Writing Guilt: Haruki Murakami and the Archives of National Mourning

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In the work of mourning it is not grief that works: grief keeps watch.
Blanchot, ***The Writing of the Disaster***

Every work of art is an uncommitted crime.
Adorno, ***Minima Moralia***

Who can swear that our unconscious is not expecting this?
Derrida, ***"No Apocalypse, Not Now"***

I.

In 1995, two traumatic events occurred in Japan. On 17 January, an earthquake struck Kobe, killing five thousand people. On 20 March, the Aum Shinrikyo cult released sarin gas into the Tokyo subway system killing twelve and injuring four thousand, some permanently. These events powerfully traumatized Japanese society, exposing as it did hidden—one might say, subterranean—uncertainties and anxieties. As Haruki Muramaki puts it in *Underground*: "Both [events] were nightmarish eruptions beneath our feet—from underground—that threw all the latent contradictions and weak points of our society into frighteningly high relief. Japanese society proved all too defenseless against these sudden onslaughts. We were unable to see them coming and failed to prepare" (237). These events,

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"two of the greatest tragedies in Japanese postwar history" (237), present serious challenges to Murakami, both as novelist and citizen of Japan. On the one hand, the events demand memorialization, demand, that is, a mourning response; yet on the other, these historical events, so cataclysmic, so beyond imagining, resist representation, resist language itself. It is here, in the crucible of history's impossible claims, that an aporetic guilt arises for Murakami and perhaps for Japan: the guilt of failing to imagine the possibility of trauma ("We were unable to see them coming") and the traumatic guilt of being unable to imagine the means to represent the traumatic event in order properly to mourn.

And for Murakami the problem of representation *is* a problem of guilt, a guilty problem: he is faced with the difficulty of attempting to represent trauma and the problem of representing guilt. Both of Murakami's narrative responses to these traumas (*after the quake* and *Underground*) represent Murakami's (guilty) attempt to speak of guilt, to speak through guilt (and thus to mourn), and to speak of the fundamental impossibility of representing guilt within language *itself* a priori incapable of accommodating trauma.[1] Blanchot's words from *The Writing of the Disaster* are thus crucial in what follows: "The disaster, unexperienced. It is what escapes the very possibility of experience—it is the limit of writing [*limite de l'écriture*]" (7). The disaster defies representation, and in some profound way this defiance—the disaster's resistance to representation—*becomes* the disaster. What Murakami's texts implicitly argue is that authentic trauma—and the guilt arising from that trauma—is not the initial event but the failure to represent that event: the disaster is both the *limit*ation of writing and that which, as border or boundary, encloses writing's impossibility. What then can be said about guilt, *for* guilt, within this limit-space

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1 In *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth writes:

> [T]he wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that … is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. (3-4)

Trauma, she argues, is "*not known* in the first instance" (4) and this results in the peculiar temporality of the condition of trauma. See also the analysis of the temporality of trauma in LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, Geoffrey Hartman's *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. For an exploration of the temporality of trauma as it plays out in the non-corporeal subject, see my "Does Mourning Require a Subject? Samuel Beckett's *Texts for Nothing*."

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where writing becomes its own effacement, its own impossibility, its own disastrous immolation?

after the quake and *Underground* stand as testimony, as witness, to Murakami's attempt to find the appropriate narrative means to express the disaster. *after the quake* is a series of six short stories (I will analyze two here); *Undergound*, in its English version, is a series of interviews with victims of the sarin attack (Part One) and with members, past and current, of the Aum Shinrikyo cult (Part Two). In *Underground*, Murakami makes clear that the workings of memory displace historical events, transforming trauma into another narrative:

> Simply put, our memories of experience are rendered into something like a narrative form. To a greater or lesser extent, this is a natural function of memory—a process that novelists consciously utilize as a profession. The truth of "whatever is told" will differ, however slightly, from whatever actually happened. This, however, does not make it a lie; it is unmistakably the truth, albeit in another form. (234)

As we turn to *after the quake* we should note a key rhetorical manoeuvre here in Murakami's defense of the truth of testimony: the event, according to Murakami, is always troped into another form in the workings of memory. Moreover, this transformation of the event, "the truth of whatever is told," defines precisely the work of the novelist which itself becomes the task of the translator. *after the quake* thus offers a series of displacements—call them translations—of the Kobe quake. *after the quake* stands manifestly as an admission that the trauma of the quake, the real "reality" of the quake, cannot be represented as such (hence the temporal designation of the title—"after"—itself an indication that trauma is not only cause but lasting [after]effect). If it is a central tenet of trauma theory that an understanding of the initial event *as* event evades comprehension and that trauma proper must be understood as a doubly inflected temporal event—cause and effect—one way of reading *after the quake* is precisely the expression of the disruptive (after)effects of great shock. The symptoms of the after-effects of trauma, as Freud noted in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, are somatic responses that must be *read back* into the originary scene of shock: the victim's body—displaying its hysterical symptoms of paralysis or mutism—is a text through which trauma expresses its (displaced) narrative.[2] *after the quake* must be read

2 Freud writes: "The symptomatic picture presented by traumatic neurosis approaches that of hysteria in the wealth of its similar motor symptoms" (281).

