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Shock and Naturalization

An Inquiry into the Perception of Modernity

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Preface

Tirelessly the process of thinking makes new beginnings, returning in a roundabout way to its original object. This continual pausing for breath is the mode most proper to the process of contemplation. û Walter Benjamin (1985: 28)

This book is an exercise in rethinking. The impulse to think something over once again always has a twofold origin. To begin with, something is encountered which promises to put an old thought in a new light. But, secondly, this novelty is not yet sure of how to understand itself and turns to the old to beg for clues. Such novelties are often encountered in literature, and what provides the clues û and at the same time often needs to be rethought û is of course sociology.

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Introduction

Over great historical periods of time the mode of sense perception changes with the overall mode of existence of the human collective. û Benjamin (1977:141)

It was in the crowd, Walter Benjamin writes, that the Parisian flâneurs at the time of the second empire obtained "the unfailing remedy" for their boredom. "Anyone who is capable of being bored in a crowd is a blockhead. I repeat: a blockhead, and a contemptible one", he quotes Constantin Guy, a painter and friend of Baudelaire (Benjamin 1997:37). The crowd inspired a mixture of fascination and dread. Inextricably entangled with its intoxicating and fascinating aspects were its menacing ones: its wildness, brutal indifference, and the possibilities of sudden, shocking encounters. "What are the dangers of the forest and the prairie compared with the daily shocks of civilization?", Baudelaire asks rhetorically, "Whether a man grabs his victim on a boulevard or stabs his quarry in unknown woods û does he not remain both here and there the most perfect of all beasts of prey?" (quoted in Benjamin 1997:39). As Benjamin points out, Baudelaire was a man who "made it his business to parry shocks, no matter where they might come from" and in whose poetry "every second finds consciousness ready to intercept its shock" (ibid 143, 154). The crowd was a remedy for boredom, not only because of the variety and the novelty it offered but also because of the need for constant alertness in order to avert its dangers. The tension between these two aspects can be felt in Baudelaire's desire to see the crowd as his home. Because it is to the crowd, this "immense reservoir of electrical energy", that what he calls the "artist of modern life" is attracted as if by a magnet.

His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world... The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito... (Baudelaire 1964:8)

The flâneur claims the crowd as his home. But this home is not a place to relax. Being associated with an exhilarating anonymity, with inexhaustible novelty and variation, and with incessant shocks, it is the very opposite of the familiar and ordinary. "Baudelaire, great despiser of the countryside, of greenery and fields, nevertheless has this peculiarity: No one could be less inclined to view the big city as something ordinary, natural, acceptable", Benjamin writes (Benjamin 1999:386).

As we turn to Okazaki Kyôko's manga-collection from 1989, *I Love Boredom* (Taikutsu ga daisuki), we encounter the figure of the flâneuse strolling in the bustling crowds of Shibuya, one of the trendy shopping areas of Tokyo. But something has changed. The crowd, which Baudelaire portrayed as a source of shock and fascination, seems to have become the backdrop of solitary reveries.

To cast sidelong glances at the princes and princesses who stroll along the Shibuya streets.
The piquant blue sky as I accidentally raise my eyes. That's boredom for me.

Boredom resembles a landscape. And of course a blue sky.

And as chubby Mari in *Shi-shônen* sings, don't you get down just by looking at the blue sky? e

Like lovers going out to search for boredom under a hopelessly clear sky, like kids heading homewards after cramming school swimming like fish through a diluted night under the empty, flickering neon of convenience stores. Doesn't it make you feel cool and refreshed to walk around town like that - without dreading boredom? (Okazaki 1989:142)

No shocking encounters interrupt the bored flâneuse in her meditations. The "sidelong glances" hint at the safe and comfortable distance that seemingly isolates her from the passers-by. Even as she moves in its midst, the crowd hardly intrudes upon her. Only people who are already at home with the crowd can swim through it "like fish", as if it were their element. She also seems quite immune against any fascination with novelties. It is not novelties that attract her attention. Indeed, Okazaki explains that her fondness for boredom stems from her "attachment and respect to the everyday things she has grown used to" (Okazaki 1989:141). To her, the city has become a natural and familiar environment. Rather than offering the fascination of the new, it is a source of pleasant boredom.

*

A montage is a way of suggesting meaning through a juxtaposition of contrasting images. Benjamin called it a "crystal" that could reflect the entirety of a complex series of events. Our aim will be to try to understand the difference brought to light in the above montage, that contrasts two images of the figure of the flâneur in the metropolitan crowd, the one from Paris of the 1860s and the other from Tokyo of the 1980s.

Words that seem self-evident in their original context sometimes assume an ambiguous air when juxtaposed in the form of a montage. There is a subtle difference between the way Baudelaire and Okazaki feel at "home" in the crowd. Although both use natural metaphors to describe their experience of the street, Baudelaire's "forest and prairie" belong to a concept of nature that seems incongruous with the submarine back streets through which Okazaki's school children swim like "fish". Likewise, the hungry gaze of Baudelaire's spectator contrasts with the sidelong glances of Okazaki.

The most conspicuous difference, perhaps, is the absence of shock sensations in the way Okazaki describes the experience of the crowd. To experience modernity as shocking is to see it as an unsettled, crisis-ridden condition in which people's expectations and habits are out of tune with the rhythms of change in society. Modernity, however, is also sometimes characterized by the diametrically opposite experience: the return of the semblance of the "natural" to which modernity was once thought to be antithetical. What Okazaki seems to express is precisely this experience. She presents us with a modernity in which people feel familiar with the patterns of change and are less readily shocked. While no one "could be less inclined to view the big city as something ordinary, natural, acceptable" than Baudelaire, this is exactly how Okazaki's flâneuse perceives it.

In order to hold fast this difference terminologically, we shall say that Baudelaire's crowd is "shocking" while Okazaki's is "naturalized".¹ The terms "shocking modernity" and "naturalized modernity" are neither period-labels nor do they designate separate social structures. They designate ways of perceiving modernity — as shocking or as naturalized.² Nature stands for the appearance of taken-for-grantedness in a given order of things. That an order appears natural means that it is perceived to coincide with the concepts representing it, in the sense that changes in this order are perceived to occur within the limits of the known and established. Shock is the disruption of this natural order. In this disruption concept and object are perceived to be separate entities — their "non-identity" is revealed, to use Theodor Adorno's term. Palpably demonstrating its unreliability in the moment of shock, the given and taken-for-granted order becomes problematic and can no longer be experienced as natural. This can be experienced as the "liberation" from nature but also as its "destruction". As we shall see, Benjamin's concept of "shock" carries precisely these two contradictory aspects: the prevalence of shock sensations in modernity turns it into a "hell", but at the same time reveals the possibilities of "redemption" in it. What I call naturalization is the process whereby what was once shocking sinks back into the familiar and takes on the appearance of nature. Just as shock is an ambivalent experience — not only destructive but also liberating — so naturalization is an ambivalent phenomenon that not only implies the recovery from shock but also the concomitant disappearance from view of non-identity.

Aims

Shock is often seen as an experience that is emblematic of modernity. As is well known, many classical works — not only in sociology but also in philosophy and literature — portray modernity as an arena of shock. These works have proven the fruitfulness of the concept of shock as a tool for grasping the experience of modernity. Our investigation aims to try out and to explore the concept of naturalization as an additional tool. I will argue that naturalization is a crucial sociological concern in the sense that many of the major contradictions and dilemmas in contemporary culture cannot be understood without reference to it. While thinkers like Benjamin and Georg Simmel famously portray the big city crowd — and by extension modernity itself — as an arena of shock, shock sensations are notable precisely for their absence in depictions of the crowd as well as of modernity as a whole in much contemporary literature. The overarching aim of this study is to reflect on the meaning of this observation for the theory of modernity. In particular, we are interested in its implications for Benjamin's theory.

The emphasis of the investigation will be on how the relation between the perception of modernity as shocking and as naturalized has unfolded in Japanese literature during the half century since the end of the Second World War. This limitation in time and space is necessary for reasons of scope, and is also convenient, since the postwar era in Japan was a time in which both of these modes of perception have been particularly striking — ranging from extreme visions of shock-modernity in Abe Kôbô to the prototypical visions of naturalized modernity in Murakami Haruki. To place the development in the relation between the two modes of perception in perspective and for it to become visible as a whole, however, brief discussions of examples from Western literature as well as of somewhat earlier Japanese writers will also be included.

Stated succinctly, three tasks stand at the center of our investigation. The first is to map the experience of naturalized modernity — something that will require the relativization of classical sociological concepts based on the perception of modernity as shocking. Secondly, we will show that each mode of perception is characterized by its own distinctive dilemmas, something which is essential to bear in mind when we discuss the strategies and ideals which we encounter in modern culture. Thirdly, we will discuss the implications of naturalization for the perception of non-identity, and, by extension, for the critique of ideology and myth. Let us have a close look at each of these questions.

The relativity of concepts

Benjamin's view of modernity as an arena of shock leading to the disintegration of the "aura" seems to have been particularly widespread during the epoch of so-called "classical modernity" — the roughly hundred years from the middle of

the 19th century onwards, in the West as well as in Japan after the Meiji restoration. Thomas Ziehe suggests that this mode of perception is no longer as prevalent: what we are experiencing today is "not the decay of the aura, but the loss of the way of experiencing which characterized the contemporaries of the decay of the aura" (Ziehe 1993: 139). Since classical modernity was the epoch of classical sociology, the theoretical significance of this shift may be immense. Many key sociological concepts — Gesellschaft, reification, second nature, Blasiertheit, to name a few — rest on a conception of modernity as shocking, and many of them explicitly so.

An important task of this investigation is to examine what "happens" to some of these classical concepts, and in particular Benjamin's concepts, when they are applied to "naturalized" representations of modernity. Here, perhaps, is the place to clarify our attitude to classical concepts. This attitude should not be confused with the antiquarian — or as Benjamin said: "philological" — attitude that treats them as mere relics of the past, as objects rather than as instruments. Neither do we use them as if they possessed timeless validity. Our investigation has the character of an experiment. The concepts will be used — but only in order to see how they reveal new aspects and internal tensions, shift meaning or even revert into their opposites in their new environment. In order not to petrify, either as relics or as putatively timeless categories, concepts must be thrown back into the stream of experiences and perceptions. The benefit of this procedure is not merely that it forms part of the self-reflexivity of sociology, but also that the tensions registered in the concepts tell us about how history changes — but to this we will return shortly.

Here we see the first reason for our choice of literature as our material. The meaning of our experiment consists in the relativization of sociological concepts through their confrontation with the fluid processes of how a society perceives and experiences itself. Stated precisely, it consists in the confrontation between the perceptions from which they spring — and which they preserve within themselves as the phenomenology at the heart of sociological theory — and the perceptions to which they are applied. These processes resurface in literature in a guise that is much more easily accessible and sensitive than in theory itself. Literature is a pool of perceptions and experiences of society, which are also expressed in sociology but in a different form. It is a "back door entrance" to the phenomenology at the heart of sociological theory.³ Literature, in other words, is not simply "empirical material" but also a tool for sociological self-awareness. In order to understand our concepts we must know from what experiences they originate. Literature can therefore help theory to a self-understanding about its own presuppositions. A consequence of this way of looking at literature is that we cannot consider the relationship between theory and literature asymmetrical. Needless to say, this does not mean that we consider the two identical. What it means is that social theory must be interpreted in the light of literature, just as literature must be interpreted in the light of social theory.

Experiences, dilemmas, strategies

The relativization of concept has a purpose. It will facilitate for us to bring to light the respective characteristics of "shocking" and "naturalized" modernity. How can we map the experience of naturalized modernity? What are its central dilemmas and how do they differ from those of shock-modernity? By what strategies do people react to the dilemmas and how do they differ from those of shock-modernity? To explore these questions is the second task for our investigation.

Here again literature will be of help, precisely by its ability to provide concretizations of the interrelation of experiences, dilemmas and strategies. Imagination always has a point of departure. If a literary work is to live as an artwork it must take its point of departure from lived experience. Fiction is the artful reconstruction of such experience. That experience, which is the heart of the work of fiction, is also what is eminently social and historical in it. The first and foremost task of sociological analysis is to extract that experience.

The next task of sociological analysis is to look, not at the experience itself, but at the way the author has responded to it. That response typically includes an exploration of the dilemmas connected to the experience and, simultaneously, of strategies for overcoming them.⁴ Fiction, in other words, not only serves to convey experience, but also serves as an excellent medium for exploring possible "or" "hypothetical" solutions to the contradictions underlying it. It is a vehicle for the intellect as well as for emotion. It offers us insights not only about how people feel about dilemmas, but also about how they seek to overcome them. Fredric Jameson calls the form and content of the literary work an "imaginary resolution" of the "real contradiction" posed by the lived experience (Jameson 1981:77ff). It should be noted, however, that works of fiction only rarely present a finished solution in the sense of a compact ideological closure which shuts out all traces of contradictions from view. If culture serves to provide "imaginary resolutions" to "real contradictions" then it will always contain a reference to the latter that may be unearthed through immanent analysis. I would argue that these solutions do not simply conceal or distort real contradictions in society. It is far more fruitful to approach the work as a revelation of these contradictions "or" of the way experiences, dilemmas and strategies are interrelated "or" at least of the subjective guise in which they are perceived.

Taken together, these steps represent a threefold focus: firstly, on the experiences of shock and naturalization presented to us in literary works; secondly, on the dilemmas and social contradictions which these experiences bring into view; and thirdly, on strategies for responding to these dilemmas and contradictions.

To be sure, there is more individual variation at the level of strategies than on that of the experiences and dilemmas. This is because people are not passive consumers of experience. They react to it differently, on the basis of frames of reference that are influenced by their particular historical, cultural and social

context. The religious and philosophical traditions of a country play a large role here. But although a dilemma can always be "solved" in many ways, the "solutions" tend to follow certain patterns. The mapping of such possible solutions is just as crucial for understanding a society as the grasp of the underlying experience or dilemma itself, since society is shaped not only by what is general in it, but also and primarily through the interplay of what is particular and divergent.

Because of this interplay I have chosen to adopt a more general approach in discussing a number of theorists and writers in laying bare the outlines of the experiences and the dilemmas central to "shocking" and "naturalized" modernity. The strategies employed in regard to these dilemmas, by contrast, are best elucidated by individual writers. I will focus on the work of four Japanese writers: Kawabata Yasunari, Abe Kôbô, Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû. The reason for choosing these four writers is simple. Kawabata and Abe share a view of modernity as shocking but display contrasting strategies towards the experience of shock — one basically affirming it while the other basically rejects it. Similarly, Murakami Ryû and Murakami Haruki both portray modernity as naturalized but display contrasting strategies towards the experience of naturalization — again one affirming it and the other rejecting it.

Materialist sociology, non-identity and the critique of myth

History is what hurts [...] This is indeed the ultimate sense in which History as ground and untranslatable horizon needs no particular theoretical justification: we may be sure that its alienating necessities will not forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them. — Fredric Jameson (1981:102)

What are the implications of naturalization for the critique of myth and ideology that was central to Benjamin and to several of his fellow travellers such as Adorno or Ernst Bloch? What are the possibilities of such a critique in a naturalized modernity? The third and perhaps most difficult task of our investigation is to explore this question. But what does it mean? Here some remarks on the pivotal role played by "non-identity" in this critique are necessary in order to state this question in a more precise and well-defined way.

The central importance of the perception of shock for sociology is best realized by asking how we may express a notion of "reality" which is viable in today's deconstructivist intellectual climate. The position of Benjamin or Adorno would be that this reality is history. Not, however, history as an objectified body of facts or of interpretations, but as that which destroys our expectations. "History", as Jameson wrote, "is what hurts". It can be apprehended only through its effects and never directly as some reified force. It is what breaks through and invalidates our expectations, the conceptual net by which we struggle to contain it. This means that reality cannot be expressed in

words. But it can be known. We know it as that which outwits, upsets and defeats our words.

An important consequence that follows from this is that perception is not entirely governed by concepts. To perception belongs not only the categories and discursive orders through which people order reality, but also the failure of these orders in those sudden moments when something occurs and something is perceived which forces them to view reality in a new way. Concepts only correspond imperfectly to the fluid historical processes which we are nevertheless able to apprehend — to that "adventurously moving, latently expectant world" which Bloch called "the most real thing there is" (Bloch 1988:154). The discrepancy between concepts and what they claim to represent is, of course, what Adorno calls "non-identity". For him non-identity was a central concern for precisely the reason that it is the language by which changes on the material or social level are communicated to the subject. It is the negative way in which consciousness registers the discrepancy between itself and the external world.

Here we sense the reason for Benjamin's fascination with the experience of shock, for what is shock, if not the most unmistakable case of a sensation in which non-identity is revealed? For someone aiming at a materialist investigation of modernity like Benjamin, the rupture that shock effects in the mythically closed dream-world of consciousness assumes an importance that is not only political but also methodological, since it is an opening through which he may catch a glimpse of what he is really after, namely the movement of history itself. Shock becomes the "effect" by which history may be apprehended. Under modern conditions of reified thinking, the perception of shock is the perception of history. Shock is therefore not only an appropriate object for sociology but perhaps the object par excellence, since shock may be defined as the negative impact of social reality on ideas. It is what opens up our eyes to "the most real thing there is" and helps us to look beyond our concepts.

But what is the epistemological status of this "history" or this "object" which shock reveals to be non-identical with the concept? We now need to delve further into the question of the meaning of "non-identity". Non-identity means the discrepancy of concept and object, but this object is not to be understood as an ineffable "thing-in-itself" or "substance" in its own right. The source of non-identity is rather to be found in the movement of history itself that undermines all substances. In other words, what the concept fails to grasp sufficiently is not the essence or substance of its object, but how the object is historically constituted or "mediated".

To Benjamin and Adorno a "mythical" condition is a condition in which this mediation is forgotten, hidden behind a semblance of timelessness. "The essence of the mythical event is return", writes Benjamin (Benjamin 1999:119). In similar vein, Max Horkheimer and Adorno describe the mythic world as "a world without exits, for ever the same" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1981:31). Myth, being what "never points beyond what is", is in other words the semblance of identity (Adorno 1994a: 394). It is the condition aspired to by what Adorno

calls "identity-thinking" or reifying thought: thought that strives to repress or shut out the perception of non-identity and thus the awareness of the possibility that things can be otherwise, of qualitative change and history (ibid 17).⁵ Here is the place for an introduction and a preliminary explanation of the term "reification", which will be used throughout this investigation.⁶ Contrary to common belief, "reification" has nothing to do with the untenable opposition of "human beings" and "things". Reification means that an object — human or not — appears to possess "substance" independently of the process of its historical mediation. In this sense even the act of identifying a person as "human" — in distinction to animals or things — would be an instance of reification. Reification, in other words, is not the opposite of the human but of the historical. "For all reification is a forgetting: objects become purely thing-like the moment they are retained for us without the continued presence of their other aspects: when something of them has been forgotten", Adorno writes (letter to Benjamin, 29 Feb 1940, Adorno & Benjamin 1999: 321).

However, the predominance of identity-thinking in modernity does not mean that non-identity cannot be perceived. A premise of Adorno's critique of identity-thinking is that all perception is not shaped by concepts. An example of perception that escapes and negates the preexisting concepts is what he calls "metaphysical experience" — called forth for instance by physical pain and suffering, but also by artworks and the names of villages visited in childhood summers — which seem to contain a promise of happiness since they fail to fit into the reified state of the status quo. Failing to fit in with reified reality, the experience of senseless pain as well as the memory of long-lost happiness gives rise to an inarticulate inner resistance to this reality, to a sense that something is wrong. It provokes the reaction of "Is this all?" ("Ist das denn alles?") (Adorno 1994a:355-400). Using an expression from Brecht's *Mahagonny*, Adorno and Bloch formulated this as the sensation that *etwas fehlt*, that "something is missing" (Bloch 1988:1ff). Adorno's critical theory has been described, for good reason, as a "sensitive theory" based on a standpoint of "a priori pain" (Sloterdijk 1987:xxxiii). It is not from any preestablished standpoint, but from sensitivity to pain, that his criticism gains its incisiveness. The "motor of dialectical thinking", he declares, is "pain", and he counts "vertigo" and "shock" to its "index veri" (Adorno 1994a:43, 202). The possibility of such perceptions is an indispensable precondition to his critique of myth and ideology. Moments of pain and lost happiness reveal that the semblance of absolute closure is false, that it is nothing but an idealistic construction of the identity-thinking that attempts to repress non-identity in the name of self-preservation. It is by pursuing such perceptions that "immanent criticism" can bring to light the fissures and cracks, the rifts and discontinuities, that are covered up by identity-thinking. To be sure, the "reified" modernity criticized by Adorno is characterized by intolerance and repression of non-identity, but at the same time it is a state of society in which non-identity is highly visible: visible as the object of repression. In Adorno's view repression, far from obstructing this

visibility, is the very act that generates it. It is by being true to the pain generated by identity-thinking itself that its falseness can be made apparent.⁷

This view of modernity in which identity-thinking generates the very rifts that will subvert it corresponds almost exactly to the image of modernity painted by Benjamin: as a "hell" and a "continuous catastrophe" propelled by a "dialectic of the new and the ever-same", the latter being generated by the endless cycle of shock sensations and attempts to master them by the "protective shield" of consciousness. This correspondence suggests that both thinkers saw modernity as an age characterized by the efforts of thinking to establish a semblance of identity. Consequently, it was an epoch in which non-identity was repressed but at the same time clearly visible in the sensation of shock.

As we shall see, representations of naturalized modernity exhibit a low level of visibility of shock and also of the open repression carried out by a reifying heightened consciousness in the service of self-preservation. Equally rare are the auratic images of happiness that Adorno associated with metaphysical experience. Should this be interpreted as the victory of myth? Has the "sensitive theory" carried out by Adorno and Benjamin lost its preconditions? Or does naturalization open up other ways of perceiving non-identity that allow for continued critique? Here it becomes apparent that a task of the highest importance is to investigate in what ways non-identity is perceived in literature and what role it plays in the strategies deployed against the dilemmas of naturalized modernity.

How do we trace changes in the way the non-identical is perceived? Adorno's concept of non-identity is by itself of little use here, for it is exactly what he himself feared it might be: abstract. Rather than to Adorno himself, we do better to turn to his mentor and friend, Benjamin. One possibility would be to make use of his concepts of shock and porosity. As mentioned, Benjamin sees shock as a characteristic experience of modernity. In contrast, porosity is not a characteristically modern experience, but an experience that upsets and disrupts the everyday workings of modern society. Benjamin derived the concept from his experience of the comparatively "backward" Naples. Porosity is portrayed in ambivalent but tendentially utopian colors as the experience of an irregularity and a transitivity that is not shocking. Porosity is not absent from everyday modern life, but tends to be transient and elusive, often only appearing fleetingly in conjunction with the experience of shock or as a dream or an object of yearning. Even when a state of porosity is actually experienced, for example in play, it tends to negate reality and point beyond the present state of things. To attempt a simple definition, we could say that if shock is the way non-identity appears to identity-thinking, then porosity is how it appears when it is free from the compulsion to identity. Insisting on self-preservation, identity-thinking can only perceive non-identity as a threat that must be brought under control. Porosity, by contrast, suggests a condition of permeable and open borders in which the environment is not feared.

Benjamin and Adorno took for granted that modernity was shocking per se. What are the implications for their critique of myth if shock subsides, if the a priori of pain no longer exists? Must naturalization, which involves the dying away of shock, also mean the dying away of the perception of non-identity. Or is non-identity perceived in some other way, such as in the experience of porosity?

*

A word also needs to be said about what will not be treated in this investigation. To begin with, shock-modernity and naturalized modernity are not exhaustive categorizations of how modernity is perceived. Other ways of perception are certainly possible. An exhaustive categorization, however, does not belong to our tasks. Rather than writing a full-length history or geography of the perceptions of modernity, I have chosen to delve into the perception of modernity as "naturalized" partly because of the usefulness of this viewpoint in order to understand contemporary culture, and partly as a way to provide an efficient counterpoint to the classical view of modernity as "shocking" and to bring the limitations of this viewpoint into relief.

Secondly, this means that my emphasis will be on the task of clarifying the meaning and the theoretical implications of two categories of perception. I will devote much less attention to the historical changes in the relation between them or to the causes of such changes. Our task, as mentioned, is not to write history. At no point do I wish to suggest any "developmental law" that would have modernity travel irreversibly *en bloc*, so to speak, and in a single line *à* from a Baudelairean state of shock towards the mundane tranquility of Okazaki. Indeed, as will become clear in the following section of this chapter, it is not continuity but discontinuity that is at the center of our concern. Naturalization *de facto* tends to come after shock. Nevertheless, only a fool would suggest that shock no longer plays any role in late modernity. To use a metaphor, "shock" and "nature" are rather to be seen as two rooms in the building of modernity, two rooms that contain many doors, some leading back to where one came from and others opening up to new spaces. When I discuss the relation between shock-modernity and naturalized modernity, the aim is no more than to clarify contrasts and possible passages between such rooms: to draft a map, rather than to trace actual movements.

Sociology and literature

Before entering into the main discussion, we need to clarify the status of literature for our investigation. Since we are interested in learning from the

experience contained in literature, our approach is clearly distinct from what Irene Powell calls the sociology of the writer and the study of the influence of literature on society (Powell 1978:x).⁸ How, then, do we characterize our approach?

An important premise for the following study is that fiction in many cases offers a privileged access to the experiences, moods and contradictions prevalent in society. The sociologist Lewis Coser is right when he recommends sociologists to turn to literature, since the "creative imagination of the literary artist often has achieved insights into social processes which have remained unexplored in social science" (Coser 1963a:3). Literature is not simply an object for the sociologist to explain, but also a source of knowledge about society. Coser points out that the latter use of literature requires a break with the conventional idea of a sociology of literature, which he describes as a specialized area of study that "seeks to explain the emergence of a particular art work in a particular form of society, and the ways in which the creative imagination of the writer is shaped by cultural traditions and social arrangements" (Coser 1963a:4f). This kind of sociology of literature, as the sociologist Inoue Shun points out, is conditioned on the sort of sociologism which attempts to reduce the literary work to its social foundations.

For since the time of Hippolyte Taine, the field of the sociology of literature has been tacitly premised on a sort of sociological imperialism, or at least on a "sociologism" in the Durkheimian sense. It assumes that literature is the dependent variable and society the independent variable. The main path of motion has been to explain a literary work or phenomenon by using sociological factors. The reverse path, the one down which sociology learns from or is enriched by literature, has generally been ignored. (Inoue 1985:346)

As Inoue points out, the insights offered by literature can only be preserved if we eschew this sociologism. What is required is a "dialogue", in which sociology "learns from or is enriched by literature" (Inoue 1981:2, 1985:346f). To use Coser's phrase, we may characterize the approach to literature advocated by him and Inoue as a sociology through literature, rather than as a conventional sociology of literature. This is an approach that attempts "to use the work of literature for an understanding of society, rather than to illuminate artistic production by reference to the society in which it arose" (Coser 1963a:4f). An important premise of this study is that sociological theory has as much to gain from such a dialogue as the understanding of literature has by being illuminated by sociology.

