Nostalgia as a Means of Oppression, Resistance and Submission: A Study of Dystopian and Homecoming Novels

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Abstract

Somewhat paradoxically, nostalgia, a yearning for home or one's past, is characteristic of dystopian fiction, which is a narrative of social criticism commonly with a futuristic setting. This thesis examines the political rhetoric of nostalgia in four dystopian novels: *Swastika Night* (1937) by Katherine Burdekin, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood and *Never Let Me Go* (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro. This is complemented by the analysis of nostalgia in other relevant homecoming novels, such as Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* (1939), Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) and Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989); what is highlighted in this approach is the aspect of social realism in the latter three dystopian novels. This thesis aims to demonstrate how reading dystopian novels through the lens of nostalgia can reveal the complexity of the relation between nostalgia and social criticism. Consequently, the study elaborates on various implications of existential homelessness in the modern world, particularly from a psycho-political perspective.

Previous studies of traditional dystopian texts tend to criticise nostalgia merely as sentimental and reactionary, since the home they describe is fixated on one particular version of the past, presented as an authentic memory. For instance, in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* Winston's idealisation of his childhood undermines his resistance against the authorities, for it is exclusive in terms of race, class and gender. Yet the concept of nostalgia is not limited to this fetishistic type, which in fact verges on what Jeff Malpas calls "mythophilia". Many critics, by contrast, agree that Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* avoids such conflation between nostalgia and mythophilia by presenting a more self-reflective attitude towards memory. However, such a binary opposition between reactionary and self-reflective nostalgias is reductive, since it disregards the observation (*pace* Heidegger) that nostalgia is first and foremost a mood rather than an attitude. Overall, the analysis of each dystopian novel reveals multiple dimensions of nostalgia, that is, nostalgia as a means of oppression, resistance and submission; the nature of nostalgia is neither immediately enslaving nor liberating. It is also proposed that there is a subversive potential in the act of mythmaking itself, particularly when the past is utilised as a hypothetical model for imagining a new future, rather than the object of reconstruction.

Acknowledgements

[I]t is not death, alas, but the eternal torments of dying.

Franz Kafka, from his diary entry in 1914 (qtd. in Friedländer, 132)

Without continued support from numerous people, I was probably not able to go through and confront what Kafka calls "the eternal torments of dying" throughout my Ph.D. When I kept finding myself in limbo – my inner dystopia – it was always others who helped me to return to my home, i.e. thinking. At the moment of writing this, I can hear my past self objecting to this rather positivist generalisation, but here we are. This thesis is dedicated to each of those who believed in my abilities and supported me in various ways.

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Luckily, I have rarely felt homesick for my country, Japan. It is undeniably those who I mentioned here and many other local “mates” who made me feel like Liverpool is my home.

Contents

Abbreviations

BNW: *Brave New World*

SN: *Swastika Night* (The Feminist Press edition)

CUFA: *Coming Up for Air*

NEF: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

HT: *The Handmaid's Tale*

RD: *The Remains of the Day*

NLMG: *Never Let Me Go*

Introduction

"The twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia".

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (xiv)

"Some scholars might suggest that myths are always more appealing than utopias".

Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (23)

If the main mode of utopian fiction is amnesia – the total emancipation from a nightmare called history, then that of dystopian fiction is remembering – which is most explicitly exemplified by the protagonist's melancholic attempt to take a refuge in what has been but is no longer present. Gary Saul Morson's following reflection on the difference between utopia and anti-utopia is particularly of significance in this regard: "Whereas utopias describe an escape *from* history, these anti-utopias describe an escape, or attempted escape, *to* history, which is to say, to the world of contingency, conflict, and uncertainty" (128, emphasis in original). [1] Along with many critics, Lyman Tower Sargent observes that "the dystopia became the dominant literary form of the twentieth century", with some notable exceptions, such as "the utopianism of the sixties" which are epitomised by feminist utopian literature (*Utopianism* 29-31).[2]

[1] The two terms – dystopia and anti-utopia – are distinguished in this thesis, although the difference can be a subtle one at times. Tom Moylan defines an anti-utopian text as that which "fails (or chooses not) to challenge the ideological and epistemological limits of the actually existing society", due to its "closed, mythic strategy [which] produces a social paradigm that remains static because no serious challenge or change is desired or seen as possible" (156). In sum, anti-utopia explicitly rejects utopian thinking, whereas dystopia remains ambiguous.

[2] Catastrophic world events which are often mentioned as signs of the impossibility of achieving a utopia (at a national/global scale) are: the two World Wars, the rise of Nazism and that of Stalinism, genocides (such as the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide), the development and use of nuclear weapons, and the demise of the Soviet Union. In *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (1987), Krishan Kumar notes that "[i]t has to be admitted that no utopia, ecological or other, has seized the public imagination in the latter part of [the twentieth] century in the way that Bellamy, Morris and Wells were able to do at its beginning" (419). In addition to historical events, he attributes the death of utopian literature to the novel's increasing concern with private life rather than public: "The retreat from the concern with the whole life of society undermines a constitutive principle of utopian social theory" (421-2). Yet Kumar maintains that, although "[t]he anti-utopia certainly made most of the running in the

Although Svetlana Boym does not mention dystopian fiction in particular, her statement quoted above on the shift from "a futuristic utopia" to nostalgia is suggestive in this regard.

In general, dystopian novels tend to be written as a cautionary tale of a possible future by way of "critical extrapolation" and "satirical exaggeration", the mode of which is social criticism (McKay 305). Its futuristic setting is juxtaposed with nostalgia, a sense of disillusionment with the present, which manifests predominantly in a narrative of resistance in the genre. An intense sensation of nostalgia can be triggered by the foreign and the unknown, and dystopias are indeed suffused with an atmosphere of alienation and anxiety. In this context, recollecting one's past serves as a means to reaffirm and consolidate one's identity, whilst grounding oneself for envisioning a different future. Raffaella Baccolini aptly points out that "[t]hrough memory and recollections, the dystopian citizen returns to past times and culture, but he also strives for a better future by imagining to be free" ("Journeying" 343). Whereas dystopian fiction tends to extrapolate current social situations into the future, its underlying narrative modes take an analeptic turn.[3] The mythologisation of the lost past is typical in the state's hegemonic narrative of oppression, while nostalgia operates as an affective ground[4] for a narrative of resistance. The history which the state promotes and enforces is in fact what Pierre Nora terms "dictatorial memory – unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualising, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of its ancestors

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first half of the century", utopian imagination survived in the second half in a more "fragmented" form (387-8) (for his more recent discussion on the same issue, see "The Ends of Utopia", *New Literary History*, vol. 41, no. 3, Summer 2010, pp. 549-569). Indeed, it could be the case that the boundary between literary utopia and dystopia has become ever more ambiguous during the course of the last century. Tom Moylan contends that numerous dystopian novels entail a utopian dimension; what he calls "critical dystopia" is then a form of utopian imagination, in which the reader can catch a glimpse of an alternative society to the dystopian one (Baccolini and Moylan 7). Meanwhile, in *Archaeologies of the Future*, Fredric Jameson propounds a more formalistic study of utopia by focusing on the utopian impulse, the expression of which is often covert and could even appear anti-utopian on the surface level (see the chapter one of the book, entitled "Varieties of the Utopian").

[3] This past-oriented tendency is extremely strong in Ishiguro's dystopian novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), which is discussed in Chapter Five; the narrative folds a futuristic element (human cloning) into the past, while the theme of nostalgia saturates its content.

[4] Throughout this thesis, the adjective "affective" is used in a psychological sense, indicating emotion and mood (see "affective, adj. 1c." in *OED*). As discussed below, nostalgia is construed as an affect (as opposed to reason) which has the potential to motivate political (in)action, and this study analyses such an aspect of nostalgia in the selected novels, especially from psychoanalytical, political and existential perspectives.

to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins and myth" (8). According to Nora, in the modern world where collective memory is no longer transmitted through traditions, history emerges not so much as the past but as "a representation of the past" which is subject to "analysis and criticism" (8, 9). The dystopian modern state, then, brings such history under control, and thereby it becomes the absolute memory which is immune to criticism. In opposition to this, the individual memory is presented as that which is based on one's personal, lived experience.

Here, although this thesis is not a comprehensive study of the genre of utopian/dystopian literature and it would thus be impossible to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the definition of literary dystopia, some clarification should be made due to the complexity of terminology surrounding the field.[5] Defining dystopian fiction can be attempted by asking the following two questions: what is dystopia, and what does it do, or what is its function? In regards to the former, a minimal definition of dystopia is provided in *Oxford English Dictionary*: "An imaginary place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible". Dystopia is here simply regarded as an opposite of *eutopia* – the best possible place. Lyman Tower Sargent's following well-known definition is similar to this, whilst it draws more attention to authorial intention and readers' response: "Dystopia or negative utopia – a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" ("The Three Faces" 9). On the other hand, the following definition by M. Keith Booker foregrounds the aspect of social criticism: "Dystopian literature might be defined as imaginative literature that constructs flawed fictional societies the shortcomings of which satirise ideal utopian societies, or specific real-world societies, or both" ("English Dystopian Satire" 32). As a satire, the element of social realism[6] comes into play, and this is indeed highlighted by the approach taken in the following chapters on works by George Orwell, Margaret Atwood and Kazuo Ishiguro, in which a dystopian text is paired with a social realist text written by the same author.

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[5] For thorough and recent reflections on various definitions of dystopian literature which have been proposed in relevant fields of sf and utopian literature, see Moylan (chapter four, "New Maps of Hell") and Claeys's *Dystopia* (273-290).

[6] In *OED*, social realism is defined as "The realistic depiction of contemporary (esp. working-class) life as a means of social or political comment".

What, then, differentiates dystopia and social realism? A key characteristic of literary dystopia is its intertextual engagement with other utopian/dystopian texts. In theorising utopian literature, Fredric Jameson proposes that its prominent feature is its "explicit intertextuality": "few other literary forms have so brazenly affirmed themselves as argument and counterargument. Few others have so openly required cross-reference and debate within each new variant" (*Archaeologies* 2). Utopian novels are textually interconnected; they examine common themes (such as social reformation and the building of a sustainable world), employing a particular plot structure (such as travelogue). Such a characteristic can surely be applied to dystopian fiction, which is particularly noticeable among its early cases. Wells's novels such as *The Time Machine* (1895) and *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) can be read as a literary polemic against socialist utopias in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890) (while the latter two comprise an antinomy between urban utopia and rural utopia). Wells's futuristic cities and the idea of the global state then inspired Zamyatin's rational, mathematical dystopia, *We*. Huxley and Orwell then appropriated dystopias by Wells and Zamyatin, producing the genre-defining works, *Brave New World* (1932) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949); the former depicts a dystopia of hedonist consumerism, the latter that of state-imposed poverty and party-worship. Meanwhile, Huxley's dystopian novel is explicitly criticised in Burdekin's utopian novel, *Proud Man* (1934), and connections between her novel, *Swastika Night* (1937), and Orwell's are noticeable. Foreshadowed by Burdekin's novels, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which capitalises on patriarchal oppression, is a response to dystopias by the aforementioned male authors. Each of these dystopian novels provides its own nightmarish social vision through strong textual engagement with its precursors, by way of a diagnosis of the contemporaneous society and its extrapolation. In this sense, social criticism and intertextuality are defining characteristics of the genre.

In light of this, the following definition by Gregory Claeys in his extensive genre study entitled *Dystopia: A Natural History* (2017) captures a common thematic structure which is intertextually shared by numerous dystopian texts:

> Literary dystopias are understood as primarily concerned to portray societies where a substantial majority suffer slavery and/or oppression *as a result of human action*. Privileged groups may benefit from this. Others may escape it,

> either to a condition of previous (preferable) normality or to something better. (*Dystopia* 290; emphasis in original)

An advantage of Claeys's formulation is its elaboration of particular concerns on the level of content, while avoiding subjective terms such as "bad" or "worse". Institutional oppression/violence and exploitation of others on a large scale – which are indicators of modern slavery – are indeed hallmarks of the selected texts of dystopian fiction in this thesis (scapegoating should also be added to the definition). Claeys is careful to make a distinction between dystopian and apocalyptic fiction by limiting a cause of such dismal conditions to human actions. Escaping to "a condition of previous (preferable) normality" is also indicative of the theme of nostalgia. On the other hand, as discussed later, a particular emphasis is put in this thesis on themes of survival and suicide in dystopian narratives (see Chapter One, Part Two: World-alienation in Dystopian Novels); Claeys's definition is useful in this regard to contextualise the two concepts with more clarity. In addition, a tension between two types of narratives can be detected in the above definition. This has been suggested by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan; dystopian fiction consists of "a narrative of the hegemonic order and a counter-narrative of resistance" (Baccolini and Moylan 5). This is of particular significance since it characterises the dialogic nature of the function of social criticism in literary dystopias.

Meanwhile, dystopian fiction is often regarded as (a sub-genre of) science fiction. Here, the elements of extrapolation and prediction become a key issue. Interestingly, Adam Roberts asserts that "the chief mode of science fiction is not prophecy but nostalgia" (26): "SF does not project us into the future; it relates to us stories about our present, and more importantly about the past that has led to this present" (28). This also applies to the dystopian novels discussed in this thesis. The dystopian present is often an extrapolated version of the future of the authorial present, and as such dystopian texts are a corollary of the author's criticism of the authorial present; nostalgia as a narrative device then provides an alternative perspective or satirical distance to the dystopian present through its employment and idealisation of the past. Nostalgia is, in its basic sense, a longing for a more comforting past and as such it opens up a moment of critical reflection, although it is arguable whether the world was truly better in the past or the passing of time merely alleviates the pain of discomforting memories. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is particularly replete with nostalgic

sentiments when compared to dystopian novels such as *We* and *Brave New World*, at times verging on obsessive anachronism.

"Speculative fiction" is another term which needs some unpacking in regards to framing literary dystopia. Notably (or notoriously), Margaret Atwood prefers to categorise her future-oriented novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), "speculative fiction" rather than "science fiction".[7] Atwood deems it important to distinguish them in terms of how probable it is that the extrapolated vision of the world would materialise itself in the future. Atwood explains this as follows:

> What I mean by "science fiction" is those books that descend from H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, which treats of an invasion by tentacled Martians shot to Earth in metal canisters – things that could not possibly happen – whereas, for me, "speculative fiction" means plots that descend from Jules Verne's books about submarines and balloon travel and such – things that really could happen but just hadn't completely happened when the authors wrote the books. (*In Other Worlds* 6)

The War of the Worlds cannot be categorised under speculative fiction, since, as Claeys also notes, the invasion of Martians is not based on any "evidence of extra-terrestrial life either in 1898 or now" ("The Origins" 109).[8] Atwood's criteria is that a world narrated in speculative fiction has to consist of elements which have already (partly) come into existence in the past, thus assuming a form of prediction or cautionary tale more explicitly. Atwood elaborates further on this:

> For me, the science fiction label belongs on books with things in them that we can't yet do, such as going through a wormhole in space to another universe; and speculative fiction means a work that employs the means already to hand, such as DNA identification and credit cards, and that takes place on Planet Earth. But the terms are fluid. ("Aliens Have Taken the Place of Angels" n. pag.)

Speculative fiction demands its content of reasoning to be something "already to

[7] For an overview of this controversial distinction, see P. L. Thomas, "A Case for SF and Speculative Fiction: An Introductory Consideration", *Science Fiction and Speculative Fiction: Challenging Genres*, Sense Publishers, 2013, pp. 15-35.

[8] Yet the probability of a Martian invasion is dependent on which perspective the reader adopts; for some conspiracy theorists, Wells's vision might be realistic enough, judging from their own esoteric evidence for such an event.

hand". This is not limited to scientific technologies; as for her first dystopian novel, Atwood has often emphasised that she made sure to extrapolate from human disasters and cases of violence which actually happened elsewhere in the world in order to warn the reader about a potentially negative future.[9] In a sense then, the structure of a cautionary tale is based on historic recurrence, which is encapsulated by the old adage, "History repeats itself". If we forget our past wrongdoings, we will experience them again; or what happened there can happen here. Writers of a cautionary tale give significant weight to selected events, presenting them as a burden or even sin of humanity (e.g. power-worship as human nature in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*). Such a narrative form presents itself as collective memory, that is, a device for preventing collective amnesia. Milan Kundera's comment on Nietzche's eternal return in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) is suggestive of how such collective amnesia is concomitant with the world-view where history does *not* repeat itself. According to Kundera, everything is "cynically permitted" (4) and meaningless, if each event is only transitory and ephemeral: "What happens but once might as well not have happened at all" (223). Then it follows that there is a grim possibility of people longing to implement disastrous things such as torture chambers and forced labour once again, for the negative aspect is completely forgotten: "In the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine" (4). Speculative fiction views natural and man-made disasters as something that can be repeated anytime and anywhere if certain measures are not taken against them. In this sense, it presents itself not so much a prediction as a preventive memory.

As discussed above, nostalgia, memory and history are key concepts in literary dystopia. Yet what is problematic here is that, in previous studies of dystopian fiction (especially traditional texts of the genre), the term "nostalgia" tends to be used somewhat reductively – either to castigate reactionary elements in the text or to highlight its function as a drive for critiquing the status quo. Chris Ferns's study of utopian/dystopian literature (*Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* [1999]) devotes some space for the theme of nostalgia, arguing that, although the narratives of traditional dystopian novels – Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931) and George Orwell's *Nineteen*

[9] "I would not put into this book anything that humankind had not already done, somewhere, sometime, or for which it did not already have the tools" (*In Other Worlds* 88).

Eighty-Four (1949) – begin *in medias res*, the element of travel in traditional utopian narratives persists as "a symbolic return to the past" (128):

> D-503's first "irrational" act is to accompany E-330 to the House of Antiquity; Bernard and Lenina travel to the tribal Reservation; and Winston's first illicit assignation with Julia takes the form of a trip out to the unspoilt countryside. (128)

Although Ferns acknowledges the critical function of nostalgia as a form of resistance against the status quo, he maintains that the overall effect is undercut by its anachronistic impulse where "the past is portrayed as somehow more authentic" (138). Here, Ferns dismisses the aforementioned traditional dystopian narratives equally as reactionary. This is because the rebels within the narratives are ignorant of the potentially oppressive nature of traditional values which they wish for. This tendency manifests particularly in their idealisation of the countryside and heteronormativity. Although such an unreflective attitude towards the past should be deconstructed fully to reveal the impasse of social criticism within each narrative, to dismiss the nostalgic impulse of dystopian counter-narratives merely as a sign of conservatism and regression occludes the broader and richer implications of the concept at work. This thesis, then, explores the notion of nostalgia in several key dystopian novels, arguing that nostalgia manifests in a variety of forms in the textual configuration of dystopias, primarily as a means of oppression, resistance and submission. It also argues that the nostalgic impulse is a symptom of modern homelessness, or in Hannah Arendt's word, world-alienation in the modern age, which is most elaborately represented in the body politic of the state. It particularly highlights the predominant mood of political apathy and uprootedness in the genre, the cause of which cannot simply be ascribed to the rebels' failure of self-critique and imagination.

This thesis is far from an attempt to offer a single, definite reading of each chosen text. It does not provide a detailed historical overview of either the concept of nostalgia or the genre. Its focus is on various forms of the narrative structure of each novel, utilising the concept of nostalgia as an interpretive key. As this study interrogates the use and abuse of nostalgia in dystopian novels, its literary analysis is accompanied with a rigorous philosophical investigation. In *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1962), Jean-Paul Sartre underscores the importance of a phenomenological

perspective, which enquires "the conditions under which an emotion is possible" (19). He is opposed to the psychologist's inductive approach, for it disregards the issue of intentionality – what an emotion signifies to the self and how it transforms the way in which the self apprehends the world: "the psychologist prefers to hold fast to the belief that the facts fall into groups of themselves under his gaze" (20). Similarly, this thesis takes a phenomenological approach by delving into theoretical assumptions and implications of nostalgia; it does not merely observe various representations of nostalgia in each novel and inductively draw a certain conclusion, nor does it unreflectively follow previous theories of nostalgia and apply them to each literary text. Rather, this thesis attempts to reconsider the theory of nostalgia itself through a close analysis of dystopian novels.

Chapter One is structured in three parts. Part One establishes a theoretical framework of nostalgia in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of this topic. Drawing on Jeff Malpas's theory of nostalgia and deploying his key distinction between nostalgia and mythophilia, it attempts to look beyond a binary distinction between reactionary nostalgia and self-reflective, revisionist nostalgia. This is discussed extensively by drawing on Martin Heidegger's theories of home and mood. Nostalgia is a mood which encompasses self and world. As such, recuperating the concept for progressive politics is to run the risk of dismissing the longing merely as regressive, while failing to deal with the past as difference. It also situates nostalgia in the philosophy of death; nostalgia is a mood in which one finds oneself engulfed with the sense of both familiarity and unfamiliarity. Whilst Malpas, a Heidegger scholar, focuses on philosophical implications of nostalgia, this chapter will put more emphasis on the political sphere, in order to pave the way to the analysis of nostalgia as an affective ground for resistance in the chosen dystopian novels. Part Two, then, provides a theoretical observation of world-alienation and modern homesickness of atomised individuals by deploying the political thinking of Hanna Arendt. Such philosophical investigation is structured around the themes of survival and suicide in dystopian narratives. It is argued that to live and to survive has to be differentiated, in order to assess to what extent inhabitants of dystopias are oppressed and, more importantly, to reconsider what they are deprived of from the state. In this context, suicide comes to take on the meaning of an ultimatum to society where self-preservation is the sole motive for life – at the cost of others' lives. For example, if

one was to commit suicide, it would be rendered meaningless by eradicating this act in all individuals' memory. State-sanctioned violence is also ideologically naturalised, which reinforces political apathy and discourages any resistance. It is emphasised in these two parts that, whereas nostalgia, a longing for home, is often discredited as private fantasy, the political implications of such an affect in the genre require a close examination. Part Three provides a brief analysis of the political rhetoric of the past in H. G. Wells's *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899), Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931). Whereas later dystopian novels engage with nostalgia/mythophilia in a more extensive and comprehensive manner, such a tendency is prefigured in these early classics of the genre.

Chapter Two is devoted to the analysis of Katherine Burdekin's *Swastika Night* (1937). What particularly distinguishes Burdekin's dystopian narrative from the other three dystopian novels is that, it is mythophilia, rather than nostalgia, which is employed for the formation of the counter-narrative. In order to illustrate how *Swastika Night* presents a self-reflective type of mythophilia against the Hitlerian myth in the hegemonic narrative, this chapter provides a close examination of its dialogic narrative structure, as well as exploring the concept of masculine and feminine nostalgia.

The following chapters employ a double structure for the analysis of nostalgia in selected dystopian novels. What is particularly interesting, yet has not been hitherto rigorously analysed, is that each following author – Orwell, Atwood and Ishiguro – delved into the theme of nostalgia in a more realist narrative of homecoming before writing a dystopian one, which is also imbued with an intense yearning for the past.[10] As such, this thesis does not explore the uses of nostalgia across a wide range of

[10] This phenomenon can be interpreted as an expression of what Matthew Leggatt calls "the nostalgic sublime" in his book entitled *Cultural and Political Nostalgia in the Age of Terror: The Melancholic Sublime* (2018). Although Leggatt sees it as characteristic of culture and politics in the twenty-first century, it seems highly relevant when he defines it as "an emotional connection and response to the oppression of the global, which in turn provokes a desire to get back to *something*, in particular, back to a 'simpler' past life that manifests itself in a cultural and political nostalgia" (7, emphasis in original). Leggatt argues that the nostalgic sublime, which once marked the aesthetics of modernism, made a "violent return" in the cultural milieu of the twenty-first century, suggesting "a break from, or even the end of, the postmodern age" (8). In light of this, the thematic transition from homecoming to dystopia which can be seen in works by the three authors can be regarded as an example of this nostalgic sublime; there, homecoming is represented as a way of dealing with increasingly alienating social circumstances, whilst dystopian imagination is an attempt at mapping social change with a rhetoric of terror.

dystopian novels. That is, it is not an exploration of nostalgia across a variety of dystopian texts, but rather examines—in specific relation to three well-known dystopian novels by the three authors studied—a fundamental relationship between nostalgia and dystopia in their writings. The purpose of pairing a realist, homecoming novel with a dystopian one in each chapter is, then, not only to contextualise the latter and to draw attention to its aspect of social realism, but to investigate closely how the concept of nostalgia is represented in two different modes of narratives. The focus of this study is thus on philosophical implications rather than on biographical circumstances. This is not to undervalue the importance of biographical criticism; such an analysis would be beneficial for accessing to what extent the author's nostalgia is implicated in the literary text. Yet the aim of this study is not to reveal correlations between the author's life and his or her texts, but to foreground the literariness of each novel and to analyse how it produces various interpretations of nostalgia. This comparative analysis thus seeks to offer an alternative method of reading the chosen dystopian and homecoming novels, revealing the complexity of the relationship between nostalgia and social criticism.

Chapter Three, then, considers the theme of nostalgia in George Orwell's novels, *Coming Up for Air* (1939) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). It first examines nostalgia as a threshold experience, or a symptom of a mid-life crisis in the former homecoming novel. Its narrative is marked by a tension between analeptic and proleptic visions, as well as depictions of synaesthesic experiences. These characteristics are then inherited by *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The nightmarish anticipation presented in the former novel materialises in the latter, while both express a strong sense of nostalgia as a reaction to an oppressive social environment. It is argued that, in both novels, nostalgia manifests itself paradoxically as a harbinger of death as well as a stopgap for confronting it. It is then proposed that what is indicated by the text through Winston's nostalgia and the loss of historicity in Oceania is, in essence, nostalgia for nostalgia, that is, a melancholic desire for a nostalgic longing itself.

Chapter Four first revisits the issue of women's nostalgia in order to contextualise the theme of trauma and nostalgia in Margaret Atwood's two novels, *Surfacing* (1972) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). What is distinctive in both novels is the inability to feel nostalgic in a meaningful sense. In the former, this problem is

confronted by delving into repressed memory through a ritualistic journey in order to come to terms with the past. In the latter, the element of storytelling comes to the fore as a nostalgic engagement with the dead. For further analysis of Atwood's dystopia, a particular emphasis is put on Offred's passivity as a result of her absolute scepticism, as well as on whether Offred can be heard by future historians.

Chapter Five examines the issue of aestheticized and commodified nostalgia and that of political apathy in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and *Never Let Me Go* (2005). It first investigates the representation of imagined nostalgia which is expressed by homeless narrators in the two novels, as well as interpreting the novels as nostalgic commodities themselves. *Never Let Me Go* subverts traditional dystopian tropes in various manners, which foregrounds the moral complacency of the characters; nostalgia is utilised by the oppressed as a means of submission, which is distinctive when compared with the other novels where nostalgia is employed as a means of resistance.

In the Conclusion, then, the potential of mythophilia as a conduit of radical imagination is explored by thematising the four dystopian novels in terms of mythophilia, rather than nostalgia. It hints at a possibility of self-reflective mythophilia, which is underdeveloped in Malpas's distinction where nostalgia is strictly directed to one's existential past. Self-reflective mythophilia can motivate one's formation of a counter-narrative, and it is such a desire that is completely missing in *Never Let Me Go*.

Chapter One

Nostalgia and World-alienation in Dystopian Novels

"Understanding is never free-floating, but always goes with some state-of-mind. […] Understanding is grounded primarily in the future; one's *state-of-mind*, however, temporalizes itself *primarily* in *having been*".

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (389-90)

Part One: The Concept of Nostalgia: A Phenomenological Approach

In regards to the origin of nostalgia, Jeff Malpas states that "the experience of loss and estrangement that lies at its heart is ancient" (161). Homer's *Odyssey* is indeed a classical epic which depicts such experience, and Ovid's poetry, Seneca's writing as well as Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) likewise offer notable meditations on nostalgia, as mentioned in Helmut Illbruck's *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightend Disease.*[1] Yet it was only the late seventeenth century when the term "nostalgia" was invented; it denoted a mental disease to be cured, and the only treatment is to let the patient return home, or to provide them the hope for it (Hofer 389-90).[2] The word itself is a compound of two Greek words, "the one of which is *Nostos*, return to the native land; the other, *Algos*, signifies suffering or grief" (Hofer 381). It was coined by Johannes Hofer in his 1688 dissertation entitled "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia or Homesickness"; originally, nostalgia was defined as a disease caused by "the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to one's native land" (381). Here, nostalgia is equivalent to homesickness; it entails various

[1] See the Introduction in Helmut Illbruck, *Nostalgia: Origins and Ends of an Unenlightened Disease.*

[2] Hofer mentions a Helvetian servant in Paris whose symptoms of nostalgia disappeared after being granted permission by his master to return to his country, even though he remained in Paris. He was "broken up no longer by this disease" (390).

symptoms which were prevalent among “certain youths”, and apparently impossible to be cured “unless they had been brought back to their native land” (380). Hofer draws on a few case studies: Swiss mercenaries (“the centurions of the forces in Helvetian Gaul” [382]), a male student from Berne studying in Basel, and a country girl. Somewhat strikingly, all three are particularly mentioned as dying patients, which indicates the lethal nature of nostalgia. Meanwhile, the feeling of nostalgia can be conjured by things which seem quite trivial to the eyes of others. These feelings, however, can develop into a certain mood which persists and dominates the subject, putting them into a state of melancholy. At the same time, the subject is split between their homeland and a foreign place, and this sense of alienation hinders them from adapting themselves to the current living place; the subject then starts devaluing the current situations, which indicates the critical nature of nostalgia. That is to say, such a feeling of dejection operates as a complaint, implying that the current place fails to accommodate one’s way of life. From a psychologist’s point of view, however, it could be seen as a failure of a patient to transfer/sublimate one’s attachments to the old home into something new.

In these cases, the object of nostalgia appears to be obvious; it is one’s home or hometown where one grew up, or on a larger scale, one’s homeland/country. It is, however, important to note that home cannot be reduced to a mere location; numerous elements associated with it, such as a family, foods, customs and personal events constitutes the place where the subject used to live, although it would again be wrong to say that home is reducible to these elements. Each of them serves to help construct one’s sense of identity, that is, one’s recognition that they are part of their home. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the spatial aspect of home – home as a specific place which exists or existed in one’s lifetime – was the main focus in Hofer’s dissertation, as is clear from his emphasis on physically returning home as a cure for this disease.

Meanwhile, over the course of history, the concept of home in nostalgia appears to have gone through a paradigm shift; whereas it is predominantly spatial in Hofer’s examples listed above, it has since then gained a more temporal character.[3] Tammy Clewell summarises this as follows:

[3] This thesis does not go into how nostalgia was gradually demedicalised and gained a common

> By the eighteenth century, when nostalgia ceased to be regarded in pathological terms, it assumed a temporal form. Nostalgia came to name not a bodily disease generated by missing a place but rather an emotional longing for lost time, a phenomenon that Romantic poets so famously figured as a sense of wonder, of unlimited possibilities, or even of immortality associated with childhood and youth. (5)

As discussed later, the concept of home is both spatial and temporal in its nature. Yet what should be noted in this phenomenon of the shift in the meaning of nostalgia is the spatialisation of time, which enables the idea of re-living the past by revisiting a site of one's memory through recollection. Edward S. Casey underscores the nature of memories as imagined from a perspective of the present: nostalgia is a phenomenon of "being moved into a past world that existed by grace of productive imagination and its resonance in the present" (369). The past time is then accessible in the form of memories associated with it, when they are enacted through the experience of nostalgia. One's childhood, which is the prime object of longing, is not absolutely lost as long as one is capable of recollecting it.

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to abstract the role of place in nostalgia by focusing only on its temporal aspect. With regard to this, Malpas maintains that home is first and foremost a place, and the distinction between the spatial and the temporal is only useful in investigating the historical shift in the emphasis of the notion of home: "Understood precisely as a pain associated with desire for *home* – and as home is neither a space nor a time, but a place that holds a space and time within it – so nostalgia can never be understood as spatial or temporal alone" (162, emphasis in original). Malpas's conception of home is based on Heidegger's formulation of place and space. According to Heidegger, space is "neither an external object nor an inner experience" ("Building, Dwelling, Thinking" 156). As suggested by his term "being-in-the-world", one's existence cannot be understood ontologically if the self and the world are categorised as two distinct entities. A space/place is rather a realm of possibilities which is generated by a "boundary":

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usage. For this, see Helmut Illbruck, and Linda Austin, *Nostalgia in Transition 1780-1917*, University of Virginia Press, 2007.

> What the word for space, *Raum*, *Rum*, designates is said by its ancient meaning. *Raum* means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary […]. A boundary is not that at which something stops but […] the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*. […] *Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations and not from "space"*. ("Building, Dwelling, Thinking", 154; emphasis in original)

Heidegger rejects an abstract, geometric conception of space, and postulates that place is not a mere sub-category of space. In this context, home is neither a container which preserves our past memories nor a mere geographical location. Heidegger defines home as "the circumference that is historically enclosed and nourishing, that fuels all courage and releases all capacities, that surrounds the place where humans belong in the essential meaning of a claimed listening" (*Introduction to Philosophy* 24). The "place" in this quotation can be considered as spaces which emerge within a boundary or a circumference which is enacted by locations. Home is a "circumference" from which "something begins presencing"; it is the ground of a being. Moreover, listening amounts to being "addressed" and "claimed" by "*that* in which they belong" (*Introduction to Philosophy* 24; emphasis in original). It could be thus posited that home is where one recognises oneself as a historical being through the realisation that one was being called into existence. Home is not merely a spatial point of reference or a container of a certain period of the past. And as such, it is never something that one can choose only by announcing that a place is one's home.[4] Here, recognition from others who already belong to the place is crucial; one needs to be "claimed" and "addressed". Heidegger's dynamic conceptualisation of home allows the exploration of its theoretical potentiality as one's existential moorings, that which reveals the individual as a being-in-the-world. Here, the sense of belonging is founded on plurality

[4] The notion of home is inseparable from that of identity; the former is particularly effective for elucidating one's origin as something that one cannot easily dispose of. And it is often others who remind one of one's attributes, as in the case of being discriminated in terms of one's race and sexuality; in this case, others demand one to return home. John J. Su stresses this irreducibility of one's origin as follows:

> [I]f race or other identity categories are social constructions, this does not necessarily imply that individuals can change the ascriptions attributed to them. Individuals do not choose their identities in isolation. […] From birth, individuals are located within particular places, social networks, and religious institutions. As people mature, they may respond differently to the social circumstances of their birth and upbringing, but no one can entirely ignore them. (*Imagination* 115)

which is implicated in one's addressability, which enables one to actualise their potentialities as oneself. Home is, then, a sanctuary of memory and freedom. Being at home is to acknowledge one's past and to be recognised as a historically-determined being. It should be stressed, nevertheless, that home is a "circumference", not a substance. Home manifests as limitations, and only when it is remembered as such, actualities come into view.

Heidegger's emphasis on the boundary, however, could be problematic due to its apparent exclusive nature; is not boundary by definition the source of nationalism and even the racialisation of home,[5] which perpetuates the logic of "us versus them"? This rebuttal is given initial plausibility considering Heidegger's notorious association with Nazism. Objecting to the notion of place as bounded and static space, Doreen Massey is right to be cautious of "some problematical senses of place, from reactionary nationalisms to competitive localisms, to sanitised, introverted obsessions with 'heritage'" (65). Malpas indicates, however, that Massey's objection is based on "a certain rather caricatured version of the Heideggerian position" on the theorisation of place (153). This issue is worth some unpacking, since it sheds light onto the formal nature of his conception of home. In "Letter on Humanism" (1947), Heidegger explicitly rejects defining "homeland" (*Heimat*) in terms of nationalism, claiming that it should be thought in terms of "the history of Being" (217). Homelessness "consists in the abandonment of Being by beings", and in this sense "the homeland of this historical dwelling is nearness to Being" (218). In Nazism, the question of Being is concealed in the short-circuit of their invention of racial purity through their origin search. As Malpas stresses, Heidegger's homeland is the locus of "*questionability*": "the coming to presence of being is not a matter of the coming to be of some being, but is rather the coming to presence of the *questionability* that belongs to being essentially" (154, emphasis in original). This questionability originates from Dasein's nearness to Being, which is normally hidden under the everydayness and publicness

[5] *In Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema: Homeless at Home*, Inga Scharf provides a succinct summary of the Nazis' employment of the concept of *Heimat*:

> During the Nazi era, *Heimat* became part of the nationalist rhetoric of "blood and soil" and in that sense "Germanised". It was propagated as a mythical place solely calling to Germans and inaccessible to foreigners, especially Jews. To put it rather crudely, images such as Aryan people in traditional costumes, singing and dancing (folklore) or working (preferably engaging in practices characteristic of rural areas) became typical representations of this dream of purity and were advertised in the media of the time. (48)

of Dasein. Dasein is fundamentally marked by its ontological passivity as that which is thrown to the world, and in this sense "[m]an is not the lord of beings" ("Letter on Humanism" 221). Nazism's homeland, on the other hand, is the ahistorical presence of a particular racial being, which is farthest from Heidegger's above formulation; it eradicates the dimension of self-reflexivity of Dasein by eschewing the issue of fundamental arbitrariness in regards to demarcate their home. In comparison with Nazism's conception of home, Heidegger's is more of a hypothetical locus of limitations and possibilities which can be revealed by facing one's existentially passive and limited nature as a historical being, and thus not necessarily discriminatory or reactionary.

It is in this context that Svetlana Boym's conception of home presented in *The Future of Nostalgia* should be touched on. Boym differentiates two "tendencies" (41) of nostalgia: one is "restorative nostalgia" and the other "reflective nostalgia" (xviii). Particularly in the former, home can signify a place which has never been part of the subject's lived experience (say, a specific historical period). Malpas refutes such an extended definition of home, arguing that "restorative nostalgia" "not only lacks any sense of pain, of *algos*, but strictly speaking also lacks any proper sense of home, of *nostos*, since it lacks any sense that what is at issue is what already belongs to it, and to which [it] might be said to belong" (170). Malpas then names this pseudo-nostalgia as "mythophilia" – "a longing not for what is remembered, but for what is known only through its retelling, through story and myth" (169). What makes mythophilia distinct from nostalgia is that the object of longing in this case is a certain, strong idea of what home *should be* regardless of one's lived experience. Such a conflation between memory and myth (fiction, imagination) itself would call for an extensive analysis in itself, which is beyond the scope of this thesis; the fact that appropriating a past as one's own possession and mourning for its loss, or claiming to belong to an imaginary place in some spiritual manner is associated with nostalgia only reveals the close and complex relationship between imagination and memory.[6] Although there is no space in this chapter to delve into this binary opposition between imagination and memory, Malpas's distinction of nostalgia and mythophilia is nevertheless of high importance

[6] For an in-depth analysis of this conflation from a phenomenological perspective, see "Chapter 1: Memory and Imagination" in Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, U of Chicago P, 2004.

since it effectively serves to limit the focus of this concept, considering that the term tends to be used rather casually even in academic contexts.

As mentioned above, the temporal aspect of the concept of nostalgia has been more highlighted than the spatial aspect, although this distinction of time and space remains ambiguous. Nostalgia here becomes a target of criticism in terms of authentic historical thinking; Malpas acknowledges this by stating that such nostalgia "[entails] a denial of or blindness to the present, and as therefore inevitably given over to conservatism and self-delusion" (164). Nostalgia in this case indicates an unreflective attitude towards a period/era which one wantonly idealises/mythologises; cognitive brackets are conveniently put around anything negative to one's desire. In his paper on a genealogy of nostalgia as a critical term, Nauman Naqvi indicates that academics in the humanities and social sciences started to add a negative connotation from around 1980 to such an act of selective memory (5): '"[n]ostalgia' as a critical category is usually employed to target the valorisation and manipulation of the past that is a feature of a range of exclusionary and oppressive political projects" (6). It is such a supposition that has lead to nostalgia being exploited as "a term of critical opprobrium" in the field of humanities (Malpas 164). Moreover, specifically in Britain, Crewell also indicates "the rise of the heritage industry during the Thatcher years" as an occasion for critics to utilise the term nostalgia to criticise the idealisation of the imperial era as a political strategy of the state (7). Since then, nostalgia has been commonly understood as a byword for reactionary essentialism and thus unable to accommodate any critical perspective against the status quo, incapable of opening up the radical potential of the future. Here, it seems that "nostalgia" came to share a characteristic with another contentious term, "ideology", when it is "considered as a form of flawed consciousness and wrong values": "Ideology [is] something to be exploded from the point of view of those who (like historians or philosophers) were free of the taint of ideology" (53). In this sense, both nostalgic and ideological contents are something that must be deconstructed, whereas a nostalgic or ideological element within such a critical position itself is rarely questioned.

In opposition to such negative employment of the term nostalgia, several attempts to redeem the concept have been made in terms of its political/philosophical implication. Raffaella Baccolini's "critical nostalgia" is one such attempt, which resonates with Boym's "reflective nostalgia". Baccolini's idea is also concomitant

with the notion of critical dystopia formulated by herself and Tom Moylan; in contrast to anti-utopia, critical dystopia leaves some space for hope. Such utopian impulse is detected through a formalistic reading which examines an alternative world-view portrayed within the text, against a monolithic and mythical narrative of the anti-utopian dystopia (Baccolini and Moylan 7).[7] For Baccolini, being critically nostalgic is "a re-visionist approach" ("Finding Utopia in Dystopia" 175), that is, "to look at the past critically and to yearn for a different past, now, and to desire a different future" (186). Rather than attempting to reclaim an authentic image of history, it is to imagine what history could have been to facilitate the discovery of possibilities which had been systemically dismissed and ignored. Yet such a critical position still begs a question in terms of the nature of the past; Naqvi rightly interrogates it by asking in what way "a 'forward-looking' relation to the past (which would, naturally, show up all the nastiness of the past) would tell the past as it really was" (6). Baccolini might counter-argue, however, that "critical nostalgia" is not concerned with "the past as it really was" at all, but the past as it really should have been. Yet "to yearn for a different past" remains problematic since it is a form of disavowal and at worst forgetting, suppressing voices of the past which are incongruent with the desire of "critical nostalgia". Moreover, nostalgia, or the act of remembering one's past experience, is first and foremost reflexive and even paradoxical by nature, since it is achieved through interacting with the past self which continues to fade away and disappear, while a unity of the past and present self is simultaneously experienced. Here, Ricoeur's following reminder is apt: "Is not memory fundamentally reflexive, as the pronominal form which predominates in French would lead us to believe: to remember (*se souvenir de*) something is at the same time to remember oneself (*se souvenir de soi*)" (3). "Reflective nostalgia" thus seems to be a category mistake due to its redundancy, although the concept of "critical nostalgia" could be effective in its particular focus on the need of critical engagement with the past.

Baccolini's argument operates on the dichotomy of "regressive nostalgia" and "critical nostalgia" ("Finding Utopia in Dystopia" 185). The main issue underlying this categorisation, along with Boym's "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia", is its detached attitude towards the world through the objectification of

[7] For her analysis of critical dystopias in light of critical nostalgia, see the final section of Baccolini's article, "Finding Utopia in Dystopia".

oneself, which rather consolidates the dichotomy of self and world. Boym discredits the sense of belonging since it leads one to believe in a single, particular home:

> Nostalgia is paradoxical in the sense that longing can make us more empathetic toward fellow humans, yet the moment we try to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity, we often part ways and put an end to mutual understanding. (xv)

Boym's assumption here is that this attachment to one's home can easily degenerate into parochialism and xenophobia, which would consequently hinder mutual understanding with others; hence if there is still some space for nostalgia to be affirmed in terms of an ethics, it should be limited to the critical sphere.

Suppose that a certain object affects the subject in a certain manner by reminding them of their past. Here presumably, in Boym and Baccolini's model, in the face of such a mood, the subject can *choose* either to wallow in fantasy or take a critical distance from it. As Boym claims, the project of "reflective nostalgia" is founded not on "a freedom from memory but a freedom to remember, to choose the narratives of the past and remake them" (354). Yet while the selectiveness of such reflective narratives remains problematic, a more pressing question is: how can one choose to be free from nostalgia as "a social disease" and use nostalgia instead as "a creative emotion" (354)? Is it not an invention of a liberal individualist who can choose to be nostalgic at will, reducing nostalgia to its aesthetic dimension as "a mere pastime for those who are freed from labour" (Illbruck 22)? Naqvi contends that this dissection of nostalgia into the reactionary and the progressive "tells us nothing about the ethical and political texture of a way of thinking", since it is as yet fixated upon the idea of history as progress and thus cannot fully address what is lost in such a narrative (48).

The underlying issue here is that the above categorisation overlooks the fact that nostalgia is first and foremost a mood where in its nature, self and world are deeply entwined. Malpas underscores this aspect as follows:

> [N]ostalgia is a certain mode of appearing of both self and world. […] Moods always involve, as Otto Bollnow points out, a common "tuning" (as the German term suggests) of self and world, so that a mood is no mere internal feeling but is always also externalised. (166)

This dual modality of mood avoids the dichotomy of the self and the world. This is the strategy Heidegger employs in his philosophy: "Having a mood is not related to the psychical in the first instance, and is not itself an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on Things and persons" (*Being and Time* 176).

