiphanic nature of remembering.

Naturally, with a relatively small number of fictional pieces, one may not go as far as drawing far-reaching conclusions concerning "the" 1930s or "remembering" as such. One has to be aware of the limitations of such an approach carried out within the space of a dissertation. It is evident for, instance, that other forms of the malfunctions are also possible (e.g., amnesia is not broadly discussed here, in spite of the then popular character of the amnesiac shell-shocked soldier), or one may argue that "healthy" forms of remembering may also be valid for critical discussion. A further barrier to more universal claims here is the selection of 1930s authors. It goes without saying that if one were to scrutinise other writers of the period, for instance, highly idiosyncratic voices like those of Samuel Beckett, Malcolm

Lowry, James Hanley or Lawrence Durrell (who all began their careers in the 1930s) or different female voices, ranging from Elizabeth Bowen and Sylvia Townsend-Warner through Stevie Smith to Storm Jameson and Rosamond Lehmann, not to mention those writers who began their carriers before the thirties and continued to publish in this decade as well, a wholly different image of "remembering in the 1930s" would emerge. Furthermore, when one speaks about the contrast between the "high modernist" 1920s and the subsequent decade, an awareness of the fact that other voices existed besides the now canonical Woolf, Joyce or T. S. Eliot, and the consciousness of the fact that not all kinds of remembering in the twenties may be described with the Proustian scheme are also necessary. Yet, in spite of these necessary restrictions of both method and material, the following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

The 1930s, as determined by the generation born in the first decade of the century, stands as a wholly distinct period in literary history. This transitory, in-between decade, suspended between two great wars, was highly aware of the problematic relationship of the past and the present, of which the symptoms characterise much of the writing of the period. It is a certain immobility, frozenness that characterises the relation of the past and the present, together with the inability to return to the past, conceived of as a place of security and happiness coupled with an equally strong feeling that the future offered no better alternative either. This general sentiment was exacerbated by the sense that not only was the past a period of stability and certainty anymore; on the contrary, it continued to exert a frustrating influence of authors in the present. Thus, it is the impotence of breaking out of the present situation and the helplessness in preventing the past from invading the present that may best describe the more or less general attitude towards the problem of remembering in the decade.

I attempted to employ the theoretical triad of trauma, melancholia and nostalgia to get closer to the understanding of the decade's memory problems. The notion of trauma proved especially useful in examining Henry Green's novels of the period and emphasising the transitory nature of the situations unfolding in them: the (non-)events at a railway station and the experiences of an auxiliary fireman during the Blitz. As regards trauma, the tentative suggestion was also made that certain other authors besides Green, such as Spender, Isherwood, Greene and Upward (and Auden) employed this characteristic traumatic idiom to make sense of their public school experiences, in fact, to create a myth of their education, which was ultimately rooted in their sense of guilt about not being able to fight in the Great War. The outcome was a complex strategy of compensation with which they attempted to make up for the loss suffered by their elders and to inflict on themselves a similar kind of pain, retrospectively traumatising their public school experiences. It was a way of growing up,

forcing themselves to be adults, coupled with the feeling that they would permanently remain adolescents.

The concept of melancholia appeared to be useful in two ways: it was a suitable framework to make sense of the loss experienced by the semi-autobiographical narrator of Isherwood's thirties novels, and it also brought one closer to the understanding of the surface-bound, reserved and consciously un-poetic language of Waugh's and Powell's 30s novels. The characteristic narratorial attitude in these writers of taking an outsider position, looking at the scene in a reticent, laconic way, remaining observers of otherwise chaotic, farcical or even tragic events may be approached through the idiom of melancholia, with its insistence on metonymic details and allegorical world-constructions. One may even risk the statement that the characteristic dark humour, the inclusion of seemingly irrationally cruel and gratuitously savage elements, especially in Waugh, may, at least in part, be traced back to the hidden sadism directed against the ego in the psychopathology of melancholia. The loss that Isherwood's narrator experiences is the loss of Berlin before Hitler's rise and the melancholic revival of these experiences after returning to England. The motif of photography proved to be significant in this respect, pointing at the outsider position and the work of salvage, carried out by the narrator in the Berlin novels.

