

## Numbness of the Mind Paradigm in Haruki Murakami's *After the Quake* and Iraq's After the Quake

أنموذج العجز الفكري في مجموعة هاروكي موراكامي القصصية ما بعد الزلزال  
والواقع العراقي بعد زلزال الاحتلال

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### Abstract

Haruki Murakami (1949-present) is a contemporary Japanese writer whose works have been translated into fifty languages and won him plenty of Japanese and international awards. His short stories are well constructed in a weird realistic manner and are mixed with elements of surrealism. His novels and short stories fall under the genre of magical realism. One of the major revolving themes that Murakami wrote about was the haunting feeling of emptiness and disconnectedness in a world which seems to care much for materialism and self-interests.

The paper explores two of Murakami's short stories in his book **After the Quake** (2000) and the relevance of their themes and characters to Iraq after the quake. Literally, Iraq may never have witnessed a real earthquake, but one can say its metaphorical meaning has a great implication upon the lives of its people. The reference to Iraq after the quake in this paper would focus on the aftermath of the 2003 War such as: the feeling of disconnection among people, disinclination in life, feelings of deprivation and depreciation, and the corruption of leaders and politicians. Likewise, though Murakami's short stories chosen in this paper do not deal with the actual earthquake, its implications can be felt as we read the stories. His characters witness a sense of disconnectedness and the feeling of being unappreciated even when they do the hardest and most dangerous jobs.

Two of Murakami's short stories "UFO in Kushiro" and "Super Frog Saves Tokyo" are tackled to show the paradigm and comparison between the lives of these characters (that are actually a reflection of Japanese lives in mid

1990s) and the restricted depressing life of the Iraqis in the postwar era of the 2003 War. Both have experienced fragmentation, despair and lack of self-worth due to the reasons that are explained in this paper. The Iraqis however, may have experienced a deeper suffering where one can say they have reached a state of the numbness or enslavement of the mind and feelings. The paper also highlights that animosity should be dissipated from the hearts of people specifically in politicians and top leaders. Though it is a complicated world, man should conceive that the prosperity of mankind rests in his own hands. Cherishing the diversity of cultures and understanding each other's moral principles are the means to diminish evil in order to reach the desired bliss.

**Keywords:** despair, numbness of the mind, evil, unprotected, earthquake, self-fulfillment

I

Most of Murakami's works manifest the sense of despair, emptiness, and disconnection from others even when Japan was witnessing its economic boom in the 1980s. Though Murakami's characters appear content and lead an ordinary life, they shun themselves from their surroundings to create a self-imposed detachment. In doing so, they later realize that there is a missing gap in their lives and eventually try to establish some coherence between themselves and their perplexed surroundings.

Patricia Welch asserts, "not realizing that what they [the Japanese] believe to be 'identity' is largely a by-product of ideology that supports the interest of the state and capitalism" (1). She further states, "the core-level malaise of such characters shows the numbness effect of contemporary Japanese society on the individual and suggest that, economic success aside, postwar Japan was no utopian paradise"(2). In many of Murakami's novels and short stories, his characters struggle to establish their identity in a country that cares little for their needs. Likewise, the Iraqi people have struggled tremendously during the postwar era of 2003 to maintain an

identity and self-fulfillment in a system that seems to care very little for their aspirations. Frequently the state seems to suppress the Iraqi's needs by dehumanizing them and crushing their identities in the name of sectarianism and ethnicity. Free choice seems to be a far-reaching end to the Iraqi citizens (after the 2003 War) and have learned to accept their fates in a blind manner. They feel unprotected and live nervously in a state of partial displaced order and regulations. For that reason, amongst other reasons that are tackled in this paper, most of the Iraqi citizens have been experiencing the sense of loss and fear after the occurrence of the 2003 War; a state that can be called the numbness or enslavement of the mind and feelings.

However, most of Murakami's works manage to portray how the characters transgress these feelings in order to pass into the path of awareness and hopefulness. In regard to this matter, Murakami stated in an interview "he [his protagonists] 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" (3). The characters in his book of short stories **After the Quake**, are never real witnesses or present at the actual earthquake, yet the effects and aftermath of it can be felt deeply upon them.

The earthquake he mentions in **After the Quake** is a relevance to the actual earthquake that occurred in Kobe, Japan in January 1995. It caused about 6000 deaths and massive devastation. The Japanese were struck by its magnitude and the huge disaster it inflicted. They were further struck in March 1995 when two major subway lines in Tokyo were attacked by a coordinated release of sarin gas. These two events "powerfully traumatized the Japanese society exposing...uncertainties and anxieties" (4). Though the casualties were low, the subway gas attack shocked the Japanese people because of its terrorist act. Most fingers were pointed at the Aum Shinrikyo, a radical Buddhist cult, for carrying out that attack. Paul Scalise quoted Japanese psychoanalyst Miyamoto Masao's assessment "young people just don't know what to believe. ...At school, they feel alone and unprotected... . When they leave school, they join cults because the cults give them a sense of belonging" (5). A considerable number of Japanese graduates were

attracted in joining the Shinrikyo cult (as a religious organization) to give them a sense of belonging. Ironically, the cult leader used those elite members in his organization for atrocious deeds. The leader of the cult was eventually arrested for the subway gas attack. Thus, what Murakami wanted to explore throughout his various works is that confusion and despair exist even in a prosperous capitalistic society.

