Laurenţiu Malomfălean

Science Fiction, Fantasy and Oneiro-Fantastic in Haruki Murakami's Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World

ABSTRACT

After a brief clarification regarding the hyper-structuralist triad of strange – fabulous/ marvelous – fantastic and its avatars upon the category of oneiric, this paper focuses on the most accomplished dream novel written by Haruki Murakami. A book where dreams are not seen, but read. Each of the three sections of my study will analyse the rapport between the two spaces from the (title of the) volume, pointing various connections with a certain science fiction literature. In the last lines, I had to believe the so-called oneiro-fantastic undergoes a regression: the suggestion of a post-mortem space brings the implicit reader on the edge of mythical fantasy.

KEYWORDS

Haruki Murakami; Dream; Hyperindividual; Fantasy; Oneirism; SF; Unconscious.

LAURENŢIU MALOMFĂLEAN
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
laurentiu.malomfalean@ubbcluj.ro

The Japanese novelist analysed here belongs to a generation which saw itself (pre)matured by the culmination of a countercultural student movement called Zenkyōtō, being at the same time witness to its rapid collapse. There is no doubt in what concerns Haruki Murakami's affiliation to the hypermodern[1] times, post-1968 – an year defined by himself as "a kind of a turning point"[2]. Completely aware that modernity has become a simple convention, the novelist can resume it:

> with Murakami, whose highly exportable brand of realism wavers between sur- and hyper-, the maps that matter are mental, not geographic [...].[3]

> his fascination with the tenuous borders that move in and out of focus between the real and the unreal, the surreal, or even the hyperreal[4], continues to be evident, often manifested through the superimposition of the dream world on the waking world [...].[5]

We thus arrive at the field of oneiric imaginary. Some delimitations are now required. If contemporary science fiction seems to engender the category of a strange oneiric (vaguely remembering a positivist modernism) and, moreover, if nowaday

146 fantasy re(ap)praises the fabulous oniric (reminiscent both of romanticism and of a high modernism), the hypermodern type of oneiric built by Murakami goes further. His protagonists act like in a (pre)lucid dream, the paradoxical phenomenon when the dreamer is aware that he is dreaming. We should call this intra-oneirical meta-lucidity. Even if recognised as such by means of an incongruity, lucid dreams are the best mimics of reality. So this oneiric encompasses – but rather surpasses – both science fiction and fantasy, belonging to the larger aesthetic category of fantastic, as defined by Tzvetan Todorov:

> The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty [truth/ illusion]. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.
> The concept of the fantastic is therefore to be defined in relation to those of the real and the imaginary [...].[6]

When lucid dreaming occurs, the two realities – the oneiric and the "real" – are confounded: we enter in a hyper-reality, not an inter-zone, but already the included middle. Thereby, this is another field of undecidable: indistinction, dissuasion between reality's levels or plans: the fantastic oneiric – or vice versa, the oneirical fantastic. Let it be oneiro-fantastic.

Do androids dream of eclectic unicorns?

Published in 1985, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*[7] is a hypermodernist novel because it can fully shed light on the concept of hyperreal theorised by Jean Baudrillard, the hypertext according to Gérard Genette, but in the first place the notion of a hyperindividual, which must be defined via the books of Gilles Lipovetsky. In addition to the remarks already made, a sort of lucid oneiric hyperrealism interferes in the work of the nipone writer with his macrofictions from the first half of the '80s – that is just when the volume *Simulacres et simulation* (1981) was in debate:

> No longer merely passive victims, the main characters in Murakami's major novels during this period – which include [*A Wild*] *Sheep Chase*[8] and its sequel, *Dance Dance Dance*[9], and (perhaps his masterpiece to date) *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* – were now presented as [...] seeking not merely romantic and nostalgic connections to the past but also a more active means of making sense of their lives and *the bewildering plurality of hyperrealities* around them. No longer content, as he had been in *Pinball 1973*[10] and *Norwegian Wood*[11], to tell a story about the conflict between self and environment in terms of daily, surface reality, Murakami devised a kind of "simulation approach" in which the conflicts existing within his protagonists' [...] consciousnesses were simulated and then projected into the surreal [?], labyrinthine regions of dream and personalized [?], Jungian unconsciousness [?]. Fully aware of the confusing, often banalizing impact that *hyperconsumerism* was having on Japan, these novels are all cautionary parables about

the dangers of life under late capitalism [...].[12] [emphasis mine]

Secondly, the novel is by far a hypertext, by openly pastishing literary genres like cyberpunk, fantasy, hard-boiled detective fiction˙ horror, mystery and S.F..[13] In what the second class mentioned is concerned, its remastering by Murakami has received various analysis:

> Much of *The Hard-Boiled Wonderland and The End of the World* is a playful parody/ pastiche of episodes in *The Lord of the Rings* (and the neo-Jungian mythopoetic criticism that has gathered around it) with allusions to *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Alice in Wonderland* as well. [...] Taken together, all the allusions to British fantasy fiction suggest that both the outside and interior worlds are fantasies; there is no "real" world in the sense that there is an objective truth apart from the perceiving mind and its needs. The main differences are that in the fantasy of Wonderland, everything seems to be outside individual human control, and within the fantasy of interior life, everything seems to be under individual control.[14]

