

**Tamás Tukacs**

## **Memory, War and Trauma in Late Modernism**

### **Henry Green's *Caught***

This paper deals with Henry Green's *Caught* (1943), with occasional references to Green's previous novel, *Party Going* (1939), examining how the war setting influences the nature of remembering and how remembering is traumatised by these circumstances. The paper ultimately argues that in the 1930s and 40s a definite shift may be detected from the High Modernist, epiphanic, revelatory, transcendental kind of remembering, initiated by the Proustian "mémoire involontaire" towards traumatic modes that enact the invasion of the present by the past, rather than their happy co-existence in a moment of epiphany. The essay introduces elements of trauma in Green's novels in general and then moves on to identify the three main facets of traumatic narratives: their ontological, epistemological and narrative paradoxes. Most of the characters in *Caught* can be regarded as strange survivors of traumatic occurrences, who have to bear the consequences of this ontological dilemma and fight against the principles of fluidity and the danger of invasion that seem to threaten the boundaries of the past, the present and the future. The essay also presents the three main strategies of coping or failing to cope with trauma, exemplified by the three main characters, Roe, Pye and Christopher.

### **Henry Green's Fiction and Trauma**

In his autobiography, *Pack My Bag* (1940) Henry Green (1905–1973) evokes the traumatic episode when he got to know that his parents were dying, following an accident in Mexico (97).<sup>1</sup> He recalls that he had never had a similar experience before, when "a shock blankets the mind and when I got back to my room I walked up and down a long time" (97). He did not, however, regard the experience as necessarily traumatic: "I began to dramatize the shock I knew I had had into what I thought it ought to feel like" (97). But, he "was given a push further down this hill about five weeks later" when his parents got better and sent him photos "with bandages

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1. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Henry Green, *Pack My Bag* (London: Vintage, 2000).

around their heads” (98). “This gave me a return of hysteria,” Green claims (98). This is a classical (Freudian) traumatic scenario in which the second event recalls and re-interprets the first, seemingly harmless one as traumatic.

In the same section, with a fine metonymic link, the narrator starts to talk about his parents’ visit to Mexico every other year. Once, when the parents were on leave, there was a girl in the house who seemed reluctant to show Green her private garden, her little kingdom. In the end she agreed, but the child Green grabbed a spade and wanted to dig up the garden. “Rightly she would have none of this and tried to stop me. She was the stronger and was succeeding when in a last attempt to get my way I swung the spade with all my strength against her leg and cut her to the bone” (101). The only solution for the shock, he thinks, is a similar wound inflicted upon himself, *the repetition of the wound*: “I saw nothing for it but to cut my own leg open and was carried to bed screaming for a knife” (101).

What connects the two episodes, the news of the parents’ accident and the spade scene, is the motif of wounds, that is, *traumas*. At the beginning of this part of the autobiography, Green interprets memory with the help of the metaphor of a foxhunt, in which it is presumably the rememberer who, “like the huntsman, on a hill” “blows his horn” (97) to evoke memories. By the end, however, it is the fox that he identifies with: “They say the fox enjoys the hunt but the sound of the horn as he breaks covert [sic] must set great loneliness on him” (101); “Later, when the accident I have described disrupted me, I felt, and it is hard to explain, as though the feelings I thought I ought to have were hunting me. I was as much alone as any hunted fox” (102). Thus, in Green’s concept of memory, instead of the rememberer hunting, retrieving, violently recalling memories, the subject becomes the hunted – or perhaps more appropriately, *haunted* –, inflicting wounds on himself, and what remains is “shame remembered” (102).<sup>2</sup>

Trauma is central to Henry Green’s oeuvre, especially in his novels written in the 1930s and the 1940s (chiefly in *Party Going*, *Caught* and *Back*). My starting assumption is that Green’s fiction between the world wars is part of the general memory crisis of the late modernist period when – together with the appearance of a new, young literary generation, the Auden Group – the first wave of the reaction to and the rewriting of the high modernist tradition, together with its concept of memory, begins. According to Richard Terdiman, the basic fantasy of modernism is constituted by excluding every factor external to the work or the realm of art in general,

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2. Jeremy Treglown points out that Green had originally intended to entitle his autobiography “Shame Remembered.” Treglown, *Romancing: The Life and Work of Henry Green* (New York: Random House, 2000), p. 120.

“the effort to suppress extra-artistic determination.”<sup>3</sup> He claims that “the entire somatic and psychological *attitude* of modernism,” which had been uncannily anticipated, nearly forty years before Proust was born, by Théophile Gautier, could be summed up like this: “artistically indisposed, recumbent, disengaged – and distinctly paranoid concerning the menace of the world outside the writer’s bedchamber.”<sup>4</sup> Proust and Gautier, in Terdiman’s view, are linked by “the common intent to evade domination by outside forces . . . to slip free of external determination by resolutely barricading oneself.”<sup>5</sup> It is, however, precisely *memory* that subverts the self-enclosed fantasy of modernism; and so Proust’s monumental work, a quest narrative, demonstrates that “relations won’t go away,”<sup>6</sup> and that the present remains dominated by the past.

Several variants of this subversion of the original agenda of modernism’s self-enclosure, were treated in thirties novels, staging the dominance of the past over the present. Most of these texts exhibited ways in which the peaceful coexistence of the past and the present was disrupted by invasion, repetition, loss and futile longing, using the idioms of trauma, melancholia or nostalgia. Graham Greene and Daphne du Maurier (especially in *Rebecca*), for instance, attribute great significance to traumatic occurrences, in which the characters are unable to fight the spectres returning from the past.<sup>7</sup> Christopher Isherwood, Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell

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3. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993), p. 160.

