In search of the real: technology, shock and language in Murakami Haruki's *Sputnik Sweetheart*

MICHAEL FISCH

Abstract: Murakami Haruki's novel *Sputnik Sweetheart* (2001) is concerned with the condition of language and its restoration. For Murakami, as well as other contemporary Japanese thinkers, anxiety over the condition of language and communication was brought to the fore by the nearly consecutive occurrence of violent events in the winter of 1995. The shock of these events was compounded by the already weakened state of national confidence as a result of the economic collapse. The following argument traces Murakami's attempt to imagine a transformation and recovery of language that is predicated on an encounter with *achiragawa* (the other side). I argue that Murakami's depiction of this encounter draws on a certain psychology of shock as a condition whereby mechanisms of disavowal are short-circuited and that which has been repressed in the unconscious or split off from awareness is allowed to surface momentarily. In this theorization, shock is a particularly modern phenomenon born of the effects of a technologically mediated existence. In its capacity to reveal that which has been obscured by habituation and adaptation to the conditions of everyday life, shock is a dangerous yet liberating moment of encounter with a real.

Keywords: Murakami Haruki, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, *achiragawa*, shock, technology, modernity, disavowal

In December 2000, a 17-year-old high school student from Tochigi-ken in Japan was arrested for throwing a small home-made bomb packed with nuts, bolts and box-cutter blades into a crowded video store in Tokyo's Kabuki-cho area. Upon questioning, the youth expressed remorse only over the fact that he had not been able to execute his full plan, which involved firing a shotgun at the survivors. The youth told police that he had wanted to 'hear what people's screams would be like and to see people broken into pieces, to see their bones and internal organs' (*hito*

wo barabara ni kowashite hone ya naizō wo mitakatta) (*Mainichi shinbun* 6 December
2000). He explained that he felt there was nothing behind people's superficiality
so he wanted to be able to 'see inside people'. The youth's confession evokes an
association with the now infamous murders committed by another child, known
in the media as '*Shōnen A*' (Youth A). Similar to the Tochigiken youth, 'anxiety
about the artificiality of the world' and an obsession to 'destroy it in order to reveal
the Real' is cited as a compelling force behind *Shōnen A*'s gruesome decapitation
of a local child – a sacrifice for his invented god (Iida 2002: 446). Is there a
hidden logic behind these desperate and bloody acts? What is it that binds the
spilling of blood, moreover innocent blood, with angst over the artificiality of the
world?

The sense of artificiality that troubled these youths bespeaks a crisis in rep-
resentation, where referents are perceived as failing to mark a concrete real and
appear instead to cascade precipitously in a chain of semantic displacement that
renders language for ever a process of misapprehension. It is tempting to inter-
pret their violence as a desire to resuscitate a semiotic veracity via the magic of
sacrifice, in which, as Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss tell us, the slaughter of
the sacred victim produced real affects (Hubert and Mauss 1964). The mimetic
logic of sympathetic magic induced through sacrifice bound the *thing* to its repre-
sentation so that 'what happens to the enemy's spear, hair or name, also happens
to the individual' (Horkheimer and Adorno 1988: 10). Yet, as Horkheimer and
Adorno point out, since the principle of substitution in sacrifice contradicts the
representational specificity upon which the efficacy of the ritual rests, it signals
a future unraveling of its effects – the semiotic fix it offers is at best temporary
(1988: 10).

Concern for the condition of language and its restoration is also at the heart
of Murakami Haruki's novel *Sputnik Sweetheart* (2001). For Murakami, as well
as other contemporary Japanese thinkers, anxiety over the condition of language
and communication was brought to the fore by the nearly consecutive occur-
rence of two excessively violent events: the 1 January 1995 Hanshin earthquake
and the 20 March 1995 *Aum Shinrikyō* sarin gas attack in Tokyo's subway. The
shock of these events was compounded by the already weakened state of na-
tional confidence resulting from economic collapse (Murakami 1999: 746–5).[1]
In a manner that brings to mind the two incidents of juvenile crime cited above,
the restoration of language in *Sputnik Sweetheart* is initially allegorized in terms
of a sacrificial ritual that will recuperate the force of language by facilitating a
proximity to a real, conceptualized as *achiragawa* (another world or the other
side). The allegory proves insufficient however, and the image of blood in sacri-
fice is instead appropriated as a metaphor for shock and a confrontation with a
repressed awareness of the conditions of existence in contemporary late-capitalist
Japan. The following argument traces this development in the narrative while
attempting to explicate the status of the real *vis-à-vis* Murakami's notion of
achiragawa.

The transformation and recovery of language in *Sputnik Sweetheart* is predicated on an encounter with *achiragawa*. I argue that Murakami's depiction of this encounter draws on a certain psychology of shock as a condition whereby mechanisms of disavowal are short-circuited and that which has been repressed in the unconscious, or split off from awareness, is allowed to surface momentarily. In this theorization, which will be explained in greater detail below, shock is a particularly modern phenomenon born of the effects of a technologically mediated existence. In its capacity to reveal that which has been obscured by habituation and adaptation to the conditions of everyday life, shock is a dangerous yet liberating moment of encounter with a real.

Achiragawa and the real that it designates in *Sputnik Sweetheart* undergo several permutations before the relation to shock becomes clear. In its initial evocation within an allegory of sacrifice, the real that *achiragawa* specifies is a condition of greater authenticity. It is simply a space not colonized by modern reason and its bifurcating logic: a space without contradictions in which magic is still instrumental – a place of pre-modern origins, so to speak. But *achiragawa* is also depicted as accessible via mundane technologies (phones, computers, binoculars) or 'inner-medium' spaces at the edge of society, even while it is characterized as a time and space outside technological mediation.[2] In this sense, it is consistent with fantasies of occult spaces that have surrounded such technologies since their emergence, and the real toward which it gestures can be seen as modernity's remainder, the excess of a split consciousness of a subject constituted in mediation.[3] *Achiragawa* is thus decisively sheered of its exterior spatial component and situated as a corollary of the unconscious. In this capacity, it begins to take on the function of a real that is the effect of the stripping away of the illusory framework constituting the consciousness of the everyday and marks an uncanny recognition of a sustained commitment to disavowal. Although this sense of the real in *Sputnik Sweetheart* slides at moments toward the terminality of a Lacanian Real – that empty space from which the subject emerges in the symbolic and which cannot be represented or faced but only experienced in the form of its symptoms (Lacan 1977) – it is never capable of reaching that point.[4]

My reading of *Sputnik Sweetheart* negotiates these various configurations of *achiragawa* by identifying it as a hyper-real, or para-space, similar to what one finds in the science fiction genre. The decision to do so is, in part, a strategic consideration aimed against an interpretation of Murakami as participating in a specifically Japanese literary tradition. The hyper-real is a phenomenon that is decisively modern as well as not restricted by discursively constituted national literary boundaries. Furthermore, the hyper-real accessed through, yet beyond, technology is read as an attempt to push the print medium to its limits by harnessing technology's potential for generating the phantasmagoric.[5] Yet, by depicting the actual experience once inside the hyper-real as entirely unmediated, Murakami signals a desire to erase the technological apparatus through which the

hyper-real is ultimately generated, and to recover a pure and radically empowered new language.