The third element of the theoretical triad, nostalgia was used to examine James Hilton's novels from the point of view of the collusion of two senses of nostalgia. On the one hand, there is a discernible tendency in the 1930s, after the catastrophe of the war and in the shade of the threat of the Slump and hunger marches, to turn nostalgically towards the countryside, seen as the repository of the values of "true" Englishness. This idea was by no means limited to more or less conservative authors and politicians of the decade, the most spectacular representative of which was J. B. Priestley in the period. On the other hand, one may detect a more sceptical attitude concerning the redeeming force of nostalgia, especially in the 30s novels of George Orwell and Daphne du Maurier. This nostalgia is wholly another kind: it emphasises its sickly, pathological aspects, the sense of being frozen in the present and the inability to return, literally or figuratively, to a past place or time, the sense that the signs of the past and those in the present may under no circumstances match each other. These nostalgists are bound to travel, look endlessly for the lost place that may never be recovered, either because the return there is impossible, or the place has changed beyond recognition. James Hilton's novels are especially suitable to contrast these two kinds of nostalgia. The majority of their protagonists are pathological nostalgists, eternally yearning for a lost place and experience, either doomed to forever tread the Earth and never stop (like Conway) or have already died (like Chips or Newcome). It is the task of the next generation to evoke their

memories, which, interestingly, happens with nonpathologial nostalgic means. The sole exception from this is Hilton's *Random Harvest* (1941), which, through the experiences of an amnesiac soldier, presents the possibility of recovering memories (and recovering a "healthy" England), the closing of the gaps between the past and the present, thus enacting a healthily nostalgic narrative, which the British doubtlessly needed at the time of the Blitz.

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Magyar nyelvű összefoglaló

Jelen értekezés célja az emlékezés szerepének, jelentőségének és ellentmondásainak bemutatása az 1930-as évek brit regényeiben. A disszertáció tárgya nem elsősorban elméleti (pszichológiai, pszichoanalitikai, filozófiai) jellegű, nem célja az irodalomban jelentkező emlékezésformák általános vizsgálata egy korszakon belül, hanem sokkal inkább irodalom-, illetve szellemtörténeti: az elsődleges célja a brit (egészen pontosan angol) irodalomtörténet egy kiválasztott szakaszának elemzése egy bizonyos szempontból. Mivel egy ilyen tág téma egy disszertáció keretén belül nehezen tárgyalható, így természetesen korlátozásokra kényszerülünk. A „harmincas évek angol regényei" alatt ebben az esetben a századforduló táján, konkrétabban a körülbelül 1900 és 1910 közt született, az angol modernizmus első nagy korszaka után fellépő írócsoport (elterjedtebb nevén az Auden-generáció) által írt regényeket értem; így ebbe a kritikai konstrukcióba jelen esetben nem tartoznak bele a korábban született írók (Woolf, Joyce, Maugham, stb.) harmincas években írt regényei, sem pedig az ugyan az 1930-as években alkotó, de a fősodorhoz nehezen köthető írók – Samuel Beckett, Malcolm Lowry, Flann O'Brien, Lawrence Durrell – művei sem. Természetesen a jelen értekezés nem foglalkozhat minden, az Auden-generációhoz ilyen vagy olyan szállal kötődő íróval sem, így ezt a kört is szükségképpen szűkíteni kellett: a dolgozat főleg olyan férfiírókkal foglalkozik, akik a jelzett időintervallumban születtek, előkelő magániskolákban tanultak, de nem feltétlenül voltak tagjai a W. H. Auden köré csoportosuló társaságnak. Disszertációmban három szerzőt, Henry Greent, Christopher Isherwoodot és James Hiltont vizsgálok meg részletesebben, akik közül az első csak érintőlegesen hozható kapcsolatba az említett írócsoporttal, a harmadik pedig még a legmérvadóbb irodalomtörténetekben sem szerepel a fősodor tagjaként, de egy emlékezéssel foglalkozó dolgozatban helyet kell kapnia (Isherwood viszont az Auden-csoport meghatározó tagjaként alkotott, Auden barátjaként és szerzőtársaként). Ezen kívül rövidebb elemzésekben helyet kap a dolgozatban Anthony Powell, George Orwell, J. B. Priestley és Daphne du Maurier is.

A második megszorítás a témát illetően az emlékezés jelentőségét érinti; helyesebb lenne úgy fogalmazni, hogy a disszertáció a múlttal való rendellenes kapcsolattal, az emlékezet defektusaival foglalkozik, és ezen keresztül vizsgálja az említett írókat: Henry Green 1930-as évekbeli regényeit a trauma, Isherwood írásait a melankólia, Hilton műveit pedig a nosztalgia elméleti kereteinek segítségével elemzem. Közös jellemzője az említett emlékezeti problémáknak, hogy eltérő hangsúlyokkal ugyan, de mindhárom a múlt

„jelenlétét", a szubjektum számára fájdalmas elmúlni nem akarását hangsúlyozza, ezáltal megtörve a múltat követő jelen kronologikus rendjét.

Ezzel a dolgozat kérdésfelvetése elvezet egy általánosabb érvényű problémához is, mégpedig annak vizsgálatához, hogy milyen módon változott a klasszikus vagy „magas modernizmus" alapvetően (bár nem kizárólagosan) prousti, az esztétikai totalizáció lehetőségét, a mélységkultuszt, valamint a múlt és a jelen egyetlen, epifanikus momentumban történő egybeesését hangsúlyozó emlékezetstratégiája a másod- vagy későmodernista korszakra a patologikus aspektusokat, az emlékezés lehetetlenségét, de legalábbis problematikus voltát egyre inkább előtérbe helyező módozatokká. Így a disszertáció áttételesen az angol modernizmus helyzetére, változásaira is választ ad ezen három író, illetve három emlékezet-probléma kapcsán.