4. Terdiman, p. 160.

5. Terdiman, p. 160.

6. Terdiman, p. 183.

7. Besides the recurring motif of the mysterious “green baize door,” that separated the family’s home and the school, most of Greene’s writing is replete with childhood traumas, returning fears and phobias. In his autobiography, *A Sort of Life* completed in 1971 (London: Penguin, 1986), he often mentions how in his adult life he was still possessed by infantile phobias. Recalling the terror of seeing bats and birds, he adds, “The fear of bats remains” (p. 24). This terror is also referred to, within the context of the then popular discourse of psychoanalysis, in his travelogue *Journey Without Maps*, written in 1936 (London: Penguin, 1980): “It was an inherited fear, I shared my mother’s terror of birds, couldn’t touch them, couldn’t bear the feel of their hearts beating in my palm. . . . The method of psychoanalysis is to bring the patient back to the idea which he is repressing: a long journey backwards without maps, catching a clue here and a clue there . . . until one has to face the general idea, the pain or the memory” (pp. 96–7). Apart from childhood fears, the memory of his public school, similarly to most of his contemporaries, also seemed to exert a traumatic influence on Greene. In his autobiography, he claims that around 1968, while planning a novel about a school, he revisited the scene of his childhood education. He, however, abandoned the novel, for he “couldn’t bear mentally living again for several years in these surroundings,” and wrote

use the central idiom of melancholia to stage this memory crisis, which, at least in the thirties novels, was connected with a characteristic, dry, “empty,” surface-bound style, apt to enact the loss and emptiness effected by melancholia. James Hilton (especially in *Lost Horizon*) and George Orwell (most spectacularly in *Coming Up for Air*), on the other hand, tended to question the validity of nostalgia, highlighting the pathological aspects of futile longing. There is an important difference, however, between the Proustian, high modernist mode of remembering and its late modernist variant. By the 1930s, it was realised that the basically Proustian, epiphanic and revelatory model of memory simply did not work any more and, consequently, those modes of remembering came to the forefront that denied or at least called into question the aesthetic conception of memory that had emphasised a metaphoric identification of the past and the present, as in Proust’s famous *madeleine* scene.<sup>8</sup>

Lyndsey Stonebridge boldly asserts that “Green is a trauma writer, not before, but very much of his time.”<sup>9</sup> With a little exaggeration, Henry Green’s idiosyncratic novels function almost like a traumatising wound in the English literary landscape of the 1930s and in English late modernist fiction in general, seemingly evading easy classification and rational explanation. Green’s texts question the mere possibility of acquiring knowledge, thereby providing a broader context for the epistemological paradox of traumatic occurrences in the novels as well. In the words of Andrew Gibson, his is “an art, above all, of surfaces, surfaces that are suggestive and yet, in the end, blandly impenetrable.”<sup>10</sup> It is as if Green provided a meta-commentary to his texts in the first page of *Party Going* (1939) by describing the situation after the death of the pigeon as “everything unexplained.”<sup>11</sup> According to György Dragomán, Green presumably suggests in his novels that everything in life is modelled “on this (un)structure of secrecy,” which “may evolve into the ultimate structure sustaining the whole construction of a fictional reality.”<sup>12</sup> In psychoana-

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*A Burnt-Out Case* instead, thinking even a leper colony a more preferable location (*A Sort of Life*, p. 54).

8. It may obviously be asserted that this late modernist mode of remembering, which emphasised the pathological (traumatic, melancholic, nostalgic) aspects of recollection, could be regarded as the intensification or radicalisation of the Proustian, high modernist concept or remembering, highlighting its aspects denying metaphoric identifications and epiphanic revelations that had always already been inherent in the former, Proustian version.

9. Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Writing of Anxiety. Imagining Wartime in Mid-Century British Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 57.

10. Andrew Gibson, “Henry Green as Experimental Novelist,” *Studies in the Novel* 16.2 (1984) 197–214, p. 198.

11. Henry Green, *Loving. Living. Party Going* (London: Pan, 1978), p. 384.

12. György Dragomán, “‘Everything Unexplained’: The Structure of Secrecy as Structure in Henry Green’s *Party Going*,” *The AnaChronisT* 2 (1996) 231–42, p. 242.

lytic terms, the death of the pigeon and other unexplained occurrences serve as traumatic spots in the fabric of the text, impossible to be contained by any linear, rational and progressive sort of plot. Furthermore, Green's plots in general seem to be deceptively simple, and, therefore, the reader feels compelled to go "deeper" and attempt to look for parallels, structuring symbols and correspondences between different layers of the text. As, in *The Genesis of Secrecy*, Frank Kermode points out, "[*Party Going*] belongs to a class of narratives which *have* to mean more or other than they manifestly say."<sup>13</sup> The possible points of entry, however, are false landmarks: they let the reader in but the roads of interpretation fork in so many different ways without consistency or any significant meaning that they throw the reader back to the surface of the text.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Green's novels (like most late modernist novels) seem to deny the convictions of high modernism as far as the function of memory is concerned. The main difference between modernists and Green appears to be the lack of the belief in the ordering function of memory, and, in his case, the emphasis falls on the uncontrollability of memories that invade the characters' consciousness in the present in a traumatic manner. Several critics are aware of this contrast between the two attitudes to memory, claiming that Green denies the epiphanic aspect of recollection, foregrounding the subversive element of modernist remembering. Michael Gorra, for instance, juxtaposing Green's work with that of Woolf, asserts that "Green has no faith in the mind's ability to re-order 'the myriad impressions of an ordinary day' " and that his characters "remain overwhelmed by their sensations," being unable to establish a meaningful relation between the self and the world.<sup>15</sup> He claims that Green's fiction highlights the suppressed and subversive supplement of Mrs Dalloway (who is able to establish an order over chaos), the shell-shocked soldier: "Green's characters are nearly all like . . . mad Septimus Smith."<sup>16</sup> In a similar vein, Victoria Stewart points out that "the inclusion in the narrative of the psychologically damaged war veteran Septimus Smith allows Woolf to explore a different kind of memory, one which intrudes with a violence that is counter to the free-flowing associations experienced by Clarissa."<sup>17</sup> Randall Stevenson, however, con-

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13. Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1979), p. 7.

14. Ferenc Takács, "Henry Green" [Afterword to the Hungarian edition of *Caught*], in Henry Green, *Csapdában* (Budapest: Magvető, 1981), 255–71, p. 260.

15. Michael Gorra, *The English Novel at Mid-Century: From the Leaning Tower* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 27.

