Jonah in the Whale: The Spatial Aspects of Nostalgia in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* and George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*

Tamás Tukacs

The two 1930s novels of the title are powerful manifestations of the growing concern with the validity of rural nostalgia. In the crisis-stricken, "low dishonest decade" (Auden 86) of the 1930s, several authors interrogated the personal and national relationships towards the countryside by evoking different spaces enacting the conflict of the supposedly untainted, innocent pastoral landscape and the urban culture of modernity. Specifically, Hilton's and Orwell's novels do so with reference to the temporality included in this conflict (unchanging countryside vs. city tainted with the passage of time), and within the framework of pathological nostalgia, entailing the failure of the protagonist's return to the site of his or her beloved past. The present paper will look at these problems, arguing that these 1930s texts mark a fundamental shift as regards the role of remembering compared to high modernist novels of the previous decade.

To be able to validate the claim above, i.e., that late modernist novels generally tend to enact a growing concern with the validity of nostalgia, one has to examine the different ways in which modernist and late modernist texts conceive of the role (obligation, pleasure, burden, etc) of remembering. Taking the risk of easy generalisation, one could say that modernist remembering may be described in two ways: it is metaphorical and spatially limited. The former claim means that the act of remembering is, more often than not, imagined as a privileged scene of the coincidence of the past and the present in one revelatory, epiphanic, transcendental moment. The act of remembering is not that of a consciously evoked past; it is generally the occurrence provoked by some empirically perceivable material, in an unconscious manner, calling forth the involuntary memory of the subject. The most well-known example of this kind of remembering is, naturally, Proust's famous *madeleine* scene in the first volume of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, when the protagonist, after dipping the little cake in his tea is able to evoke his whole childhood. More precisely, the scenes and memories of his childhood come back and flood him in an uncontrollable way. This epiphanic moment reveals a higher or more general unity and is sealed off from "reality" or "history" around it: it is a moment severed or isolated from temporality, thus is suspended and possesses an ordering capacity on the mutability of everyday life.

As regards the metaphor of space, one can claim that it is like a fortified area impervious to the intrusion of harmful, traumatic, disturbing material

represented by what is outside it and can only give access to that privileged moment of the past, which provides the present moment a metaphysical and transcendental level. This is, of course, compatible with the whole self-fashioning of (high) modernism of the 1920s itself. The modernist work of art is supposed to be treated as a self-enclosed unit, valid in itself, outside history, having little plot, conveying an image, as it is apparent from the authenticating and prestige-giving gestures of Eliot's "mythic method," the symbolic and aesthetic totalisation and ordering of the "myriad of impressions" (Woolf, "Modern" 154), or even the Joycean image – however ironic or contradictory it may be – of the artist paring his fingernails above the work of art. In this respect, it is also important to mention the commonplace image of the modernist artist retreating to the ivory tower, the reminiscences of which can even be found in Virginia Woolf's essay "The Leaning Tower," in which she compares her own generation with the new one, mentioning images precisely in connection with "history" or "reality" outside the tower: "But 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). To sum up, modernism is in favour of metaphorical equation of temporal sequences and the spatial closure of this identification.

For various reasons, this metaphoric and spatial logic is fundamentally transformed by the late modernist period. First of all, the Great War meant a catastrophic break in the continuity of individual lives and of generations. As Sigfried Sassoon, the war poet put it, he felt his life was simply severed into two by the war, and for him, "postwar life exists only as a long meditation on that material" (cited by North 32). The opposition between older and younger generations seemed antagonistic; these generations were simply cut off from each other, the older looked down on the younger, and the latter could feel that the people of the past still wanted to carry on with their lifestyles and continued to voice the same pre-war slogans. In his 1961 novel, *The Fox in the Attic*, Richard Hughes writes about this in the following way:

> Oxford is always luminous; but at first in those post-war days Oxford had been an older and more hysterical society than in normal times. Colonels and even a brigadier or two twisted commoners' gowns round grizzled necks: young ex-captains were countless. But between Augustines who had never seen the trenches and these, the remnant who for years had killed and yet somehow had not been killed back, an invisible gulf was fixed. Friendship could never bridge it. Secretly and regretfully and even enviously these men yet felt something lacking in these unblooded boys, like being eunuchs; and these boys, deeply respecting and pitying them, agreed. But the elder men