I won't pass to the inventory and/ or comparison of the hypertextualised elements, because this is not the purpose of the present paper. In this case, we have a rewriting process, from a rather shallow fantasy towards the pure fantastic, whereas the worlds in the book are both ambiguous, therefore they catch themselves mutually, even viciously, one being the corollary and the cause of the other. Likewise, the manifest control upon the inner life brings us close to a lucid dream. There is absolutely no science fiction in this, but, still, we should recall here two SF authors, possibly

parodied by Murakami: Philip K. Dick, with *Do androids dream of electric sheep?* (1968), screened by Ridley Scott in his *Blade Runner* (1982), where we have the famous unicorn dream sequence – as if the director would be responding to the question-title of the book, and Ursula K. Le Guin, with *The word for world is forest* (1976), where, on a colonized planet, lucid dreaming is almost a religion for the natives. Finally, the hyperindividualism is obvious in the fact that two toposes – actually *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* – have each as protagonist a first-person singular pronoun, which connotes precisely this narcissistically and typically hypermodern divided personality:

> The frequency of [t]his use of the first-person pronoun "I" rivals that of its use in English, despite the fact that the Japanese language does not require the naming of subjects where context makes them clear.[15]

> Murakami splits his narrator-hero into *Boku* and *Watashi*, assigning the formal *Watashi*-"I" to the more realistic world of a vaguely futuristic Tokyo, and the informal *Boku*-"I" to the inner, fantastic world of "The Town and Its Uncertain Walls"[16].[17] [emphasis mine]

In other words, Boku inhabits the End of the World, similar to a medieval town surrounded by an ubiquitous Wall. The character will draw an escaping map[18], that looks "like a human brain, with a river bisecting the two hemispheres and the wall around the town and its environs representing a skull."[19] As if the Town were to be literally located only in the head – or, maybe, unconscious, or, most certainly, dreams – of the character from beyond: the diurnal ego, *Watashi*.

From an augmented perspective, the place reveals a West Gate ready to be opened only on its right side, while the symmetrical East Gate has been locked up for good by the Gatekeeper. Every evening, he drives the unicorns outside the Town, in order for them to sleep, returning the next morning. One might ask: do we meet again the mythological horn/ ivory gates, those valves built for true/ false dreams, able to come out from an infernal Town, guarded by a tamed Caron-Cerberus, which separates the shadow – representing the memory – of the permanent first – and always the same – income. Things begin to thrill *Boku*:

> At first, the End of the World seems like Utopia. The factories are deserted. Unicorns roam the streets. No one has to work very hard. [...] There is no violence. It seems like a magical, timeless place. But as the narrator comes to live there, he realizes it is a soulless limbo.[20]

Haruki Murakami writes about control. For the citizens of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, force means controling data[21]; from beyond, "the Gatekeeper [...] may [...] be seen as the subconscious manifestation of the System/ State and its various control mechanisms"[22]. We shall soon see, this guardian could be the mental-oniric image of the Professor who implanted some circuits in the brain of the codenamed *Watashi* Calcutec.

Nevertheless, the spaces involved are communicating in a fantastic manner. Not uncanny, not marvelous! The whirlpool in the middle of that South Lake from where only the *Boku*'s shadow escapes in the end seems to be connected to the pits near the sanctuary of the INKlings, unseen but terrifying creatures populating the Japanese capital's underground, I mean Hard-Boiled

Wonderland's one. This area kept in darkness may configure the point where the worlds in the book – a rationalist bleak dystopia counterbalancing a private/ oneiric mental compensation – are linked, meeting each other on a porous, unstable boundary. Otherwise, we couldn't explain why does Murakami fall back to these quasi-mythical beings in a futuristic zone, having nothing to do with a fantasy borrowed from/ by Tolkien himself. The so-called INKlings do have some awfully strange gods: two fish with fangs – presented as real fact, in the permanent wake of *Watashi*! But we soon feel the dream logic, when "objects introduced in the first section of the novel surface in cryptic, mutated form in the second; creatures that exist as physical facts in the second story are discussed as academic abstractions in the first."[23] This brings us close to the creatures that actually interest us. At the End of the World, unicorns have become overnight – and remained after death – fallacious depositories of dreams.

Oneirolibrarian *vs.* Dreamreader

The old scientist already mentioned first appears to be a harmless biologist, concerned only with mammalian palatal system, by collecting animal skulls and storing them on shelves in a Tokyo subterranean laboratory. This repository from *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* has been put together with a belief in "the hidden language of bones", decodable and controlable even. The supposed method is not at all innocent. Murakami can imagine for the future, when a certain technology would be up-to-date, how to "draw out the memories stored in bones". Since dreams are coded memories, the analogy with a lacanian oneiric language arrives by itself. Controling this activates a form of lucidity from behalf of the dreamer, if not – as we later shall see – from the part

of the one who is creating for/ to him the very dream!