16. Gorra, p. 27.

17. Victoria Stewart, *Narratives of Memory: British Writing of the 1940s* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 8.

trasts the nineteen-thirties and the period of high modernism by asserting that “equipped with clearer recollections of a better world in the past, the modernists restructured their fiction to retreat from a disturbed life after the First World War into inner consciousness. . . . Thirties authors, on the other hand, faced the difficulties of contemporary life and the threat of a future second war with less opportunity of ‘retreating or advancing,’ ” and so felt obliged “to engage more directly with contemporary history.”<sup>18</sup> Stevenson’s statement may seem valid on the surface, but the problem is that it reiterates the superficial contrast so often made between the modernism of the 1920s and the “realist” literature of the 1930s, stating that the thirties were more “present-oriented” than the previous decade. The past was no less important for the 1930s authors, including Green, only emphases shifted: the modernist concept of the Proustian *mémoire involontaire* can be seen as lingering on in the 1930s, only with a modified function. Thirties characters no longer aestheticise the present in order to make it fit for nostalgia, like John Haye in Green’s *Blindness*,<sup>19</sup> or Mrs Dalloway for that matter, but suffer from the painful intrusion of the past into the present and their uneasy co-existence. In the 1930s, the epiphanic moment of Proust’s *madeleine* scene came to be replaced by instances of more painful and traumatic intrusions of the past into the present.

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

In Henry Green’s novels we can see characters immobilised and caught up in certain situations. They find it very difficult to break out from these spaces and places, and thus remain suspended between destinations; they stay passive, subject to outside circumstances. John Haye in *Blindness* (1926) loses his eyesight due to a train accident and is confined to his room after that; the “Bright Young Things” in *Party Going* (1939) can hardly leave for France due to the fog around the station; Richard Roe in *Caught* (1943), serving as a fireman during the Blitz, is doomed to wait weeks until the raids begin.

These situations may be termed traumatic inasmuch as they show a strong parallel with the *ontological aspect* of trauma, by which I mean the manner in which the traumatised victim experiences the shocking situation, and the way he is able to live

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18. Randall Stevenson, *A Reader’s Guide to the Twentieth-Century Novel in Britain* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1993), p. 58.

19. Michael North, *Henry Green and the Writing of His Generation* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1984), p. 22.

after surviving it. First and foremost, the trauma victim feels hopelessly passive, betrayed,<sup>20</sup> immobile, frozen, characterised by “panic inaction,” “catatonoid reactions,” immobilisation and automaton-like behaviour.<sup>21</sup> They submit themselves to circumstances, claiming that the traumatic event was justified by its causes,<sup>22</sup> exhibiting symptoms of anhedonia (fear of joy) and alexithymia (rejection of emotions).<sup>23</sup> At the moment of the trauma, the ego is dissociated into a subjective emotional system (that feels the trauma but cannot represent it, of which the result is the appearance of conversion symptoms) and an objective intellectual system (that perceives the trauma but cannot feel it, as if it were happening to another person).<sup>24</sup> The success of the therapy naturally depends on extent to which the gap can be bridged between emotional and intellectual selves, on the desire to tell and the imperative to stay silent and remain between the past and the present. Most of Green’s characters feel as if they had been trapped, caught in a situation that stops the forward movement of time and, concomitantly, opens a space for the invasion of traumatic past occurrences.

Trauma victims are also bound to confront, not primarily their own trauma, but their “enigma of survival”<sup>25</sup> and the insight they gained through the traumatic experience.<sup>26</sup> This “enigma of survival” is beautifully illustrated by Henry Green’s short story entitled “Mr Jonas” (1941) whose protagonist, rescued in a fire operation, is “unassisted once he had been released, out of unreality into something temporarily worse, *apparently unhurt*,<sup>27</sup> but now in all probability suffering from shock . . . *to live again* whoever he might be, this Mr Jonas” (my italics).<sup>28</sup> Does Mr Jonas know what happened to him at all?

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20. Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 4.

21. Henry Krystal, “Trauma and Aging: A Thirty-Year Follow-Up,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), 76–99, p. 80.

22. Krystal, p. 83.

23. Krystal, p. 86.

24. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 131.

25. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), p. 58.

26. Cathy Caruth, “An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), 128–47, p. 134.

27. In fact, those are almost the precise words that Freud uses in *Moses and Monotheism* to illustrate the incubation period following the trauma of the sufferer of a railway accident: “It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot, where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision” (quoted in Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 16).

28. Henry Green, “Mr Jonas,” in *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, ed. Matthew Yorke (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), 83–89, p. 89.

This epistemological aspect of trauma is strongly related to its ontological aspect. The *basic epistemological paradox* of trauma is that the sufferer does not necessarily experience the original occurrence as traumatic and does not necessarily know that he has undergone a trauma. As Freud very early explained in “The Aetiology of Hysteria,” it is not the original event itself that exerts a traumatic influence on the victim, because it very often comes too early in his childhood to be understood and assimilated. Nor is the second event inherently traumatic, but it triggers a memory of the first one that is retrospectively given a traumatic meaning.<sup>29</sup> Between them is the period of temporal delay, which defers interpretation and prevents immediate reaction. Amnesia, latency, or as Freud put it, an “incubation period” follows the scene of trauma, due to the fact that the patient, during the occurrence of trauma, could never become conscious of its significance, he simply *does not know* that he underwent trauma, and thus exists in a state of epistemological void. The experience of trauma, Cathy Caruth maintains, “would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself.”<sup>30</sup> The victim may leave the site of the accident, like Green’s Mr Jonas, *apparently unharmed*, without realising that he has, in fact, become a victim. Perhaps he never returns again, but he cannot leave the trauma behind. Amnesia is most clearly indicated by the fact that the psyche cannot treat the “event” as memory, which is unable to be integrated into the life story of the patient on the basis of a past-present dichotomy. What lets one know that a traumatic event took place at all is that the shock returns in nightmares, flashbacks, bodily and conversion symptoms, nightmares, repetitions, traumatic re-enactments, and so on, in the latency period. “Survival” thus gains a very ambiguous meaning: the “passage beyond the violent event” is accompanied by “the endless inherent necessity of repetition, which ultimately may lead to destruction.”<sup>31</sup> In Green’s novels, characters typically “survive” a traumatic situation but they rarely grasp its real significance. Those, like Pye in *Caught*, for instance, that cannot resist the invasion of the traumatic return of the repressed material usually end their life in a tragic manner.