> understood each other and cherished each other charitably. (126–7)

As Orwell puts it in "Inside the Whale" (1940), "the old-young antagonism took on a quality of real hatred. What was left of the war generation had crept out of the massacre to find their elders still bellowing the slogans of 1914, and a slightly younger generation of boys were writhing under dirty-minded celibate schoolmasters" (225). As Robert Wohl asserts, "the generational ideal feeds on a sense of discontinuity and disconnection from the past" (cited by North 6).

Secondly, the relationship of the generation born in the first decade of the century to its past fundamentally changed, compared to those born earlier. As Woolf claims, they had to write "from the leaning tower," having lost the (seeming) stability of the Victorian period: they were brought up during the war and grew up in the atmosphere of chaos. They experienced a paradoxical kind of "stability," namely, that their self-identity was to a great extent shaped and determined by the war itself. Although they could not participate in the Great War, their obsession with the catastrophe of the nation and with personal traumatic experiences provided the framework of the collective mythology of the Auden generation.

Furthermore, the generational break also meant that the new group of writers, born in the first decade of the twentieth century, had to deal with the contradictory feeling of lack and hatred mingled with desire and envy. Since they were simply too young to participate in the war, they tried to compensate for this loss with various, more or less enthusiastic and adolescent gestures, and later, actually going to the front in the Spanish Civil War. The whole generation had the feeling of being redundant and belated. To quote Hughes again, "he [Otto] must needs pity the whole generation everywhere whose loss it was that the last war ended just too soon: for the next might come too late" (147). Henry Green, one of the most idiosyncratic writers of the 1930s, begins his autobiography with the following statement, referring to the Boer Wars and the First World War: "I was born […] in 1905, three years after one war and nine before another, too late for both" (1). In his autobiography *Lions and Shadows*, published in 1938, Christopher Isherwood speaks about the numbing effects of non-participation and records the consequences: "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. […] 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" (46). Several other writers could be cited who spoke in a similar fashion about being left out, ironically, from one of the greatest tragedies of the nation.

Finally, as a result of the awareness of history and the troubled relationship with their elders, these young (male) writers had to cope with the burden of

remembering. 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 irrefutable dictum as if coming from a gigantic Ghost: "Remember!" (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, driven by two fundamentally opposing desires: to remain faithful to the memory of their elders and 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 and insubstantiality was that they ended up forming a rather paradoxical relationship with the past. 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.

Together with the fact that the achievements of modernism were supposedly impossible to be carried on in the 1930s, it follows that partly as a result of the above-mentioned factors, the late modernist period began to redefine modernism and consequently its attitude to remembering as well. The validity of the Proustian version of epiphanic, transcendental and metaphorical kind of remembering is called into question, and gives way to more pathological forms. The opening passages of Aldous Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936), for instance, give a fine example of the way the epiphanic qualities of remembering are being questioned. Anthony Beavis, the protagonist of the novel is looking at family photographs, but, as if to illustrate Roland Barthes' theory about the impossibility of photography to restore the past (85) and even block memory (91), they do not have the power to evoke the figure of the mother: "The snapshots had become almost as dim as memories" (7). Later, not surprisingly, we can read about Beavis' lengthy diatribe against Proust:

> 'All this burden of past experiences one trails about with one!' he added. 'There ought to be some way of getting rid of one's superfluous memories. How I hate old Proust! Really detest him.' And with a richly comic eloquence, he proceeded to evoke the vision of that asthmatic seeker of lost time, [...] squatting in the tepid bath of his remembered past. And all the stale soap suds of countless previous washings floated around him, all the accumulated dirt of years lay crusty on the sides of the tub or hung in dark suspension in the water. (13)