The Japan of *Sputnik Sweetheart*

The appearance of some of Murakami's motifs and narrative devices in *Sputnik Sweetheart*, such as the encounter with *achiragawa* and the search for a vanished mysterious woman, render it similar to his previous novels. As in all his works, these devices are employed toward a depiction of a crisis of representation as a critique of the condition of language (and by extension human relations) in the mass-mediated culture of late-capitalist Japan. However, *Sputnik Sweetheart* delivers an important departure from Murakami's previous novels in its depiction of a return from the *achiragawa* and the subsequent transformation of language and communication. Such a transformation allows for imagining a new form of contemporary subject capable of authentic communication (Takushoku 1999a: 35–6; Yoshikawa 2000).[6]

Sputnik Sweetheart emerges from Murakami's impressions of the media coverage of the *Aum Shinrikyō* cult's sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway and his experience recording the victims' stories in his work *Underground* (1999). In the epilogue to *Underground*, Murakami criticizes the reporting of the incident in the Japanese media, claiming that the media built a bandwagon of consensus with exhausted, systematic and banal words (*riyō shitsukusareta, seidoteki ni natte shimatta, teaka ni mamireta kotoba*) (Murakami 1999: 739). The critique, however, is less a criticism of the media *per se* and more a comment on the inadequacy of contemporary language in relating the true sense of the event. Following the statement concerning the media, Murakami suggests that 'what we need now, I'm afraid, are words that work in a new direction and an absolutely new story that will be told in those words (another story in order to purify the story)' (ibid.: 739).[7] What Murakami is confronting here is the difficulty of articulating an experience so overwhelming that it exceeds the available economy of signification. Language has reached the limits of its expressive capacity and is unable to convey a subjective sense of a lived reality. Consequently, dialogue between people is either eclipsed by silence in the face of the ineffable or filled with words void of affect. This sense of frustration with the inadequacy of language to relay the experience of the gas attack echoes Walter Benjamin's disquiet regarding the end of storytelling that he perceived in the incapacity of language to relate the traumatic experience of modern warfare in World War I.[8] Benjamin writes that the 'art of storytelling is coming to an end':

> Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable

to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences.

(Benjamin 1968: 83)

In view of the motif of solitude that dominates Murakami's works, one senses that for Murakami, as with Benjamin, the crisis of storytelling is an accumulated effect that has worsened over the course of modernity rather than a recent and sudden phenomenon. But it is the arrival of shock that brings awareness of this condition into consciousness. For Benjamin, the senseless mechanized slaughter of World War I provided the necessary shock; the definitive presentation of a crisis in language (more than in any previous novel) that emerges in *Sputnik Sweetheart* suggests that for Murakami the events of the 1990s (including the Great Hanshin earthquake and Japan's economic collapse) function metaphorically as examples of what will be discussed below as technological accidents of modernity.

Shock

Shock, as described by Wolfgang Schivelbusch in connection with the modern technological accident, is a 'kind of sudden and powerful event of violence that disrupts the continuity of an artificially/mechanically created motion or situation, and also the subsequent state of derangement' (Schivelbusch 1986: 157–8). The technological accident and economic crisis, which are inherently related by the 'management of industry through capitalist principle' (ibid.: 132), are also similar forms of a systemic breakdown with corresponding effects of shock and trauma. The modern technological accident, which was perceived as the result of the loss of structural integrity maintained by containing the mechanical production of energy within safe parameters of operation, parallels the manner in which Marx defined economic crisis as a loss of equilibrium between the functions of buying and selling in the circulation of commodities (ibid.: 132). The 'state of derangement' resulting from the accident or crisis is a condition arising from an assault on mechanisms of repression produced by the modern (urban) individual as part of the imperative to negotiate a daily interface with constructed environments:

> The technology has created an artificial environment which people become used to as second nature. If the technological base collapses, the feeling of habituation and security collapses with it. What we called the 'falling height' of technological constructs (destructivity of accident proportionate to technical level of construct) can also be applied to the human consequences of the technological accident. The web of perceptual and behavioral forms that came into being due to the technological construct is torn to the degree that the construct itself collapses. The higher its technological level, the more denaturalized the consciousness that has become used to it, and the more destructive the collapse of both.

> (Schivelbusch 1986: 162)

The notion of habituation to which Schivelbusch refers is the structure of repetition that allows one to become accustomed to technology while repressing the initial fears that marked the first encounter with the technology. It is the mechanism that enables, or rather demands, that one become absorbed in reading on the train or the in-flight movie on the plane in order to preclude the possibility of cognizing a potential disaster. Habituation thus points to what psychoanalysis calls the mechanism of disavowal, a form of dissociated altered state of consciousness, in which a part of the consciousness is circumscribed from the working memory. It is the same principle that drives the logic of the fetish, where one constructs a wall between what one knows and what one supposedly does not know, or can no longer remember.[9] One becomes absorbed in the technologically constituted space of in-between-ness with the certain expectation that there will be a safer and more certain world waiting at the point of disembarkation. Hence habituation operates toward the construction of an illusionist framework, a certain politics of representation that enforces the notion of a real existing immediately outside the space of the artificially produced in-between. In the contemporary illusionist framework driven by an interlocking global net of electric information technology and media-driven consumer desire, in which (to borrow a phrase from pop-culture) 'resistance is futile', it is the idea that one still maintains some semblance of control that has been displaced into the forever waiting, forever insistent and forever deferred destination of the real. The real is thus that imagined space outside the forever in-between world of mass-mediated culture, where we believe we can turn the technology off and separate ourselves from its all encompassing web. And yet, as the real is itself constituted by technology, we are secretly aware of the truth that there is no alternative; once technology has been switched on we can never step outside its effects.

Shock, then, is the condition in which the continued deferral of the contradiction in our mode of being is made untenable. In other words, the shock that results from the technological accident, the economic crisis or the systems crash is the moment when the politics of representation supporting the illusion to which we are committed becomes impossible. A breach opens between the designated spaces of the real and artificial to reveal the constructed nature of both. When the instinct for self-preservation, which is a preservation of the *status quo*, is strong, we respond to shock by attempting to defer the realization that what is being recalled is not just the initial repression from which the illusionary framework emerged, but rather something that is more frightening than death: the systematic nature of everyday life and the correlative mechanism of repression instantiated in order to live.[10] If there is a potential to be realized from the shock of the accident, it is in a momentary lapse of the dissociated/disavowed condition, the tearing down of the wall between what we know and do not know and an intensely physical encounter, unmediated by mechanisms of repression, with the material world.

