Violent Memory: Haruki Murakami's *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*

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Abstract

Modern information technologies have radically transfigured human experience. The extensive use of mnemonic devices, for instance, has redefined the subject by externalizing aspects of inner consciousness. These transformations involve the incorporeal but deeply felt, violent dislocations of human experience, traumas that are grounded in reality but which challenge symbolic resources because they are difficult to articulate. I am interested in how the unseen wounding of mnemonic intervention is registered in the "impossible" language of speculative fiction (SF). SF is both rooted in the "real" and "estranged" from reality, and thus able to give form to impossible injuries. This paper argues that Haruki Murakami uses the mode of SF in his novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World,* to explore how mnemonic substitutes interfere with the complex process of remembering World War II in Japan. I will demonstrate how, through SF, Murakami is able to give form to an unseen crisis of memory in postwar Japan, a crisis marked by the unspeakable shock of war and by the trauma that results from the intrusion of artificial memories upon one's consciousness of history.

Keywords: commemoration, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Haruki Murakami, speculative fiction, trauma

“…there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”
(Walter Benjamin, 1968, p. 248)

The violence done by technology is manifold and far-reaching. From the destruction caused by modern military weapons, to the toxic effects of industrial pollutants, technology-facilitated physical violence has become increasingly severe over the years. There are other forms of technological violence equally profound, though less perceptible to us. Modern information and communication technologies have radically collapsed space and transformed time, transfiguring our concepts of historical consciousness. These subtler technological transformations involve incorporeal but still violent dislocations of human experience. These dislocations constitute trauma,[1] a wounding of the human psyche. Yet, because these wounds are invisible, they are difficult to identify or acknowledge. I am interested in how such wounds are registered in the “impossible” language of speculative fiction[2] (SF). This paper explores how Haruki Murakami’s SF novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World,* conveys the unseen wounds of postwar commemoration, a technological reshaping of memory that encourages forgetting and prevents healing.

Trauma is an experience constitutive of modernity (Micale and Lerner, 2001, p. 10), and many consider the modern subject “inseparable from the categories of shock and trauma” (Seltzer, 2013, p. 18). Sigmund Freud, for example, in his post-World War I text, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), asserts that psychological wounds can occur “without the intervention of any gross mechanical force” (p. 10), putting an end to the long-held belief that the traumatic neuroses of military combatants result from physical wounding. Freud argues that a traumatic experience causes the mind to split as a means of defence into the everyday conscious and the “repressed” unconscious. For Carl Jung (1935), trauma results in psychological dissociation, where the ego separates into fragments, or complexes, as a means of defending the psyche against damage (p. 71). Walter Benjamin (1968) recognises a similar kind of psychic wounding as endemic to the modern urban experience. In the city, the individual is overwhelmed by the “series of shocks and collisions” that subject “the human sensorium to a complex kind of training” (p. 175). For Benjamin, this “shock” (an affect Freud closely relates to the notion of trauma) “become[s] the norm” (p. 162) and leads to an “atrophy of experience” (p. 159). Likewise, Theodor Adorno (1981) calls attention to the insidious violence of commodification and reification, sociotechnical processes that entrench in modern society a destructive rationality, resulting in the “mutilation of man” (24).

The increasingly unnoticeable technological re-orderings of everyday life in the Information Age further complicate this psychological wounding. The extensive use of digital technologies and our newfound ability to retrieve and generate information, particularly, have changed the way that we remember. Our reliance on what Bernard Stiegler (2003) calls “mnemotechnics,” artificial supplements that exteriorise and store memory, has meant that we no longer need to actively remember. Mnemonic devices (like cinema and digital records) have disrupted older ways of commemorating difficult pasts, leading to anxieties about our ability to actively shape cultural memory. A growing number of scholars have explored how this exteriorisation of

[1] The word “trauma” (from the Greek word meaning “wound”) originally indicated a physical injury requiring medical attention but now describes the psychological wounds caused by devastating, painful events (Phillips, 2007, pp. 74–5).