One of the basic fantasies of modernism, according to Richard Terdiman, was "the effort to suppress extra-artistic determination" (160). In Terdiman's summary, Théophile Gautier, "who had uncannily anticipated, nearly forty years

before Proust was born, the entire somatic and psychological attitude of modernism" defines this attitude like this: "artistically indisposed, recumbent, *disengaged* – and distinctly paranoid concerning the menace of the world outside the writer's bedchamber" (160, emphasis mine). In Gorra's argument, 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, which appears only less emphatically in Proust's work, but later becomes one of the cornerstones of late modernist fiction: remaining disengaged is impossible. Comparing Henry Green's work with that of Woolf, Gorra claims 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," being unable to establish a meaningful relation between the self and the world (27). Victoria Stewart, in a similar vein, 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). That is, although the modernist fantasy of temporal and spatial closure, the exclusion of extra-artistic determination may have been covered by different screen memories (such as Clarissa's associations or the Proustian *madeleine* scene), the fiction of the 1930s foregrounded the principle that "relations won't go away."

The forms of remembering in the 1930s, thus, tend to be characterised by non-metaphorical qualities and also, as far as spatiality is concerned, the most frequent motifs are those of "overwhelming", "intrusion" or "invasion." The limits of the present moment are less solid and are permeable for the influences coming from the past in a traumatic manner. The characteristically disengaged fantasy of modernism, the desire to sever relationships both in the direction into the past and the future, or at least letting them dominate the present as far as they were not harmful for the subject, were questioned and replaced in late modernism by a different concept of memory that emphasised the permeability of temporal boundaries and the threats imposed by returning or haunting past experiences. The narrator of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), for instance, conceives of memory as "spanning years like a bridge" (13). What she does not mention is that this bridge may serve as a route from the present into the past in a nostalgic way, but it may also serve as a passage for traumatic memories *to invade* the present.

As far as the changes in the concept of the work of art are concerned, the lack of temporal and spatial closure entails at least three things. First, the dominance of metaphor comes to be replaced with metonymy and – let us mention this here as a tentative claim – by allegory. Secondly, a work of art is generally not just a quasi-plotless, autonomous, self-enclosed unit but is deeply implicated in or engaged with "reality" or "history" outside. Finally, there seems to a return to more "realistic" modes of writing; to quote David Lodge, who equates this return to "realism" with the preponderance of metonymy, 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).

The dichotomy of engagement and isolation and the problem of the contrast between metaphorical and metonymic/allegorical remembering in the 1930s are excellently illustrated by James Hilton's *Lost Horizon* (1933) and George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939). What is common in both novels is, on the one hand, the theme of pathological nostalgia (see Susan Stewart), and, on the other hand, the preoccupation with the English countryside. Both novels can be seen as attempts at illustrating the problematic relationship between spatiality and temporality, with special attention to remembering and nostalgia.

Basically, two modes of nostalgia co-exist in most of the fiction of the 1930s. One of them 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 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, the second type describes certain novels of Orwell, while the mixture of the two may be apt to analyse James Hilton's works, which represent both kinds of nostalgia to describe their 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 signified a marked difference between the corrupt London and the untainted, uninfected countryside. This sense of rural nostalgia continued to live on in the Victorian condition-of-England novel, in the works of William Morris in the late nineteenth century, and was carried on even in the twentieth century, for instance, in Stephen Graham's *The Gentle Art of Tramping*, first published in 1927. Graham 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. 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, always already there and can at best be admired. Hence the frequent definition of heritage and nostalgia for that heritage as something "natural," unreflected, transparent, given, and offering some sort of healing to the maladies of modernity. 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 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, progressive intellectuals also supported the country house cult in the 30s (297), and J. B. Priestley also took up the preservationist cause in the 30s (Wright 89). The term "heritage" was often used by Communists as well in the 30s to articulate their vision of future (Samuel 207): even the left-wing poet Cecil Day-Lewis could only opt for a kind of revolution that returns to the traditional values of the country. As he puts it in "Letter to a Young Revolutionary,": "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" (40). All these examples show that caring for heritage was by no means exclusively a Conservative cause in the British context.