Unconnected

The Russian forerunner of all communication satellites and symbol of a new phase in the Cold War and information technology, 'Sputnik', which also means 'companion,' operates on an ironic level as the central metaphor for the impossibility of communication and absolute solitude in *Sputnik Sweetheart*. The image of the satellite orbiting against the emptiness of space comes to signify utter futility in the aspiration for intimacy between two people. Meditating on the hopelessness of this solitude, Murakami's quintessential first-person narrator, Boku (I),[11] remarks that individuals are no more than 'lonely metal souls in the unimpeded darkness of space, they meet, pass each other and part, never to meet again. No words passing between them. No promises to keep' (Murakami 2002: 179).[12] His use of the Sputnik metaphor at this point in the story appears as an unconscious echo of a sentiment expressed earlier by Miu, a Korean Japanese woman whom Boku has joined on a small Greek island to help look for Sumire. In yet another instance of this sort of unconscious echo that moves from one character to another, in telling Boku about Sumire's vanishing, Miu appropriates the metaphor, 'like smoke', from Sumire, who employs it in describing to Miu the disappearance of a cat during her childhood. Finally, the metaphor makes its way into Boku's explanation of Sumire's disappearance. For Murakami this is a media model of communication rather than a model for an authentic communication between individuals; it is communication via contagion where the individual is transformed into a relay that simply receives and transmits within a network. Such a mode of communication precludes the necessary reflective intervention of a thinking subject, a subject that can perceive, interpret and articulate the 'new story'. Yet, the essentially perfect transmission of a phrase gestures toward the possibility of perfect communication, that is, communication that occurs at a telepathic sub-conscious or perhaps extra-linguistic level, free from the specter of semiotic slippage and miscommunication. As we shall see throughout the following argument, Murakami's attempt to develop a new (pure) story and language appears trapped between the media and an authentic model of communication as he is bound by the materiality of the print medium and associated technologies of distribution.

When individuals do attempt to communicate in *Sputnik Sweetheart*, it is misunderstanding and imperfect communication rather than perfect communication that characterizes their interaction and serves as the grounds for incomprehensible alienation and loneliness. The notion that this miscommunication is a result of a crisis in signification emerges most explicitly in the conversations between Boku and Sumire concerning semiotics and writing. Sumire is a 22-year-old woman with a penchant for a bohemian lifestyle and American beatnik literature who is herself struggling to become a writer. Boku is in love with Sumire but she is completely without sexual desire for men. Thus their relationship remains confined to a strained platonic affair maintained mostly through inconvenient (for

Boku) late-night telephone conversations as a result of Sumire's insomnia. In one of the initial dialogues between the two, a telephone conversation at 4.30 in the morning, the extent of the moribund condition of signification is revealed in Sumire's confusion over the functional difference between a sign (*kigō*) and a symbol (*shōchō*). Boku, as the forever pragmatic and rationally minded character that he is, attempts to explain the difference between the two via an example of a symbol that one could assume would be common sense for anyone with knowledge of Japan, especially a citizen: 'The emperor is a symbol of Japan. Do you follow that?' (Murakami 2002: 28) Sumire does not, however, and responds with an ambiguous, 'sort of' (*nantoka*). Pressing the fact that the currency of this symbol is reified by the Japanese constitution and thus not a point for ambiguity, Boku insists that Sumire acknowledge it unequivocally for the conversation to continue. Sumire accepts, reluctantly, and Boku attempts to explain the critical difference in the quality of reciprocation that distinguishes a sign from a symbol. The concept, however, remains elusive for Sumire. It would be wrong to interpret Murakami's choice of this specific symbolic equation, which is currently the focus of numerous anxieties and debates as a result of what is seen as the threat of a resurgent nationalism, as a statement regarding the condition of nationalism among Japanese youth. Instead, by using what should be an obvious symbol and yet presenting it as devoid of rhetorical force, Murakami is suggesting a lack of vitality in contemporary language, which is needed to either establish or represent a physical reality.

Sumire's failure as a writer is the result of the moribund condition of language that Murakami belabors. She desires to create a great work that will 'capture the soul and human destiny' (Murakami 2002: 14) yet senses that her writing lacks some essential element. In an attempt to explain the art of literature, Boku allegorizes writing novels with an ancient Chinese gate-building ritual according to which the gates for walled cities in ancient China were constructed from the bones of fallen soldiers. It was only after the bones had been doused with the blood of a freshly killed dog that the 'ancient souls of the dead [would] magically revive' (Murakami 2002: 16). Boku explains:

> Writing novels is much the same. You gather up bones and make your gate, but no matter how wonderful the gate might be, that alone doesn't make it a living, breathing novel. A story is not something of this world. A real story requires a kind of magical baptism to link the world on this side with the world on the *other side*.

> (Murakami 2002: 16, emphasis in original)

The allegory evokes the ancient magic of sacrificial ritual and suggests an analogical equation in which blood is to bones as meaning is to signifier. Accordingly, 'magical baptism' (*jujutsu teki na senrei*) in the blood of the sacrificial victim promises to restore meaning to the semiotic structure of language just as spirits

of fallen soldiers are restored to weathered bones. This logic draws on a modern anthropological interpretation of sacrifice as a sacred ritual that restores meaning to its proper place by fastening the symbolic to a material referent, thus restoring order to the realm of the profane . . . (see Hubert and Mauss 1964). The efficacy of sacrifice lies in the process of a literal identification within the mimesis of sympathetic magic ('what happens to the enemy's spear, hair or name, also happens to the individual'). Thus the *other side (achiragawa)* in this instance specifies both the pre-modern condition in which sacrifice was possible, and a sacred realm beyond the contemporary environment of the modern. In either case, it is a circumscribed space inhabited by a semiotic authenticity that Boku feels is absent in the present. Based on this reading, Murakami's longing for a new kind of story seems little more than clichéd nostalgia for an imagined purity and simplicity of a pre-modern era. What challenges such an interpretation, however, is that despite Boku's pedantic stance toward Sumire, it is not at all clear which of the two is in need of the 'magical baptism' or whether such magic is indeed the solution. This becomes apparent from Sumire's literal understanding of Boku's allegory. The idea that a word or phrase could succumb to a doubling that troubles the literal meaning by suggesting a secondary, abstract, interpretation does not occur to her and she responds to Boku, 'I really don't want to kill an animal if I can help it' (Murakami 2002: 16). Boku reassures her that he is only speaking 'metaphorically' and there is no need actually to kill anything. But to speak metaphorically of sacrifice is to displace via abstraction an act that by the virtue of its literal mimetic logic is antithetical to metaphor. That is, in the Chinese gate building ritual, the blood of the dogs *is* the life of the animal that will restore the life to the bones. That Sumire understands this (albeit intuitively) while Boku does not is the first indication that the central transformation in language that will occur over the course of the narrative (the emergence of the pure story) will be mediated through Boku while Sumire will be the catalyst in this process. How does the transformation happen?