Soon, the Calcutec *Watashi* receives a hat-box where he finds an extremely easy skull, that proves to be of a unicorn, then only a trivial artifact. Besides this, the character discovers "a pair of stainless-steel fire tongs exactly like the ones the old man had used on his skull collection. I was reminded of the *ivory* [emphasis mine] baton of a Berlin Philharmonic conductor." Most probably Herbert von Karajan, eventually (with) a splinter from the gate of deceiving dreams! Knocking the skull, *Watashi* realizes the sound comes right from a rough "shallow depression of about two centimeters in diameter in the center of the forehead." Something is missing: the only horn. Subsequently, going perplexed to the municipal library, the Calcutec gets hold of the borgesian *Book of Imaginary Beings* – published in 1957 as *Manual de zoología fantástica*. Turning over it in our turn, we find out that, for instance, by contrast with a more ambiguous Greek specimen, the Chinese unicorn (*K'i-lin*) is an 100% benefic and auspicious animal.[24] In the novel of Haruki Murakami this time, by an extremely efficient correspondence, the laboratory and the library, both from Hard-Boiled Wonderland, are condensed as in a freudian dream in order to become at World's End oneirolibrary. The volumes on the shelves are becoming there unicorn skulls depositing dreams. The texts are going to be read as mere sensations, emotions, palpitations.

Thereby, *Boku* reads old dreams. His name in the surrounded Town will be the Dreamreader. From six to ten or eleven in the evening, he will fulfill his task on a regular basis – but only after he will have acquired the necessary semi-oedipal condition: the Gatekeeper sticks a flamed knife in his eyes; he can no longer see (to) the light of day, as if his diurnal ego[25] would sleep permanently. Only afterwards are we allowed access to/ in the building that houses the so-inappropriately-called library:

> The heavy wooden door makes a scraping noise as I push it open. I find a long straight hallway before me. The air is dusty and stale, an atmosphere the years have forsaken. The floorboards are worn where once tread upon, the plaster walls yellowed to the color of the light bulbs.
> There are doors on either side of the hallway, each doorknob with a layer of white dust. The only unlocked door is at the end, a delicate frosted glass panel behind which shines lamplight.

In the generative story *The Town and Its Uncertain Walls*, the description goes further:

> On the third day after my arrival in the Town, I push [/] open the door of the Library. [...] a few yellow light bulbs hang from the high ceiling. [...] The light [...] is so dim that even my body is fuzzy, as though it will be sucked into some other place. Worn down cedar floorboards, plaster walls that seemed to have discolored to match the light of the light bulbs; the hallway continues forever, turning several times as it goes. The building must be deeper than it is wide. I feel like I'm descending into the earth.[26]

Still there, in the same arhitext, the protagonist recognises the librarian once he enters the heated room and, also unlike the final version from the novel, he penetrates a phantasmatic dark underground, a hole compared to the bottom of a well: the headquarters of the archives![27]

Boku finds out that old dreams are enclosed in unicorn skulls – hyper-easy,

without consistence, a favorable opportunity for the writer to suggest the weightlessness and fragility of the dream. This Dreamreader may feel frustrated at first, practicing a thankless job, without purpose or meaning. The act of reading takes place following a Braille technique. Theoretically:

First, turn the skull to face you in this way, then gently place your hands on either side. [...] Now gaze at the forehead. Do not force a stare, but focus softly. You must not take your eyes from the skull. No matter how brilliant, you must not look away. [...]

Practically:

The threads of light are so fine that despite how I concentrate the energies in my fingertips, I am incapable of unravelling the chaos of vision. Even so, I clearly sense the presence of dreams at my fingertips. It is a busy current, an endless stream of images. My fingers are as yet unable to grasp any distinct message, but I do apprehend an intensity there.

Gradually, Boku ends up reading five or six dreams per evening, as if he were to dream the very dreams of others: the indicated numbers corresponds to the REM sleep phases of a usual night. In fact, the Dreamreader is redreaming lucidly, that's what he does! And if we're on the calculations, risking haphazardness, we could make an estimation: those two thousand dreams – how many the collection at the End of the World seems to contain – means about a year of reading and/ or dreaming. The oneirolibrarian, for now in the position of a new Ariadne, can reveal them to her subaltern:

She leads me into the stacks. It is a huge schoolroom with rows of shelves, each shelf stacked with white beast skulls. It is a graveyard. A chill air of the dead hovers silently.