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as displaced narrative, but—and here we encounter the precise economy of guilt—as a narrative that knows it is a displacement. My task here is to suggest ways of reading this displacement as itself a disaster in Blanchot's sense: the displacement of trauma must carry over a residue, a trace, of the impossible-to-narrate/imagine real. Murakami's six texts, texts at times seemingly only tangentially related to the Kobe quake, carry traces of the traumatic real even as the historical event is subsumed. In this sense, the displacement becomes the trauma: the narrative *is* the trauma that cannot be narrated. And thus paradox and aporia attend each narrative as the text both is and is not the originary trauma.

Murakami's texts articulate a kind of traumatized testimony in which the event in a sense is formally traumatized by virtue of its translation into textual and narrative form. *after the quake*, explicitly fictionalized, can be read as Murakami's subjective (impossible) testimony of events beyond the telling. *Underground*, as I will argue, is Murakami's attempt to produce an empirical, call it "objective," historical testimony. Yet as we will see, this attempt to speak objectively, which becomes the attempt to let others—or the *Other* that is the victim—speak objectively, is marked by anxieties about transcending those subjective limitations that mark the explicitly fictional texts as, in some senses, ironized simulacra of the traumatic event. *Underground* thus becomes fictionalized in the way Hayden White reminds us that all histories become fictionalized. It is here, in Murakami's manipulation of these testimonies, that a fundamental displacement of the event of trauma occurs and a concomitant guilt arises.[3] This guilt resides precisely in the tacit *and* unconscious admission that displacement can only ever be a translation or metaphor of the originary experience. Displacement as representation—representation as displacement—is guilty of an a priori and unavoidable failure. Murakami may wish to maintain that the "truth" of the event survives its transmission, but that very (defensive) statement speaks to an extreme anxiety precisely about the ability to represent and a guilt about the very attempt to represent. In other words guilt—as manifest in the formal structure of the stories—is itself a displacement of trauma. Here we see precisely the complexity of writing guilt/writing trauma: if the symptoms of trauma are themselves a displacement of the originary event, then guilt must be understood as

The "motor symptoms" of hysteria are explained "by fixation to the moment at which the trauma occurred" (282).

3 See Hayden White's *Metahistory* and *The Content of the Form* for fully elaborated arguments about the fictionalized element of historical writings.

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a displacement of a displacement, a double deferral of the impossible event of disaster. And because guilt functions to displace trauma—and the narrative of that trauma—mourning, as a kind of narrative return to the originary scene of disaster—is endlessly deferred: guilt makes mourning an economic impossibility. Thus the initial demand of the event of trauma—that it be memorialized—is impossible to meet and the novelist is left with a remainder, a melancholy debt, which can never be expiated. And certainly the formal arrangement of Murakami's stories bears witness to this uncanny deferral of the disaster. The narratives are not about the quake per se, but all make oblique (or in some cases casually direct) references to the disaster. But the narratives are not set in Kobe; they do not concern characters involved directly in the disaster. The disaster is marginalized in the individual narratives yet paradoxically and uncannily central to the text as a *whole*. Displaced to the centre, the representation of the quake reflects formally—*en abime*—the complex psychoanalytical "rhetoric" of guilt-as-displacement-of-displacement: the texts thus reflect formally the guilt that cannot be expressed as such.

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II.

The initial story in *after the quake*, "ufo in kushiro," illustrates the narrative method Murakami will use throughout the collection. The wife of Komuro (she is unnamed throughout the story) is transfixed by news coverage of the Kobe quake. For five days she watches the coverage, never saying a word. On the sixth day, she disappears, leaving a note:

> I am never coming back … the problem is that you never give me anything … Or to put it more precisely, you have nothing inside you that you can give me. You are good and kind and handsome, but living with you is like living with a chunk of air. It's not entirely your fault, though. There are lots of women who will fall in love with you. But please don't call me. Just get rid of all the stuff I'm leaving behind. (5–6)

A possible reading of her disappearance is that the quake brings on a realization of fundamental emptiness, but Murakami is careful not to make the link between the quake and the disappearance manifest. We only are invited to read this disappearance as a kind of existential aftershock, a transposition of massive trauma onto the all too familiar scene of a marriage in crisis.

But this disappearance is only the initial event of the story: the remainder of "ufo in kushiro" concerns Komuro's trip to Hokkaido. Komuro has

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agreed to transport a small box containing an unknown object, perhaps indeed no object at all, to Hokkaido. This box which "weighs practically nothing" and which resembles boxes "used for human ashes" (8) becomes a portentous emblem, a physical objective correlative to Komuro's own emptiness. In some ways, it is a crypt for what Abraham and Torok, in *The Shell and the Kernel*, would call the "lost object," that element of the ego, unknowable, untellable, displaced by trauma. This box becomes the manifestation of the crypt in the ego which Abraham and Torok argue forms in the traumatized subject; the crypt forms as a result of the loss of the valued object, more precisely the loss and burial of a memory of an "idyll":