James Hilton's protagonist Hugh Conway in *Lost Horizon* (1933) may be termed to be an eminent nostalgist. Owing to a revolution in Baskul, inhabitants are to be evacuated to Peshawar, but the plane is hijacked and Conway, with three other members of the company, lands in Tibet, and is on the way to the lamasery of Shangri-La. This is the place where he discovers eternal life (people do not get older there) and this is where he yearns to return to. The Buddhist monastery where Conway and three other passengers land offers a safe haven from the crisis of the 1930s, a place untouched by contemporary modernity. It is a "distant, inaccessible, as yet unhumanised" (44) virgin territory which is not tainted by products of popular culture like "dance-bands, cinemas, sky-signs" (87). Described by Conway as a "land-locked harbour, with Karakal brooding over it lighthouse-fashion" (97), the place 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 remembered how he and the others arrived at the lamasery" (82), it cannot be represented in words, just as it cannot be represented on 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 is indeed 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 finitude and perfection. He conceives of the place as an "enclosed paradise of amazing fertility" (128), a gigantic sanitary system (128) whose inhabitants, in fact a mixture of the Chinese and the Tibetan, are cleaner and shapelier than either race. Conway falls in love with a tenant of the monastery, Lo-Chen, a Manchu girl. Not surprisingly, he projects his ideas of purity, perfection, finality, non-emotional affection on her 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 modernist atemporality, perfection, which is like a work of art; metonymically, there are references to Lo-Chen as a precious stone (217) and a drop of dew (229). Right after this first encounter with the girl, Conway goes for a walk, which appears as a Proustian, epiphanic moment that emphasises synaesthesia: "The scent of tuberose assailed him, full of delicate associations; in China it was called 'the smell of moonlight'" (122). Conway's love for the girl may be best described as a sort of desireless affection, untainted by and isolated from the passage of time: "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).

On the other hand, the lamasery of Shangri-La is not the kind of Utopian, ahistorical place promising extreme longevity, which might fit a science fiction piece or one that would illustrate modernist poetics as opposed to outside "reality." The place may also be interpreted as the allegorical version of a pastoral, idyllic England. It is remarkable that its chief virtues include reverence of tradition, permanence, temperance, subdued passion, elegance, flexibility, moderation and peaceful contemplation (not to mention the ritual of having tea). One descriptive passage is illuminating in this respect:

> The party […] followed Chang through several courtyards to a scene of quite sudden and unmatched loveliness. From a colonnade steps they 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* – 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, emphasis mine).

The passage inevitably refers back to *Pride and Prejudice*, more specifically, Elizabeth's reactions in catching sight of Pemberley Hall at the beginning of chapter 43:

> Elizabeth's mind was too full for conversation, but she saw and admired every remarkable spot and point of view. They gradually ascended for half-a-mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. 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)

It might be interesting to recall that the passage also 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 the mind of Stevens, the butler, 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)

The lack of "vying or vanity," the "perfectly proportioned" landscape, the lack of awkward taste, the sense of "greatness" without sublimity, the feeling of naturalness, the "lack of obvious drama," the calmness and the restraint of this vision reinforce a nostalgic image of England whose message is that, in fact, nothing changes, for it is a still life. To quote Susan Stewart once again, "whereas [the still life] 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). There is no movement, no action in these landscapes, or at least any action or desire is subdued and controlled. They are totalising, metaphorical visions that equate the present moment with what has been there for time immemorial. This would also correspond to the modernist image of a work of art in its frozenness, immobility and temporal and spatial closure.

The place, however, cannot remain an idyllic, ahistorical, disengaged (modernist) one for Conway. First, he discovers that the place *does* have a history, for the Lama, whose original name is Perrault, and who has been living there since the eighteenth century, is about to appoint Conway his successor before he dies. Secondly, the place is equipped with all the conveniences of modern life, it also has a library, with books published up to the mid-1930s (162). The library (indirectly the lamasery) is not a self-enclosed, totalising unity; what is more, the very alphabetical ordering of books calls attention to its metonymical rather than its metaphorical qualities. Finally, one of Conway's fellow passengers, Mallinson, falls in love with Lo-Chen, but not in a passionless, "intellectual" way. Consequently, after temporality is inscribed in this way in the narrative and in the space, Conway's dream of the lamasery as an ahistorical, atemporal, secluded space collapses and he decides to leave Shangri-La. It might also be asserted that he has to give up his fantasy of an idyllic, atemporal, isolated and nostalgic vision of England and must engage with the forces of history outside. Unlike Henry Miller, in Orwell's interpretation, he is unable to "perform the essential Jonah act" with the utopia of Shangri-La and cannot hide himself from the external forces of history in the 1930s.