The earthquake in **After the Quake** is used as a symbol to show the fragmented self in the lives of Murakami's characters. The similarity of those characters can thus have a parallel to the depressing lives of the Iraqi people under the strident conditions of the terrorist acts in the postwar era of 2003. The association of these characters to the aim of this paper highlights how some of those people had to face the duality in others' personalities (their hypocrisy). That is why they would either retreat into a desolate state to face their fragmented self because they cannot cope in dealing with those people or might avert themselves into becoming hypocritical though this could stand against their moral values. However, others would think deeply of a positive crucial change to the system to assess their beliefs, concepts, and values.

As stated earlier, most of the stories in **After the Quake** have indirect implications to the earthquake that occurred in Japan in 1995, but none of them deals with the actual incident itself. On writing the short stories, Murakami highlights the points that represent the earthquake such as; trauma, perplexity, and despair. The characters in **After the Quake** are faced with certain disruption. It is after they undergo the traumatic experiences caused by the earthquake that their lives are later transformed into a more enlightening vision. Writing about those characters, Murakami's aim is not only to portray their emptiness but to dissipate the hopelessness and deadness in his readers as well so they could adjust to a brighter state as Rosbrow confirms, "the characters in his stories are first disrupted, and eventually transformed by their experience of trauma" (6). In confronting his protagonists to the outcome of the earthquake, Murakami shows the hollow life they have led and make them realize how unappreciated they have been despite their hard work. He manifests the quake as a turning

point in their lives (a kind of an epiphany) to be confronted with their despair and emptiness that they have long held.

Nearly all the characters in **After the Quake** witness emotional wounds, isolation, and aimless life due to their being under the circumstances of modern-day life. Lofgren asserts that “all are emotional wounds, bound together by the isolating tendencies of modern life” (7). However, at some point in their lives, they would witness a kind of a healing effect. This is achieved either at their own willingness or would be instigated by another comforting person or by another striking event. In this paper, the lives of the protagonists in the stories chosen, are extremely similar to the lives of the Iraqi people after the 2003 war. It seems that after the outbreak of the war, the Iraqis are living in an ongoing process of despair despite the modernity and new technology in life. They want to construct a fabrication of oblivion in order to forget the numbness of the mind. They feel fragmented and hollow due to the thwart appreciation and the incapability to plan a bright future for their lives. It is only after being submerged in the trauma of living a futureless life that they begin to realize there apt to be a change.

Likewise, the protagonists chosen in the short stories of this paper undergo the same feeling of emptiness and deadness of the mind of the Iraqi people. In “UFO in Kushiro”, the protagonist Komura is left by his wife unexpectedly. After watching the news of the Kobe earthquake for five consecutive days, Komura’s wife (she remains unnamed) decides to leave her husband leaving him a note of never returning back. She wrote in her note, “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” (8). It is only when Komura’s wife watches the horrific incident of the earthquake that she realizes how neglected and shallow her life has been. Unlike Komura who may not have experienced those feelings because his wife’s presence made him always feel secure from the outer world until her departure. He is thus struck when his wife tells him he is just “a chunk of air”. The trauma of the earthquake as Rosbrow states, “disturbs her [Komura’s wife] psychic equilibrium, and

makes her unable to stand his emptiness”(9). He finally agrees to his wife’s request and is granted the divorce she wanted. As Komura decides to take a week off from work to clear his thoughts, his coworker offers him a free trip to a distant city, Hokkaido, but is to deliver a small weightless box to the coworker’s sister. Being assured there is nothing dangerous in the box, Komura agrees to deliver it. As he reaches his destination and is met by his coworker’s sister, Keiko, and her female friend Shimao at the airport, Komura feels a sense of numbness and confusion. Meeting those two females makes him clumsy and inconvenient that when Keiko asks him if his wife’s departure had something to do with the earthquake, Komura replies “probably not. I don’t think so” (p.12). One can say that Komura’s undergoing those feelings of dejection and loss of order is quite similar to a soldier experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after the occurrence of a certain war.