The transformation of language occurs not, as Boku first imagines, by virtue of magic but rather its absence. It is the result of a brutal stripping away of the illusory framework, the padding between the self and world produced in the process of habitualization. In connection with this thematic shift, Boku's allegorical use of sacrifice and magical baptism is detached from its anthropological context and re-appropriated as a metaphor for shock. In its modified designation, the analogy equating blood and reanimation of bones with the recuperation of words comes to reference the capacity to recognize a relation between phenomena, stated as the realization that 'when people get shot, they bleed' (Murakami 2002: 136).[13] In other words, to recognize blood is to be aware of the material conditions of existence – an effect of being unable to sustain a state of disavowal. *Achiragawa*, in this sense, induces or is induced by a state of shock in which the mind is exposed to that which it has deferred into the unconscious. In the journey to the 'other side', the writer, or rather new storyteller, slips outside the 'fictional framework' of the

everyday and engages the real by disengaging what Freud called a stimulus barrier, and which Boku describes in terms of the mechanics of a car's transmission:

> I think most people live in a fiction. I'm no exception. Think of it in terms of a car's transmission. It's like a transmission that stands between you and the harsh realities of life. You take the raw power from outside and use gears to adjust it so everything is in sync. That's how you keep your fragile body intact.
>
> (Murakami 2002: 62–3)[14]

Boku's mechanical metaphor clearly situates the contemporary fictional framework within the effects of technological mediation. *Achiragawa* is thus definitively not outside technology but is rather its symptom. The encounter with *achiragawa* suggests a situation in which one is able to inhabit modernity while maintaining an awareness of its effects. Hence, the art of storytelling, for Murakami, is the capacity to capture in narration the 'raw power' that shapes and controls our lives in a manner that is often too terrifying to acknowledge.

Murakami's depiction of *achiragawa* as a place that is accessed through the liminal spaces in society has been associated with a traditional narrative device in Japanese literature and culture. For example, citing the ethnologist Origuchi Nobuo's (1883–1953) research into the Japanese folk belief concerning passages to parallel worlds, Takushoku Mitsuhiko (1999a: 24–7) suggests that Murakami works within this tradition. Certainly one can find similarities between the other worlds depicted in Murakami's novels and those other spaces described in Origuchi's work. But to relegate Murakami to a specifically (traditional) Japanese context is to disregard the centrality of the struggle with the decisively modern condition of a dissociative state for which the technology of a mass-mediated culture is its condition of possibility. In other words, it is this condition that establishes both the possibility of and the need for the encounter with the *achiragawa*. Moreover, the displacement of the modern by the traditional that is required to consign Murakami's work to the status of traditional expression, signals yet another instance of disavowal (of the modern in Japan) and of split consciousness – 'I know but I do not know' – that is part of the same modern phenomenon Murakami is attempting to confront through *achiragawa*. Hence, I would argue that, if there is anything traditional or pre-modern about Murakami's other worlds, that tradition or depiction of a pre-modern milieu is entirely embedded within the desires and logic of modernity.

In order to avoid any association with attempts to locate in Japan an intact and irreducible manifestation of tradition *despite* modernity, I read Murakami's depiction of *achiragawa* as similar to what Samuel Delany defines as the para-space found in cyber-punk fiction. According to Delany, the para-space is an alternate space that 'exists parallel to the normal space of the diegesis – a rhetorically heightened "other realm"' (cited in Bukatman 1993: 157). While the para-space is often inaugurated through cognition it is always a 'materially manifested' and 'linguistically intensified' space in which 'conflicts that begin in ordinary space are resolved'

(Murakami 2002: 157). Yoshikawa Yasuhisa notes that, when writing about the regular world, Murakami frequently employs allegory and metaphor, and in the moment of transition between this world and the 'other world' the technique is drastically intensified. However, following the transition into the other world, allegory and metaphor vanish into simple narration (Yoshikawa 1999: 41–2). Such a mode of description clearly designates *achiragawa* as a space that is accessed via and at the same time beyond mediating technologies, of which language is the most fundamental. More importantly, the simplification of language announces a desire to retreat from the mechanism of disavowal actualized in the symbolic function of language. That is, it is through entrance into language and its corresponding capacity to displace meaning in signification that the mechanism of disavowal in the logic of the fetish is made operative. Stripping away metaphor announces an intent to re-experience the moment of shock, the moment before what is revealed in that shock is lost in a dissociative reaction that splits the consciousness and separates the realization from the working memory. The journey to *achiragawa* thus expresses a movement back from the symbolic to the imaginary *toward* the Real and a confrontation, or, as Sumire will call it, 'collision' (*shōtotsu*), where the realization that 'when someone gets shot they bleed' cannot be deferred.

In an attempt to re-experience the moment of shock, Murakami's work harbors the possibility for the kind of 'traumatic realism' that Hal Foster finds enabled through the strategy of repetition in the work of Andy Warhol, especially *Death in America*, which focuses on images of accidents (Foster 1996). According to Foster, the repeated images of accidents in Warhol's work can be read as an attempt to 'repeat a traumatic event (in actions, in dreams, in images) in order to integrate it into a psychic economy, a symbolic order' (1996: 42). However, Foster suggests that this repetition is not so much 'restorative' or an attempt to 'reproduce traumatic effects', but rather 'to produce them as well' (1996: 42). Foster's theoretical model here regarding trauma is the Lacanian definition of trauma as a 'missed encounter with the real' that cannot be represented but only repeated. Hence, according to Foster, 'repetition in Warhol is not representation':

> Repetition serves to *screen* the real understood as traumatic. But this very need *points* to the real, and it is at this point that the real *ruptures* the screen of repetition. It is a rupture not in the world but in the subject; or rather it is a rupture between perception and consciousness of a subject *touched* by an image.
>
> (Foster 1996: 42)

Foster suggests that the effect produced echoes both Roland Barthes' notion of *punctum* as the moment when the screen is popped and the real pokes through and Walter Benjamin's concept of 'optical unconscious' that 'describes the subliminal effects of modern technologies of the image' (Foster 1996: 42–5). Although Barthes' and Benjamin's concepts are similarly aligned *vis-à-vis* what I have been referring to as an effect of shock, the 'real' to which they refer is the product of separate theoretical moments in a history guided by a different set of problematics.

Benjamin's real is rooted in a Marxian critique of ideology as that which obfuscates an awareness of the true nature of the relations of production while Barthes' sense of the real is, as Foster points out, closer to the Lacanian Real. Foster's conflation of these two conceptualizations of a real is appropriate for the analysis of *Sputnik Sweetheart*, as Murakami's real also vacillates between similar conceptual poles.

What unites *punctum* and 'optical unconscious' is their reference to a critical point at which the mechanism that defers shock into trauma (the missed encounter with the real) is disabled and shock is revisited. It is a moment of radical disjuncture and instability but also a moment that carries the possibility of the recuperation of the subject, in the sense that it provides a tentative suturing of a split psyche and subsequent flash of anamnesis. In the encounter with *achiragawa* that will occur on the small Greek island, each of the three central characters in *Sputnik Sweetheart* is forced to confront a memory or realization that has been repressed. For Miu and Sumire the nature of the repressed memory and experience comprise a more personal psychological drama. For Boku the encounter will be nothing less than a collision with the illusionary framework of the everyday and the systematic nature of repression demanded by life in late capitalist Japan. While Miu will defer what is revealed for a life of further disenchantment, and Sumire's fate is left ambiguous, Boku will discover a new self-awareness and emerge from a lifetime of alienation.

