

This article was downloaded by: [Mr Thomas Rosbrow]

On: 13 April 2012, At: 09:54

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hpsd20>

### Murakami's After the Quake—The Writer as Waking Dreamer and Trauma Analyst

Thomas Rosbrow Ph.D. <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> San Francisco, CA, USA

Available online: 12 Apr 2012

To cite this article: Thomas Rosbrow Ph.D. (2012): Murakami's After the Quake—The Writer as Waking Dreamer and Trauma Analyst, *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 22:2, 215-227

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10481885.2012.666161>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## Murakami's *After the Quake*—The Writer as Waking Dreamer and Trauma Analyst

Thomas Rosbrow, Ph.D.  
*San Francisco, CA*

In this paper I explore how Haruki Murakami depicts in profound and original images and nested stories the experience of traumatic dissociation and recovery. Murakami has an uncanny ability as a “waking dreamer” to capture and narratively elaborate core imagery. In his writings, he has examined the significance of imagination and dreaming in a person's bearing the complexity and multiplicity inherent in human existence. In “U.F.O. in Kushiro” the protagonist's reawakens from a numb, frozen state through a provocative encounter with someone who melts his frozen dissociation. There is a parallel to analytic working through of enactments stemming from trauma as described and elaborated by Bromberg.

Immersion in great imaginative literature can serve a restorative and generative purpose for the analyst-reader who so often has to wrestle with, and join, a patient's numbed, haunted adaptation to traumas, of the recent and distant past. Murakami's humor and evocativeness help me recover from the everyday depletion of clinical work on the edge of impasse. Literature and art help us regenerate and expand our capacity for complexity, imagination, and play in our daily practice and lives.

For some years, I've been entranced by the novels and short stories of Haruki Murakami, the wildly popular Japanese writer. Reading him, I am immediately transported to a psychic area on the edge of dream consciousness, filled with striking unforgettable images and storylines. While his stories veer at times into surrealism, the characters are quite real and affecting, capturing and demanding this reader's empathy. While he evokes dreamlike landscapes and fantasies, his stories are narratively constructed in a strangely realistic way with satisfying progressions from beginning to ending. His writing has a simplicity and directness similar to great detective writing, where you feel that the book you are reading is practically reading you; you can't put it down, and the process of reading becomes as easy as walking or breathing.

His writing varies from more or less realistic to wildly imaginative, though there are elements of surrealism in probably all of his work. His stories frequently involve themes around loss, searching for the lost person, and haunting feelings of regret and awareness of transience. In an interview (Murakami, 2004) Murakami described these central concerns:

I don't know why I keep writing these things. . . . My protagonist is always missing something, and he's searching for that missing thing. It's like the Holy Grail, or Philip Marlowe. . . . When my

protagonist misses something, he has to search for it. He's like Odysseus. He experiences so many strange things in the course of his search. . . He has to survive these experiences, and in the end he finds what he was searching for. But he is not sure it's the same thing. I think that's the motif of my books. Where do these things come from? I don't know. It fits me. It's the driving power of my stories: missing and searching and finding. And disappointment, a kind of new awareness of the world (pp. 136–137).

Murakami's emphasis on searching for the lost person closely matches Bowlby's work on loss (Bowlby, 1980). Bowlby emphasizes the significance of searching and yearning as a key, often unnoticed, aspect of mourning (Hamilton, 1986). Searching and disbelief over the loss of the loved are necessary experiences before the loss can be eventually accepted. While Freud (1914) saw the end point of mourning as detaching from the lost loved one so as to reengage with the world, Bowlby sees the need for a continued inner dialogue with lost loved ones, a motif in Murakami's fiction. Murakami heartily agrees with Freud's (1905) statement from the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*: "The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it (p. 222)."

At the same time, and here is a key element of the magic of Murakami's work, the mournful elegiac moods of his stories are leavened by a impish hilarity that crops up at the strangest moments. In a way, it is his humor, playfulness, and irony that make his writing not just bearable but cathartic and transformative. The mix of the bitter and the sweet that he creates—along with his surrealist imagination—gives his work its distinctive quality. You feel like you are on a roller coaster of emotion and fantasy, giving yourself over to Murakami's crazed and masterful direction.