Our aim should be to develop the sociological explanation of the work from the work itself, rather than to reduce the work to pre-established sociological schemata. This does not mean exempting fiction from critical scrutiny. It does, however, mean treating literature as a partner rather than as a mere object of analysis. The appropriate model for criticizing works of literature would be to extract through interpretation their sociology and their philosophy, and to

take them just as seriously as one would take a sociological or philosophical theory. In this sense, we may, as Inoue suggests, speak of literary works as a form of sociology. "If the basic goal of sociology is to illuminate the nature of man and society, it can also be said that many works of literature, though their methods may be different, are devoted to the same end" (Inoue 1985:347).⁹

Nevertheless — learning about society from literature? Surely, a premise of such an undertaking must be the extravagant — and Simmelian — claim that the whole can be viewed from the fragment, that even remote historical changes are somehow registered in the individual work of literature, and that we can gain knowledge about these changes by interpreting individual works.¹⁰ Interpretation here become a deciphering, a process of extracting the general — knowledge about society and history — from what seems to be the most particular — the imagination of a writer. The question of the generalizability of the findings achieved through literature is a central methodological problem, and we will now clarify our position in regard to this question by introducing four crucial concepts: primal scenes, montage, constellation, and model.

This will also provide us with an elucidation of why the fact that the notions of shock in German sociology and Japanese literature derive from different cultural traditions and historical settings doesn't render their comparison invalid from a critical point of view. A task of our investigations will be to prove the fruitfulness of bringing them together. It is indeed our hope that the differences that we will encounter will provide the impetus to the setting in movement of concepts which we have described as one of our aims.

Primal scenes

How do we trace changes in experience? A good place to start is at the surface, by comparing descriptions of minutiae in literary works. For such a comparison to teach us anything about modernity that is sociologically relevant, we will need to look at scenes that involve sociological concepts that are constitutive for our understanding of modernity.

Here our point of departure will be the various scenes that have entered our consciousness as primal scenes of modernity. These are scenes — usually established through depictions in famous literary works or the classics of philosophy or sociology — that have become the "exemplary instances" through which we understand the concept of modernity. They are scenes that capture the specifically modern aspects of our lives. We will compare these primal scenes to scenes from present-day literature that are similar in their outward appearance — their setting. The selection of scenes is far from arbitrary. The similarity in setting will provide a stable frame of reference which will bring out the fissure or "time-differential" (Benjamin) between them, or in other words: how the meaning that is attributed to the relations established in them has changed in the interval. The method is simple, but not easy. Its difficulty stems from its deliberate estrangement of the present-day literary work, which it seeks to present in a way which we who are its contemporaries are not quite used to —

namely as something different. It is from differences like this, no matter how subtle, that we will gain the impetus for theoretical rethinking.

One of the masters of this method was Benjamin. In their fondness for the concrete, Benjamin and Simmel share a common predilection. But unlike Simmel, Benjamin's concepts take form, not so much through abstraction as through the juxtaposition of concrete instances that are never mere examples. In his texts we repeatedly see how the substance of an argument emerges from an unsettling transition between heterogeneous elements. Thus the juxtapositions in *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* of instances of shock in Freud, Baudelaire, Engels and Poe mutually relativize each other and undermine the concept of shock in the very process by which they construct it. Brought together the contexts interrupt and "ruin" each other.¹¹ Destructive transitions of this kind proceed more by bringing out differences than common denominators. Through this destruction Benjamin's own concept of shock emerges, a concept, then, which does not rest on any common ground with what has been juxtaposed. Rather, it is what comes into view through the juxtaposition of ruins. Benjamin himself called this procedure "montage".¹²

Montage

What \hat{u} after discovering a difference \hat{u} will we be able to say about how it came into being? What does a montage tell us? Nothing directly about the process history has taken in the interval between the instances that we juxtapose. Benjamin used the montage as a tool for grasping the meaning or the essence of a concept. The value of the montage, then, is not primarily historiographical, but eminently theoretical: it forces us to theoretical reconsiderations and reformulations of central sociological concepts. It does uncover historical change, but does so only in order to question concepts and force them out of their complacency. Primal scenes and scenes from contemporary literature are contrasted in order to shake loose the classical concepts from their place in the theories. The montage does not aim at the rigidification of the concept in a system, but to release the old concepts from their moorings in the classical theories and to set them afloat in history. As the theories are revealed as ruins, the concepts will be set in motion \hat{u} like pieces of iron when placed in a magnetic field \hat{u} and will have to develop.

Classical theory and new Japanese fiction are not to be integrated on a historical continuum as if they were milestones along the one-way street of modernity. They are to highlight each other. Classical theory can only be given life in the analysis of matters that are or at least seem at first to be foreign to it. At the same time this is to deepen our understanding of contemporary Japanese literature: exactly by suddenly being shown in the light of this very old and forgotten lamp, which hits it from an unexpected direction, it will be made to reveal parts of its essence which until now have been hidden in the shade.

The juxtaposition of the experience of the crowd in Baudelaire and Okazaki at the beginning of this chapter was intended as a montage. We know that

Benjamin developed his theory of shock from his analysis of the former. The differences between the two scenes is not big, but disturbing. It gives rise to several possible questions. What work of modification would be necessary for Benjamin's theory to fathom it? How much would it have to expand its range, deepen its foundations and how many other fields would it have to engage in? How much, in other words, would it have to be generalized in order to account for the difference?

Constellations

We should not rest satisfied with the merely destructive side of this procedure. Not even Adorno's negative dialectics was wholly negative – it only seemed that way from the standpoint of the systems of identity-thinking which it attempted to destroy. Our aim is to capture and understand what is new in relation to our old concepts. What we need is not only to shake the concepts loose from their theoretical definitions, not only to set them adrift, but above all to observe in what direction they travel and in what patterns they rearrange themselves.¹³ What we must seek to capture is the new meaning that a concept takes on when it comes into contact with new object. The montage, then, sets free, but this is not its final purpose. The pattern into which concepts that are set free to understand a new reality will rearrange themselves is what Adorno called a constellation (Konstellation).¹⁴

In is only in constellations, Adorno argues, that thought may salvage the "non-identical" in the objects – i.e. what we have called difference. Here concepts relinquish the claim to correspond to objects in a fixed and definite manner. What they fail to achieve individually they accomplish when they "quote each other" and "encircle" the object in a balance of misrecognitions, hoping that it will spring open "not through a single key or a single number, but through a number-combination" (Adorno 1994a:166). In this operation the shift from singular to plural is crucial: while no single concept may subsume the object, by approaching it together they help to correct each other's blind spots.

As is obvious from Adorno's statements, constellations are not theories in any usual sense of the word. Rather, to the extent that theories approximate what he calls "identity-thinking", constellations could be described as anti-theories. What distinguishes them from conventional theories can be summarized in three interrelated points. To begin with, Adorno rejects the classical method of defining the object by gradually closing in on it by proceeding from general concepts to more specific ones, i.e. the classification of the object per genus proximum et differentiam specificam, which is the method of identity-thinking. In a constellation each concept should be "equally close to the center", meaning that it should be seen as contributing directly to the meaning of the object, illuminating it from its own particular direction. Concepts should neither be arranged in a hierarchy, nor should they be used as mere logical links or bridges (ibid 1978:71, 1994a:164). Related to this is the second point that constellations allow for paradoxes. What matters is the

effectiveness of concepts in bringing out different aspects of the object, rather than their internal logical consistency. They should respect the object "even where it fails to obey the laws of thought", as Adorno formulated the aim of negative dialectics (ibid 1994a:144). In Adorno's view, constellations bring out a contradictory quality in the object itself, a quality that reflects the fact that the object is historically mediated — a process rather than a thing. A third point is that because of this, any attempt to grasp it must also be sensitive to historical context, allowing for changes and variations. Constellations can never claim to have stabilized themselves in a definite relation to the object. They are "force fields" rather than rigid structures (ibid 1991:13, 1994a:165f).¹⁵

We will not fix the constellations, not turn them into a new system. But we will use them, tentatively, to understand the new reality which shapes them. Concepts that move freely in this way are not building blocks, but the antennae, or sensors, through which we feel history. The procedure of the montage, in other words, does not only serve to illuminate the shortcomings of classical concepts, but also indirectly to illuminate the historical substratum to which they claim to be applicable and which determines their meaning.

In the following investigation I will approach the experience of shock-modernity and naturalized modernity through the use of constellations. In other words, I do not aim at constructing a theory, but at capturing phenomena in the movement whereby concepts "quote each other" in order to correct each other's blind spots.

Let us return to the question of how Benjamin's theory of shock would have to develop in order to bridge the "non-identity" between the two scenes presenting the experience of the crowd in Baudelaire and Okazaki. The problem is spurious. The montage indeed spurs theory to develop. But the aim of such development is not to subsume, not to pinpoint common denominators as in identity-thinking, but to elucidate non-identity. Rather than "connecting" the elements of shock and tranquility, exemplified by Baudelaire and Okazaki, on the basis of a shared continuity, I am interested in using their non-identity as a means to distinguish two different modi of the experience of modernity that deserve to be understood in themselves.¹⁶

Models

This far we have only been concerned with how to grasp and to present experiences. Are constellations also suitable tools for grasping social mediation? Constellations are not only suitable, but perhaps the only tools which will allow us to grasp the relation between literature and society without reifying it. Here we will use them not only for elucidating the immanent meaning of an experience, but also its social and historical embeddedness.

However, there is one important difference between presenting the immanent and the sociological significance of an experience. In the former case concepts revolve around the experience itself, while in the latter case their task is to bring out its social mediation. In this latter case, I will refer to the constellation as a

sociological "model". Models are constellations that sociologically decipher the immanent meaning of the works. They decode it by confronting the experience extracted from the work with sociological and psychological theories and theory-fragments. This decoding is not a reduction. Experience is not brought together with theories and theory-fragments in order to be reduced to them, but in order to constitute, together with them, a net for capturing its social significance. A model is held together by nothing except the heuristic value gained by the mutual illumination of its elements. Literary interpretations and theory-fragments do not ground or support each other, but serve to make each other comprehensible. The relations established in a model are therefore neither causal nor strictly logical. As Adorno points out, constellations take the place of the old category of "the cause" and thus imply a renunciation of consequential logic (Adorno 1994a:168). In the following, questions of "cause" will only be raised to the extent that they are already inherent in the various theories and theory-fragments which we use to illuminate the experience presented in literature. Even such discussions, however, serve primarily to illuminate the experience or suggest possible interpretations, rather than to establish logical bridges in any grand style theory.

By grasping the relation between literature and society as a model, it will be possible to avoid two problems common in the sociology of literature:

- (1) Models do not sacrifice the individuality of the literary work. The reason is that it does not subsume the latter, but serves to illuminate it from different directions. This "illumination" is important. The theoretical elements of a model are not arbitrarily applied to a work from the outside, but must prove their worth in supplementing the interpretation of immanent features in the work. For instance, models should only include theories or theory-fragments concerning class or gender or cultural characteristics to the extent that such categories are present in the universe of meaning of the work itself. There is no a priori for interpretation except that meaning. At the same time, it has to be kept in mind that the relations obtaining within a model are loose and never firmly established. Models are nothing but provisional and hypothetical tools for investigating society.
- (2) Models avoid the problem of the "representativity" of the literary work.¹⁷ What matters in a model is not the degree to which a work is representative of society, but the sociological significance of its un-representativity. The way that an object reflects light varies according to its surface and its position, even though the light-source remains the same. In the same way, it is futile to generalize from the particular way that a literary work reflects society. The general makes its presence felt in a literary work only in the particular way that it is reflected. Just as the endlessly variable patterns of light and shade can only be decoded through a precise knowledge of the peculiar shape of the surface on which it falls, so the general can only be studied in the particular — not apart from it. It is only by paying respect to what is individual in an object, and not by downplaying or eliding it, that

learning about society from it becomes possible. An object grasped in such a way can serve as a social landmark or a point of reference, a tool for orientation in social space, even if it is not "representative" of it. To show this is one of the aims of this research. On the other hand, one must not forget that the empirical support of a model is weak. It is because of this weakness that the analysis of literature must be accompanied by a high degree of methodological awareness and conducted in the light of a broad range of social phenomena and sociological theory.

Let us now return to the question of the generalizability of our findings. Is not our investigation in danger of being pulled in two different directions — tending on the one hand to develop the theoretical argument, on the other to pursue the individuality of the object under investigation — and ending up vacillating between the two? There is a tension here that can also be formulated as that between form and content, the abstract and the concrete, or the general and the particular. How are we to deal with this stubborn, yet fundamental tension? Since it cannot be a question of simply choosing one over the other, must we then allow equal weight to both and pursue our investigation in two separate directions, attempting both to do justice to the individual and to the general? Isn't there then a risk that we lose ourselves in the pursuit of two different goals, both of which would merit our entire energy and attention? The objection does not apply to us, for to us neither the general nor the particular constitutes a final aim in its own right. We do not aim at two things but at one: to lay bare the contradiction between the two. What we are aiming to arrive at is neither the concept nor the object, but their "non-identity". The tension between concept and detail, both of which are necessary for the reflexion on experience, cannot be avoided. But this, far from being detrimental to research, may provide it with its best opportunities. In this investigation it is not our task to avoid this tension. It is neither to take sides with the concept, nor with the detail, and nor is it to unite the two in some putative synthesis. It is to bring out the non-identity between the two.¹⁸

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The main part of this thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 ("Shock") presents the main elements of the experience of shock-modernity, mainly through a discussion of Benjamin. This will also bring into view the central dilemma of shock-modernity. Chapter 2 ("Strategies in shock-modernity") analyzes the responses to this dilemma in Kawabata Yasunari and Abe Kôbô. The montages in chapter 3 ("Montages") will demonstrate the need for a theoretization of naturalized modernity. In chapter 4 ("Naturalization") the experience of naturalized modernity will be presented and theorized with the help of examples from literature such as Murakami Haruki and a discussion of Freud's theory of the internalization of libido. Chapter 5 ("Strategies in naturalized modernity") analyzes the strategies by which Murakami Haruki and

Murakami Ryû deal with the dilemma of naturalized modernity. Finally, in the "Conclusion" I return to the theoretical implications of naturalization.

Although the more theoretical chapters and the chapters dealing with literary analysis mutually support and, hopefully, enrich each other, I have tried to organize my discussion in such a way that they can be read independently. I apologize to the reader for the repetitions that this arrangement has caused.

Japanese names will be written with surnames first. Romanizations will follow the Hepburn-system (with the circumflex as a stand-in for the straight line to indicate long vowels).

chapter 1

Shock-modernity

Most sociological classics originated in an environment colored by the experience of shock. Modernity was not yet wholly familiar, not yet wholly natural or unproblematic. It was the onrush of something new, something that was still developing and irresistibly transforming traditional culture. People were confronted by the problem of having to adapt to modernity as to something unfamiliar while in many cases maintaining a strong attachment to premodernity and lost nature. Our aim is not to repeat the claim made in so many classical theories that the shock-sensation is a prominent element in the experience of modernity. Far more significant is the fact that these theories are themselves colored by their time and implicitly or explicitly rest on a conception of modernity as inherently shocking.

Here a particular place is occupied by Benjamin's Arcades Project and his essays on Baudelaire particularly the 1939 *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* in which the sensation of shock is made into a cornerstone of the account of modernity. To Benjamin shock is emblematic of modernity. Not only is he a forerunner in singling out the experience of shock as the key to understanding the experience of modernity, but his own theory is probably the classical theory which most acutely and perceptively articulates and expresses the experience of modernity as shocking. His acute sensibility to shock was shared by many of his contemporaries in the first half of the 20th century, which was a time in which the ever-present sense of threat and risk was heightened into a paralyzing trauma. The venerable past appeared dead and replaced by the supremacy of the contingent, the accidental, the possible and the unforeseen.¹⁹ Benjamin himself refers to the traumatic impact of the First World War in his 1933 essay "Experience and Poverty" ("Erfahrung und Armut"):

Never before have experiences been more radically refuted than the strategic ones by the war of position, the economic ones by the inflation, the bodily ones by the hunger, and the moral ones by the holders of power. A generation that had still traveled to school in a horse-drawn carriage stood under the open sky in a landscape in which nothing was left unchanged except the clouds, and in the middle, in a force field of destructive currents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body. (Benjamin 1977:291)

In Japan too the period from the Meiji restoration onwards was a time when the experience of shock was predominant. "Perhaps no age prior to our own has been so afflicted by nightmares", the critic Kobayashi Hideo writes 1932 (Kobayashi 1995:37). There as well as in the West, the experience of these times was indeed, as Harvey puts it, that "the only secure thing about modernity is its insecurity" (Harvey 1995:11).

The aim of this chapter is to map the principal characteristics of the constellation of "shock-modernity". We will use Benjamin's theory of modernity as a guide, partly because he shares our vantage point of shock and partly because of the light it throws on other classical social thinkers. Just as Benjamin, we will attempt to understand modernity through a focus on the sensation of shock. What distinguishes our undertaking from his is, of course, that it is exactly this vantage point that will reveal the near absence of shock in much of our material in the following chapters. A wide range of other thinkers and writers will be touched upon and discussed, but primarily in connection with Benjamin. I have chosen partly Japanese texts and partly classical theorists, most of whom were contemporary with Benjamin. This will allow me to show, firstly, that the experience of shock was as central in the Japanese as in the European context, and secondly to hint at how theoretically fundamental this experience has been as a premise or point of departure in the theory of modernity. Our aim is not to reduce these thinkers to the "same", but to let each highlight the key function that the concept of shock serves in their ideas from different angles and thus to let each contribute to a fuller picture of the constellation that we are mapping. By showing how crucial the notion of shock is in these accounts, it will become possible for us to grasp the full extent of the theoretical implications of the absence of shock, of naturalization, in the following chapters.

It will be helpful to begin with a brief summary of Benjamin's theory of modernity. Its gist is expressed in his famous formulation that the price of modernity is the "disintegration of the aura in the sensation of shock" (Benjamin 1997:154). In modernity, people tend to protect themselves against the raw force of shock by developing a "heightened degree of consciousness", which serves as a "protective shield" against excessive external stimuli. This in turn leads to a shift in the form of perception from assimilated experience (*Erfahrung*) to superficial sensations (*Erlebnis*) of reified and isolated moments. Benjamin treats this shift as equivalent to the disintegration of the "aura" — defined as that which makes an object or a human relationship appear unique and embedded in a history or tradition of its own. Drained of aura, the world turns into the world of "spleen", which is a state where external stimuli have lost their uniqueness — every sensation seems to be merely a repetition of previous ones (*ibid* 111ff). According to Benjamin, then, spleen arises not through a lack of stimuli but through an excess of stimuli. Paradoxically, it is shock — and not its absence — that fuels it. Modernity appears as a seamless collusion of incessant shock-sensations and attempts by the intellect to master the shocking environment. It is a "hell" or "continuous catastrophe",

characterized by a "dialectic of the new and the ever-same", an endless production of novelty after novelty, yet at the same time mired down in monotonous repetition, each new shock collapsing back into the ever-same (ibid 1999:842f; 1977:231). Paradoxically, this very hell contains a redemptive potential, expressed, for instance, in the dreams about and partial realizations of what Benjamin calls "play" and "porosity", a potential that becomes accessible through a "tactile" getting used to the catastrophe.

Shock, aura, porosity, heightening of consciousness, and hell — we will attempt to catch the experience of "shock-modernity" in the net formed by these key concepts. Below, I will discuss each of them, devoting a section to each.²⁰

1-1: Shock

What does Benjamin mean by shock? We remember that this concept is delicately ambiguous. It is a marker of non-identity, a disruption of the organic and continuous flow of things that together form a self-identical totality in which the oldest as well as the newest presents itself as part of the same essence. It is the sudden intrusion of an external logic or an external chaos into the ordered whole of the organic. It may inflict the "pains of hell" but is also the necessary rupture that liberates from the mythical closure associated with the aura. Benjamin never sets down this ambiguity abstractly. His analysis in *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* takes off from a very concrete point — the shock experienced by pedestrians in the urban crowd — and takes form, not so much through abstraction as through the juxtaposition of concrete instances, each of which is always more than a mere example. According to Benjamin, one particularly poignant and captivating expression of the shock experienced in the crowd was achieved by Baudelaire in his sonnet *A une passante*, which depicts the poet's chance encounter with an anonymous passer-by, a woman in mourning whose glance he happened to catch.

Amid the deafening traffic of the town,
Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,
A woman passed, raising, with dignity
In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown;

Graceful, noble, with a statue's form.
And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills,
From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm,
The softness that fascinates, the pleasure that kills.

A flash, then night! û O lovely fugitive,
I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance;
Shall I never see you till eternity?

Somewhere, far off! too late! never, perchance!
Neither knows where the other goes or lives;
We might have loved, and you knew this might be!

(translated by C.F.MacIntyre, quoted in Benjamin 1997:124)

As Benjamin points out, the poem is not about love at first sight, but at last sight. "It is a farewell forever which coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment. Thus the sonnet supplies the figure of shock, indeed of catastrophe" (Benjamin 1997:125).

Here we should note the ambiguity of the anonymous masses in Baudelaire. They "bring the figure that fascinates", but simultaneously there is "something menacing" and "inhuman" about them (ibid 125, 128). This ambiguity can be described as an intermingling of fear and desire û an intermingling that is characteristic of the perception of an environment as shocking.²¹ The woman is borne along by the crowd to appear before the narrator, but she is also snatched away by it, and it is the combination of these two moments that gives birth to the sensation of shock. The experience of shock, in other words, stems from a situation in which the promise of libidinal fulfillment clashes against the hard and reified structures of modern society û from a situation balancing, so to speak, between the hope of fulfillment and the betrayal of this hope. On the one hand we have the experience in the big city crowd of expectation and exhilaration, the enticing air of permissiveness and possibilities, but on the other hand there is the experience of the city as a lonely, hostile desert of brute indifference. In the city desire is not only "liberated" and barriers pulled down, but its fulfillment is also frustrated to a high degree, since it has to be pursued in a hostile world, always entailing the exposure of the subject to shock and setbacks. Here we see why shock occupies such an important position in Benjamin's analysis of modernity: it is a "crystal" in which the conflicting elements of modernity are reflected and visible in a conveniently condensed form. Modernity is a situation in which everything is still in the balance: it both Utopia and wasteland in equal degree. The same friction between conflicting contexts run through all the concretizations of the sensation of shock that Benjamin offers: what is experienced on an individual scale in the crowd appears on a historical scale as the relentless and impatient destruction and creation that is characteristic of modernity, the age of permanent crisis. It is this self-contradictory nature of modernity which he will capture in his formulation of modernity as a "hell" characterized by a "dialectic of the new and ever-same".

Let us now move on to study this state of balance or conflict in two further phenomena that often accompany the descriptions of "shock-modernity": the impression of speed and of the superhuman strength of the social system.

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the form of a city
Changes faster û alas! û than the mortal heart.
û Baudelaire, "The Swan" (1997:117)

The wrought-up tempo, the tremendous acceleration and frenzy of modern life is a recurrent theme in descriptions of shock-modernity. Simmel's description of the "intensification of nerve-life" in the modern city û with its "swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" as exemplified by "the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions" û is classic (Simmel 1964b:410). Equally eloquent is the statement in Natsume Sôseki's great novel *The Wayfarer* (1912-13, *Kôjin*) which attributes the insecurity of modern man to the acceleration of modern life:

Man's insecurity stems from the advance of science. Never once has science, which never ceases to move forward, allowed us to pause. From walking to ricksha, from ricksha to carriage, from carriage to train, from train to automobile, from there on to the dirigible, further on to the airplane, and further on and on û no matter how far we may go, it won't let us take a breath. How far it will sweep us along, nobody knows for sure. (Natsume 1991:285)

"This agitation is becoming so great", Nietzsche writes, "that the higher culture can no longer allow it fruits to ripen; it is as if the seasons were following too quickly on one another. From lack of rest, our civilization is ending in a new barbarism" (Nietzsche 1984:172).

Shock-modernity is an environment in which things, as Baudelaire writes, always change faster than the heart; it is a state in which things constantly seem to happen "too fast", before people feel properly prepared. The rhythm of society and that of the heart are out of tune, and it is this divergence that comes forward as shock. We could say, for instance, that Baudelaire's *A une passante* depicts a love that never gets the time to grow into an aura. Petrified by the shock it receives, it is a broken fragment of what it might have become. In the anonymous urban crowd, impulses to know one another better are not only rare but also generally doomed, since feelings of affection are denied the peace and time to grow around their object. In modernity, unrelated occurrences constantly intervene in one's life on every level without warning, threatening its unity and tranquility and making it impossible to lower one's guard without inviting pain. It is an age when inner impulses û such as the poet's feeling in the chance encounter with the passer-by û are constantly and brutally thwarted.

The accelerated speed of modern life is also emphasized in Robert Musil's vision of an imagined "super-American city" which he contrasts to the comfortably leisurely pace of backward Vienna:

Air and earth form an anthill traversed, level upon level, by roads live with traffic. Air trains, ground trains, underground trains, people mailed through tubes special-delivery, and chains of cars race along horizontally, while express elevators pump masses of people vertically from one traffic level to another; at the junctions, people leap from one vehicle to the next, instantly sucked in and snatched away by the rhythm of it, which makes a syncope, a pause, a little gap of twenty seconds during which a word might be hastily exchanged with someone else. Questions and answer synchronize like meshing gears; everyone has only certain fixed tasks to do; professions are located in special areas and organized by group; meals are taken on the run. Other parts of the city are centers of entertainment, while still others contain the towers where one finds wife, family, phonograph and soul. Tension and relaxation, activity and love, are precisely timed and weighed on the basis of exhaustive laboratory studies. (Musil 1981:31, trans. by Sophie Wilkins)

The prime impression generated by this city is that things are "too" efficient, that the tempo is "too" high. Musil's "super-American city", one commentator has remarked, "is the world of Chaplin's *Modern Times*" (Kamata 1995:240). To be sure, just as in Chaplin's movie the high tempo creates an impression of comic excitement, but in both this speed also has something inhuman and machine-like in it.²² What seems to fascinate Musil most is the "systematic" aspects of social relations in modernity — the superhuman web of obscure yet "functional" interconnections in which people appear as mere cogs or functionaries, the city as a Taylorist factory in which people are shuffled around like objects on a conveyor belt.

Here we have already encountered another conspicuous theme of shock-modernity: the perception of modern society as an overwhelmingly powerful and inhuman machine, a "system". The superhuman power of the social system is sometimes seen as the direct source of the prevalence of shocks in modernity. One example is Adorno, according to whom it is the disparity in strength between the social system and the individual that generates the experience of shock that is characteristic of modern art.