In focusing on the critical use of nostalgia, Boym and Baccolini underestimate the nature of nostalgia as a mood, which persists and returns to haunt the subject regardless of their political orientation; to Boym, nostalgia could be useful only when it is sufficiently doubted, yet such a critical/relativist stance itself is not fully called into question. This is not to claim that the element of "choice" is completely absent when it comes to nostalgia as a mood; indeed, it is far-fetched to conclude that one is completely at the mercy of it. Heidegger himself concedes that "[f]actically, Dasein can, should, and must, through knowledge and will, become master of its moods; in certain possible ways of existing, this may signify a priority of volition and cognition" (*Being and Time* 175). Yet the issue here is that a "critical" type of nostalgia which Boym and others advocate remains a product of free-floating scepticism, failing to examine nostalgia as that which reflects existential homelessness and uprootedness in the modern world. In regards to this, Illubruck contends that "the conception of the Enlightenment as a form of cure, liberating nostalgia from its Ovidian faith in the incommensurable and incommunicable secret of an actual, particular, and irreplaceable home, and also as choice between alternatives, must be questioned" (22). To put it metaphorically, nostalgia, an "unenlightened" mood where one's yearning for home persists, seems to be comprised of certain knots that cannot be disentangled through Reason's surgical operation; nostalgia is, however, "more than a disease only to be healed or a faulty reasoning only to be corrected" (Illubruck 136).[8] After all, one does not deliberately choose to be nostalgic; the subject is, as Heidegger indicates, always/already possessed by one or another mood.[9] To grasp its conceptual implications fully, it is necessary to look at nostalgia as a phenomenon, "*that which shows itself in itself*" rather than an appearance that signifies one's psychological

[8] Such negative views of nostalgia are founded on an assumption that the past is a series of "a once present and selfsame past" (Illubruck 136). As discussed in the later section on the uncanny aspect of nostalgia, a nostalgic longing evokes not only the selfsame past but also the past as the Other.

[9] "The fact that moods can deteriorate and change over means simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood" (*Being and Time* 173).

complexes (*Being and Time* 51, emphasis in original). This is, nevertheless, far from denying Boym's and Baccolini's projects of redeeming nostalgia for imagining a new future. It is also not to discredit works by Boym and Baccolini; what is problematic is their categorisation. On the contrary, this study is an attempt to understand nostalgia as a mood, which is pre-personal and inter-subjective, in order to unravel modern homesickness. For a proper analysis of the topic, then, it is paramount to situate nostalgia as the return of the dead, that which resists being rationalised, and even narrated: that is, nostalgia "as *discomfiting* rather than comfortable, as bringing it with it a sense of the essential *questionability* of our own being in the world" (Malpas 161, emphasis in original).

Nostalgia as haunting

In the most banal sense, death appears to be the diametrical opposition to life; the former annihilates the body as well as the consciousness of the self, or in other words, the self ceases to exist to themselves, if not to others (for instance, the self, or a semblance of it, can live on in others' memories, writings, social media accounts). Death can be thus construed as a transcendental force or arguably, violence, which reduces one's existence into the state of nothingness without any prior consent. In order to tackle this absolute negativity that death is capable of bringing, or simply to dodge nihilism, one might set out to search for meanings in various realms – for instance, religion, community, family, friend, work, and art.[10] Yet what complicates this is the notion of the death-drive as opposed to the pleasure principle, which was introduced in Sigmund Freud's 1920 essay, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle".[11] The

[10] One can argue that search for the so-called meaning of life itself is a nihilistic act in that it reduces life into mere appearances of the single truth. Yet it is likewise all too easy to accept things in the manifold, or just how they are, without proper reflection; such thoughtless and myopic attitude towards the multiplicity of beings (obsession with what Arendt calls "small things" [*The Human Condition* 52]) seems to be what reinforces political apathy, which is ultimately nihilistic (this topic will be discussed further in the analysis of Ishiguro's novels in Chapter Five).

[11] The death drive runs counter to species' self-preservative instinct; in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud proposes that it is only "the sexual instincts" that "operate against the purpose of the other instincts, which leads, by reason of their function, to death" (40). A driving force for civilisation is then an "instinct towards perfection" which originates from "*Eros* taken in conjunction with the results of repression" (43). Interestingly, Katharine Burdekin held a view that such a positive instinct drove men to be obsessed to an unhealthy

nature of pleasure principle is in fact negative, in the sense that it ultimately serves to "free the mental apparatus entirely from excitation or to keep the amount of excitation in it constant or to keep it as low as possible" ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 62). If pleasure is a cessation/absence of stimuli rather than the intensifying of it, what follows is that one is constantly at the mercy of "the instinct to return to the inanimate state" (38). Here, the death-drive can be construed as a form of nostalgia. It is this concept of the death-drive, which presumes the relationship between death and life to be more one of antinomy, rather than a contradiction in which excludes the other. In regard to this, Robert Rowland Smith proposes that the death-drive should be seen as "a beyond of the beyond of the pleasure principle", defining it as follows:

> [It is] the deathly instinct to return to the inanimate state in order to come back again as living, where living and dying constitute not opposites but different degrees of energy. Put more simply, *the death-drive is the instinct to come back to life, not to die, but to haunt*. Which suggests that life itself, rather than being fully alive, is already a form of energetic haunting. (Smith 19; emphasis added)[12]

The point here is that the death-drive is not merely a mere self-destructive energy that is built in the human psyche since its birth; in such a mechanistic view, human beings are reduced to something like suicidal flies which are attracted to light by nature,[13] and consequently, nihilism would be legitimised. On the other hand, in Smith's formulation above, the death-drive is part and parcel of life through its haunting.

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extent with inventing objects and ideas, which could be interpreted as a symptom of their jealousy towards women's capability to reproduce and nurture the next lives (*Proud Man* 20, 24).

[12] The notion of sex as a means of liberation from oppressive forces is one of the conventional tropes in traditional dystopian texts. For a detailed discussion of this, see Thomas Horan, "Revolutions from the Waist Downwards: Desire as Rebellion in Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We*, George Orwell's *1984*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*", *Extrapolation*, vol. 48. no. 2, 2007, pp. 314-339). The question here is: liberation into what? Drawing on Foucault's theory, Smith observes that "sex leads to death without providing the gratification of 'sex itself'" (17).

[13] There is a Japanese idiom that says "the summer insect that flies into the flame", indicating an apparently suicidal and absurd behaviour of positively phototactic insects. Yet in this case it is more sensible to assume that those insects are being rather trapped by light: insects are disposed to utilise natural lighting (the sun, the moon, stars) for those activities, while artificial light disrupts this habit.

Through such haunting, as a positive force that can affect life, death "come[s] back to life".

Jeff Malpas's below passage on the nature of nostalgia should be understood in this context; nostalgia is not so much a returning to the past[14] as an eerily "direct reencounter" with the past self which is long gone.

> Nostalgia, […], is thus a returning to self – a coming home to what one has been and so also to what one is, yet a coming home that is fundamentally uncanny – so that what one encounters is a ghostly, spectral self. One might say that nostalgia, in this sense, is the *direct* reencounter with one's own past, recognised as one's past. (Malpas 171; emphasis added)

Nostalgia is an existential mood that necessarily involves self-reflection. Yet such nature can easily be mystified by an effect of commodified nostalgia such as heritages, museum exhibitions and antiques which impedes one from such encounter with the past self through stereotypically "nostalgic" discourses, packaged as a temporary relief; the uncanny experience of nostalgia is given a convenient, positivist narrative. Boym's following remark is indicative of this: "commercialised nostalgia forces a specific understanding of time" (38, emphasis added). The main mode of commodified nostalgia is thus forgetting, a form of repression. Terry Eagleton states, in regards to the necessity of repression for stabilising one's sense of the self, that "[o]nly by self-oblivion can we be ourselves. Amnesia, not remembrance, is what is natural to us" (*After Theory* 63). Nostalgia, however, is at its fundamental level a haunting visit from the past, which disrupts such an oblivious self-image instead of consolidating it. It operates as a *memento mori* where the self encounters the dead self, in totally unexpected moments and situations.

Steven Galt Crowell, in "Spectral History: Narrative, Nostalgia, and the Time of the I", theorises such a negative, or formalistic conception of nostalgia. This theory draws on F. R. Ankersmit's understanding of nostalgia, in which the object of nostalgia

[14] Such yearning to return to one's past, which possesses the self, can be interpreted as a manifestation of the death-drive, which is "the instinct to return to the inanimate state" (38): "If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons – becomes inorganic once again – then we shall be compelled to say that 'the aim of all life is death' and, looking backwards, that 'inanimate things existed before living ones'" ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle" 38; emphasis in original). Yet this interpretation is partly problematic in that nostalgia is viewed as a mere appearance of some hidden instinct.

is "not 'the past itself' […], but the *difference* or the *distance* between the present and the past" (201, emphasis in original). It then follows that "the feeling of nostalgia, or *Heimweh*, of being far away from one's *Heim* or home contrary to one's wishes, must be closely related to the feeling of *Unheimlichkeit* – Freud's term for the uncanny" (228). Crowell expands on this and foregrounds the uncanny aspect of nostalgia, arguing that "nostalgia does not mourn for what is dead and gone but experiences *the return of the dead* (97, emphasis in original). This view attests to the fact that nostalgia is primarily a mood which affects the subject regardless of their will. Having a mood is not a "subjective colouring": "A mood assails us. It comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being" (*Being and Time*, 101, 176).[15] One is always/already attuned to the world in having one mood or another, and in nostalgia, the past manifests itself through the uncanny experience as "the return of the dead", or an unfamiliar doubling of the familiar.[16] The past is experienced as an indeterminate surplus that eludes narrativisation, that which cannot be appropriated as an object and arranged in order for understanding; Ankersmit elucidates that nostalgia is "an experience of the past in which the past can still assert its independence from historical writing" (194).[17] In this regard, nostalgia is not merely what Emmanuel Levinas understands as "a retrograde return to sameness" (Casey 362).

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[15] Heidegger notes that moods are typically understood as "fleeting Experiences which 'colour' one's whole 'psychical condition'" (*Being and Time* 390).

[16] The relationship between nostalgia and boredom is also worth mentioning. The following is a quotation from Heidegger's theorisation of boredom in his 1929-30 lecture (this is collected in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*):

> The thing can ultimately be boring only because the attunement already plays around it. It does not cause the boredom, yet nor does it receive it merely as something attributed by the subject. In short: boredom – and thus ultimately every attunement – is a hybrid, partly objective, partly subjective (88).

At first, it seems that nostalgia is remote from boredom; the former denotes desire and the latter the inability of it. What both concepts have in common, however, is their nature as "a hybrid" of the objective and the subjective. Nostalgia and boredom are not an inherent attribute of a certain object, yet at the same time, they are not entirely a product of the subjective (Husserl's slogan: "all consciousness is consciousness of something"). As is also argued earlier, the analysis of nostalgia therefore cannot be a mere psychoanalytic reading of the text. Meanwhile, what seems to be specifically interesting in the relationship between nostalgia and boredom is that they are how anxiety finds its expression; in anxiety, the self is felt as a burden to be dealt with.

[17] "Nostalgia yearns neither for specific representational contents, nor for the vanished world to which they belonged. Neither do I yearn for the person I once was, for I am indeed still that same person. Instead, I am haunted by the ego that 'once' lived, its very living 'spectrally' present to me as though I were once more to taste the sweetness of that life. Thus nostalgia, too, belongs to the philosophy of death, though it speaks of that which escapes the tomb of narrative anonymity" (Crowell 99).

Rather than one's will to recollect, it is the past that repeats and insists itself; the past is evoked through the synesthetic experience of nostalgia irrespective of one's intention, and what it reveals is the difference between the present self and the past self, which remains irrecoverable and uncanny.

Such a formalistic understanding of nostalgia seems to distance itself from the original definition, a longing for home. Yet it demonstrates a more radical conception of nostalgia through focusing on the form instead of the content. What is incommensurable and inarticulable that the nostalgic subject yearns for might not be, be it idealised or not, one's home *per se*, but rather a fleeting sense of atemporal unity between the past self and the present self; such a sense of unity is always a retrospective effect of imaginative projection from the present, and it operates as a means to consolidate the self against its annihilation – a means to evade death.[18] In other words, a sense of comfort provided by nostalgia originates from the sense of *unity* of the present self and the past self (the relationship which is often conflated with the *sameness* of the present and the past, which is best captured in a slogan in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, "who controls the present controls the past" [NEF 260]), whereas its bitterness is the realisation that they are distinctly separate, and the "dead" self serves as one's *memento mori*. Nostalgia is in this sense the paradox of being (unity) and becoming (difference). This positive aspect of nostalgia coexists with its uncanny effect, which is, in Illbruck's words, what consists "nostalgia's often ambivalent longing" – "the fear of returning and being confronted with one's former self" (132).[19] The existential nature of nostalgia which is simultaneously consoling and haunting, indeed manifests in various forms in the chosen dystopian novels in this thesis. Before proceeding to the analysis of the genre, however, there is another issue which requires critical reflection; namely, the relationship between nostalgia and social criticism.

Social criticism and nostalgia

[18] The birth of a human being is "the unwelcome molestation, the intrusive quickening, of life" (Smith 8). This is part of Heidegger's idea of life as being thrown into existence. A desire for a sense of unity would then be the effect of the death-drive to counteract and minimise such a disturbance brought by one's birth.

[19] Illbruck quotes Heine's poem on his doppel(t)gänger to illustrate how nostalgia could hinder one's return to the site of memories; "There a man is standing, too, […] Terror grips me when I see his face – […] What do you want, aping the pain of my love that tormented me on this very spot,/ So many a night, in times long past?" (132-3).

"An arresting and pervasive aspect of Jameson's descriptions of postmodernism is their suffusion with tropes of death" (Radstone 135). Radstone lists the death of the following entities which Jameson appears to lament, such as "the loss of coherent 'monadic' subjectivity, and with the consequent 'death of the author', culture, particularly literature, loses its unique voices *and* its capacity to parody such voices" (135, emphasis in original). Although it is not the intent of this section to read dystopian fiction as a symptom of postmodernism, Radstone's focus on Jameson's rather grieving mode of social criticism (which is, ironically, an indictment of pervasive nostalgia in postmodernism)[20] is relevant to that of dystopian fiction, which is likewise replete with death. The major tendency in such a criticism is that its critique is grounded in its self-fashioning as the declaration of death of social/cultural entities, as if from the objective viewpoint of a doctor whose patient is modern civilisation. It is this positing of oneself as a free-floating intellectual that makes such verdict sound somewhat ignominious at first glance, since to others such an act might appear to be a wilful murder of traditions, disguised as a description of what happened. One can detect numerous objects of death declaration which are represented in dystopian fiction. The followings are a few examples; humanism, liberal individualism, communism, socialism, revolution, history (the past and the future), democracy, the Other, language, neighbours, family, God and love. Hannah Arendt, whose theory is drawn on later in this chapter, would add to this list the death of the public and the private in totalitarianism, which is concomitant with the death of the space of politics. The question should be asked here is: what is implied in such a declaration of death, or metonymically, what sorts of ghosts – which existed in the unattainable past – are conjured and desperately longed for to return? In what way do those conceptual phantoms reveal and affect the nature of social criticism as the declaration of death?

[20] Radstone argues that there are two nostalgias in Jameson's criticism of postmodernism:

> One is associated with modernism and with Benjamin, with the quest for "wholeness or unity" and later with "remembered plenitude". This is arguably a nostalgia associated with and in quest of patriarchy's lost "good" woman and in flight from postmodernism's "bad" woman. The other nostalgia – omnivorous and oversexed – is a nostalgia associated with postmodernism and patriarchy's "bad" woman (144).

This observation is hinged on her theory of masculine and feminine nostalgias. For further discussion of this, see Chapter Two.

The politics of "loss"

What is at stake here is the two internally related distinctions; namely, a distinction between lack and loss, and between critique and criticism. Nostalgia, as a past-oriented feeling, can become an affective ground for legitimising social criticism, either internally or externally. When the mythologised past is utilised as a reference point external to the present reality for the purpose of judging the status quo, such an operation betrays its limitation as a valid critique; this is because it is fixated on a particular, positive utopian image which is often exclusive in terms of race, class and sexuality. In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for instance, Winston's Arcadian fantasy of the Golden Country, which is posed antithetically to dystopian life in the authoritarian regime, is a utopia in the sense that it is non-existent and deemed as superior. This critical pitfall is what Theodore Adorno names idol worship:

> [T]he view which evaluates phenomena externally, in a detached, free, superior way, deeming itself above the limitations of negation and the arbitration of the dialectic, is […] neither one of truth nor one of justice. (107).

The mythologised surplus of social criticism in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, whose climax is the death of humanism – "the spirit of man" – undermines Winston's subversive position due to its lack of a self-reflexive and dialogic perspective (NEF 282). Similarly to Adorno's caution against idol worship, Terry Eagleton suggests that such judgement, which is based on an abstracted viewpoint, should be categorised as "criticism" and be distinguished from "critique".

> "Criticism", in its Enlightenment sense, consists in recounting to someone what is awry with their situation, from an external, perhaps 'transcendental' vantage-point. "Critique" is that form of discourse which seeks to inhabit the experience of the subject from inside, in order to elicit those 'valid' features of that experience which point beyond the subject's present condition. (*Ideology* xxiii)

An act of judgement and evaluation necessitates either a metaphysical or experiential ground; the former mystifies its ultimate standpoint in order to render itself pseudo-authoritative, whereas the latter, so to speak, puts itself in others' shoes, deconstructing and complicating the issue as much as necessary for mobilising change. "Critique", an

internal judgement, tries its best not to hierarchise the judge and the judged, as "criticism", an external judgement, does without sufficient self-reflection.

To declare the death or loss of something is to invent the past existence of it. Such a strategy of social criticism is symptomatically nostalgic in its effect of resurrecting possibilities which apparently existed in the past; as such it risks mythologisation. As Slavoj Žižek suggests, the performative rhetoric of loss is often a result of the displacement of lack, which is the irreducible gap in the human psyche itself that could never be filled in reality (*Totalitarianism* 143). Slavoj Žižek argues that melancholy in fact attempts to possess what has never been possessed through the invention of the "lost" object: "what we never possessed can also never be lost, so the melancholic, in his unconditional fixation on the lost object, in a way possesses it in its very loss" (*Totalitarianism* 143). In other words, to declare that something is lost is to invent this lost object in the presence of its absence. Indeed, this thesis on nostalgia in dystopian novels itself can be questioned as a nostalgic/mythophilic attempt of the author who lives in a late capitalist postmodern era; it could be a mere product of the author's desire (triggered by dystopian texts) to resuscitate metaphysical and ahistorical spectres – humanism, liberal individualism, Truth, to name a few – signified in the texts. What is at issue here is the validity of employing dystopian fiction for the service of one's political position, as in the way Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was exploited for the anti-Soviet propaganda.[21] Such an approach is oblivious of the hidden biases and legitimation of existing power relationships of one's own political stance. An assumption here is that every idea is historically situated, or rather, politicised in a manner which promotes a certain social group at an expense of

[21] In his essay titled "Freedom and the Cold War", Alan Sinfield argues "[w]hatever Orwell believed he was doing, he contributed to the Cold War one of its most potent myths" (111). According to Sinfield, the novel overgeneralises the dangers inherent in totalitarianism, almost deifying its supposed evilness; this aspect happened to allow the novel to serve as an ideological apparatus for the Western Alliance; in other words, it enforced a perception that the Western world is "good" and the Communist world is "evil". *Animal Farm* also ended up being used as a means of propaganda by the CIA, though the main point of *Animal Farm* is its function of "counter-propaganda": "By the early 1950s, the CIA even helped to fund a full-length animated version of *Animal Farm*, which eliminated several characters and gave Orwell's fable a happy ending – the animals rebel against their new masters" (Dickstein 144-5). Also see Tony Shaw, "'Some Writers are More Equal than Others': George Orwell, the State and Cold War Privilege", *Cold War History*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 143-170. Incidentally, Fredric Jameson notes that the term dystopia began to be widely employed in the 1950s, suggesting the influence of the Cold War (*Archaeologies* 198). As Claeys notes, this coincides with the emergence of the criticism and scholarship of dystopian fiction (*Dystopia* 273).

others. It should be noted, nevertheless, that such scepticism against ideological nostalgia itself can fashion its own essence by positing the "historical truth" or an authentic historical vision of a designated era.

Yet this apparent double bind makes space for interrogating the nature of the past itself, as Ankersmit stresses that "[t]he time has come for us to think about the past, rather than investigate it" (180). An archival approach, which encompasses the past and future, is more productive than a purely archaeological one, which discovers the past solely in terms of the present perspective; whereas the former recognises a generative aspect of the act of studying the past, in the latter the present is put in brackets for categorising past entities, demystifying them as objects.[22] For instance, Arendt's apparent nostalgia for the Greek city-state in her book *The Human Condition* (1958) appears to be a symptom of mythophilia: that is to say, a philosophical archaeology to externally validate her own point of view. Yet in *The Human Condition*, such an image is in general not presented as a utopia or essentially liberating. Whereas resuscitating the dead is to conjure up a phantom, such an act is not necessarily conservative or reactionary. In order to avoid the reification of past ideas and succumbing to idol worship, the phantom of the past needs to be understood as a hypothetical model for imagining a new future; mythmaking is after all the perversion of reason, or reason's suicide, which Horkheimer and Adorno demonstrate in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). In light of their critical theory, it could be concluded that, in the politics of nostalgia, what should be conserved is not reified images of the past, but the future haunted by the past, or what Horkheimer and Adorno call "past hopes" (xvii).

[22] Archaeology is a "systematic description or study of antiquities" (OED); the subject discovers objects of the past, but the notion of the past itself is abstracted in such a standpoint. It is an inductive approach in the sense that the past is no more than a collection of facts. On the other hand, archive signifies the process of preserving historical records rather than a discovery. Its Greek etymology is "government", highlighting the aspect of control and its public nature. Archiving then poses a question of the nature of the past; what and whose memory deserves to be kept, and how it should be kept for the future. This is not to say that archaeology is inherently dogmatic due to its assumption of the fixed subject position; for an in-depth interrogation of the past from an archaeological approach, see Victor Buchili and Gavin Lucas, *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, Routledge, 2001.

Part Two: World-alienation in Dystopian Novels

A mythic narrative closure often found in dystopian novels hinges on a conundrum of resistance which is expressed in the citizens' impossibility of taking any political action. Inhabitants of dystopias find themselves in deep political apathy, while being diminished to a function of labour force to reproduce and perpetuate the hegemony of a regime. Jean Starobinski's understanding of modern nostalgia provides a hint at interpreting the nature of homesickness in dystopias. In regards to the historical transformation of the meaning of nostalgia, Strarobinski argues that "[w]e no longer speak of disease but of reaction; we no longer underline the desire to return but, on the contrary, the failure of adaptation" (101). The modern nostalgia's emphasis on childhood as the object of longing seems to result from individuals' reluctance to become an adult, since it only signifies one's constant need to adapt to the changing society, dealing with "the paramount necessity of reintegration into an existing *milieu*" (Starobinski 101). What characterises dystopias is indeed the artificiality of urban landscapes where social inequality is naturalised and atomised individuals are pressured into conformity; this provides a ground for existential homelessness where no alternative to the status quo is allowed to be imagined and pursued. This dismal situation is what Arendt calls "radical world-alienation", where history and nature – the unknown – cease to exist, for "[a]ll the process of the earth and the universe have revealed themselves either as man-made or as potentially man-made" which is a consequence of scientific measurement and survey (*Between Past and Future* 89).[23] What is left then is the artificial unknown, which cannot be measured at the moment due to a lack of resources; hence the future is a risk to be predicted and taken under control. Anxiety then takes on a distinctive quality, for objects including other human beings are now mere effects of the subject, and thus experiences are ones "between man and himself" (Arendt, *The Human Condition*; 254). World-alienation is then the deprivation of "a common world which would at once relate and separate them", where

[23] Claeys concludes his extensive genre study by stating that "the natural history of dystopia ends both with the death of nature, and the commencement of, and then too in turn perhaps the conclusion of, the artificial and mechanical history of mankind" (*Dystopia* 498). It should be emphasised that mankind themselves are objectified and engineered from what Arendt terms "the Alchimedean point" (*The Human Condition* 248). In regards to the conflation between nature and technology, one can recall a famous opening line in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984): "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel" (3). Nature is the artificial, and vice versa.

there are only two choices left, either to "live in desperate lonely separation" or to be "pressed together into a mass" (*Between Past and Future* 89). Yet these are not truly meaningful choices, for they are a mere reaction against this modern homelessness where subjects are ultimately anonymous and interchangeable; there can be an enlightened mass being, but that does not change the fact that they are still part of the mass, rendering an authentic state of being a mere lifestyle. In Arendt's theory, the mood of homesickness or loneliness which permeates the masses is "the common ground for terror, the essence of totalitarian government": "To be uprooted means to have no place in the world recognised and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means not to belong to the world at all" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 475).

Concomitantly, nostalgia and mythophilia manifest themselves in a variety of forms in dystopian novels considered in this thesis. Memory becomes crucial for the oppressed individual generally in the following three ways; first to wallow in a private utopian memory so as to take some momentary refuge (escapist), and secondly to engage in critiquing the status quo through comparison between the past and the present (critical), and thirdly to actively reify personal memories in order to equip oneself with a modest legacy of one's life (submissive). These are reactions to the obliteration/fabrication of memory directed by the power. And as such, nostalgia is presented as a means of, or an existential foundation for, survival for inhabitants of dystopias; resistance or submission is a reaction against existential homesickness. In order to delve into the politics of nostalgia in the selected novels, it is therefore essential to establish a reading of them in terms of surviving homesickness. What should be particularly highlighted is that in dystopias, the state or society separates and divides citizens by indoctrinating the ideology of self-preservation, and consequently suicide becomes a form of resistance so as to reject being subjected as an anonymous labour force. This will be expounded through a close analysis of each of the chosen novels in this thesis.

This is also partly an attempt to re-examine a conventional schematisation of the genre – that is, the binary opposition of liberal individualism against collectivism; in *Nineteen Eighty Four*, "the individual is always defeated" and that is "a law of nature" (NEF 142). According to M. Keith Booker, "[d]ystopian fiction is typically an individualist genre, opposing the special desires and inclinations of its protagonists to the demands of an oppressive regime that makes true individualism impossible"

("English Dystopian Satire" 32). Gregory Claeys also notes that "dystopian literature is often about rational autonomous individuals lost in the Le Bonian crowd" (*Dystopia* 269), and such anxiety about collectivism and mass culture – be it socialist or capitalist – "could be construed as the quintessential dystopian theme by the mid-1940s" (*Dystopia* 496). This is indeed a valid observation, and Claeys's in particular draws from a substantial amount of historical accounts and numerous literary texts. Yet what has not been questioned sufficiently is this interpretive lens itself, which is premised on the binary opposition between individualism vs collectivism. Dystopian texts then should be treated as opportunities to re-think and interrogate the complexity which underlies such an opposition itself, rather than as products of historical facts and pointing out recurrent patterns and themes in a designated period.[24]

What is occluded in the schematisation of individualism versus collectivism is the fact that the individual fundamentally requires others' recognition to be a citizen fully equipped with political rights; to put it crudely, one needs to be "seen and heard" by other people to exercise one's individuality in public to actualise social change (Arendt, *The Human Condition*; 50). Meanwhile, society is not *a priori* oppressive; conforming to society enhances the possibilities of an individual, in so far as society accommodates everyone's individuality by acknowledging them as a full citizen by letting their speech and action matter in public. In this context, the subjected individuals in dystopias are fundamentally all half-citizens, since their individual speech and action are largely supressed. Writing a diary, illicit sexual behaviour, and engaging in nostalgic feelings and thoughts are archetypal means of resistance in well-known dystopian novels by Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell. Yet as Winston repeatedly declares that "we are the dead" (NEF 142, 230) in spite of all his attempts to resist, it is as though he himself understands at heart that such forms of resistance cannot result in any political change and are thus futile.[25] In "Totalitarianism as Liberal Nightmare: The (Post-) Politics of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Sofia Sampaio sheds light on this

[24] Claeys's historicist approach is by all means of great importance, particularly as a corrective to a philosophical approach, which this thesis has deployed. The latter has its weakness in overgeneralisation, whereas the main problem of the former is its tendency to treat texts as historical objects while the subject position of the interpreter is more or less abstracted.

[25] The private realm in Orwell's dystopia does not even have any substance, for there is no privacy and no possibility to secure one's private property from the state. These two conditions are necessary for becoming a fully political citizen. In Arendt's theory, the private is a pre-condition of the public; if the public realm is denied to citizens, the private disappears accordingly. For this, see section 8 "The Private Realm: Property" in *The Human Condition*.

dilemma: “Winston’s problem is not that he lacks a private space but that *he has been reduced to one*, indeed, to the almost parodic point of living inside ‘the few cubic centimetres of his skull” (151, emphasis in original). Totalitalianism is in this sense the reduction of the world itself.

It is therefore not theoretically constructive to thematise the genre simply as a conflict between the isolated, autonomous individual and society, although it is a convenient starting point for a further enquiry. Arendt’s emphasis on plurality (“sameness in utter diversity” [*The Human Condition* 57]) rests on the idea that to live is to be among others and that freedom is inter-personal. In this sense, it is misleading to characterise dystopian fiction merely as the defeat (or death) of liberal individualism, which is founded on a false dichotomy between the individual and society. On the contrary, the literary dystopia interrogates the validity of liberal individualism as a ground for resisting oppressive society. What seems common among protagonists in the chosen dystopian novels is that, despite their rebellious attitude towards the status quo, they are unable to establish a horizontal relationship with others – neighbours, the working class, people of other races and sexes. D-503 in Zamyatin’s *We*, John the Savage in Huxley’s *Brave New World* and Winston Smith in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are rather attracted to a vertical relationship with their ideals; John the Savage clings to Christian virtues and, more troublesomely, D-503 and Winston choose to be subsumed into the mythic power of the totalitarian dictator. This resignation cannot be fully understood through the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, since those individuals are first and foremost subjected as a singular and superfluous being, confined within their meagre ego and thus unable to represent and unite with others. One might blame the lack of empathy or the ignorance of those individuals, but such an indictment is unproductive precisely because it presupposes an *individualist* who chooses their actions primarily through their own will. As Winston desperately cries out that “[i]n the face of pain, there are no heroes”, and is subsequently re-programmed by the state, in totalitarian dystopias individualism itself is absolutely undermined by human engineering and institutional brutality (NEF 251).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak accentuates the need to distinguish an individual and individualist (“Three Women’s Texts” 244-5). One’s individuality is overdetermined by their multiple backgrounds/parameters in terms of the cultural, the economical, the racial, the sexual. Yet the idea of individualism inherently antagonises

society as a force that suppresses one's individual desires. In addition, individualism in its fundamental sense cannot provide a fundamental criterion of judgement as to why an act of inflicting pains onto others is unjust. In her reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Sampaio aptly comments that "Oceania is an ultra-individualistic place, where no one trusts anyone (not even one's family)" (151). The sole motive for life is self-preservation. In regards to this, Žižek proposes an insightful distinction of public and private. From a contemporary liberal viewpoint, "the private is the space of our idiosyncrasies where creativity and wild imagination rule and moral considerations are (almost) suspended; the public, on the contrary, is the space of social interaction where we are obliged to obey the rules in order not to hurt others" (*First as Tragedy* 104). In this formulation, humans are not so dissimilar to wild animals which constantly need to be tamed, disregarding the fact that human desires are inherently social. It is likewise problematic that creativity is seen as personal rather than interpersonal, or rather, intertextual. Against such reified, individualistic understanding of the individual, Žižek opposes Kant's distinction between private and public:

> [W]hen we reflect upon our ethnic roots, we engage in a *private use of reason*, constrained by contingent dogmatic presuppositions; that is, we act as "immature" individuals, not as free humans who dwell in the dimension of the universality of reason. (104, emphasis in original)

Each individual is situated within the matrix of particular backgrounds in terms of parameters such as race, class and sexuality, although this is not to claim that each individual is reducible to particulars.[26] Parochialism and xenophobia, for instance, are in fact the effect of privatising reason, setting the limit to its use for one's private interests, viewing one's idiosyncrasies as the essence of one's uniqueness.[27] Yet one's

[26] Those particular backgrounds which affect the self would limit one's possibilities. Yet such self-recognition is paramount for realising what is impossible and what possibilities are available.

[27] What Spivak calls "a nostalgia for lost origins" is an instance of such a private use of reason in resisting the power ("Three Women's Texts" 245). Drawing on the Caliban figure in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, she contends that Caliban, the colonised, is "a name in a play, an inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text" (245). "[C]laiming to be Caliban" is not a productive strategy for resistance, since it "legitimises the very individualism that we must persistently attempt to undermine from within" ("Three Women's Texts", 245; emphasis in original). In the context of individualism, claiming to be Caliban itself in the positive results in being subsumed into its myth of subjectivism rather than undermining it; to be Caliban is to make a wilful choice to be a monster, not a human, and as such it is a choice to remain in the periphery, the position which does not radically challenge the very logic of

origins are fundamentally arbitrary as a being thrown into the world: "existing is always factical. Existentiality is essentially determined by facticity" (*Being and Time* 236). One's existence is, to borrow Malpas's words, "is given in its own prior placedness" (319, fn 17). This "placedness", however, is not completely synonymous with situatedness – one's being as socially determined – since place pre-exists society. Positing one's given placedness (and situatedness as part of placedness) as the absolute ground for one's identity remains self-delusional; this is because such a position does not recognise the arbitrariness of being placed in the first place.[28] On the other hand, a public use of reason is to open up a space of political actions that generate human relationships which enable individuals to negotiate for a just future. In order to pin down what makes a dystopian narrative dystopian, it is in this context crucial to analyse it through this dynamic model of the individual and society.

Self-preservation as an ideology

In discussing the issue of subjectivity in utopianism, Fredric Jameson argues that "'self-preservation' is not an instinct at all, but rather something like an ideology, or at the very least an ideological mechanism" (174). In "Critique of Violence", Walter Benjamin similarly interrogates "the dogma of the sacredness of life" (299).[29] If survival, a mere condition of living on is sacred, it would not be possible to differentiate humans from "the life of animals and plants": "However sacred man is, […] there is no sacredness in his condition, in his bodily life vulnerable to injury by his fellow men" (Benjamin 299). Winston's decaying body notwithstanding, it is the vulnerability and malleability of the body in relation to the state's control that are foregrounded in the dystopian novels discussed in this thesis. The vulnerable or unsacred nature of the body is also highlighted in Offred's narrative in Atwood's *The*

centre and periphery.

[28] This is not to suggest that any essentialism is fraud. On the contrary, it is the realisation of one's fundamental homelessness, or the arbitrariness of one's origin is what facilitates the close examination of one's limitations and possibilities as oneself. One's origin surely constitutes the essence of one's being, yet nothing can explain the absolute origin of the origin, or why one came to attain such-and-such attributes (nationality, gender, etc.). To claim the superiority of one's existence over others in terms of one's origin is therefore unfounded since no one had chosen to be born with superior attributes. Such superiority is only imagined retrospectively.

[29] Also see Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 315.

Handmaid's Tale: "The body is so easily damaged, so easily disposed of, water and chemicals is all it is, hardly more to it than a jellyfish, drying on sand" (HT 105). The body is then ultimately a mere burden for resistance, although it possesses its knowledge as a repository of the past, as discussed in the later chapters. Both Winston and Offred in the end wilfully surrender in order to protect their bodies at the cost of others.[30] The idea of self-preservation seems to permeate dystopias, for the body is the only possession of an inhabitant who is deprived of any opportunity of political participation; the hegemony typically justifies its control over people by appealing to an individualist ideal of "survival of the fittest".[31] Life is merely a zero-sum game, reduced to dichotomies such as "to win or to lose" or "to eat or to be eaten". Here, the following questions should be asked: what are the assumptions of discourses which prioritise survival, and how do they reveal power politics and unequal distribution of resources in the modern society, in terms of race, class, gender and sexuality? More specifically, who decides whose life is more "valuable" than others? Likewise, to what extent can one's act be forgiven in the name of survival instinct? For this, Winston's notorious remark during a torture session, "Do it to Julia!" (NEF 300) should be read in this context.[32] On the other hand, what should be sustained in the discourse of sustainability? What social/economic system? Or which part of the eco system?

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[30] Winston's notorious remark, "Do it to Julia!" haunts Atwood's text, albeit in a more passive manner. The following sentence in Offred's narrative encapsulate this moral crisis: "I don't want pain. […] I want to keep on living, in any form. I resign my body freely, to the uses of others. They can do what they like with me. I am abject" (HT 286). Yet allowing others to harm her is potentially to harm other people in a similar condition as hers; resignation is not exempt from ethical questioning.

[31] The theme of "survival of the fittest" typically manifests in the promotion of eugenics, caste system and power worship. Also in a more subtle manner, it is expressed in the body politic such as compulsory physical exercise and nutrition control. It also manifests in the lack of empathy among individuals. Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games* (2008) series are an epitome of a hyper-individualist nightmare (the trilogy was later adapted to a film series of the same title by Gary Ross [2012]). Some recent dystopian films which are centred around the theme of "survival of the fittest" are worth mentioning here: *Carré Blanc* (2011) by Jean-Baptiste Léonetti, Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca* (1997) and *In Time* (2011), and *Cloud Atlas* (2013) by Tom Tykwer and Lilly Waschowski (a film adapted from David Mitchell's novel of the same title [2004]).

[32] This is a critical moment for Winston, for it makes him realise that his ideal of "spirit of man" is powerless against physical violence. For this, one can also argue that his selfish wish to sacrifice Julia for his life is merely forced. But then again, Winston is conditioned to loathe himself in general; O'Brien the torturer repeatedly condemns Winston about his lack of discipline: "You are a slow learner, Winston" (NEF 263). See Chapter Three for more detailed discussion.

Meanwhile, suicide seems to be the opposite of survival; suicide is life's self-denial, and as such it could be thought as a resistance against and triumph over the survival instinct. However, can suicide become a survival strategy, in the sense of leaving a legacy of resistance, which survives beyond one's life? A scene in Suzanne Collins's The *Hunger Games* (2008) is a good example for this. At the end of the Game, the protagonist Katniss attempts to commit suicide instead of simply murdering the other survivor, refusing to become the victor of the game. Her suicide attempt is here a protest against the regime (it eventually forces the regime to change the rule of the game to allow two victors).[33]

Yet suicide is, fundamentally speaking, a form of violence, and as such it cannot be political in itself; Arendt indicates that violence is "mute", "prepolitical" and thus "barbaric" in the sense that it is "to command rather than persuade", silencing and thus eradicating other people (*The Human Condition* 26-7). Even individual suicide as such ends up being an apolitical act, although there can be a discursive potential in it, particularly when a suicide note is left.[34] An ideal political realm would then be a dialogical space of speech and action, which generates human relationships rather than destroying them. Yet what complicates this issue is that there are oppositional groups which accomplished a transition from terrorism to politics, such as the provisional Irish Republican Army and Hamas (the Palestinian militant Islamist organisation). There appears to be a type of violence which initiates politics; or is it merely a semblance of it, unless it addresses the creation of the common world?[35] Although discussing each

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[33] "We both know they have to have a victor" (Collins 338). Instead of succumbing to the logic of self-preservation, Katniss comes up with the idea of suicide as a means of resistance. The film adaptation somewhat romanticises this suicide scene as a gesture of their mutual love. Meanwhile, Katniss's decision to care and mourn another competitor Rue triggers people's revolts in the Districts. Yet it should be noted that Katniss's brave act can be read as a romanticisation of rebellious women, since the determination that it would take is simply overwhelming for an individual. In the later novels, Katniss constantly suffers from being projected this image of a female revolutionary from others.

[34] This would be a case if one posits that all writings are dialogical since there cannot be any monologue as in the sense that there is no private language.

[35] Regarding this, one can recall Benjamin's distinction between "mythical violence" and "divine violence":

> If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood. (297)

Benjamin then adds, "[m]ythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it" (297). On this account, the proletarian general strike (as opposed to the

particular case of terrorism is beyond the scope of this thesis, the question that should be asked is: to what extent can the end justify the means?

To further complicate and develop the question, it is necessary to comment on the nature of death in order to grasp the concepts of survival and suicide at a deeper level. In spite of its annihilating aspect, it can be posited that one has the right to die naturally, since death is fundamentally what is given by life itself; it is absolute and democratic in the sense that it is impossible for anybody to escape from it. In this sense, death is transcendental violence. Wilful murder of other people is thus ethically wrong since one's death should be kept random; a murderer is in a sense playing God by terminating another's life. This view does not undermine the necessity of self-defence when one's life is under immediate threat. Indeed, it is not only one's life which is being threatened in such a situation, but one's death as an inevitable consequence of life, which must be kept random and not at mercy of others' self-interest. A mass murder by terrorists is in this sense particularly scandalous because its selection of targets is at random, which demonstrates its nihilistic, and thus apolitical nature. Revenge is another concept that could justify violence in its function of exposing the wrong; for instance, resistance against an oppressive social system is in this sense a form of revenge. On the other hand, committing suicide is a murder of oneself. One way of justifying this would be that every individual has the right to destroy their body as long as such an act does not harm others. Here, the body is considered as one's property. However, it is impossible for every human being to avoid their natural death in the first place; the body is not quite their own and it can be taken away at any moment. In this sense, it could be argued that one has a dual right to one's own life: the first right is to receive natural death, and the second is to voluntarily end one's life. Natural death should not be conflated with social death which is inflicted by others and society. Not all deaths are equal; deaths in dystopias are primarily the latter type, and this is why it requires a thorough critique.

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political general strike) is one manifestation of divine violence, and another is education (291). It seems that what Benjamin aspired for is something utopian, which has a distinctively collective and anarchistic dimension. Curiously, Benjamin also states that "the expiatory power of violence is not visible to men" as such (300). Here, what seems to be emphasised is that divine violence only manifests itself in the actual process of change, rather than in the act of proposing a particular aim and attempting to fulfil it; outcomes of divine violence are recognisable only in retrospect.

The body politic of the state

In the selected dystopian novels, survival of the individual is a key theme while the possibility of one's suicide as a form of resistance or resignation is always lurking at the background. It is here provisionally useful to categorise three types of survival in the genre. The first is a passive type, that is, a form of submission to the state by conforming to society's demands. In this situation, one is, metaphorically speaking, already dead as an individual.[36] The second position, in which one struggles to separate oneself from society, is more active: it is a desperate attempt at resisting through one's survival, living on as an individual while taking a risk of not conforming to society. Alternatively, it can also be an attempt at seeking for a refuge outside the state. Such escape is typically to the countryside, or it could be into one's mind or nostalgic images.[37] Resistance is not always spectacular; it could take a form of testimony as in the case of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Here, the protagonist never ceases to make complaints about her situation; complaint could be political when it is heard by others and becomes an action, revealing how one's right to exist as a full citizen is disregarded in a given society. These two types of survival are in fact a reaction to the third type or agent of survival. It is survival of the dystopian state, or its urge to perpetuate itself. Although it seems at first farfetched to posit the survival instinct of the state, such an attempt will reveal the interrelationship between the state and atomised individuals.

Meanwhile, one characteristic of dystopian novels is that inhabitants of dystopias tend to be nameless and atomised. They are typically designated by a

[36] Even if one might renounce individual thinking at all, it does not necessarily follow that one does not exist. A human being is not merely a Cartesian "thinking thing", which "doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and that also imagines and senses" (Descartes 15). It should be noted that Descartes proposes the idea of "a thinking thing" as part of his project to situate the I, not the human being. It could then be argued that one can cease to exist as an individual while still existing as a human being, who is nonetheless directed towards the potentialities of thinking (also note that imagining and sensing are part of the Cartesian "thinking being"). It should be stressed, however, that thinking would be impossible without what enables it, such as the body and others.

[37] The final scene in Terry Gilliam's film entitled *Brazil* (1985, a director's cut version) provides a sophisticated representation of such a tendency to idealise the countryside as one's private utopia. It first ends with Sam and his girlfriend's escape into the countryside, and it then cuts to the true ending, where it is revealed that the first happy ending is a figment of Sam's imagination as his attempt to distract himself from severe torture sessions.

combination of alphabets and numbers which are artificially created and assigned to them by the state instead of family or local community: such names include, D 503, Alfred Alfredson E.W. 10762, 6079 Smith W., Offred, Kathy H.[38] In relation to this, human relationships among denizens are all mediated through the state; family or community that are founded on mutual understanding are not allowed to exist or function. In such a condition, human relationships are reduced to a series of mechanical, binary responses, that is to say, one is merely "for or against" the other (Arendt, *The Human Condition*; 180); and when one behaves antithetically to the status quo, the other will report it to the authority as it is his or her duty to be a good citizen. Here, one can recall a scene in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where Mr Parson is denounced by his own daughter, and even more disturbingly, the father congratulates the daughter's capability to make use of herself as a spy (NEF 245). It reveals the absolute lack of mutual trust within a family, which is programmed by the state. To quote from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the state "[has] cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman" (NEF 306). What is offered instead is a semblance of solidarity which is cultivated through public activities such as the Hate Week. In this society of atomised individuals, the chance of uniting with others to form an oppositional group against the state is rendered nil. For the subjected individuals, such resistance cannot be a viable option in such a dystopia, since self-preservation is thought of as the utmost purpose of their life. Indeed, one of the most pessimistic moments in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is when it is revealed that a resistance movement, which is called "the Brotherhood", is merely the state's fabrication for luring and eradicating deviants.