The 18th chapter, entitled exactly "Dreamreading", brings new details concerning the dream-text analogy, upon which the whole novel was constructed. As a tireless reader, Boku seeks to grasp the message of those endless dreams, without knowing it is hidden right in himself:

I gently place both hands upon the skull and stare, waiting for a warm glow to emanate. When it reaches a certain temperature – like a patch of sun in winter – the white-polished skull offers up its old dreams. I strain my eyes and breathe deeply, using my fingertips to trace the intricate lines of the *tale* it commences to tell. The *voice* of the light remains ever so faint; *images* quiet as ancient constellations float across the dome of my dawning mind. They are indistinct fragments that never merge into a sensate *picture*. There would be a landscape I have not seen before, unfamiliar *melodic* echoes, whisperings in a chaos of tongues. [...] Between one fragment and the next there is nothing in common. [emphasis mine]

Here, the account – not only the action/ passion related – looks like remembering dreams at dawn. Their fantastic gratuity resembles nothing, but when it comes to exegetical texts, dreamreading is qualified in various ways – contradicted, contradictory and counterfeit:

The dreams […] are the memories of the oblivious inhabitants; and "reading" them is the process of releasing

their energy, insuring the peace of the memoryless citizens."[28]

dream-reading is in a larger sense a metaphor for interpreting signs in any form, or any language, but to read with neither interpretation, retention, nor even comprehension or purpose ultimately voids the unconscious of all thought and volition."[29]

[by] "reading" old dreams [...] at the Town library (the unconscious manifestation of his job as a "calcutec"), he [*Boku*] is forbidden to interpret them, even to think about them. His dream-reading is [...] a metaphor for reading the cultural signs of the [Lacanian?] Symbolic Order [...].[30]

In a final disclosure, *Boku* learns from his shadow that human souls are absorbed by the animals and transported beyond the Wall; unicorns are dying by the weight of the selves carried with them everywhere. Then,

the Gatekeeper cuts off their heads [..,] indelibly etched with self. These skulls are scraped and buried for a full year in the ground to leech away their energy, then taken to the Library stacks, where they sit until the Dreamreader's hands release the last glimmers of mind into the air. That's what 'old dreams' are. Dreamreading is a task for newcomers to the Town – people whose shadows have not yet died. The Dreamreader reads each spark of self into the air, where it diffuses and dissipates. You are a lightning rod; your task is to ground."

If every unicorn absorbes not exclusively or entirely a self, but parts from the selves of several people in the Town, which thus mix in a collective puzzle, for every single of those we can assert a dissipated "postmodern self"[31] – better called hypermodern. The protagonist tries to reconstitute the soul of the librarian from the dream-fragments he reads. After he remembers a nostalgic song, *Boku* sees a star-like, white warm light coming from the skulls, and, without any view pain, he feels pervaded by his own old memories. Ultimately, one could think the oneirolibrarian to be the image of the wife with whom the other, *Watashi*, had broken up in Hard-Boiled Wonderland – unless she died, we do not know exactly. *Boku* has from the very beginning a sensation of *déjà vu*. In dreams, we often rejoin a lost person. As in *What dreams may come*[32], in this novel we have two bright spectra, captives at the End of the – other – World. Murakami has rewritten Divine Comedy's latch, another cleaved character finding his unnamed Beatrice in Purgatory. *Watashi* is 35 years old, like a new Dante who started a quest not so much for God, as for what moves the sun and all stars.

The implanted unconscious

In the rough climate from the underground studded by INKlings, the Professor will provide an explanation – to us and also to his victim. Apparently, Haruki Murakami uses the tactics of a *policier*, by uncovering very late an experience we could fast include in the category of strange, if it were not only a science fiction experiment – even tough not as impossible as it seems: "End of the World" represents the mental content and also the password of a new designed unconscious, by assembling some phantasmmagoric devices (never enough presented) in the brain of one brilliant calcutec; we can textually consider "the 'End of the World' sections [to] represent the

152 neurophysiological conse-
quences of the bionic surgery
the Professor in 'Hard-Boiled
Wonderland' has already performed on
Watashi"[33].

If about herein writer's inventions were
made at least some questionable assump-
tions like "the subconscious is the natural
habitat of Murakami's characters"[34], it
would be useful to see what kind of un-
conscious this novel describes. I give the
floor to the old scientist:

> Each individual behaves on the basis of
> his individual mnemonic makeup. No
> two human beings are alike; it's a
> question of identity. And what is iden-
> tity? The cognitive system arisin' from
> the aggregate memories of that individ-
> ual's past experiences. The layman's
> word for this is the mind. Not two
> human beings have the same mind. At
> the same time, human beings have
> almost no grasp of their own cognitive
> systems. [...] All we know – or think
> we know – is but a fraction of the
> whole cake. A mere tip of the icing.

For now, nothing special. Then, still
referring to memory, the Professor becomes
original:

> That's your black box. In other words,
> we all carry around this great unex-
> plored "elephant graveyard" inside us.
> Outer space aside, this is truly human-
> ity's last *terra incognita.*

Suddenly, the murakamian character
will retract what he said above, by sending
us to a sort of Jungian active imagination:

> No, an 'elephant graveyard'[35] isn't ex-
> actly right. 'Tisn't a burial ground for
> collected dead memories. An "elephant
> factory" is more like it. There's where

you sort through countless memories
and bits of knowledge, arrange the
sorted chips into complex lines, com-
bine these lines into even more com-
plex bundles, and finally make up a
cognitive system. A veritable produc-
tion line, with you as the boss. Un-
fortunately, though, the factory floor is
off-limits. Like Alice in Wonderland,
you need a special drug't'shrink you
in.