The social origin of shock can be presumed in the overpoweringly intensified disproportion in modern industrialism between the body of the individual and the things and forces in technical civilization over which shock has power... Through such shocks the individual becomes conscious of his nothingness in the face of the gigantic machine of the entire system. (Adorno 1994b:156)

The theory and fiction of shock-modernity abound with visions of individuals being absorbed or oppressed by an immense and superhumanly powerful social machinery — from the Weberian "iron cage" to the monstrous, lethargic bureaucracies of Kafka and from Orwell's 1984 to Ginsberg's "Moloch". One

of the most sustained scholarly attempts to grapple with the preponderance of the social system over the individual is Simmel's. "The deepest problems of modern life", read Simmel's famous words, "derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life" (Simmel 1964b:409). A central problem is what he called the disproportion between "subjective" and "objective culture", or the "atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture" — the latter term standing for the culture accumulated over the centuries and embodied in the knowledge, the institutions and the numerous things of contemporary society that threaten to reduce the individual to a "quantité négligeable" (a negligible quantity) (ibid 422). The inability of the individual to measure up to objective culture is especially visible in the modern metropolis.

Here in buildings and educational institutions, in the wonders and comforts of space-conquering technology, in the formations of community life, and in the visible institutions of the state, is offered such an overwhelming fullness of crystallized and impersonalized spirit that the personality, so to speak, cannot maintain itself under its impact. (ibid 422)

To be sure, as society grows more complex and impenetrable, its operations are executed with ever-increasing efficiency and it puts ever greater areas of human conduct under the sway of economic or administrative systems. The growing strength of these systems has meant the extension of "modern" reified social relations, accompanied by shock, into areas of life that were previously exempt from shock. With Jürgen Habermas, we could say that modernization has tended to replace "social integration" — the coordination of action through shared and readily comprehensible norms — by "system integration" — the coordination of action through money and power, the media of the economic and administrative systems. As economic and administrative system-mechanisms "colonize" the spheres of life previously governed through the resources of the "lifeworld" (the subjectively meaningful and usually taken-for-granted normative background of social interaction), social interaction becomes increasingly independent of shared norms and shared understanding. Society as a "lifeworld" becomes fragmented, while systemic interconnections become increasingly difficult to grasp, resulting in an impression of confusing speed and complexity (Habermas 1992a:352-5). For instance, the functional logic that explains the gathering together of thousands of strangers in the city generally exceeds the perceptive capabilities of any single individual. By extension, the increasing differentiation of the "system" may appear to explain the prevalence of the shock-sensation, since its interconnections are so complex that it constantly seems to surprise and overwhelm people. The impression that things change "too fast" and that preparation is lacking would then simply reflect the growing impenetrability of the system, and not necessarily reflect any factual increase in the speed by which its operations are executed. The "speed" and the

"strength" of the system would thus seem to stem from the same process of colonization and do not necessarily indicate two separate sources of shock.

But why is the "colonization of the lifeworld by the system" perceived to be shocking? Here we need to remember that the "system" in many recent works of fiction has ceased to be experienced as shocking, despite still being portrayed as immensely and ominously powerful. This indicates that the "social origin" of shock is not primarily located in the increasing power of the economy or the bureaucracy per se, but above all in the circumstance that system-mechanisms are perceived to clash with the expectations and values that concern the areas of life that they colonize. The clash between system-mechanisms and the values of the "lifeworld" is a variation of the clash between fear and desire. In both cases shock is the product of a conflict between expectation and the betrayal of expectation. What happens with "naturalization", is that the sense of conflict or friction between separate contexts subsides as expectations become aligned to external circumstances. The system, in other words, is shocking primarily because it is experienced as a new and unfamiliar environment, not necessarily because of its power.

Let us have a brief look at two aspects of the image of society as a "system" that tend to clash in a particularly acute way with people's expectations and desires: 1) the atomization of human relations into a "world of enemies", and 2) technology and the insensitive, "machine"-like character of modern life:

(1) The big city crowds described by Benjamin and Simmel are the result of atomization: purely accidental concentrations of individuals who are on their way somewhere else, locked in their own separate trajectories. Atomization, or the disintegration of social bonds through system-imperatives, has occupied a special place in sociology ever since Ferdinand Tönnies' early *Community and Association* (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, 1887). Tönnies' work reflects the experience of what might be called the first major onslaught or initial stage of atomization: the destruction of the libidinally integrated, pre-modern community. The bewildering and shocking impact of this destruction can also be clearly felt in Georg Lukács' *Theory of the Novel* (1915) in which it is registered as the downfall of the epic, a literary form which in his view presupposed an intact community. In the world of the epic "all understand each other because all speak the same language, all trust one another, be it as mortal enemies, for all are striving in the same way towards the same center" (Lukács 1996:44). In the modern novel, by contrast, the heroes are solitary and homeless, trapped in their own incommunicable personal destinies, and all they can do is to yearn for the wholeness and the mutual understanding that has been lost. If we turn to Ulrich Beck's present-day theory of "individualization", we see that atomization has now progressed further and is dissolving far more than the community. Beck describes it as a process whereby all kinds of old solidarities — like those of class, family, friendships, or love — become more fragile or torn to pieces altogether (Beck 1992:91-102). Just as his predecessors, however, Beck derives this process from system-imperatives: to stay in tune

with the rhythms of the labor-market, individuals may have to sacrifice human ties at a moment's notice. In this sense, individualization is clearly a continuation or radicalization of the processes of atomization that are as old as modernity itself.

In the classics of sociology the increased instability and unpredictability in human relations brought about by the atomization of social relations is typically portrayed as creating a "cold" world of mutual distrust and hostility in which the risk of shock is endemic. Tönnies sees antagonism as a typical feature of human relations in *Gesellschaft*,²³ Simmel writes about the aversion felt between its members,²⁴ and similar passages abound in Benjamin, Adorno, Arnold Gehlen and others.²⁵ This instability is the background of what we have called the intermingling of fear and desire in shock-modernity. It is because of this intermingling that atomization is perceived to be shocking. As Baudelaire's sonnet illustrates, a result of atomization is the creation of a society in which impulses and expectations associated with sociability and love tend to be punished by shock. That shock stems from such an intermingling is indicated by Benjamin's words about the "stigmatization of love in the big city" (1997:46, 125). In Adorno too, we see that shock tends to arise from the perception of a friction or conflict between incompatible contexts. To vary one of his aphorisms "Love you will find only where you may show yourself weak without provoking strength" (Adorno 1978:192) "we may say that shock is occasioned when you make yourself vulnerable in the expectation of tenderness but encounter reification. Adorno's aphorism reflects his recognition that the spread of reified social relations in modernity has all but eradicated the likelihood of reciprocal love as well as of all spontaneity of feeling, and this is why he finds atomization shocking.

Similar sentiments were found in Meiji-period Japan. In his novels Natsume Sôseki consistently portrays modernity as an ugly, hostile world characterized by cynicism, greed and the struggle for survival. "It is not you in particular that I distrust, but the whole of humanity", the sensei says to the narrator in *Kokoro* (1914). And he adds: "You see, loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egoistical selves" (Natsume 1997:29f). In these words, there is seemingly no friction or conflict between the sensei's expectations and the reality of atomization, but as the reader is aware his attitude is the product of past experiences of betrayal, making it clear that atomization and shock went hand in hand in his case as well.

However, are we entitled to draw the conclusion that the conflict between fear and desire is insoluble under conditions of modernity? Not if the very expectation of tenderness may diminish through what we will call a process of privatization or interiorization of libido "but to this possibility we will return later.

(2) There seems to be a relation between "shock-modernity" and the perception of "machine-likeness". Shock is not only due to the introduction of technology

in life, but also to the way human relations, in adapting to a modern environment, are themselves perceived to take on a "machine-like" character. Again, this is vividly and picturesquely described by Benjamin, who argues that the way the pedestrian is forced to react to shock sensations in the crowd mirrors the mechanical reactions and movements that workers are forced to adopt by their machines. "The shock experience which the passer-by has in the crowd corresponds to what the worker 'experiences' at his machine" (Benjamin 1997:134).²⁶ Making their way in the crowd, moving through traffic or dangerous crossings, pedestrians are forced to react mechanically to the bombardment of signals and approaching dangers.

Moving through this traffic involves the individual in a series of shocks and collisions. At dangerous crossings, nervous impulses flow through him in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery. [...] Whereas Poe's passers-by cast glances in all directions which still appeared to be aimless, today's pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals. Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. (Benjamin 1997:132)

This description, with its emphasis on purely sensory blitz, draws attention to technology as a source of shock in the city. The crowd is a meeting place of human beings and various technological devices: cars, traffic lights, neon signs. The adaptation to this environment — the "training" mentioned by Benjamin — amounts to the development of a way of perception tuned in to technology. Here we recognize the reason for Benjamin's interest in the crowd. Just as familiarity with movies and photography could help people get used to and master technology — as he famously argued in *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility* (1936) — getting used to the big city crowd could help people master the "machine-like" character of modernity instead of being passively subjected to it or rejecting it in a regressive, defensive way. The difficulties of this adaptation were many. We have the example of the novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirô, who in his 1933 essay *In Praise of Shadows* (*In 'ei raisan*) expresses how harrowing traffic lights could be experienced:

[N]ow that we cannot cross an intersection without consulting a traffic signal, old people can no longer venture confidently out into the streets.[...] [O]n those rare occasions when I go into Osaka, it sets every nerve in my body on edge to cross from one side of the street to the other. If the signal is in the middle of the intersection it is easy enough to see it; but it is all but impossible to pick out a stop light that stands off to the side, where no one would ever expect to find it. If the intersection is broad, it is only too easy to confuse the light for facing traffic with the light for crossing traffic. (Tanizaki 1977:39)

In Benjamin as well as in Tanizaki, a central theme is the collision between "tradition" on the one hand and "technology" on the other. As we have suggested earlier, it is collisions of seemingly incompatible contexts of this sort that come forward as shock sensations. In other words, I would suggest that it is not the "machine-like" character of society per se that is perceived as shocking,

but rather this sense of a collision between the "human" and the "mechanical", from which the metaphor of society as an inhuman machine draws strength.

The metaphor of society as a machine is found throughout the classics of social thought. Individuals are likened to "cogs" in Max Weber, Bloch, Siegfried Kracauer and many others.²⁷ Tönnies describes atomization in terms of a shift from the "organic" ties of *Gesellschaft* to the "machine-like" or "mechanic" relations between atomized individuals in *Gesellschaft*.²⁸ The classical theoretical term that corresponds to this perception of society as machine is *û* alongside *Gesellschaft* *û* "reification" in the superficial sense according to which it means that the relation between humans assumes the character of a relation between things. We will return later to reification *û* here I would merely like to point out that the term is often wedded to the perception of society as oppressive, antagonistic and shocking, and often seems to depend on a sharp and very symptomatic disjunction between the "human" or the "organic" on the one hand and the "thing-like" or "mechanical" on the other. This disjunction corresponds to what we described above as a clash between desire and fear, expectation and betrayal, and so on *û* in other words to the experience of a gap or clash between contexts that are mutually exclusive.

We may now state Benjamin's own terms for the two incompatible contexts whose collision he portrays as the foil of the shock-sensations in modernity: on the one hand the world of the "aura", and on the other the world of "heightened consciousness" and "spleen". We will shortly return to these two worlds. First, however, we need to have a closer look at "porosity", an experience that occupies an interesting place in Benjamin's thought, being reminiscent of the shock-sensation and just as antithetical to the "aura", but still not fully typical of modernity.

Porosity

[T]he value of cities is determined according to the number of places in which improvisation is permitted. *û* Siegfried Kracauer (quoted in Frisby 1985:139)

The delight in destabilization and freedom that the city offers under favorable circumstances is related to a quality that Benjamin, Asja Lacis and Ernst Bloch referred to as "porosity". "Porosity" and "play" are two concepts whose central function in Benjamin's view of modernity is frequently underrated.²⁹ Although they articulate a fundamentally anti-auratic experience of contingency and impermanence, they must be carefully distinguished from the concept of "shock".

Benjamin and Lacis derived the concept of porosity from their experience of Naples and developed it in their jointly written essay "Naples" (1924). The architecture as well as social relations in this city, they claim, are characterized by impermanence, improvisation and ambiguity. Everywhere "the stamp of the

definite is avoided" (Benjamin & Lacis 1972:309). Boundaries like the ones between private and public or labor and leisure are fluid and unsettled. "Just as the living room reappears on the street, with chairs, hearth and altar, so the street migrates into the living room" (ibid 314). The porosity is not only spatial, but temporal as well: "it is difficult to judge where construction is still going on and where decay has set it. For nothing is fully completed" (ibid 310).

Bloch takes up the concept of porosity in the essay "Italy and porosity" (1925), where he describes the porous as "an object that lacks boundaries, but that is nevertheless bound together" (Bloch 1998:451). "To see a party of Neapolitans enter a restaurant and spread out over the tables, even the already partly occupied ones, and to observe the initiation of social contact and the mingling of conversations, is truly a lesson in porosity. There is nothing aggressive in this, nothing like the German practice of confiscation; rather, everything is friendly and open: a diffuse, collective mode of gliding." (ibid). The same is true of interiors.

Interiors of middle-class homes show hardly any sense of solid, attractive habitability; instead, the placement of furniture within a room is arbitrary and changeable as the scenes in the street. The residential interior participates in the exterior world: the result is a merging of private and public space. The light source consequently is not a part of the wall, helping to enclose space; rather, it is the street's way of intervening within the dwelling, of pressing inward with the force of light. Conversely, the world outside has many of the features of a living room — especially in the piazzas (even the newer ones) that are almost entirely, but beautifully, closed in. Italy has a surfeit of such roofless banqueting halls or dance halls, from the piazza in Capri to Piazza San Marco in Venice; yet they possess a sense of enclosed interiority that is often absent in the inner rooms of residences. (ibid 452)

These Neapolitan homes provide an illustrative counterpoint to what Benjamin and Adorno described as the bourgeois intérieur of the 19th century, the private dream worlds which, sealed off as completely as possible from the outside world, functioned as "sheltered islands" for its inhabitants. The homes described by Bloch are the very opposite of such "private universes". To Bloch, porosity signifies that history, the past, is embedded everywhere in the present and can be grasped through the "holes" of the present. It thus offers exits, breathing holes in the cave, and suggests the possibility of change. The constant coming and going of people in the house prevents it from congealing into a closed auratic space, to seal itself off as an autonomous whole and thus to define itself as an interior possessing a substance and a logic in its own right. But neither is it wholly subject to the logic of the outside world, the community. It is more correct to say that the provisional and impermanent character of the Neapolitan interior derives from its position on the crossroads of intersecting logics. Even better would be to say that a porous space lacks a defining logic, since its internal arrangement will be determined by convenience and never in a definite way.

The most important thing we can notice is how blatantly these descriptions of porosity and mutual openness contradict the common notion of the superior might of heteronomous orders that leave no room for spontaneous individual action — in other words, of the kind of "system" that Adorno and others perceived to be the social origin of shock in modernity. This suggests that neither Benjamin nor Bloch see porosity as a typically modern experience. To be sure, in modernity the logic of capitalism and the modern state shatters the mythic context of traditional beliefs, but it does so only to establish a new repressive order in its place, a "second nature". Impervious to pleas its own inexorable logic is the very prototype of intolerant identity-thinking, excluding everything that fails to address it on its own terms and in accordance with the logic of money or bureaucratic power.

This is why both Benjamin and Bloch give a slightly utopian tinge to their descriptions of porosity.³⁰ Especially Bloch's essay is suffused by a nostalgic appreciation for what to him must have appeared to be a backward country. Significantly, he states that "the bourgeoisie and its culture stand in opposition to porosity" (Bloch 1998:456). Although Benjamin and Bloch derived the category of porosity from their actual experience of a city, both tend to regard it as a category of experience belonging to an earlier stage in which capitalist social relations are still just a thin layer over a basically pre-capitalist society. As a result, they both contrast Naples to the gloomy orderliness and machine-like efficiency of modern industrial society, with its fixed boundaries between private and public.

Associated with the slightly pre-modern, "porosity" is nevertheless not to be confused with the archaic, mythic sameness that Benjamin associates with the aura. It suggests something peculiarly modern, the isolation and radicalization of one of the aspects of the modern city, namely the impermanent, the irregular and the ambivalent. Porosity constitutes, as it were, a transposition of the experience of shock into an idealized realm in which it is denuded of its frightening, intimidating aspect. "Porosity" is irregularity, unpredictability and chance where there is no compulsion to identity. Perhaps one could venture the following generalization: wherever irregularity overwhelms the capacity of the subject to assimilate it, it will appear in the guise of shock. Shock is linked to the preponderance of the system over the individual, whereas "porosity" suggests a balance, an equilibrium in the exchange of non-identity between the subject and society. Porosity means that the subject is free and capable to act back on its environment. The question we need to address now is to what extent shock-modernity was considered to offer this possibility. Is this balance merely an ideological projection that stems from an inability to accept the present, or does it offer any clues as to how the dilemmas of the present may be overcome? As with most of Benjamin's concepts, that of "porosity" too turns out to be quite ambiguous.

Let us first examine the claims to an emancipatory potential in porosity. The very word "balance" calls to mind *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility*, where Benjamin argues that one of the most important social

functions of film is "to restore the equilibrium between human beings and machinery" (Benjamin 1989:375). The spectator, he claims, "tests" the film by his active interest in the process of its production. This active interaction with a technical medium is also what he calls "play". "Play" and "aura" are elements in all works of art, but with the disintegration of the aura, art is liberated from its ritual component and the scope for play in art is correspondingly increased (ibid 359, 368 n10). The essay thus presents the thesis that the disintegration of the aura means increased scope for play. Play is presented as a progressive potentiality which, unlike the charming porosity of Naples, has technology \hat{u} and the "developmental tendency of art under present conditions of production" (ibid 350) \hat{u} on its side. This conclusion, as is well known, elicited the criticism of Adorno (letter from Adorno to Benjamin 18.3.1936, Adorno & Benjamin 1999:127-34). What he feared was the far too direct and unmediated attempt by Benjamin to identify the actual attitude of contemporary movie-audiences with "play". Indeed, as Benjamin himself was well aware, "play" as well as "porosity" are best understood as wish-images. If they are taken as true descriptions of present society they risk serving as myths or ideologies.

The precarious balance between the factors of porosity, shock and aura can be studied if we return to Baudelaire's *A une passante*. Let us return to the desire felt by the lonely flâneur, this time described in a passage by Benjamin himself:

Love presses forward with the inquisitive fingers of desire down the winding street. Its way leads through the interior of the lover, which opens up to him in the image of the beloved who passes lightly before him. This image opens up his interior to him for the first time. For, as the voice of the truly beloved awakens in his heart an answering voice which he has never before heard in himself, the words which she speaks awaken in him thoughts of this new, much more hidden ego. (Benjamin 1999:828)

The anonymous woman appears to the flâneur as a scent of exteriority, as the suddenly opened gate out of the closure of identity. The other world, which he suddenly glimpses, is auratic. Its aura is reduced to ashes the very same moment that the crowd carries her away. That the aura has to remain a mere rudiment, which was never allowed the time to develop and blossom, also means that he never becomes fully enslaved by it. He stays at the threshold of two intersecting worlds, torn out of his reveries but not wholly allowed into the auratic world of the beloved. This moment, in which it seems as if anything could happen and everything is still in the balance, is a moment of "porosity". As the woman disappears from view, this sense of porosity too is extinguished. Nothing remains but sameness and identity \hat{u} what Baudelaire called spleen. Baudelaire's sonnet suggests that shock leads to the disintegration not only of the aura but also of porosity. As we remember, the argument in *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility* presents the opposite thesis: the disintegration of the aura means increased scope for play. Here then, is the exact point at which this essay can indeed be judged to present a more positive and

"optimistic" view of shocks and technology than the later essays on Baudelaire, although we must remember that *The Work of Art*-essay speaks about a mere scope or potentiality, and that even in this essay "play" remains a Utopian concept rather than one reflecting the actual experience of modernity.

Porosity, then, is only fleetingly realized, and mostly lives on as an ideal. As an ideal this experience is manifested in the fantasies of utopia celebrated by Bloch, and can also be sensed in what Adorno calls a state of "reconciliation" in which non-identity is no longer suppressed. "Reconciliation" is not the restoration of unity — i.e. not the return of the aura — but is better grasped as a potential inherent in the very qualities in modernity which, as long as society insists on repressing the non-identical, are perceived as shocking, such as unpredictability and transitoriness. To be sure, the daily shocks of capitalism too provide an escape from the false finality of identity-thinking. The shock sensation is a fissure in the sameness of everyday life, through which the light may shine in of undreamed-of possibilities, of externality, of something other than the existing order. But such shocks are felt to be painful because of the one-sidedness of the relation between subject and object: the subject is merely the passive victim. In contrast, porosity is a rare experience of non-identity under conditions that allow for a two-way communication, the condition that Benjamin described as an "equilibrium" between man and the shock-producing technological environment.

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The same precarious vacillation between ideology and utopian imagination can be studied in Simmel's observations on play and sociability (*Geselligkeit*). Although he sees personality as threatened by the "hypertrophy of objective culture" in modernity, he also sees a possibility for fashioning a unique personality in the scope for "play" inherent in modernity itself. In play the contents and "actual forces" of life "are lifted out of the flux of life and freed of their material with its inherent gravity" — they are freed from their objective purposes in the economy and reproduced as play (Simmel 1964a:43). Sociability, he writes, is "the play-form of sociation" (ibid 45). Sociability has a "democratic" nature, in that everyone "acts as if they were equal", interacting solely for the sake of interaction and not for any external objective purpose (ibid 43). In constructing an artificial world of seeming equality, sociability may be seen as a kind of preparation for utopia — it is where we rehearse what we would do in the absence of objective purposes and real constraints. Here again, we could say that Simmel is actually depicting a sphere that is not so much part of modernity, as slightly removed from it.³¹ As the distance to social reality closes and it becomes impossible to turn a blind eye to real relations of power in society, shock becomes unavoidable and this leads to the disintegration of play. What is revealed here, in other words, is that the slightly backward "porosity" of Naples and the "play" of the haute bourgeoisie or the

court occupies analogous positions. None of them is really equipped to survive the full impact of modernity as shock.

The playform of eroticism is coquetry, Simmel writes (Simmel 1964a:50). This is a game of offer and refusal, one of his prime examples of "sociability". Interesting from this point of view is Natsume Sôseki's 1909 novel *And Then* (*Sore kara*). The main protagonist, Daisuke, is a dandy and aesthete who very well illustrates the Simmelian program of refining one's personality. The only milieu in which he can thrive is the city, with its relations characterized by transience, fickleness and disloyalty. This is an environment, he muses, that is inherently unsuitable for marriage and lasting commitments.

Daisuke chose the geisha as the outstanding urbanites because of their heightened sensibilities and broad-ranging freedom of contact. Who knew how often in the course of a lifetime some among them would change lovers? Were not all urbanites geisha, only to a lesser degree? (Natsume 1988:149)

The geisha as the outstanding urbanite! û Here we see a positive view of the freedom that results from the destruction of the aura. At the same time, the deceptive quality of this freedom of choice is evident. Daisuke leads a privileged life without material worries. The difficulties of erecting a "personality" under these conditions are underscored by the fate that awaits Daisuke û to fall helplessly in love in his best friend's wife. The breach of Daisuke is the breach of the play-form, through tactlessly plunging back into the reality of desire, even in the face of material dispossession and social stigmatization.

Play is not so much a depiction of the actual state of modernity as of a "better" modernity in which irregularity and transience would not appear shocking. To say that porosity mainly lives as an ideal is the same as saying that it is vulnerable to contact with the social reality in which such conditions do not obtain. Shock shatters the sense of wholeness associated with the aura, but is û as we have seen û often just as destructive of the experience of "porosity", which is based on the very same irregularity and impermanence in modernity as the experience of shock itself but dependent on rare favorable conditions, such as the relative backwardness of Naples or the sheltered existence of materially well-to-do circumstances.

1-2: Aura

Let us now turn to what the shock-sensation is supposed to destroy û the aura. The beloved human being may well be the auratic object par excellence. Benjamin writes about *A une passante* that "far from experiencing the crowd as an opposed, antagonistic element, this very crowd brings to the city dweller the

figure that fascinates" (Benjamin 1997:125). How are we to understand this fascination?

The distance that is there in the eyes of the beloved and that draws the lover after it is the dream of a better nature. The decline of the aura and the waning of the dream of a better nature [...] are one and the same. (Benjamin 1999:362)

Here "aura" is created by the distance the lover seeks to overcome to attain love's fulfillment. As we will see, Benjamin consistently portrays the auratic object as distant, as the embodiment of a desire or yearning not yet fulfilled. However, there is one sense in which the encounter with the passer-by does not yet represent a genuine realization of the aura, but rather the mere possibility of such a realization, glimpsed before it is obliterated in the sensation of shock. This is because what Benjamin calls the aura is nourished not only by expectations and dreams, but also by memories and by the sense of an unbroken continuity with the past. Modernity, with its incessant shock-sensations, is therefore experienced as a "disintegration of the aura". In other words, Benjamin's modernity is not a wasteland completely devoid of aura, since it continually offers novelties which are fascinating on account of their auratic possibilities, but it characteristically prevents these possibilities from being realized.

What, then, is the aura? The auratic object is an object of worship, adoration or wistful longing. It makes an object appear unique, in possession of a tradition of its own and elevated above the trivial affairs of everyday life. Benjamin summarizes the two elements of "uniqueness" and "distance" from the everyday world in the following definition of the aura:

We define the aura as the unique manifestation of distance, no matter how close the object might be. While resting a summer afternoon, to follow the outline of a mountain against the horizon, or a branch that casts its shadow on the viewer, means to breathe the aura of this mountain, this branch. (Benjamin 1977:142.)

There is something ambiguous in Benjamin's treatment of the aura, something which easily comes into view by a comparison of *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility* (1936), in which the destruction of the aura is portrayed as a liberation from myth, with *Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, in which the emphasis is on the utopian aspects of the aura, associated with what Stendhal called the promise of happiness and expressed in Baudelaire's idea of "correspondences".

In the former essay Benjamin argues that the techniques of reproduction liberate the work of art from its cultic value and hence from its aura. Through reproduction, the "distance" of the work of art is abolished since it is made more accessible, and similarly "uniqueness and permanence" give way to "transience and repeatability" (Benjamin 1977:143). The magical or religious images of earlier societies, by contrast, were usually kept out of view. Their value was not an "exhibition value" but a "cultic value", which derived from their appearance

of inaccessibility and uniqueness. Unlike in the reproduced work of art, the value of such images resided in its "authenticity" (Echtheit), which in turn depended on a sense of its unique history. This history could itself be extremely flexible and volatile. For example, a statue of Venus retained its aura for the medieval clerics, not as an object of worship but as an "ominous idol". What mattered was its appearance of unbroken continuity with what was once worshipped (Benjamin 1977:143).