Shangri-La in Hilton's novel represents an atemporal, modernist space embodying his nostalgia for a lost England. It is just as frequent, however, that the other, metonymic pole can be found in certain descriptive passages of the 1930s, generally connected to the present. These metonymies deny a self-enclosed, totalising and epiphanic vision and they fragment the scene into empirically perceivable "articles." In Hilton's novel, for instance, the "contamination" of the outside world is described by Conway in the following terms: "I use the word in reference to dance bands, cinemas, sky-signs and so on" (87). In another novel of Hilton's, *Good-bye Mr Chips* (1934), the following evocations can be read, this time about the past: "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, about the final years of the nineteenth century); "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 …" (70, about the Edwardian period). It is also remarkable how often metonymic lists appear in Orwell's texts. In *Coming Up for Air*, 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). In "Inside the Whale," he writes about the 1930s providing a long list of metonymic details:

> To say 'I accept' in an age like our own is to say that you accept concentration camps, rubber truncheons, Hitler, Stalin, bombs, aeroplanes, tinned food, machine guns, putsches, purges, slogans, Bedaux belts, gas masks, submarines, spies, provocateurs, press censorship, secret prisons, aspirins, Hollywood films, and political murders" (218).

At other places in the essay, he also seems to relish in metonymic details. Speaking about Henry Millers novel *Tropic of Cancer* (1935), he asserts:

> And the whole atmosphere of the poor quarters of Paris as a foreigner sees them – the cobbled alleys, the sour reek of refuse, the bistros with their greasy zinc counters and worn brick floors, the green waters of the Seine, the blue cloaks of the Republican Guard, the crumbling iron urinals, the peculiar sweetish smell of the Metro stations, the cigarettes that come to pieces, the pigeons in the Luxembourg Gardens – it is all there, or at any rate the feeling of it is there" (211).

It just as frequently happens, however, that these fragments, metonymic and synecdochic details, feature in descriptions of the English landscape as well. Perhaps the best known such metonymic passage is that of Stanley Baldwin's speech in 1924:

> 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 the scythe against the whetstone, and the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill, the sight that has been seen in England since England was a land, and may be seen in England long after the Empire has perished and every works in England has ceased to function, for centuries the one eternal sight of England. The wild anemones in the woods in April, the

> last load at night of hay being drawn down a lane as the twilight comes on, when you can scarcely distinguish the figures of the horses as they take it home to the farm, and above all, most subtle, most penetrating and most moving, the smell of wood smoke coming up in an autumn evening, or the smell of the scutch fires […]. These things strike down into the very depths of our nature, and touch chords that go back to the beginning of time and the human race, but they are chords that with every year of our life sound a deeper note in our innermost being. These are the things that make England […]. (101–2)

The passage is 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 – all these are not only fragments, but *characteristic* fragments, of the English scene." (36). These "fragments" of the past and the present are easily accessible, empirically conceivable metonymic details suggest that no particular effort is needed to gain this vision, since these elements are perceivable to all. Thus, they prepare the ground for seemingly easy nostalgia. However, by the very force that they are fragments, "characteristic fragments of the English scene," they undermine the metaphoric totality of modernism and point toward to a late modernist emphasis on metonymy and allegory.