The peroration of this slightly mad sci-
entist looks like a statement made by Mura-
kami himself (or vice versa), proving to
them both a certain dose of superficiality,
spottable because the novelist uses the
wrong term "*sub*conscious" – a vague, silly
positional word, somewhat similar with
"*post*modern" – instead of "*un*conscious"[36]:

> the subconscious is very important to
> me as a writer. I don't read much Jung,
> but what he writes has some similarity
> with my writing. To me the subcon-
> scious is *terra incognita* [s.m.]. I don't
> want to analyze it, but Jung and those
> people, psychiatrists, are always ana-
> lyzing dreams and the significance of
> everything. I don't want to do that. I
> just take it as a whole. Maybe that's
> kind of weird, but I'm feeling like I can
> do the right thing with that weirdness.
> Sometimes it's very dangerous to
> handle that.[37]

Similarly, *Boku* does not interpret
dreams, he only reads them; interesting
enough, the writer did not play till the end
of his game – the character might have bro-
ken some unicorn skulls! But this can be left
to the reader to carry on, by taking the text
to its last consequences. For, on the other
side, unveilings from the Professor, a tire-
less ex-member of the System, continue:

Nobody's got the keys't'the elephant factory inside us. Freud and Jung and all the rest of them published their theories, but all they did was't'invent a lot of jargon't'get people talkin'. Gave mental phenomena a little scholastic color.

As well was pointed, this "chromatic" effect precedes in fact a religion of hyper-individualism:

It would sound reductionist to put too much emphasis on the elephant's association with Buddhism and Shintoism, yet the author, by using an animal that has strong religious meaning to symbolize the human mind, does seem to suggests that the belief in one's selfhood is as important as traditional religion [...], if not taking its place altogether.[38]

In order to protect information from Semiotecs, the scientist has tried to control the unconsciouses of a group of Calcutecs, by first freezing their cognitive processes on a single sequence, and then, after an open brain surgery, managing even to implant in those heads a different mental circuit, with electrical devices for connection. Here is an unparaphrasable exchange of words between Watashi, the cyber-guinea pig, and the science fiction researcher:

"From what I've heard, our core consciousness, our black boxes, are stored in the System vault. How is that possible?"
"We did thorough tracings of your cognitive systems. Then we made $v\%$ simulations for storage in a main computer bank. We did it as a kind of insurance; you'd be stuck if anything happened't'you.»
"A total simulation?"

"No, not total, of course, but functionally quite close't' total, since the effective strippin' away of surface layers made tracin' that much easier. More exactly, each simulation was made up of three sets of planar coordinates and holographs. With previous computers that wasn't possible, but these new-generation computers incurporate a good many elephant factory-like functions in themselves, so they can handle complex mental constructs. You see, it's a question of fixed structural mappin'. [...] first, we input the electrical pattern given off by your conscious mind. This pattern varies slightly with each readin'. That's because your chips keep gettin' rearranged into different lines, and the lines into bundles. Some of these rearrangements are quantifiably meaningful; others not so much. The computer distinguishes among them, rejects the meaningless ones, and the rest get mapped as a basic pattern. This is repeated and repeated and repeated hundreds of thousands of unit-times. Like overlayin' plastic film cells. Then, after verifyin' that the composite won't stand out in greater relief, we keep that pattern as your black box."
"You're saying you reproduced our minds?"
"No, not at all. The mind's beyond reproducin'. All I did was fix your cognitive system on the phenomenological level. Even so, it has temporal limits – a time frame. We have't'throw up our hands when it comes to the brain's flexibility. But that's not all we did. We successfully rendered a computer visualization from your black box."

Further on, Haruki Murakami describes in detail this experiment seemingly detached

from the pages of a book belonging to the literature of anticipation. The scientist becomes an artist:

"We showed our subjects some object, analyzed the electromagnetic reactions in their brains, converted that into numerics, then plotted these as dots. Very primitive designs in the early stages, but over many [...] repetitions, revisin' and fillin' in details, *we could regenerate what the subjects had seen on a computer screen.* Not nearly so easy [...], but simply put, that's what we did. So that after goin' over and over these steps how many times, *the computer had its patterns down so well it could autosimulate images from the brain's electromagnetic activity.* [...] Next thing I did was't'read your black box into the computer preprogrammed with those patterns, and out came an amazin' graphic renderin' of what went on in your core consciousness. Naturally, the images were jumbled and fragmentary and didn't mean much in themselves. They needed editin'. Cuttin' and pastin', tossin' out some parts, resequencin', exactly like film editin'. *Rearrangin' everything into a story.*" [emphasis mine]