The aura of the work of art, Benjamin continues, is inseparable from the cultic or ritual context of its origin in ancient societies. It endows the object with a semblance of timelessness. Non-reproducible works of art such as the Greek marble statues present themselves as if they had been "made for eternity" (Benjamin 1989:361). We might say that in such work past and the present appear "identical", as being of the same "essence". The "mythical" aspect of the aura consists in its repression of everything that fails to harmonize with this essence. The aura, then, is a repository of the sacred and of the promise of happiness, but also mythic \hat{u} founded on a repressive tradition that has come into being by excluding and trampling on all that is different, all in its history that was too weak to make its voice heard and that only subsists as scattered, marginal fragments.³²

Similarly, in the notes to the Arcades Project and the essays on Baudelaire Benjamin values the sensation of shock since it contributes to the liberation from the aura. "It is a shock", he writes, "that brings someone engrossed in reverie up from the depths" (ibid 325; J53a,4). The basic thrust of the argument is thus similar to *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility*: to the extent that the "machine-like" quality of the crowd comes to characterize human relations in general \hat{u} i.e. to the extent that such relations will appear fortuitous and replaceable, as mere repetitions \hat{u} they will become antithetical to aura (Benjamin 1997:131). However, in *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* the stress is much less on the false closure created by the aura than on its openness to the future. Although still the aura is associated with the semblance of tradition and continuity, it is also expressed in wishes that reach into the future, beyond the status quo. A significant change has thus taken place in the concept, which has become less conservative and more Utopian. Indeed, it is now not the aura in itself that is seen as imposing a foreclosure of utopian possibilities, so much as the world of Baudelairean "spleen", which is defined precisely as a world drained of aura (Benjamin 1997:145).

In *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* Benjamin brings these utopian aspects of the aura into view by discussing the aura's relation to memory and hope, or past and future. This discussion also clarifies the particular kind of time-consciousness associated with the aura. Let us have a look at this discussion.

(1) Let us begin with the relationship of the aura to the past and to memory. In Benjamin's writings the notion of aura is closely wedded to that of the "trace" of a forgotten human moment in the thing.³³ One reason for the vagueness of the concept of "trace" is that it is something that brings back the past in an

involuntary, or unconscious, way. The aura as Benjamin foregrounds in *Some Motifs in Baudelaire* crucially relies on an unconscious or involuntary memory for its transmission. The aura, he writes, consists in "the associations" which are "at home in the *mémoire involontaire* [involuntary memory]" (Benjamin 1997:145).³⁴

But what is this forgotten human moment that manifests itself as aura? The aura is not only transmitted involuntarily. It arises from long years of worship or love that give the object a "semblance of beauty" (*schöne Schein*) (ibid 989:368 n10). Benjamin quotes Proust:

Some people who are fond of secrets flatter themselves that objects retain something of the gaze that has rested on them. They believe that monuments and pictures present themselves only beneath the delicate veil centuries of love and reverence on the part of so many admirers have woven about them. (quoted in Benjamin 1997:148)

Benjamin comments to this passage that the aura is what the objects "retain" of the gaze that has rested on them: "To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return" (ibid). This ability to look back, I suggest, can be described as its ability to call up the past libido invested in it. We find an illustrative example of the relation between the aura and past libido in Tanizaki. In *In Praise of Shadows* he asks why it is that the Chinese and Japanese love jade, this "strange lump of stone with its faintly muddy light" that lacks the brilliance of diamonds and rubies? His answer is that "we seem to find in its cloudiness the accumulation of the long Chinese past", an accumulation that is materially present in the "grime" and "filth" that comes of centuries of affectionate handling:

Of course this "sheen of antiquity" of which we hear so much is in fact the glow of grime. In both Chinese and Japanese the words denoting this glow describe a polish that comes of being touched over and over again, a sheen produced by the oils that naturally permeate an object over long years of handling which is to say grime [...] I suppose I shall sound terribly defensive if I say that Westerners attempt to expose every speck of grime and eradicate it, while we Orientals carefully preserve and even idealize it. Yet for better or for worse we do love things that bear the marks of grime, soot, and weather, and we love the colors and the sheen that call to mind the past that made them. (Tanizaki 1977:11f)

This passage demonstrates the close connection between libido (love) and aura (grime). Perhaps one could even offer the following as a further redefinition of Benjamin's famed concept: what appears as an object's aura is the traces of libidinal investment in it.

The dependence of the aura on involuntary memory explains why it is vulnerable to a shocking environment, in which a heightened degree of consciousness and "voluntary memory" become predominant. The aura thrives only in a world in which the data of the surrounding world are allowed to enter the flow of experience, instead of being turned into isolated objects of information for the intellect. As the quoted passage on the gaze that rests on

mountains and branches indicates, the concept of the aura is associated not only with pre-modern works of art, but also with nature. Indeed, a precondition for the aura seems to be a "natural" environment in which shock sensations are absent. Only there would involuntary memory be able to unfold uninterrupted, and only there could the awareness of the unique history of the contemplated object be cultivated.

We shall return to the concepts of "voluntary" and "involuntary" memory later. Here it will suffice to note Benjamin's ambivalence towards the aura. The aura is mythic, particular and pre-modern, but it is also a depository of experiences that are inaccessible to the "voluntary" memory that becomes predominant with modernity. The emphasis on the aura's "truth-content" is perhaps even more evident in his discussion of its connection to the "wish" and "completing time".

(2) The notion of aura can be elucidated by introducing the concept of "completing time", which Benjamin borrowed from Joseph Joubert and which appears in a context which suggests that it is closely linked to the aura and to involuntary memory. Benjamin uses it in deliberate opposition to linear, hellish or "destroying" time, which is linked to heightened consciousness and to which we will return later. Benjamin quotes Joubert:

Time is found even in eternity; but it is not earthly, worldly time [...] That time does not destroy; it merely completes. (quoted in Benjamin 1997:136)

"Completing time" is a time in which we feel that all wishes will come true. They seem to arise "out of the womb of time", not in opposition to it. Here the subject, who feels as if it had eternity at its disposal, is in touch with a time in which the moment, replete with experience, has freed itself from linearity. It is a time that allows for inner composure and deliberation. Benjamin adds that this "is the antithesis of time in hell, the province of those who are not allowed to complete anything they have started." (ibid). Benjamin illustrates such hellish time with gambling. The gambler's desire to win, he writes, is not a wish in the strict sense of the word, since a wish springs from the unconscious depths of assimilated experience. While a wish "reaches out in time" and hopes for fulfillment in an indefinite future, the gambler's eyes are impatiently transfixed on "the next compartment, the next card" (Benjamin 1997:136). The vulnerability of the sense of "completing time" to shock can be illustrated if we return to Baudelaire's sonnet *A une passante*. The aura needs time for an awareness of the history of its object to grow, for memories and wishes to take root. Without this awareness the object cannot appear irreplaceable. But as Benjamin points out, the big-city crowd is where traces are obliterated. Since we do not know from where people come or where they are going, we are unable to attach either memories or expectations to them. In the crowd, no wishes can ever come true — at most, the gambler's desire for a lucky coincidence.³⁵

Benjamin's comments on the relation between the aura and the wish throw light on the link we discerned between the aura and past libido. Another way to express this link is: the aura is the embodiment of an old wish. An auratic object embodies old, fulfilled or unfulfilled wishes. This is also why it is insufficient to regard the aura simply as an embodiment of the past, of tradition. It always refers to the future as well.

To summarize then, the aura is linked to a tradition transmitted through a continuous flowing together of past, present and future without dramatic breaks. This tradition is constituted through the smooth transition from past to future \hat{u} from unconscious memories to the fulfillment in completing time. From out of this tradition flow wishes that are projected to the future as utopian fantasies. Here the full extent of the ambiguity of the aura comes into view. As seen in the remarks on completing time, the aura is not only mythical semblance embellishing the status quo, but also points beyond itself. Expressed in the aura of a thing is what Bloch called the *Vorschein* or anticipatory illumination of utopia. It is both ideological and a carrier of that promise of happiness, which Adorno \hat{u} following Stendhal \hat{u} discerned in autonomous art. That Benjamin, despite this, welcomed the shock sensation and the destruction of the aura must be seen against the background of the suffering and exclusion of countless victims, the losers of history, whose traces had to be obliterated for the beautiful semblance of the aura to arise.

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In Simmel we find an argument that partly parallels Benjamin's thoughts on the disintegration of the aura. In both we find reproducibility in the role as the destructive agent, although in Simmel's case this is more connected to the leveling effect of the money-economy than to shock or technology per se. Just as shock, money serves to obliterate history. The affinity to Benjamin's argument is quite clear in passages such as the following:

The levelling effect of the money equivalent becomes quite evident as soon as one compares a beautiful and original but purchasable object with another equally significant one which is not purchasable. We feel from the outset that the latter object possesses a reserve, an independence, a right to be exclusively valued according to the objective ideal \hat{u} in short, it possesses a distinction that the other object cannot attain. (Simmel 1990:393)

The "reserve" and "distinction" that Simmel mentions correspond to the "distance" stressed by Benjamin. In fact, Simmel himself uses the word "aura", if only in passing, in connection with a discussion of the change in the relation between producer and consumer. In the custom work common among medieval craftsmen, the consumer had a personal relation to the commodity since it was produced especially for him. With increasing division of labor and the decay of custom work, however, "the subjective aura of the product also disappears in relation to the consumer because the commodity is now produced independently

of him." (ibid 457). Mass production destroys the aura of the product in much the same way as what Benjamin called "reproduction". One factor that according to Simmel contributes to this destruction is the sheer quantity of the products, which makes a close and personal relationship to each of them difficult.³⁶ "What is distressing is that we are basically indifferent to those numerous objects that swarm around us, and this is for reasons specific to a money economy: their impersonal origin and easy replaceability" (ibid 460). Simmel here seems to refer to what in Marxism is known as the shift from use value to exchange value as a primary factor in the destruction of the aura, a process that Jean Baudrillard would later theorize as the shift from an artisanal production reflecting the needs of the buyer towards the contemporary self-sustaining system of consumption in which the product is nothing but a sign defined in relation to other products and in which needs have simply fallen outside the picture (Baudrillard 1988:14-22).

In a formulation that captures one of the most important aspects of the loss of aura, Simmel states that this loss is experienced "as an independence of the object, as the individual's inability to assimilate it and subject the object to his or her own rhythm" (ibid 459). This inability to assimilate the object is equivalent to a loss of "freedom": "Just as freedom is not something negative but rather is the positive extension of the self into the objects that yield to it, so, conversely, our freedom is crippled if we deal with objects that our ego cannot assimilate." (ibid 460). This is the situation of the worker in relation to the process of production today, and of the consumer to the wealth of commodities. Interestingly, while Simmel describes the destruction of the "subjective aura" of a product as a loss of "freedom" — since the subject becomes unable to assimilate the product as a unique extension of the self — we have seen that Benjamin affirmed the same process as a liberation from myth. We will return to the conflict between these two attitudes to the aura later, since it seems to reflect an ambivalence in the historical situation of its destruction.

Simmel's preoccupation with the problem of the aura is also revealed by the fact that he, even more directly than Benjamin, offered an argument that can be read as an account of how the aura of human beings must decay in a money economy. Instead of "aura" he uses the word "distinction" (*Vornehmheit*), which is defined in terms strikingly reminiscent of the aura. Like the aura, it gives the appearance of "irreplacability" and "distance". In its "distance", it is linked to reserve and self-containment: "The distinguished person is the very person who completely reserves his personality" (Simmel 1990:390). Crucially, Simmel describes it as an aristocratic quality that is antithetical to what can be bought for money. A person with "distinction" is thus "above" things like prostitution, marriage for money or bribery. As these examples imply, even such "intimate" areas of life as sexual relations and the family lose their "distinction" if they are regulated by money. "Only a monetary transaction corresponds to the character of a completely fleeting inconsequential relationship as is the case with prostitution. [...] Money is never an adequate mediator of personal relationships — such as the genuine love relationship,

however abruptly it may be broken off — that are intended to be permanent and based on the sincerity of the binding forces." (Simmel 1990:376). Simmel here links genuine love to history while money is linked to the fleeting and inconsequential. What is inconsequential and leaves no traces is also something isolated from the possibility of integration into tradition. With Benjamin we could say that a relationship mediated by money will tend to remain a mere isolated "sensation" (Erlebnis) without ever being integrated as a lasting "experience" (Erfahrung).

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The aura isolates and protects from the everyday and from society — in all the ambivalent senses that this implies. Benjamin captured this function in the image of the bourgeois domestic interior of the 19th century. With the spread of modern, capitalist relations in the 19th century, the interior and the limited arena of family life became one of the last places in which the male private citizen still demanded auratic human relations. Private space was auratically elevated — as the unique and distant "home" — over the everyday life of work. Sealed off from the outside world, it became modeled on the phantasmagorias of the solitary private citizen.

The private citizen who in the office took reality into account, required of the interior that it should support him in his illusions. [...] From this sprang the phantasmagorias of the interior. This represented the universe for the private citizen. In it he assembled the distant in space and in time. His drawing-room was a box in the world-theatre. (Benjamin 1997:167f)

The dreamlikeness and ideological function of this space is succinctly explained by Adorno in his book on Kierkegaard (1933). Adorno claims that the "inwardness" valorized by Kierkegaard is modeled on the bourgeois intérieur of the nineteenth century. In the private sphere of the apartment the bourgeois individual imagined himself sheltered from the power of reification. Similarly, inwardness appeared "as a romantic island where the individual undertakes to shelter his æmeaningÆ from the historical flood." (Adorno 1989: 37). In the apartment, every object is cut out from its historical context and "arranged in the semblance of unchangeable nature" (ibid 44).

The contents of the intérieur are mere decoration, alienated from the purposes they represent, deprived of their use-value, engendered solely by the isolated apartment that is created in the first place by their juxtaposition. The "lamp shaded like a flower"; the dream orient, fit together out of a cut paper lampshade hung over its crown and a rug made of osier; the room an officerÆs cabin, full of precious decorations greedily collected across the seas — the complete fata morgana of decadent ornaments receives its meaning not from the material of which they are made, but from the intérieur that unifies the imposture of things in the form of a still life. (ibid 43f)

Just as dreams rearrange the contents of waking life according to its own logic, the objects gathered together in the bourgeois intérieur create a semblance of mythic timelessness. We recognize here the impact on Adorno's thought of Benjamin's idea of "natural history" (Naturgeschichte). Just as the self which attempts to extricate itself from external history is forced to reify its historically given content, so the intérieur attains its ahistorical character by freezing the historical moment into an illusory image of a "still life". "Inwardness" is nothing but such a still life. The objects of the intérieur are mythical images, fossils of capitalism which retain a ghostly semblance to reality but which nevertheless serve essentially to conceal the historical process.³⁷

Benjamin too describes the interior as a mythical sheltered space, "furnished in dreams" and cut off from historical reality (Benjamin 1999:213). Here, however, we must not pass over his notion of the interior as a "receptacle" in which the inhabitants leave their "traces".

The interior was not only the private citizen's universe, it was also his casing. Living means leaving traces. In the interior, these were stressed. Coverings and antimacassars, boxes and casings, were devised in abundance, in which the traces of everyday objects were moulded. The resident's own traces were also moulded in the interior. (ibid 1997:169)

In this notion of "trace" we sense a typically benjaminesque ambivalence. History is shut out, but another "history" is offered in its stead — the semblance of a uniquely personal space imprinted with the small-scale history of memories and traces. This, however, should by no means be interpreted as a rehabilitation of the conception of the interior as an expression of inwardness — a conception we find, for example, in Simmel, who portrays the domestic interior as a sphere in which the owner is surrounded by "possessions" that have been "assimilated" as extensions of the self (Simmel 1990:321f). There is a reason that Benjamin carefully avoids describing the interior in terms of self-expression, preferring to rely instead on the ambiguous notion of trace. This, of course, is the insight we encounter in his idea of "natural history": the history of traces is based on the notion of a private self possessing an "inwardness" that is itself not conceived of as historically mediated but as a nature-like given. Being based on this notion, "self-expression" of the Simmelian sort becomes confined to the private sphere, to the domestic interior. In contrast to Simmel, Benjamin emphasizes the need to "awaken" from the mythical, closed world of the aura, which is felt to be suffocating since it allows no room for non-identity. Thus, while for Simmel the destruction of the aura is experienced as a loss of "freedom", as a limit to self-expression and to the ego's capability of shaping the world in accordance with its "personality", for Benjamin freedom presupposes a "liberation from the 19th century", including from the closed circle of the bourgeois interior with its exclusion of the external world.

What tolls the death knell for the bourgeois interior, with its strict distinction between interior and exterior, is the transparency of 20th century glass architecture. Benjamin writes:

The nineteenth century, like no other, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person. The twentieth century, with its porosity and transparency, its tendency towards the well-lit and airy, has put an end to dwelling in the old sense. (Benjamin 1999:220f)

The advent of the "glass-culture" (Scheerbart) is an architectural parallel of the destruction of the aura. "Glass is not for nothing such a hard and glossy material on which nothing sticks. And a cold and sober one. Things made of glass have no 'aura'. On the whole, glass is the enemy of secrets." (Benjamin 1977:294). Glass is the figurative opposite of the plush of the 19th century interiors, where everything seemed to leave traces. The use of glass and steel in the architecture of Le Corbusier and Loos, he continues, has "created spaces in which it is difficult to leave traces" (ibid 295). Benjamin welcomes this arrival of transparency: "To live in a glass house is a revolutionary virtue par excellence", he writes. For similar reasons he lauds André Breton's *Nadja* by calling it a book "where the door keeps banging to and fro", explaining that the shock felt by its reader must be similar to the one he felt in a hotel in Moscow, where he the Tibetan monks who were staying at the same hotel left their doors open since they belonged to a sect whose members had vowed never to be in closed rooms. This, he adds, is a "moral exhibitionism that we are very much in need of" (Benjamin 1988:203).

It is when seen in relation to the auratic bourgeois interior of the 19th century that Benjamin's concept of "porosity" assumes its true utopian and political significance. Porosity implies the subversion of the division of inside and outside, private and public, which is constitutive for the world of 19th century capitalism. Whereas in the contemporary situation of Benjamin, the interwar years, the bursting open of the closed space of the interior, replacing it with the "transparency" of glass-architecture, strikes an ominous note with its oblique reference to the totalitarian subjugation of privacy by the forces of the state or the market, "porosity" signifies the opening of doors and boundaries in an environment not yet dominated by reification. This, as we have seen, is far from how Benjamin portrays the actual state of capitalism. The disintegration of the aura in the sensation of shock may be a revelation of non-identity, but it serves to promote, not a utopia of porosity, but a reified world under the domination of a heightened consciousness that sees as its mission to obliterate all non-identity.

1-3: Spleen and the protective shield of consciousness

Shock-modernity is characterized by a peculiar form of boredom that is different from the one we find in naturalized modernity. Simmel calls it the blasé attitude (Blasiertheit) and Benjamin, drawing on the vocabulary of Baudelaire, refers to it as spleen. Common to these notions is that they rest on a conception of modernity in which shock-sensations are abundant. A typical example is Simmel's well-known thesis that the "intensification of nerve-life" (Steigerung des Nervenlebens) in the modern metropolis brings about a dominance of the intellect over the emotions in spiritual life. This in turn produces the blasé attitude, a state of bored indifference in which nothing is "worth getting excited about" since everything is considered to be equal and exchangeable. As a result, according to Simmel, indifference takes the place of deeper emotional involvement. Things are dealt with in a more superficial way — instead of reacting to stimuli "with the depth of one's personality", one reacts "with the organ furthest removed from it" (Simmel 1964b:410-4, 1990:256). The idea that shock produces a heightened consciousness is also eloquently expressed, for instance, by Benjamin's contemporary, the anthropologist Arnold Gehlen:

[W]e can never afford to relax the tensed-up, awake state of our consciousness; we must maintain a chronic state of alarm, continually monitor our circumstances, continually reorient our conduct, continually articulate and revise our basic commitments. And we must do so on a stage where foreground and backdrop, characters and lines, are constantly changing. (Gehlen 1980:67f)

Like Simmel, Gehlen links this "over-reflexivity" to Blasiertheit or what he calls the "apathy of the over-stimulated" (Gehlen 1980:80). According to both, then, the blasé attitude arises not through a lack of stimuli but through an excess of stimuli. Paradoxically, it is shock — and not its absence — that fuels boredom in their theories. This curious coexistence of seemingly opposed elements is also central to Benjamin's account of modernity.

According to Benjamin in modernity people tend to protect themselves against the raw force of shock by developing a "heightened degree of consciousness" (Benjamin 1997:115). Here he takes recourse to Freud's thesis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) that one of the functions of consciousness is to serve as a "protective shield" (Reizschutz) against excessive external stimuli. Freud writes:

This little fragment of living substance is suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies; and it would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli. [...] Protection against stimuli is an almost more important function for the living organism than reception of stimuli. (Freud 1991:298f)

Benjamin never portrays this shield as a secure fortress offering the subject shelter or rest. One of the principal features of the heightened consciousness is the nervousness with which it seeks to keep step with the complexity of the

environment. Thus Baudelaire, who "made it his business to parry the shocks, no matter where they might come from", is portrayed as a nervous wreck (Benjamin 1997:117). The image that flashes through the reader's mind is that of a hunted animal. The vigilance with which consciousness seeks to forestall the shocks resembles the one with which one stamps out fires. The foil of Benjamin's treatment of shock and the intellect is thus a portrayal of modernity as an essentially hostile world. A world of friends, where you could relax, would not be modernity.

This image of a heightened consciousness desperately struggling against a hostile environment neatly coincides with Simmel and Gehlen's observation that the "intensification of nerve-life" in the modern metropolis produces a blasé attitude. More than them, however, Benjamin is interested in how the protective shield of consciousness creates new forms of perception, and in particular in how it affects or distorts memory and time-consciousness: "assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents" (Benjamin 1997:117). Here we see why Freud works so excellently as a point of departure for Benjamin. To begin with, Freud argues that a high degree of consciousness, functioning as it does to keep stimuli out, has the effect of preventing deeply felt and lasting "memory-traces". Instead, memories "are often most powerful and most enduring when the process which left them behind was one which never entered consciousness" (Freud 1991a:296). He also, secondly, suggests that whereas unconscious mental processes are "timeless" — meaning that the idea of time plays no role in the way we experience them — one of the ways in which consciousness protects against stimuli is by ordering them temporally, thus producing the idea of abstract time. Time, Freud points out against Kant, is thus a "necessary form of thought" only for consciousness (ibid 299).

Freud's arguments suggest that conscious recollection and abstract time are obstacles for perception, and that they reduce the degree to which the world is truly and fully experienced. This is the background of Benjamin's thesis, which forms a cornerstone of his theory of modernity, that in modernity the fullness of assimilated experience (*Erfahrung*) tends to be replaced by the superficial sensation (*Erlebnis*) of isolated and objectified moments.

The greater the share of shock factors in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it is so, the less do these impressions enter experience (*Erfahrung*), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life (*Erlebnis*). (Benjamin 1997:117).

In order for a perception to become an *Erfahrung*, it must be assimilated into the tradition of one's innermost memories, dreams and expectations. Benjamin describes *Erfahrung* as "a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life", which "is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data" (Benjamin 1997:110). An *Erlebnis*, by contrast, can be utilized or enjoyed

without leaving a trace. Since such sensations are never assimilated into a whole, they always appear as torn out of any meaningful context, as accidental and replaceable. An example of an Erlebnis in this sense is "information". "Information" designates those data that are forever repeatable and never leave a lasting mark.

Why can an Erlebnis not be assimilated? One crucial factor is speed. "This process of assimilation, that takes place in the depths, requires a state of relaxation that is becoming rarer and rarer", Benjamin writes (1977:392). The appearance of interruption comes about when the eye or the mind is unable to catch the connection between the previous and the present moment, with the result that they cannot be integrated into a continuous whole (as Erfahrung) but remain fragmented and discontinuous (as Erlebnisse). The prevalence of Erlebnis over Erfahrung, then, would seem to be intimately related to the appearance that things change "too fast", which we mentioned earlier.

At this point, we may illustrate the argument with the help of the literary critic Kobayashi Hideo, who in the 1933 essay "Literature of the Lost Home" ("Kokyô o ushinatta bungaku") spells out the implications of the speed and acceleration of modern life insightfully when he describes Tokyo as a place where it is impossible to form lasting memories. As he looks back at his childhood in Tokyo, he remarks that the few memories that he had "possessed no actuality, no substance".

Looking back, I see that from an early age my feelings were distorted by an endless series of changes occurring too fast. Never was there sufficient time to nurture the sources of a powerful and enduring memory, attached to the concrete and the particular. (Kobayashi 1995:48f)

Lacking such memories, he is unable to think of Tokyo as his "home". What Kobayashi is saying here is, to put it in Benjamin's terms, that his memories of Tokyo consist of Erlebnisse rather than of Erfahrungen.

Let us have a closer look at how Benjamin relates the shift from Erfahrung to Erlebnis to memory, time, and to the sense of spleen. The heightening of consciousness, he points out, involves a shift away from involuntary memory towards voluntary memory. Whenever one tries to remember something from one's past consciously, that is, whenever one makes use of "voluntary" memory, the past loses its character of lived experience and is reduced to harmless objects of "information". The only way to genuinely reexperience one's past, according to Benjamin, is to let oneself be immersed in the unconscious, "involuntary" memory, like when the protagonist in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* is transported back to his childhood world of Combray by the taste of a madeleine pastry. Like Proust, from whom he borrowed the term "involuntary memory", Benjamin devotes particular attention to the tendency of the intellect to distort memory. The past, he quotes Proust, is "beyond the reach of the intellect" (Benjamin 1997:112). Voluntary memory is

able to represent the past, to be sure, but only in a way that is tailored to the needs of the intellect.

The world drained of experience through the reifying gaze of heightened consciousness is the world of Baudelairean spleen (Benjamin 1997:142ff). "The spleen [...] exposes the passing moment in all its nakedness. To his horror, the melancholy man sees the earth revert to a mere state of nature. No breath of pre-history surrounds it; there is no aura" (ibid 145). The absence of aura here signifies a present reduced to its mere facticity. Spleen is akin to *Blasiertheit*. It is a state where external stimuli have lost their uniqueness – every sensation seems to be merely a repetition of previous ones. Time becomes empty and meaningless. It becomes a purely linear continuum of seconds and minutes, or what Benjamin (in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1940) calls "homogeneous and empty time". What we encounter here is that typical time so often associated with modernity: variously referred to as linear time, objective time, measurable time, clock-time, and so on.³⁸ The time-consciousness of spleen, however, is not really linked to the frame of mind of indifference, so much as to pent up anger and frozen expectations. It is the time, for example, of irritated waiting, or of gambling when one gambles with one's eyes transfixed on the roulette-disc. "In the spleen the perception of time is supernaturally keen; every second finds consciousness ready to intercept its shock" (ibid 143). It is such a boredom nourished by shock-sensations that Kobayashi describes when he remarks that the world-weariness and ennui that encircles Baudelaire's poetry is far from a monotony – rather, it is shot through by a radical "tension" (Kobayashi 2000:102). Reified time does not simply effect a mere nullification of emotion, but is linked to feelings of deprivation and frustration, to the hunger for experience. The seconds and minutes parade the experience, which they deny the impoverished subject, as if to deliberately mock him. Reified time is felt to be hellish, a "destroying time" in which we are for ever prevented from fulfilling our wishes and finishing our work. The endless expanse of linear time marks endless deprivation and is thus a "continuous catastrophe". This time is the remorseless wind of "progress" in Benjamin's famous simile in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, the wind that blows so furiously from Paradise that the angel of history is blown into the future, unable to stay on in order to wake up the dead and to repair what has been broken.