Similar to Komura’s feelings, the Iraqi people have lost their sense of predictability and order after witnessing the earthquake, and by earthquake here I mean the 2003 War. After witnessing the traumatic event of the war and its aftermath, many of them have started to feel more withdrawn, indifferent, and above all having a sense of loss and disorder in their lives. Many would say, “we are like the living dead” due to the spiritless and flavorless life that lies ahead of them. People would go to work, do businesses, go to schools, have sex, but these are all done in a tasteless manner due to their being submerged in how to tackle the issues of sectarianism, kidnappings, killings, unemployment that occurred after the 2003 war. They could well be undergoing PTSD (even though for those who have not participated in the actual war of 2003) without being aware of it. This can be confirmed when a number of fifty individuals (most of them university professors) were asked how their lives felt after the 2003 war; all stated that it was either depressing or miserable. None of them said it was joyful (10). People do their daily routine work and chores but in a depressing and flavorless manner. They do not have that sense of joy and stability like they had before the war. In other words, they do not live a normal ordinary life. It is a state of the numbness of the mind and feelings.

Likewise, when Komura finishes dinner with the two ladies and is taken to the hotel, Shimaō attempts to have sex with him and tells him, “you need to lighten up and learn to 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 bears. Nobody knows what’s going to happen” (p.17). He acknowledges to her and after several failed attempts to have sex, Komura gives up. Being asked by Shimaō if he has been thinking about his wife, Komura ascertains that fact to her. But in fact Komura’s mind was evoked by images of the earthquake, “images of it had come to him one after another, as if in a slide show, flashing the screen and fading away. Highways, flames, smoke, piles of rubble, cracks in streets” (p.17). Komura’s inability here could well resemble many of the Iraqi males to fulfil the needs of their wives whether financially, physically, or emotionally speaking due to their being in a stressful unstable life full of troubles of unemployment, kidnappings, corruption, and high living expenses.

When Shimaō inquires what Komura’s note said, he tells her, “that living with me was like living with a chunk of air” (p.18). Being surprised of what that means, Komura tells Shimaō, “that there is nothing inside me, I guess. ... I’m not sure, though. I may have nothing inside me, but what would *something* be” (p.18). Komura is then suddenly struck and bothered by that thought that he wants to know what was that something inside the box which he brought to his coworker’s sister, Keiko. When Komura wonders why that thought bothers him all of a sudden, Shimaō says in a low voice, “it’s because that box contains the something inside you. You didn’t know that when you carried here and gave it to Keiko with your own hands. Now you’ll never get it back” (p.19). For a split of a second Komura is overwhelmed and empowered by rage but forces himself to calm down when Shimaō apologizes to him. Freud speaks of the melancholic’s loss of the love object:

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...[when] a loss of this kind occurred, ...

one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost. (11)

The loss of the box could well resemble the corruption of some of the politicians who have lost that something (in their case, it could well be their integrity and patriotism) even before holding their positions. Their lost integrity is the something which in a similar way parallels Komura's something that was lost and that he will "never get it back" (p.19). Boutler suggests that Komura's losing the box (as he gives it to Keiko) means he has lost the box which contains his lost self (his emptiness). Boutler further states, "Komura has lost the crypt containing his loss (he gives the box to Keiko): this doubled loss, this doubled absence, makes mourning impossible" (12). Likewise, corrupt politicians have lost that "something" which is inside the box. Their integrity has been lost and ripped off from their souls. Hence, the lack of responsibility occurs without them knowing about it, and naturally any sense of commitment toward their citizens becomes useless. That is when mourning becomes impossible, i.e., would not share or feel their citizens' despair and this is where they reach the most crucial and dangerous state; a state of numbness toward their community.

One must mention that the loss of Komura's box is never to the same extent as that of the bad politicians' loss of integrity. Komura "can never name the loss, the 'something' that is now absent. And yet he feels compelled now to know his loss" (13). At least when Komura is agitated by Shimao in telling him that he would never get the box back, he becomes quite willing in trying hard to understand what that something was in the box which he lost. It could be his guilt in not fulfilling his wife's desires or it could well be something else. However, corrupt politicians unlike Komura, would rarely be willing to know and understand their mistakes. Freud explains that a person's melancholy is risen "only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him" (14). This could well explain the ignorance of the corrupt politicians toward their society



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because they do not realize to whom nor what has been lost in them. They never face melancholy simply because they keep a blind eye and a deaf ear to the requests and demands of their citizens. They are mainly interested in their own self-benefits.

Surprisingly though, the story ends on a glimpse of hope as Komura closes his eyes and “the huge bed stretched out around him like a nocturnal sea” (p.19). He as Rosbrow affirms, “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” (15). Komura is never present at the actual incident of the earthquake but its effect can clearly be seen on how numb, strange, and depressing his life has been. Komura “feels strange and agitated, unable to grasp what has happened to him” (16). After the earthquake incident and his wife’s disappearance, Komura can be considered somehow similar to the Iraqi citizens who are witnessing the lack of feelings and the disappearance of family bondage. One can highlight the point here that for each disturbing trauma such as a war or an earthquake, people would undergo a certain confusion and at times an overlap of feelings and confused existence. Freud believed in both of his models (the Dynamic and the Economic Model) that “the conscious and the unconscious battle for control of a person’s actions... . Freud believed that both of these principles [the pleasure principle and the reality principle in the Economic Model] are at war within the human psyche” (17). Komura’s wife, for instance, leaves her husband after seeing the devastation inflicted upon her people by the earthquake. The overlap of feelings can also be noticed when Keiko recalls the incident when the wife of a friend of hers is disrupted and decides to leave her family a week from seeing a huge UFO. They had two kids and had no domestic problems, yet she abandoned her family unexpectedly.