Burdekin's *Swastika Night* makes a stark contrast to Orwell's presentist dystopia particularly since the secret book of alternative history is presented as highly authentic, which allows Alfred's heroic endeavour of preserving it against all the

[38] Although personal names in *Brave New World* appear more unique to each individual, it seems to be arbitrary combinations of historical names (Bernard Marx, Lenina Crowne, Dr Wells etc.) – a technique which was employed by the author for satirical effects.

odds.[39] This is also made possible by a strong bond within Von Hess's[40] and Alfred's families, which resists being completely subsumed under the Nazis as Hitler's gigantic mythical family, although it remains problematic that women are completely excluded from anywhere except among the Christians. Although Alfred's "almost life-long struggle to *think* light into the darkness of human origins" at times makes him feel suicidal (SN 97, emphasis in original), Alfred's faith in thinking and knowledge drives him to achieve an immortal state of being as a passionate advocate of the truth; what facilitates an optimistic reading of *Swastika Night* is such an unassailable desire for the truth which survives through the figure of Alfred.[41] By contrast, von Hess admits that suicide has not been uncommon among his family cursed with the secret knowledge conferred by their ancestor. Likewise, the knowledge almost completely devastates Hermann, a deep admirer of Alfred. These negative reactions seem more convincing than Alfred's straightforward scepticism and heroism, whose motive is not sufficiently elaborated in the text. Meanwhile, von Hess also mentions "the very numerous other suicides among German men" (SN 64). The story does not develop this point further. These two holes in the text can be interpreted as a signal of hope; Alfred's heroism as an English rebel and the high suicide rate attest to the incompleteness of the Nazis' social engineering.

It is then clear that the Hitlerian empire is rather authoritarian than totalitarian. This distinguishes Burdekin's dystopia from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and also Zamyatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*, where there are only instrumentalised human relationships. This atomisation of individuals can be explained well with Arendt's conception of the modern state as one gigantic, nameless and often patriarchal body. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that the modern state ultimately denies the public (which is the realm that ensures individuals' political

[39] There are several articles which hold a view that *Swastika Night* provides a horizon of hope thanks to Alfred's heroism. Especially see Daphne Patai, "Orwell's Despair, Burdekin's Hope: Gender and Power in Dystopia", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1984, pp. 85-95. Also see Raffaella Baccolini, "'It's Not in the Womb the Damage is Done': Memory, Desire and the Construction of Gender in Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*", *Le transformazioni del narrare*, edited by E. Siciliani et al., Schena, 1995, pp. 293-309.

[40] Von Hess remarks that "[only] the Knights are allowed to have family feeling; you see how dangerously strong it can be", indicating his family's transgenerational determination to preserve the secret book (SN 133)

[41] Yet the text also reveals the limitation of such a passion for the truth, which renders the narrative profoundly pessimistic especially in terms of gender equality. Chapter Two thesis discusses this conundrum in *Swastika Night*.

freedom and action) and the private (which is the realm that ensures privacy to secure a space for solitude and thinking). The subject individual as a labourer or a job holder constitutes the state as the basic cell of society. Each cell needs to be kept in a healthy condition to provide the maximum productivity and usefulness to the whole. Physical exercises, supplements and drugs, rationed sex, and communal sessions such as "the Two Minute Hate" are provided for an outlet to release and displace feelings of discontent. A cancerous cell, that is to say, a rebellious individual, must be eradicated. [42] Suicide is in this context only egotistic and irresponsible, disturbing the smooth functioning of the state. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this argument is overturned in a military context; a soldier must be willing to sacrifice themselves in order to protect the state (for example, Japanese suicide bombers were ordered to kill themselves for the cult of State Shinto). This is what Arendt calls the body politic of the state.

Regarding this, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it is important to note that the state is symbolised as Big Brother, which is in fact an anonymous patriarch.[43] As Alok Rai points out, Orwell wrote in 1940 that "[m]an is not an individual, he is only a cell in an everlasting body" (quoted in Rai, 147), and this idea is dramatized through O'Brien. In one torture session, he asks Winston as follows: "Can you not understand, Winston, that the individual is only a cell? The weariness of the cell is the vigour of the organism. Do you die when you cut your fingernails?" (NEF 302). One's lifetime is merely considered as an offering to the state, and in return one can achieve immortality as part of the everlasting regime; life in Oceania is "a moment-to-moment struggle against hunger or cold or sleeplessness, against a sour stomach or an aching tooth" (NEF 106). O'Brien's cruelty towards Winston illustrates how such survival instinct can inflict horrendous violence onto others. The state is represented as singular, self-perpetuating, oblivious of its potential demise, and only cognisant of itself ("Outside man there is nothing" [NEF 304]). There is no wonder why this single, gigantic family, which holds a firm belief in collective solipsism, does not provide any home, since it does not allow an individual to be seen and heard among others, nor

[42] Claeys notes that one of the key features of totalitarian dystopias is "a medical-organic metaphor of the group, in which 'purging' and 'cleansing' become appropriate languages expressing social paranoia" (*Dystopia* 267).
[43] "The booted figure of sovereign power routes the violence of dystopia through a masculine body, signifying state authority" (Lothian 445).

leave any private space to escape into. What Big Brother signifies is thus a gigantic machine with a human face. And what fuels such a machine is people's state-sanctioned ignorance and ignoring.

Can suicide then become a means of political intervention in Orwell's prison-state? Winston mentions the large number of suicides; although he himself is extremely reluctant to commit suicide due to the fear of physical agony,[44] he believes that "[t]he proper thing [is] to kill yourself before they [get] you" (NEF 106). Much to his dismay, however, O'Brien explains that the state does not allow any martyrdoms to happen (NEF 290):

> We shall turn you into gas and pour you into the stratosphere. Nothing will remain of you; not a name in a register, not a memory in a living brain. You will be annihilated in the past as well as in the future. You will never have existed. (NEF 291)

As Arendt notes, suicide is a spontaneous act, and as such it is a manifestation of individuality (*Totalitarianism* 455). Perhaps it can be concluded that society is sufficiently dystopian when it leaves for inhabitants suicide as the only and last option as a means of protest. It then follows that a society which eradicates one's existence in the past, present and the future would be dystopian to its full extent.

In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, each household makes sure to remove any potentially dangerous materials to prevent the Handmaid's suicide.[45] Indeed, the previous owner of Offred's room (or more precisely, a prison cell) committed suicide, leaving the carved message in the cupboard which reads "*Nolite te Bastardes Carborundorum*" ("Don't let the bastards grind you down") (HT 52, 187). This suicide is here political as it subverts the order, however trivial it is. Ofglen, who is Offred's walking partner, also kills herself when she faces arrest for spying activities. Suicide is a way for Ofglen to re-claim her autonomy, declaring that she at least has control over her own life. However, killing oneself demands considerable effort; in contrast to these two martyrs, Offred is hopelessly jaded.[46] Yet it is such passiveness

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[44] Tools for suicide such as "firearms, or any quick and certain poison" are "completely unprocurable" in Oceania (NEF 106).

[45] "It isn't running away they're afraid of. We wouldn't get far. It's those other escapes, the ones you can open in yourself, given a cutting edge" (HT 8).

[46] The question is, can Offred kill herself at all? The conundrum of suicide is that, even one

that eventually leads her to survive, and recount her story. Here, it should be stressed that it is not survival *per se* that is a political action; it becomes so when her life is told and heard. Through her memoir, her survival – no matter how defeatist it would have been – turns into a political testimony, exposing violence imposed by the authorities. This can be contrasted with the gradual but critical decrease in women's population in Burdekin's dystopia, which makes von Hess, one of the high-ranking knights, deeply concerned and threatened since it has the potential to cause the demise of the German empire: "[t]he men are committing suicide", without realising so (SN 12, 70). Although it is never clarified in the novel whether such a decrease is a result willed by women (the reader is unable to hear them since women are excluded to the periphery both in the story and the text; see Chapter Two), *Swastika Night* seems to allow a space for the interpretation that this is women's form of resistance, although it remains highly problematic to regard it so since such self-annihilation is subconscious, and thus ultimately accidental.

Yet Offred's rebellion through narrative is not entirely celebratory, as is revealed in how the recorded memoir of her survival is treated in the future conference. The professors who discovered Offred's cassette tapes decry the fragmentary and unreliable nature of Offred's testimony; to them, Offred should have reported "the workings of the Gileadean empire" and the sheer lack of "the instincts of a reporter or a spy" in her narrative is utterly regrettable to them (HT 310). Offred's memoir is indeed suffused with resentful but timid complaints, focusing on the subjective rather than the objective. Her clumsiness and awkwardness, nevertheless, can be interpreted as a manifestation of historical violence suffered by the oppressed, marginalised and silenced in the past. Offred lets the past speak by letting her trauma speak. Although her narrative might be fragmentary and temporally

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believes that there must be some way to survive, an ultimate escape achieved by killing oneself appears to be much more attractive than all sorts of effort which would be required to pursue such a belief. Hope is not enough for one to stop committing suicide, when one is simply too exhausted to believe it. Even in this dismal situation, however, one might not be able to kill oneself, since there is still a possibility that death is not an ultimate escape from the self and the world, but something worse. It is of course arguable whether one's consciousness remains without the body; if the destruction of the body coincides with that of the consciousness, death could be an ultimate escape. Yet the issue is that there is no way for oneself to be certain about this until one actually dies. If martyrdom does not exist because of the state's memory control and people's political apathy, one has to make a leap of faith by believing that death should bring absolute nothingness. Otherwise, as Offred does, one has to live on until being forced to die.

disjointed, its nature is fuller and richer, since it allows her body – a repository of the past – speak rather than suppressing it, overcoming the dichotomy between mind and body, reason and emotion.[47]

What characterises the critical dimension of The *Handmaid's Tale* is this persistently passive position. A detached academic lecture on Offred's narrative or (reconstructed) suicide note, which is presented at the end of the novel, makes a stark contrast to this. Speech and action are separated in the lecture; it almost appears that for those professors, reconstructing history from Offred's memoir is not so dissimilar with engaging in some stimulating intellectual activity, like solving jigsaw puzzles. Offred's memory is subjugated under history, and as a second-class historiography, its value in itself is minuscule. This is indeed an example of what Arendt calls "mere talk", which is fundamentally uneventful (*The Human Condition* 180). To borrow Spivak's words in "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Offred was "made to unspeak herself posthumously" by other men and women, stripped of her political existence (40).[48]

It is, then, ironic that there is no political dimension in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*; the text even seems to be deliberately written antithetical to it. Refusing (although never explicitly) to claim her right to live as a full citizen, it seems that to Kathy, one of the organ slaves, her own survival (albeit in a limited sense) is of upmost importance; her memories gained through her objectification of others and objects provide her a sense of comfort, and she seems to enjoy the bitterness of nostalgia just as an inevitable surplus of her nostalgic project (see Chapter Five). Yet what is truly

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[47] Arendt touches on the dilemma of telling a story of suffering in *The Human Condition* by introducing the following anecdote by Plutarch.

> A man once approached Demosthenes and related how terribly he had been beaten. "But you", said Demosthenes, "suffered nothing of what you tell me". Whereupon the other raised his voice and cried out: "I suffered nothing?" "Now", said Demosthenes, "I hear the voice of somebody who was injured and who suffered". (Arendt 26, fn 8)

On a performative level, the meticulous recounting of suffering can cause an adverse effect to the audience due to its detached attitude. It lessens the intensity of suffering conveyed by the utterer of the speech.

[48] Also see Abigail Rine for her reading of *The Handmaid's Tale* in light of Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Rine also questions whether Offred can be heard in the post-Gilead society, concluding that she cannot; the novel thus remain tremendously pessimistic, depicting "patriarchal discourse as almost insurmountable and human society as unable to learn lessons from history" (78). Although, as discussed Chapter Four, the pessimism of the novel is undeniable, the fact that the novel poses this question by employing a framing narrative is what makes the novel distinct and complex as social criticism.

sinister is Kathy's acceptance of her imminent premature death, which suggests that Kathy is willing to renounce her own survival. This acute sense of resignation is in fact highlighted in Mark Romanek's film adaptation (screenplay by Alex Garland) of the novel. The following is Kathy's final monologue:

> I remind myself I was lucky to have had any time with him [Tommy] at all. What I'm not sure about, is if our lives have been so different from the lives of the people we save. *We all complete*. *Maybe none of us really understand what we've lived through, or feel we've had enough time*. (Romanek, *Never Let Me Go*; emphasis added)

It is striking that all types of deaths are rendered equal by the remark, "[w]e all complete". Here, social violence is naturalised; dying from a relatively more natural cause and from systemic slavery makes no difference. It then follows that marginalisation and indoctrination of certain individuals seems complete in Ishiguro's organ-harvesting dystopia. Its anti-utopian nature is revealed through Kathy's sentimental, yet meticulously controlled narrative of submission.

Dystopian novels represent self-preservation not as an instinct but an ideology: a cannibalistic ideology that is instilled by the state. Meanwhile, suicide as resistance can be construed as a survival strategy, in the sense of leaving a legacy of resistance, which could "live on" beyond one's life. In contrast to the truth-seeking heroism in *Swastika Night*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* demonstrates an extremely pessimistic view on the subversive aspect of suicide by depicting how the state eradicates a rebel's existence from the history and people's memory. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, on the other hand, the protagonist survives and her memoir or complaint also survives. Yet it still raises a question of how survivors can speak to the audience and conversely, of how the audience can listen to them. Such a political dimension cannot be identified in *Never Let Me Go*, which focuses on delineating strategies for maximising satisfaction with servitude. In regards to this, Offred's following remark is worth quoting: "If my life is bearable, maybe what they're doing is all right after all" (HT 187). It should be stressed that it is highly problematic to judge Gilead's enslavement of women on whether it is bearable or not. It is such resignation, based on one's subjective position, which perpetuates unbearable sufferings of others. Survival is not sacred in itself. To live and to survive should then be distinguished; the former is to claim and exercise

one's right to live as a full citizen, and the latter is a mere pre-condition of the former. Such a distinction constitutes the crux of social criticism that must be addressed fully. As discussed in the following chapters, nostalgia manifests in a variety of forms in this textual configuration of dystopias, primarily as a means of oppression, resistance and submission. Whereas nostalgia, a longing for home, is often discredited as private fantasy, the political implications of such an affect in the genre require a close examination.

Part Three: The Political Rhetoric of the Past in Wells's *When the Sleeper Wakes*, Zamyatin's *We* and Huxley's *Brave New World*

Before moving onto the main analysis of the four selected novels, this section provides a brief observation of the three early dystopian novels: namely, *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) by H. G. Wells, *We* (1924) by Yevgeny Zamyatin, and *Brave New World* (1931) by Aldous Huxley. This is to contextualise the theme of nostalgia in these traditional dystopian texts, which foreshadows the preoccupation with the past in the later novels.

Whereas *The Time Machine* (1895) is well-known as one of the earliest science fiction texts, the other two early works, "A Story of the Days to Come" (1899) and *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) or its slightly revised edition *The Sleeper Awakes* (1924)[49] can be recognised as dystopian fiction in a more straightforward manner. Published in the same year, the two works share a quite similar setting. Set in the twenty-second century, a world-wide, technologically advanced city is ruled by gigantic trusts. The hedonistic lifestyle of the rich is in a sheer contrast with the despairing toil and misery of the poor. The texts illustrate such themes as the progress of scientific technology, the proletarian revolution and the ruthless nature of power politics, which were developed further by the succeeding novels by Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell.

[49] The edition used in this thesis is the 1924 Atlantic Edition titled *The Sleeper Awakes*, which was reprinted in Penguin Classics in 2005.

"A Story of the Days to Come" can be placed in the dystopian tradition particularly because of the closure of its world: characters are confined to the city, or the "magnificent prison of latterday life" ("A Story of the Days to Come" 353). Then, the middle-class lovers, Denton and Elizabeth, attempt to escape to and reside in the countryside "beyond the hills" in order to exercise their ideal of an old-fashioned life (350). This belief in nature's transformative potential is placed in opposition to the ossified stasis of the city, representing an ideology of rebellion in dystopia. Romantic love through escaping the confinements of the urban life, going against social norm and living in untamed countryside are developed further in dystopias by Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell.

On the other hand, in *The Sleeper Awakes*, the cataleptic sleeper from the nineteenth century is employed as a critical agency of the dystopia in the twenty-second century. Graham, a suicidal socialist, wakes up naked – possibly a sign of rebirth – in a hyper-capitalist city suffused with technology, where the discrepancy between the rich and the poor has reached a preposterous level. Wells also introduces "the old man who knew everything" in chapter 11 as a cicerone of the future dystopia, who briefly explains to Graham the changes that have occurred to the world over the past few centuries (*The Sleeper Awakes* 94). The hopes and knowledge of the past are presented as indispensable for Graham's resistance against Ostrog's autocracy. In delivering a speech of rebellion to the proletariat, Graham declares as follows:

> I come out of the past to you […] with the memory of an age that hoped. My age was an age of dreams – of beginnings, an age of noble hopes; throughout the world we had made an end of slavery; throughout the world we had spread the desire and anticipation that wars might cease, that all men and women might live nobly, in freedom and peace. […] So we hoped in the days that are past. (*The Sleeper Awakes* 214)

Once depressed and suicidal, Graham finally gains the opportunity two hundred years later to realise his socialist dream by demanding a revolt of the masses. It is an act of reclaiming utopian dreams of the late nineteenth century where utopian literature flourished. The future was then still viable and alive, only imperfect. Graham goes on to ask: "And what of those hopes? How is it with man after two hundred years?" (*The Sleeper Awakes* 214). Graham overcomes his first death by awakening in the future

hyper-capitalist dystopia; yet ironically, he dies in an air-combat against Ostrog, the capitalist despot, whose agenda is to create a utopia of the Over-man (*The Sleeper Awakes* 171). A socialist's dream dies twice.

Later dystopian novels more explicitly present nostalgia as an affective ground for a narrative of resistance. Zamyatin's futuristic dystopia in *We* (1924) is a consequence of "the war between the city and the countryside" (*We* 20), a glass-made rational utopia which separates itself from the outside wilderness by the Green Wall. The text itself takes a form of journal entries by D-503, an engineer of the first spaceship, the Integral. This writing project is part of the colonisation of the universe; D-503's initial intent of writing was to persuade savage aliens how the One State, which is "the highest of heights in human history" (*We* 22) is capable of offering them "mathematically infallible happiness" (*We* 3). D-503 soon realises that such project is a matter of utmost difficulty, for it amounts to write for the past:

> [I]t is more difficult for me to write than for any author in the course of all human history: some wrote for their contemporaries, others for their descendants, but no one ever wrote for their ancestors or beings who resemble their own distant, savage ancestors… (22)

Living in the thirtieth century, D-503 has access to the past that the reader in the twentieth century recognises only through the knowledge of the state-sanctioned history. In writing for "the Ancients", however, D-503 gradually becomes haunted by the barbaric past which cannot be defined according to mathematical formulae; the object (the past) starts to effect the subject (the writer). Such irreducibility of the past manifests in "stupid atavistic appendages" within D-503's body; he notices a "classical" nose and "hairly and shaggy" hands (*We* 9). As Parrinder notes, the contradiction is within his choice to write in the form of diary, which is by definition subjective in totalitarian society and hence not suitable for expressing the collective mind (122).[50] Through writing to the unknown past, D-503's body operates as a conduit to the Ancients. He can only imagine the life of people thousands of years ago. Writing a

[50] In Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, however, such a subjective mode of expression itself becomes a tool to accept and naturalise social violence through collecting and ordering one's memories. See Chapter Five for more discussion.

diary in a sense teaches him a longing for the past. Such a longing is, strictly speaking, mythophilia, since D-503 is a thousand years away from the past he desires.

D-503 then visits the Ancient House, an old house built before the war located on the edge of the Green Wall and now "wrapped in a glass shell" (*We* 24). It displays various kinds of ancient objects such as a statue of Buddha, a painting of Pushkin and old books, and this is indeed where a secret rendezvous takes place with I-330, on a day that violates the law as stated in Table of Sex Days. Meanwhile, a female dissident, I-330 is endowed with the ability to think beyond sanctioned reason. In the Ancient House, she appears in front of D-503 in "the fantastical attire of an ancient epoch" (*We* 18), prefiguring the sexsualised Julia in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The text also indicates that there is a Prehistoric Museum, which includes "the Botanical Museum" (44), where the lives of previous eras are illustrated through objects such as extinct flowers, a fish hook, and stuffed horses (*We* 44, 118, 136). These museums encompass the past in totality, re-arranging and re-ordering past events according to the linear narrative of progress. Although historians and archaeologists do exist in the One State, the past is homogeneously reduced to a target of ridicule, stripping the pastness from the past and reducing it to its instrumentality. D-503 proclaims to his old friend R-13, a state poet, that "the antediluvian times of the omnipotent Shakespeares and Dostoevskys – or whoever they were – have passed" (*We* 39).[51] When compared with those carefully curated prehistoric museums, the Ancient House operates as an affective mnemonic of pasts. The place, which is replete with random antiques, activates D-503's unconscious mind. For the first time in his life, he experiences dreams and nightmares: "I have never had dreams before. […] dreams are a serious psychic disease" (*We* 30). It also affects his writing style in the journal entries; it becomes more fragmentary, metaphorical, and non-linear. As the story reaches its climax, D-503 becomes disturbed even further by the uncanny presence of the past in the Ancient House, which forces him to question his instrumental, collective identity.[52]

[51] R-13 is another "ancient" figure like D-503; the former is "not precise or rhythmic and he has a kind of twisted, laughable logic", being unable to understand "Taylor and mathematics" (*We* 38).

[52] It should be noted, however, that it is somewhat uncertain why the Ancient House, while it is located in the periphery, remains unnoticed by the state in the first place.

In *We*, the past is presented as an imaginary number: "something foreign, alien, frightening, it devoured me – it couldn't be comprehended or defused because it was beyond *ratio*" (*We* 36). The past which is repressed in the orthodox discourse channels into D-503's atavistic body, expresses itself through D-503's imagination. D-503 declares that he is not "a component" of the One World, but "the number one" (*We* 138). Yet such reification of the individual identity is juxtaposed with D-503's injunction for everyone to submit to irrational bodily impulses (*We* 138). D-503 is trapped by the dichotomy between a rational utopia and the wilderness, and thus unable to accept I-330's belief in "infinite revolution", which rejects idealising both types of space: "Well, which final revolution do you want then? There isn't a final one. Revolutions are infinite. Final things are for children because infinity scares children" (*We* 153). [53] D-503 is ultimately unable to accept such a progressive world-view of endless transformation. Instead, he longs for "a mother like the Ancients" who would treat him as "a fragment of herself" (*We* 189). The ending, in which D-503 chooses to be lobotomised for absolute submission to the state, is not surprising. Through D-503's narrative, Zamyatin's *We* ultimately represents a rejection of encountering the past and accepting its transformative potential.

In Huxley's *Brave New World*, the World State's policy to obliterate history is encapsulated in "that beautiful and inspired saying of Our Ford's: History is bunk" (BNW 40). Henry Ford's infamous dictum is repeatedly mentioned by the World Controller, Mustapha Mond, in his casual history lesson to alpha students. In terms of textual effect, its representation has a unique feature. Mond's statements are placed in Chapter 3 of the novel, where the narration "switch[es] back and forth from Mond's impromptu history lesson to Lenina's conversation with Fanny Crowne about irregularities in Bernard Marx's sex life" (Meckier 165). Passages, sentences and words that are voiced by characters are pulled into shape as the cut-and-paste of ideological chit-chat. As such, the reader is required to reconstruct Mond's fragmented passages in order to gain an insight to how the world has transformed into the hedonistic, behaviourist dystopia in 632 AF (After Ford). The past emerges through such reconstruction is rife with violence and blood: "the Nine Year's War" (BNW 52), "some bits of flesh and mucus, a foot, with the boot still on it, flying through the air and landing, flop" (53), "dead of anthrax" (54), "Simple Lifers were mowed down by

[53] See Wegner for his detailed analysis and mapping of "possible worlds" in *We* (147-171).

machine guns" (55), "British Museum Massacre" (56). As Adam Stock notes, "it was precisely through the violent deaths of untold millions that the founding of the World State eliminated suffering and war and instituted stability and material well-being" (429). This is accompanied by the eradication of the past: "a campaign against the Past; by the closing of museums, the blowing up of historical monuments […] by the suppression of all books published before A. F. 150" (BNW 56).

The World State, nonetheless, preserves the Savage Reservation as a living museum inhabited by Indians; there, things eradicated in the World State are still left to exist, such as family, diseases, gods, old age and emotions (BNW 116). Indeed, the idea of home itself is repeatedly castigated by the civilised as "an understerilised prison"; home is a mere remnant of primitivity (BNW 42, 43). This is where John the Savage, an illegitimate child between two future Londoners – was born and raised. He is then brought to the World State, only to discover the infantile dystopia without "god", "poetry", "real danger", "freedom", "goodness" and "sin" (BNW 215). A source of such ancient knowledge is *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, a forgotten book mysteriously left by his mother's lover (BNW 122). It is this "noble savage" figure that gives a reactionary undertone to the novel; it is as though "Huxley urges us to a nostalgic, pastoral return to utopia in the Reservation" (Gottlieb 64). As Erika Gottlieb argues, however, such an allegation is false, since John is depicted as a figure who is "left in a limbo" between "the primitive horrors of the Reservation and the sophisticated ones in the London of 651 AF", ultimately forced to commit suicide (69-70). John the Savage's yearning for the lost traditional values is a case of mythophilia, and he desperately forces them onto the child-like denizens of the World State, only instrumentalising the past without any reflection. Yet it would be an overstatement to conclude that John's (Huxley's) ideal is a mere product of "the inhibitions and cultural preferences of a late nineteenth-century public schoolboy" (Carey 89). It is indeed ironic that his final resistance – self-flagellation as a means of purifying himself –ends up with him making a spectacle of himself. His masochistic "performance" is then turned into a "feelie" – multisensory film – entitled "The Savage of Surrey", "could be seen, heard and felt in every first-class feely-palace in Western Europe" (BNW 226).

On the other hand, the state discourages any critical thinking by providing citizens with tranquilising drug called *soma*. Thanks to this, nostalgia seems to be

rendered impossible: “Was and will make me ill […] I take a gramme and only am” (BNW 101). Meanwhile, another main character, Bernard Marx, seems to have overcome such conditioning against the past and the future: he does not see “anything intrinsically objectionable in people talking about the remote past; that was one of those hypnopaedic prejudices he had (so he imagined) completely got rid of” (BNW 94). As with Zamyatin’s D-503, Bernard is depicted as a physically deformed alpha male. In a hyper collectivist society, physical abnormality becomes a conduit to self-realisation.[54] Helmholz Watson is another interesting figure in this regard. He is a state poet (BNW 71), again recalling Zamyatin’s character, R-13. Watson expresses great enthusiasm for John’s knowledge of Shakespeare, ending up being exiled to a distant island.

It should be noted here that denizens in both dystopias do not express particular longings for their own lived experience. D-503 and John the Savage do engage in mythophilia, that is to say, imagining the past which is long gone. This is a major difference from the dystopian novels by Orwell, Atwood and Ishiguro. On the other hand, whilst Katherine’s Burdekin’s *Swastika Night* does not focus on personal nostalgia, its depiction of an impulse for regaining access to the erased past is of particular importance for this study; Burdekin’s text mobilises a longing for the distant past as the main motive for resistance, rendering the text a space of contested temporalities. Compared with *We* and *Brave New World*, *Swastika Night*, the text analysed in the next chapter, thus provides an alternative perspective on the central topic of the thesis.

[54] “A physical shortcoming could produce a kind of mental excess. […] Mental excess could produce, for its own purposes, the voluntary blindness and deafness of deliberate solitude, the artificial impotence of asceticism” (BNW 72).

Chapter Two

Mythophilia in Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*

"Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothin' to do wid Him. If de fust woman God ever made was strong enough to turn de world upside down all alone, dese women togedder ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!"

Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" 1851 speech.

In his 1940 book review of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, George Orwell meditates on Hitler's imperialist project. He then offers an extrapolation of it as follows:

> Suppose that Hitler's programme could be put into effect. What he envisages, a hundred years hence, is a continuous state of 250 million Germans with plenty of "living room" (i.e. stretching to Afghanistan or thereabouts), a horrible brainless empire in which, essentially, nothing ever happens except the training of young men for war and the endless breeding of fresh cannon-fodder. ("Review of *Mein Kampf*" 117)

The striking element in Orwell's image of Hitler's empire is its sheer absurdity; war, or any type of state violence becomes an end in itself. Such worship of power and violence is surely detectable in Orwell's dystopia: "imagine a boot stamping on a human face. Forever" (NEF 280). What is troubling is indeed the motive for conjuring such a stagnant world where "nothing ever happens" except wars, which are a means of consuming surplus production to prevent the advancement of the human condition.[1] People outside the Party are excluded from the main narrative; the proles (producers)

[1] "The essential act of war is destruction, not necessarily of human lives, but of the products of human labour. War is a way of shattering to pieces, or pouring into the stratosphere, or sinking in the depths of the sea, materials which might otherwise be used to make the masses too comfortable, and hence, in the long run, too intelligent" (NEF 198)

are mere animals (NEF 75), and women and the racially marginalised are equally so. Orwell implies that such a mysterious drive for power and violence is after all part of human nature:

> Hitler, because in his own joyless mind he feels it with exceptional strength, knows that human beings *don't* only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags and loyalty-parades. However they may be as economic theories, Fascism and Nazism are psychologically far sounder than any hedonistic conception of life. ("Review of *Mein Kampf*", 118; emphasis in original)

Orwell here borders on anti-utopianism, or extreme pessimism in proposing that Hitler's programme, which appeals to "struggle, danger and death", is after all an inevitable consequence of the violent nature of human psychology ("Review of *Mein Kampf*" 118). The monolithic and stagnant empire of power worship in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* which Orwell extrapolated from *Mein Kampf* is, then, not wholly absurd; it is disturbingly convincing to him.

It should be noted here that it is not unusual for Orwell to castigate socialists and communists not only for their utopian fantasy, but also for their unmanliness (Patai, *The Orwell Mystique*; 85). As seen in the above quotation, his disdain is often expressed with a succession of nouns, which suggests a deeply personal nature of his criticism: "One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words 'Socialism' and 'Communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, 'Nature Cure' quack, pacifist, and feminist in England" (*The Road to Wigan Pier* 161). Similarly, the simple lifestyle is deemed simply despicable in *Coming Up for Air*: "Vegetarianism, simple life, poetry, Nature-worship, roll in the dew before breakfast" (CUFA 228). These comments are Orwell's reaction against a form of nostalgic rural utopianism embodied by "the garden city movement and early twentieth-century 'simple life' philosophies" (Waddel 21). As Patai contends, the sexist undertone is evident in Orwell's vitriol against the simple life. The validity of it becomes deeply problematic when such sexism is naturalised under the notion of human nature (which Orwell seems to be doing in the above

quotation on Nazism), without interrogating the origin of sexual antagonism in the first place.

Meanwhile, in *Proud Man*, Katharine Burdekin propounds two theories of "human nature" in order to deconstruct its myth: "One, that it is fundamentally noble, and the other that it can never change. The first idea comforts them, while the second *excuses* them for their most grotesque actions, thus allaying, if very slightly, their feeling of guilt" (27, emphasis added). The second is particularly of importance as it reveals the reactionary tendency in the act of naturalising the human condition. As Hannah Arendt maintains, one can only know "who" one is and cannot know "what", to which only God has an answer (*The Human Condition* 10); the discourse of human nature seems only to mythologise and consolidate the essence of the human, revealing its exclusive logic. [2]

Interestingly, Orwell's grim vision of the future Hitler's empire, which more or less exhibits his taste for a *nostalgie de la boue*, is elaborately depicted in Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*, published twelve years before *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, under the masculine pseudonym of Murray Constantine.[3] Extrapolating the Nazis' ascension to power in Germany and depicting a fascist dystopia where Hitler is deified, *Swastika Night* associates such impulse of world domination with the cult of masculinity. As is discussed in this chapter, Burdekin's text can be interpreted as an attempt to deconstruct the idea of human nature by revealing its gender assumptions.

The choice of Burdekin's dystopia for the analysis of nostalgia, however, might not be immediately evident especially when compared with the other three novels in this thesis. Along with other dystopian fictions, *Swastika Night* is constituted as a textual confrontation between a hegemonic narrative and a counter-narrative of

[2] Human nature should rather be understood negatively as that which haunts human existence, or metaphorically speaking, the shadow that one cannot jump over. The function of the discourse of human nature should be focused on defamiliarisation rather than familiarisation; the former sees the concept as an opportunity to re-think human possibilities, whereas the latter exploits the concept only for validating one's current point of view.

[3] According to Patai, it is unclear whether Orwell was aware of Burdekin's novel, although such speculation is not completely unfounded: "the internal similarities suggest that Orwell, an inveterate borrower, borrowed also from Burdekin. As it happens, Victor Gollancz, publisher of *Swastika Night*, was also Orwell's first publisher, and Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* was itself a Left Book Club selection, in 1937, just as *Swastika Night* was in 1940" ("Foreword" to SN xii).

resistence. Although a nostalgic/mythophilic undertone for the Holy Roman Empire within the hegemonic narrative is palpable,[4] the theme of nostalgia in the counter-narrative seems to be lacking in intensity. Indeed, it appears to be logically impossible for the rebel, Alfred, to idealise the past as Winston does in Orwell's dystopia, since denizens in Burdekin's Hitlerdom are almost completely in isolation from the world before Hitler's authoritarian regime, due to the authority's destruction of historical records and enforcement of their dogma. Compared with this, Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* narrates the story of Offred, who witnesses the transition from the pre-Gilead America to the Republic of Gilead, which enables her to gain a historical perspective. Meanwhile, there is no reference to history education in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*; in fact clones do not seem to be equipped with any skills for historical thinking (one school teacher in Hailsham lamentingly tells them that "You've been told and not told" [NLMG 79]); this results in their myopic world-view which allows their submission. Kathy's nostalgia is then confined to her own direct experiences with her surroundings. Although such nostalgia for one's personal, lived experiences should still be possible for Alfred in *Swastika Night*, the narrative does not quite focus on his everyday trivial experiences as Kathy does.

What characterises the counter-narrative in *Swastika Night*, then, is Alfred's nostalgia, or technically, mythophilia for alternative pasts; in other words, it is nostalgia for temporality itself. What motivates his desire to deconstruct the orthodox myth is in fact ancient monuments, old songs and legends which miraculously survived seven hundred years of Hitler's reign (further discussion on this will follow). Alfred's mythophilia is opposed to the hegemonic mythophilia, in that the former incorporates a more self-reflective perspective. As is mentioned, Burdekin's critique of hyper-masculinity also invites an interpretation of nostalgia/mythophilia from a gendered point of view. In short, *Swastika Night* proves to be a key dystopian text in its depiction of how memory and nostalgia are politicised and gendered, thereby presenting memory as a social construct.

[4] Loretta Stec comments on a strong nostalgic drive in fascist millennialism, stating that "[f]ascist ideology of the 1930s […] joined the rational with the mythic, in fairy tales, in modern agrarian communities, and in the works of Nazi ideologues such as Alfred Rosenberg, to create a visionary project" (180).

In Burdekin's imagined future, which is set 720 years after the birth of Hitler, the world is divided in two empires: Germany and Japan.[5] The Holy German Empire, a theocratic authoritarian state, is built on its utter enslavement of women. This surely anticipates Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, although the latter more explicitly addresses the issue of women's voices and resistance; they are, by contrast, completely silenced in *Swastika Night*, an issue which will be addressed fully later. All women (except Christian ones) are trapped in cages from their birth to death; their existence is only meant for the reproduction of future Nazis. In order to stabilise their superior position, men engage in constant physical/psychological abuses. It is then a logical consequence that rape is not considered a crime, for women are deemed not to possess "will and choice and a spirit of rejection" (SN 13).[6] If othering is to define and instrumentalise the existence of others for the self-preservation of the privileged, women are chosen as sacrifices for such an agenda. The ideological justification for this enslavement is to make women "fit in with the *new* German Manhood, the *first* civilised manhood of the world" (SN 82, emphasis added). A pseudo-utopian statement like this is common among other traditional dystopias. Such a world is in essence only a product of the extreme application of the age-old value system; in it, women are biologically inferior to men since their only ability is to reproduce descendants, as opposed to men who are capable of building an empire for dominating others (SN 81).

Yet it is indicated in the narrative that sacrificing women for men's self-preservation inevitably entails the sacrifice of men's self-preservation itself. One of those contradictions is the decline of birth rate, and another is men's growing inability to have sexual intercourse with women due to a deep feeling of disgust with them. It is indicated that the former is the main cause of a cease-fire between Germany and

[5] The Germans rule "Europe, Russia as far as the Ural Mountains, Africa, Arabia, and Persia" (SN 75), whereas the Japanese "rule over Asia, Australia, and the Americas" (SN 76). This division of the world by the two axis powers anticipates *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) by Philip K. Dick. Dick's narrative is set in America divided by the two countries, which makes a contrast to Burdekin's novel which only focuses on Germany and England. Meanwhile, as McKay notes, it can be speculated that *Swastika Night* invented the "'Hitler Wins' narrative" ("Katharine Burdekin" 190). Whereas this chapter is solely focused on *Swastika Night*, the author of this thesis is planning to conduct a comparative study of these two novels in terms of the theme of nostalgia; for instance, Dick's narrative is marked by an acute sense of nostalgia by Childan, an Americana antique shop owner.

[6] All the quotations from *Swastika Night* in the thesis are from The Feminist Press edition published in 1985.

Japan for more than seventy years, for men are needed to sustain their own country (SN 76).[7] The latter is exemplified by Hermann, Alfred's Nazi friend. Despite the law which orders German men to beget children by the age of thirty,[8] Hermann maintains that he is utterly unable to tolerate being with women at all (SN 22). This sheer revulsion against women even leads him to commit a brutal murder of a young attractive chorister, for he witnessed the boy's sexual assault on a Christian girl; Alfred accuses Hermann, believing that he assaulted the boy "[b]ecause he's a pretty lad who ought only to be interested in men" (SN 35). Hermann's love of men bears an extremely narcissistic tendency: it turns easily into hate when he sees in them their undisciplined urge to need women, who are equal to animals. On one occasion, Hermann muses over women and concludes that "women have no souls and therefore are not human", a statement which is a mere regurgitation of Hitler's dictum (SN 9, 11). In regards to this abomination of women, von Hess explains that "[t]o love a woman, to the German mind, would be equal to loving a worm, or a Christian" (SN 12).[9] The absolute elimination of women as a consequence of the ideology of hyper-masculinity seems to be reasonable enough (Patai "Orwell's Despair" 92; Carlo Pagetti 362);[10] the end (subjugation of women for a reproductive purpose) justifies the means (debasement of women), while the achievement of the former is paradoxically undermined by the latter.[11] Whereas these cases reveal internal contradictions of the Nazi ideology, the fact that the text does not elaborate on them is part of what makes *Swastika Night* ultimately anti-utopian.

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[7] Perpetual war is indeed one of the main characteristics of Orwell's dystopia. Whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* war operates as a means of creative destruction in terms of economy, *Swastika Night* indicates that perpetual war would eventually become untenable in a hyper-misogynist dystopia.

[8] By contrast "a whole-time homosexuality" is permitted for Englishmen, since they are among inferior subject peoples (SN 166).

[9] Commenting on homosexuality in the Holy German Empire, Alfred also states that "Men do love boys, nearly all of them, at one time or another, in one way or another" (SN 120)

[10] "A man cannot hold to one woman because he despises all women. He cannot *love* a woman, wholly and exclusively and for his life, because at the bottom of his mind he hates her sex" (*Proud Man* 43; emphasis in original).

[11] It should not be mistaken here that *Swastika Night* is symptomatic of homophobia; it only criticises a type of homosexuality which discriminates the opposite sex as a whole. McKay also notes that the text represents homosexuality as the result of the "institutionalised misogyny" ("Katharine Burdekin" 197). *Swastika Night* does touch on a more positive potential of homosexuality in its description of Hermann's self-sacrifice for Alfred. For more discussion on the problematic relationship between homosexuality and feminism, see "A Speculative History of No Future: Feminist Negativity and the Queer Dystopian Impulses of Katharine Burdekin's *Swastika Night*" by Alexis Lothian.

The hegemonic narrative and collective amnesia

Whereas it is important to analyse how a hegemonic narrative is told and utilised for domination, the quality of a counter-narrative becomes a more crucial issue in analysing dystopian fiction as social criticism. As is mentioned in Chapter One, Terry Eagleton suggests two modes of persuasion: criticism and critique. The former appeals to an alternative master-narrative (i.e. socialism, communism, etc.) in order to invert the existing value system; the latter rather attempts to reveal internal contradictions in society by way of deconstruction. What is to be investigated in social criticism is not only how a hegemonic narrative suppresses voices of the marginalised or othered, but how even a seemingly subversive narrative can be oppressive in itself. The dialectic halts when the anti-thesis starts to reproduce the binary logic of the thesis, hardening itself as a myth. This reflexivity between the thesis (the hegemonic: myth) and the anti-thesis (the subversive: reason) is what needs to be revealed and overcome, which would set the dialectic in motion again.

Swastika Night foregrounds two conflicting narratives: namely, the Hitler Bible and the book of secret history. In this authoritarian dystopia, the Hitler Bible is the only legitimate account of its origin, which is replete with myths invented by the regime. History in totalitarianism is, so to speak, the "handmaid of authority", lacking in objective points of view (qtd. in Assmann 57). The high-ranking Nazi knight, von Hess, explains to Alfred that it was a "typical scholar knight", von Wied, who contributed most to the destruction of history and creation of the Hitler Bible.

> This book of von Wied proved that Hitler was God, not born but exploded, that women were not part of the human race at all but a kind of ape, and that everything that had been said and done and thought before Hitler descended was the blackest error of subhuman savagery and therefore must be wiped out. (SN 79)

Von Wied's doctrine provides the ideological background of Hitler's cult of masculinity, negating the past as it is mere "subhuman savagery". This eradication of history is in turn a symptom of "[t]he fear of memory":

> All history, all psychology, all philosophy, all art except music, all medical knowledge except the purely anatomical and physical – every book and picture and statue that could remind Germans of old time must be destroyed. [...] [E]ven Hitler's own book, hallowed throughout Germany, could only continue to exist in part. There was memory there, you see. Memory of what we call the Preliminary Attack. (SN 79)

The only texts that exist after a series of large-scale book burnings are "technical books and the Hitler Bible". Any writings including "records in stone and in paint and in architecture" have been obliterated (SN 116). Such censorship even went so far as to eradicate national/local legends (SN 117). Besides, "[n]ews was always broadcast" to the majority of citizens since they are kept illiterate (SN 17). Here, banning of literacy and oral governance are employed as a means of control. Collective amnesia is thereby achieved by the extensive destruction of historical records, which even includes the memory of destruction itself.

By contrast, the empire's mythology has to be kept remembered and enacted by actual bodies of its inhabitants. In regards to the formation of a collective memory, Aleida Assmann highlights this body politic of collective memory:

> [A] collective memory is necessarily a mediated memory. It is backed up by material media, symbols, and practices which have to be grafted into the hearts and minds of individuals. ("Transformations" 55)

The novel indeed begins with a detailed description of the Creed, a "monthly worship" in one of the Swastika churches; it also mentions a yearly ceremony called "the Quickening of the Blood", the largest one among many others which strengthen "the Holy Mystery of Maleness" (SN 5-6, 9). In contrast, the "Women's Worship", which is held once in every three months, is for "psychic subjection", indoctrinating the lesser, ape-like state of their being. Whereas nostalgia is, theoretically speaking, first of all a reaction to one's lived experiences, mythophilic recollection actively enacts memories, and when it is collective, it "grafts" those memories into individuals. In the Holy German Empire, the institutionalised collective mythophilia is utilised as a means of oppression by the state; citizens are denied of any alternative historical views outside the terrain of the "sacred" collective memory, trapped in the abyss of the dogmatic belief system which only allows a single, homogeneous mode of thinking.