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The capacity for fear and for happiness are the same, the unrestricted openness to experience amounting to self-abandonment. – Adorno (1978:200)

What are the implications for the perception of non-identity of the setting up of consciousness as a "protective shield" against shocks? Here, I believe, we may with profit connect Benjamin's argument to Horkheimer and Adorno's famous

discussion of Odysseus and the sirens in the Dialectic of Enlightenment (Dialektik der Aufklärung, 1949). This episode from the Odyssey plays a role in their argument which is reminiscent of the role played in Benjamin's argument by *A une passante*. The role of the beautiful passer-by who intoxicates the lonely flâneur is played by the sirens who, seated on a cliff, seduce the passing seafarers with their irresistible song and cause the ships to founder against the reefs. However, the choice of Odysseus rather than Baudelaire is not theoretically insignificant. Unlike Baudelaire who allows himself to be shocked, Odysseus averts the danger through skillful use of his "heightened degree of consciousness". The episode neatly illustrates Horkheimer and Adorno's conception of enlightenment thought as instrumental reason in the service of self-preservation. As Homer tells us, Odysseus permits himself the luxury of listening to the dangerous song safely tied to the mast, while his crew rows past the cliff with wax stopped up their ears. Seized by the power of the song he tosses wildly with his head to make his men untie him, but knowing the danger they row on until they reach safe distance. It is thus not so much shock per se as the pain of renunciation and self-denial that is foregrounded in the episode. Horkheimer and Adorno argue that this piece of Enlightenment cunning illustrates the coming into being of the modern subject as an act of simultaneous self-preservation and self-repression. The temptation of the sirens, they state, is the temptation to give up one's ego or identity by returning to the past. Their version of the modern subject thus differs slightly from Benjamin's: it comes into being by resisting this temptation in the name of self-preservation. As a consequence their critique of modernity tends to focus more on the negative side effects of repression and self-reification than on the shock-experience per se.

Humanity has had to undergo a terrible self-mutilation in order for the ego, the identical, goal-oriented masculine character of man, to develop, and part of the process is still repeated in every childhood. The effort to hold the ego together accompanies it through all its stages, and the temptation to get rid of it has always gone hand in hand with the blind concentration on preserving it. (Horkheimer & Adorno 1981: 49f)

Through its pursuit of self-preservation, the subject closes itself to the experience of non-identity: to shock-sensations as well as to the "promise of happiness that has constituted a permanent threat against a civilization whose road has been that of obedience and labor" (ibid 50). The subject outwits the mythical forces of external nature only by relinquishing this promise: "a denial of the nature within man has been the price for dominating external nature" (ibid 72). It is not far-fetched to see the call of the sirens as a metaphor for love and for a certain kind of aura. They would thus embody the same ambiguity which we have already studied in Baudelaire's passer-by, inspiring desire as well as fear. The Homeric episode would then agree nicely with the thesis that the pursuit of the aura in modernity ends up in shock and destruction. Horkheimer and Adorno's claim that the subject of self-preserved reason has

had to renounce happiness in order to secure its identity also seems to parallel Benjamin's account of how the heightening of consciousness results in spleen. However, where Baudelaire was "reborn" by his shocking encounter in the crowd, Odysseus stays securely on the side of identity-thinking, and while spleen is produced by an exposure to shocks, the unhappiness of identity stems from a state in which shock can no longer be felt.

In suppressing non-identity, the self-preservative reason described by Horkheimer and Adorno appears to be a variation of what Lukács calls reified thinking. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) Lukács argues that such thinking, by treating its concepts as if they were rigid and timeless entities independent of history, becomes blind to the dialectical movement of history, or, in other words, to the mediation of its objects through the "totality" of societal relations (Lukács 1968:195). Adorno's negative dialectics dispenses with the Lukácsian notion of "totality", but an even more significant amendment is his stress on self-preservation as the essential purpose of reified thinking, or "identity-thinking". This is significant since it introduces the idea, absent in Lukács, that reified thinking, far from being a stable structure, is constantly under siege by shocks and impulses. Approaching its objects from the standpoint of self-preservation it cannot but sense the non-identical as a threat. Adorno, in other words, offers the idea that something in perception itself — namely, the perception of non-identity — offers the possibility of resisting and upsetting identity-thinking.

The crucial theoretical importance of this idea can be seen, for example, if we relate it to Max Weber's theories of rationalization and disenchantment. As is well known, for Weber rationalization empties the world its secrets. There is no longer any room for the alluring mystique of religion in the world as explained by science.

Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. (Weber 1958b:139).

The destruction of the aura, with its "liberation from ritual", is clearly related to disenchantment. In fact, Adorno used the term "disenchantment of art" as a synonym to the decays of the aura of artworks. It would seem possible to say that what on an individual scale takes the form of a "heightening of consciousness" is an important part — or perhaps a kind of close-up — of what on a historical scale appears as what Weber calls rationalization and disenchantment. However, in contrast to the famous Weberian image of rationality as an "iron cage", Adorno's reconceptualization of rationality as self-preservative reason points to the potential brittleness of the cage. In view of this, it seems paradoxical that Adorno at times tends to restate the "iron-cage" view of modern society as a totally integrated system at the same time as he, as

we have seen, paints a picture of modernity as filled to the brim with shock-sensations. To the degree that shock-sensations still abound, self-preservative reason is clearly not completely successful and possibilities of upsetting or relativizing it would still seem to exist. Indeed, one could even argue that it is the very desperateness of the struggle of the "protective shield" to avert the threat of non-identity that makes it seem so repressive and intolerable, thus lending it the high visibility which distinguishes it from the "softer" and less visible foreclosure of non-identity in the aura.³⁹

Benjamin is more successful in bringing out how the experience of shock itself offers possibilities of resisting reification.⁴⁰ Shock is not only antithetical to the aura and the "natural" taken-for-granted order of things, but also to the calculations of heightened consciousness. "The new", he writes, is "the antithesis to what conforms to plan" (Benjamin 1999:916, 904). By focusing on micro-level experiences such as *flânerie*, gambling or watching movies, he is able to demonstrate in a more palpable way than Adorno the dialectics by which the "heightened state of consciousness" is necessitated by the ceaseless shock-sensations of everyday life, which at the same time constantly threaten to overwhelm it. Even a modern ego imprisoned in an identity of the kind portrayed by Horkheimer and Adorno is thus always in danger of being destabilized by the shocks which it seeks to contain. Conscious attempts to dehumanize society constantly run up against the "re-humanizing" forces of history, which reasserts itself in the form of shocks. Let us return to the example of Baudelaire's sonnet to the passer-by. The shock is evidently due to the desire that seizes the lonely poet. This desire shows that the crowd is not entirely dehumanized in his view, that the people are not entirely indifferent to him. Baudelaire is still equipped with impulses that make him vulnerable to shock. "Reborn", as he writes, through his momentary libidinal cathexis, he willingly receives the punishment for his desire.

While Lukács and Adorno are helpful in providing a theoretization of the danger for non-identity posed by reification, Benjamin offers a more concrete analysis of experience, showing the fragility of the protective shield. His modernity is no iron cage but a whirlpool in which aura, shock and rationality compete with and destabilize each other. This whirlpool is what he called "hell".

1-4: Hell and the dilemma of shock-modernity

Lost in this base world, jostled by the mob, I am like a weary man who sees behind him, in the depths of the years, only disillusionment and

bitterness, and in front of him only a tempest that brings nothing new. û
Baudelaire (quoted in Benjamin 1999:314)

Hell, for Benjamin, is not dominated solely by shock. It is, rather, a cultural space dominated above all by three elements: aura, shock and spleen. It is a space in which the disintegration of the aura and the rise of spleen are constantly replayed and experienced, rather than a space in which there is no longer any aura.

Baudelaire's *A une passante* is a primal image of modernity as hell because it depicts a moment of collision in which both aura and shock are equally present and alive. Benjamin's famous thesis that the price of modernity is the "disintegration of the aura in the sensation of shock" is not to be understood to imply that the modern is incompatible with an auratic way of perceiving things. Modernity is not the age in which there is no more aura. It is the age in which the aura is destroyed. The aura perishes anew in every sensation of shock, but just as incessantly new aura is produced. As Benjamin points out, even in modernity aura is constantly produced anew in phenomena such as fascism or the film-industry. The aura does not disappear but is drawn into a perpetual process of disintegration. This explains why, in the examples of the passer-by or the factory worker, we not only fail to meet a full-fledged mythical aura but also fail to meet a seamless world of perfect reification. Baudelaire's impulses already want to spin an aura around the passante just as she is torn from him. And the worker in modern industry feels "alienated" or "degraded" simply because his own personal aura is still dear to him. What Benjamin calls "hellish" or "destroying" time, the time in which nothing can ever be finished, is the time of a modernity in which the aura is constantly called into being to rekindle desire, only to be stamped out before any fulfillment can be reached. Benjamin's modernity, then, is one in which the still aura exists, but only in conjunction with shock.

Similarly, in this modernity spleen only exists in conjunction with shock, and never by itself. It is shock û and not its absence û that fuels what Benjamin and Simmel call spleen or *Blasiertheit*. For both theorists, modernity appears as an almost seamless collusion of incessant shock-sensations and attempts by the intellect to master the shocking environment. In the state of spleen, which arises through these attempts, the series of shocks is perceived as an endless and monotonous repetition of the same. Modernity is caught up in an endless production of novelty after novelty, yet at the same time mired down in monotonous repetition, each new shock collapsing back into the ever-same. This "dialectic of the new and the ever-same" is identified as a "hell", in which "the latest novelties" appear as "pains eternal and ever new" (Benjamin 1999:26).

What is at issue is [...] that the face of the world, the colossal head, precisely in what is newest never alters û that this "newest" remains, in every respect, the same. This

constitutes the eternity of hell and the sadist's delight in innovation. To determine the totality of traits which define this "modernity" is to represent hell. (Benjamin 1999:842f)

Hell, then, is a structure which is both eternally new and eternally the same, the producer of shock as well as spleen. To describe modernity like this means to describe it as a paradoxical continuity of discontinuity, as a repetition of shocks. Unlike the "sameness" of seemingly stable premodern societies, the "sameness" characteristic of modernity is born from "a world of strict discontinuity" û from an endless repetition of difference, of new beginnings, failures and destruction (Benjamin 1999:843). This is hell, the perpetual catastrophe:

The concept of progress is to be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things "go on as usual" is the catastrophe. It is not what always approaches us but what in each case is given. Strindberg's thought: hell is not what awaits us, but this life here and now. (Benjamin 1977:246)

Hell is the background of Benjamin's critique of myth. Contrary to what Marx hoped for at the time of the Communist Manifesto, the "everlasting uncertainty and agitation" and the "constant disruption of all social relations" in capitalism would not force men "to face with sober senses that real conditions of their lives" (Marx & Engels 1992:6). Rather, Benjamin writes, "[c]apitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream-filled sleep came over Europe, and, through it, a reactivation of mythic forces" (Benjamin 1999:391). The higher the level of shock, the stronger the impetus will be to strengthen the "protective shield" of consciousness, which is itself the cause of the nightmarish semblance of the ever-same.

However, there is something ambiguous about Benjamin's notion of hell. Exactly what makes it "a sadist's delight", what makes people so vulnerable to shock, is the constant reappearance of desire, however futile its prospects may be. Desire is a kind of hope. It feeds on the awareness of non-identity. Hell is perhaps felt to be most hellish precisely in the operation in which desire is extinguished, yet in order to continue its operations desire must constantly be reproduced. We may now define hell using our terminology. Hell is where the non-identical is constantly being crushed, but because of this it is also where non-identity is constantly visible. Hell itself produces the tools for questioning myth. This is the background of Benjamin's astounding search for an "awakening" from myth in hell itself, a strategy to which we will shortly turn. This ambiguity corresponds to the ambiguity of the shock-sensation. Shock is part of the hellish dialectic of the new and ever-same, just as novelties are part of consumer capitalism, but at the same time it may also be that rift through which myth can be seen through, that true and revolutionary novelty which Benjamin calls the Utopian standstill of history, the "now-time" (Jetzt-Zeit) in which linear time is suspended, history's losers are redeemed from oblivion and the energies of the past become available for revolutionary upheaval.

The coexistence of shock, aura and spleen is a defining characteristic of the cultural space of shock-modernity. And just as the aura may very well have

existed peacefully without shock in premodern societies, we shall later see that naturalized modernity too represents a break-up of this "hellish" triad, since there we will encounter a spleen or boredom that exists without shock, and that even arises precisely because of the stillness or absence of shocks in the environment.

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After having discussed Benjamin's notion of "hell", we are now in a position to approach the question of his view of the central "dilemma" of modernity and his strategy for "awakening from the 19th century" (Benjamin 1999:464). A convenient way to introduce the dilemma of shock-modernity is by having a look at Natsume Sôseki's novel *The Wayfarer* (*Kôjin*, 1912-13). This example will provide the further benefit of illustrating that the pairing of shock and heightened consciousness was similarly pervasive in societies as culturally and geographically separate as Meiji Japan and the Germany of Benjamin. A good place to start is with one of the characters in a subplot, a girl who seems almost like an embodiment or allegory of the "the disintegration of the aura". A friend of the narrator, Misawa, one day tells him of an insane girl, the daughter of a friend of his father with an unhappy marriage behind her. Every time he leaves the house, she follows him to the door and begs him to come back early. He feels sorry for her and tells the narrator that he would have liked to think that she loved him.

But the truth seems quite otherwise. As I heard the story, her husband, whether a rake or a sociable man, soon after their marriage fell into the habit of staying out or coming home late, and apparently this tortured her unmercifully. Yet she somehow had endured this treatment, not uttering a word of complaint to him. With this experience still haunting her, even after the divorce, and the onset of her sickness, she was only saying to me what she had wished to say to her husband (ibid 82).

This girl is an image of what happens to the aura in an age of shock. Locked in her deranged state, she becomes, as it were, a petrified image of the pain she must have suffered, of the shock that befalls inner nature when, expecting love and tenderness, it receives nothing but pain.

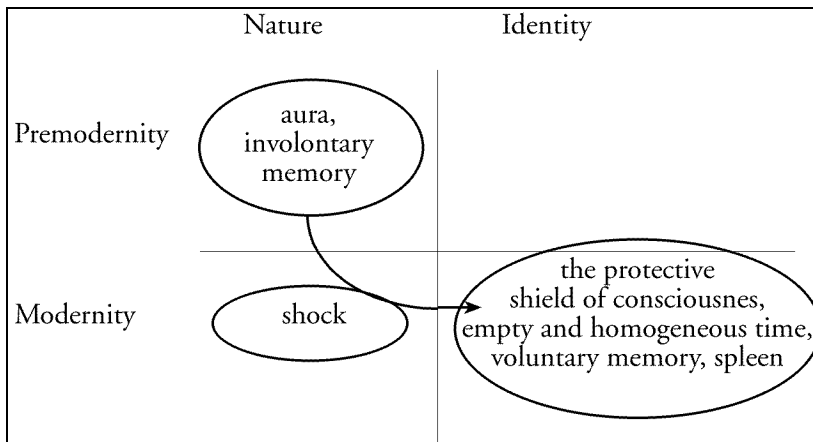
The novel also provides an antipode to the girl, the equally suffering Ichirô, who is the main protagonist of the book. A neurotic university teacher, he is a picture of modern intellectualism and "over-reflexivity", torturing himself with excessive introspection and unable to break out of the confines of the logic of his paranoia — he is, in other words, helplessly caught in his "protective shield". Although the putative cause of his torment is his mistrust of his wife, there is also a clear sense of pain at his inability to really trust anyone at all or to find comfort in any religion. Later, after having heard about the insane girl from the narrator, Ichirô remarks that since she was insane, what she had said to Misawa had been "far more sincere and genuine than the usual empty amenities". "Ah,

then can we never find out what a woman really is like, unless we make her insane?" he sighs (ibid 104f). Ichirō here portrays the girl in implicit contrast to his wife and to the calculating character of modern times. She is pure inner nature, someone whose "protective shield" no longer functions. In the fleeting moment of this conversation, the girl becomes an object of nostalgia for Ichirō, as the aura sometimes becomes in a world dominated by self-preservative reason.

The appearance of these two personages in *The Wayfarer* is not coincidental. It reflects the pervasiveness of the categories of aura and protective shield in Sōseki's view of modernity, which can also be seen in many other of his works.⁴¹ This view corresponds neatly to Benjamin's framework. As we remember, Benjamin sees modernity as a condition in which the aura is destroyed though the sensation of shock, in response to which a reifying heightened consciousness is established. What both Sōseki and Benjamin bring out is that the setting up of a heightened consciousness in the service of self-preservation is no way to escape the tortures of hell. Indeed, it exacerbates Ichirō's sufferings.

The dilemma can be represented in form of a figure (FIG 1) of the three moments of Benjamin's account of modernity: shock, aura, and the protective shield of consciousness. By "nature" I refer to the state of openness to experience associated by Benjamin and Freud with involuntary memory. This is a state which in pre-modern societies enabled the subject open itself up to assimilated experience (*Erfahrung*), but which in modernity means vulnerability to shock. I use the term "identity" to designate the state of heightened consciousness, which, according to Benjamin, comes into being in order to protect against shock.⁴² The figure presents in a clear-cut form what Benjamin saw as a primary dilemma of modernity. With the disintegration of the aura, we lose our last ties to prehistory. Exposed to shock, inner nature seeks to protect itself under the protective shield of identity. Where this shield is strong, the self is rigidified and happiness dies. The result is spleen. Where this shield is thin, it will be torn apart and the self will again have to face shock.

FIG1:



How did Benjamin himself picture the possibilities of dispelling the "dream" of capitalism? To begin with he never forcefully tries to solve the dilemma by choosing one element — such as the aura or reification — over the other. There is, however, one "solution" which he clearly rejects. For people living in a world of spleen, which is "drained of experience", a nostalgia for the aura may arise. This may take the form of a conscious attempt to revive the aura, as in fascism. Although Benjamin saw the modern collusion of shock-sensations and a reifying high consciousness as "hell" and as a "continuous catastrophe", the conscious attempt to restore and preserve the lost world of the aura in an artificial or "voluntary" way was barred to him. To Benjamin fascism marks a regressive response, which tries to conjure back the lost aura of art and of community by deliberately monumentalizing the present and, as it were, freezing the movement of time. Remaining under the sway of the intellect and "voluntary memory", it is incapable of recreating the blissful state of prehistory. Instead it ends up in the "aesthetization of war" needed to cover up its failure.⁴³ By means of war, the greatest shock of all, fascism completes the victory of hell. The conscious attempt to restore the aura thus follows "the law that effort brings about its opposite" and leads back to shock (Benjamin 1999:908).

However, although shock was hailed by Benjamin as a liberation from the aura, he was just as critical of the affirmation of reification and of the "protective shield" of consciousness as he was of the affirmation of the aura. In itself shock indicates nothing but the overwhelming strength of heteronomous powers facing the subject in modern society. This is why he also remained skeptical of the heroic affirmation of hell in Baudelaire. What he valued in the aura was the promise of happiness that in modernity would have to be expressed in other ways if the catastrophic solution of fascism was to be avoided. He continually sought for forms of experience (Erfahrung) — such as the experience of "porosity" — that would be free from the repressive aspects of the aura. Nevertheless, he also gradually came to endow the aura with a more utopian significance in the writings of his last years.⁴⁴ As modernity establishes itself through a destruction of the auratic way of perceiving things, he sometimes

valorized one against the other: the aura as utopian potential in a reified world, or reification as a liberation from the aura. The "aura", was simultaneously a carrier of a promise of happiness and marred by mythical closure.

How are we to understand this ambivalent attitude? Is it possible to interpret his vacillation between the affirmation of shock and the nostalgia for the aura to signify a consistent stance in its own right? An article published in 1922, "Those who wait" ("Die Wartenden"), by Siegfried Kracauer is helpful in considering this question. In the article Kracauer addresses the issue of the widespread and chronic mood of a loss of meaning in the Weimar republic. There exists at present, he writes, a great number of people who are "metaphysically suffering from the lack of a higher meaning in the world" (Kracauer 1990:160). Among such people Kracauer discerns three distinct attitudes:

- (1) The attitude of a skepticism based on principle. Kracauer sees a prototypical exponent of this attitude in Max Weber, who is driven by his "intellectual conscience" and resolutely turns his back to the absolute. In him, "the inability to believe" has turned into a "not wanting to believe", an attitude which is at once resigned and heroic.
- (2) The attitude of the "short-circuit-people". These are people who are out of their impatient yearning for a higher meaning and their inability to stand the "chaos of the present" and "hurry head over heels" towards any shelter against the lack of meaning which offers itself up. They are driven "more by a will to believe" than by any genuine "dwelling in belief", more by "metaphysical cowardice" than by any true conviction. In doing so, they "pick a fruit, that is not yet ripe". Their belief is "artificial" and is only made possible "thanks to an involuntary self-deception".
- (3) The attitude of waiting. This attitude, with which Kracauer himself identifies, is characterized by a "hesitant openness". The one who assumes the attitude of waiting does not bar the way to belief but neither does he force his way along it. Like the principled skeptic he endures the lack of meaning, but his skepticism never degenerates into a fundamental principle (ibid 165-170).

Kracauer's typology is applicable not only to attitudes to loss of meaning, but also to attitudes to loss in general. If we may use it as a typology of attitudes to the decay of the aura, we get the following three attitudes. Roughly corresponding to the attitude of "fundamental skepticism" would be, for instance, Baudelaire's rejection of the aura, while the "short circuit" alternative is seen in what Benjamin criticized as the artificial production of aura in fascism.⁴⁵

Finally, the attitude of "waiting" seems to be where Benjamin himself fits in. He always maintained an attitude of "hesitant openness" towards modernity, waiting for the new forms of experience that might emerge from it. As opposed

to conscious production of aura, which was bound to be regressive, one might say that he advocated a strategy of getting used to the dream-world of capitalism, with its technology and its shocks, as a first step in order to dispel it. "The tasks which confront the human apparatus of perception at the turningpoints of history are not to be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are only mastered gradually, by habit, under the guidance of tactile reception" (Benjamin 1977:167). This was a strategy, not of subjecting the dream to an external critique, which was bound to get caught up in "the law that effort brings about its opposite", but of groping one's way inside it in search of the dialectics of awakening at work within it. Just as for the Jews "every second was a small gate through which Messiah might enter" (ibid 261), so for Benjamin every piece of rags or refuse was a potential "dialectical image" which might trigger the sudden flash of recognition, the involuntary memory, which would help dispel the nightmare.

chapter 2

Strategies in shock-modernity

2-1: Two ideals of the good life

How do people deal with the dilemma, structured around shock, which we discerned in the previous chapter? What strategies are used and what ideals of the good life⁴⁶ are pursued? First we need to have a look at two ideals of the good life, which I will call the paradigms of personal identity and of inner nature. Their most influential versions were articulated in literary fiction and philosophical treatises in the classical epoch of modernity — the half centuries before and after 1900 — and most of them are deeply imprinted with the experience of shock.

The paradigm of personal identity emphasizes the need for the subject to secure a fixed identity. The model may be exemplified by what is often called the "ideal of authenticity" — that is, the ideal to be true to one self, to one's own unique "inner voice" and to one's own way of being human. The basic conviction of the ideal of authenticity, Charles Taylor writes, is the idea that "each individual is different and original, and that this originality determines how he or she ought to live" (Taylor 1989:374ff).⁴⁷ The ideal is to construct a more or less stable and unified personal identity, capable of remaining essentially the "same" throughout the shifting situations of life. Crucial is the act of identification, i.e. the conscious act whereby one subjectively recognizes what one is and what one wants to be. This model presupposes a strict dividing line between self and other. Thus predicates with which one identifies are carefully distinguished from others that are rejected in the sense that one would not want to be described by them. Most classical versions of this ideal emphasize self-preservation. The self needs to maintain its own unity and continuity, and to protect itself from alienating influences in its environment. Shock is seen as a threatening intrusion of "non-identity" that must be pacified and brought under control. That identity is a widely felt need cannot be denied. It contributes to a sense of security, of responsibility and to self-confidence. The

redeeming qualities of the healing of a tormented life by achieving self-integration through securing an identity are not hard to understand.

The paradigm of inner nature, by contrast, seeks the good in the movement of self-transcendence, self-distancing or self-forgetting, in the dissolution of the self that results from the pliancy and openness to the external world and to the impulses of an essentially amorphous inner nature. It demands freedom from conceptual limitations and rigid fixations, which tend to limit, imprison and impoverish the self. "Identity" is seen as a self-reification. If the thrust of the former paradigm consists in the negation of non-identity, here it is affirmed. The truth-content of this ideal is attested by our memory of our forgetfulness of time and of the self during moments of happiness or strong concentration. When Dostoevsky describes *û* in *The House of the Dead* *û* how he is finally able to forget his "wretched self" in the contemplation of a flying lark, he also conveys of sense of how oppressive a fixation on identity might feel.

The background that is often explicitly or implicitly taken for granted in both paradigms is the arrival of shock-modernity. They both react, albeit in contrasting ways, to the anxiety and turmoil of times in which "things change too fast" and in which the destruction of the aura is still painfully felt. However, if the dilemma of shock is indeed, as we have suggested, a "structural" feature in shock-modernity, then we could expect that neither of these "paradigms" should be fully able to resolve it. To put it concisely, the strategy pursued in the paradigm of identity *û* which the aim of guaranteeing a richer and more fulfilled life *û* results in the conjuring up of a mere image of the living impulses of inner nature. The threatened or disintegrated auratic interior of the "true" self is reconstituted under the aegis of heightened consciousness, a construction of "voluntary" rather than "involuntary" memory that partakes in the reification of the self against which it was supposed to protect. The weakness of the paradigm of inner nature, by contrast, consists precisely in the openness and vulnerability through which it escapes reifying itself but which also make it defenseless against the shocks that are endemic in modern social relations. While rejecting the notion of any single true self, it must do so without any hope of salvaging the aura. The difference between the two paradigms can also be formulated in terms of their relationship to the conflict of "fear" and "desire". The paradigm of identity, with its emphasis on self-preservation, tends to repress "desire" in the name of "fear", while the paradigm of inner nature tends to disregard "fear" in the name of "desire".