The second characteristic feature of Green’s novels – something that links him to the dominant idiom of the 1930s, mainly practised by the Auden group – is his intense interest in frontiers, borders, margins, possibilities of passage, thresholds, problems of accessibility and the dilemma of “going over.”<sup>32</sup> I shall argue that the

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29. See Leys, p. 20.

30. Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 17.

31. Caruth, *Unclaimed*, p. 63.

32. The term is borrowed from Carol A. Wipf-Miller, “Fictions of ‘Going Over’: Henry Green and the New Realism,” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 44.2 (1998) 135–53.

significance of this process of crossing frontiers, “going over” barriers and being suspended between two places and the past and the present is not, primarily, a political or moral dilemma in Green, but a corollary of the characters’ past, mainly gaining temporal and psychological significance. The routes for almost all of the characters are closed both backwards, in the direction of the past and also forward, into the future, thus they remain suspended in a temporal no-man’s land and are locked up in the permanent present of trauma.

The spatial symbol of this inertia is the abundance of closed spaces in Green’s fiction. The blind Hays spends most of his time in his room, the young people’s lives in *Living* (1929) take place in the factory or at home, the scene of *Party Going* is the hall and hotel of a railway station, the characters in *Caught* can be seen either at home, or in pubs or at the fire station. The characters do break out in one way or another, but most of these attempts prove to be temporary solutions. The expression of this temporal stasis effected by trauma and other crises of remembering is by no means limited to Green in late-modernist fiction. Similar examples may be found, for instance, in Graham Greene’s thrillers, which, by definition, stage some sort of suspension of time within the frame of the plot; James Hilton’s Shangri-La in *Lost Horizon* (1933) is also a spatial metaphor of nostalgia in crisis. Maxim de Winter’s estate in Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938) is, similarly, the object of the couple’s troubled attempts at remembering and Bowling’s nostalgically evoked Lower Binfield is likewise such a scene in George Orwell’s *Coming Up for Air* (1939). What connects these spaces and places is that the central characters would like to see them as unchanging, free of external temporal invasion, or even aestheticize them with the help of memory. The failure to preserve them in their ideal state in recollection, however, shows that, to quote Terdiman once again, “relations won’t go away.”

### **Invasion and Repetition: Trauma in *Caught***

Henry Green’s fourth published novel, *Caught*, on which he began working in 1941 and which was eventually published in 1943, is, on the one hand, a semi-autobiographical novel about the experiences of Richard Roe, an auxiliary fireman in the Blitz. On the other hand, it is a continuation of, or sequel to, *Party Going*. It deals with the major themes of the previous novel, while the chief motifs and certain correspondences between characters also make a link between the two texts. If we compare the two novels, no essential difference seems to exist between Green’s pre-war and war novels. Seen from the perspective of *Caught*, *Party Going* could metaphorically also be evaluated as a “war novel,” or, to put it in another way, *Caught* is not primarily a war novel but can equally be described

as a text that stages certain situations that traumatised individuals have to face, to which the Blitz is a mere historical backdrop.

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

Like *Party Going*, *Caught* also explores the problem of memory in an apocalyptic setting. It begs the question as to what extent memory and remembering are possible as refuges from the impending catastrophe in a situation imperilled by death, and in what ways people can shield themselves against the insistence of traumatic wounds in the present. As Stonebridge points out, "*Caught* is not only a psychoanalytically informed genealogy of trauma, an exploration of the belated effects of the past upon the present lives of war-anxious characters [but] it is also a text which . . . gives poetic form and shape to the trauma, not of the told, but of the telling."<sup>33</sup> The greatest enemy of recollection is waiting, being in transit, a suspended state between event and non-event, war and non-war, "which stubbornly refuses to unfurl into an event."<sup>34</sup> Historically, the time of *Caught* is the period between the declaration of war and the first systematic air-raids on Britain (September 1939 and July 1940), the so-called "Phoney War." The life of people in this span of time is defined by the structure of anti-climaxes. As Green put it in one of his later essays: "The whole point of a fireman is that he is endlessly waiting. And most have lost their nerve."<sup>35</sup> The anxiety is mainly centred around the problem of memorialisation, that is, the quest for events suitable to be delegated into the realm of memory.

As an exceptional state when "there were no week-ends off," when "public holidays were not recognised" (5),<sup>36</sup> war creates extreme difficulties for remem-

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33. Stonebridge, pp. 58–9.

34. Stonebridge, p. 61.

35. Henry Green, "Before the Great Fire," in *Surviving: The Uncollected Writings of Henry Green*, ed. Matthew Yorke (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), 260–79, p. 276.

36. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Henry Green, *Caught* (London: Hogarth, 1978).

brance. According to Mark Rawlinson, the present is a fictive, unrealised state in the novel, because the characters are cut off from their past by alien identities forced on them by the war, apprehending themselves through memories which are not of their own.<sup>37</sup> It seems that storing memories is almost impossible. Characters either forget very quickly, or they are burdened by too many and too painful memories intruding into their lives, preventing the “normal” workings of remembering and the accumulation of new memories. As a third alternative, they begin to construct false memories. For instance, “at the height of the first Blitz” Roe cannot recall how his son was given a bicycle, he cannot recollect how much pleasure it gave, and he is not able to distinguish between this bicycle and a tricycle he gave a year before (25): he “found his memory at fault. But the rest he thought he remembered very well” (26). When on a leave, walking around the garden with his son, Roe “had forgotten his wife,” which is all the more surprising because he lost her only a couple of months earlier (178). It is as if this forgetfulness were transferentially repeated when, in a conversation with Roe, Dy, his sister-in-law, is not paying attention and “she forgot Richard” (188).