Toward *achiragawa*

Sumire's journey toward *achiragawa* and initiation into the art of storytelling begins when she falls in love with Miu, a Korean Japanese woman who is an independently employed wine importer and seventeen years Sumire's senior. She starts working for Miu and the two of them travel to Europe together for business. Declaring finally that 'blood must be shed', Sumire confesses her love and sexual attraction toward Miu while the two of them are vacationing on a small Greek Island. Miu, however, rejects her and Sumire disappears the next morning. The only traces of her that remain are two documents on a computer disk. The disk is left for Boku to find locked inside a suitcase that will open to the combination of Boku's telephone number area code. The cryptography is eminently appropriate as even in Japan it was the phone line that connected Boku's and Sumire's worlds. It is also another late night phone call that summons Boku across the world to the small island in the Aegean Sea that is so far beyond contemporary civilization that its 'communications are a bit backward' and 'there aren't any faxes or the internet' (Murakami 2002: 98).

The summons to the island is also Boku's call to *achiragawa* and it is initiated in a moment of misrecognition – 'it didn't sound like my name, but there it was' – over a phone line 'distorted by some far-off inorganic substance' (Murakami 2002: 79). In an era in which instantaneous communication obfuscates an awareness of the distance mediated by the networks connecting talking heads, the delay and distortion that marks this summons is an indication of the impossible distance

whence it originates and subsequently manifests its meaning as a call from the *achiragawa*. Similarly, the materiality of the connection – the phone line – signifies the call from the 'other side' as a summons from Boku's unconscious, which is never so far as it is near: 'Only an apparatus such as the telephone can transmit its [the unconscious'] frequencies, because each encoding in the bureaucratic medium of writing would be subject to the filtering and censoring effects of a consciousness' (Kittler 1999: 89).[15]

At last it is Miu's voice that traverses the distance to inform Boku that Sumire has disappeared and to ask him to come to the island and help her look for her. She gives Boku the name of the island, which is never revealed to the reader. Boku has never been to the island. Yet, as in the Freudian notion of the uncanny as something that is both familiar and unfamiliar (Freud 1997), it is a place that sounds to him 'vaguely familiar' (Murakami 2002: 80). To get there, Boku must take a train to Tokyo's Narita airport, a flight to Athens that connects through Amsterdam, catch another plane to Rhodes and then a ferry to the island. Even before departure, however, there is a moment of radical disorientation in the form of an 'illogical dream – or uncertain wakefulness' in which '[t]he world had lost all sense of reality. Colors were unnatural, details crude. The background was papier-mâché, the stars made of aluminum foil. You could see the glue and the heads of the nails holding it all together' (Murakami 2002: 84).

The Boku who is summoned to *achiragawa* manifests symptoms that Weber associated with the process of disenchantment in a capitalist society. He is a man who, in his desire to know more about 'the objective reality of things outside' himself and how he maintains 'a sense of equilibrium by coming to terms with it' (Murakami 2002: 55), remains tormented by isolation and plagued by the inability to answer the question, 'who am I?' (Murakami 2002: 54).[16] He is a man who attempts to contain mystery within the rational universe of equations, as witnessed in his reaction to Miu's summons. After hanging up the phone he writes:

1. Something has happened to Sumire. But what happened, Miu doesn't know.
2. I have to get there as soon as possible. Sumire, too, Miu thinks, wants me to do that.

   I stared at the memo pad. And I underlined two phrases.

(Murakami 2002: 82)

Boku's encounter with the *achiragawa* holds the promise of shock and transformation thematized in the language of death and rebirth.

Once on the island, Boku's first genuine experience with *achiragawa* is mediated by the documents Sumire has tactfully hidden in anticipation of his arrival. By mimicking the reader's engagement with Murakami's fiction as another world in itself, the mode of Boku's textual encounter with this *achiragawa* serves as a doubling that both reveals and emphasizes the potential for the novel to operate

on a performative level as traumatic realism; Murakami's aim is to reproduce in the mind of the reader the transformation that Boku will undergo as a result of his experience. In other words, Murakami intends for Boku's encounter with *achiragawa* via Sumire to act in the capacity as a fictional 'other world' and potential catalyst for transformation of the reader.

Sumire's message to Boku contains two documents. The first document is written in a self-reflective diary form in which Sumire attempts to analyze her desire to write. Through a mode of metonymic progression she discovers that her 'basic rule of thumb in writing has always been to write about things as if I *didn't* know them – and this would include things that I did know or thought I knew about' (Murakami 2002: 133). This practice for producing literary description almost immediately evolves into an understanding that:

> inside of us what we know and what we don't know share the same abode. For convenience' sake most people erect a wall between them. It makes life easier. But I just swept that wall away. I had to. I hate walls. That's just the kind of person I am.
>
> (Murakami 2002: 135)

In describing the simultaneous harboring of 'what we know' and 'what we don't know', Sumire is pointing to nothing other than the logic of the fetish and corresponding mechanism of disavowal: the wall constructed out of 'convenience'. Without this wall, Sumire realizes, there is no way to avoid 'collision' (*shōtotsu*). While 'collision' carries the threat of a permanent destabilization of the psyche, in its promise of an engagement with the real, which is announced here in the realization that 'when someone is shot they bleed', it also harbors the potential for revelation. Sumire is tempted to defer, yet again, this promise of revelation by escaping into dreams. In dreams, according to Sumire, 'boundaries don't exist. So in dreams there are hardly ever collisions. Even if there are, they don't hurt. Reality is different. Reality bites' (Murakami 2002: 136). Dreams, however, are the territory of the unconscious and hence for Murakami the gateway to *achiragawa*, where confrontation ('collision') cannot be avoided. No sooner has Sumire determined that dreams promise a refuge from collision than she begins to recount a recurring dream by prefacing it with a metaphor announcing the impending derailment and collision: 'A single theme is repeated [in the dream] over and over, like a train blowing its whistle at the same blind curve night after night' (Murakami 2002: 138). Sumire's recurring dream involves a missed encounter with a mother who died when Sumire was 3 and whom she knows only through a few photos in an album her father showed her. In the dream, when Sumire is not able to recognize the woman as her mother from her memory of the pictures in the album, she 'feels a wall of sorts melt away inside her' (Murakami 2002: 139) and concludes that her father tricked her. Her mother tries to speak to her but Sumire is unable to hear her words. When she awakes she is also unable to remember her

mother's face from the dream. Sumire's dream ultimately points to a history of repressed animosity toward her father as the obstacle inhibiting a proper memory of her mother. He is the cause of her inability to mourn and the root of Sumire's alienation. Having faced this first encounter, Sumire's confidence is strengthened and she determines 'I want to make love to Miu, and be held by her.' With that she declares that '[b]lood must be shed. I'll sharpen my knife, ready to slit a dog's throat somewhere' (Murakami 2002: 141).

Despite the expectation that the second document will recount what happens when Sumire acts upon this resolve, the document tells the story rather of Miu's experience fourteen years earlier, as narrated by Sumire-cum-storyteller. As the climax of the novel, the story of Miu's experience clinches the theme Murakami has been building concerning the confrontation with the real as the condition of possibility for the emergence of the new story. Miu's story demonstrates unequivocally that the encounter with *achiragawa* inaugurates a shock in which the mechanism of repression is disabled and anamnesis is actualized. Murakami makes it clear that to grasp this moment is to re-emerge from the encounter with the new story, or in Miu's case the potential to become a great pianist. To defer the encounter again is to re-immerse oneself into empty signification and isolation, which is demonstrated in Miu's quitting piano for a profession in trade and commerce and her estrangement from all intimate relations.