It would be surprising to learn that, following the very same steps, such a process has already been completed. In 2011, some real flesh researchers from the University of Berkeley brought together computational simulation (with its configurative models) with a hyper sophisticated imaging technique by magnetic resonance, managing to reconstitute how does the brain see those images, but, even more, intuiting that future technology could be used to view dreams on computer in real time – and, why not, record them![39]
In the novel, *Watashi* will effectively have introduced in himself (by the Professor), one third cognitive system. As for a *fin*

de siècle dandy, "in this case, the narrator will be living in this work of art for the rest of his life"[40], only that he will be there by force, compelled, another one acting as author. The "End of the World", "this constructed unconscious"[41], represents thus a psychological space digitally fabricated by the Professor (a former film editor), that is an ordered and counterfeit image of a psyche. By contrast, the other 25 Calcutecs involved in the experiment are all dying in sleep, dreaming their own dead end. Only announced, the half-protagonist's death in Hard-Boiled Wonderland may reach to a correspondance when the shadow of Boku is sinking in the lake's vortex from beyond, where the splited character will have remained for good alive. Because even tough the topos created was artificial for him too, *Watashi* had a predisposition/ vocation or natural psychic stability:

"you were operatin' under multiple cognitive systems't'begin with. Not even you knew you were dividin' your time between two identities. [...] You probably had your own junction box that gave you a kind of mental immunity. [...] Two or three months ago, I went back and replayed all twenty-six visualizations. And something struck me. Yours was the least random, most coherent. Well-plotted, even perfect. *It could have passed for a novel or a movie.* The other twenty-five were different. They were all confused, murky, ramblin', a mess. No matter how I tried't'edit them, they didn't pull together. *Strings of nonsequential dream images.*" [emphasis mine]

"It's as if you descended to the elephant factory floor beneath your consciousness and built an elephant with your own hands."
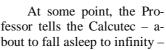
"You've got an innate grasp on your core consciousness."

However, the edited unconscious is none but a foreign body. After the destructtion of the underground laboratory by the Semiotecs who teamed with the INKlings, *Watashi*'s tertiary circuit can no longer be interrupted, by going to melt the connections and condemn the protagonist to a never ending existence-life-story at World's End – (from) where time and space are missing. On the border between two hostile worlds, the character holds as a coffin or boat of Charon his own car. Listening to Bob Dylan's *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*, *Watashi* stays for ever captive in the science-fictionally implanted unconscious.

There, the individual comprises everything, although he does not seem to know it, only in the last pages, by possessing a free – lucid dreamer – will. As if unexpectedly aware that he is dreaming, *Boku* finally realizes he created *for* himself the Town (of dreams), one in which everybody *is* himself – so that we can easily talk about a hyper-individual:

> The narrator has created everything and everyone in the End of the World, and the result is bleak, lonely, and confining. There is no Other, and so there is no threat. But there is also no possibility of connection with any entity outside the self. All the characters who seem like separate entities are part of the narrator. They cooperate without any conflict or emotion because they are all the same.[42]

Then, as a good creator, *Boku* decides not to leave his world: "I cannot forsake the people and places and things I have created." As Jay Rubin asserts, "only when he realizes that the town is his [...] self, does *Boku* sense his 'responsabilities' towards it"[43].

At some point, the Professor tells the Calcutec – about to fall asleep to infinity – he can recover all he lost in that world: a genuine compensatory microcosm! This questions the reading problem. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* can be read either as it was typed (alternatively, a chapter *here*, another *beyond*), giving the character some *en détail* compensations through dream correspondences, either by textual jumps (first all odd sections, then the rest), case in which the passages concerning the Wall & Gatekeeper/ Lake & Shadow/ Forest & Librarian depict a post-mortem space, a personal hereafter, a compensation marvelously occurred, *en gros*.

If the protagonist from Tokyo never seems to be dreaming (because he is not allowed to sleep by the characters who barge into his apartment), this can be only because of the experiment he has been subjected to: an implanted unconscious that became autonomous, divorced from reality. Conversely, "End of the world" is a continuous dream!

References

Murakami, Haruki, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, translated by Alfred Birnbaum, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1991 [1985].

Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacres et simulation*, Galilée, Paris, 1981.

Beale, Lewis, "The Cool, Cynical Voice of Young Japan: In Haruki Murakami's Fiction, There Are No Kimonos, No Bonsai Trees, Just a Disdain for Japanese Tradition and an Obsession With American Pop Culture", in *Los Angeles Times*, available at http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-08/magazine/tm-233_1_haruki-murakami, accesed December 16, 2012.

Caesar, Judith, "Murakami, the Inklings,

and the Uses of Fantasy", in *Critique. Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 52.1, 2010, pp. 41-54.

Genette, Gérard, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*, Seuil (Poétique, 33), Paris, 1982.