The combination of humor and sadness, the evocation of a bittersweet mood, is a mood-state described by the Brazilian word *saudade* (Levine & Crocitti, 1999; Levi-Strauss, 1995; Saudade, n.d.), which, as I understand it, refers to a mood of wistfulness and sadness at life's passage or transience. Along with sadness there is an appreciation of the beauty of life, and a romantic sweet longing for what has past. I would distinguish this feeling from a melancholia, or nostalgia. In nostalgia, one idealizes the past and wants to return and recapture what has been lost, an act of memorialization (Kundera 2003). In *saudade*, the passage of time is undeniable, unrecoverable, and intensely experienced. There is no going back, but what is past can be remembered and seen in perspective, from a distance. This is the mood so beautifully portrayed in Fellini's movie *Amarcord*, full of childhood memory, the title meaning "I remember." In place of nostalgia, I would use the word "poignancy" along with "saudade" to put into words the complex feelings of warm remembrance mixed with a sharp awareness of transience and loss. These are the feelings Murakami is so great at evoking imaginatively, thematically, and narratively.

Though his stories have always dealt with themes involving loss and dislocation, over the past 10 years or so he has more deliberately tackled societal trauma in his fiction and nonfiction. His book of short stories, *After the Quake* (Murakami, 2002), deals with the effects at a distance of the Kobe earthquake on the lives of a series of characters. None of them were present at the 1995 Kobe earthquake, which caused over 5,000 deaths and widespread destruction, but all the characters are touched by the trauma of the earthquake by knowing people there, or just by identifying and being touched by the national event. Their lives change in mysterious and profound ways.

It is impossible to read *After the Quake* without thinking of the effects of 9/11. I am reminded of a patient of mine who was friends with one of the men who rebelled against the hijackers on the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania. A patient, in his 30s, who felt stuck in his life, was inspired by his friend, who had been a bold, free spirit, to break out of his constricted existence. He studied a foreign language and eventually moved to another part of the world, where he reported feeling alive and engaged in life in a new way.

### WRITING, DREAMING, AND OUR NEED FOR IMAGES AND NARRATIVE

In interviews and in his biography (Rubin, 2002), Murakami relates that he does not remember his dreams but thinks of his writing as a way that he expresses and connects with what he calls his “subconscious.” His stories start from images that come to his mind unbidden, which he then elaborates and shapes as his stories unfold. He does not know where the stories are going till they are written. Afterward, he can craft and rewrite.

In this way, his fiction has the quality of waking dreams, which use the primary process in the service of elaborating powerful images into fully shaped moving narratives. The stories retain the freshness and unconscious provocativeness of dream images, while adding to them the deeply satisfying structure of a full story, which gives the reader a sense of time passing, characters evolving, and a resolution of dramatic and psychological tension.

When Murakami talks about waking dreams, there is a resonance with contemporary psychoanalytic writing about “dreaming” as a metaphor or model for imaginative, creative thinking in the way Bion influenced analysts, for example, Ogden (1997) talked about the analyst and the patient dreaming together in a session. Murakami is describing literally dreaming stories in waking time, creating unbidden stories during the late night/early dawn when one is usually sleeping and dreaming. This process is evident in the hallucinatory vividness of his characters and their landscapes.

Mark (2009), in his recent paper (which came out after the first writing of this paper) “Waking Dreams,” described a Murakami-like phenomena in his patients who have hallucinatorily vivid dreams that appear unbidden in sessions. What is remarkable about Murakami’s dream states is that they contain not just individual images but are ongoing narratives he transcribes into writing.

However, reading his dreamlike fiction does generate in the reader a deeper capacity for what Ogden calls reverie. More specifically, immersion in Murakami’s fantastic and evocative dreamscapes feeds one’s ability to generate the rich “image-making,” which Gardner (1983) in his book *Self Inquiry* sees as central to the analytic process for analyst and patient. I have no doubt that the past 10 years of reading Murakami has helped me use and expand my imagination more deliberately, but also more playfully.

We are drawn to participate imaginatively in listening, reading, watching stories, which mirror and extend our sense of our own lives unfolding and searching for meaning and purpose. Without a sense of a lived story, our lives can feel fragmented, empty, directionless (Meares, 1998; Rosbrow, 2008). Though we have learned to be more skeptical of the literal truth of the stories patients tell of their lives, knowing how fallible and ever changing memory is, the need for narrative is essential to have a life that makes sense and feels meaningful. Literature and other forms of art supply a source of ever changing narrative forms that accompany and rejuvenate us as we shape and reorganize the story lines of our own and our patients’ lives.

## IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE AS ANTIDOTE TO DISSOCIATION AND DEPLETION

As analysts and therapists, our professional literature gives us some structure and stability in organizing our work and our emotional reactions to our exhilarating and exhausting work. But I know that I have a deep psychic need for the type of enlivening and processing of stirred-up emotions, which comes from being moved and sustained by fiction and movies, and music. Without that imaginative immersion and affective stimulation, I fear my clinical work would be too much to carry; I'd be overstimulated, overtaxed, or conversely, shut down. So along with providing narrative models and structures, these arts help to rejuvenate and expand our capacity and inventory of images.