It is noteworthy to mention here that Japanese wives are well-known for their loyalty toward their families, but Komura’s wife’s obscure decision in abandoning her husband makes us think that she has paid no concern in her remaining along with her husband’s side. Similarly, Iraqi women who are well-known for their loyalty and faithfulness, have asked for divorce due to

the unstable complex conditions they have witnessed after 2003 war. Many Iraqi women, for example, preferred to ask for a divorce rather than to remain homeless with their husbands. The fact must be mentioned here that homelessness has become a widespread issue due to one of the consequences of 2003 war such as displacement. Being displaced of their home towns due to sectarianism, ethnicity, and town bombings made a lot of families face unemployment, homelessness and poverty. That is why among other reasons (like depression due to the deaths of their own sons and daughters), the divorce rate rose up to 80% after the outbreak of the 2003 war (18).

Hence, one can also say that the after effects of the traumatic experience of 2003 war made the Iraqi people pretty much like Komura's after effect of the earthquake in a state of numbness and frozen capacity. Bromberg 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" (19). Komura feels emotionally paralyzed due to his wife's desertion, and her disgust toward him. The Iraqis too, feel spiritually frozen and paralyzed (if not physically as well) due to the outcome of the War. Most of them loathe their existence and feel insubstantial and empty due to the reasons mentioned earlier. They are in a state of the entrapment or deadness of the mind and feelings.

Many individuals of the Iraqi society would also feel shallow and disfranchised because their voices and opinions cannot be heard. They feel there is "something missing" inside them which is quite similar to the feeling that Komura felt. It is only when Komura thinks suddenly (when the story is about to end) what could that missing something be, that he is provoked with rage. Shimao apologizes and he is calmed down to be aware of his insubstantiality and thus begins to have a new different perspective toward his life. A lot of the Iraqis too after the traumatic event of 2003 war, have been immersed in insubstantiality and the duality of character where, for example, they try their best to satisfy and comply with their corrupt superiors even if it stands against their own beliefs. Complying against their

moral standards has made them experience a dull and miserable state of mind. Thus, they too should have a sudden awareness (or they may have already recognized their awareness) like Komura to begin their journey of recovery and to eliminate any sense of duality and emptiness. A journey that could recuperate their disinclination in life.

## II

The instability of the conditions in Japan's 1990s such as the Kobe earthquake, gas attack on the subways of Tokyo, and the decline in Japan's economy, can be considered as an analogy to the unsettledness recounted in "Super Frog Saves Tokyo". The story is about Katagiri who one day returns home from work to find a giant talking frog in his own apartment. The Frog incites Katagiri to help him save Tokyo from a second earthquake caused by a gigantic Worm that resides underground (20). Katagiri is an ordinary man who works at a bank as a collection officer to collect the loans from violent clients and companies to deliver them back to the bank. Primarily, Katagiri's job is dangerous because he has to deal with the criminal underworld district of Kabukicho that is filled with gangsters. He "had been surrounded more than once by mobsters threatening to kill him, but he had never been frightened" (21). It seems he does not mind getting shot or killed by those gangsters as he has nothing to lose in his life. He has raised his brothers and sisters single-handedly until their marriages, but has seen no appreciation or gratitude from them. He has not even seen any sense of appreciation or reward from his superiors or colleagues despite the dangerous missions he had to accomplish. Despite being "unappreciated and unpromoted" (p.89), Katagiri has never once complained.

Hence, the giant, well-educated Frog (as Murakami portrays him) thinks the solitary Katagiri is quite suitable for the task in helping him to combat the giant Worm. Though Katagiri is looked down upon by people around him, the Frog thinks that Katagiri is a very courageous and sensible man and that "in all of Tokyo...there is no one else I could trust as much as you to fight by my side"(p.89). Katagiri's reluctance to participate in the fight

against Worm, makes the Frog inform him that he would only need his verbal and spiritual support during the fight. Fighting the Worm is a matter of responsibility and honor to save Tokyo and it is for people like the decent hard-working Katagiri that the Frog wants to save. If they happen to die in the fight or defeat the Worm, no one would recognize that. Thus, it was a battle to be fought alone and to save their citizens from a pernicious monster. Unexpectedly though, before the zero hour of the battle, Katagiri gets shot by one of the gangsters. As he wakes up in the hospital, the nurse tells him that Tokyo has not been struck by any earthquake and that he was only found unconscious on the ground. When the nurse leaves, Frog reappears to Katagiri to assure him that Worm has been defeated and that “the whole terrible fight occurred in the area of imagination. That is the precise location of our battlefield”(p.98).