Tom Moylan claims that this common characteristic in dystopian fiction – the master narrative as solipsistic identification with the fabricated past – is often countered by another narrative which voices a call for objectivity:

> Whereas the hegemonic order restricts memory to nostalgia for a fictive golden age that embodies the ideological attributes of its own system, the dystopian protagonist often reclaims a suppressed and subterranean memory that is forward-looking in its enabling force, liberating in its deconstruction of the official story and its reaffirmation of alternative ways of knowing and living in the world. (149)

"A fictive golden age", in the case of *Swastika Night*, marks its beginning in the explosion of Hitler, "the perfect, the untainted Man-Child" (SN 6); the emperor initiated a "holy" conquest of the world, which promises his second coming at the completion of such endeavour and the consequent redemption of humanity.[12] The point is not so much whether such a reconstructed memory is fictive or not as how it presents a utopian image, the culmination of human progress. Lord Hitler, who rectified all wrongs in the world, ends history itself in order to release humanity from their barbaric past. Yet such rhetoric of the golden age is in fact a tool for the privileged to ensure their power over the unprivileged, the inferior.

What underlies this manipulation of collective memory is the regime's narcissistic identification with the fabricated past where men are categorically superior to women. In *The Sexual Politics of Time: Confession, Nostalgia, Memory*, Susannah Radstone propounds her theory of such nostalgia from a psychoanalytic perspective: "fetishistic nostalgia can be understood as a retreat from the present. It represents the attempt to fold the present into the past in order to escape a (castrated) future" (Radstone 149). On Radstone's account, fetishistic nostalgia is particularly masculine since it is castration anxiety that causes such idealisation of the pre-Oedipal past, that is, the phallic mother. As Radstone stresses, however, this does not suggest that all men are susceptive to fetishistic nostalgia whereas all women are immune to it:

[12] This is an obvious reference to Jesus Christ; incidentally, according to Orwell, the photograph of Hitler in Hurst and Blackett's edition of *Mein Kampf* "reproduces the expression of innumerable pictures of Christ crucified, and there is little doubt that that is how Hitler sees himself" ("Review of *Mein Kampf*", 117).

"psychoanalysis usually reveals bisexuality – meaning the co-presence of psychical masculinity and femininity – within the subject" (Radstone 150).

As is discussed above, "the fear of memory" is characteristic of the nature of the Hitlerian regime: "In the heart of the pride lurked a fear, not of anything physical, but of Memory itself" (SN 79). Whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the constant rewriting of history is employed as a means of ensuring the perfect status of the master narrative, in *Swastika Night* it is the absolute negation of the past. The "fear of memory" can then be interpreted as fear of time itself, that is, its unrelenting forward movement. Building the Hitlerdom is in this sense an attempt to establish an ahistorical enclave free from linear progression of time; the fear of memory is, in an ultimate sense, the fear of death.

The hegemonic narrative in *Swastika Night* therefore is symptomatic of what Assmann calls "a conflation of history and memory", which is on her account characteristic of totalitarianism: "Totalitarianism can therefore be described as an attempt to restore the premodern state monopoly over history under modern circumstances and with modern means" (64). This apparent regression for the purpose of consolidating itself as a masculine utopia is made possible by modernity embodied particularly in the theory of social Darwinism, technologies for human conditioning, and war weapons.[13]

[13] However, Stock rightly points out the lack of the use of technology in Burdekin's dystopia: "it lacks the state apparatus of the properly modern, totalitarian regimes of Huxley's World State and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The invasive capabilities of the modern state are necessary to prevent citizens from learning how to inquire more successfully about the world, particularly in relation to the past and historical change" (Stock 437). In Orwell's dystopia, it is indeed omnipresent technologies such as microphone and telescreen which are employed by the Thought Police that put people in a constant state of paranoia, incapacitating their will to resist. In *Modernism and Fascism*, Roger Griffin discusses how it was believed that fascist myths of rebirth by Mussolini and Hitler could be "engineered through the power of the modern state" (8); Griffin argues as follows:

> In practical terms, the realisation of the Nazi new order depended far more on the daily routine of thousands of well trained German scientists, experts, and technicians, […] quietly going about their business in the countless fields of applied science, technology, and administration that make up technocratic modernity than it did on the theoretical writings of high-profile ideologues such as Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger. (310)

The power inherent in science technology, which is enabled by instrumental reason and culminated in the atomic bomb in the Second World War, seems to have been underestimated by Burdekin.

However, the very unambiguousness of the official history itself inspires sceptics like Alfred to question its authenticity. Adam Stock foregrounds this point as follows:

> In *Swastika Night* the past is seen through the framework of a mythology that is both unalterable and full of inexplicable "mysteries". The regime hopes that historical inquiry will disappear simply through neglect. Alfred and von Hess both give the lie to this hope by interrogating the inconsistencies of Nazi mythology. (Stock 436)

Alfred, with the help of von Hess, attempts to deconstruct the regime's mythical narrative of its origin to free themselves from the stagnant present, and curiously, Alfred appeals to his own mythophilia for the lost Englishness. However, this does not make their counter-narrative immediately liberating, albeit subversive; the difficulty of positing an antithesis is, as was discussed earlier, its tendency to mirror the logic of the counterpart, ending up halting the dialectic and producing another enslaving myth.

Counter narrative: Alfred as an English hero

Burdekin's narrative centres on the struggles of an English airplane engineer called Alfred to preserve von Hess's book of secret history. In opposition to the Hitler Bible, the book, along with the photograph of the living Hitler, serves as a counter narrative; these are represented as a locus of truth. The book is a testimony of the erased past, which has been passed onto later generations exclusively among the family of an old knight, von Hess. It was secretly written by his dissident ancestor, Friedrich von Hess, a Teutonic Knight of the Inner Ring of Ten when the Nazis seized power. While being on the search for the next messenger of truth due to the loss of his three sons in a war, von Hess tests Alfred's bravery by ordering him to fly an airplane with him, which is strictly prohibited for the English, an inferior "race". This rite of passage, which could result in their death, is essential for von Hess, for he believes that "truth is an intolerable burden even for a grown man" (SN 54). Alfred then turns out to be fearless enough, demonstrating his will to die for protecting the hidden document. What is implied in this episode is that the survival instinct needs to be overcome, not so much

to display one's superiority over others as to prove oneself to deserve a life better than the one assigned by the state.

It is then revealed that there existed in the past empires other than the Hitlerdom, including the British Empire, and women used to live alongside men and were allowed to exercise the right to reject men's orders. Moreover, Christianity was not a race but a religion, and Hitler himself belonged to it (SN 71). As Friedrich von Hess admits in the text, that is only "the smallest fragment of the truth of history" (SN 74), his account of history is inevitably partial, yet the impact of the series of alternative perspectives is enormous and life-changing to denizens who have been denied their access to any historiography other than the ideology of the Holy German Empire.

Alfred's reaction to this series of revelations is, however, not so much a feeling of utter shock and subsequent despondency (as are exhibited by Hermann) than that of euphoria. The forbidden book provides an alternate historical perspective to the Hitler Bible, enabling Alfred to sense a glimmer of hope for resisting the Germans. This results from Alfred's sceptical character, which is suggested in the text to be innate to him as an Englishman (SN 115). In regard to this, Stock notes that "[Alfred's] critical awareness prefigures his reading of the book" (SN 431). Indeed, even before becoming acquainted with von Hess, Alfred, who is one of the few literate people thanks to his occupation, comments on the Hitler Bible that "[i]t's an unsatisfactory book. Something wrong somewhere. It leaves you empty" (SN 29). Yet it is problematic that his natural scepticism remains utterly blunt when it comes to women's rights: "Alfred had never worried about the ordinary day-to-day sufferings of women" (SN 59). To be fair, after "the revelation", Alfred becomes more critical of his own sexist view: "*why* should they be unhappy now, when they are at last required to be nothing but animals?" (SN 105, emphasis in original). This is a valid point, for if women are truly animals, they would not be able to have the awareness of unhappiness; the fact that they must be constantly discouraged to behave like men through psychological conditioning proves their human qualities.

Meanwhile, Alfred does not adopt a dogmatic stance by slavishly absorbing the book verbatim, even though it is a symbol of truth; the existence of the absolutely authentic history is precluded by Alfred's dialogic scepticism. Most of the lengthy

dialogues in *Swastika Night* in fact consist of Alfred's debate with von Hess who provides him with a summary of the book, with topics ranging from past civilisations, women, masculinity, music, to religion.[14] This interactive and dialogic reading methodology makes a contrast to that of Winston in Orwell's dystopia, who also procures a copy of the secret book written by the leader of an opposition group against the state. His reading is a solitary and monologic activity in two senses. Firstly, he does not discuss matters in the book with others (Julia does not have much interest in reading it, for she is "only a rebel from the waist downwards" [NEF 163]). Second, for him, "[t]he best books, […], are those that tell you what you know already" (NEF 208); the function of the book is to confirm and validate Winston's pre-existing thoughts. He therefore puts down the book half way, full of disappointment, for it "had not actually told him anything that he did not know" (NEF 226). What Winston desires is the definitive account of what brought about the dystopian state, yet such a monologic reading attitude runs a risk of reifying knowledge; that is, the book is either useful or useless for Winston's self-interest.[15] George Mckay comments on the difference between these two contrasting reading methodologies: "Winston's process of self-reading operates more as a restabilising than a destabilising event [which is experienced by Alfred]" ("Metapropaganda" 308). Such difference is also exhibited on the level of form. Stock's following comparison of this point with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is suggestive in this respect:

> [W]hile in *Swastika Night* the reader encounters the book indirectly through the dialogues between Alfred and von Hess, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the situation is reversed: almost thirty-four pages are devoted to an extract from the book itself. (Stock 433)

In regards to this, von Hess's text claims itself as a subjective historiography, and it is thus destined to be partial and fallible; its author is "always in despair", which can be seen from remarks in the book such as "[h]ere my memory fails me" and "[h]ere I have

[14] Patai also notes that, instead of mobilising "one fully knowledgeable 'informant' who would speak didactically to the reader", *Swastika Night* employs a dialogic technique in its narrative, which is "a departure from her earlier novel *Proud Man*, of which *Swastika Night* is in many ways an extension" ("Gender and Power" 91).

[15] It is, nevertheless, important to keep in mind that denizens in Oceania are all under the influence of the extreme degree of paranoia which is instilled by the state through various types of state apparatus. Winston's ability to think critically might have been stifled beyond recovery.

alas no further knowledge" (SN 74). By contrast, the tone of the political treatise in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (entitled *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*) is impersonal and detached throughout, presenting knowledge in a rather monologic, declarative style, which reveals its dogmatic nature.

What stands out in *Swastika Night*, then, is Alfred's capability for active listening, which can be compared with Winston's pessimistic moralism and self-pity in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Alfred's critical, but as yet constructive attitude comes to the fore when he questions and counter-argues von Hess's statements. For instance, von Hess unreflectively castigates the Japanese for their "ape-like imitativeness", stating that "[t]he Japanese are quite incapable of originating anything at all, or creating anything except yellow-faced babies" (SN 112). What is implied here is that the German Empire not only degrades women and the Christians, but the Japanese in the same way by viewing them as sub-human, or apes. Alfred notices von Hess's potential bias against the Japanese, and points out the unmissable affinity between the Germans and the Japanese particularly in terms of their rabid interest in world-conquest. Alfred goes on to suggest, "when you see people you can criticise who have the same idea of life as you, you see not perhaps how bad the idea is but how dull it is?" (SN 113). Alfred here attempts to shift the focus of discussion to the ethical validity of conquest itself so as not to reproduce the oppressive logic by degrading others. Alfred also attentively listens to the teaching of Christianity by a devout Christian named Joe Black. Although Alfred is sceptical about religious people in general since they prioritise their belief over promises and mutual trust in the common world (SN 186), he does not completely dismiss Joe Black's account, showing his willingness to understand its creed.

What concludes the counter-narrative is Alfred's determination in his task of passing the book on to future generations so that his descendants could mobilise it for their liberation; it is not so much for resisting the regime *per se* as for expanding their consciousness. This motive can be detected in Alfred's pledge of non-violence in his resistance against the authorities, which again can be compared with a more or less uncritical treatment of violence as a means to resist in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the use of it is unquestioned as long as it contributes to overthrowing the regime.[16] As

[16] There are numerous references to non-violence in *Swastika Night* (29, 100, 125, 131, 115).

it is named "the rebellion of disbelief" (SN 26), Alfred's agenda lies in preservation of memory and historical records, along with healthy scepticism. He declares that "I am the repository**,** the place where a very old human idea is kept" (SN 30). Alfred perceives himself to have been impregnated with the memory which originated before his birth, which is yet to be recovered. Here, it could be said that his mission is rooted in his nostalgia for a dynamic temporality: time as a driving force for change and a source of objective perspectives of the world, which has been lost in the Hitlerdom: "[The idea has] been homeless perhaps, for want of a place. Or resting. Or hibernating. But never, never dead" (SN 30). One could argue that this idea of the body as a repository of the past is influenced by the theory of organic memory, which was popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[17] Here, memory can be transmitted over generations, considering that the past is preserved not only through records, but also through affects, habits and customs. Affect and bodily reactions cannot be simply destroyed like other materials, and they operate as internal mnemonic devices. For an absolute control over people, the state would constantly need to supress and discipline them through economic, cultural, and psychological means. Alfred's desire for change – a utopian wish – is deposited in his body. This could be interpreted as a subversive element of his mythophilia.[18] Such desire is, however, by all means

[17]"The theory of organic memory placed the past *in* the individual, *in* the body, *in* the nervous system" (Otis, 3; emphasis in original); "One absorbed one's environment. […] the body of an individual was a record, a palimpsest, perhaps, of its interaction with its environment, in its own lifetime, in its grandparents' lifetimes, and in the lifetimes of its distant ancestors" (Otis 6). It could be speculated that this theory influenced Orwell's use of the term "ancestral memory" in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (NEF 100).

[18] It should be stressed, however, that the idea of hereditary memory can be utilised for a nationalist agenda, fabricating the essence of the body of a nation. The discriminatory potential of such a gesture is also evident in the way racism is the corollary of the hegemony's dissemination of essentialist discourses as the incontestable truth. Arguing that it is not essentialism *per se* that is discriminatory but the naturalisation of essentialisic categorisation, John J. Su states that "[t]he idea of race that was used by the Western powers to justify colonialism and slavery, for example, depended on a set of essentialistic assumptions about biological differences among races that was not sustainable upon interrogation" (*Imagination* 124). For Su, essentialism in terms of race is valid as far as it accepts "critical and self-conscious inquiry" (*Imagination* 124); although this seems paradoxical, what is highlighted here is one's racial identity as something given and cannot easily be altered, and thus, as a source of one's self-undersanding through historical reflection. In analysing "racial memory" which is prevalent among ethnic American novels in the latter half of the twentieth century, Su concludes that "[r]acial memory is invoked not to provide a fixed or static characterisation of individuals but to *encourage imaginative explorations of existing portrayals of minority populations* from alternative points of view" (*Imagination* 125; emphasis added). Alfred's mythophilia can be categorised as such racial memory as far as Alfred keeps the discursive field of his race open to inquiry and utilises it as an opportunity to understand himself and

not totally of an accidental nature; it is triggered and nurtured by some mnemonic devices which survived a state-ordered collective amnesia.

Mythophilia and the cult of King Alfred

There are several key facts which motivate Alfred's unassailable yearning for the past prior to his birth. First, as is also mentioned in Chapter One, the lack of surname triggers Alfred's inquisitiveness. He is officially recognised as "Alfred Alfredson, E.W. 10762" (SN 44). It is highly likely that "E.W" indicates his place of birth (England, Wiltshire), followed by an identification number. His last name, Alfredson, is a patronymic. It however signifies "nothing" to Alfred since it is not a permanent surname, the absence of which is implied in the fact that the geographical information is added (SN 90). Alfred instead demonstrates a certain degree of affection for his generic name, "moonraker", a name for the natives of the English county, Wiltshire. Yet the text foregrounds his wish to possess a permanent patronymic, that is, to identify his original surname in order to trace his family origin (SN 19). In regards to this, von Hess, who is called with his surname throughout the text,[19] reveals to Alfred that only the knights possess surnames while any other citizens, including Nazis, are not allowed to have them (SN 133).[20] This is to prevent them from having any "family feeling" (SN 133). They are only permitted to select their name from a limited list of common first names, so that any sense of individuality is likewise suppressed (SN 133). These naming practices operate as a means of the state's control of its subjects. It abolishes families in order to establish one gigantic family under Hitler. For the Nazis, "the Blood itself is to be their family" (SN 133). By contrast, von Hess, being a dissident, believes in "a paternal rule" over pure bureaucracy in the name of the Blood, for "[u]ntil men can rule themselves, a father is a better thing to obey blindly than a government" (SN 146).

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others.

[19] His full name is Friedrich Kasparsohn von Hess.

[20] Hermann's full name is Ericksohn, H.D.B.H. 7285 (SN 44). The four letters presumably represent Heiliges, Deutschland, Bayern, Hohenlinden.

A second factor which motivates Alfred's mythophilia is ancient monuments, legends and old tunes. Stonehenge, near his homeland, Salisbury, is one such. Reacting to von Hess's claim that it does not really belong to Alfred since it is pre-historic (a symbol of "tribal darkness" [SN 117]), Alfred maintains that it is now his possession – part of his *own* memory which enriches his Englishness (SN 118).[21] Another act of mythologizing can be seen in the way he worships King Alfred the Great. He refers to a statue of King Alfred the Great, "a great English leader", in Winchester. Von Hess explains to Alfred that King Alfred "organised the Saxon law, and prevented England from becoming Scandinavian" (SN 133). Alfred then identifies himself as the next Alfred the Great, declaring that "a man called Alfred is to deliver England from the Germans" (SN 30). It is interesting that Burdekin here chose ancient cultural entities such as King Alfred and Stonehenge to delineate an oppositional ideology against the Germans. The statue mentioned in the text indicates the grandiose statue of King Alfred, created by Thomas Thornycroft, which was unveiled in the "National Commemoration" in Winchester in 1901, marking the millennium of King Alfred's death. The plaque attached to the statue says: "To the founder of the kingdom and nation", indicating King Alfred's quintessential Englishness. In *"England's Darling": The Victorian Cult of Alfred the Great*, Joanne Parker states that "between 1800 and 1901, a cult of the Saxon king developed in Britain, with at least four statues of Alfred erected; more than twenty-five paintings of him completed; and over a hundred popular 'Alfredian' texts published – including poems, plays, novels and histories, as well as children's books" (ix). During the Victorian period, King Alfred became a national icon as an intellectual, Christian conqueror who succeeded in expelling the Vikings, while establishing law and education; the cultural image of King Alfred came to embody Victorian virtues. Whether it was the author's intention or not, in depicting its rebel figure, Alfred, *Swastika Night* seems to have participated in the making of this English national memory by appealing to King Alfred.

Yet the text more or less subverts such an image, especially by interrogating its imperialist connotation. When Alfred jumps up in euphoria in knowing that the English used to have an empire, von Hess swiftly condemns Alfred: "You ought to be ashamed of your race, Alfred, even though your Empire vanished seven hundred years

[21] It is indeed a dug-out near Stonehenge where Alfred chooses to hide the book from the Germans and where he eventually gets beaten to death by the Nazis.

ago. It isn't long enough to get rid of that taint" (SN 78).[22] Von Hess goes on to say that the Germans were in fact inspired by the English to construct an even larger empire, concluding that "[u]nshakable, impregnable Empire, […] the dream of virile nations", is "a monster that is killing us" (SN 78). Alfred then understands the self-destructive nature of the idea of domination, which lets him appropriate King Alfred as a colonialist. Incidentally, Alfred shares his surname with a Nazi ideologue, Alfred Rosenberg, who is mentioned in the text as a Nazi hero (SN 75). Although the text does not make such association explicit, this seems to be another textual critique of imperialism through its doubling of King Alfred and Alfred Rosenberg.

Meanwhile, music is another nostalgic impetus. While condemning Wagner for its violent nature, Alfred, regardless of his anti-German position, extols Bach; he even admits that he would remain faithful if Bach were God (SN 99). To Alfred, Bach symbolises non-violence, which stems from "[a] perfect faith in the goodness and universality of God" (SN 100); it does not matter for Alfred that Bach is a German. Regarding this, David Deutsch suggests that the text "emphasises the cosmopolitanism associated with Bach to promote peace in Europe" (212). By contrast, Alfred demonstrates his blind faith in an old English anti-Hitlerian song. Such a nationalistic attitude is again tested by von Hess, who claims that the tune must be German (SN 125). The text time and time again disrupts Alfred's act of mythmaking by complicating the ideology of Englishness.

The text then seems to propound the following theory. Regaining the English identity would provide an initial opportunity for resistance. However, it must not be turned into a metaphysical belief system. Despite his mythophilic disposition, Alfred declares: "The only hope probably for impersonal thinking is having to think by

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[22] The reprinted version of *Swastika Night* was published by the Left Book Club. The "Publishers' Note" is inserted next to the title page. It asks the reader to consider the nature of the novel as symbolic rather than prophetic, for "Nazism is too bad to be permanent" and it "cannot do spiritual harm even in the short run".

> [Murray Constantine] has not in the least changed his opinion that the Nazi idea is evil, and that we must fight the Nazis on land, at sea, in the air and in ourselves, he has changed his mind about the Nazi *power* to make the world *evil*. (emphasis in original)

A nationalist tone of this message is evident, implying that "we" the English must fight against Germany whatever it costs. This statement runs counter to a demand for non-violent resistance in Burdekin's text itself. It also belittles the impact of sexual antagonism in stating that the Nazis "can communicate the disease only to anyone who has the tendency to take it"; it implies that Nazism is only a cult upheld by perverts in another country, while the novel presents the idea that Nazism is a symptom of sexual antagonism, and in this sense it can happen anywhere.

yourself. *Any* kind of tradition must rot you up" (SN 111, emphasis in original). Ancient cultural artefacts, legends and music affect Alfred's existence, rendering him nostalgic for a past that is obliterated in the hegemonic narrative. Alfred in a way cannibalises ancient memory in his attempt to possess it and makes it part of his own memory; it should be stressed here that this longing is, according to Malpas's distinction, not nostalgic, but rather mythophilic. Yet by presenting Alfred's sustained self-critique and dialogue with others, the text underscores the danger of the will to possess a desired past.

Nostalgia as gendered

The nuanced nature of mythophilia in the counter-narrative makes a stark contrast to one in the hegemonic narrative, which is founded on the cult of masculinity. Does this then allow a re-conceptualisation of nostalgia as gendered? In this regard, Von Hess's following remark is somewhat remarkable in the sense that it foregrounds "regret", the bitter, painful element of nostalgia – *algia* – rather than the sweet semblance of return, *nostos*.

> [P]erhaps God allowed men to commit this crime against truth through his handy instruments, the Germans and the Japanese, to make a break between childhood and manhood, to give us a rest, to enable us to *overcome regret for what cannot come again*. (SN 131; emphasis added)

Before analysing the implications of von Hess's nostalgia, it should be first noted that his deterministic view of the rise of the Hitlerdom as a necessary process of regression in human civilisation is ethically problematic in its apparent denial of their will to conquer the world; it reduces history to God's sublime intention. Also, calling the atrocity of Nazism "a rest" in human history is controversial since it was surely never a rest for those who were sacrificed for the political program marked by an immature world-view; this gesture can be considered as a form of feigned innocence. Apart from these issues, what is proposed here is a possibility of nostalgia for temporality as

change and process. As von Hess stresses, the need to "overcome regret for what cannot come again", the emphasis of his nostalgia is not so much the reconstruction of the past civilisation, as humans' capability to overcome what is lost by envisioning and negotiating new futures. The past is here not seen as one's possession, but rather as that which is always/already out of reach.

Von Hess's nostalgia should, then, be distinguished from the narcissistic nostalgia in the hegemonic narrative. Here, Radstone's theory of gendered nostalgias provides an effective strategy to interpret the issue. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis, Radstone first of all argues that phallic fetishism can be seen in both types of nostalgia, but it is manifested differently from each other.

> In the fetishism of narcissistic nostalgia, which is, I would argue, the position most usually aligned with masculinity [. . .], the boy defends his not-yet-lost phallus through an identification with the father of Oedipal promise and through nostalgic/fetishistic fantasies of the phallic woman. In the fetishism of regretful nostalgia [. . .], most usually aligned with femininity, the little girl looks back with regret, "for what she does not have (any longer)". (Radstone 150)

On Radstone's account, masculine nostalgia is an "attempt to make the future resemble (an illusory) past" (156). As was mentioned in the above discussion on such a tendency in the hegemonic narrative, masculine nostalgia is strongly associated with castration anxiety and the consequent idealisation of the phallic mother, a utopian image of the past. Meanwhile, in psychoanalysing homesickness, Freud suggests that "whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself […] 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genital or her body'" ("The Uncanny" 245). The fantasy of the phallic mother provides a sense of a unity of the mother and the boy, the moment of innocence prior to the recognition of the mother's castration. The mother is here equal to the womb, a locus of such a self-contained condition, and as such it is imagined as a home country which grounds the subject. Being confronted by a threat of castration, nostalgia is mobilised as a defence mechanism through its retrospective fabrication of the phallic mother. In its extreme form such mythmaking, or search for the phallic mother, manifests as an attempt to reconstruct a desired past, which results in the negation of the other and reality, while protecting his own phallus from a castration threat. Home thereby

becomes the master-signifier which transcends any social antagonisms. In *Swastika Night*, the Germans, who suffer from war losses and economic catastrophe, equate home with the womb – the "blood and soil" – which is embodied as the *Holy* German Empire.

Meanwhile, feminine nostalgia is equally susceptible to the fantasy of the phallic mother, a wish to return to a primordial state of being outside reality. It is, nevertheless, more self-reflective, since it is hinged on one's awareness of the lack of the phallus which is inscribed in her body: "for the girl, the *wish* to go back sits alongside the *knowledge* that there can be 'no going back'" (Radstone 150; emphasis in original). The girl retrospectively realises that castration is not a threat but a fact; the phallus is a lack, not a loss.[23] The mother with the phallus is an image which is crossed out, irreversibly deprived; in discussing the phallic mother in relation to nostalgia, Mary Jacobus notes that it is "not only always lost but never possessed, always a sign of alienation" (137). In this sense, it cannot signify home in its full sense as in masculine nostalgia. Feminine nostalgia is fundamentally stifled with the knowledge of the negation which is marked in the female body. Radstone develops the concepts further and propounds the future-oriented potential of feminine nostalgia: "Benjamin's theory of the gaze […] seeks to *project* the affect associated with fetishistic illusion into the future, while dismantling its sustaining fantasy" (156). The following table illustrates the relation between two nostalgias:

[23] In "The Signification of the Phallus" (1958), Lacan theorises the phallus as a signifier marks the subject as split and lacking, irrespective of sex:

> The fact that the phallus is a signifier requires that it be in the place of the Other that the subject have access to it. […] it is the Other's desire as such that the subject is required to recognise – in other words, the other insofar as he himself is a subject divided by the signifying *Spaltung*. (581)

Shortly after this passage, Lacan speaks of desire: "This [The test constituted by the Other's desire] seals the conjunction of desire, insofar as the phallic signifier is its mark, with *the threat of or nostalgia based on not-having*" (582 emphasis added).

In *Reading Lacan* (1985), Jane Gallop views this distinction in terms of masculine and feminine, providing the theory of feminine nostalgia, which Mary Jacobus and Susannah Radstone draw on. See Gallop, "6. Reading the Phallus", pp. 133-156.

Dissatisfaction with the status quo --> two types of reaction	Masculine	Feminine
Castration Anxiety [FUTURE]	Threat	Fact
The Phallus [PAST]	Loss	Lack

Von Hess's "regret for what cannot come again" is directed to the loss of past civilisations, which is, importantly, retrospectively *imagined* through the reading of the forbidden book. Yet his position distances itself from pure masculine nostalgia by placing an emphasis on "regret" and considering the past as irrevocably lost rather than that which can be regained. Von Hess further develops his view of human history as a process of maturity:[24]

> [Men] have had a brilliant childhood, and that they will, if they can but proceed with their duty of growing up, pass on to a maturity before which the childhood genius even will be like a candle in daylight. (SN 131)

Here, it seems reasonable to conceptualise two types of nostalgia relatively rather than viewing them as diametrical opposites, since both share a characteristic of fetishizing their origin. Von Hess's future-oriented nostalgia can then be placed more towards feminine nostalgia for its self-reflexivity. This offers a glimpse of hope in Alfred's task as a messenger of "truth", for the knowledge that there existed an alternative past would enhance people's belief in their ability to envision and negotiate new futures through their engagement with the past, while avoiding narcissistic identification with a particular past. This is, however, not to claim that *Swastika Night* was able to provide a more nuanced, self-reflective nostalgia only because it was written by a female writer. In regards to this, by comparing dystopian novels written by men with those by women, Baccolini argues that "[j]ourneying back to the past for the dystopian woman writer and citizen is not an escape nor an idealisation, but a constant reminder of the limits of our culture and of the shaping of our identities" ("Journeying" 346).

[24] This echoes the following quotation from Burdekin's utopian satire, *Proud Men*: "Those of us who have had a reasonably happy childhood often look back to it with longing, and our fairy tales and legends have paradises, not of maturity, but of lost youth. We sigh for our youth, because in our real youth we are at any rate less perverted and more natural than we become later" (123). Burdekin maintains that adults in the modern society become perverted in their desperate attempt to adapt to society by covering up their true immature self.

Although this can be read as a plausible description of feminine nostalgia, it seems as yet problematic to ascribe the critical dimension of the text to the sex of the author. Such reading is not only essentialist, but also ignores the fact that it is male characters, von Hess and Alfred, who are able to offer a progressive view of nostalgia in the text. This suggests the possibility to appropriate each type of nostalgia regardless of one's sex.

This point should be stressed, since, as Radstone emphasises, feminine nostalgia does not exist outside patriarchy**;** it is not a transcendental force which can automatically subvert authority (151). Feminine nostalgia is indeed rooted in "the impact of phallocentrism within patriarchy", and as such it can easily turn into a simulacrum of masculine nostalgia (151). Although the girl does not possess a phallus in a biological sense, she can still appropriate it as a lost property rather than recognising it as a lack, thereby imagining the self as full rather than split. Castration anxiety can therefore be experienced by the girl, as well as fetishistic attachment to the phallic mother as its consequence. Informed by Jacobus,[25] Radstone detects in such appropriation of the phallus, especially by feminists, an essentialist fabrication of the past, that is, "[a yearning] for the impossibility of return to the fantasy of the phallic mother *or* [seeking] to 're-member' or imagine femininity from castration's 'other side'" (151, emphasis in original). In other words, when a feminist mobilises nostalgia for legitimising her cause, there is a risk of positively mythologising the image of the mother in order to restore a maternal, unalienated feminine utopia. The underlying issue of reifying the omnipotent phallic mother is that such strategy undermines the feminist project of resisting patriarchy, for "[i]f the mother is phallic, then there is nothing but masculinity after all; women are really men" (Jacobus 133). How can a woman stay being a woman in legitimising her resistance?

In addition, it should be noted that feminine nostalgia is always/already defined by the lack inscribed in the female body, and it seems slightly arbitrary how the element of regret in feminine nostalgia suddenly turns into a progressive attitude by way of Benjaminian projection. Such projection is characterised by a never-ending

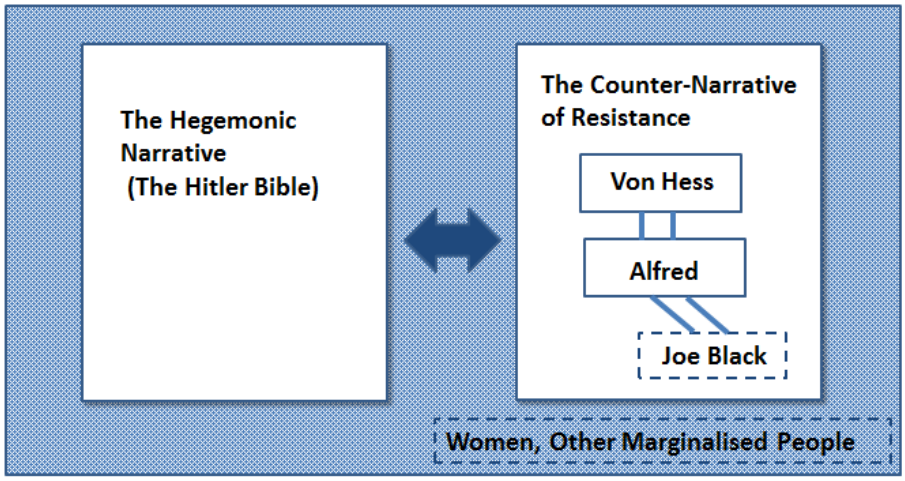
[25] "Paradoxically, the mother-centred feminist narrative which feminist theorists have developed as an alternative to the father-centred narrative of psychoanalysis risks reinscribing the fiction of the uncastrated woman who defends against castration anxiety – but does so at the price of denying sexual difference" (Jacobus 133).

and precarious back and forth movement (becoming), and it is thus understandable how some feminists attempt to mobilize the phallic mother as their fundamental origin (being). While Burdekin views the phallus as a source of power rather than a signifier without its reference in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the risk of essentialising the phallic mother is touched on in Burdekin's utopian novel, *Proud Man* (1934); when criticising the cult of the phallus in early twentieth-century Britain, the narrator from the future utopian world contends that "[t]he women had nothing to lose, but the men had everything" (*Proud Man* 32). The narrator then argues that women should "learn to associate power with the womb instead of with the phallus (31). Shortly after this, however, the narrator admits that such a position shares the same logic – the idolisation of a reproductive organ as a token of power – with the phallocentric discourse: "Naturally a female dominance would make the race no happier, nor bring it a whit nearer to humanity" (31). By contrast, in Radstone's interpretation, feminine nostalgia is split between regret about the lack of the phallus and a wish for something that can replace, or, rewrite it. Jacobus, on the other hand, proposes that authentic feminine/feminist nostalgia would "[look] back not only to what feminism desires but to what it desires different, now" (138). It remains ambiguous what sort of politics is available for such a split, groundless position; how can women, torn between the past and the future, be seen and heard in public in an Arendtian sense, or is this a suggestion to move beyond politics, and if so, is it somewhere or nowhere?

To summarise, the rhetoric of possession and loss is predominant in masculine nostalgia, while that of regret characterises feminine nostalgia. Whereas this again recalls Svetlana Boym's distinction between "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia", now each of them is presented with the valance of gender. *Swastika Night* contrasts the Hitlerian nostalgia, which is presented as a symptom of masculinity, with von Hess and Alfred's more self-reflective nostalgia, which points towards the potential of feminine nostalgia which is discussed above from a psychoanalytical viewpoint.

Women's lost voices

Despite the subversive nature of the counter-narrative which is discussed in this chapter, it is as yet problematic and paradoxical in that Burdekin's text completely abstracts actual voices of the oppressed. Ironically, women's voices are almost completely lost in multiple narratives in the text, voiced by the hegemony, von Hess, Alfred and Joe Black. Moreover, the marginalised (Jews, people of other races) are entirely muted (Lothian 466). The relation among them is schematised in the following diagram:



Whereas there are at least three dialogic structures in the text (the hegemony vs the book of secret history, von Hess vs Alfred, Alfred vs Joe Black), women and other marginalised people are excluded from any of them; in each dialogue, the former is degraded as subhuman, while the latter is absent.

Furthermore, as is discussed above, memory plays a crucial role in the counter-narrative of resistance. It is remarkable that Joe Black has memory of Christianity even though it is strictly oppressed; this has been possible because the Christians succeeded in passing on the Bible through oral communication (which recalls "the book people" in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* [1953]). On the other hand, women are absolutely denied any knowledge of their past. Baccolini notes as follows:

> Women's total ignorance of the past, which results in the impossibility to remember and to desire a better future and, therefore, organise oneself and resist, makes Burdekin's *Swastika Night* one of the most distressing dystopias of our century. ("Journeying" 348)

Critics also mention the fact that the text only focuses on male characters, although as is mentioned in the last section, von Hess and Alfred adopt a feminine position in their mythophilia.[26] Yet even after reading von Hess's book, Alfred is ultimately unable to treat women as human. This is depicted in the scene where he decides to meet Edith, and the daughter of his woman, Ethel. Holding the baby in his arms, he tells himself that "[i]t's not in the womb the damage is done", musing over a possibility for her to be a proper human individual (SN 161). Yet a growing feeling of disgust, and also that of jealousy towards Ethel, eventually overwhelm Alfred, when he realises that Ethel lost any capacity to think independently, yet simultaneously she displays a mysterious maternal ability to calm down the baby (SN 163). He concludes that, once von Hess's book is circulated among people, women's liberation would naturally follow (SN 165). It should be nevertheless noted that women's voices are muted by such unwarranted optimism.

It is likewise striking that the narrator also seems to be complicit with the dominant mysoginist view of women. Whereas *Swastika Night* is written in free-indirect speech, it is at times kept ambiguous who the speaker really is, as it is in the following quotation: "None of the women found their lives at all extraordinary, they were no more *conscious* of boredom or imprisonment or humiliation than cows in a field. They were too stupid to be really conscious of anything distressing" (SN 158). Although it could be assumed from the context that this is part of Alfred's thought, or even of thoughts of men in general, it is questionable why the narrator has to remain so close to the male characters throughout the narrative. Stec calls this entirely misogynist nature of the whole narrative into question, stating that "the emphatic nature of those criticisms [of women] is not challenged" (182). Stec then proposes that this is Burdekin's scare tactic. That is to say, the text maximises its function as a warning to women readers by depicting the absolute demise of women: "[*Swastika Night*] in some sense *is* 'the Book' that urges readers to see alternatives and create a

[26] In *Proud Man*, the narrator from a utopia voices a thought on driving social change: "Reforms, or abatements of privilege, cannot come from the depressed class itself, for except in the case of a sudden armed rising, it has not the power to initiate the reforms. They must be initiated and carried through by the guilty-feeling members of the privileged class" (61). Although this view is compatible with the counter-narrative of von Hess and Alfred, it contradicts an earlier statement in *Proud Man* which deems a sense of guilt or sin to be the root-cause of the distortion of sex (25).

better future" (182, emphasis in original). The text as a whole, nevertheless, can be interpreted as extremely conservative since it does not address the question of how women (and any other marginalised people) can speak and mobilise themselves for their rights equal to those of the dominant sex/race; on a fundamental level, the text seems to perpetuate the myth of masculinity by overemphasising its power, no matter how such power is socially constructed.

Meanwhile, there is one more female character other than Edith who "speaks"; she is called Marta, and is despised as a "revolting dirty old woman" by everyone including other women (SN 15). Yet notably, Marta is the only female character who demonstrates the will to claim her existence. In one ceremony, von Hess accidentally orders women to beget more "daughters" due to a slip of the tongue (SN 13). While the majority of women immediately try to convince themselves that it is they who misheard the Kight's remark, Marta unashamedly reinstates what he actually said (SN 15). Marta's position is quite extraordinary, for she is deemed "[n]ot human, but not female" (SN 15). While she is regarded as subhuman due to her gender, her old age allows her to overcome "all womanly feelings of shame and humility" and to refuse to internalise the sense of inferiority (SN 15). As Lothian points out, however, Marta only appears on one page, which renders her existence insignificant (464); her marginalised condition also puts herself in an extremely vulnerable position. Marta is regarded neither as a man (human) nor a woman (animal), and as such, Marta is excluded to the very edge of the periphery of society. Yet her defiant attitude is remarkable, for it seems that having a memory of a better society is not crucial for Marta's resistance; it is her existence itself that legitimises her claims to be treated as human. She refuses to be defined in terms of gender expectations, which would be an initial step to deconstruct patriarchy and rewrite the phallocentric narrative.

Burdekin's dystopian text illustrates how both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives are driven by a sense of nostalgia, or more specifically, mythophilia. It allows an interpretation of mythophilia as rooted in a masculine defence mechanism against an unknown future. By contrast, the dialogic structure within the counter-narrative facilitates a self-reflective attitude towards its own mythophilia of Englishness, while utilising such a primordial drive for mythophilia – a utopian wish for change – as an affective ground for resistance. *Swastika Night*, however, remains an anti-utopian dystopia from the point of view of the marginalised,

since it only concentrates on male voices, with others' excluded to the periphery of the text. Yet on a deep level, it is indicated that, no matter how the Hitlerdom attempts to obliterate the past altogether, it is haunted by ghosts from the past who are waiting to be recovered by Alfred.

Meanwhile, Patai's following comment on the reception history of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and that of Burdekin's *Swastika Night* is of paramount importance:

> [H]ow ironic, though not at all inexplicable, that the novel [*Nineteen Eighty-Four*] which does not question male dominance, while ostensibly protesting against the pursuit of power, is the one that became world famous, while the other [*Swastika Night*] lies forgotten. ("Gender and Power" 95)

Burdekin's negative critique of society was once lost and now recovered, thanks to a feminist critic, Daphne Patai. This chapter itself is one attempt at a dialogue with Burdekin's ghost, with the aim of unleashing its potential as a critique of the social and political milieu of the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, as Patai maintains, Orwell's dystopia is still considered as the genre-defining masterpiece of dystopian fiction. Although his blindness to the issue of gender remains highly problematic, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and also his homecoming novel, *Coming Up for Air*, must be rigorously examined. This is because these two novels, when read together, provide numerous insights into the nature of nostalgia.

Chapter Three

Nostalgia against Death: George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

"I am not able, and I do not want, completely to abandon the world-view that I acquired in childhood".

George Orwell, "Why I Write" (319)

Part One: Between Recollection and Speculation in *Coming Up for Air*

Coming Up for Air was published in June 1939, about three months before the outbreak of the Second World War, and ten years before the publication of one of the hallmarks of dystopian fiction, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Whereas the common features between *Animal Farm* (1945) and Orwell's dystopian novel seem more obvious in terms of their political themes of flawed revolution and totalitarianism, those of *Coming Up for Air* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* likewise require careful attention. This is so since both novels strongly evoke nostalgia within their satirical narratives. Indeed, the pre-dystopian nature of *Coming Up for Air* is evident in its scathing critique of modern England. A detailed analysis of the theme of nostalgia, which is explicit in the elegiac narrative of Orwell's more realist novel, is crucial to expand the horizons of the reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; the former's nightmarish anticipation materialises in the latter, while both heavily rely on nostalgia as a reaction to an oppressive social environment. The main focus of this section is two-fold. The first is to analyse how the texts present nostalgia as a means to critique the status quo, and the second is to explore how nostalgia manifests itself paradoxically as a harbinger of death as well as a stopgap for confronting death.

Spectres of suburbia

Does not all homecoming inevitably end with disappointment? Regarding this question, Kant is often mentioned in theories of nostalgia. For Kant, what the Swiss homesick soldiers long for is their youth – "a carefree life and neighbourly *company*" – and thus homecoming is impossible: when they return to home, "they there find their anticipation deceived and thus even their homesickness cured" (qtd. in Illubruck 131; emphasis in original). The irony of homecoming is that one's return itself cures a painful recollection, not through the satisfaction of the desire but through the puncturing of it; the desire loses its object. In *Coming Up for Air*, George Bowling,[1] a middle-aged "travelling salesman", sets out on a small journey home to his fictional hometown in Oxfordshire named "Lower Binfield", to take shelter from an unsettling yet stagnant life with his wife and children in a London suburb named West Bletchley (CUFA 130).[2] Set in 1938, the forty-year-old is haunted by both the past and the future, in urgent need of reorienting his social values; the past manifests itself in partly fading but still poignant memories of his Arcadian childhood and the latter spectral visions of an impending war. Bowling's anti-modern sentiment is repeatedly expressed through a spatial metaphor: the future is "going downwards", "[i]nto the grave, into the cesspool", whereas the past is a way upwards, which would let him "come up for air" (CUFA 177). Patricia Rae aptly describes Bowling's attempt to consolidate his identity by re-living his memory as "psychological rearmament" (152). To add to this view, Bowling's obsession with homecoming is depicted in the text as if he is embarking on a spiritual pilgrimage, which would enable him to confront the moral decay of the modern world; Lower Binfield is indeed "shaped roughly like a cross with the market-place in the middle", although it is nostalgia rather than Christian faith that

[1] Orwell's protagonist, who is often mocked as Tubby, is a modern reincarnation of Tom Bowling, "the legendary personification of the courageous English sailor" (Kuchta 184). Todd Kuchta describes this ironical naming as an indicator of "the flaccidity of modern English manhood" (185).

[2] More specifically, Bowling lives in the Hesperides Estate of Ellesmere Road (CUFA 11). Kuchta notes that Ellesmere Road is "presumably named after the picturesque Shropshire market town, […] a feeble attempt to link modern suburbia with the rural past" (185). Yet Hesperides is the "place of the setting sun" in Greek mythology, which deflates the Arcadian effect. The Hesperides Estate is indeed introduced as "the property of the Cheerful Credit Building Society", which exploits both leases and builders (CUFA 11). "Bletchley" also stems from *bletch* (to blacken, stain etc.), signifying "suburbia's sullying of England" (185).