Specifically, I experience immersion in imaginative literature as an antidote to ongoing frozen, dissociative mood states, which are inevitable, as Bromberg (2006d) detailed, in the treatment of many patients. The patients I have in mind are ones who enter treatment having been severely hurt and disillusioned in recent primary relationships, whether intimate or therapeutic (Rosbrow, 2008). Their treatments involve a long period in which I have been feared and kept at a distance. I've needed to "wear the attribution" (Lichtenberg, Lachmann, & Fosshage, 1992) of the traumatizing other and help the patient elaborate this perception, until a time when the image can played with as both real and unreal.

Carrying the weight of past failed relationships, I can feel trapped with the patient in a shared concrete state of mind, or mood (Tronick, 2007). Transference feelings are experienced as "what is," not as feelings that are mutable, and part of a rich, varied emotional fabric. These impasses can shift or melt over time, but before that shift the I have to find a way to life with, and survive, an image of myself that feels burdensome, grim, toxic, and partial.

For me, reading Murakami's fiction is restorative in a complex way. His piquant, provocative imagination is in itself enlivening and stimulating to my own sense of playfulness and animation. On another level, his fiction—as we see—also deals thematically with how a person awakens from dissociation and deadness, and is in that way cathartic and related to the professional stress I bear. Reading him helps me shake off deadening moods, and resurface into a bright, blooming awake state.

## IMAGINATION, TRAUMA, COMPLEXITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Murakami has explicitly discussed, in novels and nonfiction, the essential role of imagination and dreaming in sustaining a complex, affectively rich psychic life. His ethics and intentions are strikingly in line with the contemporary psychoanalytic zeitgeist that values an integrated capacity to experience the multiplicity of emotional states and selves, as well as a full acceptance of the separateness and complexity of others' minds. (Jurist, Slade, & Berger, 2008)

Murakami has written about how cults both free and rob the individual of the responsibility and anxiety of struggling with psychic complexity. In his nonfiction work *Underground*, Murakami (2001) interviews members of the Aum cult, some of whose followers attacked Tokyo subway commuters with sarin gas in 1995. In reflecting on their motivation, he concludes that the members sacrificed their own personal life narratives, and substituted a simplistic narrative supplied by the cult leader, Shoko Asahara. The following section conveys Murakami's perspective on the integral relationship between dream, narrative, and complexity:

Now a narrative is a story, not logic, not science, nor philosophy. It is a dream you keep having, whether you realize it or not. Just as surely as you breathe, you go on ceaselessly dreaming your story. And in these stories you wear two faces. You are simultaneously subject and object. You are the whole and you are a part. You are real and you are shadow. "Storyteller" and at the same time "character". It is through such multilayering of roles in our stories that we heal the loneliness of being an isolated individual in the world (Murakami, 2001, p. 231).

Murakami sees a human vulnerability to being overwhelmed by such complexity. On the cult followers, he states: "It's precisely because people can't find any fixed point within their multi-layered schemes that they're tossing aside their self-identity." Discussing his interviews, he links his work as interviewer with his work as a fiction writer, both building multiple perspectives: "What I am trying to provide here ..(is) not one clear viewpoint, but flesh-and-blood material from which to construct multiple viewpoints; which is the same goal I have in mind when I write novels."

For Murakami, imagination is what makes a person fully human and open to complexity and multiplicity within ourselves and with others. In *Kafka on the Shore* (Murakami, 2006), the wise character Oshina channels Murakami's values:

It's all a question of imagination. Our responsibility begins with the power to imagine. It's just like Yeats said: In dreams begin responsibilities. Flip this around and you could say that where's there no power to imagine, no responsibility can arise (p. 132).

In the ethic Oshina espouses, the human imagination is what gives a person the capacity to begin to understand others, and take real responsibility for how one treats others. Without imagination, we are amoral, not fully alive or human. Our imagination fundamentally comes from our capacity to dream. As Murakami writes, "The earth keeps turning. But before any of those details of the real, there are dreams. And everyone's living in them." Here Murakami echoes Stephen Mitchell's assertion that "all psychopathology is a failure of imagination (p. 300)."

## TRANSFORMING TRAUMA IN LITERATURE AND ANALYSIS

Several of Murakami's stories and novels (along with *After the Quake*, especially *The Wind Up Bird Chronicle*; Murakami, 1998), *Kafka at the Shore* (Murakami, 2006), and *After Dark* (Murakami, 2007) present for the reader, and especially the analyst interested in trauma, an awake dream experience of immersion and resurfacing from the sequence of traumatization and recovery: the danger of flooding of affect, the protective numbing from being flooded, the emptiness and fragmentation that go along with being numbed; through transformative connections into a state of heightened awareness of what has been experienced and dissociated, and to a fresh cautiously hopeful sense of new relating and engaging with life. As with successful dreams (Lifton, 1996) the reader gets a sense of closure and reintegration.