Before the Frog sinks into a coma to be devoured later by insects and maggots, he tells Katagiri “I am, indeed, pure Frog, but at the same time I am a thing that stands for a world of un-Frog”(p.99). Thus, the sentence uttered by the Frog could have the implication that the Frog can be considered as a symbol for mankind. Though both are confused of what the Frog meant, the Frog here can be proven to be the symbol of sacrifice that should be found in humans. In other words, what Murakami was implying through Frog’s words is that there ought to exist a burnt offering, a sacrifice in humans in order to see the effectiveness of what virtue truly mean. Had they not battled the Worm, Katagiri and the Frog would never have averted the occurrence of the earthquake. It is noteworthy to mention here that the Frog exists in Katagiri’s mind only and that Murakami used the elements of magical realism meticulously to insinuate the fact that “virtue has its own reward even if recognition or reward seems unlikely”(22). Katagiri is unappreciated and unrewarded by others, yet he reacts sincerely to save his fellow mankind from the earthquake.

Worldwide, politicians should take Katagiri’s lesson into consideration where they ought to acknowledge to their countries’ needs. Their cognizance to their citizens should be genuine; they should not seek recognition or popularity while neglecting the essentialities of their

communities, and above all should avoid their own self-benefits. Politicians should be receptive and open to ideas and suggestions made by their communities. There ought to be a mutual understanding between the two components (politicians and citizens) to prove their integrity and loyalty to their countries. One must reflect the point here specifically to the Iraqi politicians after the 2003 war where they have refrained from providing their citizens the most crucial necessities such as security and stability. Complying with the needs of their citizens seems to complicate things to them because of their immersion in the sea of corruption. They would rather favor their own self-interests than to approve their citizens' requirements.

One of Frantz Fanon's major concerns was, "the problem of the 'native bourgeoisie' who assume power after the colonial powers have either departed or been driven out. When this situation occurs, the native proletariat, 'the wretched of the earth', are left on their own, often in a worse situation than before the conquerors arrived"(23). After the occurrence of the 2003 war in Iraq, most working and middle class people have been left in a worse situation than before the war. They have been undergoing a state of the enslavement of the mind and feelings which presumably is even worse than slavery itself. Being incapable to determine their future destination (aims and goals), and the inability to experience a simple ordinary day in their lives (because of fear of getting killed or kidnapped) have all been reasons (among other factors that will be discussed later in the paper) for the acceleration state of the numbness or enslavement of the mind and feelings. Food stores and shopping centers with diverse products, restaurants, and large stores with various electrical and mechanical equipment have been opened, but ironically people's joy and prosperity are hindered due to their restrained feelings of the unknown. Apparently, the politicians too should relate to Katagiri's lesson where sacrifice, reparation, and amendments will prove worthwhile when not considering any rewards or compensations from others. They need to fight their duality where words and actions should coincide to prove their sense of commitment and obligation toward their society.

Since obligation is not practiced sincerely by the superiors in addition to the widely spread of the terrorist acts, the citizens of Iraq resemble Katagiri's sense of loss of connection. In a similar way to Katagiri's feeling, the Iraqis have been experiencing disconnectedness and alienation from their own surroundings due to the aftermath of the 2003 war. One of those after effects is their lack of self-fulfillment where they feel that none of their goals or aims are being achieved. According to them, it is an aimless life and feel utterly unprotected. Naturally this would lead them into a state of perplexity and numbness, and in turn could also lead to a state of a lost identity. Loughman asserted, "the confused or lost identity, [is] caused by absence of 'idealism' or any source of self-fulfillment"(24). For that reason in "Super Frog Saves Tokyo", Katagiri sees the Frog (in his mind's eye) as an escape to avoid his sense of lost identity which is caused by being unappreciated and unrewarded by others (even by his own brothers and sisters). Ty Lai quotes Baker to assert that, " 'becoming-animal' provides a creative escape from a repressive society and other conservative forces"(25). The Frog thus, enables Katagiri to escape from a society that considers him a failure. His acceptance to fight the Worm can not only gain him self-recognition, but the worthy sacrifice that he does would be for the benefit of his own country as well.

Similarly, some of the Iraqis may have started seeing the Frog (in the box of their imagination) to incite them to confront and defy their corrupt superiors. However, their instigation would mostly be curbed due to the evilness that resides in some factions. The parallel of this statement can correspond to Frog's words just before he is devoured by insects and maggots where he says to Katagiri, "what you see with your eyes is not necessarily real. My enemy is, among other things, the me inside me. Inside me is the un-me"(p.100). What Murakami was claiming is that at times evil comes from within. Jacques Lacan explains that any brief moment of terror or joy or desire "arises from deep within our unconscious psyche" (26). Occasionally people could possess some high traits to pursue the righteousness in life, yet infrequently and uncommonly could be villains because of the evil that comes from within. This fact can thus be associated to the terrorist acts that are happening around the world. The probable

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existing evil empowers those terrorists to do the most pernicious acts of violence against humanity. Freud asserts, “the interaction of the id, ego, and superego greatly determine our behavior”(27). It is:

the superego [that] acts like an internal censor, causing us to make moral judgements in light of social pressures. In contrast to the id [which is responsible for the darkest wishes and desires], the superego operates according to the morality principle and serves primarily to protect society and us from the id. ...the superego serves as a filtering agent, suppressing the desires and instincts forbidden by society and thrusting them back into the unconscious(28)

Hence, in the terrorist case, their superego may not be functioning as it should be.