Frenţiu, Rodica, *Haruki Murakami. Jocul metaforic al lumilor alternative*, Argonaut (Literatura), Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

Murakami, Fuminobu, "Murakami Haruki's Postmodern World", in *Postmodern, feminist and postcolonial currents in contemporary Japanese culture. A reading of Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana, Yoshimoto Takaaki and Karatani Kōjin*, Asian Studies Association of Australia, Routledge (East Asia, 8), London and New York, [2005], pp. 20-55; originally published in *Japan Forum*, 14.1, 2002, pp. 127–41.

Gregory, Sinda, Miyawaki, Toshifumi & McCaffery, Larry, "It Don't Mean a Thing, If It Ain't Got That Swing: an Interview with Haruki Murakami", in *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 22.2, June 2002, pp. 111-27.

Haney II, William S., *Cyberculture, Cyborgs and Science Fiction. Consciousness and the Posthuman*, Rodopi (Consciousness. Literature & the Arts, 2), [Amsterdam – New York], [2006], p. 133.

Hantke, Steffen, "Postmodernism and Genre Fiction as Deferred Action: Haruki Murakami and the Noir Tradition", in *Critique. Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 49.1, 2007, pp. 3–24.

Hillman, James, *The Dream and the Underworld*, Harper Perennial, [New York], [1979].

Walter Kirn, "In the Wee Small Hours", in *The New York Times*, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/03/books/review/Kirn-t.html?_r=1, accesed December 18, 2012.

Lai, Amy Ty, "Memory, Hybridity, and Creative Alliance in Haruki Murakami's Fiction", in *Mosaic. A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 40.1, Mar 2007, pp. 163-179.

Lin, Francie, "Break On Through", in *The Threepenny Review*, Summer 2001, available at http://www.threepennyreview.com/samples/lin_su01.html, accesed February 19, 2013.

Lipovetsky, Gilles, *L'ère du vide. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*, Gallimard (Folio. Essais, 121), [*s.l.*], 2003 [1983, and 1993 for the afterword].

Idem & Charles, Sébastien, *Les temps hypermodernes* [préface de Pierre-Henri Tavoillot], Bernard Grasset (Nouveau collège de philosophie), Paris, [2004].

Miller, Laura, interview with Haruki Murakami, Dec 16, 1997, available at http://www.salon.com/1997/12/16/int_2/, accesed February 22, 2013.

Napier, Susan J., "The Dystopian Imagination: From the Asylum through the Labyrinth to the End of the World", in *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature. The Subversion of Modernity*, Nissan Institute, Routledge (Japanese Studies), London and New York [1996].

Rubin, Jay, "The Other World of Murakami Haruki", in *Japan Quarterly*, 39.4, Oct-Dec 1992, pp. 490-500.

Idem, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, Harvill Press (Panther. Biography & Autobiography), London, 2002.

Snyder, Stephen, "Two Murakamis and Marcel Proust: Memory as Form in Contemporary Japanese Fiction", in Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder (eds.), *In Pursuit of Contemporary East Asian Culture*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996, pp. 69–83.

Strecher, Matthew Carl, "Beyond 'pure' literature: Mimesis, formula, and the postmodern in the fiction of Murakami Haruki", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57.2, May 1998, pp. 354-378.

Idem, *Dances with Sheep. The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki*,

University of Michigan Press ([Center for] Japanese studies, 37), Ann Arbor, 2002.

Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated from the French by Richard Howard, with a new foreword by Robert Scholes, Cornell University Press, New York, 1975 [1973] [*Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970)].

Vasile, Adelina, "Subjectivity and Space in Haruki Murakami's Fictional World", in *Euromentor Journal*, 3.1, March 2012, pp. 112-131.

Notes

[1] I chose this term to replace the vague term post-modernism.

[2] Lewis Beale, "The Cool, Cynical Voice of Young Japan: In Haruki Murakami's Fiction, There Are No Kimonos, No Bonsai Trees, Just a Disdain for Japanese Tradition and an Obsession With American Pop Culture", in *Los Angeles Times*, available at http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-08/magazine/tm-233_1_haruki-murakami, accesed December 16, 2012.

[3] Walter Kirn, "In the Wee Small Hours", in *The New York Times*, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/03/books/review/Kirn-t.html?_r=1, accesed December 18, 2012.

[4] That is not at all postreal!

[5] Matthew C. Strecher, "Beyond 'pure' literature: Mimesis, formula, and the postmodern in the fiction of Murakami Haruki", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57.2, May 1998, p. 376.

[6] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, translated from the French by Richard Howard, with a new foreword by Robert Scholes, Cornell University Press, New York, 1975, p. 25.

[7] *Sekai no owari to hādo-boirudo wandārando*.

[8] *Hitsuji o meguru bōken*, 1982.

[9] *Dansu dansu dansu*, 1988.

[10] *1973-nen no pinbōru*, 1980.

[11] *Noruwei no mori*, 1987.

[12] Sinda Gregory, Toshifumi Miyawaki & Larry McCaffery, "It Don't Mean a Thing, If It Ain't Got That Swing: an Interview with Haruki Murakami", in *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 22.2, June 2002, p. 112.