> Between the idyllic moment and its subsequent forgetting … there was the metapsychological traumatism of a loss, more precisely, the "loss" that resulted from a traumatism. This segment of an ever so painfully lived Reality—untellable and therefore inaccessible to the gradual, assimilative work of mourning—causes a genuinely covert shift in the entire psyche … This leads to the establishment of a sealed-off psychic place, a crypt in the ego. (141)

Murakami's text suggests that the work of mourning required by Komura is work responding not only to the economy of his own loss of his wife but the massive loss initiated by the quake. In my reading of "ufo on kushiro" the physically embodied crypt—the box—is a precise symptom of the massive disruption, as if the quake has unearthed, or created an awareness of, the normally sealed-off crypt of loss. And we need to be clear about this: the crypt, physically originating with Komura's colleague Sasaki, incrementally seems to become a part of Komura. There is therefore an intimate connection between all who meet in this text and all who are merely phantoms (the disappeared wife, the ghosts of the Kobe dead). Komura speaks to Sasaki's sister Keiko and her friend Shimao, two women he meets in Hokkaido:

> "Do you mind if I ask you about your wife?" Keiko said.
> "I don't mind"
> "When did she leave?"
> "Hmm … five days after the earthquake, so that's more than two weeks ago now."
> "Did it have something to do with the earthquake?
> Komura shook his head. "Probably not. I don't think so."

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> "Still, I wonder if things like that aren't connected somehow," Shimao said with a tilt of the head.
> "Yeah," Keiko said. "It's just that you can't see how." (15)

The final moment of the story sees Komura begin to think consciously about what the box/crypt contains. Shimao suggests that the 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" (22). The revelation brings Komura to the verge of "committing an act of overwhelming violence" (23) against Shimao until she reveals she was only joking. But what can we make of this moment? Primarily, we must notice that Komura's loss of self—a realization initiated ultimately by the chain of events beginning with the quake—is permanent. The event of massive loss finds its echo in the permanent loss of self on a personal level ("you'll never get it back"). Komura has lost the crypt containing his loss (he gives the box to Keiko): this doubled loss, this doubled absence, makes mourning impossible. Murakami has positioned his character in a state beyond mourning: Komura's loss cannot be taken up and metabolized because it is permanently absent; one cannot mourn a loss that one cannot conceptualize as such.

Komura now stands as an almost classic melancholic in Freud's sense of the term. In "Mourning and Melancholy," Freud speaks of the melancholic's loss of the love object:

> Where the exciting causes are different one can recognize that there is a loss of a more ideal kind. The object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love … In yet other cases one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either. This, indeed, might be so even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him. (253–54)

The melancholic, failing—or refusing—to metabolize loss, being unable to identify the precise nature of the loss but knowing that some loss has occurred, is thus permanently, painfully, tied to loss, to the unknowable event of loss, to an unknowable, unnameable history. Melancholia, as Eng and Kazanian remind us in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, is perhaps the only ethical response to loss precisely because melancholia keeps the

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memory of loss alive, refuses the comfort of forgetting what should not be forgotten.[4] In some crucial ways, all of Murakami's texts in *after the quake* and *Underground* are exercises in ethical melancholia in this sense. But we must notice the aporia of melancholy—the melancholy aporia—that arises in (at least) the fiction: Komura's loss can never be named; the event—if it is the quake; if it is the event of the quake transposed onto an absent wife—cannot be known and named as such. Melancholia may work to maintain history, but the melancholic, not knowing "what" he has lost, can never name that loss. In this manner Komura is the perfect (melancholic) allegory of the writer who cannot articulate the "unknown loss" that trauma initiates.

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"ufo in kushiro" thus allegorizes and thematizes an aporia I wish to suggest is precisely the aporia of guilt: Komura, as suggested, can never name the loss, the "something" that is now absent. And yet he feels compelled *now* to know his loss. Shimao's disavowal of the link between the "something" in the box and Komura—that the something is his loss—only serves to reinforce that desire for what remains unknowable (it is never revealed what is inside the box and it is clear that it is a space into which loss as such is projected and placed under erasure). I suggest this narrative allegorizes guilt because Komura's loss—unknowable, unseen, erased—and his desire to know that loss suggests an indebtedness to loss, an impossible indebtedness. Murakami's guilt, as a writer attempting to transcribe, translate, accommodate, the loss that is the quake, is in an indebtedness to an impossible to repay debt.[5] The aporia of guilt arises in the inability to pay the debt demanded by history, by the inevitable traumas of history. The disaster, to return to Blanchot, is the limit and end of writing: it conditions writing, it *is* writing's goal, and it brings writing to the ends of what it can do. Guilt thus is expressed formally in the impos-

4 Eng and Kazanian offer a "counterintuitive" (5) reading of melancholy, one that attempts, counter to Freud, to depathologize melancholy: "While mourning abandons lost objects by laying their histories to rest, melancholia's continued and open relation to the past finally allows us to gain new perspectives on and new understandings of lost objects" (94). They ask a provocative question: "Might we say that the work of mourning remains becomes possible through melancholia's continued engagement with the various and ongoing forms of loss—as Freud writes 'of a loved person' or 'some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on?'"

5 It is useful to keep in mind Nietzsche's tracing of the term guilt and his admonition to remember that guilt is a moral concept with material origins: "[T]he basic moral term *Schuld* (guilt) has its origin in the very material term *Schulden* (to be indebted)" (*Genealogy* 194).

