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

[Mattar, Netty](#) [Save all to author list](#)^a International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia[Full text options](#) [Abstract](#)[Author keywords](#)[SciVal Topics](#)

Abstract

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

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Commemoration; Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World ; Haruki Murakami ; Speculative fiction; Trauma

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✉ Mattar, N.; International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia;

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