This absent-mindedness or light amnesia is extended even to Christopher, his son, who is also found wanting as far as memories are concerned: “Roe asked whether he remembered how in the summer they had all gone to get something for his rabbit. . . . Christopher said he did not know and then added coldly that his rabbit was sent away” (8). That is why Roe is so anxious about creating suitable memories for his son: when the boy falls ill, “Roe was afraid his son would only remember the leave by how ill he had been” (6). He would like to engage his son in shared memories, by the presents he gives and by creating a mystery place in the garden “where the hob-goblins lived” (9), but the son systematically downplays these attempts (in a rather anti-climactic way), denying the presence of mystery: “Christopher said, ‘but nanny knows, Rosemary knows, oh everybody knows’ ” (9). When the boy demands that they build something, Dy eagerly supports the common game, since “she meant to make the few days they were to have together as much a memory to the boy as they would be to the father” (29). Creating these memories serves a practical purpose in the novel, since they are to compensate for the loss the boy had suffered.<sup>38</sup> The problem is, however, that creating pleasant memories is bound to fail under the circumstances, for the war infects the past, the present and the future as well. Christopher constructs a battleship

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37. Mark Rawlinson, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), pp. 103–104.

38. Similarly to the girls dancing in night clubs after they bid farewell to their men: “they were driven to create memories to compare, and thus compensate for the loss each had suffered” (63).

from bricks (26), and when they go into to garden to build a bonfire, they are similarly caught up in images evoking burning houses in the Blitz: “From a window came a blind of smoke, as though rolls of black-out material, caught in the wind, had been unwound and been kept blowing about. Just like the smoke from one of their bonfires at home” (79).

According to Rod Mengham, fixation on memories, self-deception and remembrance paralyse the present in the novel.<sup>39</sup> In fact, for most of the characters, no proper place exists between the past and the future. They are entangled in a complex web, the present unconsciously repeats past episodes, memories are reinterpreted in the light of present events and both are caught up in the expectation of an apocalyptic future. For the characters there is no middle ground between “caught” (the present of the fire station) and “adrift” (in falsely remembered worlds),<sup>40</sup> they are typically bogged down in the trap of the present and set adrift towards the past and the future. Roe often returns to the memory of his wife, an inclination that verges on obsession, in which the distinction between past and present fades: “Now that he was back in this old life for a few days, he could not keep his hands off her in memory . . . he could not leave her alone when in an empty room, but stroked her wrists, pinched, kissed her eyes, nibbled her lips while, for her part, she smiled, joked, and took him to bed at all hours of the day, and lay all night murmuring to him in empty memory” (33). However, this memory cannot remain a pleasant one, similar to the episode when Roe recalls their first meeting in the early spring in a rose garden (64). The setting seems idyllic, yet the whole scene is corrupted, colonised by the presence of war, marked by the motifs of hotness and roses:

He turned to her and she seemed his in her white clothes, with a cry the blackbird had flown and in her eyes as, speechless, she turned, still a stranger, to look into him, he thought he saw the hot, lazy luxuriance of a rose, the heavy, weightless, luxuriance of a rose, the curling disclosure of the heart of a rose that, as for a hornet, was his for its honey, for the asking, open for him to pierce inside, this heavy, creamy, girl turned woman.

He had been sticky, then, in flannels, but not so hot as he was now, dressed in thick labourer’s uniform, proofed against fire and water. (64)

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39. Rod Mengham, *The Idiom of the Time: The Writings of Henry Green* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), p. 77.

40. North, p. 112.

The plight of remembering, or rather, the uncontrollable invasion of the present by the past is signalled by sharp contrasts, like those between the white dress and the blackbirds, the gentleness of the rose and the motif of piercing. Moreover, the colonisation of the present is even more emphatic by the use of oxymoron in the “*heavy, weightless*, luxuriance of a rose” that perfectly stages the mechanism of trauma inasmuch as trauma weighs upon the present, but it is also “weightless” for it is invisible and unintelligible for the traumatised subject.

While Roe would like to break out of this trap by creating memories for himself and for his son, there is not much hope for the boy in this respect, who enacts and repeats the hollowed-out present of the war in symbolic gestures, and builds memories relying entirely on the war. This distance is signalled by their two different strategies: “Neither was sorry to go his own way. The boy would be building up memories particular to himself. . . . Neither was much with the other, the one picking up the thread where the war had unravelled it, the other beginning to spin his own, to create his first tangled memories, to bind himself to life for the first time” (33–4).

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

Fluidity and the absence of clear frontiers are not difficult to discover as far as names are concerned (just like in *Party Going*). Roe’s name recalls “roses” and also “the heraldic cattle” they see together in the field; combined with Pye, Roe’s name gives the Greek for “fire” (pyro);<sup>41</sup> Pye’s name refers to Piper, who is often called “Pied Piper,” which evokes both the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin and the Roe’s “pied garden” (26), but the word “pied” also recalls birds, so characteristic of Green’s novels. The motif of fluidity also characterises life at the station where there is a high stake in knowing, not knowing, secrecy, letting out secrets and spreading gossip. Secrecy pervades the whole station, the auxiliary firemen are spying on each other, and most of the rumours centre around Pye’s story, his sister’s abduction of Roe’s son, Christopher and his own relationship with his sister. It is a rapidly accelerating process exacerbated, for instance, by

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41. See Takács, p. 270.

old Piper, who “let fall so many hints that a story of Christopher’s abduction eventually got out” (150); “This was how the story got around, in bits and pieces, and it was this way that it grew, and it grew in a short time, for there was not much time left” (151). There is no putting an end to the “growing” of rumours, which, just like an unstoppable fire, destroys Pye’s life. While in *Party Going* the dominant image of the transgression of the frontiers is the motif of water, metaphorically engulfing and invading the present, here it is the image of fire that respects no boundaries.