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sible attempt to extend beyond the limits of the disaster into the *disaster of writing's limitations*.

Whereas "ufo in kushiro" instantiates guilt on a personal, subjective level, "all god's children can dance" wishes to transpose (a sense of) guilt into a larger arena. "all god's children can dance" is a text that uses manifest psychoanalytical tropes/narratives to explore the uneasy relation between desire, loss, and national trauma. Yoshiro is the son of Osaki, a member of a religious cult; Osaki believes, as do some members of her cult, that Yoshiya's father is God. Yoshiya has rejected his mother's beliefs and knows rationally that his father is one of his mother's many lovers; specifically, he believes that his father is an obstetrician with a missing earlobe. Yoshiya's early childhood is spent desperately trying to avoid and repress his sexual desires for his mother, and thus Murakami explicitly stages the story according to an Oedipal scenario:

> They slept in separate bedrooms, of course, but whenever she felt lonely at night she would crawl under his covers with almost nothing on. As if hugging a dog or cat, she would sleep with an arm thrown over Yoshiya, who knew she meant nothing by it, but still it made him nervous. He would twist himself into incredible postures to keep his mother unaware of his erection.
>
> Terrified of stumbling into a fatal relationship with his own mother, Yoshiya embarked on a frantic search for an easy lay … He should have left his mother's house and begun living on his own, Yoshiya knew, and he had wrestled with the question at critical moments … But here he was, twenty five years old, and still unable to tear himself away. (50)

"all god's children can dance" takes place in the immediate aftermath of the Kobe quake. The text, however, contains only one direct reference to the quake: Yoshiya's mother has been staying at her Church's Osaka facility (Osaka is close to Kobe) and has been working offering aid to the survivors. The plot of the narrative concerns Yoshiya as he follows a man (who is missing an earlobe) into the subway and eventually into an abandoned playing field. The man subsequently vanishes, leaving Yoshiya alone to ponder the relation between his desire for his mother, the absent father, and the destruction of cities: "Now that the stranger had disappeared, however, the importance of succeeding acts that had brought him this far turned unclear inside him. Meaning itself broke down and would never be the same again" (63). This is a crucial passage in this story and *after the quake* as a whole. Here Yoshiya—and Murakami—make clear that logical

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connections between events, whether temporal or causal, at times do not function. The structure of meaning itself, as expressed in narrative terms, or religious-philosophical terms, has collapsed: this collapsing becomes meaningful as itself a kind of meaning: "So what if the man was his father, or God, or some stranger who just happened to have lost his right earlobe? It no longer made any difference to him, and this in itself had been a manifestation, a sacrament: should he be singing words of praise?" (64).

Just as Blanchot reminds us that the true disaster is the failure of writing, the limit of writing, the end of representation, Yoshiya's indifference to the nature of his identity—precisely, his indifference to the *narrative* of his identity—itself becomes a sacrament. And yet, enmeshed in this sacrament, perhaps indeed produced by this sacrament as a kind of uncanny after-effect, is a feeling of crime committed and punishment deferred. In some ways, the loss of the father, as the strange logic of Murakami's story would have it, can only produce, as a kind of traumatic aftershock, a reminder of a prior guilty desire for the mother. And this desire is intimately linked in Yoshiya's mind to the disaster at Kobe. Murakami's logic of displacement suggests that the trauma at Kobe unearths—displaces in phenomenal and psychoanalytical senses—subterranean and (badly) repressed desires. Yoshiya dances in the field, a dance that works to bring him to this uncanny place of enlightenment:

> And then it struck him what lay buried far down under the earth on which his feet were so firmly planted: the ominous rumbling of the deepest darkness, secret rivers that transport desire, slimy creatures writhing, the lair of earthquakes ready to transform whole cities into mounds of earth … He thought of his mother far away in that ruined city. What would happen, he wondered, if he could remain his present self and yet turn time backward so as to meet his mother in her youth when her soul was in its deepest state of darkness? No doubt they would plunge as one into the muck of bedlam and devour each other in acts for which they would be dealt the harshest punishment. And what of it? "Punishment?" I was due for punishment long ago. The city should have crumbled to bits around me long ago. (66–67)

Murakami's analogue of repression—the physical subterranean realm with its rivers that transport desire (a perfect emblem of metaphorical displacement)—suggests that displaced desire, illicit desire, is a foundational element in the formation of the subject and of the city: these subterranean currents of darkness and desire help to "create a rhythm

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of the earth" (67). And thus the fantasy that Yoshiya imaginatively plays out—the fantasy of returning to the past to enact these desires—suggests both the inescapability of desire and, perhaps, the inevitable desire for punishment. The phenomenal destruction of Kobe, and by implication Tokyo, thus is the inevitable outcome of a crime repressed and a punishment never inflicted.