I am interested in looking at how the characters in his stories are first disrupted, and eventually transformed by their experience of trauma. In these stories, as in life, trauma is first absorbed, and only later, under the right circumstances, can it be represented (and re-presented) with the promise of transformation. In real life, traumatic experiences are carried and remain internal to the person until there is an opportunity to bring this experience literally out into the world, through

an interaction with another person. As we know through our clinical work, the experience may be enacted with the other person, analyst or other intimate, in wordless and emotive ways, which may have benign or malignant consequences. At other times, often later, healing comes more directly through being able to speak fully with emotion and memory about what the person has endured, directly or vicariously. This only seems to work when the other (or others, community) is fully open to witnessing unblinkingly the pain and suffering of the person who has known or been effected at a distance by trauma.

What can we learn from Murakami's story about this process of implosion and reopening? I am here using Louis Breger's (1989) idea of the writer as psychoanalyst; that the great creative writers give us, analysts, new insights and constructions. We learn from them, rather than feel we can reduce them to our theories. As in listening to dreams, the action happens by attending to both the powerful images which stand out and foreground the story, and by grasping the movement of the plot of the story (Levenson, 2000). Following Ernest Hartmann (2001), dreams, and dreamlike stories, are ways of what he calls "thinking in pictures." He adds that the "central images" in a dream are images which contextualize emotions. So in Murakami's stories, the vivid images he creates express and articulate powerful affect states that are beyond ordinary words or modes of description.

#### "U.F.O. IN KUSHIRO"

In the story I discuss—"U.F.O. in Kushiro," the first story in *After the Quake*—the protagonist, Komura, is suddenly left by his wife. Living in Tokyo, his wife had obsessively watched breaking news of the Kobe earthquake, mesmerized and withdrawn and riveted. Kobe is far away, and she has no family there. For several days, Komura, a young salesman, leaves and returns from work with her glued to the TV. One day he comes back, and she has left without warning.

Komura is totally shocked by her leaving. Murakami describes Komura having a connection with her (she remains unnamed), which kept him content and existentially relieved. Murakami's following description corresponds to what I understand, from Bowlby's writing, as attachment security (Bowlby, 1969):

Though he did not understand why, Komura always felt his tension dissipate when he and his wife were together under one roof; it was the only time he could truly relax. He slept well with her, undisturbed by the strange dreams that had troubled him in the past. His erections were hard; his sex life was warm. He no longer had to worry about death or venereal disease or the vastness of the universe.

Komura is soothed and comforted against life's terrors, tensions, and his own fears of impotence and insecurity by her presence. Instead of disappearing into the anxiety of infinite space, he feels bounded, held by her.

Behind she leaves the following note, saying that she is leaving, never coming back, because of what is missing in him, because of his emptiness. Key phrases in the note are "The problem is that you never give me anything.. you have nothing inside that you can give me . . . living with you is like living with a chunk of air."

Thus there is a polarity of images and affects in the story—a polarity often seen in dreams—he feels secure and contained by her presence from experiencing the very nothingness that she

feels and then cannot tolerate inside of him. The trauma of the earthquake disturbs her psychic equilibrium, and makes her unable to stand his emptiness; she becomes aware of not having a floor under her.

From this starting point, the narrative of the story takes off. (Of course, I am highlighting the points relevant to this discussion, leaving out many details, even of a rather short story.) Komura is devastated—his emotional life in ruins (earthquake image), he asks to take a week off from work. A coworker makes him the strange offer of a free trip to Hokkaido, a distant city, including airfare and hotel, if he will carry on the plane a secret package, small and almost weightless, which he'll bring to the coworker's sister there. Hokkaido is freezing cold, it's February, but Komura agrees to go; it seems as good an idea as any. He passively accepts: "He had no reason for not wanting to go to Hokkaido." He is assured there is nothing criminal or dangerous about the package, but he is not to know the contents.

When he gets the box, it resembles a box used for human ashes, but smaller. On the plane to Hokkaido, he reads about the destruction of the earthquake but is unable to feel anything but vague worry about his wife's absence:

Each article reported some new tragedy, but to Komura the details seemed oddly lacking in depth. All sounds reached him as far-off, monotonous echoes. The only thing he could give any serious thought to was his wife as she retreated ever farther into the distance.