[2] Introduced in the 1960s, the term “speculative fiction” is a broad umbrella term that indicates the constantly evolving aesthetic field of science fiction as it continues to blend with other genres. In this paper, I use the terms “speculative fiction” and “science fiction” interchangeably.

memory has not only affected individual and collective memory, but how it has radically transformed human subjectivity (see e.g. Lury, 1998; Landsberg, 2004; Hoskins, 2018).
The effect of mnemotechnics on memory is a question that Haruki Murakami explores in his 1985 SF novel, *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World*.[3] Recent alterations in World War II commemorative sites in Japan have been accompanied by debates about selective remembrance and the appropriation of the past. This has challenged the legitimacy of historical memories and raised questions about how different commemorative tools affect and shape remembrance. Murakami's novel engages with these questions, framing the encounter between memory and mnemotechnics in postwar Japan as trauma.

SF: A Language of the Impossible

Throughout history, the trauma of subtler technological violence has been marked by encounters with the supernatural. The shock of new technologies has often coincided with accounts of hauntings (see, e.g. B. Allen, 1982; T. Gunning, 2004; P. Thurschwell, 2004). This suggests that the unseen psychological impact of technology finds expression in the language of the impossible – language that exceeds the boundaries of rationality. This idea is reinforced by Roger Luckhurst's (2005) argument that recent narratives of alien abduction directly "negotiate the traumatic encounter of subjectivity and technology" (p. 233). The abductee, probed with various technological devices, "embod[ies] the 'implantation' of the machinic into the human world," reflecting the invasiveness of contemporary technologies into our most intimate spaces and human passivity in the face of it (pp. 235–236).

These strange disturbances articulate the rupture that is the essence of trauma. Trauma studies in the humanities theorises that the psychological experience of trauma is marked by the subject's dissociation from reality, which creates a hole in consciousness (Caruth, 1995, p. 89). This rupture translates into what Ruth Leys (2000) calls a "crisis of witnessing," which is a crisis "manifested at the level of language itself" (p. 268). In line with this, trauma scholars indicate the constitutional failure of linguistic representation in viably testifying to the traumatic experience. They point to the inability of (strictly) realist modes of writing – writing that is mimetic and purports to authentically represent reality – to aptly relate the "unbelievable" experience of trauma (Wolfreys, 2002; Whitehead, 2004). Indeed, there is a sense that language can only successfully bear witness the moment it *fails* to represent, (Caruth, 1996; Felman & Laub, 1992).[4] Trauma challenges our symbolic resources, even as it demands representation.

SF is a mode well suited for articulating the unknowable processes of trauma. This is because SF is not confined by the conventions of more naturalistic forms of fiction, which privilege more "empirical" ways of seeing. Following Darko Suvin's definition (1979), SF is a mode of fiction that is rooted in reality, corresponding to our cognitive understanding of what is "real," but is at the same time necessarily "estranged" from reality. Whether they are imagined projections of present trends or invented possibilities rationalized into the world of the text (pp.

[3] I use Alfred Birnbaum's (2011) English translation of the novel. In the original Japanese, the alternate worlds of the novel are distinguished by the use of different first-person pronouns, *watashi* (the formal "I") and *boku* (informal "I"). As this nuance is difficult to convey in English, in the English translation, Birnbaum uses different tenses – the past and present – to distinguish the two worlds (Karashima, 2020, ch. 3).

[4] It is for this reason perhaps that trauma scholars turn their attention to "modernist" writing as a form that can aptly communicate the distortions and ruptures of the traumatic experience. The dichotomy set up between realist and modernist (and other non-realist) forms of writing can be understood to register the debate in psychoanalysis about whether trauma arises from actual events or in fantasy (Hartman, 1995, p. 538).

63–84), these estrangements encourage readers to work through the discontinuities between the fictional and the real, and thereby gain new insights about the world. SF is therefore a "split" sign system, a mode encouraging the self-conscious play with the inherently divisible nature of language. The genre's self-conscious openness to alterity (and to the impossible) allows writers to represent traumatic experiences that themselves "challenge… the capacities of narrative knowledge" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 79). At the same time, SF writing also always returns back to the material, and is able to root unknowable trauma in the "real." As I will show, Murakami employs SF, a language of the "impossible," because it is able to give form and expression to the unseen wounds that result from the violent intrusion of mnemotechnics upon memory, thereby allowing him to proffer trauma as a source of Japanese historical consciousness.