Yoshiya thus is indebted: he owes a punishment, a punishment that cannot be paid as such, and therefore a punishment displaced onto the city. Personal guilt ("I was *due* for punishment long ago" [emphasis added]) is neatly displaced onto a larger site of trauma ("The city should have crumbled long ago"). By using the manifest Freudian tropes, Murakami, in what is perhaps the most unsettling aspect of this story, evokes a kind of inevitability of trauma: the Oedipal paradigm, the story suggests, is inescapable, erases temporal and physical boundaries, brings us, precisely, to the limits of desire. The resonance of this story lies in the large implication that somehow the guilt we inevitably accumulate, the punishments that are never meted out, *must be* (and will *have been*) expressed: the energy of overdue punishment, punishment for crimes that cannot but occur, produces a guilt that will be expressed as displaced trauma.

Murakami's text suggests, in its analysis of the inevitability of trauma, an essential and ineluctable link between the subject and his trauma (a trauma in this case which is transposed onto a larger national scale). It is possible thus to figure this inevitability, this unavoidability, this *desire* to repay the guilty debt of punishment, as a kind of melancholia: because this repayment of guilt, guilt that would only ever reconstitute itself in the Oedipal paradigm, can never be made. The desire for the mother that Murakami suggests brings about trauma on a national scale will always be there. What Murakami has uncannily suggested here in this story is that melancholia—as a process of failed mourning for trauma caused by the individual's illicit desire—is oriented as much to the *future* as it is to the past. And thus the aporetic question: how can we mourn and work through a guilt for crimes that have yet to occur, crimes which will have taken place in a possible future?

III.

Part of Murakami's stated anxiety about both the Kobe quake and the Aum Shinrikyo attack is that no one foresaw the events. In some sense, these inevitable traumas and crimes represent a (guilty) failure of the rational imagination, the failure to imagine the possibility of such future traumas and crime. In some sense, thus, *after the quake* and *Underground* represent

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archives of failure, guilty (because posthumous) attempts to retrospectively imagine these events.[6] Yet, there is one moment in *Underground* where Murakami makes an explicit link between his work as a novelist and the Aum Shinrikyo attack. In this passage, Murakami speaks not of a failure to imagine the attack (itself a guilty act) but of an imaginative responsibility for the attack. Murakami mentions his novel *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* and the fictional race he invented called the INKlings. The INKlings are a subterranean race of eyeless monsters who have created a vast network of tunnels under Tokyo. Murakami's words here are crucial:

> A childish fantasy, admittedly. Yet, like it or not, when news of the Tokyo attack reached me, I have to admit these INKlings came to mind: shadowy figures poised waiting just beyond my train window. If I were to give free rein to a very private paranoia, I'd have imagined some crucial link between the evil creatures of my creation and those dark underlings who preyed upon the subway commuters. That link, imaginary or not, provided one rather personal reason for writing this book. (240)

And of course it is the words "imaginary *or not*" that contain the maximum compression of responsibility and imagined and imaginary guilt. *Underground*, in one sense, can be read as the attempt by Murakami to exorcise that guilt, to work through the possibility of his imagined guilt (the guilt of his imagination) by painstakingly attempting to understand the real reasons for the traumatic event. *Underground* thus must be read as Murakami's attempt to displace his guilt by uncovering the truth of history.

But this attempt to work through, to mourn the trauma produced by a guilty imagination, can only displace and defer the event. As Baudrillard reminds us in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (in words echoing Blanchot), "[T]here is an absolute difficulty of speaking of an absolute event" (42). Murakami, however, works to maintain the possibility of accurately transposing, translating, transmitting the truth of the event. Testimony, rather than what we may call the "figurative testimony" of fiction, becomes Murakami's

6 One story in *after the quake* functions as a clear instance of wish-fulfilment. "super-frog saves tokyo" imagines how an earthquake threatening to destroy Tokyo is averted by the combined efforts of a hapless banker (Katagari) and a giant frog. This text clearly, perhaps too clearly, functions as a kind of exorcism of guilt as is plays out Murakami's impossible desire to have saved Kobe from disaster.

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way of translating the ineffable real of the traumatic event. And thus, despite the fact that Murakami "edited, reordered, or rephrased where necessary" to make the manuscript of *Underground* more "readable" (4) and despite the fact that everyone interviewed "asked for some changes or cuts" (6), what remains in this testamentary archive is "unmistakably the truth" (234). This appeal to the truth, of course, speaks quite explicitly to an anxiety surrounding the nature of testimony, an anxiety which I will link in what follows to Murakami's sense that testimony may only be another form of historical displacement. But it should be emphasized here at the outset that these claims to truth lose something of their authority, their appeal to a kind of historical objectivity, when placed next to these explicit confessions of editing, reordering, and rephrasing, of making the texts more "readable." It is of course his term "rephrasing" that speaks most explicitly—and thus ironically—to the fact that *Underground* is as fictionalized as *after the quake*. What we do need to register here, as we pass from one genre (fiction) to another (call it non-"fiction"), is the way in which Murakami hides in plain sight the fact that his text is as much a subjective response to trauma as is *after the quake*, subjective both in the sense that each testimony is an individual response and in the sense that Murakami has re-written each testimony according to specific rhetorical needs. This hiding in plain sight can be read as another manifestation of guilt about the process of translating what cannot be translated: the attempt to capture the event of trauma in language—and thus to displace it—is a crime to which Murakami, by admitting his fictionalizing, obliquely confesses even as he makes claims to the truth.