We will now briefly examine how these paradigms are worked out and elaborated in philosophy and literature, in the ideal of authenticity by Martin Heidegger and in two alternatives to this ideal suggested by Musil and Adorno. These sketches will demonstrate the fruitfulness of the distinction between the two paradigms as well as offer us useful points of reference for the analysis of literary works in the following chapters.

Authenticity as a response to shock

The tension between the two paradigms of identity and inner nature is visible even in those ideas that claim to have reconciled their differences. The ideal of authenticity is one such idea. There is one claim that this ideal can never give up: that the good consists in being "oneself" and not an "other". The division between self and other is one of its most fundamental presuppositions. Marking the "boundary" of the self, this division serves as a guarantee of the unity and integrity of the self and to delineate the sphere of unsullied selfhood, the source of authenticity, from the outside world, which constantly threatens to lead the self astray. Nevertheless, the ideal of authenticity attempts, in its own way, to reconcile the demands of identity and inner nature.⁴⁸ It can be described as an attempt to satisfy the demands of inner nature from the standpoint of identity. Its appeal stems from the apparent success of this attempt. Unlike conventional identities an "authentic" identity can only be achieved through a rejection of everyday social existence and through a confrontation with what Taylor calls the "inner voice". The search for this "inner voice" demands that one discard the conventional identity imposed by society, which is to be replaced by one erected on the basis of one's own unique individuality. Such an "authentic" identity would escape the insensitivity and rigidity of conventional identity and thus satisfy the demands of inner nature. An "authentic" self is a self that combines pliancy to amorphous nature with the reassurance that it nevertheless "remains itself". The self, then, would both be fortified against threats to its integrity and free to lose itself in the uncontrollability of the moment. However, while the ideal of "authenticity" arises in opposition to the experience of the reification of the self in modern life, the question arises whether the "true" self which this strategy sets out to find or establish is not itself a form of reification or limitation of the self. The critique of reification, which is used by the proponents of this ideal to justify their rejection of the mere "shell" of "conventional identity", can therefore be turned against itself.

In this paradoxical quality of the ideal one senses the presence of a social contradiction. With the onset of modernization the traditional structures for libidinal gratification were destabilized. The "liberated" desire was, so to speak, left alone in what was typically perceived as a hostile world to search without guidance for the new trajectories into which it might one day stabilize again. This is the historical juncture at which the conflict between desire and fear reaches its peak. And to be sure, it is only with the arrival of shock-modernity that the ideal of authenticity gains ascendancy in its first pure form.⁴⁹ In many versions of this ideal we find the an emphasis on the shocking or hostile character of the environment. The early fiction of 1960s Japan, for example, typically depicts protagonists — Bird in the 1964 novel *A Personal Matter* (*Kojinteki na taiken*) would be a typical example — suffocating in the midst of oppressive human relationships from which they long to escape. Often surrounded by rampant physical violence, they are both fearful and filled with resentment against their environment. In philosophy we find that Adorno portrays Kierkegaard's "inwardness" as a precariously maintained shelter, a "romantic island", where the subject takes refuge from the brutal reality of

reification and capitalism. By shutting out the awareness of history, the awareness is lost that the interior of the self — supposedly the source of authentic existence — is itself historically mediated and a product of the very reification that it attempts to escape (Adorno 1989:24-46). In his criticism of Heidegger too, Adorno stresses that the "ontological need" that fuels the search for "authenticity" has its source in the increasing reification of modern society, which makes a mockery of the individual autonomy that modernization at the same time elevates to its ideology (ibid 1994a:69-103).⁵⁰

Often, then, we find that "hell", the hostile and atomized world of *Gesellschaft*, is portrayed as the prototypical environment of the ideal of authenticity. This is an environment in which desire is liberated on a scale previously unknown, yet where this desire is constantly intertwined with fear. While fear contributes to the strengthening of identity — to the construction of ever stronger "protective shields" — desire gives rise to a yearning to return to nature. The ideal of authenticity is an attempt to reconcile these two opposed currents, to shut out non-identity and thus to overcome and neutralize the experience of shock. It reflects the unease of the city and — to the extent that it succeeds in restoring inner peace — serves as a "protective shield". Let us have a closer look at one example of this reconciliation. In spite of Heidegger's misgivings about conceptual thinking, his philosophy of "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*) in *Being and time* (*Sein und Zeit*, 1927) represents a sophisticated version of the model of identity. To be sure, it is also one of the most interesting and complex versions.

Heidegger: identity as authenticity

Let us return to the simultaneous critique and rescue of identity that is typical of the ideal "authenticity" and illustrate it with the help of *The Silent Cry* (*Man'en Gannen no futtobôru*), written in 1967, where we confront a model of identity filled with an almost religious pathos. The quest for an individual "truth" is portrayed as a paramount good for the individual. The tormented and humiliated existence of the narrator, Mitsu, is intimately connected to his estrangement from the village in the woods of Shikoku where he and his younger brother Taka grew up. As he returns to the village from Tokyo, he bends down to drink from a well close to the family house and reflects that the water is exactly the same as it was twenty years ago:

And the same certainty developed directly into a feeling that the "I" bending down there now was not the child who had once bent his bare knees there, that there was no continuity, no consistency between the two "I's", that the "I" now bending down there was a remote stranger. The present "I" had lost all true identity. Nothing, either within me or without, offered any hope of recovery.

I could hear the transparent ripples on the pool tinkling, accusing me of being no better than a rat. (Ie 1994:58)

Mitsu then, has denied his roots and is full with resentment against his charismatic brother who is hailed as hero after saving a child from drowning and, identifying with an ancestor who led a rebellion in the village in the Meiji era, leads the villagers in an attack on the Korean owner of a supermarket. Mitsu's despair concerns his inability to renew his feeling of affinity and kinship with the village where he grew up and his insight that he "unlike Taka" "does not have a truth to tell". Taka had risen from his hell by yelling out his "truth".

And in the final moment when he stood facing the muzzle that was to split the naked upper half of his body into a mass of ripe pomegranates, he succeeded in achieving self-integration, in securing for himself an identity given consistency by his desire to be like great-grandfather's brother. (ibid 270)

The consistency of Taka's life was secured by his last self-destructive act. But even to Mitsu a road to authenticity is opened through Taka's death. His self-denial is finally suggested to begin to be dissolved in hopeful self-confidence in the conversion-scene of the last chapter. "I think the need to oppose Taka has always made you deliberately reject the things that resembled him in you. But Taka's dead, Mitsu, so you should be fairer to yourself", his wife tells him. In the ideal of identity is coupled to a critique of self-reification: through his resentment toward his brother Mitsu had robbed his self of its freedom of movement and let it be objectified and harden into a false, negative identity. Clinging to this false identity, Mitsu had denied his true, authentic self, which now, once more, becomes accessible to him. Here the text repeats a common argument: the openness to the environment that is celebrated by the paradigm of inner nature is only possible to those who are in possession of a secure identity, accepting who they "truly" are instead of denying it, to those "in other words" who have achieved an "authentic" identity. The conversion from inauthenticity follows models from Heidegger and Kierkegaard. There is a similarity between the silent call of conscience in Heidegger and the incommunicable "silent cry" that Mitsu finally manages to decipher. The difference between them primarily seems to consist in the fact that authenticity is unattainable until Mitsu finally succeeds in this deciphering, in the fact that the road to his "truth" is longer and more difficult than Heidegger suggests in *Being and Time*.

The critique of conventional identity to the benefit of an authentic one also runs through Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The authenticity of *Dasein* "which is his term for the subject" is defined as remaining oneself and keeping out whatever is alien, yet even so *Dasein* is supposed to remain "open to the situation" and capable of "grasping the moment". Thus the self is to be protected at all cost, yet at the same time open to change. We thus see a clear attempt to combine the demands of self-preservation and inner nature through the mediating function of the concept of authenticity. Let us now have a closer look at this concept.

According to Heidegger Dasein is authentic when it "chooses itself", when it is "its own" (Heidegger 1967:42). Authenticity is depicted as a condition in which one turns to oneself to determine how one wants to live, and in which one doesn't let oneself be more influenced by one's environment than by oneself. Inauthenticity, on the other hand, is not being oneself, to live the life of a stranger. By orienting oneself towards one's environment — indulging in "curiosity", "gossip", "clamor" and "non-commitment" — one ends up living the life of a stranger, as *das Man*, and neglecting one's own possibilities. As in all models of identity a clear demarcation line is thus drawn between what is "one's own" and what is "alien". Rather than to adapt — horizontally, as it were — to others, one strives to establish a — temporal — continuity in one's life. As we see, the force of this concept of authenticity hinges crucially on the meaning of temporal continuity. For this reason, Heidegger's most pregnant definition of authenticity is delivered in connection with his discussion of the temporality of Dasein.

The unity of ekstases

Exactly what does Heidegger mean by authenticity? It is a certain attitude towards temporality. He proceeds to show this by means of an analysis of the basic structure of Dasein. This structure — which he calls care (*Sorge*) — has three elements, which he links to corresponding elements or "ek-stases" of temporality: the future, the present and the past. In this way temporality becomes constitutive of Dasein itself. Dasein is always simultaneously "projecting" into the future, "being thrown" by the past, and engaged in the present. Authenticity can thus be described in terms of how Dasein relates to these three "ek-stases". Authentic Dasein assumes responsibility for the future, is true to its roots in the past, and resolutely grasps the possibilities of the present. Inauthentic Dasein, on the other hand, passively waits for the future, forgets its past, and becomes blind for the possibilities of the present (ibid 325-).⁵¹ Inauthentic Dasein thus breaks up the interconnectedness of the three ek-stases and it fails to locate itself in relation to temporality. In authenticity, on the other hand, the three ek-stases are brought together into a congruent whole. Authenticity is the unity of Dasein's recollection of its inherited possibilities, of the future that it projects and the decision that it makes here and now. The unity of this threefold movement is central. "[O]nly a being that, in anticipating, just as primordially is having-been, is able to convey to itself the inherited possibility, to grasp its own being-thrown and to be instantaneous for æits timeÆ." (ibid 385).

Here it seems clear that Heidegger is adhering to a model of identity. It's true that the "innermost possibility" of Dasein is no given essence waiting to be discovered within the self. However, his vision of the good life is built around the notion of continuity in life. Change and novelty are only acceptable if one is certain that the change is in accordance with the past. Past, future and present must be congruent, which means that Dasein must at every moment be able to

recognize itself in every other moment of its life — whether past, present or future.

But what is the role of the present in this unity? As we see, it is in the present that Dasein is supposed to "be instantaneous" to its moment. Might this provide the sought-after outlet of the impulses of inner nature?

The openness of being

Dasein rediscovers itself by clearing itself away from all determinations, in the openness of the present or in what Heidegger would later, in *Was ist Metaphysik* (1929), call "nothingness" (das Nichts). This state of openness of being is illustrated through the concept of "anxiety" (Angst). In its anxiety Dasein hears the call of conscience. "Resolve" is to understand and listen to this call. But what ought Dasein resolve to do? Since this depends on the "situation", the content of the call of conscience is always indeterminate. Since, in a state of inauthenticity, one is fascinated by "clamor", conscience has to call "without clamor". Here his philosophy reveals itself as what Habermas calls a "decisionism of empty resoluteness" (Habermas 1994:141). But what I primarily want to direct attention to is that Heidegger with this move — to see the task of conscience in calling Dasein into the indeterminacy of the situation — provides a description of the state of authenticity that is surprisingly close to the ideal of inner nature — a state in which Dasein keeps "free and open" to the prevailing possibility (Heidegger 1967:307f). Heidegger goes even further. What is revealed in the openness of the present is that being is itself fundamentally open and groundless. The indeterminacy of being (Offenheit des Seienden) results from the fact that it is founded on "nothingness" (Heidegger 1996:114). This means that Heidegger equates "being oneself" (Selbstsein), or authenticity, with openness and freedom. Opening itself to the situation means that Dasein never commits itself for ever, but continually has to "retract" itself and its decisions. Dasein, in other words, can only realize its innermost possibility by making itself fundamentally indeterminate. "Only in the nothingness of its Dasein does the existent wholly comply with its innermost possibility" (ibid 120). What we can here observe is that Heidegger through his emphasis on the indeterminacy of being comes close to satisfying the paradigm of inner nature. We will now see, however, that this is a mere mirage.

The relation between the unity of ekstases and the openness of being

It might look as if the idea of the "openness of being" runs counter to the insistence on the "unity of ekstases", but this is not so. Far from being incompatible with the maintenance of continuity, the openness of Dasein is designed as its presupposition. Dasein is authentic if it takes its orientation not from others — horizontally — but from its own past and future — vertically. It must open itself to the Stimmungen of the present, which — in the stillness when the "clamor" of others has died away — will spring from the innermost recesses

of its past and tell it what future to project. The Heideggerian openness is thus a means for forging and supporting the unity of ekstases and a sham if it is taken to generally. This openness is achieved by shutting out others. Nothingness is the state in which Dasein opens itself up, not to everything, but to its own innermost possibility. To repeat: "Only in the nothingness of its Dasein does the existent wholly comply with its innermost possibility". The freedom of authentic Dasein is therefore linked to the apprehension of inevitability, and must not be confused with an abstract freedom of choice. The more authentic Dasein is, he writes, the less gratuitous is its choice. Heidegger uses the word "fate" to describe this inevitability. Dasein is "torn away from the multitude of the close-by possibilities" and brought into "the simplicity of its fate" (in die Einfachkeit seines Schicksals) (ibid 1967:384). Thus freedom turns into necessity. Freedom is conflated with unfreedom: freedom becomes affirmation of one's limitations. The openness of the present is abruptly turned into the submission to fate.

This means that Heidegger's concept of possibility must be treated with caution. If "possibility" had been taken in a broad sense to mean everything one has the power and will to realize, then Heidegger would have taken the step over to the paradigm of nature and Dasein would have been authentic whatever possibility it chose to realize. The refusal to take this step, which would have required a renunciation of the idea of authenticity as a unity of ekstases, forces Heidegger to differentiate between possibilities that bring Dasein closer to itself and those that make it alien to itself. Furthermore, and in blatant contrast to the thesis of indeterminacy, the content of the desirable possibilities is even given a far-reaching measure of concretization. Not only does Heidegger, abstractly, demand that indeterminacy deliver itself up to determinacy. The content of determination is even prescribed in advance by his disdainful tirades against such inauthentic modes as "self-importance", "curiosity", "gossip", "love of pleasure" and so on. Here the call of conscience joins in with the "clamor". That this fits badly with his philosophy of nothingness goes without saying.

The fact that the unity of ekstases assumes priority over the affirmation of indeterminacy as such is telling. It means that it is finally the paradigm of identity that triumphs in Being and Time.

Alternative traditions

Habermas's choice to use the Heideggerian term "authenticity" to designate the criterion of validity for ethical discourses — i.e. discourses about the good or "not-failed" life — testifies to the tremendous impact and continuing influence of Sein und Zeit. When he introduced the ethical sphere of validity in his theory in the late 80's, he furthermore utilized Heideggerian terms such as "resoluteness" and "thrown projection" (Habermas 1992b: 125f; 1993:8-12). This demonstrates two things. Firstly, it shows that the distinction we have suggested between paradigms of identity and non-identity constitutes an

important fault line that runs through critical theory itself. Contra his mentor Adorno, Habermas joins the former paradigm. Secondly, it demonstrates the extent to which the ideal of authenticity has overshadowed and made it difficult even to imagine alternative ideals of the good. This is a difficulty perhaps most blatantly expressed in Taylor, who states that an existence without "strong evaluations" — the standard by which people articulate and define what life they would find worthwhile or fulfilling and which is clearly related to what we here term identity or authenticity — would be "unbearable", and who adds: "More fully expressed, the claim is that we could not encounter someone who utterly lacked this dimension as anything but a damaged, radically reduced human being, suffering from a pathological disability; whereas to feel our own lives as thus lacking would be a terrifying experience" (Taylor 1991b:250f). Despite statements like this, which seem to privilege authenticity as the sole ideal of the good, alternatives to authenticity certainly exist — most obviously in philosophical and religious ideals antedating romanticism (for instance: stoicism, Buddhism). Attempts to formulate alternative visions can also be found today, as we shall see in Kawabata Yasunari and the early works of Murakami Haruki.

I will here offer two brief sketches of how Adorno and Musil attempt to formulate versions of the paradigm of inner nature or non-identity, each from his own distinctive standpoint or tradition. These sketches do not aspire to do full justice to the complexity of their respective approaches to the good life. The aim is to bring out a distinctive features that will serve us as points of reference in the course of the analyses that lie ahead of us. In each case I will attempt to show they embody a distinctive strategy in regard to what we have called the "dilemma" of shock-modernity: in a shocking environment the subject is forced to choose between the protective-reifying walls of identity or exposing itself to the pain of shock. Common to them is that, in dealing with the choice between this shield and exposing themselves to shock, they tend towards a criticism of the protective shield and an affirmation of the openness to shock. Each in his own way attempts to show how the experience of shock itself can be transformed into a liberating experience of porosity.

Robert Musil: hypothetical living and daylight mysticism

It is likely that even God speaks from his world in conjunctivus potentialis [..], because God creates the world and thinks: It could just as well be otherwise. — Musil (1981:19)

Fundamental to the experience of contingency is Robert Musil's insight that "it could probably also be otherwise" (Musil 1981:16).⁵² This experience is also the mood and the problem of Musil's explorations in *The Man without Qualities* (*Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*), an impressive literary and intellectual achievement in the form of a novel, the first volume of which appeared in 1930

and which was still unfinished by the time of the author's death in exile in 1942. With Musil we are again confronted with the background of the interwar years, but unlike in most thinkers of this period, contingency is not portrayed as shocking in the painful, destructive sense, but rather affirmed as an antidote to the "reality" of convention.

This everyday "reality" is the realm of *seinesgleichen* — "the like of things", an intersubjective order of stereotypes and conventions, held together through seemingly stable borders and classifications. "Ultimately, a thing only exists through its boundaries and thus through a so to speak hostile act against its environment", Musil writes, which is why "not only a German holds a Jew for an incomprehensible and inferior being, but also a football player a piano player" (ibid 26). This intersubjective "reality" is materially embodied in the semblance of society as an ever-same and hypertrophied objective culture. Ulrich, the main protagonist, describes it as a lifeless moonscape, a petrified landscape so "complete and finished that one is mere superfluous mist beside it" (ibid 130). Here Musil seems to make use of the familiar distinction between outside and inside, between the overwhelming weight of reified "reality" and the "superfluous mist" of the feebly pulsating heart, a distinction which is central to the ideal of personal identity or what Stephan Jonsson calls "the expressivist paradigm". As Jonsson points out, however, Musil subverts this distinction by pointing out that interiority too is a product of reification (Jonsson 1996).⁵³ In Ulrich's eyes, those who assert their "identity" against the lifeless order of "reality" participate in it rather than upset it. Unlike many critics of reification among his contemporaries, Musil never advocates any romantic return to a richer and more fulfilling, auratic past but seems more interested in questioning the notion of "identity" as such — of things as well as of people.

To the scientifically trained Ulrich "reality", consisting of everything that is commonly perceived as "whole" and self-identical, falls apart into a system of variables.⁵⁴ Since "in every minus resides a plus", nothing can be understood as an entity in its own right, entirely self-identical. The appearance of "reality" in a thing only comes about through a certain one-sidedness. This means that reality is not as stable as it seems; indeed it "abolishes itself" (ibid 289).

He senses: this order is not as firm as it appears; no thing, no self, no form, no principle is certain, everything is implicated in an invisible but unceasing change, in what is unfirm there is more of the future than in what is firm, and the present is nothing but a hypothesis which one has not yet left behind. (Musil 1981:250)

This is why he asserts that "if there is a sense of reality, there must also be a sense of possibility". To a person possessing a sense of possibility what exists is not more important than what does not exist, and confronted with reality he thinks, "well, it could probably also be otherwise" (ibid 16). This includes the self. Life, Ulrich reflects, has to be lived "hypothetically", according to a "utopia of essayism". Contrary to the bourgeois ideology of the whole and

unitary individual, there is no enduring substance behind it, nothing to sustain its "identity". The absence of identity is, of course, first and foremost demonstrated in the figure of Ulrich, "the man without qualities", himself. Thus his friend Walter complains to his wife Clarisse that Ulrich never does anything wholeheartedly:

When he is angry, something laughs within him. When he is sad, he has something up his sleeve. When something moves him, he rejects it. Every bad act will in some connection appear good to him. It is always the possible context that determines his opinion of a thing. To him nothing is fixed. (ibid 65)

Since Ulrich does not identify with any of his characteristics, everything that is usually thought of as inner — feelings, thoughts, reason — tend to assume the character of something independent, objective or external. A "man without qualities" could thus just as well be described as "qualities without a man" (ibid 148). "Probably", Ulrich reflects, "the dissolution of the anthropocentric attitude, which for so long time has held man to be the center of the universe, but which now already since centuries back is disappearing, has finally reached the I itself" (ibid 150). Ulrich does indeed see society as an inhuman "machine", but seems to have found a way to stay aloof of shock though adopting a new way of thinking about the subject and the good life. The shocks do not upset him since he lacks any central wholeness or auratic interior that can be shattered. In this respect, his poor friend Walter offers an illuminating contrast. To Walter, modernity is indeed shocking — a soulless chaos from which he escapes to Wagner, to proto-fascist popular movements and to "identity", the mirage of the auratic interior of the self.

With Ulrich we have traveled a far way from Heidegger. The notion of a boundary guaranteeing the unity of the self and separating it from others, central to the ideal of authenticity, has already become pointless. Instead of asserting the self against the reified everyday reality of conceptually fixed and seemingly self-identical things, Ulrich seeks to reach beyond this reality by dissolving the self.⁵⁵ As is well known, what he finds beyond this reality is the "other condition" (der andere Zustand), which he also calls a "fragment of another world". This condition, which Ulrich explores together with his sister Agathe, is depicted as a feeling of oneness with the "heart of the world", of intense love, of a merger between subject and object (ibid 746-).⁵⁶ Significantly, it is not attained by the restoration of auratic wholeness, but rather by a sober reflexivity that is radicalized to the point that the "protective shield" of identity itself becomes relativized and undermined. It is exactly because reflexivity is affirmed at every point that it fragmentizes itself and leaves emptiness or "daylight mysticism" in charge. This is why Ulrich assures us that he is not pious: he is only interested in the Holy Way to the extent that it can be entered by car. In calling for more — not less — reason he could well agree with Adorno's call for an enlightened Enlightenment: "It is through more, not less, reason that the wounds dealt the irrational totality of humankind by the

instrument that is reason can be healed" (Adorno 1991:103). However, while for Adorno critical reflexion means immanent criticism, Musil's criticism consists in offering alternative interpretations that seem just as plausible as the one to be criticized. Instead of entering the criticized idea in order to explode its semblance of closure and finality, he undermines it by showing it to be merely one possibility ("it could just as well be otherwise..."). Neither Adorno nor Musil rely on any absolute transcendent criteria, but whereas Adorno thinks that he has to renounce external yardsticks to achieve this, Musil performs the same trick by multiplying the yardsticks and juxtaposing them next to each other.⁵⁷ Musil and Adorno, each in his own way, throw doubt on the rigid opposition of the "heightened consciousness" and the "aura". In other words, both attempt to transcend what we have called the dilemma of shock-modernity through the formula of a radicalization of reason.

However, the price Ulrich has to pay for combining reflexion and inner nature in this way is, as we have seen, that all "qualities" must be strictly uncoupled from his life. This is also the weak spot in his model. Is it possible to imagine reflexion as wholly detached from life? Wouldn't life itself have to be as hypothetical and revocable as thinking for the subject to be able to detach itself completely from "qualities"? Is not the other condition too part of or a product of the history or social reality which it seeks to transcend? Let us now turn to Adorno for a model of the good that emphasizes the social "situatedness" of reflexion.

Theodor W. Adorno: dialectics and the situatedness of reflexion

"Negative dialectics" is merely the negative form of a thinking that, from a different point of view, appears in a non-negative guise, as a model for a relation between subject and object that is free of domination; a thinking, in other words, that has freed itself from the need of self-preservation. As such, negative dialectics is wedded to an vision of happiness resting on pliancy to the mimetic impulses that the subject has had to repress in the interest of dominating nature, impulses that would find delight in opening itself up to what is different — to what Adorno, quoting Eichendorff, calls *das schöne Fremde*, the beautiful other.

Let us return to Heidegger. That the paradigm of identity triumphs in Being and Time means that his version of authenticity is vulnerable to the critique that it takes on itself the brutality of modern society and has to close itself to mimetic impulses of inner nature. This is exactly the criticism directed against Heidegger's ideal of authenticity by Adorno.

The equation of the genuine and the true is untenable. It is precisely undeviating self-reflection — the practice of which Nietzsche called psychology, that is, insistence on the truth about oneself, that shows again and again, even in the first conscious experiences of childhood, that the impulses reflected upon are quite *æ*genuine \AA . They always contain an element of imitation, play, wanting to be different. The desire, through submergence in

one's own individuality, instead of social insight into it, to touch something utterly solid, ultimate being, leads to precisely the false identity which since Kierkegaard the concept of authenticity has been supposed to exorcise. (Adorno 1978:153)

About the self he writes:

All its content comes from society... It grows richer the more freely it develops and reflects this relation, while it is limited, impoverished and reduced by the separation [...]. Anything that does not wish to wither should rather take on itself the stigma of the inauthentic. For it lives on the mimetic heritage. The human is indissolubly linked with imitation: a human being only becomes human at all by imitation of other human beings. (Adorno 1978:154)

In Adorno, just as in Musil, the dividing line between self and other is erased. The richness of the subject becomes dependent on the richness of the world that it experiences. "The profundity of the subject is determined by the richness and complexity of the perceived external world" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1981:220). One of his central theses is that it cannot isolate itself from this world without impoverishing itself. For there is nothing "genuine" or authentic, nothing solid or fixed, that constitutes the self. The impulses of the self always comprise a wish to be non-identical, "imitation, play, wanting to be different". The ideal of authenticity would stifle these impulses. It impoverishes the self since it forces the self to keep to itself and to limit itself to the constantly repeated experience of nothing but itself. Thus the self is reified and turned into a thing to be preserved (Adorno 1996:109):

But whoever barricades himself in his mere being as it is, having cut himself off from everything else, thereby risks fetishizing it. The liberated fixed identity then finally becomes something external, the subject becomes its own object, which it nurses and preserves. (ibid 109).