WWII and Disavowal

The one event in modern history that has arguably produced the deepest rupture in Japanese culture and identity is the shocking military defeat that brought an end to World War II in the Pacific zone. In an effort to end Japanese imperialist ambitions, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tens of thousands of people, most of whom were non-combatants, were killed instantly.[5] Many of those who survived the initial bombings would later die from radiation poisoning and other bomb-related injuries (Vergun, et al., 2012, pp. 405–408). The obliteration of these two cities prompted the Japanese to concede defeat. To a culture that would rather face death than dishonour, the act of surrendering must have been enormously damaging to national pride. These feelings were further complicated by the occupation of Japan by Allied forces (1945–1952), which brought about major change, including the conversion of the Japanese economy into a US-controlled capitalism, and the transformation of the political system. The shock of defeat, the unthinkable violence of the bombs, and the upheaval of postwar social change culminated in a profound disruption of Japanese culture and identity.

The Japanese remembrance of the catastrophic part of this history has been problematised by a tension that exists between private and public remembering. At the individual level the memory of a catastrophic event is often repressed, and this presents a challenge to individual healing (Caruth, 1996, p. 11). This is further problematised by the complexities of cultural memory. Remembering becomes enmeshed in processes of power that undergird the construction of collective memories. These cultural reconstructions of the past – which may take the form of national myths and other historiographies[6] – potentially interfere with psychological or cultural healing because they can obscure aspects of a nation's past, and these distortions can affect each citizen's overall perspective and their attitude towards healing. In the case of Japan, the persistent denial of its wartime atrocities, which had precipitated the eventual dropping of the atomic bombs, has been seen as preventing citizens from confronting the events of the past honestly. After the war, the Japanese government frequently revised

[5] Although exact numbers are uncertain, and figures from Japanese and American officials differ, it is generally estimated that the number of deaths in Hiroshima is approximately 140,000, and 70,000 in Nagasaki. Most of the deaths occurred instantly, or within a short period after the bombs were dropped (Roth, 2008, p. xxi).

[6] I use the term "history" to refer to events and processes that occur in the past. "Historiography" is used to refer to the writing of history, the attempt to describe and explain history, inferring from evidence that remains. Historiography, along with other constructed forms of cultural memory, from cultural and national myths to various monuments and memorials, are referred to collectively as mnemonic reconstructions.

information in school textbooks,[7] and up until 1990, officials continued to deny aspects of Japan's war crimes that had triggered US retaliation (Chang & Barker, 2003, pp. 33–34). Official narratives served to focus attention, instead, on victimisation, post-war peace and recovery (Yoneyama, 1999, pp. 5–8). The Japanese people were prevented from remembering, and consequently, denied their own trauma. This complex process of remembering the war, and the manner in which mnemonic substitutes continue to interfere with individual consciousness and healing in contemporary Japan, lies at the heart of Haruki Murakami's novel.

In *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (hereafter referred to as *Hard-Boiled*), Murakami presents the reader with two worlds. The "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" is a "realistic" landscape that we identify as the "real" Japan. This is juxtaposed with the "End of the World," a dream-like "town" that contains elements of the fantastic, such as unicorns that "absorb the egos" of the people that inhabit it (Murakami, 2011a, p. 263). These contrasting worlds run parallel to each other and are presented in alternating chapters, further distinguished by different modes of address. In its original Japanese, the narrator of the "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" sections speaks through the formal "I," or Watashi, (in the English translation by Alfred Birnbaum, the protagonist uses the past tense), and in "The End of the World" sections, he uses the informal "I," Boku (in the English translation, this is signalled by the use of the present tense). While there seems to be a clear division between the two worlds, the reader eventually recognises that they merge. Characters and objects in the "real" world appear in the dream realm, and entities that seem to belong to the fantastical realm intrude into the "real-life" city spaces of the "Hard-Boiled Wonderland." Murakami troubles the seemingly clear division between the "realistic" and the "fantastic," the "real" and the "imaginary," in order to draw attention to the unstable links between signifiers and referents. In doing so, Murakami problematizes the status of the "real," thereby opening up the possibilities for representing the trauma surrounding World War II, a catastrophe grounded in reality but which challenges symbolic resources.