In Sumire's narration, Miu (unintentionally?) frames her story of the encounter with *achiragawa* between the narrations of two experiences of racial/national discrimination: the first in Europe and the second in Japan as a Korean-Japanese. In the first instance Miu describes a sudden awareness of a 'prejudice against her as an Asian' (Murakami 2002: 146) while spending a summer in a small Swiss town when she was 25 and attending music school in Paris. In this town, Miu makes the acquaintance of a 'handsome fiftyish Latin type' man named Ferdinando, whom Miu meets once for coffee but then attempts to avoid after feeling suspicious about his motives toward her (Murakami 2002: 145). The uncanny, however, is already in motion, and just as Freud, outside his native Germany, wanders the streets of a provincial town in Italy only to find himself returning again and again to the same sexually charged street with 'painted women' lurking in the shadows (Freud 1997: 213), Miu – doubly displaced from her 'native land' as a Korean-Japanese – finds herself (accidentally) running across Ferdinando 'often enough to make her feel he was following her' (Murakami 2002: 146). She begins to feel 'irritated and uneasy' and views 'Ferdinando as a threat to her peaceful life' (Murakami 2002: 146). Moreover, the mechanism that will take her to *achiragawa* has begun to summon her through phone calls in the middle of the night that go dead the moment she answers – which she mistakes for Ferdinando. Since 'the phone was an old model' that 'she couldn't just unplug' (Murakami 2002: 147) she has no choice but to go along for the ride pretending not to hear the 'train blowing its whistle at the same blind curve night after night' until the jolt of the accident will throw her into a direct confrontation with the real and her state of disavowal.

The jolt occurs when nostalgia for her father draws her toward a Ferris wheel at a local amusement park one evening. It is near closing time but she manages to buy a ticket for the last spin of the wheel with the hope that from the top of the wheel she will be able to view her own apartment across town through a small pair of binoculars she carries in her bag. Unfortunately, she has time only to locate her apartment window before the wheel finishes its spin. But the logic of repetition and desire that drives the uncanny never really kicks in until the second time around and thus Miu finds herself unexpectedly locked in the gondola starting a second spin. This time around, despite feeling an illogical sense of guilt over her voyeuristic intent, she is able to peer into her own apartment as the wheel rounds the top and she wishes that she could place a call to the phone in her room or read the letter she left on the table (Murakami 2002: 150). Just as it is a 'more unusually violent jolt of the train' that precedes the uncanny appearance of Freud's double,[17] Miu's encounter with her *doppelgänger* occurs as the Ferris wheel comes to a sudden halt and she is 'thrown against the side of the car, banging her shoulder and nearly dropping the binoculars on the floor' (Murakami 2002: 150). She has been abandoned for the night locked inside the now motionless wheel and when she peers through her binoculars into her apartment again she confronts her darkest fears and desires in the form of her double engaging in tempestuous sex with the hairy, animal-like Ferdinando (Murakami 2002: 154). Miu is both horrified and captivated by the sight, nauseated and yet unable to 'drag her gaze away' (Murakami 2002: 155). She feels outraged by the sense that what she is watching is being performed especially for her and that she is unable to control this 'meaningless and obscene' violation of her body that will leave her 'polluted' (Murakami 2002: 156). At last, the man who is ravaging her double is not 'even Ferdinando anymore' but a face that she will be unable to recall after she eventually loses consciousness. She is found the next morning by the amusement park employees and when she awakes in the hospital her hair has turned pure white, visually inscribing both the memory of the event and the radical transformation of her body and mind:

> I was still on *this* side, here. But *another* me, maybe half of me, had gone over to the *other* side. Taking with it my black hair, my sexual desire, my periods, my ovulation, perhaps even the will to live. . . . I was split in two forever.
>
> (Murakami 2002: 157)

Miu is forever plagued by the question of which is her authentic self. 'Is the real me the one who held Ferdinando? Or the one who detested him?' (Murakami 2002: 157).

Miu's uncanny encounter carried the potential for securing her link with *achiragawa*, which Boku situated earlier as the essential element for the real story. Instead, she withdraws, confessing that she does not have the confidence to face the experience (Murakami 2002: 157), while attempting to dismiss it as a figment of her imagination: 'What happened in Switzerland fourteen years ago may well

have been something I created myself' (Murakami 2002: 160). Without that link, something is missing from her (Murakami 2002: 158) and her piano playing fails to move an audience. Moreover, she finds herself unable to compete even with pianists of less refined technique.

Miu closes her story by attributing the strength she had to continue life after the event to her parent's insistence that she recognize that she must always live as a foreigner in Japan despite her perfect identification with the culture. This very strength, which is nothing less than the strength to construct a wall for sake of convenience between 'what you know and what you don't know', is thus the same force driving the mechanism of repression behind the illusory framework of the everyday.

Following the vicarious exposure to *achiragawa* via Sumire's documents, Boku experiences the realm for himself when he is awakened late at night by 'far-off music, barely audible' (Murakami 2002: 168). The music lures him out of bed into a bright moonlit night toward a hilltop in the woods. Sensing danger, Boku feels that he should 'keep his distance' and at the same time he feels that he has to go forward: 'I felt like I was in a dream. The principle that made other choices possible was missing' (Murakami 2002: 169). At once, Boku feels himself separated from his body and the moment before the final transition to the *achiragawa* he declares that 'the spark of life had vanished. My real life had fallen asleep somewhere, and a faceless someone was stuffing it in a suitcase, about to leave' (Murakami 2002: 170). What he mistakenly refers to here as his 'real life' is in fact the life that was subdued in habituation, the life that had 'fallen asleep'. Once the transition is complete, we are in the space of the hyper-real where the process of abstraction in signification ceases and words are imbued with the power to invoke an immediate physical consequence; it is an experience of virtual reality encountered through print where, similar to those computer-generated realities of science fiction, the 'mind makes it real'.[18] Feeling overwhelmed, Boku takes a breath and literally sinks in the 'sea of consciousness to the very bottom' (Murakami 2002: 170):

> Pushing aside the heavy water I plunged down quickly and grabbed a huge rock there with both arms. The water crushed my eardrums. I squeezed my eyes tightly closed, held my breath, resisting. Once I made up my mind, it wasn't that difficult. I grew used to it all – the pressure, the lack of air, the freezing darkness, the signals the chaos emitted.
>
> (Murakami 2002: 170)

When Boku resurfaces the music is gone and the transformation that will result from this encounter with the *achiragawa* has begun. He returns to his bed and, unable to sleep, realizes that the real Boku is dying somewhere while starving kittens are consuming his brain (Murakami 2002: 172).