With this criticism Adorno hits the conflict between the paradigms of identity and inner nature on the mark. Adorno emphasizes his thesis of the reification of the self by using the language of commodity exchange: authenticity is when the self disposes over itself as if it were private property (ibid 113). "Anything that does not wish to wither", Adorno writes, "should rather take on itself the stigma of the inauthentic." (ibid 1978:154). With these words, Adorno not only affiliates himself with the paradigm of inner nature. His criticism also shows that Heidegger doesn't manage to satisfy this paradigm. In his view authenticity itself merely reproduces the oppression of inner nature which it accuses conventional identity of perpetrating.

However, Adorno differs from Musil in not advocating any unconditional self-forgetting. While Musil's dissolution of the self liberates reflexivity from its last anchorings, Adorno redirects the reader's gaze to social mediation. The subject may not exist as a timeless essence, but it is nevertheless historically given. The interplay of the subject and conceptual thinking is given much more attention. To combat the inhuman condition of the present, spontaneity and

conceptual thinking need each other — the former to provide detachment from the conceptual system, the latter to provide detachment from what is immediately given. Both are moments of a dialectical movement. Thought must surpass the impulses, but this must never itself become definite, must never turn into a finite and static system (Adorno 1994a:13-39).

There are two passages in *Minima Moralia* which mirror each other and together illustrate the dialectic of spontaneity and conceptual reflexion — here in the guise of a dialectic of love and justice — and which also show that what Adorno calls reconciliation must not be misunderstood as any kind of "synthesis" or unity of the two. Adorno begins (in "For Anatole France") by pointing out that a person in love has eyes for nothing but the beloved object, which always appears unique.

The eyes that lose themselves to the one and only beauty are sabbath eyes. They save in their object something of the calm of its day of creation. (Adorno 1978:76)

The paradox of these sabbath eyes is that it is only thanks to their blind infatuation, their unjust forgetfulness "which borders on contempt" for everything else, that they present the object with its individuality undamaged, liberated from the spell of identity. The attempt to view everything justly and impartially would spoil its beauty, since justice requires a transcendence of the merely particular and thus of the individuality of the object.

In the other passage ("Golden Gate"), which can be read as the antithesis to the one just discussed, the love relation is viewed from the perspective of the rejected lover, to whom the need for transcending the particular is brought home by the pain of being rebuffed. "In the senselessness of his deprivation he is made to feel the untruth of all merely individual fulfillment", but at the same time he recognizes the futility of an appeal to justice, since love must be given voluntarily. "He was wronged; from this he deduces a claim to right and must at the same time reject it, for what he desires can only be given in freedom" (ibid 164). Since love cannot be founded on rights, justice cannot help him. The crucial point that Adorno drives home is that both of the incompatible instances have to be affirmed. What here appears as a conflict between love and justice, or the particular and the universal, is the mirror-reflection in negative dialectics of the conflict between the experiences of aura and reification. Justice is denounced as a reification that destroys the individuality of objects by subsuming them under general principles, but at the same time demanded because the "sabbath eyes" in themselves are blind to the uniqueness of everything except the object on which they rest. The aura is true, since it preserves non-identity against the leveling of reason, but also false, since it ideologically shuts out everything outside itself from view. Adorno oscillates between the two poles of aura and reification in a self-destructive movement that leaves both in ruins.

Reconciliation, then, is not a unity, but a reflexive realization that dilemmas cannot be resolved idealistically, in thought, but can only be dissolved, through

history. Love and justice, or aura and reification, are both in possession of their respective "truth-content", and must be affirmed although they are incompatible. The point at which Adorno's reflections end is not the synthesis, but the point where the expectations on a synthesis are betrayed. Instead of overcoming the dilemma of shock-modernity, Adorno shows the ideological character of all overcomings. The solution offered by negative dialectics is nothing but the contradiction itself — or to be precise, the recognition that contradictions such as the one between aura and reification cannot be resolved idealistically, since they are ensnared in the workings of social mechanisms. More than Musil, then, Adorno acknowledges the "situatedness" of the self and of reflexion, but the price for this is that his philosophy can offer nothing but the absence of the good.

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We will now have a look at two Japanese writers. While Kawabata Yasunari will be seen as trying out a version of the model of non-identity, we will see that he does so in ways that are highly original and expand the categories we have used so far. Similarly, while Abe Kôbô will be seen as a representative of the ideal of authenticity, we will see that this ideal significantly differs from Heidegger's. While Kawabata adopts a strategy of yielding to or inviting the shock-sensation, Abe's fiction is marked by the struggle to overcome it. One affirms shock, the other negates it.

2-2: Kawabata Yasunari: shock and the reunion with inner nature

The aim of this part is to investigate the category of shock in the writings of the Japanese writer and Nobel laureate Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972). Benjamin and Kawabata in many respects seem to be situated on the same historical threshold. A keen awareness of the threat of shock colors the image of modernity in both writers. At the same time, there are some decisive differences between the two. Benjamin sees the heightened consciousness of modernity as originating in the attempt to parry the daily sensations of shock generated by capitalism. What is brought out clearly in the novels of Kawabata is that shock also works the other way. For those who are imprisoned in the citadel of identity, even the painful experience of personal disintegration may seem liberating. Not only the disintegration of the aura, but also the breakdown of identity manifests itself as shock, and to that degree shock not only forces consciousness away from, but also back to inner nature.

I will not discuss the entirety of Kawabata's output. Most of those novels to which I will refer belong mainly to the post-war period — The Master of Go (1942-54, Meijin), Thousand Cranes (1949-51, Senbazuru), The Sound of the Mountain (1949-54, Yama no oto), The House of the Sleeping Beauties (1960-61, Nemureru bijo), and The Old Capital (1961-62, Koto) — as well as his Nobel lecture "Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself" (1968, "Utsukushii Nihon no watashi"). This was a period when the traditional culture of Japan seemed to be in a process of irretrievable dissolution, and as a consequence a period in which Kawabata himself declared that he could write nothing by elegies — or literally, that he "could do nothing but return into the sadness of Japan" (cf Kawabata 1973c:196). However, Kawabata's statement should not blind us to the elegiac character even of novels written before the war, such as Snow Country (1935-37, 48, Yukiguni). My reason for emphasizing the novels I have mentioned here, including Snow Country, is that I am anxious to bring into relief a certain view on shock, which seems to be connected to this elegiac character.

Below I shall first describe the aesthetization of shock in the novels of Kawabata. This will involve exploring the formal relationship between their endings and the narrative as a whole, and how this relationship enables them to undermine their own unity. This detour is necessary since I believe that Kawabata's notion of shock manifests itself not only on the level of the contents of his works, but also in the way that these works are constructed. Secondly, I will attempt to reconstruct the model of the good life that informs his novels. I will argue that Kawabata presents us with an ideal of inner nature, which is animated by the Zen Buddhist notion of nothingness and the aesthetics of *mono no aware* ("the sadness of things"). Finally I will attempt to explore the implications of this reconstruction for the problem posed by Benjamin concerning the possibility of experience (*Erfahrung*) in modern societies.

The aesthetization of shock

The novels of Kawabata have been likened to haiku and waka, the traditional seventeen- and thirty-one mora poems that achieve their beauty by a mating of opposite or incongruous terms. This is true not only of his style, but also of the overall narrative organization of his novels.⁵⁸ Impressions and episodes confront the reader as more or less autonomous fragments, each of them emitting a color or fragrance of their own. While each section is embedded in the context of the whole, in each a counter-tendency to free itself from this context is also at work. In contrast to the montage, where unity emerges from the transition between heterogeneous elements, in Kawabata the transitions are disintegrative. The final blow to the unity of the novels is dealt by their often abrupt and "inconclusive" endings. With small means a shift of nuance is brought about that is often so startling that the endings seem to make the context, without which they would be incomprehensible, fall apart. In the endings of novels such as Snow Country, Thousand Cranes, The Old Capital or

The House of the Sleeping Beauties the curious relationship between the whole and the part is heightened to a point where the disintegration of the former becomes a precondition for the beauty of latter. Mishima Yukio once observed about The House of the Sleeping Beauties that the "the formal perfection" of the novel consists in the way the woman's "last cruel remark" at the end, "brings down the house of lust, until then so carefully and minutely fabricated, in a collapse inhuman beyond description" (Mishima 1980:8).⁵⁹

The special characteristic of endings of this sort is that they brutally replace, rather than conclude the narrative. Their effect is in a sense the effect of shock. By its swift negation of the whole, nothing is left to linger in the reader's mind after finishing the novel but its last flashing moments. The bitter shout with which Thousand Cranes ends (and to which we will return in the next section) awakens the reader as if from a dream. It does not resolve the laboriously constructed web around which the dream has revolved. Rather it tears it apart. The reader is made to vacillate between two worlds, and in this rough farewell the dream seems to shine with an even greater clarity and beauty. In its effect it is similar to the kiss with which Ingrid Bergman quells Humphrey Bogart's inquisitiveness in Casablanca. Before she kisses him she says: "There is only one answer that will take care of all your questions." In the same way the reader's expectations of a resolution of the conflict that has propelled the narrative are displaced in the sensation of shock in the endings. Kawabata kisses the reader, and in this shock the unresolved contradictions disappear from view.

The complex relationship between the whole and the ending can be illustrated by what is often considered to be Kawabata's masterpiece, Snow Country, a novel set in a hot-spring resort in the snowy regions of Niigata prefecture, where the well-do-to aesthete Shimamura — a picture of Blasphemous or bored indifference — has come from Tokyo to visit the young geisha Komako. Although passionately loved by her, he is unable to respond to her passion and his feelings seem to exhaust themselves in aesthetic contemplation. It is made clear that the beauty he perceives in her stems from her innocence and the futility of her "wasted efforts" (*torô*). She knows less than him, and this is why he loves her.

He was conscious of an emptiness that made him see Komako's life as beautiful but wasted, even though he himself was the object of her love; and yet the woman's existence, her straining to live, came touching him like naked skin. He pitied her, and he pitied himself. (Kawabata 1993:127f)

This attitude testifies to what we, borrowing a term from Benjamin, may call his "higher degree of consciousness". Tied up with his insight into the futility of living, is sadness and emptiness. As a passive observer, he can only hand out death, receive without giving. In one of the last scenes of the novel, in which he decides to return to Tokyo, he wonders "what is lacking in him, what kept him from living as completely", and he gazes "at his own coldness":

He could not understand how she had so lost herself. All of Komako came to him, but it seemed that nothing went out from him to her. He heard in his chest, like snow piling up, the sound of Komako, an echo beating against empty walls. (ibid 155)

The novel can be interpreted in many ways, but at least on one very apparent level it is animated by the contradiction between the fullness of life, represented by the love of Komako, and the intellect, represented by the "bored indifference" of Shimamura. This contradiction is overshadowed in the final scene. Shimamura prepares to return to Tokyo, and meets Komako a final time. A fire breaks out in the warehouse, to which they hurriedly run. As Seidensticker points out, the scene with the burning warehouse "only brings about the inevitable" (Seidensticker 1993). Nevertheless, there is hardly any sense of continuity or closure. The preceding narrative falls out of view at the almost paralyzing final line, in which Shimamura's head is thrown back and the Milky Way flows into him with a roar. This effect is achieved by a number of means — the heightening of suspense, the rhythm of the shifts between relating the course of events and Shimamura's thoughts, by Komako's words, and by the reader's uncertainty concerning what has happened — but the effect is probably best explained as a result of the fact that Kawabata breaks off the narrative at a moment of suspense. The final lines aim to transport the reader into another realm, from which the narrative disappears from view.

It might be objected that even this sort of ending before the end in its own way too concludes the narrative. There is some truth in this. The anticipation of the final catastrophe permeates the narrative from the moment it begins to unfold. The elegiac mood of the novel is the mood of a consciousness that prepares itself for shock. In this sense the final lines are not simply negating the narrative, but are also constitutive for it. To use a metaphor, one might say that the disruption of the narrative is part of its own unity, just as dissonance is constitutive for an atonal piece of music. But at the same time, the ending transcends the narrative, for at least two reasons.

To begin with, the overall aesthetic unity of the work must not be confused with its narrative disunity. The final lines would not have been able to compensate aesthetically for the absence of reconciliation if they had not been introduced as an additional element that overshadows the unresolved contradiction. This abrupt shift of attention is what produces shock, which here fulfills a double function: that of aesthetic climax as well as that of narrative disruption.

Secondly, even though the endings are always already foreshadowed, and thus not necessarily surprising, they contain, like behind a veil, a testimony of past shock, of past unmitigated catastrophes. Even though they don't enter our field of vision they must have been there in order for their veiled representation to be possible. The elegiac mood does not neutralize the sensation of shock which it anticipates. Shock is present in it, as its presupposition, as memory or foreboding. The endings "negate" the narratives by letting loose a dissonance that was always there to begin with.

Shock as destructive

The sensation of shock in Kawabata is both destructive and revelatory. These two sides presuppose each other. I begin with the destructive characteristics of shock. I will use the novel *Thousand Cranes* as an example, since it reveals these characteristics in a conveniently clear-cut form.⁶⁰ Its main protagonist, Kikuji, is a well-to-do aesthete and lover of the tea-ceremony. Just as Shimamura in *Snow Country*, he is a man characterized by a passive and contemplative frame of mind. The aesthetic world which he creates for himself and in which he finds pleasure is threatened through the ominous presence of Kurimoto, his deceased father's mistress, whom he is unable to think about without revulsion. Kikuji vacillates between two women — Yukiko and Fumiko — in his choice of marriage partner. A few pages before the end, Fumiko becomes an "incomparable absolute" and "final fate" for him. He goes to visit her in the morning and the pages, unusually, vibrate with new confidence and hope. Fumiko, he realizes, was the "antidote" that had "made him want to live again", enabling him to step out of the dark, ugly curtain where he had dwelled. As he arrives he receives a faint hint that she might have committed suicide. Here the novel ends abruptly as he lets out a sudden, hateful exclamation — his first in the novel — about Kurimoto:

"But Kurimoto lives on..." Kikuji said, as if spewing out every word as poison against an invisible enemy, and hurriedly walked towards the shade under the trees in the park. (Kawabata 1964:152)

In this ending three characteristics are revealed, of what could be called the ideal type of Kawabata's concept of shock. To begin with, the character of shock as a break-down of expectations is especially conspicuous. At the moment when Kikuji finally ceases to waver, the future he settles for — Fumiko — is snatched away from his hands. The process by which the expectations that are to be crushed gradually gain fixity and become "absolute" is instructive. While his attitude of passive contemplation would be impossible without a heightened consciousness, this consciousness does not take the form of a fixed "identity". Like in Musil's "man without qualities" the gaze is not directed inwards, but outwards — it fixes on women and objects of art. By being purely contemplative, it does not need to be tied up to a fixed future. In Kawabata this contemplative stance is closely connected with the cold and lifeless heart of the male protagonists. Only when he finally falls in love, does he regain "life". Just before the end, in the morning before he goes to Fumiko's house, the future clears up and gains a new fixity. He gratefully thinks of her as the "antidote", that had "made him want to live again". The shock hits him at the moment when nature was transforming itself into identity. What is shattered is a newborn identity, in the sense of having discovered one's "incomparable absolute" and "final fate", of having a fixed set of life-expectations. The tendency of shock to shatter expectations is present in the endings of other novels too.⁶¹ In *Snow Country* the entire world of the snow country is made to go up in flames

together with the burning warehouse. The disenchanting effect is similar in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, where, as Mishima observed, the "house" itself collapsed at the brutal and down-to-earth words of its proprietor. All these worlds, that are at first taken for granted, are revealed as empty.

Secondly, the ending leaves the protagonist as well as the reader suspended in a state of ambiguity. Kikuji is returned to his earlier state of ambiguity, to a state in which he no longer has any "incomparable absolute" or "final fate". Ambiguity is also evident in the fact that, just as in the endings of *Snow Country* and in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, a woman seems to have died, although we are not told for sure.

Thirdly, Kikuji's angry shout seems incongruous with its immediate context, from which it breaks free and which it overshadows. This trait of shock is apparent in the ending of *Snow Country* as well. What is specifically evident in *Thousand Cranes* is the function of shock to abolish its moral context. While this work has often been said to thematize the conflict between love and public morals, this reading tends to neglect the extent to which criticism of conventional morality in this work is itself morally motivated. If the reader is made to detest the slandering of Kurimoto, this is at least partly because the victims of this slandering — Fumiko and her mother — have a higher justice on their side. In this way a moral dilemma is forcefully brought to the fore of the novel, only to be abolished at the ending as if struck by lightning. Overshadowed by Kikuji's shout, it is left as it is. Rather than neatly resolving it in order to restore moral harmony, it is dissolved and rendered meaningless as its context itself disintegrates.

These three characteristics agree more or less with our interpretation of Benjamin's notion of shock as a negative sensation which does not fit in and for which one is never prepared. Firstly, we clearly recognize the break-down of expectations. Secondly, occurrences which fail to fit in with the "tradition" of one's experiences have the effect of undermining the reliability of this tradition, thus giving rise to ambiguity. Thirdly, the unexpected often tends to occupy our entire attention, thus shutting out the wider context from our view. The one difference which does strike us is that while Benjamin usually portrays shock as a painful thwarting of unconscious impulses, the emphasis in Kawabata is rather on the destruction wrought by shock on the edifices of an aestheticizing consciousness. This is a difference to which we will return later.

Shock as sam \neq dhi

To gain a view of the revelatory elements of shock, it is helpful to make a detour from the texts of the novels to their religious underpinnings.⁶² A model, which explains the positive appraisal of shock, is to be found in Kawabata's Nobel lecture, *Japan, the Beautiful, and Myself*, which was an attempt to explain the source of his aesthetics to a non-Japanese audience. It largely consists of his commentaries on sayings and poems by Zen-masters. In the lecture we find the "nothingness" of Zen described in the following way:

This is not the emptiness of the West. It is rather the reverse, a universe in which everything communicates freely with everything, a universe of limitless and inexhaustible spirituality. (Kawabata 1973b:186)

In other words "nothingness" mustn't be confused with mere absence. Nothingness only appears as a non-entity from the vantage point of language and reason. In fact, as Buddhism spread to China the Buddhist term for nothingness (Sanskrit *śūnyatā*, Chinese *wu*, Japanese *mu*) became assimilated with the Taoist term for the ultimate but nameless being, *ch'ang tao*, a term which has the advantage of not presenting its object as a mere non-entity.⁶³ In Taoism, *ch'ang tao* designates the originary and non-differentiated state of things in which no possibilities are yet realized, and which therefore lacks determinations. As such it can only be captured by words in a one-sided and distorted way. This is the reason why, Kawabata continues, the emphasis in Zen is less on reason and argument than on "intuition" and "immediate feeling". It is also the reason why he insists that the "emptiness" in his works is different from "the nihilism of the West" (Kawabata 1973b:191).

Zen, in fact, offers a good vantage point from which to comprehend Kawabata's notion of shock. A central notion in Zen is that of *samādhi*, a state of mind in which memory is dissolved, and the only reality is the reality of here and now.⁶⁴ Furthermore, one's ego is left behind, and the distinction between subject and object dissolved. Sekida Katsuki makes a distinction between what he calls "positive" *samādhi*, which arises when one is totally absorbed in a certain object or action, and "absolute" *samādhi*, which arises when one is totally absorbed in nothingness (Sekida 1977:42). Actually, these two different kinds are one and the same, the reason being that *śūnyatā* according to Zen doctrine *śūnyatā* nothingness is realized in the immediate here and now. To be able to return one's self to the originary state of nothingness, all determinations imposed on it by one's past and by one's anticipations of the future must be discarded. This state of total fluidity and openness, when the ego is suspended, is also the precondition for being totally absorbed in concrete objects or actions. The equation of nothingness with immediacy recurs in the philosopher Nishida Kitarō's notion of "pure experience". It is widely recognized that he based this notion on the notion of *samādhi*. He defined it as follows:

[B]y pure I am referring to the state of experience just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination. The moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound, for example, is prior not only to the thought that the color or sound is the activity of an external object or that one is sensing it, but also to the judgment of what the color or sound might be. In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience. (Nishida 1990:3)

According to Nishida, pure experience is "prior" to all knowledge and as such the most fundamental kind of experience. "Prior" should not be taken to mean prior in a temporal sense. Nishida's point is rather that the knowledge formed

in moments of pure experience is logically prior to the distinctions created by language and "deliberative discrimination".

Although Nishida did not use the word "shock" to describe pure experience, as an experience that catches "heightened consciousness" off guard and breaks through the conceptual schemata which define expectations, it does not seem controversial to qualify it as such. To use Benjamin's formula, it is clear that the "protective shield" of heightened consciousness must fail in order for pure experience to be possible. A linking together of Benjamin's concept of shock and sam *ḥ*dhi thus seems to be possible. We can now see that novels such as *Snow Country* and *Thousand Cranes* fit in very well in the Zen Buddhist tradition. They end in sam *ḥ*dhi. Through the artistic technique of Kawabata, the endings are made to work just like Nishida's "moment of seeing a color or hearing a sound", and thus displace the conceptual expectations built up by the narrative.

To return to what was above referred to as the "ideal type" of shock in Kawabata, we are now in a position to gain a better insight into its redeeming features. A brief look at a famous mythological instance of sam *ḥ*dhi will help us to bring these to light. The sacred Hindu text *Bhagavata Purana*, which dates from around 950 AD, narrates the exploits of the god Vishnu in his incarnation as Krsna (or Krishna), the son of the chieftain of a village of cowherds. When he was a child, it says, his mother Yasoda did not yet know that he was a god.

One day when Rama and the other little sons of the cow-herds were playing, they reported to his mother, 'Krsna has eaten dirt.' Yasoda took Krsna by the hand and scolded him, for his own good, and she said to him, seeing that his eyes were bewildered with fear, 'Naughty boy, why have you secretly eaten dirt? These boys, your friends, and your elder brother say so.' Krsna said, 'Mother, I have not eaten. They are all lying. If you think they speak the truth, look at my mouth yourself.' 'If that is the case, then open your mouth,' she said to the lord Hari [i.e. Krsna], the god of unchallenged sovereignty who had in sport taken the form of a human child, and he opened his mouth.

She then saw in his mouth the whole eternal universe, and heaven, and the regions of the sky, and the orb of the earth with its mountains, islands, and oceans; she saw the wind, and lightning, and the moon and stars, and the zodiac; and water and fire and air and space itself; she saw the vacillating senses, the mind, the elements, and the three strands of matter. She saw within the body of her son, in his gaping mouth, the whole universe in all its variety, with all the forms of life and time and nature and action and hopes, and her own village, and herself.

Then she became afraid and confused, thinking, 'Is this a dream or an illusion brought by a god? Or is it a delusion of my own perception? Or is it some portent of the natural powers of this little boy, my son? I bow down to the feet of the god, whose nature cannot be imagined or grasped by mind, heart, acts, or speech; he in whom all of this universe is inherent, impossible to fathom. The god is my refuge, he through whose power of delusion there arise in me such false beliefs as 'I', 'This is my husband', 'This is my son', 'I am the wife of the village chieftain and all his wealth is mine, including these cow-herds and their wives and their wealth of cattle.' When the cow-herd's wife had come to understand the true essence in this way, the lord spread his magic illusion in the form of

maternal affection. Instantly the cow-herd's wife lost her memory of what had occurred and took her son on her lap. She was as she had been before, her heart flooded with even greater love. (Hindu Myths 1980:219f)

At the point where Kṛṣṇa's mother looks into his mouth the narrative reaches a standstill, allowing the vision to which it bears no smooth continuity to unfold on its own. The sudden intrusion into the narrative of what at least at first sight appears as an alien and self-contained element is so startling that its context is forgotten. As in Kawabata, the unmediated transition between heterogeneous elements undermines the unity of the narrative. In the above passage all the previously mentioned three characteristics of Kawabata's endings recur: Yasoda's expectations suffer a breakdown; she is thrown into confusion and ambiguity; and moral judgment is suspended as the moral context the cause for her scolding suddenly collapses. But the passage from the Bhagavata Purana is instructive not only because of these overt similarities. It brings out the hidden content of the sensation of shock in Kawabata's novels. It reveals what they never explicitly state, namely that this breakdown and collapse is no pure negation. To the three "ideal-typical" characteristics of shock mentioned above, a further two can now be added.

Firstly, what the above passage reveals is the revelatory function of *samudhi*, which is only indirectly felt in Kawabata. *Samudhi* is meant to reveal not just beauty, but also truth. The concrete imagery of Hindu mythology with its philosophical emphasis on "being" rather than the Buddhist "nothingness" is helpful in showing that *samudhi*, far from being a mere destruction of expectations and context, brings the beholder in touch with a palpable reality. In Kawabata as well, this revelatory function is silently present. In the senselessness of the deprivation felt by Shimamura or Kikuji, the dream worlds they have built up are revealed as illusory, but never in a merely abstract or intellectual way. At the moment of shock, the concrete here and now arises to take their place: the roar of the Milky Way flows into Shimamura, and Kikuji gives vent to his bitterness with a sudden shout. In shock the immediate here and now becomes real. The presumed reality of "identity", and of linear time, is denied on the level of pure experience itself. This, again, is why Kawabata refused to conflate the "emptiness" of his works with "the nihilism of the West". *Samudhi* is revelatory, in a way which nihilism, taken as purely intellectual negation, never is.

Connected to this is the second point which the above passage brings out, namely the joyful element in *samudhi*. The feelings of Yasoda looking into her son's mouth, were one might presume not just confusion, but also wonder and awe. In Kawabata, too, one is made to feel that the thrill of shock experienced by the protagonists, alleviates the horror of what is shocking. Hatori Tetsuya writes of "an unspeakable joy that lies hidden in the background" when Shimamura suffers at the end of *Snow Country* (Hatori 1997a:48).

We can now grasp two difficulties more clearly. To begin with, we understand why Kawabata's narratives tend to undermine their own unity. From a Zen Buddhist viewpoint, the "basic contradictions", which according to common assumptions in literary theory are supposed to propel the narrative and secure its unity, are in fact not basic at all, but arise from a background of "nothingness". This nothingness, far from simply negating the existent, is a synonym for the original, non-differentiated state where all possibilities are still open. Kawabata's endings do not obscure this background through the imposition of narrative closure. As the plots and the imaginary worlds engendered by the narrative recede into this background, they reveal themselves as similar to the "wasted efforts" that so moved Shimamura.

Secondly, we can grasp the vision of the good life that underlies Kawabata's aestheticization of shock. Shock is the fissure in identity, through which the light shines in of the limitless, unrealized possibilities that were once open. Shock wants to return us to the state before any of our particularities took form. It strives towards a nothingness, which here emerges as an annulment of the ideal of a conceptually defined identity, and as a basis of an ideal of the good in its own right.

We thus find in Kawabata a reversal of the negative appraisal of shock in Benjamin. Shock appears not only as a rupture, but also as a road back to an originary state of nature. This reversal is made possible by the Zen Buddhist framework and the "nothingness" that informs Kawabata's aesthetics. To the aforementioned three characteristics of shock in Kawabata — openness, breakdown of expectations, and abolition of context — two further have been added: its revelatory and its joyful character. Taken together, they present a picture of shock as destructive but also desirable. While painful, shock brings the protagonist in touch with inner nature, a contact denied to them by the high consciousness of identity.