The Worm in “Super Frog Saves Tokyo”, can best be associated with evil. However, Murakami complicates things to us when on one occasion Frog says, “I don’t see him [Worm] as the embodiment of evil”(p.88). The Frog accepts the existence of Worm as long as Worm does not exceed in his atrocity. He thinks the world is like “a great big overcoat, and it needs pockets of various shapes and sizes. But right at the [that] moment Worm has reached the point where he is too dangerous to ignore”(p.88). In a sense, the authenticity of Frog’s words can be considered thoughtfully because the world is truly like a big overcoat that consists of vice and virtue (and of course among other things as well). If evil (which exists in humans) prevails to become unstoppable, it then leads to absolute danger and chaos. In relation to this point, the fact must be mentioned that terrorist organizations would select the dejected disfranchised people to be recruited in acts of violence because evil can be nurtured more easily in those forlorn oppressed people. Worldwide, acts of violence and terrorism

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have risen in the past decade and a half (particularly in Iraq). Unemployment, lost identity, lack of self-fulfillment in some wretched abandoned souls have paved the way to create a new personality in them; a personality that is full of atrocity and retaliation. One can say that the abominable Worm (evil) has engulfed them to bring the end of history which is one of the major goals of some terror organizations. Baudrillard confirms that, "the end or goal of terrorism is the end of history"(29).

Many recruits in terror organizations have been misled by certain convictions (such as religion) to be reshaped into a total discrepancy to their original beliefs. They would thus want to perform the most atrocious acts to destroy civilization and history. ISIS, for example, has implemented one of its despicable acts when looting the Iraqi artifice in 2014 in order to erase Iraq's culture and history. The savage barbarous killings of the innocents by such terrorist organizations in the name of Islam has reached the peak of enormity. Ironically, (one must mention the fact here) the Islam religion does not compel them to perform such contemptible acts; it is a religion of peace, mercy, and compassion. Hence, their misinterpretations to the Islamic religion and to the codes of humanity have exceeded the limits pretty much like Worm's evocative enormity in "Super Frog saves Tokyo". Those members in such terrorist organizations are brain washed losers who are working to fulfill some hidden agenda and the aim is unknown but the innocents are paying the price most definitely. Their eradication is of great essentiality which is similar to the elimination of the big evil Worm.

Thus, the battle had to be waged between Katagiri, the Frog, and the Worm in order to save the citizens of Tokyo from its outrageous evil. As the battle is won by Katagiri and the Frog, maggots devour Frog's body and then would swarm Katagiri. As he screams and wakes up from a horrific dream, Katagiri finds himself in the hospital where the nurse has come to his aid. Katagiri recalls Frog's final words "my enemy is, among other things, the me inside me"(p.100). Similarly, the enemy of some citizens (be it the corrupt Iraqi politicians, for example) might as well be the enemy that resides in their souls where they would claim they have come for the betterment and



rectitude of their country. Ironically though, their offensive deeds prevail because evil has empowered them. Hassan Blasim, a contemporary Iraqi author, asserts that fact when commenting about his short stories that “the world is very fragile, frightening and inhumane...all it needs is a little shake for its hideous nature and its primeval fangs to emerge”(30).

Consequently, it is up to the people to understand the authenticity of man’s own true identity and values. They should not deviate from their moral standards no matter how harsh the conditions can be. One must realize that no matter how poor or vulnerable a man can be, he has to defy the gigantic Worm (evil) in order to reach the required elation. Patricia Welch states:

Though his [Murakami’s] protagonists are ordinary individuals, they can do extraordinary things if they live their lives meaningfully, use knowledge responsibly, and caution themselves not to follow blindly another’s questionable utopian narrative. Above all, they must choose to act but also to accept that in some circumstances they might be their own worst enemy (31)

Thus, one’s own audacious individuality can truly be expressed in orienting himself to the sincere salvation of mankind. According to the philosopher-scientist Benjamin Franklin, “individuals must find salvation within themselves”(32). But one should also keep in mind Jacques Lacan’s analysis which is “to teach us that a fully integrated and psychologically whole person does not exist”(33). Nevertheless, people have to make exceptional efforts to stand in the face of their inner evil. In doing so, they will avoid degradation and live a meaningful life. Consequently, the enslavement or numbness of their minds and feelings will be freed and would obtain a brighter perspective in life.