A dolgozatban elvégzett vizsgálódások alapján a következő általánosságok fogalmazhatók meg a témával kapcsolatban: egyrészt a harmincas évek egyes angol regényei határozott elmozdulást jeleznek a húszas évek magas modernizmusának emlékezetstratégiáihoz képest, amennyiben kétségbe vonják ez utóbbinak az emlékezetre vonatkozó totalizáló igényeit. Másrészt korszak vizsgált regényeiben az emlékezet patologikus működésének eredménye, hogy az önmagába zárt, esztétikai funkcióval rendelkező, teljességre és mélységre törekvő jelenlét nem valósulhat meg, fokozott mértékben fenyegeti ugyanis a múlt betörése (trauma) vagy a jelen kiüresedése (melankólia), illetve az eredménytelen múltba vágyás (nosztalgia). Harmadrészt a harmincas éveknek az emlékezetstratégiák szempontjából vizsgált szövegei újabb támpontot nyújtanak a klasszikus modernista és a késő modernista szövegek összehasonlításához.

Abstract

The aim of the present dissertation is to examine the role, the significance and the controversies of remembering in the British novels of the 1930s. The focus of the dissertation is not primarily of theoretical (psychological, psychoanalytical or philosophical) nature, and its aim is not to scrutinise the forms of remembering appearing in literature generally, narrowing the problem down to one era, but rather of literary historical character: its primary goal is the analysis of a chosen period of British (or more precisely, English) literary history from a given perspective. As such a broad topic is difficult to be treated within the framework of a dissertation, some necessary constraints had to be introduced. By the term "the novels of the nineteen-thirties" I mean novels written by members of a group of writers (more generally known as the Auden generation), born roughly between 1900 and 1910, making their début after the first significant generation of modernists. Thus this critical construction includes neither the works written in the 1930s by authors born a generation earlier (Woolf, Joyce, Maugham, etc), nor the novels produced by authors who, though writing in the thirties, can hardly be integrated into its mainstream literature and are rarely considered as "thirties writers" (Samuel Beckett, Malcolm Lowry, Lawrence Durrell, Flann O'Brien). Naturally, the present dissertation is not able to deal with all the authors belonging to, to a greater or lesser extent, the Auden generation, thus this group also had to be narrowed down: the study is mainly about male novelists born in the given period, educated in prestigious public schools, but not necessarily the members of the group of writers centering around W. H. Auden. In my dissertation, I analyse three authors, Henry Green, Christopher Isherwood and James Hilton in detail, out of whom Green can only be superficially associated with the Auden group, Hilton, although he does not even appear in most critical evaluations of the period as belonging to "thirties writing," must be included in a study dealing with remembering (while Isherwood, as a friend and co-author of Auden was a central member of the group). Besides these authors, shorter analyses are devoted to Anthony Powell, George Orwell, J. B. Priestley, Graham Greene and Daphne du Maurier.

The second constraint regarding the theme of the study concerns the significance of remembering: it would be more precise to say that the dissertation discusses the various aspects of the problematic relationship with the past and the defects of remembering, and scrutinises the above-mentioned authors in this context, analysing Henry Green's 1930s novels with the help of the theoretical framework of trauma, those of Isherwood in the context of melancholia and the writings of Hilton as pertaining to nostalgia. The common

characteristic feature of these problems of remembering is that – although with various emphases – all the three of them stress the "presence of the past," its painful unwillingness to become past, thus breaking the chronological order of present following the past. Through raising this dilemma, the dissertation leads to a problem of more general nature: the question of how the basically (though not exclusively) Proustian strategies of remembering of classical or "high" modernism, stressing the possibility of aesthetic totalisation, depth and the coexistence of the past and the present in one single, epiphanic moment, changed by the era of secondary or late modernism into modes emphasising the pathological nature of memory and the impossibility, or at least the problematic nature, of remembering. Thus the study, indirectly, gives an answer pertaining to the status and changes of English modernism through these three authors and three malfunctions of remembering.

The research carried out in the dissertation has led to the following results: first, certain English novels of the 1930s show a marked shift as compared to the strategies of remembering of the 1920s "high modernism," inasmuch as they call into question the latter's demands for totalisation concerning memory. Secondly, the result of the pathological work of memory in the examined novels of the decade is that the self-enclosed, aesthetically-motivated presence, aiming at totality and depth is rendered impossible, since it is highly threatened either by the intrusion of the past (trauma), or the deflation of the present (melancholia), or the futile longing for the past (nostalgia). Finally, these texts of the 1930s, examined from the point of view of strategies of remembering, may also serve as points of orientation in the comparison of classic and late-modernist novels.

Publications of the Author

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