Bowling is passionate about (CUFA 37). His homecoming is in a sense prompted by his desperate wish for, not quite rejuvenation, but rebirth: "I don't even want to be young again. I only want to be alive" (CUFA 172). In regards to this spiritual symbolism, it seems ironical that the name of the hometown connotes something rather unholy ("low", "bin").[3] Yet its function seems to counter-balance the spiritual nature of the journey by foregrounding the generic character of the salesman in a suburb – middle-aged, middle-class, and *slightly* overweight.[4] Although George Bowling is only one of "the ordinary middling chaps" (CUFA 158), his concern over the future of Great Britain – with which he shares the initials (Kerr 36) – is full of poignant recollection and speculation, at times hinting at resilience, if not redemption.

Bowling's nostalgia is a threshold experience of his "middling" status, when physical dysfunctions begin to surface. His narrative indeed begins with his "false teeth", newly fitted by a "cheap" American dentist (CUFA 21).[5] Here, Bowling's existence is grotesquely objectified by an externalised body part, invoking the sense of the abject.[6] As such the teeth operate as a *memento mori*: "The things were magnified by the water in the tumbler, and they were grinning at me like the teeth in a skull" (CUFA 4). The artificiality of false teeth evokes his disgust at modern culture and lifestyle, which are characterised by substanceless surfaces: "nothing matters except slickness and shininess and streamlining" (CUFA 22) Ersatz foods,

[3] Incidentally, there is a village called Binfield Hearth in Oxfordshire. Apparently there is a restaurant called "Orwells", whose slogan is "Rural Cooking, Modern Approach" (http://www.orwellsrestaurant.com/ [website checked on 17 August 2017]).

[4] In "*Coming Up for Air*: a 'State-of-England' novel", Naoki Kondo stresses that Orwell effectively utilised this "middling" status of the narrator as a tool for portraying the ambiguity and uncertainty of the condition of England in the 1930s.

[5] There are hints at Bowling's satirical observation of Americanisation. To him, modern foods are laden with "stuff with American names, sort of phantom stuff that you can't taste and can hardly believe in the existence of" (CUFA 22). Also "[a] troop of girls" wear "American Navy" costumes with slogans such as "PLEASE KISS ME" (CUFA 215). Americanism is here associated with inauthenticity, and in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* it is associated with totalitarianism. For instance, Winston buys a glass paperweight for four "dollars" in London, which, according to Mr Charrington, cost eight "pounds" not long before Big Brother's regime (NEF 99). This detail implies, as Phillip E. Wegner likewise indicates, that Oceania is not "an extrapolation of a purely 'English' authoritarian state", but rather, "the Oceanic superstate *is* a figure for the United States, in relation to which England, or 'Airstrip One', has been demoted to the status of a minor regional outpost" (212, emphasis in original).

[6] Bowling's constant sense of disgust at falsity and fraud of modern society prefigures Winston's reactions towards Oceanian society, which is characterised by fake foods and palimpsestic history. In addition, Winston's teeth are violently pulled out by the torturer O'Brien and later restored. This symbolises not only Winston's defeat, but his newly fitted identity as a submissive member of the Party.

advertisements, radio propaganda and the gramophone are hallmarks of the hollowed-out experience of the modern everyman. What characterises Bowling's thoughts is that they are grounded on his synaesthesic experiences in his daily life; memories are triggered by various kinds of senses such as smell and taste. His belief resides in Edwardian England, carefully eschewing a particular political or religious position throughout his memoir.

Bowling's vitriol against modernisation is targeted not only at its prioritisation of appearance over content, but also at its speed of expansion – it festers like mould. In examining landscapes of London suburbia through windows of a moving train, Bowling is overwhelmed by how it lawlessly spreads onto the horizon "like gravy over a tablecloth" (CUFA 222):

> I looked at the great sea of roofs stretching on and on. Miles and miles of streets, fried-fish shops, tin chapels, picture houses, little printing-shops up back alleys, factories, blocks of flats, whelk stalls, dairies, power stations—on and on and on. Enormous! And the peacefulness of it! Like a great wilderness with no wild beasts. (CUFA 21)

It is as though streets and buildings have a mind of their own, swallowing up the countryside. Dominic Cavendish comments on this passage, stating that "[h]ere for a fleeting instant is an impression of the industrial machine as an entity so vast and variegated it attains the quality of a benign natural environment" ("*Coming Up for Air* Revisited" n.pag). What is highlighted in Bowling's utter befuddlement with the visibility of social transformations is his inability to map current society from his own everyman standpoint.

Ironically, Bowling's attempt to escape from modern lifestyle and an atmosphere of war in a London suburb is curtailed by his realisation that his hometown is not immune to the rapid social changes. Lower Binfield – once a small market-town of "two thousand people" – has now transformed into "a good-sized manufacturing town" (CUFA 189). Now inhabited by "a good twenty-five thousand" people, or in Bowling's harsh words, "[t]wenty thousand gate-crashers", Lower Binfield is nothing but "beastly chaos" from Bowling's point of view (CUFA 192, 208). There, "two enormous factories of glass and concrete" (CUFA 189) operate alongside "[h]ouses, shops, cinemas, chapels, [and] football grounds" (CUFA 192), with bombing planes ominously roaring in the sky. The connection between modernisation and war is

epitomised in a stocking factory which now produces bombs; its make-shift nature is baffling to Bowling due to his firm belief in social stability (CUFA 206). Small businesses had been taken over by "big combines" (CUFA 211), and the natural environment has been exploited to accommodate the modern lifestyle and increasing population. Suburbanisation of the once pastoral town is perceived in Bowling's stream-of-consciousness as a menace, an "enemy invasion" (CUFA 192). To his utter disappointment, the current Lower Binfield became a double of West Bletchley, further exacerbating Bowling's sense of uprootedness, or existential homelessness. He repeatedly asks, "where was Lower Binfield?", and "[w]here was the town I used to know?", eventually concluding that it is now buried underground "like the lost cities of Peru" (CUFA 189, 191). Here the rhetoric of colonisation is evident in Bowling's narration of the loss of his home.[7] His cherished landscape has been obliterated, and what dismays him is the fact that he knew all along the consequence of the trip; there is no absolute home where he can go back to, a home which provides him with the sense of security and continuity (CUFA 110).

The sense of nostalgia is here juxtaposed as a counter-force to a dynamic, uncontrollable progress of modernisation of the country. It should be noted, however, that the object of Bowling's nostalgia is not exactly his own particular childhood; it is rather the lost presence of "[a] settled period […] when civilisation seems to stand on its four legs like an elephant" (CUFA 76, 111). Bowling recalls that there used to be "the order of things" (CUFA 110) which existed in the epoch where Bowling used to live, although here he conveniently ignores all the sufferings and hardships of common people (CUFA 173). In contrast to this, modernisation is "ghastly flux" which seems to lack any *telos* (CUFA 112). Bowling emphasises how time used to be conceived as circular, and therefore the future was a mere continuation of the present: "everything goes like clockwork" (CUFA 50). Interestingly, this belief in circular temporality, or mythic conception of time, is exemplified in how Bowling used to think about death: "It's easy enough to die if the things you care about are going to survive. […] Individually they were finished, but their way of life would continue. Their good and evil would remain good and evil" (CUFA 111). Here, death is not a mere end of life;

[7] See Kuchta for his reading of *Coming Up for Air* from the perspective of the decline of Imperial Britain, seeing Bowling as the colonised rather than the coloniser: "[both suburb and empire] set down monotonous grids of modern domesticity, imprisoning and torturing their inhabitants and feeding parasitically on their lifeblood" (172).

individuals identify themselves as part of the community that they belong to, and as long as the community exists, the members would not cease to exist. What signals the demise of such a belief system in Lower Binfield is a newly constructed cemetery at the outskirt of the town. Bowling views this as a modern tendency to conceal and forget death (CUFA 190). In contrast to death in a small and stable community where one is recognised by others, death for an atomised individual in a constantly changing society is simply to disappear entirely from the world with little traces of one's existence. If the future is simply the unknown, it is evermore harder for an individual to nurture the sense of belonging, for there is no way to believe in the survival of one's site of belonging.

Commercialised nostalgia

Although rural nostalgia is counter-posed to suburban modernisation in *Coming Up for Air*, nostalgia is not simply represented as a form of mythologising the Golden Age of England. Taking this into consideration, Bowling's rejection of commercialised nostalgia, which is an emblem of falsity and inauthenticity, is particularly notable. This is epitomised in the ironical transformation of the house/shop where Bowling grew up. The old Bowling discovers that what used to be a seedsman is now an arty tea-shop. His site of memories is invaded by pretentiously nostalgic commodities such as antique furniture; a cup of tea, a symbol of Englishness, is "so weak that you could think it's water"; and even worse, "home-made" cakes are made with substitute butter and egg, which is intolerable to Bowling as an advocate of real food (CUFA 198-9). Even though the building itself is still intact and located in the same spot, for Bowling, this transformation amounts to the irreversible loss of his home, which is simultaneously the loss of part of himself: "I belonged to this house, or rather (what I really felt) that the house belonged to me" (199). Rae's reading of *Coming Up for Air* contextualises this consumerist nostalgia, or "marketed authenticity" of the English countryside which was "heavy catering to Arcadian impulses through tourism and commercialism in the late 1930s" (158): "The more intensely Britons sought out the ideal in the 1930s, the more they could not help but recognise it as lost, unavailable, certainly, as a consolatory device in the new world war" (158). Commercialised nostalgia, or what

Kuchta Todd aptly calls "ersatz English nostalgia" (194), weakens one's capacity to remember one's past since it promotes one-dimensional memories through mass communication. Bowling rejects "the sham countrified stuff" (223)[8] due to his belief that nostalgia is first and foremost personal, and thus based on lived experiences. By contrast, the past now became a mere object of exchange. Time is a linear succession of history, under which memories are hierarchised. Personal memory is colonised by commercialised nostalgia which exploits the loss of the past through its homogeneous, sanctioned images. In light of this, Bowling also abhors the shallowness of nature-worship and the simple life movement in Upper Binfield, a housing estate which is now called "the Woodland City" (CUFA 227).[9] Contrary to the name, there is "nothing left of the woods"; instead, it is awash with "faked-up Tudor houses" (CUFA 228). Commodification of the countryside life is represented as a highly inauthentic phenomenon; an ecological issue is also raised when it is revealed that the big pool, where Bowling used to enjoy fishing, is now turned into a rubbish dump for disposing of artificial materials such as empty tin cans; natural pools are also brutally eradicated in order to deter mosquitos (CUFA 229). For Bowling, nature – which is evoked in his memories of the serenity of beech woods, the Thames, primroses – primarily exists in the background of a stable pastoral landscape; it is home for one's existence. On the contrary, commodification of the countryside puts its natural scenery to the foreground solely for maximising profits, providing simulacra of nature. As such it is marked by contradictions in its manoeuvring of nature disguised as conservation, depriving Bowling of nature as home.

The uncanny

[8] Bowling's self-reflective attitude towards the countryside can also be seen in the following statement: "[U]nlike most Cockneys, I'm not soppy about 'the country'. I was brought up a damn sight too near to it for that. […] I'm not suggesting that the whole of humanity could spend the whole of their lives wandering round picking primroses and so forth. I know perfectly well that we've got to work" (CUFA 173).

[9] According to Nathan Waddel, this type of criticism "emerged from a set of distinct nineteenth- and twentieth-century customs of back-to-basics living", which "grew from a complex blend of aestheticism and socialist politics" (101). Ford Madox Ford's novel, *The Simple Life Limited* (1911), is a key text which satirises this movement. See Waddel (chapter four, "Magnetic Cities and Simple Lives") for a thorough analysis of this topic.

Although *Coming Up for Air* is in general written in a realist form, such a quality is at times interrupted by phantastic, or uncanny motifs and atmospheres in the text. This indeed signals a more alienating aspect of nostalgia, where the irreducibility of the past manifests itself in the nostalgic mood. As discussed in Chapter One, the past insists on its presence through nostalgia; the fabrication or narrativisation of the past is secondary to nostalgic experience. In his essay "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud introduces Ernst Jentsch's formulation of the uncanny: "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate" (qtd in "The Uncanny" 378). Bowling's recollection indeed conjures up various types of ghosts. First of all, Bowling describes Londoners as "all waxworks" and "skeletons walking", devoid of individuality (CUFA 25, 26). The masses' myopic concerns with their daily lives prevent them from realising paradigmatic changes which are being brought about by modernisation. This image of the living-dead masses falls into the first category, where an animate being is in fact inanimate; in Freud's essay, examples include "wax-work figures, artificial dolls and automatons" ("The Uncanny" 378). The second is ghosts of the past which continue to haunt Bowling's vision especially during his homecoming: "The past was sticking out into the present" (CUFA 196). Images of the past conjured through the mood of nostalgia frequently mesmerise Bowling in the way they superimpose what he sees in the present.[10] It is as if objects which existed in the past are still alive; it puts Bowling at the mercy of nostalgic visions, which indicates the second category of the concept of the uncanny. The third is a reflection of the second where Bowling begins to see himself as a ghost towards the end of his miserable journey home: "I'm the ghost myself. I'm dead, and they're alive" (CUFA 208, also see 209-10). This represents Bowling's painful realisation of the death of his past self. On the other hand, Bowling considers it inauthentic to harden himself as a relic of the past like his friend Old Porteous, a retired schoolmaster: "Perhaps a man really dies when his brain stops, when he loses the power to take in a new idea" (CUFA 168).

Compared to the masses as living corpses, machines and capitalism are evermore alive in their destruction of the Arcadian world which Bowling claims to belong to. As Kierkegaard stresses, contrast is a pre-requisite for recollection: "To

[10] See CUFA 190, 196, 197,198.

bring about a recollection for oneself takes an acquaintance with contrasting moods, situations, and surroundings" (13). It could therefore be thought that these contrasts between the pastoral and the modern, and between life and death, are what enables Bowling's nostalgic recollection. This discomfiting, uncanny experience of nostalgia is what is opposed to the publicness of one's being. Publicness is one's unself-reflective state of being, when one only recognises oneself among what Heidegger terms "das Man", or "they":

> [T]he everyday publicness of the 'they', […] brings tranquillised self-assurance – 'Being-at-home', with all its obviousness – into the average everydayness of Dasein. On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world'. […] Being-in enters into the existential 'mode' of the '*not-at-home*' [uncanniness]. (*Being and Time* 220)[11]

In the public mode, one is oblivious to one's individual self. It can be reclaimed through the realisation of one's death as an ultimate individuating phenomenon. An uncanny experience provides one with the opportunity to be aware of what Malpas calls "the essential questionability" of one's existence (161). Bowling indeed desperately questions himself why he set out on a nostalgic journey in the first place:

> But what really got me down was the kind of mental squalor, the kind of mental atmosphere in which the real reason why I'd gone to Lower Binfield wouldn't even be conceivable. […] who *would* understand, here in Ellesmere Road? Gosh! did I even understand myself? The whole thing seemed to be fading out of my mind. Why had I gone to Lower Binfield? *Had* I gone there**?** […] Nothing's real in Ellesmere Road except gas bills, school fees, boiled cabbage and the office on Monday. (246; emphasis in original)

It is this utter inexplicability of how the mood of nostalgia and an accompanying sense of uncanniness dominate the subject that marks the existential aspect of Bowling's memoir. Instead of confronting it, however, he chooses to suppress his longing for the lost epoch by desperately fixating himself on his daily life as an everyman in a London suburb.

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[11] This "Being-at-home" of publicness should not be conflated with a more authentic version which is discussed in Chapter One.

In regards to the issue of the uncanny, grotesque images of amputated legs rather strangely pop up in the text in two separate scenes. One is in relation to a murder case reported in a newspaper ("woman's legs in a railway waiting-room, done up in a brown-paper parcel"), and another is to an accident during a test flight of a British bomber plane, which kills two citizens and injures one ("in among the broken crockery there was lying a leg") (CUFA 23, 234-6). It is somewhat counter-intuitive that Bowling is struck not by their grotesqueness, but rather by the sense of tediousness they bring.[12] As an ex-soldier in the Great War, what amputated body parts signify to Bowling is the utter powerlessness of individuals against the machine; war machines mercilessly swallows up individuals. Abandoned legs are a reflection of the fragmented self, or what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls "the first 'death of the subject' of modern times": in the face of weapons such as machine guns, "individual courage and intelligence did not even improve soldiers' chances for survival" (117). Bowling's insensitivity towards disembodied body parts is then concomitant with the hollowing impact of modern warfare on individuals, which resulted in the fragmented sense of the self which is in need of unification through nostalgia: the war intensifies "the feeling of not being one's own master" (CUFA 117).[13] Yet the irony is that nostalgia does not offer pure consolation, for it simultaneously conjures unsolicited ghosts from the past – images of a past self which is no longer.

In realising that his hometown would never be the same as how he remembers, Bowling declares that "I'm finished with this notion of getting back into the past", admitting the futility of re-living the past (CUFA 230). Yet this does not mean that he has fully renounced his idealisation of the Edwardian England which is characterised by mythical temporality. The allure of rural nostalgia persists; Bowling holds onto a belief that its stable mode of life is ideal for individuals, for it ensures the immortal status of their lives through the quasi-eternal existence of the community they belong to. On the other hand, Rae stresses how Bowling overcomes rural nostalgia and eventually "discover[s] an authentic version of himself and own[s] up to his

[12] In a similar scene in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston sees an amputated hand in rubble and simply "[kicks] the thing into the gutter" (NEF 87-8).

[13] Yet Bowling is also aware of the sense of pride a war gives to soldiers. Although he could not see both of his parents in their deathbed due to his duties as a soldier, what overwhelms him is not the sense of loss and grief but rather "the pleasure of being seen in my second-loot's uniform, with my black armlet […] and my new whipcord breeches" (CUFA 118). In a way, Bowling's mourning is prematurely curtailed by the state sanctioned pride.

responsibility to ensure a safe home and health and education for his wife and children" (162). This realisation of the impossibility of homecoming – to re-live and indulge himself in the bygone era – in turn facilitates what Rae calls "radical nostalgia", "a renewed commitment not to the past, but to a future of significant social change" (149). For Michael Levenson, on the contrary, Bowling's "open nostalgia" is "a determined imaginative act", "an unembarrassedly affirmative recovery of early-century innocence" (72-3). It is surely simplistic to dismiss Bowling's mobilisation of nostalgia against modernisation as apolitical, for his act of recollection itself enables his scathing critique of the status quo through comparison. Yet Rae's "radical nostalgia" seems to be an overstatement, for what is implied at the end of the novel is not so much an everyman's determination to protect his family but rather resentful submission, despite Bowling's awareness of suburbia as a place which financially enslaves citizens while instilling political apathy.

As Kuchta contends, Bowling overcomes the logic of the coloniser and the colonised in his anti-imperialist critique of suburbia; the text operates as a warning against a fascist tendency among English suburbanites due to their "slave mentality", which is "a product of late-imperial anxieties" (188).[14] Yet Bowling's resentment nonetheless manifests itself particularly in his unreflective attitude towards the issue of gender, which is evident in his portraying of his wife as a half-witted and stubborn person who can never understand his thoughts. Commenting on Bowling's first person narrative and his persistent addressing of the reader, Daphne Patai exposes the everyman's desperate self-victimisation: "Bowling cannily whispers into the reader's ear and thus brings us close to him. If, that is, we are male readers or females reading-as-males" (*The Orwell Mystique* 199). As mentioned above, Bowling is characterised by his "middling" position in terms of age, class, and physique. Although he seems to come to terms with these three categories, Bowling refuses to compromise his masculinity. For instance, being confronted by his wife Hilda for his secret journey, Bowling is left with three options. The first option is to explain to her how much he has been suffering from the mood of nostalgia, and the third is to let Hilda believe that he cheated on her and "take [his] medicine" (CUFA 247). The first is beyond

[14] In a room where an anti-fascism lecture is held, Bowling sees a "coffin" on the platform, which turns out to be a piano (CUFA 152). It gives the reader the impression that Bowling sees death everywhere he goes.

Bowling's capability, and the third would be too reactive and defeatist. Here the second, or "middle" option is of particular interest: "To pull the old gag about losing my memory" (CUFA 247). Feigning amnesia seems to be the most likely option for the disillusioned "middling" man to avoid Hilda and ultimately himself; if nostalgia is ultimately a reminder of death, it would be sensible for Bowling to repress the memory altogether. It can then be concluded that Bowling's nostalgia operates in two modes. The first is to remember to forget, as excess memory impedes one's capability to recollect; in the former, the self is no more than a collection of past events, whereas the latter is a self-reflective act to ascertain oneself as a unified being. The second is to view childhood memory as a possession; it is a means to possess the youth as something lost but undoubtedly owned in the past. Through a narrative addressed to the contemporaneous (male) reader, Bowling paradoxically reclaims his youth, recognising himself as a man who had the youth rather than who did not at all. The epigraph of the novel which is quoted from Gracie Fields' popular song in the 1930s – "He's dead but he won't lie down" – should be taken with irony in this context, instead of reading it as a straightforward celebration of the "resilient" everyman in the face of the decline of the British Empire.

Part Two: Nostalgia for Nostalgia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

For Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was meant to be read as a satiric warning against the possible threat of totalitarianism in Britain, and "*not* intended as an attack on socialism or on the British Labour Party, but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralised economy is liable, and which have already been partly realised in Communism and fascism" ("Orwell's Statement" 135; emphasis in original). Orwell's narrative is set in the future in relation to the authorial present, while the fictional events within the plot take place in England; it thus operates as a prediction of what could happen in England if the present conditions continue as they are. Prophetic visions are epitomised in its portrayal of the global spread of totalitarianism and the Telescreen as a state surveillance system.[15] Yet, as argued by many critics, the

[15] An age-old debate on whether Huxley's *Brave New World* provided a more accurate prediction than *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and vice versa, has indeed resurfaced recently, particularly after the inauguration of the American president Donald Trump.

prophetic dimension of the narrative is significantly undercut by its detailed, sensory descriptions of a life in the contemporary London of 1949. For instance, Michael Billington summarises two possible readings of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; one is to focus on how Orwell "foresaw the division of the planet into three superpowers (Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia) and prefigured the age of nuclear missiles, microprocessors and the linguistic perversion of Newspeak" and the other is to interpret the whole narrative as "a metaphor for Prime Minister Clement Attlee's austerity Britain of 1948 with its personal privations, rationed consumer goods and bomb-scarred landscape" ("A Director's Vision" n. pag.). Anthony Burgess glosses on the second interpretation, contending that Orwell's last novel is far from being a prophecy but "no more than a comic transcription of the London of the end of the Second World War" (21). For Burgess, it is "the comedy of the all-too recognisable" for those who remember what it was like to live in the 1948 derelict London; Orwell is "more convincing with his boiled cabbage and rag mats than with his totalitarianism" (21). This realist tendency of the narrative is also notable in the protagonist's name, Winston Smith. Its association with Winston Churchill is evident (especially for contemporaneous readers), considering that Winston has not been a common name. "Smith" on the contrary connotes an everyman, or nobody, which deflates the aspect of heroism. In this interpretation, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is symptomatic of realism, and as such the future operates as no more than a chronological register; Orwell's nightmarish vision then might have been too familiar for contemporaneous readers.[16]

Another element which supports this realist reading is the text's seeming refusal to fully extrapolate the ramifications of the progress of scientific technology. The function of ostensibly futuristic devices – which the surveillance system called the Telescreen and the book writing machine in Pornosec – is limited to no more than a police apparatus. Its potentials, especially liberating ones, are not sufficiently

[16] In defining science fiction, Darko Suvin claims that the common denominator of science fiction is "cognitive estrangement" (4); this function is a correlative of the major constituent of science fiction as "novum" or totalizing device, supporting the validity and autonomy of an alternative imaginary world. Thus the reading of science fiction amounts to "a feedback oscillation [by an estranging operation] that moves now from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality to the narratively actualized novum" (71). If the estranging effect in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is miniscule – a reading as demonstrated by Burgess and Asimov – it is then more of political satire rather than science fiction.

examined,[17] whereas it could be said that the emphasis of the text is the state's control over science rather than the development and application of scientific technology. In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, science is an absolute servant of power: "Science, […] has almost ceased to exist. […] The empirical method of thought, […] is opposed to the most fundamental principles of Ingsoc" (NEF 201).[18] This regressive nature of Oceania illustrates how scientific technologies themselves would not lead to the emergence of a more egalitarian society: "the world of today is a bare, hungry, dilapidated place compared with the world that existed before 1914, and still more so if compared with the imaginary future to which the people of that period looked forward" (NEF 196). This social regression is what distinguishes Orwell's sadist dystopia from scientific dystopias of Wells, Zamyatin and Huxley. The text is deeply sceptical of science as a liberating force, indicting its unfounded optimism:

> In the early twentieth century, the vision of a future society unbelievably rich, leisured, orderly and efficient – a glittering antiseptic world of glass and steel and snow-white concrete – was part of the consciousness of nearly every literate person. (NEF 196)

This progressive vision is then simply rejected as preposterous, since humanity would never be free from power-worship, and a hierarchical society would remain the only option for any nations and communities. Therefore, "technological progress only happens when its products can in some way be used for the diminution of human liberty" (NEF 201). Meanwhile, the possibility of achieving a sort of Arcadian ecotopia – "to return to the agricultural past" – is simply considered as unrealistic in the text, which echoes Bowling's rejection of nature-worship in Orwell's previous novel (NEF 198).[19] Fredric Jameson views these as an overestimation of power-hunger,

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[17] For an extensive discussion on this topic, see Peter Huber, *Orwell's Revenge: The 1984 Palimpsest*, Simon & Schuster, 1995.

[18] Fredric Jameson sees this absolute control over science as "the central contradiction of the novel's framework" (200). In opposition to this statement, Andrew Milner maintains that "as Jameson must know, science is by no means coextensive with technology" (109), although Milner does not elaborate on this point further.

[19] The text gives three reasons for discrediting the idea of ecotopia. First, mechanisation is "quasi-instinctive throughout the world", and secondly, such a pastoral country would be too vulnerable against a military country; the third reason is, predictably, that any egalitarian society is impossible due to humanity's insatiable hunger for power (NEF 198).

which rather indicates Orwell's determined position to discredit any utopian thoughts and movements:

> Surely, the force of the text (and of *Animal Farm*) springs from a conviction about human nature itself, whose corruption and lust for power are inevitable, and not to be remedied by new social measures or programs, nor by heightened consciousness of the impending dangers. (198)

For Jameson, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is anti-utopian precisely due to its fixed perspective on the human condition. Although Orwell provides a vision of a possible future, he does not engage in imagining the future as such, which is defined by its newness and otherness.

Yet what typifies Orwell's (ostensibly) futuristic narrative is not only its obsession with present London, but also with the past. Orwell's position of anti-modernity, which has been touched on in the previous section, is symptomatic in Winston's admiration of the antique and traditional values and the Arcadian imagery of the Golden Country. Isaac Asimov is dissatisfied with such a tendency, stating that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is "not science fiction, but a distorted nostalgia for a past that never was" (321). Asimov supports this view by providing an example of Winston's conflation of the "ball-point pen" and the "steel pen". Winston prefers the latter due to his belief that "the beautiful creamy paper deserved to be written on with a real nib instead of being scratched with an ink-pencil" (NEF 8). Yet as Asimov points out, it is the steel pen which scratches the paper more brutally than the ball-point pen, and thus the anachronism shown in this example verges on absurdity.

On the other hand, discussing science fiction in general, Jameson argues that the function of the future as a narrative device is to historicise the (authorial) present rather than to predict the future as accurately as possible: "SF does not seriously attempt to imagine the 'real' future of our social system. Rather, its multiple mock futures serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come" (288). As such, the main function of science fiction is to illustrate multi-faceted aspects of the present society in its totality. This resonates with Adam Stock's concept of the "future-as-past" as key part of the narrative structure of dystopian novels. In the case of Orwell's dystopia, the future-as-past is "the years between 1949 (when the novel was published) and 1984 (when the

action is principally set)" (417). While dystopian novels tend to set the beginning of the story *in medias res,* they do more or less include a description of the transition from the authorial present to the dystopian present. For instance, such a future history is told in detail in *Swastika Night* and particularly in *The Handmaid's Tale,* whereas the one which *Nineteen Eighty-Four* provides is remarkably abstract. As Stock points out, although Winston's narrative contains Goldstein's political treatise on the system and philosophy of Big Brother's Oceania, "the party's desire for ever-increasing power [which is discussed in Goldstein's book] does not tell us anything about how it gained power and solidified its position in the first place" (434). The historicising effect of Orwell's narrative is then not particularly striking due to its lack of the description of the future-as-past, the argument which also applies to *We* and *Brave New World*.

Yet it should be stressed that, within the narrative structure of *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* such an account of the making of Oceania is rendered non-existent by the authorities through their constant re-writing of history and total suppression of memory, and *this* is the distinctive feature of Orwell's dystopia. Goldstein's secret book is in fact authored by the high-ranking officer O'Brien, while Winston constantly suffers from amnesia. Winston's paranoia about the malleability of history and memory constitutes the core of his misery. As the dictum of the party declares that "[w]ho controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past", what distinguishes Orwell's dystopia from others' is the Party's absolute control over history and memory (NEF 260).[20] In this cult of consistency, even childhood memory is under constant threats of invasion by the Thought Police, while failing to control memory is deemed as one's lack of "self-discipline" (NEF 261). The protagonist, Winston Smith, is a lower official in the Ministry of Truth, assigned to falsify historical records for the sole benefit of the authorities. Any documents which are incongruent with the Party's current policy must be rectified; "All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary" (NEF 42). This rewriting of the past must be complemented by Doublethink, or memory control which consists of forgetting an unfavourable issue, while erasing the memory of the act of forgetting itself (yet simultaneously being able to retrieve the memory if required by authority) (NEF 222). "The mutability of the past" is indeed "the central tenet of Ingsoc"; the

[20] By contrast, as discussed in Chapter Two, the focus of *Swastika Night* is on the total destruction of history by the Nazi regime.

past is the object of absolute conquest, since the Party is supposed to be the holder of "absolute truth" (NEF 222). Winston was born before Big Brother's revolution and, although he cannot clearly remember, must have witnessed the rise of Big Brother in England in his childhood. Winston's refusal to forget his past leads to his later arrest by the Thought Police. Whereas what has been invaded and under threat is the protagonist's hometown in *Coming Up for Air*, it is the recollection of home or one's past itself in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In other words, if the promise of nostalgia, a longing for home, is betrayed by rapid social change in the former novel, it is now forbidden in the latter. As Fredric Jameson stresses, "the most haunting feature of 1984 is the elegiac sense of the loss of the past, and the uncertainty of memory" (*Archaeologies* 200).

Death and memory

The motif of death is again pervasive in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As often argued, this can be attributed to Orwell's declining health:

> [N]o doubt Orwell's own wretched physical condition played a role in his vivid description of both the poor health and the physical deterioration of Winston Smith over the course of the novel – his varicose ulcer, his coughing fits, his bad teeth – and of course his virtual annihilation at the hands of O'Brien at the end of the book. (Gleason 83)

Abbot Gleason highlights this autobiographical dimension of the novel; it indeed attests to the view implicated in the narrative that "the autonomous individual with a morally based personal agency was an unsustainable truth", which culminates in a rather troubling image of "Winston's total submission to O'Brien" (Gleason 83). Orwell's grim narrative foregrounds individual mortality, offering self-annihilation and identification with the collective as an only way to salvation.[21] From the early part of the story, Winston considers himself as already dead since "*[t]houghtcrime does not entail death: thoughcrime IS death*" (NEF 30; emphasis in original). At this point,

[21] Ingsoc is called "Death-worship" in Eastasia; it is a Chinese translation, signifying "Obliteration of the Self" (NEF 205).

however, he remains optimistic in a somewhat paradoxical way: "Now he had recognised himself as a dead man it became important to stay alive as long as possible" (NEF 30). His cynical attitude, however, gradually intensifies and it begins to intrude into his mind even when he is wallowing in a secret meeting with his lover, Julia: "So long as human beings stay human, death and life are the same thing" (NEF 142). This is so since "as a law of nature […] the individual is always defeated" (NEF 142). Although the theme of death is prefigured by *Coming Up for Air*, it is now put to the foreground in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

What is at stake here is the issue of death, memory and identity; in Oceania, every individual is not allowed to die as oneself. Jeff Malpas contends that one's life is far from "a collection of events or experiences"; merely to live on is not to have a life of one's own. The latter is made possible by the sense of a unity acquired through "a sense of self-awareness, self-conception, and self-direction" (180). According to Malpas, such awareness of oneself in one's totality is possible through "[m]emory and recollection, along with purposiveness and imagination": "it is through both one's sense of the past and one's projections and anticipations of the future that one's life is integrated and unified over as well as at a time" (181). Nostalgia can in this sense operate as an opportunity for forming the sense of a unity between the past self and the present self, while its uncanny aspect reminds one of death as an individuating force. In a society marked by systemic alteration of any records and elimination of personal memory, however, it is of utmost difficulty for any individual to reclaim one's existence in its unity, which is a precondition to receive death as one's own.[22] Neither mere survival constantly forced by the ideology of self-preservation, nor self-annihilation for an ultimate escape from the world, cannot secure a proper opportunity for such death. Milan Kundera's view on death in relation to memory and forgetting is relevant here:

> This is the great private problem of man: death as the loss of the self. But what is this self? It is the sum of everything we remember. Thus, what terrifies us

[22] This is not to re-establish the image of the autonomous individual, which only focuses on one's freedom to choose according to one's will. It is more to do with a unified *sense* of the self which originates from re-examining one's limitations as a thrown and mortal being, co-existing with others in the world.

> about death is not the loss of the future but the loss of the past. Forgetting is a form of death ever present within life. ("Conversation in London" 97).

Recalling the Soviets' suppression of contemporary Czech literature as well as their rewriting of history and the destruction of monuments in Bohemia, Kundera maintains how institutionalised amnesia could bring about the demise of one nation: "When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting" (97). For Kundera, the erasure of memory would amount to the destruction of the self; even if one's body continues to exist, the self who is associated with the lost memory would be unrecognisable. This view validates Winston's constant fear of the forced collective amnesia: "If the Party could thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that event, *it never happened* – that, surely, was more terrifying than mere torture and death?" (NEF 37; emphasis in original). At the end of the narrative, Winston's existence does get evaporated, and in this sense, his existence does not acquire any immortal dimension even as an ex-member of the Party; being prohibited to recollect his past, Winston has never been allowed to receive his own death, and this should be considered separately from his physical annihilation at the end of the narrative. In light of the perspectives discussed above, the following sections explore functions of nostalgia in relation to the concept of death in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Collective amnesia and selective memory

Trapped in a vacuum devoid of the past and the future, it is immensely difficult for Winston to orient his existential moorings: "Cut off from contact with the outer world, and with the past, the citizen of Oceania is like a man in interstellar space, who has no way of knowing which direction is up and which is down" (NEF 207). What instigates Winston's actions in the face of such a vertiginous reality is his physical impulses and antique objects, both of which operate as autonomous mnemonics of the past England. Indeed, Winston's ailing body is magnetically drawn to the "junk-shop" in the prole-area, which illustrates how almost impossible it is for Winston to supress his "suicidal" desire for "the vanished, romantic past, the olden time" (NEF 97, 178). Wegner comments on the critical function of "junks" which seem to contain the past:

> These self-contained material embodiments of the past serve as the irrefutable proof of the possibility of another, better, situation, and consequently provide the normative ground from which Winston Smith can critique the horror, deprivation, and poverty of Oceanic life. (Wegner 208)

Among "scraps of beautiful rubbish", Winston purchases a diary for his pseudo suicide note and a glass paperweight – a "useless" object which would never be produced in Oceania (NEF 99). Another significant site of memory is Charrington's room – "a world, a pocket of the past where extinct animals could walk" (NEF 157) where Winston and his lover Julia indulge themselves in their forbidden love affair. The glass paperweight and Charrington's room constitute Winston's "sanctuary", where the past can be "arrested"[23] (NEF 158); the time Winston "arrests" is "the ancient time, to a time when there was still privacy, love and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason" (NEF 32).[24] Although this recalls commodified nostalgia which is harshly criticised in *Coming Up for Air*, commodities such as a glass paperweight are utilised by Winston to objectify and substantiate the lost, inaccessible past. Winston's nostalgia is therefore not simply a commodified nostalgia, for he does not even have access to any pre-packaged, marketed images of the past.

However, it later turns out that the shop is in fact a trap – a locus of the Party's memory control which is designed to lure recalcitrant Party members with nostalgic memorabilia. Winston must have suspected this possibility when Mr Charrington told him that there is no demand or stock for antique products (NEF 98); if so, why is the shop allowed to exist in the first place by the authorities who are extremely hostile to the past? This again implicates Winston's precognition and suicidal impulse: "he had always known that the grave was there and waiting for him" (NEF 167).

The connection between Bowling's and Winston's narratives is shown through their reference to "the order of things", which characterises a utopian image in both

[23] The use of the word "arrest" here is slightly unnerving, considering its connotation of authority and control.

[24] The following also describes a nostalgic moment in Charrington's room: "He wondered vaguely whether in the abolished past it had been a normal experience to lie in bed like this, in the cool of a summer evening, a man and a woman with no clothes on, making love when they choose, talking of what they choose, not feeling any compulsion to get up, simply lying there and listening to peaceful sounds outside" (NEF 150).

texts (CUFA 110, NEF 63). Instead of Lower Binfield, which is an actual place, Winston's utopian enclave is now called "The Golden Country", "the landscape that […] recurred so often in his dreams that he was never fully certain whether or not he had seen it in the real world" (NEF 32). This is a semi-mythologised image of his ideal past; it is Winston's rustic, pristine and even primitive dream-world of early summer,[25] which is juxtaposed against a civilised, technological city of darkness. In the Golden Country, Winston can hear the birds singing, while he encounters Julia even before meeting her in reality; she gracefully takes off her clothes, a gesture which belongs to "the ancient time" and can "annihilate a whole culture" (NEF 33, 130-1). A pastoral undertone is evident in this utopian image, which is highly sexualised. Here, it should be stressed that "the Golden Country" is depicted as the object of nostalgia, that is, the image which belongs to the past before Big Brother, rather than Winston's mere wishful fantasy.

Is Winston's desire to secure his memory, or his archaeological impulse nostalgia, mythophilia or something in between? Winston's object of nostalgia is more ambiguous and unreliable compared with Bowling's. Whereas the past memory has dense details in the latter, Winston in fact is dismayed over the fact that he does not possess any reliable access to his past memory; his childhood is indeed "half-forgotten" (NEF 85). *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not so much concerned with the loss of a particular landscape of childhood, which is more evident in *Coming Up for Air*; it is rather concerned with the loss of memory and the past themselves. The sheer difficulty in remembering is highlighted throughout the text. For example, Winston needs to "squeeze out" his childhood memory: indeed, "nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux, occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible" (NEF 5). His memory is almost devoid of specific tempo-spatial information particularly with regard to his home; his lived experience itself seems to be wiped away. What distinguishes Alfred in *Swastika Night* and Winston is the extremely atomised status of the latter; Alfred shares collective memory embodied in folklores and monuments with his fellow English men, whereas such an opportunity is not available for Winston, except rare instances such as his memory of the rhymes of St Clement's Dane ("Oranges and Lemons"), shared with Mr.Charrington and Julia.

[25] It is likewise always summer in a recollected image of Lower Binfield in *Coming Up for Air* (CUFA 37, 40, 46, 106).

Winston even goes so far as to interrogate an old prole man about how the world used to be, yet it turns out that the man's memory is "nothing but a rubbish-heap of details" (NEF 95); the conversation itself seems helplessly nonreciprocal, unlike, for instance, a dialogue between Alfred and an "untouchable" Christian, Joe Black in *Swastika Night*. Winston's struggle to regain the objective or commonsensical certainty of the past thus remains futile due to the lack of others' help and historical records. Yet his impulse for the past continues to haunt Winston through his bodily senses such as smell and taste, as discussed below.

The distinction between nostalgia and mythophilia is further blurred by a reference to "ancestral memory". When Winston was first ushered into Mr. Charington's room, he was struck by some ambiguous, yet poignant emotion, spurring him to take the risk to rent the room even though it is clearly a punishable act:

> [T]he room had awakened in him *a sort of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory*. It seemed to him that he knew exactly what it felt like to sit in a room like this, in an armchair beside an open fire with your feet in the fender and a kettle on the hob; utterly alone, utterly secure, with nobody watching you, no voice pursuing you, no sound except the singing of the kettle and the friendly ticking of the clock. (NEF 100, emphasis added)

The objects which Winston yearns for are a cosy domestic environment where his privacy is secured. Yet the question is: is this Winston's memory (which is based on lived experiences) or more of imagination? Another appearance of "ancestral memory" is in the scene where Winston is having a meal in a dingy canteen, "meditating resentfully on the physical texture of life" (NEF 62-3). He is appalled by the extremely poor quality of rationed foods and drinks. On the other hand, "real coffee", which Julia furtively procured from Inner Party staff, invokes in Winston a deep sense of contentment: "a rich hot smell […] seemed like an emanation from his early childhood" (NEF 147). This amounts to a so-called Proustian moment. As Cretien van Campen observes, it is not the image but the taste of the madeleine which evokes the Marcel's childhood memory in *In Search of Lost Time* (13). Whereas Winston's conscious effort of recalling the past constantly fails, his remembering through senses does succeed. This reflects Proust's distinction between voluntary and involuntary memory; the former is "governed by the will of the individual and is goal-directed", while the latter "[breaks] into consciousness unbidden and at unexpected moments" (16). In *Nineteen*

Eighty-Four, involuntary memory is charged with the sense of subversion against the Party's totalitarian control over the past. Winston's meditation on taste is indeed particularly interesting, since it raises a question whether taste is relative to what one used to eat and drink in the past, or there is an absolute measure for tastefulness.

Another significant instance is a machine-produced hit song to which Winston is strangely attracted to. The nostalgic undertone to the lyrics is strikingly evident:

It was only an 'opeless fancy,
It passed like an Ipril dye,
But a look an' a word an' the dreams they stirred
They 'ave stolen my 'eart awye!

They sye that time 'eals all things,
They sye you can always forget;
But the smiles an' the tears across the years
They twist my 'eart-strings yet! (NEF 144, 148; 227)

Winston reflects that "the tune had been haunting London for weeks past" (NEF 144). Even if it is completely machine produced, the nostalgic song "haunts" the Party members and the Proles alike, and curiously, it "had outlived the Hate song" (NEF 227). Winston (and Orwell himself) is generally hostile towards mechanisation, and this instance serves as a critique of the culture industry.[26] In a sense, however, it can also be read as a celebration of common people's capability to enliven a mass-produced, drab song by appropriating it as their own (which could perhaps encourage people to unite as a collective). In hearing the Prole woman's singing, Winston is drawn into his typical nostalgia for, or even mythologisation of an all-caring mother, which is part of "the order of things": "One had the feeling that she would have been perfectly content, […], to remain there for *a thousand years*, pegging out diapers and singing rubbish" (NEF 148, emphasis added). As has been discussed, the so-called five senses bear significance in Winston's longing for the past. In addition to this, a severe memory loss Winston suffers from under the Party's memory control should not be underestimated. Taking these in consideration, it could provisionally be concluded that the narrative keeps the distinction between nostalgia and mythophilia, or memory and imagination highly ambiguous.

[26] See Wegner (208-16) for the detailed analysis of this topic.

On the other hand, it should be noticed that Winston's nostalgia is a more self-conscious experience than Bowling's; the former is intensified by the anxiety about preserving his memory intact and safe from the manoeuvring of the authorities.[27] Winston's recollection at times appears to verge on fabrication of the past – mythophilia – in its excessive insistence on the loss of it. The utopian image of the past, presented as a sign of authenticity, can hardly be affirmed as such when issues of class, race, and gender are taken into account; it remains susceptible to criticism for its reactionary or even retrograde nature. This is since Winston's "recollection of a moment of a 'prehistoric happiness'" is predominantly tied with the idea of "the 'English' or (imperial) 'British' nation-state", which is charged with male, middle-class sentiments (Wegner 207-8). For instance, although Winston struggles to believe that "[i]f there was hope, it lay in the proles", he himself also endorses the Party's view that the proles are mere animals (NEF 229). In particular, in his image of the Golden Country, Winston equates the birds with the proles.[28] In addition to this, throughout the story, there are other conspicuous gaps in Winston's humanism. One is the fact that prisoners of war from foreign countries are depicted only as a concretisation of Winston's guilt. That is to say, when he is desperately trying to look at Julia behind him in a crowd of people, what Winston receives is the "mournful" gaze of the "aged prisoner", which looks as if he condemns Winston's nonchalant sexual desire, while the narrative does not provide the prisoner's point of view (123). War prisoners are also considered as animals: "Foreigners, whether from Eurasia or from Eastasia, were a kind of strange animal" (NEF 122). In the case of colonised people, they are neither depicted as living humans, but only referred to as a passing reference in a text within a text (Goldstein's political theory), which takes their voices further away. The representation of women likewise does not go beyond monotonous stereotypes, that is, figures such as the blind follower of the Party, the prostitute, the mother, and the *femme fatale*.[29] Those elements are de-politicised or omitted from the picture of Winston's

[27] In *Memory, History and Forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur distinguishes remembering and recollection: "The distinction between *mnēmē* and *anamnēsis* rests on two things: one the one hand, the simple memory arises in the manner of an affection, while recollection consists in an active search" (17). It can be noted here that Winston's memory consists more of recollection than remembering, which is a conscious attempt to (re-)construct his past.