In what follows, I shall try to link the concepts of metonymy and allegory to Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939), with equal attention to the spatial motifs in his essay "Inside the Whale" (1940). The essay, written one year after the publication of the novel, summarises Orwell's notions and criticism of modernism, suggesting that the reconsideration or rewriting of "classical" modernism had already begun in this period. The main issue he scrutinises pertaining to this is the extent of a writer's engagement with history, its chances and its dangers. At the beginning, he claims that isolation from "reality" or contemporary events is impossible and, indeed, highly inadvisable for any decent novelist: "Of course a novelist is not obliged to write directly about contemporary history but a novelist who simply disregards the major events of the moment is generally either a footler or a plain idiot" (212). Orwell does not condemn the whole of modernist fiction on the basis of this, for he claims that, for instance, Joyce, besides being a high modernist author, is able to give familiar details of life in *Ulysses*. The rhetoric of the essay is based on the assumption of empiricism, characteristically vaguely defined; Orwell esteems the kind of fiction, exemplified by Henry Miller, in which the author reveals "what is familiar" (213), his "mind and your mind are one" (213), when he is "dealing with the recognisable experiences of human beings" (213), when the writer "is writing about the man in the street" (213), owns up "to everyday facts and everyday emotions" (215), and displays "a willingness to mention the inane

squalid facts of everyday life" (216). Taking up this idea, Orwell praises Miller because of his quietism: "So, far from protesting, he is *accepting*" (217), because "the ordinary man is also passive." (219)

In the second part of the essay he gives his own version of the literary history of Britain in the preceding four decades, setting up a dichotomy between what he accepts as the possible "starting-point of a new 'school'" (242), the Miller kind of empiric writing pervaded by passive resignation, acceptance and modernism including the writing of the Auden generation, both of which he fiercely criticises. Although it seems he still regards modernism more highly than most of the writing of his generation, he still rejects the former with its "tragic sense of life" (227), the lack of "attention to the urgent problems of the moment" (228–9), its metaphysical quality on the one hand, and also, on the other hand, the "Boy Scout atmosphere" and the "serious purpose" (231) of the Auden group. Although it seems that most 1930s writers have gone back to politics, but Orwell's problem with them is that they are unable to get beyond the "boy scout atmosphere", and that, by this fact, they completely misunderstand leftism, being largely saloon Communists, or blindly following the party line dictated by Moscow. Again, the main charge levelled against Auden in particular is the lack of common sense and disregard of everyday experiences. For Orwell, the expression in Auden's poem "Spain" "necessary murder," is unacceptable amoralism: "Mr Auden's brand of amoralism is only possible if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled" (238). Orwell concludes that "on the whole the literary history of the 'thirties seems to justify the opinion that a writer does well to keep out of politics" (240). The "new school" he is talking about might be the kind of writing represented by Henry Miller (and his own, naturally). It is not that Miller retreats into the ivory tower, nor is it that he protests against forces greater than him; it is "the viewpoint of a man who believes the world-process to be outside his control and who in any case hardly wishes to control it" (242), who "does not feel called to do anything about it" (243).

The question is, however, why Orwell's programme of quetism needs another level in the argument, i.e., the Biblical story of Jonah in the whale. In the third part of the essay, Orwell uses this example to explain his theory further. In the fashionable simplified Freudian idiom of the time, he goes on to say that

> 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*. (244–5)

Why does the essay need this allegorical level, and, by extension, why does *Coming Up for Air* – whose protagonist, George Bowling is obviously a Jonah figure – need this level? To be able to discuss this issue, we have to look into the novel more deeply and examine its possible similarities with Hilton's *Lost Horizon* and its aspects in connection with nostalgia and landscape.

Conway in *Lost Horizon* is similar to Orwell's protagonist-antihero. Bowling is also a failed nostalgist, being unable to restore the England of his Edwardian upbringing. At the end of the novel, he draws the conclusion after his failed journey to the scene of his childhood: "you can't put back Jonah into the whale […]. And it was a queer thing I'd done by coming here" (267). That is, as Orwell points out, at the threshold of the Second World War, one cannot "perform the essential Jonah act," by neglecting the historical determination of the present, but one must be unwillingly engaged in the interaction of public and personal history.

The present of the novel is characterised by the sense of fragmentation, similarly to *Lost Horizon*'s rendering of the present as a sort of contamination from outside, endangering the closed space of Shangri-La in forms of "dance bands, cinemas, sky-signs and so on" (87). In the newspaper, Bowling 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 is 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 such a 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).