The night before Boku returns to Japan he realizes that the process of transformation and rebirth is nearly complete: 'When dawn comes, the person I am won't be here anymore. Someone else will occupy this body' (Murakami 2002:

179). Immediately following this declaration, Boku is suddenly able to articulate the heretofore ineffable sensation of loneliness that has plagued his life. But the real marker of a transformation having occurred appears when he is back in Japan and is able to reach out and build rapport with a troubled grade school student from the class he teaches. The student, whom Boku calls 'Carrot' after the nickname given to him by his classmates, also happens to be the son of a woman with whom Boku is having an affair. Carrot is no doubt aware of and troubled on an intuitive level by his mother's infidelity, and yet he is unable to either articulate or understand his feelings. Instead, he becomes an obsessive shoplifter and, when he is caught for the third time, Boku and the mother are summoned to the store's security office for a conference. The serial nature of the items Carrot steals from the same store despite being caught each time – eight identical staplers in the third instance, fifteen mechanical pencils in the second and eight compasses in the first – is at once a parody of the serial nature of the institutional pedagogic apparatus producing endless ranks of salarymen and the culture of late-capitalism in which the commodity fetish is intentionally cultivated in children. Concurrently, the profound sense of alienation and confusion that drives Carrot to reject, by stealing, the proper relations of exchange fundamental to this culture, prefigures his potential future as the serial killer – the next *Shonen A* – the next kid to throw a bomb into a crowded video store or the next Asahara Shoko.[19] Boku saves Carrot not through reproach or re-establishing the institutional moral pedagogy, but by opening his heart to him and sharing with him the story of his unsuccessful search for a lost friend on the Greek island. He tells Carrot also of the estrangement he always felt from his family, of the dog he loved when he was a child that was killed in an accident and of his years of social alienation during university. In a final moment of empathy Boku tells Carrot: 'being alone is like the feeling you get when you stand at the mouth of a large river on a rainy evening and watch the water flow into the sea' (Murakami 2002: 195).

While the final pages of *Sputnik Sweetheart* leave the matter of Sumire's return from *achiragawa* an open question, the scene between Boku and Carrot renders the question essentially unimportant.[20] The significance of the novel lies in what this poignant moment of bonding between Boku and the child suggests – which is something that has remained entirely ambiguous in Murakami's previous novels. What emerges here is finally the suggestion of a resolution of the crisis in language, the rebirth of the storyteller and story, and the subsequent condition of possibility for authentic communication and understanding between individuals. This is the culmination of a long process of maturation and self-exploration over the course of Murakami's work, of the first-person narrator, 'Boku', who made his debut in Murakami's first book, *Hear the Wind Sing* (1979). by announcing a commitment to the art of story telling:

> All sorts of people have come my way telling their tales, trudged over me as if I were a bridge, then never come back. All the while I kept my mouth tight

shut and refused to tell my own tales. That's how I came to the final year of my twenties.

Now I am ready to tell.

(Murakami, in Rubin 2002: 42)

Even from that initial moment, the process of telling one's story was more than simple fiction. It was a gesture toward recovery from the malaise of modernity through a practice of the Freudian talking cure. Only for Murakami, the therapy is exercised via the most basic technology of recording, namely, print. In the sentence that follows his declaration of intent to begin writing in *Hear the Wind Sing*, Boku states: 'When you get right down to it, writing is not a method of self-therapy. It's just the slightest attempt to a move in the direction of self-therapy' (Murakami 2002: 42). In structuring an encounter with *achiragawa* as a bridge to the unconscious, the print medium imitates those other media (telephone, phonograph, film). These technological apparatuses appear incessantly in Murakami's work as narrative devices that, by linking the characters to another world, manifest a function they have been perceived to perform since their emergence. That is to say, they connect the here and now with those imagined spaces of the occult and the deeper recesses of the mind.

Conclusion

I began with a discussion of instances in which individuals, driven by a desire to recover a vanishing real and break out of what they perceived as the overwhelming artifice of the social façade, attempted to disassemble actual or institutional bodies. In either case, these misguided attempts to reveal a material form of something that can exist only in abstraction led to the shedding of blood and death of innocent people without making perhaps even a dent in the social façade. While such events may have failed to reveal the illusive *real*, for Murakami, the shocking nature of the violence and subsequent failure of language to represent adequately its emotional impact was indicative of the complicity of modern technologies of mediation in the production of a dissociated state in individuals and a prevailing sense of social alienation. In this respect, it seems ironic, then, that Murakami's attempt to find 'words that work in a new direction and an absolutely new story that will be told in those words (another story in order to purify the story)' insists on a primary interface with technology before a secondary unmediated experience in the hyper-real. Although the narrative of *Sputnik Sweetheart* concludes with the possibility of the new language and story, the reader is ultimately left to wonder whether the novel (or, in that case, any novel today) is capable of the promise Murakami assigns to it.

In designating the phrase 'blood must be shed' as a metaphor for shock and an engagement with the real that occurs entirely within the doubly abstracted realm of signification – the hyper-real literary construct – Murakami gestures to

the un-representable and intangible nature of the real. Also, by situating shock as the crucial moment in which something approaching a movement toward a Real is sensed, Murakami implicates the role of the unconscious in creating both the sense of a loss of the real and a desire for its recovery. The unconscious is ultimately burdened with the responsibility of producing a stable relationship between the individual and his or her surroundings by concealing that which the individual is unable to assimilate into the everyday without dire consequences for the stability of the psyche. In other words, it is the central mechanism behind the process of habitualization. For Murakami, recovering something of the real does not involve ripping apart bodies but rather a foraging through the unconscious via a ripping apart of language and the subsequent de-familiarization of one's self and surroundings that this involves. It is also more about remembering what language prevented one from remembering than it is about assimilating new knowledge from an external experience. Thus, while the technological accident remains the metaphor in Murakami's work for the experience of a radical de-familiarization that occurs through shock, the idea of an encounter with the real is realizable through those technologies that are seen to access the unconscious by working through and beyond language. The primary medium in this case, for Murakami, is the technology of mass printing that has made his novels available in Japan in pocket-size segments called *bunkō bon*, the main consumers of which are the masses of workers whose long commute by train each day provides ample time for reading. In this inversed schema, even the book on the train no longer offers the sense of safety it once did.

Finally, it can be suggested that shock, in Murakami's work, establishes the potential for the emergence of a new subject in the anticipation that what is not known is not something that was not encountered and recorded into memory, but rather something that is there but simply cannot be accessed. Such a schema however, produces incongruent notions of the nature of the subject who is in command of such knowledge. On one hand, this relation between memory and the subject assumes the *a priori* existence of an autonomous individual/subject who is able to re-establish subjecthood by reclaiming memory. On the other hand, the automaticity of the recording function that is memory here suggests a recording apparatus that resembles the operation of an electric recording medium absorbing all data. In this case, the subject emerges not by reclaiming memory but by reorganizing and censoring memory.

Columbia University

Notes

1. See also *Shinseiki no Riaru* (Miyadai *et al.* 1997) for a discussion of the impotent condition of language in contemporary (post-bubble) Japan.
2. Takushoku Mitsuhiko uses the term 'inner-medium' to describe those spaces in Murakami's works from which the character moves into the 'other world' (see Takushoku 1999a:

22–3). He also draws a correlation between Murakami's use of a well, called *ido* in Japanese, as an inner-medium and the Freudian notion of the Id (see Takushoku 1999b: 125–6).