[28] Also note the following self-deflating paradox by Winston: "Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious" (NEF 74).

[29] In his recently published book, Gregory Claeys seemingly disagrees with Daphne Patai's feminist reading of Julia, maintaining that "Julia's humanity is expressed through her

idealised past; indeed, although Winston's "home" is opposed to the "totalitarian" Oceania, it is far from a world of plurality.[30] In this sense, it is particularly disturbing that O'Brien is included in the image of the Golden Country, which indicates Winston's complicity with him, albeit an implicit one. [31] Winston is unaware of the fact that he and the Outer Party members are not the only ones who are deprived of their true "home" by Big Brother; there are other numerous people living without feeling at home, not even in the world before and possibly after Big Brother. Tellingly, when raising a glass of wine in a secret "Brotherhood" meeting, Winston chooses to make a toast to the past, rather than the future (NEF 284); considering Winston's unreflective attitude towards the past, this gesture seems to signal his reluctance or even refusal to imagine a new future for himself and people who he dismisses as the Other. Lothian suggests that Orwell's cautionary narrative of the future can in fact operate as a strategy to conceal the political and social issues of the "real faces" of already marginalised people:

> Orwell's boot stamping on the human face is portrayed as a future to fear. Yet as we are invited to contemplate the horrors of the future, our attention is directed away from real faces already ground into oblivion in the present and in the past. Though this is not the only possible reading of Orwell's text, it shows the potential for speculations about negative futures to perpetuate uneven power relations in the present. (447)

The alarmist rhetoric motivated by extreme pessimism, especially when propounded by a more or less privileged position in terms of class, gender and race, can be regarded as a symptom of conservative escapism. Although it would be too reductive to dismiss

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animality. It is more material, more real than Winston's whimsical abstractions and metaphysical conundrums" (*Dystopia* 412). The question is, is Julia human or animal, or both? Also, is not the very problem of the text its evident focus on Julia's animality rather than humanity?; she is merely presented as a sexually promiscuous woman without intellectual capabilities.

[30] "Orwell's vision of socialism and of the socialist revolution is based on an alliance of the middle and working classes, and alliance premised, in turn, on the absence of fundamental economic conflict between the two classes and on a populist ideology bridging the gulf of cultural difference that actually divide them" (Reich 148).

[31] "He was in the Golden Country, or he was sitting among enormous glorious, sunlit ruins, with his mother, with Julia, with O'Brien—not doing anything, merely sitting in the sun, talking of peaceful things" (NEF 288). Allan Weiss aptly claims that "[i]t is noteworthy how similar this vision of a static, and therefore preferable, world is to Oceania's own totalitarian denial of history" (131). For more discussion on Winston's complicity with O'Brien, see Daphne Patai's analysis, which draws on game theory (*The Orwell Mystique* 219-263).

Winston's position as myopic and defensive, it is therefore hard to deny that the text's critical dimension, or demand for social change is considerably undercut by these gaps in Winston's vision of home.

Yet it should be noted that there is an implicit criticism of the current regime in Winston's memory, at least on the level of form rather than content; it is his nostalgic longing *per se* that testifies the presence of the world before the dystopia. The past does exist in the form of Winston's involuntary memory, pastoral fantasy, and obsession with antique objects, regardless of O'Brien's persistent refutation of it. It is true, nevertheless, that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* remains anti-utopian, precisely because the political dimension of nostalgia is not sufficiently elaborated in the narrative; in it, nostalgia is ultimately dismissed as a private emotion. Whether conscious or not, Winston endorses the hegemony's view that the past exists only in the mind and in external records, which are thoroughly controlled by the Party in the ministries of Love and Truth (NEF 260), which leads him to absolute despair. What is overlooked or underestimated is the very existence of his physical impulse, which is inexplicable without the existence of the past or another temporal dimension, and this issue should be considered separately from manipulation of the content of memory.[32] In this context, whether a past memory is authentic or not is ultimately irrelevant as far as resistance against the status quo is concerned; however, what Winston is obsessed with is the authenticity of the past rather than the mobilisation of the past for imagining a form of society which is different from the current one. As opposed to *Coming Up for Air*, nostalgia is explicitly presented as a "political act", as well as writing a diary and having sexual intercourse with Julia (NEF 133). Yet as discussed above, the political implication of Winston's mobilisation of nostalgia is not sufficiently explored. In addition, Winston's other two forms of resistance ultimately remain to be in the private

[32] Suppose the following situation. You wake up in a hotel and start wondering why the ceiling looks different from usual; for a moment, you have forgotten the fact that you are away from home. This feeling of being baffled in a foreign place (in this case, a hotel) is premised on one's memory of home – a place where one used to live. There is, of course, a possibility that such a memory is either imagined or even artificially implanted. Yet the point here is that the past, or another temporal dimension must pre-exist in order for this sensation to happen. If one continuously forgets everything, there cannot be such feeling of being disorientated. Another example similar to the above one is when you wake up from a nap; you have forgotten that you took a nap after lunch (you might have fallen asleep by accident in a meeting), and the environment around you looks unnervingly foreign. This is because you habitually wake up at home, not in your office.

domain, and thus it is unfounded to assume any political impact of them. Suggestively, Hannah Arendt notes the futility of such private resistance:

> Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life – the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses – lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence. (*The Human Condition* 50)

Arendt then quotes from *Slavery in the Roman Empire* by R. H. Barrow (1928), stating that it is "impossible 'to write a character sketch of any slave who lived'" (*The Human Condition* 50). Transgression of the law is effectively subversive only when it is recognised as such in the public domain. Yet the dilemma of resistance in Oceania is that any sort of rebellion or even martyrdom is rendered impossible by literal elimination of one's existence in history and people's memory. Prefigured by Bowling's resentful submission, Winston's final "choice" is then to subsume his existence to the state's quasi-religious mechanism, which further consolidates the defeatist or even masochist nature of the narrative.

Winston's nostalgia for nostalgia

Yet it remains reductive only to dismiss Winston's nostalgia as reactionary, escapist or anti-utopian;[33] what should still be accounted for is Winston's intense obsession with death and memory. Why is he occupied by his thoughts of death and the past even when he is indulging in his fantasy?[34] This could be answered by attempting to pin down the "home" which Winston is really yearning for. In regards to this issue, the psychoanalytic concepts of mourning and melancholy may provide a useful insight. According to Freud, in mourning, the object of loss is evident whereas it is uncertain

[33] Most notably, Moylan interprets *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "anti-utopian pessimism" that "forecloses the possibility of any social transformation" (Moylan 161-2). Wegner also follows Moylan: "Imagining a utopia is part of the work of the committed intellectual, and in recoiling from such a commitment, Orwell rejects even the effort of envisioning a different kind of future" (Wegner 225).

[34] Winston cannot help but expect his imminent death from the beginning of the novel, when he starts writing a diary. The following quotes are suggestive: "He was already dead" (30), "When once you had succumbed to thoughtcrime it was certain that by a given date you would be dead" (107), "So long as human beings stay human, death and life are the same thing" (142), "The end was contained in the beginning" (166), "We are the dead" (230).

in the first place in melancholy ("Mourning and Melancholia" 155). Furthermore, Slavoj Žižek distinguishes the object of desire and the object-cause of desire: "while the object of desire is simply the desired object, the cause of desire is the feature *on account of which* we desire the desired object" (*Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* 147; emphasis in original). Whereas Bowling's memory is depicted in details in *Coming Up for Air*, it is more abstract in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The point here is that within the narrative structure, it remains fundamentally uncertain what Winston actually "lost". Such uncertainty and intensity of Winston's desire for the past itself can be accounted for by this theory of melancholy. That is to say, what Winston is nostalgic for is indeed the ability to be nostalgic, the desire for the particularity of home. In *Coming Up for Air*, Bowling yearns for his particular childhood, or the landscape of the Edwardian England which is part of his lived experience. His inability to come to terms with his loss of childhood is then contrasted with *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as the loss of the past *itself*, which paradoxically indicates a desperate attempt to possess it in the excessive presence of its absence. For instance, as mentioned above, Winston is haunted by the sense of mortality throughout the narrative. This melancholic nature of Winston's tendency is in fact prefigured in the impasse of wish-fulfilment of Bowling, who, in Cavendish's words, "subconsciously […] set[s] out to escape towards the very thing he was ostensibly escaping from"; it is "the holiday that is no holiday" ("*Coming Up for Air* Revisited" n. pag). In this context, it can be argued that what constitutes Winston's anxiety is not the loss of his childhood or a romantic relationship with Julia, but the possibility that he does not have any substantial desire for them in the first place.

Indeed, this inability to be (properly) nostalgic seems to imply a double structure, which can be called "nostalgia for nostalgia". Commenting on Winston's writing about his memory, the past and his childhood, Jean-François Lyotard argues that what Winston struggles to achieve is not to restore the objects of his writing or the idealised past, but rather to capture the very moments when the encounters with the unknown – such as "a word, odour, place, book, or face" – turned into the event, and thus to "preserve initiation" of it; what Winston strives to describe in his diary is not "events from childhood", but rather "the childhood of the event", which "cut open a wound in the sensibility", and "has since reopened and will reopen again, marking out the rhythm of a secret and perhaps unnoticed temporality" (90, 91). The ultimate home

which is implied in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is this "childhood of the event", when and where the event begins and unfolds, affecting the subject. This true home, the object-cause of desire, is hidden from the ostensible home, that is, the object of desire, which is epitomised in the image of the Golden Country. In this sense, it can be construed that *Nineteen Eight-Four* represents this double structure of nostalgia in a more intense manner than *Coming Up for Air*. The ultimate home (the object-cause of desire) – the childhood of the event – is contained and hidden in the ostensible home (the object of desire), which is the Golden Country. "Nostalgia for nostalgia" is then a longing for the home of home. It can be concluded that Winston's desire for the Golden Country is not nostalgia *per se*, but a simulated desire for nostalgia.

Such a self-reflexive nostalgia is highly abstract and its nature is uncanny, instead of providing any actual sense of being-at-home. In the text, this is described as "monstrous":

> The sacred principles of Ingsoc. Newspeak, doublethink, the mutability of the past. [Winston] felt as though he were wandering in the forests of the sea bottom, *lost in a monstrous world where he himself was the monster*. He was alone. The past was dead, the future was unimaginable. (NEF 28)

Having lost a longing for home itself, there is no choice for Winston but to face his own monstrosity, the uncanny image which is reflected in the dissolute landscape of Big Brother's dystopia. This monstrosity is not merely a product of Winston's own melancholia, but rather, that of his superfluous existence. Describing the status of individuals in a totalitarian state in which even the possibility of martyrdom is deprived, Arendt states as follows:

> The danger of the corpse factories and holes of oblivion is that today, with populations and homelessness everywhere on the increase, masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous if we continue to think of our world in utilitarian terms. (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 459)

As discussed above, "[h]oles of oblivion", which recalls memory holes, are what puts Winston in absolute dismay; traces of individuality are subject to be eradicated from the past as well as the future. Yet there might be a hope, as Arendt later revises her thought:

> The holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is not that perfect, and there are simply too many people in the world to make oblivion possible. One man will always be left alive to tell the story. (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 232-33)

As often discussed by critics, a formal utopian dimension can still be detected within Orwell's anti-utopian narrative, in the form of an appendix which is located at the end of the text. Margaret Atwood suggests that the appendix in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* "is written in standard English, in the third person, and in the past tense", and thus it "can only mean that the regime has fallen, and that language and individuality have survived" (*In Other Worlds* 145). As Milner notes, this appendix as well as a footnote within the main narrative (NEF 5) provide an alternative perspective to the dystopia precisely as part of the narrative, for it is not "an author's nor a scholarly editor's account of how the fiction works", thus allowing the reader to interpret the novel as "critical dystopia" (Milner 115). This formalistic technique of envisioning a new future – whose function is to historicise the dystopia as a society which belongs to the past – is extremely oblique, but nonetheless, it bears significance. "One man" who is endowed with the opportunity to tell the story of Oceania could be then the future academic who investigates "The Principles of Newspeak" (NEF 312). Yet it does not necessarily follow that the post-Big Brother world would secure a common world for individuals, ensuring economic, ethnic, and sexual equality. As Claeys cautions, the presence of a frame narrative which historicises the dystopia "does not imply a 'utopian' counter-proposal'"; it only merely signifies "an alternative to dystopia, which may also be the status quo ante" (*Dystopia* 290). It is Atwood who foregrounds this problem of the post-dystopia in her first dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

"I'm a Refugee From the Past":[1] Nostalgia, Trauma and Politics in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale*

"I am like an explorer, a traveller to undiscovered countries./ That's better than a lunatic, lost in her memories".

"Nolite Te Bastardes Carborundorum", *The Handmaid's Tale*, season 1, episode 4, *Hulu*, 4 May 2017.

"He has invented your history […] But remember. Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent".

Monique Wittig, *Les Guerilleres* (qtd. in Greene, 290)

In an essay on Orwell, Atwood refers to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as "a direct model" of her dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was published in 1985 (*In Other Worlds* 145). Meanwhile, for both authors, exploration of the theme of nostalgia precedes that of dystopia. Just as Orwell's homecoming novel preceded his dystopian one, Atwood dealt with the same theme in a novel entitled *Surfacing* (1972), which was published thirteen years before *The Handmaid's Tale*.[2] *Coming Up for Air* and *Surfacing* are both first-person narratives about homecoming, and the similarity of the titles is somewhat striking. In both novels, the narrators struggle to find a consolation for the current situation, which is lacking something indispensable to their life. The longing for home is initially presented as a strategy for reconfirming

[1] HT 227.

[2] In "The Times of Their Lives: George Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*", Joseph Browne refers to this parallel between Orwell and Atwood (156), although he does not develop his argument further. This is the only essay that I have found so far regarding this similarity in both authors in terms of the transition from a homecoming novel to a dystopian one.

identity and thus empowering the self, although its consequence is overshadowed by the impossibility and uncanniness inherent in such longing. Also distinct in both novels is anxiety about industrial capitalism and international affairs, which encroaches on the identity of each protagonist. In dystopias by Orwell and Atwood, the past is presented as a place for hope which legitimises a counter-hegemonic position, although in Atwood's text such a motif is treated in a more critical and ambiguous manner. Through a close examination of the thematic continuity between *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, this chapter will investigate how the theme of modern homesickness in *Surfacing* is further developed through dystopian imagination in *The Handmaid's Tale*, while examining complex representations of nostalgia.

Part One: Homecoming and Trauma in *Surfacing*

In "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory" (1991), Gayle Greene observes an uneasy relationship between women and nostalgia:

> [W]omen have little to be nostalgic about, for the good old days when the grass was greener and young people knew their place was also the time when women knew their place, and it is not a place to which most women want to return. (296)

Women's history is marked by oppression and exploitation; women have been confined to domestic roles such as wives and mothers, excluded from the public realm. Whereas Greene's conception of nostalgia as "a forgetting, merely regressive" (298) is one-sided and reductive, what seems right in her argument is that women, as those who have been second-rate citizens in relation to men, do not possess any collective memory of the Arcadian past in its full sense of the term, which can be seen in the mythologised image of the bygone era in Orwell's texts. Even the success of the early feminist movements, which resulted in the institution of various women's rights and thereby ensured individual agency of women, cannot easily be the object of nostalgia; they are merely taken for granted. This aversion to nostalgia can partly be attributed to the decentering of the subject in postmodernism; as Terry Eagleton notes, "[n]o sooner have women become autonomous subjects, in a reasonable rather than bugbearish sense of the term, than postmodernism sets about deconstructing the whole

category" (*The Illusions* 42). In terms of the issue of agency and subjectivity, feminism is torn between two opposed positions:

> [I]n order to be effective as an emancipatory and political movement designed to increase women's access to equality in male-dominated cultures, it supposedly needs to rely on an essentialist definition of woman. At the same time, feminism cannot deny the importance of anti-foundationalist theories that dismiss (or decentre) the concept of the autonomous subject. (Genz and Brabon 30)

It would be now self-delusional to be nostalgic for the image of free, autonomous and individualist women, for such a conception of the self itself is complicit with the hegemonic, masculine discourse of liberal capitalism. Moreover, whether women in the past enjoyed their earned rights in a true sense remains deeply questionable. Yet what is more troubling is that the essentialist conception of female subjectivity itself suppressed voices of those who do not share such identity. Towards the end of second-wave feminism, feminists were confronted by the need to redefine their subjectivity by taking into account the issues of "diveristy and differences among women, particularly in terms of racism, classism and heterosexism" (Genz and Brabon 53). Yet if the aim of feminism is to achieve gender equality among men and women, women have to conceive of themselves as a fixed political agency. Somewhat symptomatic of this conundrum, Greene appears to contradict herself when she asserts the importance of nostalgia for feminists: "a major project of feminist scholarship continues to be the recovery of women's lost contributions. Feminism is a re-membering, a re-assembling of our lost past and lost parts of ourselves. We search for our mother's gardens […]" (300). Greene notes that such search is "at times not easily distinguishable from nostalgia", the notion which she rejected earlier in her article, while prioritising the notion of memory instead (300). It is then clear that for Greene, there is nostalgia which is "merely regressive" and another which is not, although she does not elaborate on this apparent contradiction further. The question is: is there any clear distinction between nostalgia and memory? What Greene means by memory seems to be an act of remembering that maintains a critical distance, although she is insufficiently reflective in her demand for "our mother's gardens" – a mythical mother figure.

Greene then praises feminist fictions in the seventies which deal with the theme of memory, that is, "a delving of the past that allows a transformed future" (321). Atwood's *Surfacing* is situated among them. Greene then laments the disappearance

of such a theme from "white women's fiction" which "has participated in postfeminist retrenchments of the eighties" (320). Although such a loss does seem to be distressing, it should be noted that not all postfeminism is anti-feminism. Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was published in the eighties, is indeed often criticised as apolitical and reactionary, for the novel maintains a critical distance from feminism. Yet the novel should be interpreted more as a reflection and engagement with the theoretical and political antinomies of feminism. Indeed, there seems to be a possibility for feminists to be nostalgic for their past and origin without resorting to essentialist discourses. Such nostalgia would be directed to *moments* when their ancestors earned rights which had been believed to be impossible to obtain, although whether such events are truly emancipatory remains an issue to be examined. Both *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale* explore the possibility of such a moment of alterity through their nostalgic examination of the past.

Suggestive of women's ambivalent relationship to nostalgia, in *Surfacing*, the narrator's desire for her past is neither consoling nor comforting, but is imbued with pain and regret. On the level of plot, the nameless female narrator sets out on a trip home to Canada in order to search for her missing father, a naturalist recluse in rural northern Quebec. Yet it is also a journey for re-membering her fractured identity and reconciling the separation between the mind and the body; deeply suffering from the inability to feel in the city life, the narrator wishes to rediscover "her missing memories, which will prove the key to her past and to her true self" (Tolan 41). Yet as her recollection develops, a more purely escapist aspect of her homecoming gradually begins to emerge. The narrator's homecoming is in fact "an attempt to escape into isolation and innocence", a means to distance and isolate herself from the site of trauma where she was forced to have an abortion by her former partner (Tolan 41). This motive is concomitant with the narrator's positioning of herself as an innocent female victim, which she comes to criticise after her homecoming as "a lie which was always more disastrous than the truth would have been" (*Surfacing* 197).

It should be noted here that it is the sense of nostalgia itself which is longed for from the beginning of the novel: "Now I'm in the village, walking through it, waiting for the nostalgia to hit […] but nothing happens" (*Surfacing* 14). This is symptomatic of "nostalgia for nostalgia", that is, the loss of desire itself as discussed in the previous chapter. Yet what is striking is that the protagonist in *Surfacing* does not suffer from

memory loss like Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.[3] Although memories of her childhood are still vivid enough, the protagonist is troubled by the fact that the nostalgia which she anticipated does not "hit" her at all. However, her desire for such nostalgia is intense; the news of her missing father makes the protagonist obsessed with the consolatory potential of nostalgia and homecoming which would help her to overcome personal stagnation. For instance, when she realises that the old road to the village is now closed, she panics about this change, insisting that her father "shouldn't have allowed them to do it" (*Surfacing* 8). She cannot accept the change since "the old road to the village" is the road to her nostalgia, that is, a cure for her modern homesickness. Nevertheless, instead of mourning the loss, the protagonist simply represses the shock by displacing her pain to another: "if it hurts invent a different pain. I'm all right" (*Surfacing* 8). In fact, for the narrator, returning home *should not* be easy; she is profoundly haunted by the idea of suffering: "I can't really get here unless I've suffered" (11).[4] It is gradually revealed that her homecoming is atonement for her family and home which she abandoned, as well as for her unborn child. What the protagonist – the surfacer – seeks for in homecoming is therefore both consolation and redemption.

The difficulty of locating her true home within the narrative is also characteristic of the protagonist's nostalgia for nostalgia. The protagonist and her friends move from the village to the island by boat; when the village comes into full view from the lake, the narrator remarks that "[t]he feeling I expected before but failed to have comes now, homesickness, for a place where I never lived, I'm far away" (*Surfacing* 26). The protagonist's family in fact used to live in the island secluded from the village, across the lake. Here, is the village the object of nostalgia, or the island or both? This ambiguity surrounding the protagonist's home also manifests in her paradoxical description of north Quebec as "my home ground, foreign territory", indicating that she does not identify herself as a Quebec person (*Surfacing* 7). The uncertainty of home and the malleability of her memory define the narrator's non-

[3] Yet what differentiates Winston and the protagonist of *Surfacing* is that, whereas the former is fixated upon his melancholic and reactive position, the latter acts on the impasse of desire, no matter how painful the experience would be. This can also be contrasted with Bowling's homecoming in *Coming Up for Air*. Although he does act on the impasse of desire to some extent, what is highlighted in the end is the sheer meaninglessness of the project of homecoming as a means to reclaim his subjectivity: "What's the good of trying to revisit the scenes of your boyhood? Coming up for air! But there isn't any air" (CUFA 230).

[4] "I couldn't go there, home, I never went there again" (145)

linear narrative, which is detached and yet painful.

As the narrator declares that she is "inoculated, exempt, classified as wounded" (*Surfacing* 87), the theme of trauma is what further complicates that of nostalgia and homecoming. The term *trauma* is a Greek word meaning wound.[5] Cathy Caruth defines it as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth 91). For the narrator in *Surfacing*, the memory of abortion is still intense enough to the extent that she experiences it as an event which is occurring here and now, although such re-occurrence of the event is experienced through her fake memory. The narrator does not acknowledge the unborn baby in the first half of the novel, by displacing her abortion by an imagined wedding. Yet the repressed, nameless and forgotten baby continues to insist its existence through her trauma, which manifests in her inability to feel, as well as in subconscious manipulation of memory.[6] Incidentally, since nostalgia also signifies one's longing for re-living the past, both trauma and nostalgia are characterized by the presence of the past.[7] In *Surfacing*, the traumatic experience casts a shadow over the narrator's past as a whole, making her unable to idealise her childhood like Bowling in Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*. Within the narrative, trauma seems to override the narrator's capacity to be nostalgic for her childhood in a straightforward sense. The protagonist is emotionally numb, displaced, now belonging in somewhere beyond feelings and longings, even pain. This empty, groundless, and hardened self is, although it appears to protect the self from getting further hurt,[8] presented as particularly vulnerable to a

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[5] Or "any injury where the skin is broken as a consequence of external violence, and the effects of such an injury upon the organism as a whole" (*The Language of Psychoanalysis* 465). It is worth noting that, in German, *Traum* means "dream".

[6] Also see Freud's theorisation of repetition compulsion: "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it" ("Remembering, Repeating and Working Through" 150; emphasis in original), "The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. Thus he acquires no sense of conviction of the correctness of the construction that has been communicated to him. He is obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 18; emphasis in original).

[7] Trauma, or repetition compulsion inhibits nostalgia. By definition, however, trauma is the haunting *re-living* of the past negative experience in the present, whereas nostalgia is a present mixed feeling of contentment and uncanniness which originates from that which has been gone, only accessible through memory.

[8] "In a way it was a relief, to be exempt from feeling" (*Surfacing* 113).

nationalist nostalgia, in which Canada is mythologised as an innocent and thus infallible entity. Such a fantasy is founded on the dichotomy between us vs them: Canada vs America, the countryside vs the city, nature vs civilisation, the past vs the present, the colonised vs the coloniser, the body vs the mind, women vs men, and animals vs humans. In these dichotomies, Canada is an embodiment of the categories on the left side, whereas America is that of the categories on the right side.

A critique of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in *Surfacing*

While nationalist nostalgia is often viewed as a backlash against globalisation, Atwood's *Surfacing* provides a Janus-head critique of tradition and progress through the exploration of the theme of nostalgia. Nostalgia presented in the novel is more nuanced than a mere reaction against rapid social changes in the countryside brought about by industrialisation and Americanisation ("the disease is spreading up from the south" [*Surfacing* 3]). Ultimately through the motif of homecoming, the text suggests that nostalgia can provide an opportunity for acknowledging the past rather than pronouncing the death of the past, which would be an ultimate forgetting. It delineates how exploiting Canadian national memory as an alibi for one's innocence against the threat of globalisation becomes untenable for the narrator, hinting at a possibility of a more pluralist society through negotiating with the past as the other.

In her essay entitled "Travels Back" (1973), Atwood stresses that Canada and Canadian literature are "mine"; while stressing that this is not to claim their superiority to others, she maintains that they are what places and situates herself, that is, the foundation for her existence and identity ("Travels Back" 113). Atwood then questions the feasibility of cosmopolitan identity:

> Refusing to acknowledge where you come from […] is an act of amputation: you may become free floating, a citizen of the world […] but only at the cost of arms, legs or heart. By discovering your place you discover yourself. ("Travels Back" 113) [9]

[9] This statement might appear problematic for those who are denied their homes such as refugees and asylum seekers, for it might appear to deny their possibility to discover themselves. Yet Atwood's suspicion lies in the cosmopolitan's gesture of claiming their origin as detachable whenever they wish; refugees and asylum seekers are able to acknowledge their origins regardless of their "loss" of home. This recalls Hannah Arendt's criticism against Jewish refugees in America who do not wish to be called refugees, as they prefer to be fully

Here, one's origin or home is described as a physical, affective constituent of one's self; by doing so, Atwood stresses how integral one's placedness is to one's being itself. Therefore, cosmopolitan identity, in its gesture of detaching one's origin at one's will, is contradictory and even hypocritical.[10] Atwood's emphasis on the importance of acknowledging one's origin echoes the concept of placedness, a place as that which constitutes one's being. Malpas's following description of the concept is here worth close attention:

> The sense of "being placed" […] is not merely of being able to be located in relation to other things and other places (as one might do using a GPS or a map), but rather in the sense of standing within that open realm in which self, other selves, and things first come to presence. (197)

One's being is given its existence by a specific place, and yet such fundamental nature of one's being can be occluded in the familiarity and obliviousness of the everyday life. This issue is critical in Atwood's *Surfacing*, in that it critically explores one's placedness and attachment to places, in light of the issues of alienation and self-discovery.

Although it is often regarded as a manifestation of Canadian nationalism, which is typically represented through its antagonisation of America, such an aspect itself is interrogated within the narrative. As Kiley Kapuscinski argues, *Surfacing* is not a nationalist tract, but rather a critique of it, exploring "the complexity and culpability that lies beneath the surface of gender conventions and national narratives" (109). Janice Fiamengo also argues as follows:

> the narrative that some critics have made of *Surfacing* reveals a nostalgia for an idealised 1960s Canadian nationalism, when imperialism meant the United States, and postcolonial signified the moral purity of the Canadian position.

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integrated as American citizens than being a half-citizen as a foreigner. Yet this is to disavow one's particular origin in return for practical benefits, which amounts to cultural suicide. Arendt thus commends "conscious pariahs" over parvenus, claiming that:

> Those few refugees who insist upon telling the truth, even to the point of 'indecency', get in exchange for their unpopularity one priceless advantage: history is no longer a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of Gentiles. ("We Refugees" 199)

[10] In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt similarly states that "men cannot become citizens of the world as they are citizens of their countries" (257). Arendt views cosmopolitanism as a symptom of the annulment of particularities of the individual, which consolidates the interchangeability and superfluousness of the individual.

> What Atwood's novel reveals, on the contrary, is that such a position never existed. (159)

Whereas feminism and environmentalism are equally important themes in the novel, a similar critical attitude is applied to those two political causes (Tolan 45); the narrator is aware that each of them cannot form a master-narrative which would subsume any social antagonisms. Such a critical distance of the narrator is epitomized by her rejection of any types of separatist utopias. For instance, the narrator rejects David's suggestion of establishing a pure Canadian colony (*Surfacing* 89). Feminist and environmentalist utopias are further evoked by the narrator's reclusive parents as well as by her attempt at complete isolation from society. Yet the narrator eventually discards such ideals ("No total salvation, resurrection" [*Surfacing* 196]) particularly on account of their complete denial of others, which is founded on the binary logic of us vs them and self-victimisation. It should be noted, however, that while the narrator's story of homecoming consists of a multi-faceted critique of nationalism, feminism and environmentalism, what is foregrounded is not so much her metaphysical contemplation but – to borrow the title of one of Atwood's books – "negotiations with the dead" which are motivated by her sense of guilt and complicity.

What is characteristic of *Surfacing* is that it describes urbanites as fragmented, or half-dead beings, which is reinforced by their status of anonymity and uprootedness. The nameless protagonist is accompanied by her urbanite friends, that is, her boyfriend Joe and a married couple, David and Anna. In addition to the namelessness of the protagonist, her friends' lack of surnames is somewhat striking. Whereas such omission and truncation of names can be interpreted as a mere result of the stream-of-consciousness style of narrating,[11] it also reflects the narrator's aversion to naming, for she believes that it is a mark of civilisation from which she wishes to escape (*Surfacing* 173).[12] In fact, the narrator even starts to forget her own name and age, signalling her unstable identity, which also manifests in her subconscious fabrication of memories (*Surfacing* 70-1). Her friends' existence remains purely instrumental to the narrator; the couple are useful since they can provide her a lift for the trip, whereas the narrator stays fairly indifferent to her

[11] Presumably, it would be unusual to refer to oneself by one's name in the inner monologue, while truncating friends' names would be out of rapport and not intentional.
[12] This motif is again used in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The narrator's decision to withhold her name (as well as her daughter's) is a gesture of disassociating themselves from Gilead.

boyfriend, treating him as no more than a pet with a human body.[13] Meanwhile, the narrator has an acute sense of embarrassment about the idea of homecoming, which forces her to cover up her wish to reconcile with her parents with a detective narrative of finding a missing father. Her embarrassment originates from her realisation that the sense of attachment to one's past would appear irrational, abnormal and even uncivilised to the three companions, since they have already "disowned their parents long ago, the way you are supposed to: Joe never mentions his mother and father, Anna says hers were nothing people and David calls his The Pigs" (*Surfacing* 13). Urbanites are free from their origins, for the city is defined only by "the present tense" (*Surfacing* 48). Their mode of life is characterised by possibilities rather than limitations, recalling fairy tale characters such as a princess and Peter Pan; the narrator, who indeed works as a children's book illustrator, is discomfited by their ephemeral being devoid of physicality (*Surfacing* 51).[14]

Yet it should be noted that the narrator herself is at times fascinated by the idea of cosmopolitan/metropolitan free-floating and boundless identity; such a tendency is symbolised in her want for "a floating house":

> I felt that would be the best way to live, in a floating house carrying everything you needed with you and some other people you liked; when you wanted to move somewhere else it would be easy. (*Surfacing* 36)

Her fantasy of unrestrained mobility, however, is tainted by the protagonist's mental paralysis, which she believes stems from the mind and body dichotomy; cosmopolitans "float" over places, at the expense of the bodily and the affective. While the title of the novel, "surfacing" is normally associated with the narrator's act of self-renewal, it also seems to indicate the urban lifestyle, where people live only on the surface.[15] The narrator attempts to regain her senses simply by imitating others gestures, as if she is choosing suitable clothes: "what to feel was like what to wear, you watched the others and memorised it" (*Surfacing* 112). Yet as she criticises Anna's paperdoll-like existence – a mere expression of permutations of cultural variables – such patchwork identity remains ineffectual, for it views the body as a container, filling it with choices.

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[13] The narrator describes Joe as "a goldfish or a potted cactus plant", the kind of objects which randomly catches attention of customers in a shop (*Surfacing* 39).
[14] "It wasn't Peter Pan's ability to fly that made him incredible for me, it was the lack of an outhouse near his underground burrow" (*Surfacing* 51).
[15] I thank Professor David Seed for this insight.

For the narrator, Anna is "locked in, she isn't allowed to eat or shit or cry or give birth, nothing goes in, nothing comes out" (*Surfacing* 169). The narrator's fantasy of a cosmopolitan, weightless being is seriously undermined by her conception of the body as that which grounds the self. The city is then likened to "the catacombs", a place where the "half-dead" – humans trapped in the mind – imagine living (*Surfacing* 172).

If "a floating house" is a figment of imagination, "a paper house" is a symbolic repository of the narrator's memories and experiences, although it is still a product of the mind and thus malleable and unstable. It is part of the narrator's survival strategy: "A faked album, the memories fraudulent as passports; but a paper house was better than none and I could almost live in it, I'd lived in it until now" (*Surfacing* 145). A "paper house" is a locus of selective, repressed memory rather than that of self-discovery. It is at best a temporary abode for survival, although it is self-deceptive at worst, hindering the self from acknowledging the past as such (for the narrator, a coerced abortion is one such repressed memory). Memory is here conceived as a container of one's identity, rather than what constitutes the process of self-realisation which enables the self to unify the past and present selves. Again, the body is supressed, being reduced to a site of memory rather than an active generator of it. Modern people are turning into machines: "They are evolving, they are halfway to machine, the leftover flesh atrophied and diseased, porous like an appendix" (*Surfacing* 190). Later in the story, the narrator realises the limit of such a conception of memory when imagining herself as a dead cipher which constitutes someone else's paper house: one is merely others' "memolabilia, or possibly not even that" (*Surfacing* 172). Other people are mere commodities which are used to decorate one's "paper house".

Towards the end of the homecoming, the narrative shifts its focus on the homogeneity of space to the specificity of place. In the beginning of the journey, the narrator is overwhelmed by "the illusion of infinite space or of no space" (*Surfacing* 64). Although it appears to be filled with boundless possibilities, they remain inconsequential: "It's like moving on air, nothing beneath us holding us up; suspended, we drift home" (*Surfacing* 64). Such an abstract conception of space gives way to specific places in the narrative. The island, the lake and the dark woods are key places where the narrator's epiphanic moments unfold. She gradually comes to terms with her parents and aborted baby through encountering their ghosts: "nothing has died, everything is alive, everything is waiting to become alive" (*Surfacing* 160). As Atwood herself comments in a 1972 interview, the ghost in *Surfacing* is not "a ghost which has

no relation to them whatsoever", but "a fragment of one's own self which has split off" ("Dissecting the Way" 16). This is of particular importance in terms of nostalgia as a direct, uncanny reencounter with one's own past. As the narrator mobilises her past by letting it affect her and thereby renouncing her innocence (the narrator declares that she is "one of them too, a killer" [*Surfacing* 146]), she regains her bodily feeling: "feeling was beginning to seep back into me" (*Surfacing* 147). It is also remarkable that the narrator stops blaming the city itself as the root of moral decay: "It wasn't the city that was wrong" (*Surfacing* 133). This makes a sheer contrast to the motif of fishing in Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*. While the pond and fish in Lower Binfield signify the truth which is hidden and waiting to be caught/fished, Atwood's narrator literally dives into the lake, risking herself to a greater extent to obtain the truth of her past.

Meanwhile, echoing Hélène Cixous's idea of a girl's nostalgic journey to the unknown,[16] the narrator attempts to abandon her civilised self altogether through "going native" and becoming animals; what is indicated in *Surfacing* is that *women* have never really existed in the civilised world (women are a mere reflection of men), and therefore female subjectivity and body must be discovered outside it. These ideas, however, remain superficial and suspicious, and it is highly questionable when she declares herself to be a place itself: "I am not an animal or a tree, I am the thing in which the trees and animals move and grow, I am a place" (*Surfacing* 187). The narrator's nostalgia is now transformed into mythophilia of a prelapsarian female utopia in the wilderness, before it was contaminated by men and colonisers. As Alice Ridout notes, such desire is "nostalgia for a blank page" (71). Yet such a gesture itself is another means of feigning innocence and denying her past in the civilised world. In particular, the narrator's mythologisation of Canadian Indian tribes is highly controversial, for it is a classic case of "colonial appropriation in order to escape her own identity, claiming the purity and authenticity of a Native subjectivity" (Fiamengo 155). The narrator eventually realises the futility of such mythophilia, since deified objects become "questionable once more, theoretical as Jesus" for the modern self

[16] Hélène Cixous comments on the progressive nature of women's nostalgia in contrast to men's:

> A boy's journey is the return to the native land, the *Heimweh* Freud speaks of, the nostalgia that makes man a being who tends to come back to the point of departure to appropriate it for himself and to die there. A girl's journey is farther – to the unknown, to invent. (Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément 93)

who is almost irreversibly cut off from them (*Surfacing* 195). What is left for the narrator then is to return to the city with her boyfriend Joe, who patiently waits for her. Although this ending appears to be somewhat defeatist and even reactionary in its evocation of a conventional romance storyline, such criticism fails to acknowledge the narrator's determination to deal with others including the "Americans" as an imperial institution, and her refusal to wallow in "totalitarian innocence" (*Surfacing* 196): "The word games, the winning and losing games are finished; at the moment there are no others but they will have to be invented, withdrawing is no longer possible" (*Surfacing* 197). For the narrator, abandoning Joe without any confrontation would be to repeat the same-old tactic of individualistic self-preservation, which is to ignore and repress how she feels, denying her body and past as well as exploiting others as a mere stepping stone for her individual satisfaction (*Surfacing* 87). The ending thus evinces a more pluralist world-view, while also stressing the need to deal with "the pervasive menace", which should be "watched and predicted and stopped without being copied" (*Surfacing* 195). Through the narrative of homecoming, *Surfacing* explores nostalgia as that which motivates negotiation with the dead, which is essential for grounding modern homeless urbanites in a political realm. This perspective gained in this section then illuminates the politics of nostalgia in Atwood's dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Part Two: The Eighties Backlash and Inhibited Nostalgia in *The Handmaid's Tale*

Backlash can be regarded as a highly controversial form of nostalgia/mythophilia; it is a negative, at times aggressive reaction to social progress, or "the reduction of oppression" by those who used to occupy a privileged position and to benefit from the previous unjust value system (Cudd 8).[17] It is also a desire for a *simpler* time where things were believed to be relatively more in order, from the perspective of the privileged. If, as mentioned in Chapter One, Naqvi is right in proposing that nostalgia as a critical term came into being in the eighties, various forms of the backlash in the Reganite and Thacherite era might have contributed to it to a great extent. As Tom

[17] Ann E.Cudd defines backlash "in terms of progress or regress, which is defined in terms of oppression" (9). For more detail, see her article entitled "Analysing Backlash to Progressive Social Movements".

Moylan notes, such backlashes during the period are what contextualises Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: "With elements from the New Right and Christian fundamentalism conjoined with deformed and distorted feminist formations, mass-mediated consumption, the military-industrial complex, a variant of 'friendly fascism' comes alive on the page" (163). Furthermore, in his 1987 essay, Peter Fitting observes the growing trend of discrediting sexual and reproductive rights by the Christian right in Canada in the eighties. He particularly mentions discrimination against homosexuals by "a number of Conservative MPPs in the Ontario Legislature" and also a Quebec MPP, on account of protecting "traditional values" (18). Atwood's dystopia was also written when "Canadians had just elected an unabashedly American-friendly Prime Minister", which signals the end of Canada as a sanctuary from "American persecution" (Tomc 83).[18]

While it is easy to dismiss any backlash movements as regressive, it would be futile to criticise their nostalgic impulse, since nostalgia is an affect, not a political standpoint in itself. The issue is that, confronted by the emergence of a new value system or social condition, it would be natural for the formerly privileged to perceive it as a threat, since the new social order would negate (part of) their ground on which they stand and thrive. The denial of their collective memory – be it imperial, patriarchal, nationalist, classicist or racist – would have a devastating effect, especially if they are simply silenced, and persistent consciousness raising does not ensue. This seems to be the root of the self-victimisation of the privileged and a backlash in this context should be considered inevitable; it is a symptom of modern homelessness of the individual. Tradition and religion does not define the individual anymore in the postmodern age; they are at best objects of appropriation. The intensity and aggressiveness of such an act of recovery of the past are a symptom of the irrecoverable loss of tradition and religion as the foundation of individuals.

Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is then not so much an indictment but a close engagement with the eighties backlash from the point of view of a complacent woman. Such a project might appear complicit with a patriarchal structure. According to Sandra Tomc, when the novel was published in 1985, it was "accepted pretty much unconditionally as an admirable banner of liberal feminist insurgency" (73). Yet since

[18] Canada played such a role for "the United Empire Loyalists" in the eighteenth century, "Southern American slaves" in the nineteenth century, and "refugees of the draft" in the twentieth century (Tomc 83).

then, the critical dimension of the narrative has been seriously undermined by critics. The novel itself appears to be some sort of backlash; its appropriation of the romance plot of finding Mr Right, and "the heroine's barely ironised longing for hand lotion and old copies of *Vogue*" provided as "symbols of women's former freedom", and the heroine's flagrant passivity can be all interpreted as signs of the reactionary nature of the text itself (Tomc 73). Atwood's ambivalent stance towards feminism adds to this allegation of the text's complicity with the hegemonic discourse. Atwood has been reluctant to call her novel a "feminist dystopia", "except insofar as giving a woman a voice and an inner life will always be considered 'feminist' by those who think women ought not to have these things" (*In Other Worlds* 146). In a recent article, Atwood clarifies her position about the novel in terms of feminism, stating that the novel is not a feminist novel in the sense that it is not "an ideological tract in which all women are angels and/or so victimised they are incapable of moral choice" ("Margaret Atwood" n.pag.). Her reluctance to situate *The Handmaid's Tale* in the tradition of feminism is controversial, since it appears to be an active forgetting of feminists' hardship and achievements for the betterment of women's condition. As Alexandra Schwartz stresses, it is the specificity of women's suffering that matters; although women are far from angels (as are men) and there is a limit to the strategy of self-victimisation (which is one of the central themes of *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid's Tale*), what is at issue is that "the ways in which women are deprived of [human] rights – in Atwood's fiction, and in the reality, past and present, that she bases it on – are unique" (n.pag.). Yet this ambiguity of the text and Atwood's position in terms of feminism is what makes *The Handmaid's Tale* distinct, for its aversion to any utopian agenda and the exploration of the effect of various backlashes are forms of confronting reality – including backlashes motivated by nostalgia – rather than dismissing it. Although such an approach might appear passive and defeatist especially from the left's point of view, it is in fact a way forward, since it actively acknowledges and examines the oppressor's nostalgia.

Offred's situation in Atwood's dystopia is in a sense much more dismal and depressing than the narrator's in *Surfacing*, for the former does not even access to the mythical nature which is epitomised in the lake of truth, that is, a source of epiphany which facilitates the forming of a renewed self. This archaeological impulse for one's origin and past is absent in Offred's narrative. Although, needless to say, such an endeavour is rendered impossible under the Gilead regime, such impulse for self-

discovery seems altogether absent in Offred's narrative. Offred is presented as a woman who was more or less content with her previous life with her modest job as a transcriber,[19] and her husband Luke and daughter (the latter is unnamed by the narrator).[20]

Offred's choice of a rather conservative lifestyle which hinges on marriage and reproduction, however, is purely out of apolitical complacency rather than of deliberate reflection. Offred's nostalgia for her mother and Moira, two militant feminists who are now excluded to the margin of society, is fully activated only after her enslavement in the hyper-patriarch society. She then belatedly comes to the realisation that that women's rights can easily be taken away by the state unless they are proactively defended. Offred's complacency, or reluctance to acknowledge the legacy of feminism turns out to be fatal in her traumatic narrative which can be likened to a suicide note. While salvation in its full sense is again unfeasible within the Handmaid's narrative as in *Surfacing* ("I've given no trust, taken no risk, all is safe. It's the choice that terrifies me. A way out, a salvation" [HT 61]), as will be discussed later, Offred's act of storytelling evinces an alternative political dimension of nostalgia as negotiation with the dead.