At the airport he meets his coworker's sister, Keiko, and her female friend, Shimao. He is numb—like a continuation of his mood on the plane, not knowing whether he is hungry, not feeling like he has traveled a long distance. The conversation at the airport is awkward and unsettling, Keiko at first insisting that Komura's wife died, from her brother saying she was "gone." Murakami describes Komura watching Keiko walking, offering a poignant image of trauma and dissociation and unnamed flashback: "He had the strange impression that he was witnessing some moment from the past, shoved with random suddenness into the present."

In one simple sentence, Murakami poetically condenses many aspects of posttraumatic experience: first, strangeness—the loss of the familiar, second, the past intruding into the present with the physical/emotional sense of being "shoved," and third, most importantly, the sense of randomness that follows in the wake of traumatic events, which wipe out our needed sense of predictability and order. (Two recent books on trauma emphasize in ways congruent with Murakami the devastating loss of a predictable world following trauma; Boulanger, 2006; Brothers, 2007.)

The three of them leave the airport and drive through a frozen cityscape to get a hot bowl of noodles. Note the polarity between the frozen and the warm—images of trauma and reawakening. At the restaurant, the two women ask Komura about his wife's leaving. He expresses confusion about why she left; though it happened days after the quake, he denies any connection between the events. He is still dazed and in shock, as his wife was before leaving him.

At this point Shimao brings up a story to illustrate her feeling that what looks like random events are more connected than they might seem. A woman sees a huge UFO in a field one night; for several days she talks about it constantly to anyone who will listen. After a week, she mysteriously leaves her husband and children without explanation. Shimao and Keiko sympathize with the husband whose wife disappears, making an analogy to Komura's loss, consoling him with the fact that this woman left a family with no note or explanation, at least his wife left him a note. Keiko mentions how Shimao's father suddenly abandoned her family when she was a child. Murakami here presents a series of sudden abrupt losses, enigmatic and irreversible.



There is one more story within the story which is told shortly afterward. These nested stories have the quality of dreams within dreams, allusive commentaries on the main narrative. While on the way from the airport to the restaurant, Komura asks if there are bears in Hokkaido, and the two women laugh about a bear story Shimao knows, and laugh about it again at the restaurant, in a teasing way.

After dinner, they drive Komura to his room, which they rented for him at a love hotel, a hotel used for liaisons. Shimao draws Komura a bath—to warm him up—and when he comes out he is surprised that Keiko has left. Shimao asks if she can stay with him and drink a beer. He asks her to tell him the bear story.

Shimao tells how she and her boyfriend were hiking in an area known for dangerous bears. They are advised to ring a bell while hiking which keeps bears from unexpectedly bumping into them: the bears want to avoid humans, but attack when surprised. She and her boyfriend decide to have sex, but to do so they have to take turns ringing the bell while making love. Komura laughs at the story, and realizes he can't remember the last time he laughed. For a moment, he becomes animated, surfaces from being numb.

Shimao takes a bath, and suggests they have sex. He has started to feel nothing again. She says, summarizing the whole story to this point,

You need to lighten up and enjoy life a little more. I mean think about it: tomorrow, there could be an earthquake; you could be kidnapped by aliens; you could be eaten by a bear. Nobody knows what's going to happen.

Komura is unable to perform sexually. Shimao says he must have been thinking about his wife, and Komura agrees. The narrator observes,

But in fact what he had been thinking about was the earthquake. Images of it had come to him one after another, as if in a slide show, flashing on the screen and fading away. Highways, flames, smoke, piles of rubble, cracks in streets. He couldn't break the chain of silent images.

What a haunting picture evoked here of traumatic memory where images stick in the mind, disconnected, removed from any affective connection, "silent" because our rich sensory memories are reduced to pictures without sound or feeling. At the same time, his connecting with Shimao, though incomplete, is allowing him to be able to picture the devastation for the first time.

Shimao asks about the note his wife left, and he talks about her calling him a chunk or air, like nothing was inside him.

Komura suddenly starts to wonder, feels bothered about what was in the box he brought, as he listens to the howling wind outside. They wonder why it is right now that he is all of a sudden bothered.

Leaning over, Shimao in a low voice tells him, "I'll tell you why . . . because that box contains the something that was inside you. You didn't know that when you carried it here and gave it to Keiko with your own hands. Now you'll never get it back."

Komura is seized with rage. "His bones cracked as he leaned forward. For one split second, Komura realized that he was on the verge of committing an act of overwhelming violence."

Shimao sees the "look on his face" and apologizes quickly for making a bad joke and assures him she didn't mean to hurt him.

Komura has to calm himself, but he is in a different state of awareness. He feels his heart pounding, but also is able to sink into his bed. "The huge bed stretched out around him like a nocturnal sea."

Shimao asks him if he now feels like he's come a long way and he says he now feel he's "come a *very* long way."

The story ends that "Shimao traced a complicated design on Komura's chest with her fingertip, as if casting a magic spell.