Violent Commemoration

The "Hard-Boiled Wonderland" is a near-future Tokyo full of advanced technologies that suggest a world built upon a continuing commitment to technological advancement and a focus on "science for the sake of pure science" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 29). In this world, information has become the prime commodity. An "infowar" takes place between two entities, the Factory and the System, a not-so-subtle reference to the American system of technological productivity that defined post-WW2 Japan. This reference signals a historical disjunction, when Japan abruptly turned away from long-standing imperialism and aggression in order to focus on the new goals of democracy and peaceful progress, beginning during the MacArthur Occupation (Tsutsui, 2007, p. 255). The Americanised technoscape of the novel is also therefore a metonymic device for the concomitant forgetting of Japan's violent past that needed to happen for this rapid progress to take place, gesturing to a cultural amnesia that is rooted deeply in present-day Japan.

The protagonist Watashi is employed by the "System" as a "calcutec," one who "shuffles" or "launders" information by means of an extreme method of data security wherein the human brain is transformed into an instrument of data processing. Watashi's brain has been partitioned by means of a complex biomedical procedure that isolates his "core" consciousness

[7] The "textbook controversy" is a notable example of how the Japanese government was seen to "euphemize" the events of World War II, substituting textbook descriptions with more "neutral" descriptions, a distortion condemned by other nations (Yoneyama, 1999, p. 5).

(Murakami, 2011a, p. 113). His core consciousness becomes a "black box" (p. 255) that is "borrowed" for elaborate computations whilst keeping the subject "unaware" of its actual content and leaving him with "no memory of anything" (p. 114). Watashi is, in a most literal sense, mindlessly bound to the System; these augmentations do not enhance Watashi's natural ability, but instead make him a mere function of larger techno-political processes. The protagonist's lack of agency and his isolation from kin and society indicate an interruption of identity and an unseen injury. This trauma becomes clearer as Murakami reveals how such "progress" has interfered with the protagonist's own memory and sense of reality.

The brain implant enables Watashi to perform intricate calculations with little effort, but the effects are deadly. In order to stabilise the shuffling mechanism, Watashi's brain has had to be "fixed" and this interferes with its natural and necessary evolvement (Murakami, 2011a, p. 256). The Professor, the strange old scientist overseeing these procedures, has fixed Watashi's brain by creating a visual copy of his "core consciousness," rendered and edited on a computer, and then inserted into his brain (p. 262). The duplication results in a "three-way cognitive circuitry" enabling the Professor to toggle between his waking consciousness, his "core" consciousness, and the graphic simulation of his core consciousness (p. 264). However, this partitioning of his mind threatens to permanently cut Watashi off from his own core consciousness, locking him into the artificial system. As a result, the protagonist begins to experience perceptual dislocations and he realizes that he is "crumbling" and that "parts of [his] being [are] drifting, away" (pp. 151, 164, 238–239), a situation that leads to death.

While critics have read this cybernetic enhancement as registering the "complexities of the increasingly symbiotic relationship between the organic world and the digital" (Corrigan, 2015, p. 803), I argue that the brain implant symbolises the violent replacement of the individual's own memory with an artificial approximation of the past. We are told that the "core consciousness" is the place where one "sort[s] through countless memories" and arranges them into "complex lines… [and] bundles," a process that shapes one's "cognitive system" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 256). The "core consciousness" is therefore the site of memory. As the early, obtrusive reference to Proust suggests (pp. 9–10), the novel is centrally concerned with the nature of memory. There is an indication here that Watashi has surrendered some part of his memory to a greater system and that the narrative he retains is not truly his own, an idea Murakami explores in his later work, *Underground* (2003). Memory is a theme that pervades much of Murakami's work. Novels such as *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1997), *Norwegian Wood* (2002), and *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* (2014) explore the fallibility of memory, and the ways it is regulated by society and post-industrial culture. In *Hard-boiled*, Murakami engages with the question of memory substitution, specifically examining the regime of memory that fills the psychological void created by the trauma of WWII, a complex process of simultaneous remembering and forgetting.[8]