Indeed, there is a kind of messianic or prophetic impulse at work in this text, a desire to reveal the truth of the Japanese character to the Japanese and a desire to safeguard against future disasters precisely by preserving this trauma in testamentary form. It is here, in the desire to archive the testimony, that the fundamental aporia of (and desire for) mourning occurs, because it is clear that one of Murakami's goals in *Underground* is to force the Japanese to see themselves "in" the trauma (perhaps as in some ways responsible for the trauma) so as to allow a process of mourning-as-healing to occur. It should be foregrounded that this attack, because originating in human action, perhaps allows itself to be mourned in ways that the Kobe quake cannot: there is no fundamental reason for the quake to have occurred (that is, there is no way to stop earthquakes: there are potentially ways of stopping terrorist attacks). Thus, the stories in *after the quake* must end in a kind of melancholic guilt for the inability to understand and mourn that particular trauma. The Aum Shinrikyo

Thus, the stories in *after the quake* must end in a kind of melancholic guilt for the inability to understand and mourn that particular trauma.

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attacks, on the other hand, precisely because originating in human (and thus potentially comprehensible) action, allow for mourning, demand the process of mourning that narrative—as giving voice to and thus working through—can facilitate.[7] Thus Murakami writes about the aftermath of the attack:

> One thing is for sure. Some strange malaise, some bitter aftertaste lingers on. We crane our necks and look around us, as if to ask: Where did all *that* come from? If only to be rid of this malaise, to cleanse our palates of this aftertaste, most Japanese seem ready to pack up the whole incident in a trunk labeled THINGS OVER AND DONE WITH. We would rather the meaning of the whole ordeal was left to the fixed processes of the court and everything was dealt with on a level of "the system." Certainly the legal process is valuable and will bring to light many truths. But unless we Japanese absorb these facts into our metabolism and integrate them into our field of vision, all will be lost in a mass of meaningless detail, court-case gossip, an obscure, forgotten, corner of history. (226)

Murakami's language becomes emphatically psychoanalytical as he speaks of the need to absorb the facts of the attack into a collective "metabolism" in order to comprehend the traumatic event. After this absorption, the trauma will be placed into a narrative form that purifies the event: "If we are to learn anything from this event, we must look at what happened all over again, from different angles, in different ways. Something tells me things will only get worse if we don't wash it out of our metabolism … what we need, it seems to me, are words coming from another direction, new words for a new narrative. Another narrative to purify this narrative" (226–27). Murakami delineates in almost clinical fashion the Freudian paradigm of mourning: the new narrative—*Underground*, these various testimonials—becomes an archive in which the traumatic event is purified.

Murakami sets *Underground* up as a narrative of mourning and purification. Yet the appeal to memory and history (and Murakami's sense of the complicity of the Japanese with Aum Shinrikyo) transforms the mourning archive into a melancholic archive, because there is something

7 If mourning is predicated on an understanding of trauma *as* trauma, it is clearly a process intimately connected to the function of narrative. Narrative—as a process of both knowing and telling—allows the epistemological working through that mourning requires: the event must be *known* as event and communicated as such.

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contradictory about Murakami's desires in *Underground*, a contradiction that highlights the aporia at the heart of the work of mourning itself. Murakami desires to integrate the trauma of the attack—to remember in Freud's terms; he then wishes to wash the event "out of our metabolism" (226), to work through, again in Freud's terms. Yet the work itself—*Underground*—like all monuments, all archives working to preserve the past, the memories of the past, stands as the absolute negation of mourning. The text functions as what I have elsewhere referred to as the "melancholy archive."[8] The individual subjects offering their narratives perhaps have worked through their individual trauma; yet *Underground* functions, to borrow again from Abraham and Torok, as a crypt in which the trauma is preserved.[9] Indeed, the first part of *Underground* explicitly functions as a cryptic archive, supplementing the loss that occurred in the victims. One of the central effects of the sarin attack was the loss of memory; some, like Koichi Sakata (86), Noburu Terajima (149), Hiroshige Sugazaki (121), or Shintaro Komada (107) found their short-term memories to be deteriorated (Komada, for instance, could not remember the details of the day-to-day routine of the office); others, like "Shizuko Akashi," a thirty-one year old, suffered devastating losses of memory. Shizuko, paralyzed by the attack, has made progress to the point of being able to communicate verbally. Nevertheless, her condition is not promising:

> [H]er memory has almost totally gone. Sadly, she remembers nothing before the attack. The doctor in charge says she's mentally "about grade-school level," but just what that means Tatsuo [Shizuko's brother] doesn't honestly know. Nor do I. Is that the overall level of her thought processes? Is it her synapses, the actual "hardware" of her thinking circuitry? Or is it a question of "software," the knowledge and information she has lost?… She remembers most of what's happened to her since the attack, but not everything. Tasuo can never predict what she'll remember and what she'll forget. (97–98)

The story of Shizuko, one that touched Murakami profoundly, can be seen, indeed should be seen, as a symptom of the trauma that Murakami's archive seeks to preserve rather than to ameliorate and place under erasure

8 See "The Melancholy Archive: Jose Saramago's *All the Names*."

9 In "Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection *versus* Incorporation," Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok suggest that the crypt contains the traces of trauma, the "objectal correlative" of loss: "Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject. Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt" (130).