"But really", she said, you're just at the beginning."

The story ends on a surprising note of catharsis and hopefulness. Through his journey, and his strange encounter with Keiko and Shimao, Komura emerges from a deadened, numb, stunned, timeless state to where he is able to feel the entire range of human feelings from amusement to rage and finally a more calm, reflective place. He can experience the passage of time in a meaningful affective way. He has recovered or found in a new way, maybe even for the first time ("you're just at the beginning") himself as a more fully alive and aware person.

#### DISCUSSION; ANALYTIC PARALLELS

Now, I want to reenter the story, looking to elaborate, expand, and feel into the meanings and resonances supplied and implied by Murakami. This process is much like the process I'd use with a patient, or with myself, in approaching a rich, complex dream. There are two axes, or points of orientation, readily available.

One is to look at the plot and substories of the dream, the themes which are portrayed, how the different stories interrelate, how much the themes and conflicts are resolved or if not, how not. "U.F.O. in Kushiro" is fascinating in this regard because of the richness, in this very short tale, of the nested stories told by different characters.

The other complementary lens is to look at the most striking, idiosyncratic images (Hartmann's central images) in the story, as you would with a dream, and see what the images evoke and how they contrast with one another. This is apt for Murakami's type of writing, which in this book oscillates between realism and surrealism.

Murakami creates what seems for a moment a supernatural or magical occurrence; Komura's "something" in the box. In this story he does something unusual and debunks the magic, makes it a joke. But the story still retains a dreamy quality. It is still more than a realistic tale narrated. Komura's journey to Hokkaido, the carrying of the box, the two women's involvement in helping him tell what happened with his wife, and Shimao's provocation of his terror and rage are all more than normal, if they aren't supernatural. The story teeters in a precarious, delicate balance between the real and the surreal, awake and asleep or dreamed. The series of tales and jokes related within this very brief story give it a dizzying denseness.

The odd, half-real quality of the story is reminiscent of Bromberg's (2006b) discussion of being haunted in his paper "One Need Not Be a House to Be Haunted." He attributes a person's feelings of strangeness as a consequence of a severe dissociation, where the person has lost contact with significant self-states, of which she is only vaguely aware through feeling haunted. The other self-states are then ghostly presences—pushed away not-me states. Komura feels strange and agitated, unable to grasp what has happened to him and his primary relationship.

His past happiness and security have evaporated, and exist as distant, disembodied, affectless recollections.

At the beginning of the story, Komura's wife, who remains unnamed, is hypnotized staring at the earthquake's destruction on the TV. The TV with the earthquake on the screen is the first visual image of the story. Komura is a high-tech entertainment salesman, so his job also involves selling hard metallic box like objects like the TV. Boxes are one image presented through the story, as are hard, heavy objects, which may be boxlike or have other shapes. From the electronic box, we go to the box that Komura has taken to Hokkaido. This box is tiny, light, insubstantial, not at all high tech or metallic; it felt like it was made of wood, and is wrapped in paper, a kind of box that might have carried human ash. So two boxes, but with opposite qualities: hard, metallic as opposed to light, natural. A polarity of images that can point the way to core emotional concerns, conflicts. Here there is a traumatic tension—about which Robert Lifton (1979) has written between feeling human, animate, part of nature versus feeling hardened, mechanical, technological, divorced from the natural world. But paradoxically lightness also connotes insubstantiality, emptiness, “the chunk of air” he has become to his wife. Too solid or too light.

The image of the UFO seen by the wife in Kushiro has the hard metallic qualities of the TV and stereo equipment but an opposite shape, circle rather than square. It is an enigmatic object, which pulls the woman away from her family and community. She leaves everyone as she is in the grip of this indestructible otherworldly shape/object. Komura's wife has left him in the grip of her psychic awakening caused by human and natural devastation in a frighteningly fragile world. Somehow the contrasting stories share a common theme: the poignancy of a woman taking flight from her family in the face of a new incomprehensible reality. An evocation of how trauma can shatter the mundane everyday world and catapult one into a new startling confused sense of what is now real or unreal, what is fixed and forever in the world and in relationships.

A related group of complementary/polar sensory and kinesthetic images involve, on one hand, frozenness/cold/solid and, on the other, heat/warmth/softness. These images express core affects and somatic experiences of trauma. Being frozen is a physical corollary of being numb, without feelings, shut down. Both Komura and his wife are described at different points as numb and withdrawn, stuck in replaying traumatic images in their minds, divorced from their emotions. Being literally without feelings is one of the most confusing and disturbing aftereffects of many traumas. Komura experiences this at many points in the story, including seeing slow motion pictures of the earthquake in his mind—they are seen distantly, without feeling, but still preoccupying.