Dream-Worlds and the Unspeakable

Murakami approaches this complex encounter with artificial memory through the play of the "fantastic" and the "real." The relationship between the "real" world and the "dream" world of the "End of the World" sections is staged through an initial opposition of their symbolic systems. This encourages an understanding of the dream-world – the Town and its objects – as a type of figurative recovery of what cannot be consciously acknowledged or understood in the "real" world. The Professor comments on this dissociative state, telling the protagonist that the

[8] Murakami's work communicates an evident interest in the war. Novels like *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994-5) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2005) include explicit references to World War II and Japan's actions in it.

Town is the unconscious sector of his mind in which he can "reclaim everything from this [conscious] world" that he has had "t'give up" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 274). In other words, the Town and its imagery articulate what cannot be spoken in conscious life, what therefore has been disavowed or repressed. Reading the Town as unconscious symbolic recoupment immediately brings to mind Jungian theories of symbolism in dreams. For Carl Jung (1964), the unconscious mind is a repository of personal memories both acknowledged and suppressed, but also of an inherited cultural knowledge, a shared "collective unconscious" that one is not directly cognizant of. Dreams are symbolic expressions of this unconscious, "essential message carriers from the instinctive to the rational parts of the human mind" (p. 52). Jung suggests that recurring dreams may serve as an attempt "to compensate for a particular defect in the dreamer's attitude to life," or, may result from a traumatic moment that "has left behind some specific prejudice" (p. 53). In other words, dream images offer an authentic picture in compensatory relation to the conscious self.

Although Murakami avoids any explicit remarks about the event, there is an undeniable sense that the Town symbolically compensates for the unspeakable events of World War II. Although it is a place of "perpetual peace" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 248), its landscape and objects bear traces of warfare and destruction. Boku describes the "rows of empty factories" and the "nexus of passageways" as resembling "medieval entrenchments," which "entrenc[h] the camped grounds between one building and the next" (p. 65). In addition to this, the Town is inhabited by old officers who carry themselves in an "officious" manner that can be credited to "long career[s] in the military" (p. 83). They spend their days in the Bureaucratic Quarter "reminiscing about past campaigns" (p. 87), grateful that there is "[n]o victory, no defeat" (p. 317), an image of denial that characterises Japan's national historiographies. The symbolic connection to the events of World War II is further strengthened by the epithet "the End of the World," a likely reference to Toyofumi Ogura's novel *Letters from the End of the World* (1948), an eyewitness account of the atomic bombing of Japan written in the form of letters from a survivor to his dead wife. The Town's objects are therefore symbols that consistently point to the war while paradoxically denying any specific relation to World War II, an event so traumatic that it can only be safely dealt with through symbols. To readers familiar with Japan's history, the unspoken referent of the war is an unmistakable presence that haunts the tale. Even the conspicuous absence of any direct reference to the war in the protagonist's waking world (a striking absence considering the thematic focus on memory and the past) can be understood as a principal signifier for a past that has been silenced. In light of this, the Town comes to stand for disavowal itself, its symbolism both revealing and concealing the trauma.

The disavowal of the past is powerfully depicted by Boku's painful separation from his shadow, which becomes the central conflict driving the "End of the World" plot. As a condition of entering the Town, Boku must surrender his shadow through a literal amputation carried out by the Town's Gatekeeper. We learn that the shadow embodies "all memory of [one's] old world" and is the part of the self that is connected to the past. Its separation results in its death, for shadows "can't live without people" (Murakami, 2011a, pp. 62–63). According to Jungian theory, shadows are archetypes, innately recognisable and hereditary symbolic entities, which represent repressed aspects of the self that one wishes to cast off (Jung, 1959, p. 20). For the Town to maintain its peaceful state, all shadows must be abandoned. Read through Jungian theory, Boku's individual memory of the past is considered the part of the self that is most distressing and must be discarded and replaced by a more sanitized versions of the past.