### Conclusion

Eliminating and extracting one's self from his/her surroundings is a disregard to the existence of mankind and nature. However, there are certain conditions that are way beyond his control which affect his normal life. In an age where man's reliance on technology should have prevailed worldwide prosperity and peace; unfortunately though, other despairing issues can also be seen such as devastation of towns and trepidation. Is it man's own mistake? Is it the inner evil that resides in mankind?

The paradigm shown in this paper in the chosen short stories of Murakami to the lives of the Iraqi people is that at certain times, people's minds can be poisoned by malevolence. It is when this malice exceeds its limitation that man becomes so hostile toward his fellow brother and thinks only of his self- benefit. The reference to earthquake in both Murakami's short stories and Iraq is a symbol to any traumatic event (evil) which is actually caused by man's detestation to humanity. People should always conceive that any traumatic attack originates from human action (excluding those caused by Mother Nature). Murakami's characters in **After the Quake** resemble the lives of the Iraqi society after the eruption of the war in 2003 where the individuals in both cases are left in despair and a flavorless life. They both face the numbness or the enslavement of the mind and feelings due to their repressed goals. Competition to political and economic power by top leaders and officials has transformed an ordinary man's life into an aimless one. Man has begun to face the sense of duality in others and is incapable of defying their corruption and obnoxious deeds. Hence, it is a natural fact that he sinks into an ocean of despair and disconnectedness.

The significance of the word "after" in **After the Quake** is to show that people should comprehend their sense of commitment after any bad incident they might face. It refers to people's realization to the disruptive aftermath of a traumatic event. Thus, the paper has proven that though the residue of a devastating earthquake (evil malicious acts) was deep, the characters should adapt to mitigate those conditions. In a similar way, the desperate Iraqi citizens could well use (if not they may have already started using) the analogy in Murakami's stories in order to seek a relief from their numbness of the mind.

Hence, man's own self-worth can only be established when evil is diminished. People should abridge themselves to the understanding of the diversity of cultures and religions. They should orient themselves to living in a versatile world and to accept societies' differences in order to reach the required prosperity. Evil in man should be diminished by education, knowledge, and the acceptance of each other's concepts. Top leaders and officials should cooperate for the betterment of all humanity. Worldwide, the apprehension that corruption should be wiped out and that the countries' wealth should be distributed fairly, must be their top priorities. Man after all is only a human being and he is apt to falter at some point. However, it is always never too late to face his compunction and to signify that missing something inside him ( as in the case of Komura in "UFO in Kushiro") in order to meliorate things for the progress and salvation of humanity, and above all for establishing his self-value.

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**Notes**

- (1) Patricia Welch, "Haruki Murakami's Storytelling World", **World Literature Today**, Vol. 79 No. 1 (Jan.-April 2005):56
  - (2) Ibid., p.56
  - (3) Haruki Murakami, "The Art of Fiction", **Paris Review**, No.182 (2004):136-37 (interviewed by J. Wray)
  - (4) Jonathan Boulter, "Writing Guilt: Haruki Murakami and the Archives of National Mourning", **ESC: English Studies in Canada**, Vol.32 Issue1 (March 2006):125
  - (5) Patricia Welch, p.57
  - (6) Thomas Rosbrow, "Murakami's *After the Quake*-The Writer as Waking Dreamer and Trauma Analysis", **Psychoanalytic Dialogues**, Vol.22 (2012):219
  - (7) Erik R. Lofgren, "Japan", **World Literature Today**, Vol.77 No.1 (April-June 2003):99
  - (8) Haruki Murakami, **After the Quake**, Trans. Jay Rubin (London: Vintage Books, 2002), p.4
- All subsequent references to the text are taken from this edition.
- (9) Thomas Rosbrow, p.221
  - (10) A simple questionnaire was prepared by me that consisted of seven questions to assess how the Iraqis felt after 2003 war.
  - (11) Jonathan Boulter, p.131
  - (12) Ibid., p.131
  - (13) Ibid., p.132
  - (14) Ibid., p.131
  - (15) Thomas Rosbrow, p.223
  - (16) Ibid., p.224
  - (17) Charles E. Bressler, **Literary Criticism** (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2007), p.145
  - (18) In an interview with the Director of the Civil Status Division at a court in Baghdad in 11/4/2016. She informed me that until the end of 2015, the divorce rate has risen to 80% since the 2003 war.

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(19) P. Bromberg, "Something Wicked this Way Comes", **Awakening the Dreamer** (NJ: The Analytic Press, 2006), pp. 174-202

(20) The Initial letters of the words Frog and Worm will be capitalized as they appeared in the text.

(21) Haruki Murakami, **After the Quake** (London: Vintage Books, 2002), p.87

All subsequent references to the short story will be taken from this source and only page number will be shown.