Rhetoric of nostalgia

As in *Surfacing*, trauma and nostalgia are the main characteristics of the protagonist's narrative in *The Handmaid's Tale*, while the latter novel deals with the themes in a more radical manner by not allowing the protagonist any opportunity to gain epiphanic moments which can be seen in the former novel. Particularly in this section, forms of nostalgia detected in the novel will be analysed by employing the following types: forbidden nostalgia, mythophilia and inhibited nostalgia. Forbidden nostalgia indicates how a dystopian regime prohibits the individual's feeling of nostalgia,

[19] Her job is to transfer "books to computer discs, to cut down on storage space and replacement costs", which would have made it easier for Gilead to eradicate books (HT 173). Interestingly, Offred states that she sometimes took some books home instead of shredding them as ordered. Commenting on this behaviour of Offred, Luke tells her she "had the mind of an antiquarian" (HT 173).

[20] Offred does not reveal her name and her daughter's to protect themselves from Gilead's retaliation. Importantly, it is noted in the Historical Notes that Serena Joy is also a fake name, which indicates Offred's intention to hide or subvert the identity of the Commander Fred's wife, honouring the latter's existence (HT 309).

which is considered as a potential threat to authority. As for the second, the rhetoric of mythophilia can be seen in discourses such as "return to nature" and "Golden Age". And as discussed above, "going native" and "becoming animals" are other examples of mythophilia. These discourses, founded on the either/or logic, invent and essentialise a designated value system as something that has been lost and must be regained and reestablished. The third, inhibited nostalgia, is an ambivalent state of being where one's yearning for the past is blocked by trauma or (compulsively) critical attitudes against the past. This typifying of nostalgia is utilised to articulate varying aspects of nostalgia found in *The Handmaid's Tale.*

Symptomatic of Offred's nostalgia, the narrative starts with her recollection of life in the past before Gilead. The opening sentence goes as follows: "We slept in what had once been the gymnasium" (HT 3). Two components of this sentence, the activity (sleep) and the tense (the past perfect), produce defamiliarising effects, which become more vivid through the narrator's reflection, or "a haunting elegy for the high school gymnasium" (Tan 102); it was a place for activities such as sports and dance parties, and there was also the potential for it to be a hiding place for adolescent sexual relationships (HT 3). Under the state of supposed emergency, however, these liberal features of a gymnasium disappear; the place is now used as a temporary accommodation, and the narrator and other women are in fact coerced to sleep while female officers are patrolling with cattle prods. The gymnasium now serves more as a prison; stasis and the lack of freedom and privacy make a stark contrast with its former connotation of adolescence – an age of possibilities. In regards to this radical change in the function of the gymnasium/prison, Qiuyi Tan observes the Proustian synaesthesic quality of the description, stating that that "the past tense of these lines [of the opening paragraph] are poignant in their reference to the end of all the colours, smells, textures, and sounds of the rich physical life, both public and private", which is contrasted with the present, monotonous tense (102). As is gradually revealed later in the narrative, the gymnasium now operates as part of the Rachel and Leah Centre (also called "Red Centre") under the regime called Gilead, where women are imprisoned and trained to be "Handmaids". There is already a sense of resignation in the following sentence: "We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability?" (HT 4). Its nostalgic undertone is also highlighted by the narrator's self-questioning, regarding the longing for the future which people took for granted but are no longer allowed to have. The object of nostalgia here is not particular things,

but rather the sense of the future, or the past future, "something that was always about to happen and was never the same" as she had imagined it to be (HT 3). It should be noted that a certain degree of ambivalence can be observed in this description of her nostalgia for nostalgia; it is imbued with her sober realisation that expectation is always meant to be betrayed, "never the same".

The narrative is set around the beginning of the twenty-first century, soon after a Christian fundamentalist military group called "Sons of Jacob" took over the government of the United States through *coup d'état* and declared the establishment of The Republic of Gilead. The narrator is one of the Handmaids, those who have been enslaved to serve as a surrogate mother on behalf of the sterile Wives of the Commanders. Her name is Offred, a pseudonym used to indicate that she is currently appointed to the Commander Fred, serving as his possession for the reproductive purpose. The background of the foundation of Gilead is marked by the fall in pregnancy rate, which had apparently been caused by environmental contamination through nuclear, chemical and biological substances, and sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and HIV (HT 112). Yet the rationale accentuated by the founders of Gilead for the decline is the expansion of women's rights and the promotion of contraception and abortion, which significantly contributed to the decline of birth-rates. Yet as revealed in the Historical Notes, it is only the decrease of the Caucasian population that mattered even in the pre-Gilead state, and it is hinted that it intentionally worked to decrease non-Caucasian populations through fertility control, revealing the state's white-supremacist policy (HT 304).[21] As for the political

[21] This can be read as a convenient omission of the issue of racism from the narrative, which is ironic considering the strong theme of enslavement. In fact, Offred's narrative does not provide voices to racially marginalised people such as victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, who were, like Offred, treated as less than human. According to an essay by Noah Berlatsky entitled "Both Versions of *The Handmaid's Tale* Have a Problem with Racial Erasure", the recent online drama adaptation (released in April 2017) tackles this issue, yet only in a superficial manner. Although it features male and female black characters for the key roles (Luke, Offred's daughter, Moira), there is no character or narration that elaborates on a connection between Gilead and American slavery. For Berlatsky, Atwood's novel and the adaptation merely appropriate "the history of black people to provoke empathy for the suffering of white people". Importantly, Berlatsky also mentions how the novel exploits Muslim customs only for establishing the setting of the story. As for the all-covering outfits of the Handmaids, Atwood states that they were inspired by "the Old Dutch Cleanser figure on the sink cleaner boxes of [her] childhood" (*In Other Worlds* 88). Yet, as Atwood acknowledges, they have been largely interpreted as "Catholic (as in nuns) or Muslim (as in burkas)" (*In Other Worlds* 88). Yet the timing of the release of the online drama (which won the Best Drama Award in the 2017 Emmy Awards) coincides with the spread of Islamophobia in a Trump-era America; the drama's portrayal of the Handmaids then is in this context

form, Gilead is a theocracy exploiting the Bible particularly as the basis for regimented reproduction. Although sufficient food and hygienic shelter are provided to the Handmaids, they are only for the sake of keeping their bodies fit for reproduction; they are perceived by society as "two-legged wombs" (HT 156), with their subjectivity stripped away. The Handmaids are forced to wear a red dress/uniform, which is also called "habit" (HT 24); it symbolises their strictly regulated daily routines and duty to participate in ceremonies/activities, the most important of which is the ceremony of insemination.

In Atwood's dystopia, women are once more entrapped in a house, which makes an interesting contrast to Orwell's dystopia in terms of nostalgia. In the latter, Charrington's room, which is filled with Victorian antiques and a place where Winston and Julia have sexual intercourse, has a significantly utopian connotation. Such a cosy, private room is now presented in Atwood's dystopia as a prison cell for "ladies in reduced circumstances" (HT 8). Offred is in fact confined to a room in a late Victorian family house:

> A chair, a table, a lamp. Above, on the white ceiling, a relief ornament in the shape of a wreath. […] There's a rug on the floor, oval, of braided rags. This is the kind of touch they like: folk art, archaic, made by women, in their spare time, from things that have no further use. A return to traditional values. (HT 7)

Offred's room, also decorated with "a print of flowers", is filled with state- sanctioned nostalgia. In addition, the Wives are equally confined to given roles, even though their social status is deemed higher than the Handmaids'. The Commander's wife, Serena Joy, is often seen immersing herself in gardening, one of the few distractions which are allowed to the Wives.

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controversial, as it evokes Muslim women purely as victims. The novel itself does not textually engage with the history and culture of Muslim countries, only referring to images and names. Offred narrates how Gileadean terrorists at first accused "Islamic fanatics" of the coup (HT 174). Claeys comments (only in passing) that "[i]ronically, thus, both Christian and Muslim zealots coalesce in condemning women's rights" (*Dystopia* 475). The novel, in its superficial references to Islam, reinforces stereotypes associated with it (e.g. terrorists, misogynists, submissive women). For Barlatsky, Atwood's dystopia is then a case of white anxiety, where "independent Western women have fallen into an Orientalist nightmare" (Berlatsky). This suggests a reading of *The Handmaid's Tale* as an anti-Muslim propaganda. It should be stressed, however, the interpretive potential of the text as a reflection on women's freedom is nonetheless highly compelling and insightful, although Berlatsky's critique poses a serious challenge to it.

Following the genre convention of other dystopias, Gilead attempts to subjugate history under the control of the authority and manipulate memory through propaganda. In comparing Orwell's and Atwood's dystopias, Theo Finigan observes that both novels are "centrally concerned with dominating their subjects through the control of their *experience* of time, memory, and history" (435, emphasis added). Dystopias by both authors are particularly remarkable in depicting how the experience of time, which is often considered as something neutral, is in fact subject to the influence of politics and technologies. In Atwood's dytopia, time is "measured by bells […] as once in nunneries" (HT 8); the Handmaids do not *have time* at their disposal: "There is so much time to be endured, time heavy as fried food or thick fog" (HT 267). Time measured by bells is characterised by its collective, authoritarian nature; it consolidates social stability. Yet for the Handmaids, time is also steadfastly running out, for if they cannot bear a baby in six years, they will be deemed as "Unwomen" and sent to the Colonies – extremely polluted areas – for forced labour. Nostalgia then is a private time which must be supressed to maintain the purity of authoritarian memory. In his analysis of both Orwell's and Atwood's dystopias, Finigan observes that the "rationalised, controlled temporality is supplemented, and indeed buttressed, by the state's attempts to manipulate – and in some instances, erase – the traces of memory and even historical time itself" (437). Yet Offred is at mercy of "attacks of the past", which are experienced through somatic sensations (HT 52). As in Orwell's narrative, smell is again an important trigger of nostalgia in Offred's narrative. For instance, one day in the kitchen, Offred smells freshly baked bread, and to her it is "a nostalgic smell," reminding her of her mother's kitchen and her own before Gilead (HT 47). Yet she immediately comes to herself, realising that "[t]his is a treacherous smell, and [she] know[s] [she] must shut it out" (HT 47). The smell of the soap in the bathroom also enables her to encounter the illusion of her daughter; Offred struggles to deny the possibility that it is her ghost (HT 63). As seen in Winston's nostalgia in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, sensations like smell often conjure up memories in an unexpected manner. Unlike Winston, however, Offred is more conscious of the importance of self-censoring such nostalgia for her survival. Nostalgia is in this sense forbidden by the state.

Offred's nostalgia is marked by its sober realisation of the impossibility of regaining the past. Recollecting her militant feminist mother, Offred laments in

despair: “I want her back. I want everything back, the way it was. But there is no point to it, this wanting” (HT 122). For Offred, the past functions more as a critical measure to assess current situations than as the object of longing. In other words, throughout the novel, Offred’s attitude is self-critical and dialogic rather than a mere monologic reproach; meticulous comparison between the past and the present is essential to Offred’s method of reflection. For example, when on the sidewalk with her walking partner Ofglen, Offred begins to remember how “women were not protected” *before* Gilead (HT 24). Cautions against jogging on the sidewalks, opening a door to a stranger, helping a “troubled” motorist, going to a laundromat alone are “rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew” (HT 24). Offred then juxtaposes how “safe” it is to walk outside under the current regime: “no man shouts obscenities at us, speaks to us, touches us. No one whistles” (HT 24). The sentence which follows this represents the ironic aspect of one of the principles of Gilead: “there is more than one kind of freedom […] In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from” (24). In the text, these discourses are super-imposed in a quite condensed manner within a few paragraphs; by neutralizing the past and the present, the text highlights a persisting patriarchal structure and interrogates what freedom truly means to women.

One can also trace the intertextual dimension of this multi-faceted critique between *Surfacing* and *The Handmaid’s Tale* in terms of the theme of abortion. In *Surfacing*, the protagonist detests her married lover and the medical staff, claiming that she was forced to have an abortion and her baby “was taken away from [her], exported, deported” by them (*Surfacing* 45, also see 79, 144). Since then, the protagonist has been feeling that “a section of [her] *own life*, […], [her] *own flesh* [was] cancelled” (*Surfacing* 45; emphasis added). Yet she also reflects that she could have rejected it, admitting her complicity. In contrast, abortion is strictly illegal in Gilead in *The Handmaid’s Tale*: doctors and scientists who have been involved in abortion are now sentenced to death, for they are deemed “criminals” (HT 33). Although women “are supposed to feel […] hatred and scorn” towards those abortionists, Offred is reluctant to do so and even indifferent, for she believes that they lived in the past, in a different context (HT 33). While Offred’s feelings are revolving around indifferent “blankness” in the face of the dead bodies, what she does care about is her husband Luke, worrying that one of the bodies could be him (HT

33). Both novels appear to correspond with each other as a problem (pro-choice) and an answer (pro-life) especially in terms of abortion. However, they reject such a linear argument; in *Surfacing* abortion is a choice partially forced on the protagonist, while in *The Handmaid's Tale* abortion itself results in death. Although both societies are patriarchal, subjugation of women is rendered invisible in the name of choice in the former whereas it is naturalised in the latter for the benefit of humanity.

What facilitates Offred's critique is her memory of the pre-Gilead America and its transition to the current regime. By contrast, as discussed in the last chapter, Winston in Orwell's dystopia only possesses vague, fragmentary memories of his past, and he chooses to invent and idealise it, the nature of which is more towards mythophilia. Likewise, whereas *Nineteen Eighty-Four* emphasises the discontinuity of the past and the present, *The Handmaid's Tale* rather traces the continuity, contemplating over what exactly the narrator has "lost" in the dystopia. For instance, what Offred has lost in Gilead seems obvious: the right to have a family and job, spend money, move to anywhere, speak and read, and the right not to be sexually enslaved in any form. Yet at the same time, Offred is always in doubt about whether those rights had been actually accommodating her freedom in the pre-Gilead America.

On the other hand, nostalgia found in the Commander's remarks is reactionary in a quite literal sense, reinventing the concept of "Nature" as something that had been lost in America and is necessary to be brought back: "All we've done is return things to Nature's norm" (HT 220). According to him, commercialised sex or sexual freedom should be banned, since it is the cause of men's "[i]nability to feel"; the Commander laments that "men were turning off on sex, even" (HT 210). Gilead is then a device which provides men with "ability to feel" once again, and Offred later realizes that such a device is made of (so to speak) a rule and its exception, that is, the puritan Handmaid system and a "secret" brothel called Jezebel's. In Jezebel's, women are dressed in all kinds of clothes and costumes, wearing heavy make-up, all of which are strictly forbidden for the Handmaids (HT 235). The Commander enjoys the gap between the monotone, uniform-clad Handmaids and those diverse sex workers: "Nature demands variety, for men. It stands to reason, it's part of the procreational strategy. It's Nature's plan" (HT 237). The Commander describes the experience in Jezebel's as if he is "walking into the past," wallowing in the sense of nostalgia for a "forbidden" pleasure (235). The Commander's reasoning presented here is an example of mythophilia disguised as nostalgia, an ideology created by

inventing the loss of "Nature's plan". In fact, it should be stressed that the Republic of Gilead itself is the product of such mythophilia. As is mentioned in the Historical Notes, Gilead deliberately chose "surrogate mothers" over "artificial insemination" and "fertility clinics" as a strategy to tackle the issue of infertility (HT 305). Instead of investing in scientific technologies as in Huxley's *Brave New World*, the regime employs the Old Testament in order to restore the seemingly lost virtue of femininity, blaming women's literacy, contraception, and sexual freedom. This backlash against the expansion of women's rights is founded on mythophilia.

By contrast, as mentioned above, Offred's nostalgia is distinctive in its self-reflective nature. For Chris Ferns, this is what distinguishes itself from a longing for an authentic past in classical dystopias: "Where the dystopian dissidents of Zamyatin, Huxley, and Orwell seek refuge from the State's authority in the womb-like security of the past, Atwood presents liberation as a process of going forward, into the unknown" (134). Ferns then continues to highlight Offred's self-reflective nostalgia: "Offred's recollections of contemporary America, with its pornography, its sex industry, its continual threat of rape and violent assault, hardly offer a glittering alternative to the new morality of Gilead" (138). Yet the question here is, is Offred self-consciously avoiding the idealisation of a better past era, or is not this aversion rather that which reveals a social condition which makes her unable to idealise the past? Her ability to be self-critical seems not a product of her wish, but rather, that of necessity as a woman. This praise of Offreds' critical nostalgia risks canonising Offred as a courageous individualist, underestimating the moral crisis of her passivity and crippling scepticism, which make her position extremely vulnerable for nihilistic renunciation: "I'll empty myself, truly, become a chalice. […] I'll forget about the others, I'll stop complaining" (HT 286). Raffaella Baccolini's following argument is likewise problematic in this context:

> Memory and imagination mix in Atwood's novel as well, this time not in order to idealise the past, but to critique and destabilize it. Her character's memory is not nostalgic but revisionist: if Atwood's protagonist shows nostalgia for the past, it is not for the past as it was, but for the past as she would create it. ("Journey" 354)

Offred indeed realises that she is a revisionist, yet in her following remark – "[w]e were revisionists; what we revised was ourselves" – it should be noted that she rather

seems to lament the political apathy of her generation, which amounts to conforming to the status quo (HT 227).

What complicates Atwood's text is that Offred is the only one who could escape from Gilead, while others such as Offred's feminist mother, her lesbian friend Moira, or Ofglen the rebel, could not. Yet her survival is far from triumphant. These rebellious characters are all presented as persons who are certain about who they are and what they should do. Compared with them, Offred remains uncertain about her political standpoint, only caring about herself and her family. Allan Weiss dismisses such an attitude as follows: "Offred is guilty of complacency, complicity and selfish concern for her own private needs and desires," adding that "she prefers freedom from pain and acceptance of comfortable paternalistic domination over dangerous political commitment" (138). In addition, Offred is in fact prioritising her perspective of extreme scepticism. It appears that Offred refuses to take any particular political side, but as she remarks somewhat decisively that "Context is *all*," her relativism is presented as absolute (HT 144; emphasis added).

Although it might be true that Offred's survival is after all contingent and politically inept, Offred's unique world-view – or the absence of it – demands a close examination in order to explore the potential of nostalgia in her narrative. The feelings of uncertainty which dominate it on the level of its content and form are represented in the following examples. First, "*Nolite te Bastardes Carborundorum*/Don't let the bastards grind you down" is a mantra which Offred keeps holding on to, encouraging her to engage in active resistance against authority. Yet ironically, the subversive quality of the message is somewhat tainted by the fact that it is the object of the Commander's nostalgia, as it is an old joke among his schoolmates (HT 52, 187).[22] After realising that Ofglen killed herself and having being discovered in her affair with the Commander by his wife, Offred becomes absolutely devastated, and the above dictum begins to have an opposite connotation, turning into an invitation to end her life for absolute escape. At this point, she tells herself that "your life has value to no one. I want it finished" (HT 293). This anecdote tellingly suggests her anxiety over the signified. The meaning of the word is constantly affected by each context. Offred is acutely aware of this malleability of

[22] The Commander also lures Offred with Scrabble, a nostalgia-inducing board game which is mainly "the preserve of the elderly and adolescents" (Finigan 448).

the signified and reality, and her linguistic anxiety permeates her whole narrative; in this sense, Offred is a radical deconstructionist, which prevents her from acting on any moral principles. Furthermore, Offred declares that her narrative is a reconstruction: in Chapter Twenty-Three, she claims that she "reconstructed" a seemingly benign encounter with the Commander in his study (HT 134). This implies further that her reflection of the past in general is also inevitably a reconstruction. For Offred, one's past is ultimately something imaginary and inauthentic. It is also revealed in the Historical Notes – an appendix attached to the story – that Offred's narrative itself is a reconstruction made by future historians. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the authentic past is impossible and not even longed for by the protagonist, and nostalgia is presented in this context as an affect which should always be kept under control through critical examination.

The prevalence of the sense of resignation which keeps haunting Offred's past, present and future, however, seems in turn to suggest her acute longing for nostalgia itself. With regard to this, the distinction between loss and absence in Dominick LaCapra's theorisation would be helpful in elaborating on this point. In LaCapra's account, absence is more abstract than loss, or "transhistorical" in that it is "not an event and does not imply tenses (past, present, or future)" (49). The following quote seems particularly relevant to delve into Offred's attitude towards the world:

> When absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community. When loss is converted into (or encrypted in an indiscriminately generalised rhetoric of) absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which any process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted. (46)

If we follow this formula, it could be said that Offred converts losses to absence, which leads her to "the impasse of endless melancholy". What seems traumatic to Offred is that she is unable to be fully nostalgic for her past, even if she still has a relatively vivid memory of it. This is partly exemplified by the fact that her husband's life status is unknown, as well as her conviction that, even if she is alive, her daughter would have forgotten her (HT 228). These objects of mourning have not yet been completely lost, which prevents Offred from pursuing the act of mourning and come to terms with reality. Scepticism over to what extent women were liberated in the pre-

Gilead dystopia likewise continues to encroach on her ability to be nostalgic, since the subject cannot be nostalgic for something that has not been experienced or possessed. Offred can evade reactionary politics and examine the past and the present in their continuity in light of self-reflective nostalgia. Yet at the same time, trauma and linguistic anxiety dominate her sensibility, confining her to perpetual melancholia. In this sense, Offred's nostalgia is inhibited as that of the protagonist in *Surfacing*, which cannot entirely seem to be attributed to the fact that nostalgia is forbidden in dystopia.

It is nonetheless significant that Offred negotiates with the dead – her family, friends, the former occupant of her room, and Ofglen – through her storytelling.[23] Its subversive nature is tempered by the fact that it is reconstructed by dispassionate, unreflective archivists in the post-Gileadean future in 2195 which is indicated in the Historical Notes, (as discussed in Chapter One, Part Two), who fail to explore the interpretive potential of the text. Offred's suicidal narrative is only exploited and appropriated for establishing an "authentic" account of the past, while personal memories are given no more value than potential materials of the history which those academics intend to reconstruct: "What would we not give, now, for even twenty pages or so of print-out from Waterford's private computer! However, we must be grateful for any *crumbs* the Goddess of History has deigned to vouchsafe us" (HT 310, emphasis added). The sexist nature of academics' remarks in the Historical Notes is unmissable (for instance, the choice of the word "tale" in the title of the document, making an explicit play on "tail" as sexual organ; also punning on "The Underground Femaleroad" as "The Underground Frailroad" [HT 301]). In fact, the narrative suggests the persistence of a sexist perspective, which seriously underestimates women's capability of thinking, in the pre-Gilead and Gilead eras respectively; such a viewpoint is voiced by Offred's husband Luke and the Commander. According to Luke, "women are incapable of abstract thought" (HT 121). The commander's following remark in his conversation with Offred then

[23] As mentioned above in the footnote, the absence of any profound engagement with the history of American slavery lessens the subversive effect of Offred's storytelling, since it renders the narrative a typical case of white anxiety. As Berlatsky notes, "*The Handmaid's Tale* doesn't just scrub the future of racism, though. It also cleanses the past. Neither Moira nor anyone else mentions American slavery, or uses the past history of black oppression to try to understand the current situation in Gilead" (n.pag). Offred's narrative does not negotiate with the racially marginalised in the past, which detracts from its overall potential.

doubles Luke's viewpoint: "Women can't add [..] For them, one and one and one and one don't make four./What do they make? I said, expecting five or three. /Just one and one and one and one" (HT 186). The future historians share the same point of view on women's inability to think and make a point, which prevents them from seeing the narrative as something more than a mere patchwork of memories.

In light of Spivak's subaltern theory, however, Abigail Rine argues that "Offred *does* speak":

> [H]er narrative is not entirely subsumed by the hegemonic discourse, but manages to critique and unmask its violent, oppositional logic. Her self-narration exceeds and resists the limited interpretation of Piexioto (78; emphasis in original)

The importance of Offred's resistance is then not so much her endless scepticism as her determination to recount her experience and recollection. It is to revive the ghosts of the past, including her past self, and let them speak. [24] This is the most prominent feature of Atwood's dystopia, for her political storytelling positively includes others' voices. On the contrary, the instrumentalisation of others for individual salvation is what ultimately defines the inadequacy of counter-narratives in dystopian novels particularly by Orwell and Ishiguro.

Traditional dystopian novels by Zamyatin, Huxley and Orwell, as well as Burdekin's *Swastika Night* and also Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, start their narrative *in medias res*, so that the discontinuity of the world in the past and the dystopia in the present is highlighted. Although *The Handmaid's Tale* applies the same method of narrative, it rather shows continuity of the past and the present through Offred's act of remembering. This is possible since the novel is set in the transitional period, thereby depicting the making of a dystopia – unlike Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which abstracts the history of Oceania (what Adam Stock calls "the future-as-past") by positing Winston's helpless amnesia. Although the functions of places are transformed in Gilead, their appearances still evoke the past era for Offred; the gymnasium mentioned above in this section is one such example.[25] Offred's nostalgia

[24] It is, nevertheless, important to note that, as Spivak stresses, the ultimate task of critics is not to seek for a way to "give the subaltern voice" but to "work *for* the bloody subaltern, you work against subalternity" ("Interview" 46; emphasis in original).

[25] The main events in the narrative are set in Harvard, Massachusetts. The Harvard Widener's library appears a couple of times in her story, although she does not specify the place name: "I can remember where the buildings are, inside the Wall; we used to be able to walk freely

is, nevertheless, constantly aborted by her trauma and melancholic scepticism in the sense that her losses are now "transhistorical". In this sense, repetition compulsion and nostalgia are at times conflated in her contemplation over the past. Nostalgia is the main mode of narrative in *The Handmaid's Tale*, yet it evades the binary interpretation of nostalgia as reactionary or self-reflective (critical/militant), presenting existential homelessness as a chronic condition for modern women. Atwood's narrative of her dystopia does not easily allow readers to envisage a positive vision of the future, for its function is rather close examination of the backlash rather than a straightforward dismissal of it. Meanwhile, complacency and complicity are also the main themes in Kazuo Ishiguro's novels discussed in the next chapter. Yet interestingly, the self-victimisation and deep scepticism found in Atwood's two novels disappear. Nostalgia is then represented as a means of submission, rather than the kind of resistance in dystopias analysed in the previous chapters. Is Ishiguro's dystopian novel then a backlash against the convention of dystopian fiction? Can there be a dystopian novel without a counter narrative? Issues concerning these questions will be explored fully in the next chapter.

there, when it was a university. […] Maybe he [Luke]'s in the library" (HT 166).

Chapter Five

Aestheticized Nostalgia and Imagined Home in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *Never Let Me Go*

"Transience itself is commodified in passing".

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (38)

"But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. […] What was I?"

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus* (146)

Unlike Orwell's *Coming Up for Air* and Atwood's *Surfacing*, a butler's nostalgic trip to the English countryside in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* (1989) is not a return to his childhood home but to his memories as a high-ranking servant in a prestigious country house, Darlington Hall. Homecoming and dystopian novels by Orwell and Atwood are replete with the sense of resentment and a desperate wish for some form of salvation. By contrast, what marks *The Remains of the Day* is its excess of memories and consequently, lack of self-reflection and even that of affect. The same can be said of Ishiguro's dystopian novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), whose theme of nostalgia is the most obvious among the dystopian novels discussed in this thesis. Both of Ishiguro's narratives foreground the moral complacency of the modern homeless – a servant and a clone respectively – and such an anti-political tendency culminates in radical fatalism in *Never Let Me Go*. In his political reading, Alexander Beaumont also indicates the similarities between the two narratives, except for the following major difference:

> The reader [of *Never Let Me Go*] barely notices the hopes of a falsely idyllic childhood transforming into a reality too appalling to countenance until she is so deeply involved with the emotional lives of the novel's three main characters as to make securing the kind of ironic distance that renders judgement possible extraordinarily difficult. (154)

The sense of irony is miniscule in *Never Let Me Go*, due to the emotional proximity between the narrator and the reader through the aesthetics of nostalgia, or the mythologisation of the everyday and ordinary. This is exemplified in the novel's detailed account of school life, the countryside, the consumption of cheap commodities and innocuous small talk. This chapter's focus is, then, how nostalgia can be exploited as a means of submission to the status quo by way of repression. But first of all, this chapter will illustrate the aesthetics of nostalgia in *The Remains of the Day*, which is remodelled and intensified in the unconventional dystopian narrative of *Never Let Me Go*.

Part One: Being at Home with Homelessness in *The Remains of the Day*

Although critics seem to agree unanimously that *The Remains of the Day* is a nostalgic novel, its theme of nostalgia is far from straightforward: who exactly is nostalgic, and what is the object of nostalgia? It seems fairly easy to detect Stevens's nostalgia in the narrative, yet it is somewhat troublesome to pin down and elucidate its content and form. This difficulty can be attributed to the fact that, in this travelogue/memoir recounted by the diligent butler, there is no reference to his own childhood and home. His first name is never disclosed in his narrative; and crucially, his mother never appears in his retrospection. The narrator's perspective is mostly limited to his position as a servant, tirelessly glossing over formal duties and chores. Working in the same profession for his entire life, Stevens has never had a place of his own other than his pantry. Miss Kenton describes it as "stark and bereft of colour", "a prison cell" (RD 55, 174), although, for Stevens, the butler's pantry is "the heart of the house's operations, not unlike a general's headquarters during a battle (RD 173). In analysing "an ontological homelessness" of the butler, Noémie Nélis points out that "[s]ervants were, it seems, not only looking for a job or a position, but also for a *home*" (12,

emphasis in original). This suggests that his own job itself is synonymous with his home: "The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to *inhabit* their professional role and *inhabit* it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events however surprising, alarming or vexing" (RD 43; emphasis added). Yet home is first and foremost a place. Stevens, as a son of a lifelong servant, seems to have been born in another country house. Getting married and finding his own home does not seem to come across Stevens's mind, for marriage to him is "a serious threat to the order in a house" (RD 53). Stevens still holds the profession at the time of the journey, although he now serves a different employer. It could then be said that Stevens is nostalgic for the period of thirty-five years (RD 133) during which he served Lord Darlington in the prestigious country estate in Oxfordshire, which he sees it as a home.

There is, however, another dimension to Stevens's meticulous retrospection of past events inside and surrounding Darlington Hall. It functions as a means for him to restore the honour of his deceased Lord Darlington, whose association with the Nazis has been widely condemned. Clad in his employer's suits, Stevens even deliberately impersonates him on one occasion towards the end of his journey. Yet such an attempt remains private, for Stevens does not express any intention to publish his account. The image of Lord Darlington as a dignified philanthropist who strived to maintain the honour of Britain has been erased by the media at the turn of history. Stevens's personal nostalgia for the obliterated image of his employer as "a gentleman of great moral stature" (RD 132) is the only way for him to resist the current of history, and in turn to protect his home from decay.

Stevens's lack of empathy, then, results from his obsessive identification with his profession, and as such it reflects the degree of his existential homelessness as a lifelong servant. His suppression of emotion, which is required to maintain his dignity as a male servant, even manifests in his highly stylised, restrained narrative itself. Stevens does not view himself as submissive, since it is his will to serve his employer. He even considers it as a "privilege" to "[practice] one's profession at the very fulcrum of great affairs"; to serve Lord Darlington ultimately amounts to "further the cause of humanity", and it is "a contribution to the course of history" (RD 147, also see 122-3, 132-3).[1] Yet Stevens's stiff-upper-lip masculinity becomes an extreme one when he

[1] Interestingly, this counteracts Stevens's admiration of the superiority of his master, since in such a view Lord Darlington becomes a *servant* for humanity rather than a born aristocrat.

chooses to prioritise his job over attending to his father's deathbed. He boasts the sense of triumph he felt, believing that such professionalism is exactly what his father would have wished him to demonstrate (RD 115). It is, nevertheless, Lord Darlington's death in disgrace and the decay of the country house in the post-war era that eventually cause a devastating impact on Stevens, forcing him to realise that, in a fundamental sense, his existence has only been instrumental, hollow and rootless without his master and the house. In this context, what initiates, and consequently, troubles Stevens's nostalgia is the unexpected turn of history, which demystifies the ideal home which Stevens still inhabited imaginatively.

Meanwhile, Stevens projects his sense of nostalgia onto Miss Kenton, a former housekeeper of Darlington Hall. Upon reading her recent letters, Stevens suspects that Miss Kenton, who is now married to Mr. Benn,[2] is suffering from "a deep sense of nostalgia for her days at Darlington Hall" (RD 50). Steven quotes the following sentence from her letter: "Indeed, all in all, I cannot see why the option of her returning to Darlington Hall and seeing out her working years there should not offer a very genuine consolation to a life that has come to be so dominated by a sense of waste" (RD 51). Yet when the two reunite towards the end of Stevens's journey, Miss Kenton is rather baffled by such allegation of being troubled by nostalgia. On the contrary, she detects in Stevens a desperate nostalgia for the past life in Darlington Hall, suggesting to Stevens that dwelling on the past is fundamentally a futile act: "After all, there's no turning back the clock now. One can't be forever dwelling on what might have been. One should realise one has as good as most, perhaps better, and be grateful" (RD 251). Clearly disturbed by this unexpected remark by Miss Kenton, Stevens starts to question his blind loyalty to Lord Darlington (RD 256). Yet Stevens nevertheless rationalises it by telling himself that "there is little choice other than to leave our fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world who employ our services" (RD 257). His worldview does not change dramatically, happily returning to Darlington Hall to serve a new employer.

[2] Miss Kenton later reveals that her marriage was "simply another ruse" to attract Steven's attention (RD 251). She, however, implies that it is simply too late for Stevens to express any affection to her. Mr Benn is an ex-butler at Granchester Lodge, who now works in a different occupation (RD 181). Stevens seems to be quite certain that he is more suitable for Miss Kenton due to his superiority as a butler at Darlington Hall. This sense of superiority and pride is probably what softens the impact of Miss Kenton's rejection to him.

Commodification of patina

Yet nostalgia in *The Remains of the Day* is not limited to Stevens's elegiac recollection. Indeed, Ishiguro's novel itself functions as a device which implants an imagined nostalgia into the reader. The aesthetics of nostalgia of the narrative itself is epitomised in the following oft-quoted meditation on the English landscape by Stevens. Stevens propounds that the "greatness" of "this land of ours *Great* Britain" can be ascribed to its understated modesty, or, effort*less*ness:

> 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. (RD 29; emphasis in original)

It is important that, in this description, the landscape itself possesses dignity, which can be seen in its "sense of restraint". Stevens compares it with natural landscapes in Africa and America, concluding that the latter examples are "inferior on account of their unseemly demonstrativeness" (RD 29). This can be read as Stevens's nostalgia/mythophilia for the simpler life (as in "simplicity is the best"). On the deeper level, nevertheless, this statement itself is haunted by its superfluity; why does Stevens have to make a rather cumbersome argument about its beauty if it stands on its own? It is, however, hard *not* to admit the aesthetical effect of this passage; it is as if the English landscape carries the patina of the country's history as the hub of the world, and such "greatness" is not only applicable to the imperialist era but from time immemorial. At first look, the word "lack" seems to downgrade the quality of the beauty. John J. Su argues that this is "an unconsciously ironic deflation of Thatcherite rhetoric", revealing Englishness as "an empty signifier deployed to legitimate particular ideological positions" (*Ethics* 131). Although this argument is partially right in terms of the political milieu of that time, it should be noted that the nostalgic aesthetics projected onto the landscape – its simplicity and calmness – invokes the feeling that the landscape itself has the capacity to resist the movement of history. In other words, the critical aspect of Stevens's description of the English landscape is not immediately obvious.

Meanwhile, among many critics, Christine Berberich praises the novel's critique of nostalgia through its portrayal of the downfall of Lord Darlington and Stevens; the novel is "an important contribution to late twentieth-century literature" (136), since "[i]t tries to depict one person's idea of Arcadia – but shows that this Arcadia was, in fact, only a myth, tainted by the infiltration of fanaticism and misapplied loyalties" (156). To put it in Svetlana Boym's terms, then, *The Remains of the Day* draws a trajectory from "restorative nostalgia" to "reflective nostalgia", culminating in Stevens's regret at the end of his retrospection. At the time of writing the novel, Ishiguro was well aware of the negative aspect of nostalgia as a political tool; he maintains that, regardless of whether it is used by the Left or Right, its main problem lies in its fabrication of a variety of myths which is exploited to validate a certain political agenda (Shaffer and Wong 74).[3] For Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* is a form of textual subversion of stereotypes of Englishness; as many critics have argued, through depicting the failure of Stevens's idealisation of the country house as the epitome of civilisation, Ishiguro's text casts a critical light on such rhetoric of a lost ideal and ultimately presents the image as a myth. Yet the effect of such a critique is as a whole subdued and undemonstrative, due to Ishiguro's choice of an extremely subservient butler as a narrator and its polished, homogeneous prose style. What the reader would gain from the novel is, then, an escapist pleasure of consuming traditional English culture which has never really existed. Ishiguro's fable of a nostalgic servant portrays, in Ishiguro's words, "mythical England that is being sold by the English Heritage industry" to tourists, epitomised in images such as "grand houses and these cold butlers and people having tea and sandwiches on the lawn and all these very elegant upper-class people" (Shaffer and Wong 143). What should be highlighted here is his focus on the international audience, or *tourists* at the time of writing *The Remains of the Day*:

> [The Englishness portrayed in the novel] is probably not the Englishness that is understood by English people who live in England. It is precisely an England that has been conjured up for the consumption of foreigners all around the world. […] It is very much an England that has been ready-made for foreign

[3] Ishiguro's remark is as follows: "It's used as a way of bashing anybody who tries to spoil this 'Garden of Eden'. This can be brought out by the left or right, but usually it is the political right who say England was this beautiful place before the trade unions tried to make it more egalitarian or before the immigrants started to come or before the promiscuous age of the '60s came and ruined everything" (Shaffer and Wong 74).

consumption, ready-made for translation. (Shaffer and Wong 147)

The readability of Ishiguro's text can be ascribed to his deliberate avoidance of local dialects and slangs, with the aim to reach as wide an audience as possible. Although he maintains a critical distance from nationalist nostalgia, Ishiguro's interest is not so much in exposing Englishness as a case of false consciousness, as in exploiting such a myth precisely *as a myth*; such self-referentiality itself needs to be integrated to the narrative in order to cater to the postmodern reader, who is deeply suspicious of the logic of authenticity/inauthenticity. In other words, the accuracy of representations of the inside look of British aristocracy is only secondary, because the postmodern, cynical reader would not have to be told that those are a myth. John J. Su likewise claims that self-critique in Ishiguro's text is extremely subtle and implicit: "Self-critique remains palatable when cast in the indirect and sentimentalised terms characteristic of nostalgia" (*Ethics* 138). Su rightly predicts that *The Remains of the Day* would "become a novel that is admired and loved, but whose ideas for redefining national identity are largely overlooked", and thus "in no way [command] a broader shift in national discourse" (*Ethics* 139). *The Remains of the Day*, which won the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 1989 and became an international bestseller,[4] is in this context a novel which sells both nostalgia and its subtle critique as a commodity. It serves not as a form of propaganda of Englishness, but rather of advertisement; it does not enforce the reader to take in the view provided, but rather, entices.

Seen as an easily consumable textual commodity, *The Remains of the Day* can be read as a well-crafted travel guidebook in a narrative form which is targeted for home and international potential travellers alike, in that it not only provides sanitised[5]

[4] The novel sold "more than a million copies in the English language alone", and thanks to "the worldwide success of the 1993 Merchant-Ivory film, Ishiguro's most famous novel has been translated into more than twenty foreign languages" (Parkes 70).

[5] Representations in the novel are of course not wholly de-politicised. Stevens's narrative does deflate Lord Darlington's dignity as a civilised philanthropist to a great extent by revealing his notorious association with German fascists, which ultimately casts a deep shadow over the ideal of Englishness itself. Yet throughout the narrative, Stevens tirelessly underscores the innocence and efforts of his employer in his attempt to contribute to humanity. For Stevens, Lord Darlington might have made some mistakes, but he should still be remembered as a dignified person, as well as Stevens himself. Yet, as Berberich points out, Lord Darlington's failure on the moral ground is too evident to be justified: "Lord Darlington's inexcusable error lies in applying these originally honourable notions [chivalry and fair-play] in a one-sided manner: his philanthropy *in*cludes the Nazis but *ex*cludes Jewish housemaids, and as such it cannot but be politicised" (152, emphasis in original). Although Lord Darlington might have been innocent and thus not quite legally culpable, the novel as a whole significantly downplays his moral responsibility. For instance, the reader is left uncertain about what happened to the

descriptions of English culture, but it presents them as lost, evoking its longstanding ethos as well as pathos of futility and transience. It is in a way superior to the travel book which Stevens adores in the novel: Ms Jane Symons's *The Wonder of England*. This book-in-the-book is accompanied by numerous photographs and artworks of the English countryside. During his trip, Stevens carefully follows recommendations in *The Wonder of England*, yet somewhat ironically, it is always local people who have the information about hidden beautiful spots. They are, in Salman Rushdies's words, "a series of green-and-pleasant country folk who seem to have escaped from one of those English films of the 1950s in which the lower orders doff their caps and behave with respect towards a gent with properly creased trousers and flattened vowels" (n. pag.). These mythical helpers seem to be always welcoming strangers, willing to assist and entertain their trips. A myth of friendly local people in the countryside is thus concocted, which further strengthens the novel's nature as a nostalgic commodity, since such a local community itself is often perceived as being under a threat of globalisation.

As will be discussed shortly, a pleasure of reading *The Remains of the Day* is to appropriate imaginatively the patina of the lost English aristocracy. What readers are provided with is not only memory but nostalgia – a desire – for traditional English customs, sentiments and landscapes while the issue of the authenticity of these representations is always placed in brackets. Reading Ishiguro's narrative is to consume the lost Englishness in his carefully curated textual museum.[6]

In this sense, Ishiguro's novel is an example of what Arjun Appadurai calls "imagined nostalgia" (also called "armchair nostalgia" and "ersatz nostalgia"), that is, "nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory" (78). This is a type of mythophilia that is understood in the context of capitalist mass consumption. Its function is not so much evoking a consumer's nostalgia for what has been lost in one's own past, as "creating experiences of losses that never took place"; in this sense,

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two Jewish maids after having being dismissed by their master, while Lord Darlington's later regret is narrated by Stevens in detail. Yet even still, it seems that Lord Darlington is in denial of his own mistake, since he obscures his own position concerning the issue by using a third-person pronoun ("*It* was wrong, what occurred" [RD 159; emphasis added]).

[6] John Berger's following observation is apt here: "Publicity is, in essence, nostalgic. It has to sell the past to the future. It cannot itself supply the standards of its own claims. And so all its references to quality are bound to be retrospective and traditional. It would lack both confidence and credibility if it used a strictly contemporary language" (139).

ersatz nostalgia is "nostalgia for things that never were" (77).[7] Appadurai's theory of this consumerist nostalgia derives from Grant David McCraken's concept of patina. According to McCraken, patina is "a physical property of material culture": "Its function is not to claim status but to authenticate it. Patina serves as a kind of visual proof of status" (32). It is strongly associated with aristocracy, and importantly, patina is that which is maintained and nurtured by servants: "The polishing of old silver, the dusting of old furniture, the patching of old clothes, the varnishing of old surfaces – these are all part of the embodied practice of the upper classes in many societies, or, more exactly, of their servants" (Appadurai 75). In *The Remains of the Day*, it is explained that silver is "a public index of a house's standards" (RD 142). One of Stevens's achievements is indeed related to silver; recalling that his impeccably polished silver eased relations between Lord Halifax and Herr Ribbentrop, he boastfully claims that "it is not simply my fantasy that the state of the silver had made a small, but significant contribution" (RD 144).[8] It is also silver which triggers deep anxiety in Stevens; in serving the new employer, his polishing skills begin to deteriorate, which reflects the decay of a grand house (RD 148-9). Patina is an emblem of the duration of time, which evokes the immortal quality of possessions. What is required for servants in the country house is not only to attend to orders, but more importantly, to protect the estate from the destructive forces of time and preserve its essence as a sanctuary of civilisation.