This scene of denial sets the stage for what I believe is the key to the novel, namely the encounter with mnemotechnical reconstructions that complicate remembrance and cause

traumatic rupture within the self. It is crucial to remember that the Town is a technological approximation, a "computer visualization" of the protagonist's inner traumatised state (Murakami, 2011a, p. 262). Murakami takes care to emphasise that the protagonist's own core consciousness has been dislocated, and that his cognitive system is overridden by a prosthetic system, an inexact technological copy that will always be "part[ly] foreign" (p. 269) to him. In the Town, "[w]hat resembles meat is not. What resembles eggs is not... Everything is made in the image of something" (p. 224). This simulation is the product of the Professor's "editin'… resequencin' … [and r]earrangin'" of the original "jumbled and fragmentary" elements into a "story" (p. 262), a "convenient" technological conversion (p. 263). This artificial substitution "[b]esto[ws] order upon chaos" (p. 263) by condensing complex memories of the past into discrete components, reconstructions that reshape individual experience, for when "memories change, the world changes" (p. 283). This suggests that the denial of the past is not just an individual act of renouncement, but a condition imposed by external forms of commemoration, including officially sanctioned ones, that paradoxically aid and "order" one's own disjointed memory of the difficult past.

Commemoration, Passivity, Repetition

Murakami demonstrates how these memory substitutions re-position the subject from one who experiences the past to one who merely watches. The shift to the position of spectator serves to distance the individual from the traumatic event. That in turn encourages forgetting. In a compelling section of the novel, Watashi experiences the disruption of his consciousness by artificial memories, intrusive flashbacks that are characteristic of trauma, but unusual in that he experiences it as if watching a "newsreel" in the "movie theatre." On the screen he sees his shadow, "a figure in the distance," in grave danger of being engulfed by a flood but unable to speak. Watashi, a "member of the audience" watching the disaster on screen, is powerless, unable to even acknowledge that the shadow is his, and so "do[es] nothing" to help it (Murakami, 2011a, pp. 237–238). This surreal moment illustrates how forms of commemoration encode the initial trauma, reducing it in this case to the visual dimension, which is a debilitating abstraction of experience. Further, these externally constructed forms of commemoration intervene to isolate the traumatic event, preventing the subject from identifying with it and thus from taking responsibility.

The reconstruction of memories is invariably entangled in questions about control. What authority determines public forms of memory and shapes our knowledge of history, and thus our identity? The hegemonic dimension of such considerations is embodied in the figure of the old Professor, who represents the authority responsible for reconstructing Watashi's core consciousness and thus his memory of the past. The Professor is described as bearing a strong resemblance to "a major pre-War political figure" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 26), and advocates a rigorous focus on scientific advancement and efficiency for the sake of "evolution" (p. 49). The Professor advocates unyielding progress that "puts [its] trust in science" (p. 29), a "pure focus" (p. 253) sometimes blind to the "trouble [that is] ma[de] for others" (p. 274). It is the same "pure focus" on scientific advancement that Murakami identified, in his acceptance speech on receiving the Catalunya International Prize 2011, as the postwar "myth" of "Japan's technological prowess," a myth advanced by the government to stimulate postwar economic recovery.[9]

[9] In this speech, Murakami (2011b) identifies that post-World War II national policy pursued peace and prosperity through a commitment to technological advancement and "efficiency." This distorted logic resulted in substantial developments in nuclear power generation, with thirty per cent of electricity generated by this means, in spite of the renouncement of nuclear power after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

If the Professor symbolizes the authoritative construction of cultural myths, then the details that Murakami ascribes to this authority prove to be unsettling. After admitting the full extent of his unrestrained experimentation, the old man tells the horrified protagonist:

> [A] scientist isn't one for controlling his curiosity. Of course, I deplore how those scientists cooperated with the Nazis conductin' vivisection in the concentration camps. That was wrong. At the same time, I find myself thinkin', if you're goint'do live experiments, you might as well do something a little spiffier and more productive. Given the opportunity, scientists all feel the same way at the bottom of their heart. (Murakami, 2011a, p. 193)