[13] *Cf.* Susan J. Napier, "The Dystopian Imagination: From the Asylum through the Labyrinth to the End of the World", in *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature. The Subversion of Modernity*, Nissan Institute, Routledge (Japanese Studies), London and New York, [1996], p. 210 & Steffen Hantke, "Postmodernism and Genre Fiction as Deferred Action: Haruki Murakami and the Noir Tradition", in *Critique. Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 49.1, 2007, p. 15.

[14] Judith Caesar, "Murakami, the Inklings, and the Uses of Fantasy", in *Critique. Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 52.1, 2010, p. 45.

[15] Matthew C. Strecher, *art. cit.*, p. 356.

[16] A short story *in nuce* for the novel in discussion, published in 1980, but viewed as a failure by Murakami, thus not being translated ... but fragmentarily, by Daniel Morales on his blog (available at http://howtojaponese.com/2009/10/02/the-town-and-its-uncertain-wall/ *sqq.*, accesed February 13, 2013).

[17] Jay Rubin, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, Harvill Press (Panther. Biography & Autobiography), London, 2002, p. 117.

[18] Reproduced at the begining of the book in its original version.

[19] Judith Caesar, *art. cit.*, p. 44; see also Steffen Hantke, *art. cit.*, p. 22, n. 20 & William S. Haney II, *Cyberculture, Cyborgs and Science Fiction. Consciousness and the Posthuman*, Rodopi (Consciousness. Literature & the Arts, 2), [Amsterdam – New York], [2006], p. 133.

[20] Judith Caesar, *art. cit.*, p. 51.

[21] *Cf.* Rodica Frenţiu, *Haruki Murakami. Jocul metaforic al lumilor alternative*, Argonaut (Literatura), Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 218.

[22] Matthew C. Strecher, *art. cit.*, p. 362.

[23] Francie Lin, "Break On Through", in *The Threepenny Review*, Summer 2001, available at http://www.threepennyreview.com/-samples/lin_su01.html, accesed February 19, 2013.

[24] See Jorge Luis Borges (în colaborare cu Margarita Guerrero), *Cartea fiinţelor imaginare*, traducere şi note de Ileana Scipione, ilustraţii de Felix Aftene, Polirom (Jorge Luis Borges), [Iaşi], 2006, pp. 235-7.

[25] That is just *Watashi*, prisoner in a land of harsh wonders.

[26] Haruki Murakami, "The Town and Its Uncertain Wall", fragment translated by Daniel Morales, available at http://howtojaponese.com/2010/09/17/the-town-and-its-uncertain-wall-the-library/, accesed February 13, 2013.

[27] *Cf. ibidem*, available at http://howtojaponese.com/2010/09/24/the-town-and-its-uncertain-wall-old-dreams/, accesed February 13, 2013.

[28] Stephen Snyder, "Two Murakamis and Marcel Proust: Memory as Form in Contemporary Japanese Fiction", in Xiaobing Tang and Stephen Snyder (eds.), *In Pursuit of Contemporary East Asian Culture*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996, p. 75.

[29] Matthew C. Strecher, *art. cit.*, p. 365.

[30] *Idem*, *Dances with Sheep. The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki*, University of Michigan Press ([Center for] Japanese studies, 37), Ann Arbor, 2002, p. 45.

[31] Amy Ty Lai, "Memory, Hybridity, and Creative Alliance in Haruki Murakami's Fiction", in *Mosaic. A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 40.1, Mar 2007, p. 171.

[32] *What dreams may come*, film directed by Vincent Ward (1998).

[33] William S. Haney II, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

[34] Adelina Vasile, "Subjectivity and Space in Haruki Murakami's Fictional World", in *Euromentor Journal*, 3.1, March 2012, p. 114.

[35] The sintagm "elephant graveyard" appears for the first time to Haruki Murakami in the novel *Pinball 1973*, while the "elephant factory" occurs already in the short story *The Dancing Dwarf* (*Odoru kobito*, 1984), from the volume *The Elephant Vanishes* (*Zō no shōmetsu*, 1991).

[36] We are no longer surprised then if the translation sins identically, as to their big turn are proceeding not few hermeneuts. Eventually, the unconscious – in the Jungian sense – rather surrounds the conscious than to be "located" under it!

[37] Haruki Murakami, interview by Laura Miller, Dec 16, 1997, available at http://www.salon.com/1997/12/16/int_2/, accesed February 22, 2013.

[38] Amy Ty Lai, *art. cit.*, p. 165.

[39] See Shinji Nishimoto [*et al.*], "Reconstructing Visual Experiences from Brain Activity Evoked by Natural Movies", in *Current Biology*, 21.19, 22 September 2011, pp. 1641-6.

[40] Judith Caesar, *art. cit.*, p. 46;

[41] Matthew C. Strecher, *art. cit.*, p. 365;

[42] Judith Caesar, *art. cit.*, p. 47;

[43] Jay Rubin, *op. cit.*, p. 128.