The text of the novel is likewise entrapped in complex webs of repetitions and parallels, creating a traumatic text of uncanny returns. Unlike most modernist texts, in *Caught*, these repetitions and parallels do not contribute to creating an aesthetically unified, self-enclosed world that creates epiphanic moments by force of the metaphoric collation of past and present events. On the contrary, repetitions gain traumatic significance that undermine the stability of the present. Old Piper, for instance, is always annoyingly echoing what the instructor says (21); his story of abduction in Africa parallels Christopher’s abduction (37); Pye’s experiences in the First World War are prefigurations of the Blitz and also of his own traumatising, for it was around that time that he first had a sexual experience with a girl by moonlight (41); Pye visits his sister in the asylum the same day the cook, Mary Howells visits his son-in-law, who “deflowered” (79) Brid, her daughter; the word “deflowered,” in turn, evokes the pink roses on the china pot she was given as a wedding present, which is a link to Roe’s rose garden scene; both leave without permission; Pye’s liaison with a girl named Prudence evokes his sister’s abduction scene, and so on.

Examples could be listed almost endlessly to illustrate that one of the master principles of the novel is repetition against which the characters try, consciously or unconsciously, to protest. Their anxiety is in fact the same as that of the whole 1930s generation, which was largely defined by “the horrifying sense of living the same old nightmare all over again”<sup>42</sup> as a result of which images of encirclement, invasion, infection, symptoms of a deep fear of repetition, mainly the repetition of the horrors of the Great War within only twenty years’ time, are abundant within the fiction of the decade.<sup>43</sup> Against the constant peril of repetition Roe (and people at war, in general) would like to create memories for the future. This, however, proves to be a futile attempt, as we have seen, since out of the present, always already infected by the past and the future, no pleasant memories grow.

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42. Stewart, p. 33.

43. James Gordin, *British Fiction in the 1930s: The Dispiriting Decade* (New York: St Martin’s, 1992), p. 14.

However much the characters repeat that “all was over, seemingly forgotten, done with” (17), “it’s all over and done with” (104) or “it’s all over now, anyway” (159), nothing is over, because the past continuously intrudes into the present.

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

### “Tangled Memories”: Through the Stained Glass

Christopher’s obvious traumatic experience is his abduction from a shop by Pye’s sister. The intensity of the boy’s trauma is marked by the colour symbolism used in the description of the shop. All sorts of warm colours, mainly pink and red flood the interior through the stained glass windows which, together with the sight of the sailboat that he covets, completely fascinate the child. This is how Roe imagines later what must have happened: his son was “held to ransom by the cupidity of boys, and had been lost in feelings that this colour, reflected in such a way on so much that he wanted, could not have failed to bring him. . . . He was done. He stood rooted, one finger up a nostril, his hot sloe mouth pressed against mahogany, before those sails the colour of his eyes. . . . the father imagined his son must have pointed a finger and shouted, ‘I want, I want’ ” (13–4). When he is led off by a stranger, Pye’s sister, he is robbed of this object of desire, the sailboat, and it is this profound loss, not necessarily the fact of abduction, that traumatises him: “the saleswoman had engulfed it in a bag so that he could not see the glory, that is, the transfiguration” (14) and later “he sat, holding the bag on his knee, gradually losing what he held” (15). It is this object loss that underwrites the whole mechanism of trauma in the novel,<sup>44</sup> a loss that repeats the anxiety of the primal separation from his mother, recalling Freud’s interpretation of the *fort-da* game. The memory of the primal separation is even more intense in the room where the woman takes him, which uncannily repeats the experience in the shop: “It was very hot. It had coal fire. . . . She did not turn on the light, so that he could see her eyes only by their glitter, a sparkle by the fire, which, as it was disturbed to flame, sent her shadow reeling, gyrating round sprawling rosy walls. . . . ‘My tea,’ he announced, surprised to find none” (15). The story seems to “progress” by metonymic replacements and repetitions, which unsuccessfully attempt to master

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44. Stonebridge, p. 69

the loss of the mother: Pye's sister cannot offer him tea, an object of desire that could replace the lost ship, which Christopher smashes (16), unconsciously realising that it is a futile substitute for the lost object, losing its mystery, while Pye's sister also wants to convince herself that the boy is also a replacement for her lost or unborn child, "in the sadness of not finding" (9). After the event, Christopher, on the one hand, shows the classic symptoms of trauma, he can never play with a sailboat again (17). On the other hand, he perpetuates this traumatic experience by acting it out, when he builds a battleship from bricks (instead of a sailboat), using shadows "to build up substance" (26), recalling the shadows cast in the shop and the room, and then smashes the whole thing (29). Moreover, this traumatic event is not even represented directly, we can only get to know what might have happened through Roe's later reconstruction of the event, which, again, is a clear example of the epistemological dilemma of trauma: one does not know or recognise what might have happened, and it is only with considerable difficulty that the traumatic "event" can be accessed later on.

What the sailboat meant for Christopher is precisely what Christopher means for Roe. What is more, Green complicates the meaning of "loss" in three different ways. First, when he is travelling back to London, Roe "felt he had lost everything, in particular the boy" (10). Secondly, the child was really lost in London (10) and, thirdly, Christopher "had been lost in feelings" in the shop (13). Every time Roe says goodbye to him, it is like losing him again and again: "he was soon saying farewell to Christopher away out in the country whenever he was alone, losing him" (28). Another episode when he has to bid farewell to his son is described like this:

The nurse came out of the iron gate to fetch him for his goodbye to his father. . . . And as Richard turned back, and the car came out of the back drive to go to the front door, he did not know how he was going to get through his goodbye. What he had just seen was so like all he had known and might never find again, and, as he clutched at her [his dead wife's] arm, which was not there, above the elbow, he shook at leaving this, the place he got back to her nearest, his ever precious loss. (34)

Retrieving an object and losing it perfectly summarises the significance of the *fort-da* game. As *Party Going* exemplifies and as Green formulated it in his autobiography, "every farewell is to die a little."<sup>45</sup> While re-enacting the memory of his lost wife with the metaphorical loss of his son again and again, Roe risks dying several times – no wonder that at the end of the novel he calls his son Opher

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45. Green, *Pack My Bag*, p. 33.

(173), a chunked version of the original name, splitting off the “Christ” part, the hope of salvation and transcendence. What remains is Opher, “to carry,” carrying the burden of the loss, like Miss Fellowes is carrying about her dead pigeon in a brown paper parcel in *Party Going*. This is the reason why he would like to re-experience his son’s abduction unconsciously and to re-enact the loss of his wife: “When, from curiosity, he went to see for himself the store out of which Christopher had been abducted, he stopped, unknowing, by the very counter with the toy display which had so struck his son as to make him lost” (12).