This admission directly aligns the Professor with the rationalist brutality of the Nazi regime and implicitly to the Japanese atrocities of WW2, revealing a kind of quasi-scientific imperialism hidden under the veil of empiricist neutrality. This kind of instrumental reason is complicit in violence towards humanity, and especially striking in its irony, considering Japan's denial of its own imperialist brutality during this time. Murakami seems to suggest a transnational ideological connection between imperialism, Nazism and fascism, a provocative relation that indicates a gap in official historiographies that tend to brush off the Axis as a "hollow alliance" (see e.g. Law, 2019). In addition to this, Murakami alerts us to an ironic repetition of violence that occurs within the processes of postwar commemoration, with the Professor repeating unto the protagonist a violence similar to wartime tyranny. According to psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious compulsion to repeat destructive behavior is the paradoxical attempt by the unconscious to assimilate adverse experiences, incidents that have been "forgotten" and "repressed" (Freud, 1958, p. 150). This theory seems to be an appropriate means through which to read the Professor's careless violence. The reconstruction of the past that focuses on recovery and advancement is, essentially, a way of "forgetting," a way of deflecting issues of identification and culpability, which unwittingly reproduces a brutality that is neither apprehended nor overcome.

Empathic Re-Engagement

Murakami is not as concerned with the veracity of intervening forms of commemoration as he is with the potentially debilitating paralysis that results from these memories. The protagonist's consciousness is "[f]lash-frozen" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 258) as a result of his prosthetic memory, and he is unable to evolve and therefore survive. Murakami rejects the seemingly common sense notion of memory as a storehouse of stable ideas, to use John Locke's metaphor, literalized in the Professor's simulations, which assumes that memory is singular and removed from the present. Instead, Murakami emphasizes that the reification of memory is a traumatic state of disassociation from consciousness. This state leads to certain death, suggesting that memory must not be static but instead change with time and gain meaning through active processes in the present.

With his memories reified in the real world, the protagonist is powerless to change his fate and to escape the scientist's "closed circuit." However, Murakami suggests that there is a way to transcend these confines. The ambiguous ending of the novel presents readers with an unexpected form of re-engagement with the past that vitally connects it with the present, thus repossessing it from the permanence of history. For most of the "End of the World" narrative, we are given to understand that the protagonist's desired recovery of "self" depends on his being able to reunite with his shadow and escape from the Town (Murakami, 2011a, p. 63). We presume that this integration of self will somehow change his fate in "reality." Yet, at the last moment, the protagonist changes his mind. He tells his shadow: "[t]his is my world. The

Wall is here to hold *me* in, the River flows through *me*, the smoke is *me* burning" (p. 399, emphasis in original). His shadow, upset with his choice, warns him that if he stays in the Town "[he] will not be living. [He] will merely exist." Boku replies that nothing is certain, and that "little by little, [he] will recall things. People and places from our former world, different qualities of light, different songs." He is hopeful that when he starts to actively remember "[he] may find the key to [his] own creation, and to its undoing" (p. 399).

Critics have read the ending as a desire to abandon the technological world of post-industrial Japan and to retreat into a "fantasy Utopia inside… [the] mind" (Napier, 1995, p. 4), revealing an aspiration to "improve upon the subconscious world through his own understanding of it," a "pursuit of knowledge" that does not accord with the world of technology (Scott, 2009, p. 58). The novel has thus been criticized as being escapist (Napier, 1995, p. 126). However, the fact that the Town is a technological simulation is a crucial point that moderates such assessments. Boku's choice to stay within this simulation suggests an acceptance of this artificial state, and the understanding that these false memories are part of him, regardless of the catastrophic effect on his existence. This in turn implies the realization that he cannot return to a state of prior innocence, and that there is no unified consciousness that exists outside of the encounter with these mnemotechnics. The protagonist, in choosing to inhabit this liminal state, exemplifies the struggle to come to terms with a manufactured part of identity, constituted by the artificial other that resides within.