3. Friedich Kittler argues that the invention of media technologies capable of storing image and sound and Freud's discovery of the structured unconscious must be seen as concurrent and integrally related phenomena. The ability to store image and sound in a space outside the immediate access of the human mind as well as the potential for this technology to make visible or audible things that were not apparent via an unmediated interface with reality no doubt propelled the imagining of another space in the human mind, circumscribed from the working memory, in which excess image and sound data were stored. On the question of the connection between electronic media, the unconscious and imagined 'other worlds', see Kittler (1990, 1999).

4. Of course, since an encounter with the Lacanian Real can end only in insanity or annihilation, this is a condition to which Murakami only gestures throughout his works. Perhaps a good example of what the symptoms of such an encounter might look like can be found in the film *Ringu* (1998), where even a glimpse into the eye of the Real results in a terminal catatonic state; another example can be found in the Edogawa Rampo short story, 'The Hell of Mirrors', in which the protagonist is driven to insanity after locking himself into a giant ball lined with a seamless mirror (Edogawa 1956).

5. Kittler explains that the potential to store sound and image in the new technologies of phonograph and film allowed these devices to appropriate all of the fantastic or the imaginary that had theretofore been the exclusive property of literature (1999: 154).

6. While it is tempting to qualify this imagined new subject as Japanese, to do so would be to disregard what I strongly believe is Murakami's attempt to address a condition of late capitalist modernity rather than a specifically national cultural issue.

7. The Japanese is '*monogatari wo jyōka suru tame no betsu no monogatari*'.

8. It should be noted here that, although Benjamin does not unequivocally conflate the end of storytelling with the advent of the modern, he does state that the end of storytelling is a process that has become apparent since the First World War (Benjamin 1968: 84).

9. This applies to both the Freudian and Marxian notion of fetish.

10. I am in debt to John Pemberton for these insights.

11. Although Murakami does name his character in one sentence of the novel as 'K-', I chose to refer to him as 'Boku' in order to maintain the tentative connection with the first-person narrator in Murakami's other novels. Furthermore, the one instant in which Boku is properly named is due to the structure of the sentence that precludes the possibility of using the first person.

12. Except where noted otherwise I am relying on Philip Gabriel's excellent translation of *Sputnik Sweetheart* for citations from the work.

13. This is my translation of '*hito ga utaretara, chi wa nagareru mono da*' (Murakami 2001: 197). Gabriel, however, translates it as 'Did you ever see anyone shot by a gun without bleeding?'

14. It is worth mentioning that sense of a 'real' evoked here bears similarities with the notion of a *riaru* (real) that emerges in the dialogue between Miyadai Shinji, Fujii Yoshiki and Nakamori Akio in *Shinseiki no Riaru* (Miyadai *et al.* 1997). The 'real' for these three is a condition devoid of the illusions (such as the value of the family and education) to which an adherence defers awareness of the constructed nature of values and social cohesion. Such illusions operate in a manner similar to the 'fictions' to which Boku refers. They shield one from the 'harsh realities' in life.

15. Kittler writes that Freud's description of the psychiatric practice in terms of 'telephony' manifests the perception that the 'unconscious coincides with electric oscillations' (Kittler 1999: 89).

16. Weber declares in his thesis on disenchantment that science and its corresponding process of rationalization and intellectualization still 'gives no answer to our question, the only question that is important for us: What shall we do and how shall we live?' (1946).
17. In a footnote in his paper 'The Uncanny', Freud relates that 'a more than usually violent jolt of the train' caused the door of his compartment to swing back and his own reflection in the glass of the door to appear before him, which his initially mistook for another person (Freud 1997: 225, fn. 1).
18. I borrow this expression from the quintessential portrayal of such a space in the film *The Matrix* (1999).
19. Asahara Shoko is the founder and leader of the *Aum Shinrikyō* cult who is currently serving a jail sentence.
20. A number of critics insist on reading the phone call from Sumire in the last page of the novel as her return from the other side; see, for example, Takushoku (1999a). However, Murakami offers no substantial support of this reading or any other and instead leaves the matter entirely ambiguous.

References

Benjamin, W. (1968) *Illuminations*, New York: Harcourt Brace & World.

Bukatman, S. (1993) *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Edogawa, R. (1956) *Japanese Tales of Mystery & Imagination*, trans. J.B. Harris, Singapore: Tuttle.

Foster, H. (1996) 'Death in America', *October* 75: 37–59.

Freud, S. (1997) *Writings on Art and Literature*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 192–233.

Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T. W. (1988) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York: Continuum.

Hubert, H. and Mauss, M. (1964) *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Iida, Y. (2002) *Rethinking Identity in Modern Japan: Nationalism as Aesthetics*, London: Routledge.

Kittler, F.A. (1990) *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

—— (1999) *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lacan, J. (1977) *Ecrits: A Selection*, New York: Norton.

Miyadai, S., Fujii, Y. and Nakamori, A. (1997) *Shinseiki no riaru*, Tokyo: Asuka Shinsha.

Murakami, H. (1999) *Andaaguraundo*, Tokyo: Kodansha bunko.

—— (2001) *Supuutoniku no koibito*, Tokyo: Kodansha bunko.

—— (2002) *Sputnik Sweetheart*, trans. P. Gabriel, New York: Vintage International.

Rubin, J. (2002) *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, London: Harvill.

Schivelbusch, W. (1986) *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Takushoku, M. (1999a) in H. Murakami, Y. Kuritsubo, and T. Tsuge (eds) *Murakami Haruki sutadizu*, Vol. 5, Tokyo: Wakakusa Shobo.

—— (1999b) in H. Murakami, Y. Kuritsubo, and T. Tsuge (eds) *Murakami Haruki sutadizu*, Vol. 5, Tokyo: Wakakusa Shobo, pp. 124–32.

Weber, M. (1946) *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H.H.G. Mills and C.W. Mills, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yoshikawa, Y. (1999) in H. Murakami, Y. Kuritsubo and T. Tsuge (eds) *Murakami Haruki sutadizu*, Vol. 5, Tokyo: Wakakusa Shobo, pp. 38–60.

—— (2000) 'Supuutoniko no koibitu- ⟨kikan⟩ to ⟨senrei⟩ monogatari janku-ka ni koushite', *Yuriika*, 32(4): 204–9.

Michael Fisch is a PhD candidate in anthropology at Columbia University. His dissertation inquires into the contemporary experience of time in urban Tokyo by looking at the shifting nature of temporal spaces constituted around the city's train network. His previous publications include 'The rise of the chapel wedding in Japan: simulation and performance' in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (28(1–2), 2001, pp. 57–76), 'Nation, war, and Japan's future in the science fiction *anime* film *Patlabor II*' in *Science Fiction Studies* (27, Pt 1, pp. 459–68) and 'Resistance in the IDF and the emergence of the gay community: an instance of social transformation in Israel' in *Israel Studies Forum*, forthcoming.