The stained glass windows of the shop link this experience to a much earlier one, which connects his unconscious repetition of his son’s loss and his work as a fireman. At the age of sixteen, Roe is taken by a friend of the family to study the stained glass windows of Tewkesbury Abbey. A very narrow step runs along the wall, with no balustrade, no rail “and then, in his own case, as he faced right to bring his right leg over, he had that terror of the urge to leap, his back to the deep violet and yellow Bible stories on the glass, his eyes reluctant over the whole grey stretch of the Abbey until, they were drawn, abruptly as to a chasm, inevitably, and so far beneath, down to that floor hemmed with pews” (11–2). The similarity between his losing himself in the heights and his son being dazzled by the colours in the shop is obvious. What is interesting is what the stained glass represents: in the Abbey, Bible stories can be seen, while shop windows depict “trading scenes, that is of merchandise being loaded on to galleons, the leaving port, of incidents in the voyage, and then the unloading” (12). Both of them are full, teleological narratives with a firm beginning, middle and an end, illuminated (both metaphorically and physically) by the light of either transcendence or practicality, contrasting the subversive, traumatic events taking place within the shop or the church and “normal,” linear narratives.

These narratives are in sharp contrast with the logic of traumatic occurrences and raise the problem of the narrativisation of trauma. Reformulating the words of Walter Benjamin, who wrote about the link between war and narrative, quoted by Stonebridge,<sup>46</sup> we can say that trauma threatens and provokes narrative at the same time. It threatens because it degrades experience to such an extent that narrative communication is thrown into a crisis and it provokes for precisely the same reason. A traumatic occurrence, conceived as *a narrative and temporal problem*, subverts several basic notions of “normal” existence: linearity, teleology, narrative logic, symbolic integration, remembering, representation and the sense of possession and ownership of one’s life story. Since the effect of trauma is permanently present (at least until the end of therapy), it is impossible to tell it,

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46. Stonebridge, p. 57.

remember it, for it is inconsistent with the field of knowledge pertaining to memory.<sup>47</sup> As Slavoj Žižek puts it, “the essence of trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe.”<sup>48</sup> At the heart of traumatic memory (which is, it shall be added, an oxymoron) there is the idea of unrepresentability, for trauma interposes the disruption of memory between an event and its representation.<sup>49</sup> To put it in another way, traumatic narrative at best can only exist as a story, the different elements remaining isolated to only to be linked by continuatives (“and. . . and”), but it is the task of therapy to emplot the fragmented story of trauma. Trauma, however, induces a strong urge to tell, which is supposed to lead to some sort of cure automatically. But, as Dori Laub puts it, “there are never enough words or the right words.”<sup>50</sup>

Another important dilemma of trauma narratives is whether telling would not lead to an even greater pain (the victim going over his “memories” again), and whether he should remain silent, risking the “perpetuation of [trauma’s] tyranny.”<sup>51</sup> Trauma, in fact, reveals “inhumanity, the bare life,”<sup>52</sup> therefore it exists outside the realm of language, and the attempt to bring it back to this realm, by setting it within a linear narrative form, is to destroy its truth.<sup>53</sup> The victim thus becomes entrapped in a vicious circle of repressing the desire to talk about trauma or remaining in constant search for words apt to transform the meaningless, subversive traumatic occurrence into a symbolic narrative. Dominick LaCapra terms this paradox “a fidelity to trauma,”<sup>54</sup> which creates “a more or less unconscious desire to remain within trauma.”<sup>55</sup>

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47. Linda Belau, “Introduction: Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through. Remembering and the Limit of Knowledge,” in *Topologies of Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Memory*, eds. Linda Belau and Petar Ramadanovic (New York: Other Press, 2002), xiii–xxvii, p. xv.

48. Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 272–3.

49. Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, “Introduction: Contested Pasts,” in *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory*, eds. Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–22, p. 6.

50. Dori Laub, “Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995), 61–75, p. 63.

51. Laub, p. 65.

52. Edkins, p. 214.

53. Edkins, p. 214.

54. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001), p. 22.

55. LaCapra, p. 23.

Jenny Edkins asserts that trauma

is outside the realm of language, and to bring it back within that realm by speaking of it, by setting it within a linear narrative form, is to destroy its truth. There is a gap or abyss at the heart of subjectivity, according to this account, because every formation of a subject in relation to language is flawed. It produces an excess or surplus: the real. Trauma is what happens when this abyss, normally hidden by the social reality in which we live our daily lives, is suddenly revealed.<sup>56</sup>

Roe also has to face this gap, this abyss, this chasm (in the Abbey, literally) when trying to come to terms with his traumatic experience and he cannot do anything but transferentially repeat the experience. In his mind, the loss of his wife is linked to his son's abduction, which recalls the abbey scene that becomes retrospectively traumatised, for which he tries to find the cure in becoming a fireman: "He signed on because he had for years wanted to see inside one of these turreted buildings [resembling the Abbey], and also because he had always been afraid of heights" (27). The repetition of the Abbey scene as a prototype of war trauma is reinforced by the interesting twist that the hard pews they have at the substation were lent by a church (29). Following the "logic" of repetition and invasion mentioned above, Roe's attempt to fight his traumas takes a metonymic path, going through the Abbey experience, the loss of his wife and son, the latter connected to the Abbey by the motif of vertigo, and his job as a fireman.