Murakami suggests that meaningful reengagement lies beyond the conscious or rational grasp of history. In his unconscious mind the protagonist discovers that a more intuitive kind of memory offers a means of transcendence. Boku's duty in the Town is to "read old dreams" (Murakami, 2011a, p. 38) sealed inside the skulls of dead unicorns. It is a task that he cannot understand at first. He finds himself uncertain of its "purpose," and hindered by the "unfathomable" silence and "nothingness" that seems to fill these skulls. As Dreamreader, he senses an "inherent pathos…[he] has no words for," but is unable to "unrave[l] the chaos of vision" or "grasp any distinct message" from the "endless stream of images" (pp. 59–61). Unable to access these memories, he feels his own mind "hard[en]" into "solid rock" (p. 225). However, Boku discovers the Town's collection of discarded musical instruments and through them begins to recall certain songs and is "reawakened" (p. 386). Music opens up an emotional space that "thaw[s] mind and muscle from endless wintering" (p. 369) and allows his mind to be "transported great distances" (p. 367). With music, the dormant old dreams are "awaken[ed]" in the unicorn skulls and he begins to feel the Town "liv[e] and breath[e]." Music, and the creative engagement it implies, becomes the solution for bringing the past dreams into present apprehension, allowing him to experience the Town and its people as if they were "all [him] self" (p. 369). The distance between the self and the artificial collapses and Boku is driven to take responsibility for it. What is implied is that an *empathic* remembrance of the past, whether or not this remembrance is authentic or artificial, one's own or an official version, is an act of imaginative self-creation that is necessary for reconciling the two sides of a divided self. Murakami suggests that empathic remembrance involves bringing this "other" past into proximity and allowing oneself to be "touched" by it. Connecting emotionally with a memory that was not originally one's own repossesses the distant past by acknowledging its emotional weight in the present, thus transcending the boundaries imposed by external forces.

Murakami urges us to recognize that one's awareness of the past is made possible through the mediation of available representations, even as these may paradoxically entail the forgetting of one's own memories. More than this, Murakami urges reflection upon one's own culpability

in the act of forgetting. The protagonist realizes that the Town exists as "the consequenc[e] of [his] own doings" (p. 399), and that it is his own stubborn repression of the past, and subsequent dissociation, that facilitates the Professor's artificial reconstruction (p. 268). Similarly, we must recognize that the harm done by memory regimes proceeds only from one's own wilful disavowal of a disturbing past.

Conclusion

The temporal relationship of the past to the present is linear and continuous. However, the relationship between history and memory, remembering and forgetting, is tangled and complex. This is further complicated by a traumatic event, one such as the Japanese defeat in WWII, that resists being fully grasped or represented. The void in the aftermath of this catastrophe in Japan was filled by a regime of memory marked in large part by pragmatism and selective amnesia. This regime of memory, with its officially sanctioned mnemotechnics, provided comfort and meaning by embedding the individual into a collective, symbolic domain. However, as Murakami shows us, this reconstruction of the past and of meaning constitutes a trauma of its own, inhibiting individuals from coming to terms with past violence on their own terms, which can be harmfully debilitating. This crisis of memory is therefore a double wound that marks a breakdown in the distinction between the individual and the collective.

The merging of private memory and public space raises questions, as the novel shows us, about the status of the traumatic injury, whether it is part of the private fantasy realm or part of collective public space. Murakami uses SF to communicate this uncertainty by building a world that, on the one hand, recreates reality as we know it, while, on the other hand, simultaneously conveys the overwhelming shock that defines trauma and that prevents its representation. The Town conveys the latter through the foregrounding of the constructedness of its fantastical imagery, thereby revealing the absence, the void, of the traumatic reality it represents. Its symbolism gestures towards a pain that it never directly describes. And yet the Town is also a material entity implanted into the protagonist's brain, with very corporeal consequences. Fantasy, here, is emphatically materialist. Rather than being a mode of escapism, as some might argue (Suvin, 1979, p. 8), fantasy here has the effect of estranging "cognition" itself. The split sign system of SF is therefore able to articulate the unspeakable but very real shock of Japanese postwar trauma. The protagonist's choice to stay in this dissociative state demonstrates Murakami's ethical position, and his insistence that remembering the violent past, whether or not one is restricted by official versions of it, is a moral imperative, even if it seems to have dire consequences. One must always hold on to the possibilities inherent in the fact that memory, propelled by empathy, will exceed any attempts to control it, and this is a means of liberation.

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