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through the process of mourning. Murakami's archived story of Shizuko—and indeed the entirety of *Underground*—works to preserve the events and the knowledge of the events prior to the attack that erased her memory. More pointedly, Murakami's re-telling of her story works to *supplemen*t the loss of her memory of events prior to the attack by refashioning the narrative of her life. Murakami retells stories of Shizuko's past in order to facilitate an (imaginary) connection to a past that is clearly lost. Murakami describes Shizuko's niece and nephew who repeat a narrative of visiting Disneyland every time they in turn visit their Aunt in the hospital:

> So Disneyland as a place has become fixed in her mind as something like a symbol of freedom and health. Nobody knows if Shizuko can actually remember having been there herself. It may only be a later implanted memory. After all, she doesn't even remember her own room where she lived for so long. (102)

As such Murakami's narrative refuses, or strives to refuse, the comfort of mourning precisely as it maintains and supplements Shizuko's lost memory. Shizuko's narrative, thus archived and present to the reader, brings Shizuko back to that event, brings her trauma back to the time of its instantiation; thus that trauma is maintained in a kind of melancholy stasis, a *narrative* stasis brutally reflective of the somatic paralysis of Shizuko herself.

One of the uncanny effects of Murakami's collection of narratives is the (perhaps perverse) connection that is drawn between the victim and the terrorist cult member, because it is clear from the interviews that loss, deliberately inflicted or welcomed, defines both the victim and the terrorist. The narrative of Shizuko, surely the emotional core of *Underground*, is uncannily refracted, inversely refracted perhaps, in aspects of the narratives of some Aum members. Shizuko's loss of her past, for instance, is echoed by the so-called "renunciate" members of Aum, those members who, on being selected by Shoko Asahara himself, deliberately—and brutally—sever all ties to the past. As Mitsuharu Inaba, a renunciate, puts it, "If there was nothing within me I could rely on, then the only thing to do was to give myself up to Aum. Besides, I always thought that someday I'd renounce the world" (281). Inaba details how a sense of a loss of subjectivity defines the immersion in Aum and how the leader assumes total interpretive control of the world: the leader becomes "the person who would provide the final answer to Buddhist teachings. The one who could interpret it for me" (284). Another renunciate, Hiroyuki Kano, details precisely

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how the leader compelled a severing of connections to the past, how the leader initiated loss as a central tenet of the Aum faith: "There were very few people who started out as renunciates. It's rare. But I was so weak I couldn't walk properly and I was sure if things continued as they were I wouldn't be able to live a normal life. 'You don't fit this transient world,' I was told [by *Asahara*],' and I certainly agreed." (258)

Thus what appears to be a voluntary renunciation and loss of the past (for the terrorist) precedes the act of terror that robs the victim of *her* past. And just as Murakami's narrative of Shizuko serves to supplement details of her (lost) past, so too do his interviews with Aum members: he forces a kind of nostalgic return to their renounced past. In these interviews, Murakami compels the Aum members to revisit the past, to revisit their childhoods and, in at least two cases (with Miyuki Kanda and Shin'ichi Hosoi), the effects of their renunciations on their families. It is here that Murakami's *Underground* fulfills its purpose as absolute melancholic archive: he compels the Aum member back into the past and he preserves that nostalgic return in the archive that is *Underground*.

Melancholia, as Derrida proposes, prevents the working through that occurs at the site of "normal" mourning. The dead other, the lost object, the event that has caused massive psychic disruption, remains:

> Now, what is the crypt in this instance? It is that which is constituted as a crypt in the body for the dead object in a case of unsuccessful mourning, mourning that has not been brought to a normal conclusion. The metaphor of the crypt returns insistently. Not having been taken back inside the self, digested, assimilated as in all "normal" mourning, the dead object remains like a living dead abscessed in a specific spot in the ego. It has its place, just like a crypt in a cemetery or temple, surrounded by walls and all the rest. The dead object is incorporated into this crypt—the term "incorporated" signaling precisely that one has failed to digest or assimilate it totally, so that it remains there, forming a pocket in the mourning ego. (*Ear* 57)

The event cannot be interiorized and thus "I keep it in me, as a persecutor perhaps, a living dead" (58). It is here, in the sense that the historical event becomes a kind of persecutor, that Murakami's, and by extension the Japanese people's, guilt becomes manifest. Melancholia is a form, as I am characterizing it here, of a narrative preservation of trauma: that preservation becomes an objective correlative of the guilt that attends the apprehension of the event as trauma *as such*.

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Murakami speaks of this guilt implicitly when he refers to the Aum Shinrikyo cult as the distorted image of Japanese culture:

> "[T]hey" are the mirror of "us"!
>
> Now of course a mirror image is always darker and distorted. Convex and concave swap places, falsehood wins over reality, light and shadow play tricks. But take away these dark flaws and the two images are uncannily similar; some details almost seem to conspire together. Which is why we avoid looking directly at the image, why, consciously or not, we keep eliminating these dark elements from the face we want to see. These subconscious shadows are an "underground" that we carry around within us, and the bitter aftertaste that continues to plague us long after the Tokyo gas attack comes seeping out from below. (229)

There is much hidden, encrypted, perhaps in a guilty fashion, in this statement.