The narrative problem that trauma raises is best exemplified by Roe as a shell-shocked soldier returning home. After nine weeks of air-raids in London, "Roe was unlucky one morning. A bomb came too close. It knocked him out. He was sent home, superficially injured" (172). He returns, superficially injured, *apparently unhurt*, but struggling with the great task of the traumatised to narrate his experiences to Dy, who proves to be a rather impatient and indifferent listener, asking the most meaningless question under the circumstances: "I wonder what's the meaning of it all?" (194). Roe claims that "The extraordinary thing is . . . that one's imagination is so literary. What will go up there to-night in London, every night, is more like a film, or that's what it seems like at the time. Then afterwards, when you go over it, everything seems unreal, probably because you were so tired, as you begin building again to describe to yourself the experience you've had. It's so difficult" (174) and "there is always something you can't describe and it's not the blitz alone that's true of" (180). The problem recognised by Roe is precisely the problem of invasion, and it is "not the blitz alone that this is

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56. Edkins, p. 214.

true of.” Just as the warplanes invade Britain, so do traumatising experiences invade the ego, which is helpless in the face of the attack, similarly to the way the stained glass images flood the church or the interior of the shop. After the event, creating narratives in the manner of a Bible story or any teleological plot, seen on stained glass windows, is impossible, since trauma always leaves a residue that will be acted out or repeated or transferred to another person. Both Roe and his son are thus “invaded” by different kinds of trauma. What remains for both of them is “the deep colour spilled over [fire engines and sailboats] that, by evoking memories they would not name, and which they could not place, held them” (12).

Pye’s strategies in warding off his traumas are significantly different from those of Roe. To examine them, we shall have a look at the conjunction of the metaphors of war and trauma. Lyndsey Stonebridge suggests that Freud’s *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*, to some extent at least, “can be read as a metapsychological companion to Green’s text.”<sup>57</sup> She maintains that the signal theory of anxiety helps to interpret the characters’ reaction in *Caught*, inasmuch as the signal, the protective action that warns the ego of the imminent danger (like an air-raid siren) protects it because it prepares the ego for the peril. However, because it is predicated on the repetition of a past trauma, it casts the ego into traumatic anxiety anew and thus devastates its defences.<sup>58</sup> The main difference between Albert Pye and Richard Roe is that in the case of the latter his “dreading forward” (by literary imagination) protects him against trauma, while Pye is left helpless, consumed by his anxiety. One could say that Pye was not so much ruined by his “dreading forward” as by “dreading backwards.” In his mind, the memory of his First World War experiences are related to sexuality, to the “cold, wet, frozen, thawed or warm” ground (40) and, metonymically, to the “first girl he had known” and to the black night illuminated by moonlight (40). Sexuality and war are inextricably connected in his discourse, recalling the formulation of his girlfriend, Prudence: “war, she thought, was sex” (119). But while Roe is able to channel this metaphoric equation of war and sex in a relatively normal way, in the act of “rosy pictorial memory-making,”<sup>59</sup> Pye is not able to treat sex as nostalgic memory. He shifts his memory from the First World War, connected to making love, first to his girlfriend, Prudence, and then to his own sister, engaging himself in incestuous fantasies that, obviously, recall Christopher’s abduction again: “With all her other warmth they [her sister’s hands] set a glow about him just as, in childhood, when, watching the impossible brilliance climb slowly high

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57. Stonebridge, p. 66.

58. Stonebridge, p. 66.

59. Stonebridge, p. 62.

then burst into fired dust so far away, so long ago, over that hill the time his sister put her hand inside his boy's coat because he was cold, to warm his heart" (121).

When Pye imagines his visit to the doctor in the mental asylum, the doctor asks him: "Is there any history in your family, Mr. Pye?" Pye's answer is another question: "'istory, what d'you mean, 'istory?" (86).<sup>60</sup> First he does not understand the full meaning of history, here meant as a particular case history, or a genealogy of madness, his misunderstanding, his difference from the discourse of analysis being marked by his non-standard use of the word "history." Later, however, he himself becomes implicated, engaged in history, in at least two ways. First he is "caught up" in the history of the world wars, and he can only conceive of the Second World War as a repetition of the first one, which is inscribed in the "sex is war" idiom. The war blackout is repeated as the black night of his first sexual experience, lit by the moon. Moonlight, however, proves to be "impartial," "intolerant," and illuminates nothing (163, 165), just as the fog obscures the scene in *Party Going*, rendering "everything unexplained." Moonlight is also linked to history outside, "for the evacuation of Dunkirk was on. In the deadly moonlight brothers were dying fast, and not so far off" (165). The evoked scene is, significantly, both an episode of the failure of military defences in history (at Dunkirk) and the failure of Pye's own defences against traumatic invasions.

The second manner in which Pye is implicated in history is the way he creates a (case-)history for himself. While Roe creates self-deceiving memories, Pye, symbolically speaking, evacuates his forces (cathexes) from the lost object, the girl in the First World War, and then shifts them onto Prudence and then his own sister, who, as in the *fort-da* game, is in the state of "fort," "gone," put safely in a mental asylum. While Roe progresses relatively safely through the metonymic links of lost wife – abducted son – stained glass windows – Blitz, Pye's "progress" comes full circle and closes upon itself in the dead-end of a fantasy of incest. After "realising" that he may have committed incest, a realisation that comes "without any warning" (140), just as the siren goes off "without warning" (79), a recognition that comes too abruptly, he pathologically repeats, recreates the rape scene: "He went into the vast, moonlit night" (162), where he has a "fit of rememberin' back" (166). Moreover, he re-enacts his sister's abduction scene in the street with an unknown boy whom he takes to the station (168–70). Upon getting to know that Pye committed suicide, Roe summarises this simply as "it was sex finished him off" (195). Although he is right in the sense that Pye's tragic fate was brought about by sex as equated to war, the confusion, "the tangled memories"

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60. Again, just as in the episode when Roe imagines his son's abduction, we cannot see Pye actually visiting his sister in the asylum.

that the Blitz made return painfully as repetition involved both Pye and Roe, with different results, in similar traumatic re-enactments. The main difference between the strategies of Roe and Pye, both in a pathological and in a poetical sense, is that Roe's identifications work only in a *metonymical* manner, thereby they are able to channel and control the possibly traumatic effects of the invading past events and "evacuate" his forces. Pye, however, is unable to do that because he *metaphorically* identifies his first sexual experience in the context of war with later occurrences, whose framework is created by motifs of darkness, earth, moonlight, loss and war. In a more general sense, then, Pye's metaphorical and, hence, pathological, "remembering" may also be regarded as a reaction to and the criticism of the high modernist Proustian *mémoire involontaire*, which proved to be non-viable in the late modernist period, especially after the outbreak of the war.