On the other hand, various spatial metaphors are offered by the text to illustrate the problem of remembering. Right at the beginning of the novel, five such metaphors appear. 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, invading what Bowling conceives to be his "authentic" body (interestingly, however, this is what sets the process of remembering into motion). Secondly, 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 his children 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) Just like the false teeth and the soap, the children also threaten the integrity of his body and his private sphere. Moreover, 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). The original material is supplemented or even totally replaced by an alien, incongruous entity. Finally, Bowling claims that "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 his own body on the one hand (false teeth, soap, fatness), and to space on the other (bathroom), representing contamination as coming from outside (Ersatz) suggest that Bowling constructs a genuine, original core, which regularly comes under the threat from the intruding present. All of these scenes of intrusion, invasion endanger the protagonist's private sphere, rendering it impossible for him to retreat from "reality," foreshadowing one of the major themes of the novel, Bowling's unwilling engagement with history and the impossibility of the "Jonah act."

What connects the two problems, i.e., the sense of fragmentation and authenticity is the metaphor of "contamination." There is a sense that by cleaning the present from these inauthentic details, by an act of subtraction, the rememberer will arrive at an untainted core, the past, not dominated by difference. This is precisely the act of the nostalgist. A "journey" like this would amount to travelling back to a past, subtracting the present from the past, and therefore, making the two coincide. This would amount to the Proustian kind of remembering outlined above, with the metaphorical, epiphanic and transcendental coincidence of the past and the present in one revelatory moment. No such event, however, takes place in either of the two novels. Although at times Orwell's narrator imagines Proustian moments of revelation and metaphoric unity – as in the sentence using the present tense, erasing the difference that spoils the past, "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) –, upon making the actual journey back, he has to find that this "bliss" cannot be experienced once

again. The spaces that the two protagonists, Conway and Bowling, imagine will prove to be unable to protect the characters from the "contamination" and "invasion" of the present.

The theory that James Clifford outlines in his essay "On Ethnographic Allegory" provides an apt framework for the discussion of the search for authenticity and the desire to achieve this metaphoric unity under the given historical circumstances. Although neither Hilton's nor Orwell's novel may be called "ethnographic" in the strict sense of the word, the major themes and preoccupations in both of them are the same: a journey and recording the present with a consciousness of the vanishing past. As Orwell advises to the would-be writer in "Inside the Whale" in connection with the Jonah figure: "Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you can control it; simply accept it, endure it, *record it*" (250, emphasis mine). The problem with ethnography, as it is referred to by Clifford, and as it was pointed out by pioneers of ethnography, is that the very moment the object is being recorded, it begins to vanish into the past. As Bronislaw Malinowski explained already in 1921, "at the very moment [ethnography] begins to put its workshop in order, to forge its proper tools, to start ready for work on its appointed task, the material of its study melts away with hopeless rapidity" (cited by Clifford 112). In this sense, both protagonists attempt to carry out a work of "salvage ethnography" (Clifford 112), which essentially means finding places and spaces (Shangri-La and Lower Binfield) without the supposed contamination of the present. However, they come to the realisation that most ethnographers usually do not: that by carrying out the actual quest "in search of lost time," they would find "the material of [their] study melt away with hopeless rapidity."

To borrow Clifford's words, both novels can be called ethnographic pastorals (113). Referring to the classic work of Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, Clifford points out that the genre of the pastoral is highly ambiguous, for any claim that uses the argument of the "inauthenticity" and "fragmentation" of the present versus the "authentic" and "organic" past will be confronted by yet another past in which the same problems occurred: "For each time one finds a writer looking back to a happier place, to a lost 'organic' moment, one finds another writer of that earlier period lamenting a similar, previous disappearance. The ultimate referent is, of course, Eden" (113).

When Clifford claims that "ethnographic texts are inescapably allegorical" (99), it can mean at least two things. First, places, in general, can hardly resist the passage of time, therefore, any nostalgic journey towards "revisiting" the past is doomed to fail. Therefore, the nostalgist can do nothing but tell his painful journey in a way that he confers an allegorical pattern on his failed voyage. When Conway in *Lost Horizon* identifies Shangri-La with the End, finality (82), perfection (60), an Eucledian theorem (63); when Bowling speaks about his reconstructed childhood as "bliss, pure bliss" (105), imagining an "organic" English landscape as opposed to the fragmentation of the present, and when, more importantly, Bowling identifies himself with a Jonah figure, both narrate, in fact, the allegorical story of Eden and the expulsion from that place.