Murakami maintains that the Aum Shinrikyo cult cannot be held as the "other" to Japanese culture. The cult, "distorted image of ourselves" (228), must be seen as an integral element of Japanese culture, and thus the actions of the cult are in some ways the responsibility of all of Japan. Murakami's reading of the relation between Aum and Japanese society therefore also transposes the guilt for the crimes. *Underground* becomes a mirror reflecting the totality of Japanese culture, not merely the faces of victims and a few perpetrators: as a melancholy archive *Underground* strives to maintain the truth of the historical events of the attack present for all and for all time.

Yet the links between Japanese culture, Aum Shinrikyo, and Murakami himself are perhaps more complex than Murakami tacitly would admit. In the Preface to Part Two of *Underground*, Murakami makes a cryptic statement that stands alone without commentary or further elaboration. He has mentioned his interviews with members of Aum and then he writes: "[S]till, talking to them so intimately made me realize how their religious quest and the process of novel writing, though not identical, are similar" (250). There is much hidden, encrypted, perhaps in a guilty fashion, in this statement. It should be clear that Murakami sees a link not merely between the religious quest of Aum and the novelist but between the inevitable outcomes of that quest—terrorism—and the work of the novelist. Perhaps at some level terrorism and art are works of imaginative transformation; perhaps terrorism and art work to shock the complacent imagination with new perceptions of the real (indeed, this may be what *after the quake in toto* is "about"). Yet at work in Murakami's cryptic statement, and at work in both *after the quake* and *Underground*, is a perception, perhaps

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too difficult to bring fully to light, a perception that must remain present in its guilty repression, of the relation between terrorism and testimony (both *after the quake* and *Underground* function as testimony). In *The Illusion of the End,* Baudrillard suggests that the end or goal of terrorism is the end of history. Terrorism, as an expression of a kind of messianic apocalypticism, works to bring about an ecstatic end to the narrative of history: "And what, indeed, is terrorism, if not this effort to conjure up, in its own way, the end of history?" (8). The link between terrorism and testimony may seem a perverse one, an impossible one, an absurd one. But the logic of both *after the quake* and *Underground* suggests, even as the texts struggle to grasp and understand the nature of terror and terrorism, that testimony is itself only ever a displacement of history, of historical events. Murakami's desperate assertion of the truth of his accounts—that are *his* after all—can only be seen as an expression of anxiety about the way the testamentary narrative serves to displace even as it supplements history. And Murakami's strange sentence about the relation between the religious quest and writing begins to take on an added resonance, offering, perhaps, a commentary both on his own work and, we might add, on Adorno's comment that "Every work of art is an uncommitted crime" (*Minima Moralia* 111). Precisely as Murakami's texts become the guilt they wish to express, precisely as the texts archive trauma (even in and especially as its supplemental displacement) and thus become that trauma, precisely as history is effaced by the logic of testamentary melancholy, the work of art becomes a *committed* crime, in every sense of the word. Committed to the preservation of trauma, to a continual melancholic return to the scene of the crime, the criminal narrative act *is* guilty even and especially as it acknowledges its failure, tacitly or otherwise, to mourn that trauma.

IV.

Murakami has created a narrative crypt in an effort to keep memory alive as a constant reminder to the Japanese of the failure to have seen clearly the true lineaments of their own culture, their own faces. *Underground*, as both testimony and persecutor, becomes the guilt of which it wishes to speak: it speaks of guilt as it becomes that guilt. More precisely, *Underground* reminds us of the peculiar nature of guilt; guilt is the remainder of the past and a reminder of the future to come. It is clear that a testamentary narrative like *Underground*—and by extension *after the quake*—works to remind of the past and to warn against potential blindness to come. Murakami wishes the Japanese to take responsibility for the failure to have recognized themselves "in" Aum; the inevitable corollary of this guilt is the

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idea that the potential for this misrecognition to repeat itself, a misrecognition that perhaps allows the Japanese to define themselves against the other, is always present. It is in this sense that we can say that testimony—as a discourse of memory and a discourse oriented to the future—is always conditioned by twin absences or displacements: the past can never be rendered as such, the future, cannot, will not, take place as such.[10] Texts like *Underground* and *after the quake*, precisely as they attempt to speak of guilt and responsibility, to speak past and thus to mourn this guilty responsibility, inevitably fail, fail in fact a priori to carry out the business of testimony. The writing of disaster becomes the disaster of writing, the failure, the guilty failure, to translate the event, the disaster, the narrative that must contain the past in order to work through. As the logic of the melancholy archive demonstrates, the past will always make claims on the present and the future, rendering any attempt to mourn impossible: the testament—as archive, as monument to loss, of loss—will only and ever render history melancholic. What remains then of the text, in the text, what indeed, can only *be* remains, are the traces, the cinders of the trauma: the writing that immolates as it speaks its failure to speak.

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10 We might, after Baudrillard, refer to the absence of the past and the future as "the unlimited suspending of the end" (*Illusion* 7).

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