As Su argues, this aspect comes to the fore especially after the destructions of the country house after the Second World War, noting that:

> [The country house] becomes a central icon of British heritage in the post-war era because its presence belies the cultural turbulence caused by increasing emigration from the colonies; chronic unemployment and economic depression; and the resurgence of regionalism within Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. (*Ethics* 121)

Intriguingly, the country house survives after the Great Wars in a commodified form. In Ishiguro's novel, after the death of Lord Darlington, Darlington Hall is acquired by

[7] "Rather than expecting the consumer to supply memories while the merchandiser supplies the lubricant of nostalgia, now the viewer need only bring the faculty of nostalgia to an image that will supply the memory of a loss he or she has never suffered" (Appadurai 78)

[8] It should be noted that such a "shining" achievement is again tarnished by the fact that Herr Ribbentrop was the Nazi German ambassador. As such, this episode symbolises Britain's political appeasement in the thirties.

a wealthy American called Mr Farraday, who turns out to be a deep enthusiast for "English ways" (RD 129). In one episode, Mr Farraday expresses a great disappointment when Mrs Wakefield – his American friend who is as enthusiastic for English traditions as Mr Farraday (RD 128) – visits Darlington, and tells him that everything in Darlington Hall is "mock" (RD 130). He asks Stevens whether the house is "a genuine grand old English house" and even starts to doubt whether Stevens is really "a genuine old-fashioned English butler" (RD 131). What Mr Farraday wishes to possess and appropriate is, then, not the house itself but the patina of British aristocracy. Likewise, for him, Stevens the butler is a human commodity packaged and sold as part of the country house itself, as Steven himself admits towards the end (RD 255). Stevens in this sense belongs to the house in a quite literal sense as something like furniture; he is a passive masculine figure who is devoid of agency. Yet it should be stressed that, his existence is integral, not exactly to Darlington Hall, but to the patina of the house. Although Mr Farraday attempts to appropriate nostalgia for the legacy of the house, such imagined nostalgia is subject to constant scrutiny of its authenticity.[9]

In sum, nostalgia in *The Remains of the Day* manifests in various forms, most conspicuously in Stevens's longing for his deceased master and aristocracy, Mr Farraday's desire for possessing the patina of English aristocracy and the reader's desire for consuming the aesthetics of nostalgia presented in the novel. The narrative does offer a critique of aristocracy, professionalism and the English national identity. Yet such an aspect is tempered by the novel's nature as a nostalgic commodity; its effect is too subtle and unobtrusive.[10] Stevens is devoid of his own past, and his

[9] One sentence example under the entry of "patina" in *OED* is worth a mention. For the definition 1.c. ("An acquired accretion of an abstract quality; a superficial impression or appearance", *OED* cites a British diplomat Harold George Nicolson, who writes in 1933 as follows: "He says what the Americans lack is patina. I say that not only have they no sense of the past: they have no sense of the future".

[10] Fredric Jameson's concept of "nostalgia film", a cultural trend in the postmodern age which is symptomatic of the waning of historicity and affect, can be applied to the reading of Ishiguro's (imaginary) homecoming novel:

> [T]he nostalgia film was never a matter of some old-fashioned "representation" of historical content, but instead approached the "past" through stylistic connotation, conveying "pastness" by the glossy qualities of the image, and "1930s-ness" or "1950s-ness" by the attributes of fashion. (*Postmodernism* 19)

Stevens's introspective account does not invite a deep meditation on historical conditions which enabled the presence of the putative past. Its critical dimension operates only in terms of historical authenticity. That is to say, the narrative's self-critique has mainly to do with the

existence is mere part of the country house; his moral complacency is concomitant with his ahistorical being. On one occasion, he criticises another servant who memorises a number of pieces of trivial information to boast in front of his employer, disdainfully calling him "a Memory Man" (RD 36). Stevens, a mythical servant who is omnipresent yet unnoticeable, is in fact not so dissimilar to "a Memory Man", unwilling to fully reflect on his past experiences. Stevens's journey to the West Country can nevertheless be considered as homecoming, in the sense that it is a return to his imagined home. The forms of nostalgia and the homeless position of the protagonist in *The Remains of the Day* are then adapted to a dystopian narrative in *Never Let Me Go*, producing a similar reading experience despite of its haunting and elegiac tone.

Part Two: Memories as Clones in *Never Let Me Go*

As with Stevens, a country house is again an important site of memory for Kathy H., the narrator/protagonist of *Never Let Me Go* (2005). In the late nineties, after the death of her close friends, Ruth and Tommy, Kathy begins to recount her past, "to order all these old memories" (NLMG 37). Hailsham is a name of what Kathy regards as the "privileged" estate where Kathy and her fellow students grew up in their youth in sixties (NLMG 4). Instead of servants and aristocrats, the country house (Hailsham House) is this time inhabited by clones and their guardians. The sinister connotations of the place name are unmissable. For this, Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff notes that "Hailsham is a 'sham' which people 'hail'" (165). The latter particularly evokes Nazism (as in "Hail Hitler"), tacitly suggesting that a great country house is a disguised

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veracity of Steven's memories; it does not engage with questions regarding Stevens's origin as an individual (why is he a servant in the first place?). This paradox of ahistoricity in an apparently historical novel could perhaps be attributed to its first person perspective, which seems to hinder what Jameson calls "cognitive mapping" where one seeks to situate one's "individual social relationship to local, national, and international class realities" (*Postmodernism* 52). Although *The Remains of the Day* heavily draws on historical events, its very gesture of utilising social and global issues, particularly the decline of the country house against a backdrop of two World Wars, primarily as a plot device can be interpreted as a symptom of the inability of the postmodern text to historicise the present, or to represent it as a continuum with previous periods.

concentration camp; as in Darlington Hall, the country house is again haunted by German fascism and its persecution of the Jewish people. As foreshadowed, the nature of Hailsham is more like a prison for clones with its conditioning and medical check-ups. Later in the story, facilities in Hailsham cease to exist, while it survives in Kathy's memory as her "home". Yet her sense of home remains ambiguous and groundless by the fact that Kathy is unable even to locate the estate geographically, despite her constant search after the closure of the site. Her narrative indeed starts and finishes with her futile search for the place; her urge to find the lost estate eventually becomes subconscious.[11] At the end of her memoir, Kathy expresses her renewed, even stronger determination to remember Hailsham: "I'll have Hailsham with me, safely in my head, and that'll be something no one can take away" (NLMG 281). Here, it is tempting to conclude that Hailsham, as well as her co-students, live on in her memory. The placelessness of Kathy's home, however, indicates its highly phantastic quality. In *The Remains of the Day*, even after his employer's death, Stevens still has an actual place to return to, although he is slightly out of place as a traditional, old English butler. By contrast, the sheer inability of Kathy and other Hailsham students to locate their home on the map is a palpable sign of their existential homelessness; Hailsham is an empty place whose collective memory has been eradicated by official history, and as such, it is unmappable. This conspicuous gap in their memory is also a trace of the guardians' memory control of their students, although such a machination can only be inferred from the narrative which is highly symptomatic of collective mentality.

Patina is also utilised as a key aesthetic technique in Ishiguro's nostalgic dystopia. The narrative's focal period is from the sixties to the eighties. In creating his 2010 film adaptation of *Never Let Me Go*, the film director Mark Romanek decided to capitalise on "a general sense of transience and impermanence – the beauty of the sadness":

> I was taken by the concept of *wabi-sabi* – the beauty of that are old – and it became important to me to avoid all the science fiction tropes. Everything had to be old, faded – it had to have the patina of age. We were very rigorous about that. (Interview by Charles McGrath n. pag.)

[11] "Mind you, though I say I never go looking for Hailsham, what I find is that sometimes, when I'm driving around, I suddenly think I've spotted some of it" (NLMG 280).

What defines Ishiguro's dystopia is indeed its aesthetic of pastness and nostalgia, which supersedes that of science fiction. Romanek's film rendition of the novel is overall faithful to the novel, fully capturing its past-oriented nature (a notable exception is scenes of extracting organs from donors; there is no graphic depiction in the novel). Meanwhile, according to a movie critic, Peter Howell, a mock cassette tape entitled *Song After Dark* was circulated as a promotion material for the film (n. pag.).[12] This is an album by a fictional jazz singer, Judy Bridgewater, and one of her songs is entitled "Never Let Me Go". In the novel, the song is represented as Kathy's old-time favourite, and one of the most poignant scenes in the narrative is when she re-discovers the cassette tape in Norfork, which is depicted as "England's 'lost corner'" (NLMG 65). In the novel, the album is mentioned as "originally an LP", recorded in 1956 (NLMG 66-7). On the cover picture, there is an image of Judy Bridgewater, "wearing a purple satin dress, one of those off-the-shoulder ones popular in those days", smoking a cigarette in a bar while being served by "swarthy waiters in white tuxedos" (NLMG 67). The cassette tape and the song carry great significance in Kathy's recollection as well as in the plot. *Never Let Me Go* is in this context a nostalgic novel which promotes the sentiment of nostalgia instead of exploring sensitivity, as with *The Remains of the Day*.[13]

Indeed, the narrative itself is replete with nostalgic objects, evoking the time around the sixties and the seventies in particular. Norfolk, represented as a sort of sanctuary for antiques, memorabilia and junk, is where Kathy frequently returns to after she has become a carer. This is probably motivated by her memories of "the Exchanges" and "the Sales" at Hailsham; the former is for students to exchange their artworks, whereas the latter is an event where students are given the opportunity to buy miscellaneous objects[14] from the outside world (NLMG 16, 41). After graduating

[12] Howell states that the cassette tape turned out to be a disguised thumb drive, which is indeed, a memory device.

[13] Svetlana Boym introduces Vladimir Nabokov's distinction between sensitivity and sentimentality, which correlates to the distinction between literature and pornography. Whereas sensitivity has to do with being receptive to details and particulars of affect, sentimentality with ready-made, or simulated expressions of it. Boym's following reflection on the sentimental aspect of nostalgia can be applied to the reading of Ishiguro's two novels: "Nostalgia too easily mates with banality, functioning not through stimulation, but by covering up the pain of loss in order to give a specific form to homesickness and to make homecoming available on request. For Nabokov, kitsch, *poshlost* and the acceptance of the world of ready-made thoughts and emotions is static; it excludes reflective time" (339).

[14] Kathy recounts that at a Sale, "we got our clothes, our toys, the special things that hadn't

from Hailsham, The Woolworth's in Norfork becomes Kathy's one of favourite places, a general shop with shelves of "bright plastic toys, greeting cards, loads of cosmetics, maybe even a photo booth" (NLMG 155). [15] "The Portway Studios" is another such place; it used to be an art gallery, but now sells "all kinds of arty things: pots, plates, clay animals" (NLMG 160). For Ruth, on the contrary, Norfolk becomes traumatic; she once visits there to look for her original, or what they call, "possible". Ruth's alleged "possible" is a woman who works in a "nice glass fronted office", who symbolises her "'dream future'" (NLMG 140). The result is, however, devastating for Ruth, for she realises that the woman does not resemble Ruth at all; her fantasy about her alternate "future" is now taken away. Then Ruth shouts at her friends:

> We all know it. We're modelled from *trash*. Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. […] if you want to look for possibles, […] then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from. (NLMG 164; emphasis in original)

Whereas Kathy wallows herself in nostalgic commodities, Ruth perceives herself and other clones as mere "trash", associating with the marginalised people. Although this statement signals a moment of truth for clones, it is not regarded as anything distinctively significant within Kathy's narrative, which indicates her insensitivity towards others.

Never Let Me Go as a dystopian novel

Meanwhile, despite the theme of institutionalised organ exploitation, there seems to be a gap between *Never Let Me Go* and other traditional dystopian novels; the novel does not seem to be a direct response to previous dystopias, although there is surely implicit intertextuality.[16] Here, it is the lack of a counter-narrative that underlies the

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been made by another student" (NLMG 41). Ironically, rubbish from the outside world is recycled to serve as "special" objects for Hailsham students.

[15] The Woolworth's is a much-remembered supermarket chain (affectionately called "Woolies"), which epitomises the seventies "High Street nostalgia" around Britain (Castella n. pag.). All stores closed in 2009.

[16] For detailed analysis of the intertextual dimension of *Never Let Me Go*, see Leona Toker and Daniel Chertoff, "Reader Response and the Recycling of *Topoi* in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never*

issue. On the level of the settings, *Never Let Me Go* fits George Claeys definition of literary dystopia. Told from the point of view of one of the clones, the setting of *Never Let Me Go* is premised on the wide-scale systemic harvesting of organs (possibly international-scale). Clones, which are deemed less than human, are mass-produced for treating those who are in need of transplants. Detailed accounts of how recipients actually benefit from this project, as well as whether it is state-directed or market-driven are left unclear due to the narrator's limited information and knowledge. Yet the major issue is that, when read as dystopian fiction, the narrative is characterised by its obscuring and suppressing of a counter-narrative. Although there are several occasions where main characters (including Kathy) question their grim fate, the narrative does not delve into the very issue of these unsettling voices. It is as though clones are under a total control of psychological persuasion (which echoes *hypnopaedia* in Huxley's World State), yet again, Ishiguro's text eschews any convincing explanation about the lack of agency among clones. Kathy's subdued narrative, however, is the major horror; unlike other conventional dystopias, *Never Let Me Go* centres on a willing conformist rather than a desperate rebel such as Winston or Offred; when read as a dystopian narrative, *Never Let Me Go* compels the reader to interrogate the possibility and value of resistance itself. Ishiguro's narrative thus should be read as a radical critique of traditional dystopian narratives.

The ethical dimension of the text can be examined effectively through comparing Ishiguro's novel with Michael Bay's dystopian film entitled *The Island*, which was released in the same year as the novel, sharing the central premise (organ exploitation) of Ishiguro's novel. *The Island* is rife with futuristic dystopian imagery which strongly recalls prior dystopian films such as George Lucas's *THX 1138* (1971) and Michael Anderson's *Logan's Run* (1976). Set in 2019, the narrative of *The Island* starts with a depiction of a modern underground facility, inhabited by uniform-clad individuals. Their monotonous, strictly regimented life is at times interrupted by "the lottery"; the winner will be sent to "the Island", the only uncontaminated place in the outside of the sterile compound. Yet they are in fact clones who were copied from wealthy "sponsors", serving as their health insurance; that is, winning "the Island" amounts to coerced organ/baby donation and death. One of the clones, Lincoln Six-

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Let Me Go", *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2008, pp. 163-180.

Echo (Ewan McGregor) discovers the conspiracy and sets out to escape from the compound with Jordan Two-Delta (Scarlett Johansson). Eventually, they succeed in freeing all the clones.

When compared with *Never Let Me Go*, the problem with *The Island* is its overly explicit intertextuality. Tropes such as collectivism, artificial landscapes, institutional conspiracy and love romance[17] are taken too literally; the film does not provide any original aesthetics in its representation of the rebellion of one individual, "defective" clone. *The Island* is laden with prolonged sequences of spectacles and violence which are secondary, if not irrelevant, to the whole plot. Despite the superficiality of these elements, its theme of memory and ethical implications are worth a close examination.[18] What motivates Lincoln to question the veracity of the hegemonic narrative (global contamination and the island as the only inhabitable place) is his recurrent nightmare, whose components, including the image of a ship named "the *Renovatio*", are memories from his original. While each clone is implanted with artificial memories which are in line with the official history that they are taught, Lincoln's case suggests that the original's acquired memories can be genetically inherited as physical appearances and diseases, which is suggestive of the theory of organic memory or racial/genetic memory (as discussed in Chapter Two).

Meanwhile, *The Island* makes an explicit connection between clones and slavery, highlighting how exploitation of others is rationalised by the logic of human/inhuman. First, the protagonist's name is Lincoln, which recalls Abraham Lincoln, a key figure in the abolition of slavery in the United States. Second, later in the story, Albert Laurent, a Burkinabe who leads a private military force, notices a mark burned into the forearm of Jordan. Laurent was also branded during "the Burkinabe rebellion", categorised as inhuman. He was initially hired to arrest Lincoln and Jordan, but eventually decides to help them release all clones. Third, a scene

[17] During the first sexual intercourse in their life, Jordan tells Lincoln, "The Island is real; it's us". The narrative thus presents heterosexual sex as a form of liberation from social oppression, which merely follows the convention in traditional dystopian texts.

[18] In *Fool's Gold?: Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century* (2012), Lucy Sargisson also compares *The Island* and Ishiguro's novel, *Never Let Me Go*. She provides a general overview of debates concerning the distinction between clone and human, but does not delve into the themes of memory and slavery; she only briefly mentions that "[the clones depicted in the two narratives] are not free or autonomous owners of self, nor are they slaves, traditionally understood" (214).

towards the end of the film recalls a holocaust gas chamber; there, a number of clones who fit in the same generation as Lincoln are "recalled" or massacred. By referring to slavery and genocides which actually happened in the past, the film functions as an extradiegetic critique of the exploitation of clones. Lincoln and Jordan choose to return to the compound and release other clones, despite the danger and difficulty that lie ahead for the two. It should be noted, however, their recklessness verges on absurdity (the couple did not expect Laurent and his army's help, which turns out to be essential to the rebellion). Likewise, the release of clones cannot be interpreted as their emancipation in a meaningful sense, since the film does not elaborate on how they can be integrated into society outside the compound. In short, *The Island* remains an escapist adventure film, although the film's exploration of the subversive potential of memory and explicit references to slavery and genocides opens up the ethical dimension of memory and history.

As with *The Island*, clones in *Never Let Me Go* are repeatedly told that they are "special", a euphemism used for justifying the controller's manipulation of them. Kathy recalls words from Miss Emily, the principal of the Hailsham school: "Here general drift was clear enough: we were all very special, being Hailsham students, and so it was all the more disappointing when we behaved badly (NLMG 43). Miss Emily inscribes in the clone's mind that being a Hailsham student is a "privilege" and "opportunity" (NLMG 43). The tone of narrative in *Never Let Me Go* is calm and subdued, foregrounding the ordinary life of a clone. Yet one of the major differences in terms of setting between *The Island* and Ishiguro's dystopia is that, in the latter, clones are made aware from the early stage that they are created for an organ bank. Clones, at least Hailsham students, simply accept this as their role in society, and in Kathy's account, no one seems to plot an escape or rebellion, or even commit suicide.[19] Ishiguro himself comments on this lack of a counter-narrative as follows:

> I didn't want this to be a story about slavery or exploitation. So I created a world in which, peculiarly, nobody expects them to rebel. They actually feel a

[19] Lives of clones who are raised outside Hailsham are not fully mentioned in Kathy's narrative (except one of Kathy's patients who appear at an early stage of her narrative [NLMG 5]. Yet note the following remark by Miss Emily in the final revelation scene: "All around the country, at this very moment, there are students being reared in deplorable conditions, conditions you Hailsham students could hardly imagine. And now we're no more, things will only get worse" (NLMG 255).

> sense of *dignity* in carrying out their duties well. It's important to Kathy that she's a good caretaker. It's important to Tommy that he's a good donor. I find that more interesting and more sad. And I think that's more like what we are. ("Myths and Metaphors" n.pag.; emphasis added) [20]

Never Let Me Go foregrounds the fact that individuals are always/already part of society; that is, conforming to one's assigned roles leads to an individual's sense of achievement. The narrative is in this sense a desperate longing for belonging. A fear of social exclusion constantly lurks behind Kathy's narrative.[21] *Never Let Me Go* thus questions the very nature of emancipation by omitting the element of resistance, a common feature in dystopian fiction. By employing a British country house as the focal point of the dystopia, and simultaneously, as Kathy's home, the novel subverts traditional dystopian tropes. The countryside is often presented as a locus of freedom in dystopian fiction, yet *Never Let Me Go* implies that the countryside is a disguised concentration camp.

Nostalgia as a means of submission

Whereas the role of nostalgia is significant in the formation of the counter-narrative in traditional dystopian novels, *Never Let Me Go* subverts it by presenting it as a means of submission. While, for instance, John the Savage and Winston Smith desperately cling to the past, it should be noted that the content of their nostalgia is vague and abstract; they do not possess their own concrete memories of the time before dystopia, only claiming that the past *must* have been better. On the other hand, Kathy H. does not have any memory of what was before the implementation of the dystopian organ bank system. Nor does she attempt to imagine, or even mythologise the world before (like Alfred in *Swastika Night*), or question why she is fated to forced organ donation

[20] In regards to *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro frequently mentions that "we are butlers" (Shaffer and F. Wong 87). Here, Ishiguro implies that we are clones; marginalised creatures, happily exploited and murdered.

[21] Gruesome myths of the woods in Hailsham told repeatedly among students might have contributed to her fear of going beyond the boundaries (NLMG 50). This possibly evidences the guardians' psychological manipulation.

and extermination.[22] In traditional dystopian novels, whereas the protagonists attempt to rebel against authority and control, they are typically unable to establish a horizontal relationship with others beyond the confinements of class, sexuality, race, ending up surrendering to power; they rather seek for salvation and transcendence, rejecting political struggles. In comparison, what empowers Kathy to pursue her own role diligently, while avoiding the state of despondency and despair, is the memories of her close friends.

It is then striking how Kathy only re-*collects* memories rather than being affected by them. Kathy treats her memories as her permanent possession.

> I was talking to one of my donors a few days ago who was complaining about how memories, even your most precious ones, fade surprisingly quickly. But I don't go along with that. The memories I value most, I don't see them ever fading. I lost Ruth, then I lost Tommy, but I won't lose my memories of them. (NLMG 280)

Through recollection and recounting of her friends, Kathy attempt to ground her individual existence; it enables her to fill her life with meanings and consistency and to prove that she had a decent life with others. In general, nostalgia consolidates the continuity of personal identity (Wilson 34), and this positive function is represented in a story of a dying donor cared for by Kathy. Although he is not a Hailsham student, he desperately attempts to appropriate Kathy's memories as his, due to his firm belief in the myth of Hailsham: "What he wanted was not just to hear about Hailsham, but to *remember* Hailsham, just like it had been his own childhood" (NLMG 5; emphasis in original). The donor is deprived of his own past, and his desire for Kathy's childhood recalls the monster's laments in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Yet what Kathy provides him is in fact state-sanctioned childhood, which had been carefully curated by the authorities. This episode illustrates

[22] One of her hobbies is to read Victorian novels, and later she even misses her essay which she left unfinished at the Cottages (NLMG 113). Yet she does not seem to be able to engage in critical contemplation at all. This episode can be interpreted as a critique of culture as a foundation of the development of the political subject; literary criticism does not necessarily foster one's political mind. As Beaumont claims, "[*Never Let Me Go*] exposes the cultural politics of liberal pedagogy to be a lie" (162).

exchanges of memories as comforting commodities, suggesting how the oppressed are conditioned to reproduce the very system that exploits them.

Many critics, however, regard Kathy's nostalgia as redemptive, particularly since it serves as a testimony of their lives; for instance, Yugin Teo claims that Kathy's testimony "is [her] final act of resistance against the collective forgetting of those who wish to deny their existence" (Teo 83).[23] As discussed throughout this thesis, nostalgia is often considered as regressive, for it is indicative of one's reluctance to face the present situation. According to these readings, however, *Never Let Me Go* suggests how nostalgia can be employed as a means of survival in the face of one's existential crisis.

Yet testimony is by definition a social act, and unlike Offred in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, there is no indication that Kathy's story is discovered or read by anyone, and she is ready to receive extermination. Kathy's overall attitude towards others should be questioned rather than endorsed simply because she remembers them; the question is, what does she remember and in what way does she desire to recollect? At the beginning of the novel, Kathy, although in a modest and restrained manner, boasts that she is an extremely competent carer: "hardly any of [her patients] have been classified as 'agitated', even before fourth donation" (NLMG 3). Kathy's care is indeed rather superficial or even hypocritical, since she is extremely reluctant to show any sign of empathy to others' disturbing remarks and behaviours. Shameem Black clarifies this as follows: "All this empathy, it seems, has one purpose only: to reconcile patients to their brief lives of terrible suffering and imminent death" (Black 791). Indeed, Kathy's limited capacity for empathy becomes obvious when she recounts situations which demand her to reflect on her fate. Kathy remembers how Tommy used to suffer from emotional outbursts frequently, yet she never contemplates on their causes. For instance, when seeing Tommy having a tantrum, what occupies Kathy's mind is rather his precious light blue polo shirt, worried that it might get ruined (NLMG 8).[24] In addition, near the end of the novel, Kathy and Tommy meet Miss

[23] The novel is "a eulogy for the clones" (Teo 150); "the pathography acts as an elegiac act of witness and testimony (Mcdonald 80); "Through her act of remembering, their memory and sacrifice will not be lost to the world" (Bizzini 70).

[24] "[W]hat had struck me was that each time he stamped the foot back down again, flecks of mud flew up around his shins. I thought again about his precious shirt, but he was too far away for me to see" (NLMG 10).

Emily and her partner Madame, believing that they can get deferral if they can prove their humanity through artistic abilities and the capacity for (heterosexual) romantic intimacy.[25] Yet they are told that it is only a myth, and their hope is completely betrayed. After the meeting, another tantrum hits Tommy. Kathy is, on the contrary, rather unhampered by the consequence of the revelation, and she simply devotes herself to comforting Tommy in order for him to accept his fate as a dying donor (NLMG 269). Similarly in another situation, when Ruth helplessly expresses her sense of resignation in accepting the role as a donor, Kathy only rationalises Ruth's statement.

> "I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it's what we're supposed to be doing, isn't it?" I wasn't sure if [Ruth] expected me to respond to this. She hadn't said it in any obviously leading way, and it's perfectly possible this was a statement she'd come out with just out of habit – it was the sort of thing you hear donors say to each other all the time. (NLMG 223)

Kathy's capacity to empathise with others' disturbing feelings is restricted, in the sense that they do not affect her in any substantial manner. This gives the reader the impression that Kathy's memory is highly selective with her technique of repression.

In another interview, Ishiguro himself comments on the theme of memory in the novel, stating that "[a]s [Kathy's] time runs out, as her world empties one by one of the things she holds dear, what she clings to are her memories of them" ("A Conversation" n.pag.). Yet the memory of a person is not equivalent to the person himself/herself. Here, Kathy's memories of friends are in fact functioning just as clones, copies of actual persons. In *Never Let Me Go*, they are disposable commodities which are useful for people in need and can extend their lifespan; in this context, clones do not have a value in themselves. Kathy's memories of others serve as copies of those who are remembered, and it seems that she filters out any characteristics about them, in order to suppress the potential of bringing her some identity crisis. After all, it is she who possesses their memories, and it is solely up to her to tailor them according to her desire. Each of Kathy's memories is always/already framed by her perspective; as

[25] For the analysis of heteronormativity in Ishiguro's novel, see Rachel Carroll, "Imitations of Life: Cloning, Heterosexuality and the Human in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*", *Rereading Heterosexuality: Feminism, Queer Theory and Contemporary Fiction*, Edinburgh UP, 2012, pp. 131-148.

mentioned before, there are quite a few moments when others expresses critical worldviews (Tommy's tantrum, Ruth's statement that clones are all "rubbish"), but she never allows the room for reconsidering the conditions of her existence as well as others'.

It seems therefore not farfetched to conclude that what Kathy desires is memory itself, not people or places that she cherishes. Whereas Kathy's narrative appears to be the act of mourning: it is, rather, the act of melancholia. Regarding this, Slavoj Žižek's following formulation is suggestive: "In short, the mourner mourns the lost object and 'kills it a second time' through symbolising its loss; while the melancholic is not simply the one who is unable to renounce the object: rather, he kills the object a second time (treats it as lost) *before the object is actually lost*" (*Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* 147). For Kathy, memory is a means of survival in the sense that it enables her to possess the objects she cherishes in order to replenish her instrumental existence with meanings. Yet this is made possible by treating others only for the sake of acquiring their memories, wherein the objects of her nostalgia are rendered dead, stripped of their capacity to affect Kathy's perspective. Nostalgia and melancholia are therefore intertwined with each other, enabling the subject to possess the objects in their absence. Kathy's being is a container which is filled with instrumental memories, in the sense that they are homogenised, commodified, and cloned.

In the final, yet anti-climatic confrontation, Miss Emily passes Tommy and Kathy the following patronising statement: "we sheltered you during those years, and we gave you your childhoods" (NLMG 263). Again, in the above quotation from *Frankenstein*, the monster desperately wishes to possess his childhood in order to be human. Now Kathy, another character who is categorised as "inhuman" despite her human qualities, is given her childhood. Kathy's memoir is then a successful case of indoctrination, indicating that childhood memory itself is not an indicator of one's individuality and thus is far from being subversive; what seems more crucial for rejecting the inhuman status is how one witnesses and remembers others as real people with their own bodies and minds.

It is here worth considering that, unlike Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, there is no framing narrative in *Never Let Me Go*.

The function of an appendix employed by Orwell and Atwood is to historicise the dystopian present as well as the past embedded in the counter-narratives. The past which the protagonist longs for is thus relativised by the text itself. In this sense, the appendix demythologises the hegemonic narrative as well as the counter-narrative. Bereft of such a device, *Never Let Me Go* maintains its mythical temporarily. Interpreting Kathy's memoir as a testimony thus misses this point; through testimony, the individual memory confronts official history. There is no such dimension in Ishiguro's dystopian novel.

In sum, Kathy's act of narrating her memories could be read as a resistance in so far as it serves as a testimony of the clones' lives. Yet, as a social act, it needs to be heard by others. The witness can only hope that his or her narrative will lead to social change, which in this case would be the abolishment of this organ bank system. Such an interpretation of hope, however, is rendered invalid within the narrative structure, for the aesthetics of nostalgia is presented as extremely comforting. Kathy's memoir reveals her limited empathy, and given her melancholic attitude towards others, it is deeply ambiguous whether her nostalgia is wholly positive or optimistic. Even in traditional dystopian novels, the past tends to be utilised as an antithesis to the status quo, and such past remains abstract or only notional, lacking living experiences. By contrast, the past described in *Never Let Me Go* is based on Kathy's concrete, lived experiences. Yet her past still seems to be reified or commodified, in a sense that each memory is removed of its capacity to affect the holder of that memory in a meaningful manner; it is saturated with simulacra of human relations.[26] In the last scene of the novel, Kathy visits Norfolk, which is represented as "England's 'lost corner', where all the lost property found in the country ended up" (NLMG 65). In this no-place, "all the lost property" is collected into one space; it is waiting to be "found" and given meanings, but Kathy shortly leaves Norfolk, "[driving] off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (NLMG 282). This is indeed reminiscent of Offred's final words in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: "And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light" (HT 295). Yet the major difference is that, whereas Offred's destination is unknown to her, Kathy is fully aware of what awaits her: organ donation and premature

[26] It should be emphasised that this critique of Kathy's instrumental memory and nostalgia and the question of whether Kathy is human or inhuman are separate issues; it does not suggest that Kathy's lack of empathy is attributed to her being as a clone. Treating others as simulacra is, ethically speaking, inhuman, and this could be done by both people and clones alike.

death. Through the subversion of the conventional tropes of dystopian fiction, Ishiguro's novel thus challenges the reader in a more radical manner by illustrating how to effectively submit to the status quo and enjoy it.

Conclusion: Mythophilia and the Formation of a Counter-narrative

"Along with the sober anxiety which brings us face to face with our individualised potentiality-for-Being, there goes an unshakable joy in this possibility".

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, (358)

Throughout this thesis, Jeff Malpas's distinction between nostalgia and mythophilia has been deployed for analysing dystopian as well as homecoming novels. Although Malpas does not see nostalgia as a disease, his definition is indeed a return to Johannes Hofer's original definition – a longing for home – in that it sticks to the conception of home as a place, and as such inseparable from one's lived experience. Mythophilia is, on the other hand, a longing for a mythologised home or an imagined no-place; its referent is fictional, rather than existential. Malpas, however, does not delve into theoretical implications of mythophilia, for his main purpose is to re-define the concept of nostalgia as a philosophical mode of self-reflection, or as a conduit between the past self and the present self. Malpas concludes his article as follows:

> Philosophy's nostalgia is not a nostalgia that removes us from the present or the future; it is not a nostalgia that removes us from where or how we are, nor does it hide us from who we are. Yet at the same time it does not present us merely with a comfortable and comforting narrative. Nostalgia remains a form of longing rather than the assuaging of that longing, it remains a sense of home and of return, and yet does not achieve such a return nor realise that sense of home in any final fashion. (Malpas 175)

In essence, nostalgia remains ambivalent. A longing for home is a self-reflective return to oneself; one is barred from regaining a self-contained sanctuary for one's existence. Meanwhile, mythophilia is a disguised twin of nostalgia; its subject desires an imagined/idealised home, while attributing normative value to it. As discussed in

Chapter One, fetishistically dissecting nostalgia into two opposing attitudes – self-reflective (progressive) and unreflective (reactionary) – towards the past is to oversee its inherent self-reflexivity and uncanniness. Yet is not Malpas reproducing such a positive/negative binary by dismissing mythophilia as an inauthentic pseudo-nostalgia? As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the concept of mythophilia likewise cannot be grasped properly if one sees it merely as negative; the potential of mythophilia should be reconsidered especially in regards to nostalgia as political rhetoric of a counter-narrative.

Mythophilia's "reactionary" nature manifests in dystopian novels particularly in the way the official history – in other words, the winner's memory – concocts its myth to legitimise its power. That is to say, the mode of a hegemonic narrative is mythophilia which is combined with institutionalised amnesia. The myth of "blood and soil" and the deification of Hitler in the Holy German Empire in *Swastika Night* is a typical case of the "Golden Age" rhetoric, restoring the lost but ideal past of the Aryan purity. Oceania in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not so much a return to a mythical period, as a rigorous mythologisation of the present regime. For its sanctification of power, the Party does not rely on fabricating the Golden Age, but instead, it concentrates its focus on constant falsification of the past. Memory control is also enforced on citizens through apparatus of state violence – the Telescreen, the Thought Police and the Ministry of Love – in order to consolidate the infallibility of the Party. In Burdekin's Nazi dystopia, the time before the reign of Hitler is homogeneously suppressed as the Dark Age of civilisation. Orwell's Oceania, in comparison, is characterised by its capability to fabricate the past and superimpose its latest version onto the previous one: "all history" is a "palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as was necessary" (NEF 42). The result of this is significant, for Winston is even unable to remember which year it is; thus, it remains ambiguous whether the story of the novel itself occurs in 1984 or in a different year (NHF 36). In *The Handmaid's Tale*, on the other hand, oppressive mythophilia is epitomised in the regime's mythologisation of Victorian domesticity and the "back-to-nature" rhetoric which hinges on gender binarism, for the purpose of establishing the hyper-patriarchal prison state. These are utilised in accordance with The Bible as the ideological foundation of the regime's power.

Despite its tendency to be the affective basis of the restoration and enforcement of the apparently lost past or the supreme status of the regime in power, mythophilia at times becomes a strong conduit to the forming of a counter-narrative. This is most characteristic in Burdekin's *Swastika Night*; although the living condition of Alfred is relatively higher than other dystopian protagonists (after all, he can sustain his family and is not malnourished like Winston), he is as yet dismayed over the loss of the history of England. Mere survival as a second-rate citizen is not sufficient for Alfred to continue his life; he strongly wishes to understand himself as a historical being. Alfred questions: why is he second-rate in the first place?[1] Relics from the ancient time such as the statue of King Alfred and Stonehenge are left unharmed in the colonised England, since they are considered merely as a sign of barbarism. For Alfred, these cultural artefacts are a sanctuary for the erased history which he deeply yearns for to understand his origin as socially constructed rather than permanently fixed. Although they do invoke in him an irresistible desire to regain the knowledge of the lost past(s), he does not wish to reconstruct the British Empire, for he eventually realises that such an attempt would amount to perpetuating the history of violence and exploitation. Burdekin's text is replete with monologues and dialogues, at times verging on a political treatise rather than a novel. Yet such is a textual manifestation of Alfred's solitary thinking and conversation with others, which are essential for him to imagine the lost history and other different pasts, instead of merely fantasising about them. Importantly, the mode of longing in Alfred's search for truth is not nostalgia, but mythophilia, since his object of longing is the past of which he does not have any memory. Yet it is still future-oriented, seeking for undiscovered (textual and oral) historiographies to imagine a world where political equality among men and women is in the process of fulfilment. The text, nevertheless, indicates that to eradicate men's disgust towards women, which is ingrained in Alfred's mind and body, would remain a daunting prospect. Would the fall of the empire precede the liberation of women, or vice versa? The reader is given no clue to this dismaying question.

Meanwhile, as discussed in Chapter Three, Winston's capacity for imagination seems to be hindered by his extremely pessimistic worldview. In fact, Winston's

[1] This mode of thinking is, in Terry Eagleton's formulation (mentioned in Chapter One), internal critique rather than transcendental criticism. The former is more existential then the latter, in that it bases its judgement on one's experiences with others and the world, rather than on an abstract ideal which exists outside one's existence.

misery lies in his obsession with historical authenticity. As Pierre Nora argues, in modern society, "real environments of memory", which existed in "so-called primitive or archaic societies", are irrevocably lost, leaving only "sites of memory" (7-8). Memory is no longer public but private; there is nothing absolute to validate the authenticity of any memory including history, which is after all the winner's memory. The Party in Oceania is then founded on such fundamental arbitrariness of the past in modern society, declaring itself as the sole possessor of memory; the Party obtains power by eliminating historians and stripping the individual of any meaningful memories. The impasse of Winston's longing for the past then results from his conception of the past as singular and immutable; in this view, the truth value of past events can only be determined by examining historical evidence, and therefore, the Party's constant forgery of past documents is so monstrous that it stifles any space for hope. In contrast to this position, Winston's "ancestral memory", which is ingrained in his body, should be reconsidered. For this, Nora's following distinction is suggestive:

> [T]he difference between true memory, which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories, and memory transformed by its passage through history, which is nearly the opposite: voluntary and deliberate, experienced as a duty, no longer spontaneous; psychological, individual, and subjective; but never social, collective, or all encompassing. (13)

Winston's struggles originate from his desperate need for evidencing his "ancestral memory", disregarding the fact that it has survived the state's manipulation of memory as it is embedded within his own body. The lack of evidence for one's past experiences and erased historiographies would not preclude possibilities for social critique and resistance; as argued in Chapter One, if the current society does not accommodate an individual as a full citizen equipped with the capacity for political action in the Arendtian sense, such society must be more or less a dystopia;. It is rather the positive mythologisation of one's origin, to which Winston is prone to, that is highly problematic since such an act mirrors the hegemony's view of history as singular and immutable. Winston, a civil servant in the Ministry of Truth, is in fact a hard-working historian ("Winston's greatest pleasure in life was in his work" [NEF 46]), and his

demise is predicated on his sheer anxiety over the historical authenticity of his own memory. Offred's absolute scepticism in *The Handmaid's Tale* is then a radicalised version of such anxiety. Her narrative, as well as Winston's, is replete with memory traces which are rich in senses and intuitions. It is then ironic that a narrative by the radical deconstructionist is ultimately not heard, or significantly underestimated by future historians. Offred cannot be heard, but it is also Offred who does not listen to herself – voices coming from within – in the first place, entrapping herself in endless self-critique.

In re-examining mythophilia, Kathy in *Never Let Me Go* is a truly interesting figure. She fully understands how to appreciate every detail of her lived experience. Nostalgia is her mode of living, but contrary to Winston and Offred, Kathy is always/already prepared to subsume her body into others'; although her body is at the mercy of institutional violence, she is at least a possessor of good memories, which are then regarded by herself as evidence that she had a good life. Is not Kathy's passivity, in this context, a limit of nostalgia as an affective ground for resisting the status quo and thereby reclaiming oneself? Malpas dismisses mythophilia as an inauthentic longing for an imagined, fabricated past, as opposed to nostalgia which is based on one's lived past. Yet *Never Let Me Go* suggests that nostalgia can be comforting through and through, for Kathy is a master of repressing the affective quality of memories through self-discipline (just like Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*); it is indicated by her narrative that anything discomfiting can be self-contained. As Malpas argues, there is an inherently self-reflective aspect in nostalgia which manifests in its uncanny encounter with the past/dead self. Yet such anxiety, which enables self-realisation, can be easily tranquilised where the subject is immersed in the logic of commodification where nostalgia is equal to the consumption of images of the past, rather than an opportunity to situate oneself as a historical being in Malpas's sense; "an unshakable joy" in the above quotation by Heidegger would not be achieved in the world where existential anxiety can be circumvented easily (note that it takes some effort for Bowling in *Coming Up for Air* to suppress his mid-life anxiety; the sense of resentment is completely missing in Kathy's instrumental thinking).[2]

[2] Jameson's distinction between historicity and historicism in his analysis of nostalgia film can be applied here. Jameson defines historicity as "neither a representation of the past nor a representation of the future […]: it can first and foremost be defined as a perception of the present as history" (*Postmodernism* 284). As mentioned in the previous chapter, appendixes

Nostalgia is presented as a means of submission in *Never Let Me Go*, or in other words, nostalgia is reduced to the bare experience of sensations which are abstracted from real people; it is utilised for the mythologisation of the every day. Kathy's problem then is not lack of self-reflectivity in regards to the veracity of her memories (which she is already equipped with), but that of imagination, or, a sort of self-reflective mythophilia which can be found in Burdekin's *Swastika Night* – a longing for realising one's origin and willing a different future shared with other beings. Such an act takes a considerable risk, for that indicates that Kathy, confined in the periphery of society, might lose her imagined "home", which is constituted by instrumentalised memories. It does provide her sense of comfort and belonging to some extent, no matter how superficial it is. *Never Let Me Go* thus indicates that the possibility of social critique is considerably undermined by the commodified world-view where practicality and usefulness dictate our desires.

As stated in the Introduction, this study of dystopian novels is not an exhaustive investigation of the genre and its history, but rather an exploration of the concept of nostalgia from a political and psychological perspective. Through an in-depth analysis of four dystopian novels, accompanied with that of three homecoming novels, the following key framework is identified: nostalgia reveals itself in dystopian novels as a means of oppression, resistance, and submission. In the Conclusion, then, Malpas's dismissal of mythophilia is re-examined; it indicates the possibility of a more future-oriented mythophilia as a mode of social critique. Core problems in this particular field are identified and addressed in this thesis through this unconventional approach, which includes the re-theorisation of nostalgia, an extensive analysis of Burdekin's text (which is often only mentioned in passing in the field), and the incorporation of homecoming novels. Further study, however, is needed in order to solidify and expand the above framework where nostalgia is seen as a triad of political (in)actions. Such research would contribute not only to the study of dystopian fiction, but also to the

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in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *The Handmaid's Tale* operate as a device of such historicity, and the lack of such a device in *Never Let Me Go* is symptomatic of its mythic temporality. Historicism, in a negative sense, is then the obsessive fixation on images of the past. In Jameson's words, historicity "[mobilises] a vision of the future in order to determine its return to a now historical present", while historicism commodifies "all the styles and fashions of a dead past"; the past is merely quoted and edited to suite the taste of contemporary audiences (*Postmodernism* 286-7).

theory of nostalgia. The former is not merely an object of case study; it actively re-theorises the latter through exploring the paradox of the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The following quotation, which was found in a toilet cubicle in the Pen Factory (a restaurant in Liverpool), elucidates this point: "We are torn between a nostalgia for the familiar and an urge for the foreign and strange... As often as not, we are homesick most for the places we have never known" (it is signed by "Colorado"). The dystopian subject naturally gravitates towards a familiar past, while it simultaneously yearns for the unknown; here, the past and the future are inextricably enmeshed together. In fact, in the case of self-reflective mythophilia, the unknown pertains to the past, for it is to retrospectively imagine one's past in order to situate oneself as a historical being, which is crucial for exploring alternative possibilities. As such, counter-narratives in dystopias often manifest as, to quote Gary Saul Morson's words once more, an escape to history, to "the world of contingency, conflict, and uncertainty" (128). Nostalgia is, in this sense, the return of the particular.

In terms of further research, there are two particular projects worthy of mention here. The first is the analysis of nostalgia and mythophilia in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981), a novel which fuses various genres such as autobiography, dystopia, and fantasy. Set both in Glasgow and its fictional future city named Unthank, the element of social realism is highly pronounced in this unusual dystopia in its depiction of the destructive, or even cannibalistic nature of capitalism. At the same time, the theme of nostalgia permeates the novel, which can especially be seen in its inclusion of the author's fictionalised autobiography. As this study has focused on the interrelationship between social realism and speculative fiction in the latter three chapters, analysing Gray's dystopia would further consolidates the methodology employed in this thesis.

The second project is concerned with the exploration of queer temporality in dystopian fiction. In her reading of Burdekin's *Swastika Night*, Alexis Lothian proposes "queer dystopian impulses", which "disrupt too-easy narratives of hope and progress, highlighting their complicities and disappointments" (469). Such a strategy problematises the very content of "hope"; its particular focus is put on Lee Edelman's concept of queer antifuturism, which is opposed to "reproductive futurism", or, "the fascism of the baby's face" (qtd. in Lothian, 446). Children are often considered as an

emblem of hope, since they represent lasting human legacies. What is reproduced, however, is not merely children; sexual reproduction is, to a large extent, a form of affirming and conforming to the status quo, and it is in this context where queer negativity can provide insights. Nishant Shahani also interrogates the ideology of hope in her reading of Philip K. Dick's *Time out of Joint* (1959), exploring queer temporality in the protagonist's nostalgic fantasy.[3] Rachel Carrol's analysis of Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (as mentioned above) should also be added to this list, in its critique of heteronormativity as an institution and how such an agenda is reinforced by the binary logic of the human and the inhuman. Utilising queer negativity and temporality as an interpretive key would offer a provocative way of delving into the potential of social criticism in dystopian fiction as well as re-theorising the complex temporality of nostalgia.

[3] Nishant Shahani, "'If Not This, What?": *Time out of Joint* and the Politics of Queer Utopia", *Extrapolation*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2012, pp. 83-108.

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