(22) [www.sparknotes.com/short-stories/super-frog-saves-tokyo/themes.html](http://www.sparknotes.com/short-stories/super-frog-saves-tokyo/themes.html)  
Retrieved in 12/10/2015

(23) Charles E. Bressler, p.239

(24) Celeste Loughman, "No Place I Was Meant to Be: Contemporary Japan in the Short Fiction of Haruki Murakami", **World Literature Today**, 71.1 (Winter 1997):90

(25) Amy Ty Lai, "Memory, Hybridity, and Creative Alliance in Haruki Murakami's Fiction", **Mosaic**, 40.1 (March 2007):164

(26) Charles E. Bressler, p.155

(27) Charles E. Bressler, p.153

(28) Charles E. Bressler, p.146

(29) Jean Baudrillard, **The Illusion of the End**, Trans. Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994), n.p.

(30) Marianne Brace, "The Madman of Freedom Square", [www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-madman-of-freedom-square-by-hassan-blasim-1798160.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-madman-of-freedom-square-by-hassan-blasim-1798160.html) Retrieved in 19/4/2016

Hassan Blasim (1973) is an Iraqi born writer who went to Finland as a refugee in 2004. He writes in Arabic, but most of his works are translated into English. He is the first ever Arabic writer to have won the Independent Foreign Fiction in 2014.

(31) Patricia Welch, "Haruki Murakami's Storytelling World", **World Literature Today**, Vol.79 No.1 (Jan.- April 2005):59

(32) Charles E. Bressler, p.97

(33) Charles E. Bressler, p.159

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نموذج العجز الفكري في مجموعة هاروكي موراكامي القصصية ما بعد الزلزال  
والواقع العراقي بعد زلزال الاحتلال

الباحث : ا.م. ايمان عبد الستار عبد اللطيف

المستخلص :

يعد هاروكي موراكامي ( 1949-الى وقتنا الحاضر) من الكتاب اليابانيين المعاصرين، إذ ترجمت كتاباته الى قرابة خمسين لغة، وقد حصل على جوائز كثيرة منها يابانية وأخرى عالمية. لقد وظف القاص في كتاباته الاسلوب السريالي مما جعل اعماله تصنف ضمن ما يعرف بالواقعية السحرية. ومن الموضوعات التي كتب فيها الاضطرابات الدنيوية المتمثلة بالشعور بالكبت والإحباط داخل النفس البشرية ، وفقدان الترابط الاجتماعي والعلاقات الانسانية في مجتمع سادته حب المال وحب الذات.

وتناول البحث قصتين قصيرتين ضمن مجموعة موراكامي القصصية " ما بعد الزلزال (2000)" ، وعلاقة موضوعاتها وشخصها بما مر به العراق بعد الزلزال. وفي الواقع، فإن العراق لم يشهد حدوث زلزال حقيقي، لكن استعمل معناه المجازي للتعبير عن حياة العراقيين. ويقصد بالاشارة إلى العراق ما بعد الزلزال بالظروف التي حصلت أبان حرب عام 2003، وما عانى العراقيون نتيجة هذه الظروف مثل الاحساس بفقدان الترابط الاجتماعي، والكراهية ، ومشاعر الحرمان والإحباط ، وفساد القادة والسياسيين. فضلا عن ذلك فإن قصص موراكامي القصيرة التي اختارها الباحث في هذا البحث لا تتعامل مع هزة ارضية حقيقية، لكن بإمكان القارئ الشعور بمضامينها عند قراءته هذه القصص ، إذ مرت شخص موراكامي أيضا" باحساس فقدان الترابط الاجتماعي والشعور بعدم التقدير والتقييم لمواقفهم وجهودهم المبذولة.

وقد اختار الباحث قصتين قصيرتين ، هما بالتحديد "الصحن الطائر في كوشيرو" ، و "الضفدع العملاق منفذ طوكيو" بوصفهما أنموذجا للواقع العراقي ومقارنة هذه الشخصيات (التي هي في الواقع انعكاس لحياة اليابانيين في منتصف تسعينيات القرن العشرين) بحياة الكبت للعراقيين في حقبة ما بعد حرب 2003. وان كليهما (أي اليابانيين والعراقيين) قد مرا بتجربة التشظي والانهييار واليأس ، وفقدان الاحساس بالاهمية الذاتية بسبب الظروف التي اتضحت من خلال مناقشة هذه القصص، مع ذلك، فإن معاناة العراقيين أعمق وقد وصلت الى حد العجز الفكري، وتجمد المشاعر.



ويؤكد البحث ايضا ضرورة إزالة روح العداة من قلوب الناس ،  
قلوب السياسيين والقادة على نحو خاص. وعلى الرغم من تعقيد العالم الذي  
نعيش فيه فإن الانسان أدرك بأنّ الرخاء يعتمد على تكاتف قوى الخير  
وضرورة تقبل الثقافات الموجودة ضمن المجتمع الواحد كافة, وفهم آراء  
الآخرين وطروحاتهم للنهوض بمجتمع متكاتف من أجل الوصول الى حياة  
رغيدة.

#### About the author:

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