Being frozen is a core experience in the phenomenology of trauma, with multiple meanings. Komura is struggling with two basic forms of being frozen. In his numbness and incapacity to feel loss, he demonstrates the frozen state that is both the initial experience of normal loss—shock (Bowlby, 1980) but if continued over time can be a symptom of a long-term failure in mourning (Parkes, 2006). In the story, he is in grief over both his wife's leaving and his witnessing of the destruction of the earthquake.

Apart from mourning, freezing can be a paralysis that a person suffers under the grip of intense fear. Bromberg (2006d) described it as an organismic response to terror, which is self-protective and dissociative. The dissociative process involves an extreme shutting down of consciousness and feeling. Trapped by overwhelming danger and fear, the person cannot fight or take flight. Komura, until the very climax of the story, is frozen emotionally around

the hurt, shame, and rage he feels at his wife for abandonment, and her labeling of him as empty “chunk of air.”

The frozen landscape in Hokkaido is then a physical representation of his complex inner state. When he meets Shimao and Keiko, they both ask him about his loss, but also make successful efforts to literally warm him—with warm noodle soup, and later a hot bath. Their interest in understanding his loss, and giving him the opportunity to say what has happened to him, on a different level, allows him to come out of a shut-down isolated state.

But as we know too well as analysts, words can fail, and he is inarticulate and loathe to talk about his wife's disappearance and her disgust with him, his being “a chunk of air” (light, insubstantial, nothing) to her. At this point, talking about his trauma, as Bromberg (2006d) described, makes him feel worse, not better. Talking at first reminds him of the pain and anger that he is actively dissociating, leaving Komura in a deadened but haunted state.

What happens next between Shimao and Komura is the pivotal point at the end of the story. As in an enactment between patient and analyst, what cannot be talked about in a straightforward way comes out provocatively and explosively between them. As Bromberg has observed, what is unsymbolized becomes enacted dyadically (Bromberg, 2006c). Shimao has gotten Komura to take a bath, to warm up, and has taken one herself. She's told him the amusing and stimulating story of the lovers and the bear. He is relaxed by her humor and seductiveness, and begins to feel less numb, even amused. But he can't perform sexually, and instead is replaying images of the earthquake in his mind.

For the first time, he is able to see, though not yet feel, the effect of the earthquake on himself, not just through his wife. But he still is imploded, unable to fully relate, again numb. At this point, they talk about his wife seeing “something missing” in him, and then Shimao, scares him by telling him that the “something missing” was in the box, and is now gone forever. He feels on the verge of violence; she quickly disarms him and apologizes. Then he goes into a new state of deep relaxation and embodiment. He is aware of time passing, his body, the feeling of the bed; his is no longer dulled and dissociated.

In Bromberg's language (2006a), the dreamer has awakened out of a long travail of dissociation. He describes awakening the dreamer as follows: “By ‘awakening the dreamer’ I refer to a multitude of processes whereby shifting self-states in the patient, and the analyst, come forward onto the stage of intersubjective dialogue, generating greater self-state coherence in both parties” (p. 22). This “multitude of processes [which] come forward” between analyst and patient is an analytic parallel to the multilayered narratives Murakami weaves in his fiction.

Through the presence, or evocation of two seemingly opposite emotions—humor followed by rage—Komura is blasted out of his cocoon-like state by Shimao's interest, humor and, finally, wild and even sadistic provocation. Frustrated by his lack of response, she ups the ante, playing with the box story/image—till he finally roars into life. He is able to break out of coffin-like box in which he is living, and move into a soft expanding world, represented by the sea-like bed.

The reader, too (at least this reader), feels amused, terrified at times, finally relieved and exhausted by the end of the story. The sense of closure or finality here is satisfying both emotionally and esthetically, and all the substories and images resonate and melt together. The humor of the story and richness and variety of images movingly contrast with the shell-shocked states of Komura and his wife, which are beautifully described.

In the breaking through that happens between Komura and Shimao, I see analogies to analytic work with trauma. The analyst is faced with frustration dealing with the seeming impassivity

of the numbstruck, dissociated patient. It takes effort and imagination to break out of a shared frozen state. Like the women seeking out soup and a warm bath, we strive to find ways to literally enliven both our patients and ourselves.

Shifting vantage point, I can feel at times dissociated like Komura from the cumulative stress of work with impasses. The effect of the story in moving and animating me parallels how Shimao has effected Komura. Reading serves as an internal supervisor, muse, and mood shifter.