Secondly, Clifford`s argument is similar to Orwell`s in the sense that both emphasise disengagement from the present. "The self, cut loose from viable collective ties, is an identity in search of wholeness, having internalised loss and embarked on an endless search for authenticity. Wholeness by definition becomes a thing of the past (rural, primitive, childlike) accessible only as fiction, grasped from a stance of incomplete involvement. […] This will be accomplished from a loving, detailed, but ultimately *disengaged*, standpoint. Historical worlds will be *salvaged as textual fabrications* disconnected from ongoing lived milieux and suitable for moral, allegorical appropriation by individual readers" (114, emphasis mine). This does not only mean in this context that nostalgic – and allegorical – recording can only be done with this disengaged, passive attitude referred to in the Orwell essay but also that the nostalgist, confronted with the inauthenticity of the present, salvages *parts* of the past that he or she thinks to represent the whole of the past. Therefore, the nostalgist's "ethnographic" work is essentially synecdochic: he selects an element from the past and identifies it with the whole of "lost time," disregarding the "ongoing, lived milieux" and the multiplicity of past discourses.

When Conway in Hilton's novel reaches Shangri-La, the place does not just represent an allegorical version of Eden, the place of finitude, perfection, atemporality and the lack of desire. Conway would also like to project an allegorical version of England – the "menagerie of lions, dragons and unicorns" (117) – onto the place, and he identifies the object of his quest, an atemporal, idyllic version of pastoral England with these partial representations. What is more, they are, in the broadest sense, textual fabrications, in the sense that they are allegorical representations of Britain, and, it has to be added, of his own desires, inasmuch as the whole scene allegorises his own controlled and repressed desires. The key synecdoche, in turn, that summarises Bowling's longing for his Edwardian childhood is fishing, his childhood hobby. That is what he wants to return to at the end of the 1930s and catch "the big fish" he missed in his childhood. When he revisits his native village, Lower Binfield, however, what he finds at the site of his favourite pond is just a rubbish heap. The fallacy in his logic is symbolised by the suspended position he ends up in as a nostalgist, between the past and the present, between remembering and forgetting, just like the fish he could not catch: "he'd had fallen into shallow water where he couldn't turn over, and for perhaps a second he lay on his side helpless," (61) suspended between water and air. This ambiguity is also reflected by the novel's title: "coming up for air" might mean escaping from the suffocating atmosphere of the present; the air however, is dominated by the sinister presence of RAF bombing planes that destroy several houses "by accident." The protagonist is bound to remain in suspension between past and present, remembering and forgetting, being exposed to invading forces (both literally and symbolically). Thus, both Conway and Bowling remain pathological nostalgists because their desire works in a metonymical and synecdochic manner, in strict opposition with the metaphoric identification of the past and the present in high modernism.

What is common in the two novels discussed above is that nostalgia is treated with corresponding spatial metaphors. Both characters would like to find closed spaces untainted by the passage of time. This seemingly ahistorical suspension of time, which might also be characteristic of high modernism (see Joseph Frank's 1945 essay "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" 63 et passim) is fundamentally different from the spaces 1920s fiction generally provided for remembering. Devoid of transcendental and epiphanic qualities, they become sites through which the past increasingly begins to threaten, invade and contaminate the present, as a result of which most of these characters are bound to give up their secure and disengaged positions. In a more abstract way, it might be claimed that the rewriting of and attempts at transcending high modernism already begins in the 1930s, and the changing role of remembering is only one of the aspects of this rewriting, exemplified by the metaphor-metonymy shift. The practices of aestheticising the past and ahistoricising the present could not be maintained or continued, which led the gradual abandonment of the "deep", autogenic and formalist modernist language and led to a turn towards a more surface-bound, emptier and sparse narrative mode (exemplified by the texts of, for instance, Evelyn Waugh or Anthony Powell). Thus, it can be concluded that Orwell's Jonah figure is not without ambiguities since it calls attention to the controversies of remembering and the reluctant engagement with history that deeply pervaded late modernist fiction.

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