At times we inevitably stumble, and do or say things which can be hurtful and enraging, just when we are trying to be creative or imaginative, as Shimao was. But paradoxically, the person's rage directed straight at us, can be an opening out of deadness in the present, and stuckness in the past trauma, into a different future. Like an explosion as a precondition for a soft landing. A bursting through rigid dichotomies or polarities into a richer, more complex world.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper I explore how Haruki Murakami depicts in profound and original images and nested stories the experience of traumatic dissociation and recovery. Murakami has an uncanny ability as a "waking dreamer" to capture and narratively elaborate core imagery: as in dreams often presented in polarities. In his writings, he has examined the significance of imagination and dreaming in a person's bearing the complexity and multiplicity inherent in human existence. In "U.F.O. in Kushiro," the protagonist's reawakens from a numb, frozen state through a provocative encounter with someone who melts his frozen dissociation. There is a parallel to analytic working through of enactments stemming from trauma as described and elaborated by Bromberg.

Immersion in great imaginative literature can serve a restorative and generative purpose for the analyst-reader who so often has to wrestle with, and join, a patient's numbed, haunted adaptation to traumas, of the recent and distant past. Literature and art help us regenerate and expand our capacity for complexity, imagination, and play in our daily practice and lives.

## REFERENCES

- Boulanger, G. (2006). *Wounded by reality: Understanding and treating adult onset trauma*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol.1. Attachment*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss: Vol.3. Loss; sadness and depression*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Breger, L. (1989). *Dostoevsky: The author as psychoanalyst*. New York, NY: University Press.
- Bromberg, P. (2006a). *Awakening the dreamer*. Mahwah, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Bromberg, P. (2006b). One not be a house to be haunted: A case study. In *Awakening the dreamer* (pp. 153–173). Mahwah, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Bromberg, P. (2006c). Potholes on the royal road. In *Awakening the dreamer* (pp. 85–107). Mahwah, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Bromberg, P. (2006d). Something wicked this way comes. In *Awakening the Dreamer* (pp. 174–202). Mahwah, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Brothers, D. (2007). *Toward a psychology of uncertainty: Trauma-centered psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Freud, S. (1905). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. *Standard Edition*, 7, 135–243. London, UK: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1914). Mourning and melancholia. *Standard Edition*, 14, 237–258. London, UK: Hogarth Press.
- Gardner, M. R. (1983). *Self inquiry*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Hamilton, V. (1986). Bowlby's "yearning and searching" phase of mourning as seen in adult psychotherapy. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 2, 251–262.

- Hartmann, E. (2001). *Dreams and nightmares*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Jurist, E., Slade, A., & Berger, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Mind to mind: Infant research, neuroscience, and psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: Other Press.
- Kundera, M. (2003). *Ignorance*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Levenson, E. (2000). An interpersonal perspective on dreams: Commentary on paper by Hazel Ipp. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 10, 119–126.
- Levine, R., & Crocitti, J. (1999). *The Brazil reader: History, culture, politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1995). *Saudades do Brasil: A photographic memoir*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Lichtenberg, J., Lachmann, F. M., & Fosshage, J. L. (Eds.). (1992). *Self and motivational systems; Toward a theory of psychoanalytic technique*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Lifton, R. (1996). Dreaming well: On death and history. In D. Barrett (Ed.), *Trauma and dreams* (pp. 125–139). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lifton, R. J. (1979). *The broken connection*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Mark, D. (2009). Waking dreams. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 19, 405–414.
- Meares, R. (1998). The self in conversation: on narratives, chronicles, and scripts. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 8, 875–889.
- Murakami, H. (1998). *The wind up bird chronicle*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Murakami, H. (2001). *Underground: The Tokyo gas attack and the Japanese psyche*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Murakami, H. (2002). *After the quake*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Murakami, H. (2004). Haruki Murakami, The art of fiction No. 182 (Interviewed by J. Wray). *Paris Review*, 170, 115–151.
- Murakami, H. (2006). *Kafka on the shore*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Murakami, H. (2007). *After dark*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Ogden, T. (1997). Dream associations. In *Reverie and interpretation* (pp. 135–154). Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Parkes, C. M. (2006). *Love and loss: The roots of grief and its complications*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Rosbrow, T. (2008). Refinding lost songs and stories together. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, 3(3) 342–344.
- Rubin, J. (2002). *Haruki Murakami and the music of words*. London, UK: Harvill Press.
- Saudade. (n.d.). In Wikipedia. Retrieved 2008 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudade>
- Tronick, E. (2007). Infant moods and the chronicity of depressive symptoms. In *The neurobehavioral and social-emotional development of children* (pp. 348–377). New York, NY: Norton.

## CONTRIBUTOR

Thomas Rosbrow, Ph.D., is a Training and Supervising Analyst and Faculty at the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California and the Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis. He practices in San Francisco, CA.