Elegiac otherworldliness and the high consciousness of *mono no aware*

Until now I have concentrated on the notion of shock in Kawabata's writings. It is time to widen the scope of the comparison. In Benjamin, shock marks the threshold between two other worlds: on the one hand, a world characterized by the fullness of "experience" or "aura" and, on the other hand, the modern world of spleen and of heightened consciousness. In Kawabata too we find that shock serves to mediate between two worlds: on the one hand, the threatened world of traditional Japanese sensibilities — represented, for example, by Komako in *Snow Country* — and, on the other hand, the world of what Simmel called "bored indifference", represented by the city-dweller Shimamura in the same novel. These two worlds are similar to the world of the "aura" and the world of modern high consciousness. Furthermore, both Benjamin and Kawabata depict modernity as a wasteland and both seem to retain deep attachments to the lost

world of premodernity. Moreover, both writers assign to shock the function of shattering this premodern world.

However, there is a major difference in the way Kawabata strives to employ an aestheticizing high consciousness to mediate between the image of lost Japan and modern instrumental reason. In order to illuminate this difference, we first need to have a look at the basic similarities in the way Kawabata and Benjamin portray this modern reason.

Modernity as instrumental rationality

The erosion of the aura of a human being can be illustrated by *Snow Country*. In his search for purity, Shimamura increasingly transfers his affections from Komako to another girl called Yoko. Tsuruta Kin'ya observes that the shift in his affections is connected to Komako's gradually coming to maturity — when she, in Shimamura's eyes, becomes a "woman" instead of a "girl". Along with her maturity she becomes associated with the "impure" values of modernity — the concern for money and the affirmation of her own desires (Tsuruta 1997). In other words, as Komako becomes "like all others" she loses her aura. She becomes part of modernity, and therefore unable to liberate Shimamura from his spleen.

Kawabata's criticism of modernity as dominated by instrumental rationality — the rational calculation of means in order to achieve a certain goal — is most clearly articulated in *The Master of Go*, which is rare among his works, since it brings out in the open the criticism of modernity that tends to be more hidden in other novels.⁶⁵ The novel depicts the retirement-game of the famous go-master Hon'inbō Shūsai, which took place in 1938, an event at which Kawabata himself was present as an agent for a newspaper. The game was an enormous media-event. The poor health of the master, and the special rules established for the championship, made it drag on for half a year. Finally he is defeated by his younger opponent — in the novel known as I take — and dies a year later.

As the American philosopher Andrew Feenberg points out, Kawabata depicts the young opponent's victory over the old master as a lamentable triumph of instrumental rationality over tradition and over the native view of go as an artform (Feenberg 1995:193-). The equation of modernity with the domination of rules and instrumental rationality is brought out in a revealing episode. For the championship a new rule was introduced, to the effect that before every intermission of the game, the player in turn had to make a "sealed move" — a move which was written down on a note and sealed in an envelope without being shown to anyone — so that his opponent would not be able to take advantage of the time before the game was resumed. Kawabata presents this novelty as a symptom of modernity in general and goal-rationality in particular, since it rests on the presupposition that the only important goal for the players is to win (Kawabata 1997:40f). To the old master, sticking to an older rationality in which go was to be treated as art, this could not but be bothersome. It is his moving vulnerability to novelties of this sort which is emphasized in

Kawabata's portrait of him. The old master is an object of love, just as Komako in *Snow Country*. They are both on the losing side, victims who are engaged in "wasted efforts". Both lack the heightened consciousness necessary to survive in the hostile world of modernity. The challenger, Iwano, on the other hand, appears as "modern" precisely because of his being at home with rules and instrumental rationality. His strict obedience to rules, however, is only outward, and coexists with a shrewd taking advantage of them in ways that contradict their original purpose. In fact, the climax of the novel centers on the strategic use he makes of a sealed move at a crucial moment in the game. Kawabata seems to want to say that because of the merely formal character, or the superficiality, of rules, their preponderance is inseparable from the possibility of their perversion. The structure of his criticism is quite analogous to the Benjamin's critique of "heightened consciousness" and "information" as products of a formal intellectual mastery of the world which never permits its object to penetrate to the realm of genuine experience. Just as the individual history of an object or relation — the "aura" — must appear indifferent to the objectifying gaze, so every formal rule must be blind to everything outside its jurisdiction, including the intentions of those who use it as a tool for their own ulterior purposes. Through the intrusion of such an "occidental" rationality, Kawabata laments, go was turned into a mere game and its "purity" was lost (ibid 41). But for the Japanese, Kawabata explains, go was never a mere game, but an artform like the Nô-drama or the tea-ceremony. In it "the mystique and the nobility of the ancient East" was flowing (ibid 87). It is part of the traditional Japanese culture that is now vanishing. What Kawabata seems to be saying is, in effect, that modernity has destroyed what Benjamin called its "aura".

Elegy and *mono no aware*

Kawabata's treatment of modernity is not peculiar for the way he portrays it, with its disintegration of art and predominance of rules and instrumental reason. This portrayal is largely consonant with Benjamin's. The difference lies rather in the strategy by which he reacts against it. Instead of acceding to the triumph of identity, he effects a peculiar synthesis between elegiac remembrance of the lost traditional beauty and a heightened degree of consciousness. As has often been pointed out, his "snow country" is not meant to be a realistic portrayal of modern Japan — and neither, for that matter, is the Kyoto of *The Old Capital*, the tea ceremonies of *Thousand Cranes*, or the fragile constructions of memories and dreams in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*. They are elegiacally idealized "other worlds" that are consciously set apart from the reality of modernity and contemporary Japan.⁶⁶

Let us dwell for a moment on the notion of elegy. Elegiac remembrance must be distinguished from what Benjamin called "reproduction", since it crucially presupposes that the past is unrepeatable. It does not recycle the past, but retains the consciousness of loss and separation. The elegiac world is always an other

world, which is consciously held at a distance from the real one.⁶⁷ But neither is elegiac remembrance to be confused with the world of the aura, despite the fact that Benjamin established the concept of the aura in opposition to the concept of reproduction. The aura, and the "involuntary memory" with which he connected it, lack the ghostliness and otherworldliness of elegiac remembrance. This may be illustrated by Benjamin's aforementioned example of involuntary memory: the direct and overpowering re-experience of the past triggered by the taste of a madeleine pastry in Proust. This sort of memory is not characterized by a consciousness of loss at all, but by its very opposite — the happy sense of reunion with the long lost world of one's childhood. By contrast, mourning and the sense of loss is constitutive of elegiac remembrance, which consequently remains a "voluntary memory" in the service of the intellect.

That elegy falls outside of the analytical grid of Benjamin's model might seem surprising, since his preoccupation with the past and with memory have led some critics to interpret him as an advocate of nostalgia. Theoretically, however, nostalgia — or elegy — plays a very small role in his writings. For example, in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility* he establishes an opposition between, on the one hand, the ancient Greek celebration of the unique work of art thought to embody eternal or timeless values, and, on the other, the ephemeral validity of the modern, reproducible work of art.⁶⁸ This mating of uniqueness with durability and of reproducibility with ephemerality recurs over and over in his thought. It explains why he links the uniqueness of the "aura" to the timeless realm of experience and "now-time", and why he ties the ephemerality of "sensation" to the endless linear expanse of "homogeneous and empty time". This means that the notion of the ephemeral but at the same time unique object of beauty is curiously absent. The aesthetics of Kawabata breaks through Benjamin's opposition precisely by means of this notion. Elegy is the form by which the object of desire presents itself as equally distant from timelessness and reproducibility. This equidistance is splendidly illustrated in the traditional aesthetic ideal of *mono no aware*, or "the sadness of things" felt when contemplating the beauty of something transient or fragile. Kawabata refers to this concept in his Nobel lecture, where he describes it as a "feeling for the poignant beauty of things", the unsurpassed pinnacle of which is found in the classics of the Heian-period. He also claims that it has been at the core of Japanese traditional aesthetics ever since, the very aesthetic tradition which he describes as the source of his own work (Kawabata 1973b). By establishing a tie between beauty and transitoriness, *mono no aware* bridges the gulf between experience and linear time. We have already touched on how Shimamura shudders at the innocence and beauty of Komako's "wasted efforts" in *Snow Country*. To be sure, the pity he feels for these efforts presupposes a heightened consciousness that perceives the risks and disappointments that await her in the future. But he would not have been attracted to her if he hadn't also been touched by her defenselessness. This is a sort of *mono no aware*. In Shimamura we find an acute time-consciousness, but

one that is free of the deadly grip of spleen and "destroying time", and which is just as "completing" and filled with experience as timelessness itself.

The suspension of self-preservation

Unlike the heightened consciousness described by Benjamin, the consciousness of *mono no aware* does not protect against shock. The fragile dream-world of *elegy* is a consciously maintained illusion, which is constantly undermined by the reality which it seeks to escape.⁶⁹ If the main function of consciousness were to serve as a "protective shield", as Benjamin claims, then its prime priority would be to forestall the shock that comes with disillusionment by redirecting affection and libidinal investment away from illusions. This function seems absent in Kawabata's protagonists. Their awareness of danger, keen though it is, is not meant to soften or protect against the inevitable shock which it predicts. Contrary to the time-consciousness of self-preservation, where, to quote Benjamin, "every second finds consciousness ready to intercept its shock", they knowingly neglect to take any measures of defense against sensed threats.

Thus feelings of insecurity and aesthetic pleasure are predominant in Kawabata's portrait of the old Shingo, the main protagonist of *The Sound of the Mountain*, who perfectly exemplifies the merger between practical inability and aesthetic voyeurism effected by the high consciousness of *mono no aware*. He is old, his memory is falling apart, and knows that he has been unable to do anything to solve the problems in his family. His daughter Fusako even calls him a "coward". His perceptions of everyday reality mixes up effortlessly with fragmented memories and dreams. As in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* the contact with women — such as his gentle daughter-in-law Kikuko — seems to trigger the reawakening of old memories and fantasies. Throughout the novel Kikuko is associated in his mind with objects of traditional Japanese art, such as a *Nô*-mask, or with lines from a *Nô*-recital. In one scene he holds a newly purchased *Nô*-mask in front of him. The mask — a so-called *jido* — is that of a boy, but it has an androgynous beauty than is neither entirely masculine nor feminine.

The *kasshiki* was masculine, the eyebrows those of a man; but the *jido* was neuter. There was a wide space between eyebrows and eyes, and the gently arched eyebrows were those of a girl.

As he brought his face toward it from above, the skin, smooth and lustrous as that of a girl, softened in his aging eyes, and the mask came to life, warm and smiling.

He caught his breath. Three or four inches before his eyes, a live girl was smiling at him, cleanly, beautifully.

The eyes and the mouth were truly alive. In the empty sockets were black pupils. The red lips were sensuously moist. Holding his breath, he came so close as almost to touch his nose to that of the mask, and the blackish pupils came floating up to him, and the flesh of the lower lip swelled. He was on the point of kissing it. Heaving a sigh, he pulled away.

He felt, from a distance, as if it had lied to him. He breathed heavily for a time.[.]

To bring one's face so near as to touch it was probably, for a No mask, an inexcusable perversion. It was probably a way of viewing the mask not intended by the maker. Shingo felt the secret of the maker's own love in the fact that the mask, most alive when viewed at a proper distance from the No stage, should all the same be most alive when, as now, viewed from no distance at all.

For Shingo had felt a pulsing as of heaven's own perverse love. Yet he sought to laugh at it, telling himself that his ancient eyes had made the skin more alluring than that of a real woman. (Kawabata 1971:88f)

This episode illustrates in condensed form the oscillation between reality and dream world which we have seen characterizes the pattern of elegy as such. The mask that suddenly comes alive is an elegiac "other world" in miniature. Perhaps we could compare Shingo's sudden hallucination with what Musil sought to express as a suspension of "reality" as an "incomprehensible mental disturbance or a fragment of another life" (Musil 1981:1087). It is from this other reality that Shingo returns, "heaving a sigh". The same mask later appears in another climactic scene, where Kikuko wears it in front of Shingo to hide her tears. Kawabata seems to be suggesting that Shingo is in danger of conferring the "perverse love" of Heaven on her, but neither this, nor the fact that this love is what must be avoided if he is to deal properly with the problems in the family, is ever stated directly. To succumb to beauty, even at the cost of decay, is the danger of the merger of practical inability and aesthetic voyeurism, and the reason why so much in this novel seems like a conscious invitation of shock.

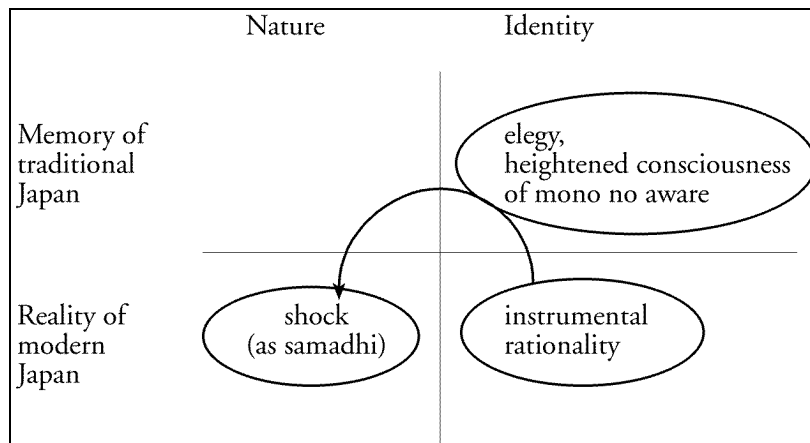
This merger is fundamental to the strategy for dealing with modernity in Kawabata's novels. His protagonists suspend the impulse for self-preservation in the face of overwhelming beauty. This is the formula which explains the pervasive sense of insecurity in his novels. With open eyes the protagonists invite the shock from which they draw pleasure. This is a strategy of knowingly putting one's identity at stake because one relishes its breakdown. They greet shock, though painful, as a liberation from the spleen of contemporary Japan. They suffer it, not in spite of their high consciousness, but because of it. Mono no aware and elegiac otherworldliness here appears in concrete guise, as a skillful device of consciousness for tricking inner nature out of its cave.

A volte-face of Benjamin's thesis

Kawabata is close to Benjamin in his view of modernity as an arena of instrumental rationality which threatens to eliminate traditional sensibilities, but he differs in utilizing the framework of Zen Buddhism in order to reinterpret shock as *samurai*. Although portraying modernity as antithetical to the elegiac dream worlds that he longingly constructs, he is able to extract intense pleasure through the shock when they fall to pieces. The heightened consciousness of *mono no aware*, which pervades Kawabata's dream worlds, differs from the

"heightened consciousness" of Benjamin, since it doesn't serve to prevent but to invite shock. In this way, shock becomes a way to regain "experience". Kawabata thus presents us with a response to shock which is significantly different from Benjamin's, indeed with a volte-face of Benjamin's thesis.⁷⁰ According to Benjamin, openness to experience increasingly becomes synonymous with shock in modernity, and people protect themselves against this shock by retreating into the "protective shield" of consciousness. In Kawabata the direction of this movement is reversed. Consciousness knowingly makes itself defenseless against the shock that will free it from spleen. Again, it seems pragmatically justified to make use of a simplifying figure, to help us visualize the contrast to Benjamin (FIG 2).

[FIG. 2]



What makes this reversal of direction possible is that the notion of shock and the predominant image of premodernity with which Kawabata opposes modernity differ from Benjamin's. For the latter, nature is lost and we can only preserve it in memory while waiting for the messianic return of benevolent "now-time". Benjamin too affirms shock, but only because of his conviction that redemption can only be achieved through the experience of the present, even if this experience was felt to be a "hell". Kawabata, by contrast, shows how shock itself offers the possibility of the good even in the midst of the modern world of instrumental rationality. As Benjamin pointed out, the aura is indeed far too vulnerable to shock to survive in a modern environment. Kawabata's elegies, however, forge a realm of perception that steers clear of spleen without resisting the loss of the "aura". The very purpose of his elegiac dream worlds is their own dissolution in the sensation of shock. Approaching shock from a standpoint imbued with a Zen Buddhist heritage, Kawabata is able to see its redeeming features and to extract from it a vision of the good which dispenses with the ideal of authenticity.⁷¹ Heightened consciousness must not be seen only as the force of identity but also as the aestheticizing consciousness of

mono no aware, and in the same way shock must be seen not just as pain but also as sam 𑄀dhi. Just as consciousness not only protects against shock but also invites it, so shock not only contributes to the setting up of identity, but also to its disintegration. If, from this, one would try extract a thesis on the good life, it would be the following: the disintegration of identity is not only painful, but also good. Modernity might mean that inner nature is increasingly vulnerable to shock, but that does not necessarily mean that we are forced to accept imprisonment in a conceptually rigidified identity, since sam 𑄀dhi 𑄀 the redeeming side of the breakdown of conceptual schemata 𑄀 is a possibility even in its midst.

2-3: Abe Kōbō and the triumph of shock

The narrative of Abe Kōbō's short novel *Just Like a Human* (1967, *Ningen sokkuri*) consists of a letter that the protagonist writes to his wife. It is a desperate call for help since she is his last hope, but it also bears the marks of conscious distortion since he suspects that she might be in collusion with his enemies. The predicament brings into focus the fear of intimacy that runs through most of Abe's oeuvre and which manifests itself even on the level of style. His preferred mode of narration is a crystal-clear scientific prose that serves to create a distance between the reader and the narrator. Adorno once remarked that the style of Kafka mimicked reification. This is true also of the style of Abe. In contrast to the intimate, confidential style of conventional novels, it arouses caution. The narrator doesn't trust his reader, who in turn feels unable to trust the narrator. But this style is sometimes interrupted by uninhibited and moving passages in which the narrator lets his despair shine through. One cannot help thinking that this oscillation between distrustful objectivity and naked cries for help reflects Abe's basic attitude to modernity, an attitude in which others are simultaneously seen through the two lenses of fear and desire.

This attitude comes forward most clearly in his portrayal of women, who are typically depicted with intense fear and simultaneously with intense desire. As the enigmatic women portrayed in *Woman of the Dunes* (1962, *Suna no onna*) or *The Ruined Map* (1967, *Moetsukita chizu*), they are living metaphors of the social machinery 𑄀 the sand village or the big city 𑄀 which is about to crush the heroes. We will here have a look at the close connection of this conflict between fear and desire to the ideal of authenticity in some of Abe's novels, mainly *The Woman in the Dunes*. As I will attempt to show, Abe's fiction reveals a tension in the idea of authenticity which will demonstrate that the dilemma of shock-modernity remains unresolved.

The fundamental categories of Abe's fiction remain the same as in Benjamin: shock and reified consciousness. Just as in Benjamin and Simmel, modernity is essentially a hostile world, experienced through a mixture of fear and desire, in which the subject constantly needs to be on its guard against shock. There are however certain differences. Modernity in Abe is experienced as a nightmare, as a continuing escalation of crisis, rather than as spleen. The efforts of the intellect are ultimately powerless against the madness which threatens to engulf it. They end up not with the blasé predominance of the intellect, but with its defeat at the hands of shock. In its inability to control shock, the subject is under the constant temptation of regression, of escape. Modernity here comes forward as fatigue. More than Benjamin, Abe emphasizes the weakness of the ego and of the individual intellect against the superior might of what Simmel called objective culture.

We will now, firstly, have a look at shock and reified consciousness in Abe, and then turn our attention to the temptation of regression. Finally we will attempt to analyze the relation in his works of the ideal of authenticity to the conflict of fear and desire.

The defeat of the intellect and the superior might of the system

In Abe, as in Benjamin, the function of the intellect is to prevent shock. In Abe, however, the storylines usually depict an escalation of crisis which ends in the defeat of the intellect. The crisis is often triggered by an initial shock, like for example in *Secret Rendezvous* (1977, *Mikkai*), a work which is set in motion by the kidnapping of the protagonist's wife one morning by a hospital van. The scene is described like this:

It was an utter bolt from the blue. Until the siren woke them up in surprise, they had both been sound asleep, and so they were caught completely unprepared. Indeed, his wife herself, the one in question, had never complained of a single symptom. But the two men who carried in the stretcher were gruff, perhaps from lack of sleep, and paid no attention: of course she wasn't ready, they said: this was an emergency, wasn't it? (Abe 1981a:8)

"In a world of increasingly dizzying change", Napier comments this scene, "no one is ever really ready for whatever crisis is about to confront them" (Napier 1996:73). Just like in Benjamin, then, the sensation of shock comes forward as a fundamental characteristic of modernity.

Fearful of shock, the protagonists in Abe's fiction maintain a state of constant and unrelieved intellectual alert, yet their intellectual efforts are singularly incapable of helping them. To the private investigator of *The Ruined Map* the numberless hypotheses which he constructs, are like a "like a broken compass", pointing "now in one direction, now in another." (Abe 1993:103). The powerlessness of the intellect is underscored by that of "information", a category which, just like in Benjamin, plays a central role in the writings of Abe as one would expect from his depiction of protagonists who seem to rely

almost exclusively on their heightened consciousness. Look at the following passage, in which the narrator of *The Boxman* (1973, *Hako otoko*) relates his addiction to news reports:

I couldn't stand being without fresh news reports for a second. The situations of battlefields change every minute. Filmstars get married and divorced... The globe might change form as soon as you turn away your eye, if only for a second. I had seven different dailies. I had two TVs and three radios in my room. (Abe 1982:92)

Information is supposedly what the intellect needs to know in order to function. Yet the boxman's attempt to keep up with it is so exaggerated that there is no time left over for this own life. Also, hardly any piece of information which Abe's protagonists manage to gather is of the slightest use. Thus the private eye in *The Ruined Map* is an expert in memorizing irrelevant details. Routine observations like "a very ordinary coffee house; capacity about eighteen seats" or "to the right was a small bench", delivered in a laconic matter-of-fact manner, acquire a comical character because of their total irrelevance.

As one would expect from the account of the uselessness of information, the protagonists who rely on it are headed for disaster. One of the most instructive and humorous accounts of the shortcomings of information is found in *Secret Rendezvous*. As its protagonist goes to the hospital in quest of his wife, he finds himself completely lost in a system so complex and so bizarre — its function seems to consist mainly in obscure sexual experiments — that his own intellectual efforts fail to help him the slightest. He discovers that "hundreds, perhaps thousands of microphones" are hidden throughout the hospital, recording his and everyone else's words and movements. When he is let into the playback room and attempts to hear his wife's voice on the tapes, he finds that there are too many conversations and the mass of information he needs to master is simply too great. Here we see that cause of the defeat of the self and of the intellect. It is not that the intellect in itself is self-defeating, it is only by absurdly being pitted against the superior and superhuman intellect of the system itself, Simmel's "objective culture", that it is bound to be defeated. It is in a world in which the intellect reigns supreme, the reified world of modernity, that the subject's own individual intellect must prove insufficient. The final image of this novel — in which the protagonist faces death of starvation and fatigue locked up in the vast underground labyrinth of the hospital — is one of such unrelieved horror, that it stands as one of the most vivid depictions of the triumph of madness to be found in the output of Abe. Gone is the soothing calm of spleen or *Blasiertheit*. The fundamental movement of the novel is thus not the pacification of shock but its escalation and final victory.

In other novels too, we find the theme of the defeat of the intellect and the superior might of the system against the individual. Thus the private detective of *The Ruined Map* is ultimately powerless against the immense and mysterious "bounded infinity" of the city, in which he slowly but irresistibly loses his grip of his own memories and his own identity, identifying with the man he is

searching for. A similar tendency is at work in *The Woman of the Dunes*. Here the role of the city is taken over by the rural dystopia of the sand village and by the mysterious sandwoman. At the same time as the entrapped protagonist desperately constructs one escape plan after the other, he feels how the sand slowly undermines his identity. In the end, he learns to accept life in the sand village. Even more striking is the defeat depicted in *Dendrocacalia* (1949, "Dendorokakaria"), where the impulse of the protagonist to turn himself into a plant finally turns out to be irresistible, despite his desperate efforts to suppress it. The defeat of the individual at the hands of the system is also the theme of the SF novel *Inter Ice Age 4* (1958, *Dai yon kanpyôki*), in which the protagonist is defeated by a ruthless group of scientist making use of a super-computer he has constructed himself.

The temptation of regression

Whenever I look at small things, I think: I am alive. Raindrops... Leather gloves shrunk from being wet... Whenever I see things that are too big, I want to die. Things like the legislative assembly or a map of the world...
û Abe Kôbô (1982:165)

While the abovementioned works û *Secret Rendezvous*, *The Ruined Map*, *The Woman of the Dunes*, *Dendrocacalia* and *Inter Ice Age 4* û all share the theme of the defeat of the intellect, the ways they portray the character of the force to which it succumbs are as different as the colors of a spectrum. It is not always the case that the defeat is experienced in a purely negative and destructive fashion. Rather, they line up on a continuum, from *Secret Rendezvous* û which ends in unmitigated horror û to *Dendrocacalia* û which ends with the tired protagonist finding a kind of relief by finally yielding to the desire of regression.

The most obvious treatment of regression is found in *Dendrocacalia*. Here the protagonist's face has a tendency to come loose and reverse itself, something which turns him into a plant. Each time this happens, he has to use his hands to put the face back in order to stop the metamorphosis from taking place:

It appeared that his face wanted to reverse itself. Apparently it felt more natural that way. Trembling all over, he pressed both hands to his face, trying to steady it. It twisted and squirmed like a live fish, doing its best to slip out of his grasp. He was tempted to rip the damn thing off and throw it away once and for all... Why not be a vegetable, indeed! (Abe 1992:51)

The story is about how he finally resigns and lets himself be transformed. Benjamin, as we recall, had recourse to Freud in theorizing the relationship between shock and consciousness. We now find that we may expand the framework laid down by Benjamin by returning to Freud again and especially to

the "death instinct". What lends the story its credibility is the desire to "return to the quiescence of the inorganic world", or to sink back into an "inanimate state", which is how Freud defined this instinct (Freud 1991a:336). According to Freud then, the threats to the "protective shield" of consciousness, or to the integrity of the subject, were not located solely in the realm of external stimuli, but also had a source inside the unconscious itself. This is the instinct that makes regression a temptation, rather than something that is induced only from the outside.

In Abe this instinct triumphs so easily because the ground is well prepared. It is the longing to escape from the losing battle against the superior might of shock which lends it power. Again, it is in the discrepancy of strength between the individual and the superhuman force of the system that we catch a glimpse to the social background to the increased susceptibility to intellectual regression. In his vision of modernity Abe may be somewhat closer to Adorno than to Benjamin, for whom the problem of ego-weakness, the fragility of intellectual integrity and the absorption of the individual by the collective with the accompanying *Ende des Individuums* was never the burning issue that it was for Adorno. In late capitalism, Adorno claims, individuals must identify with the system in order to survive. The one who fails to adopt becomes an outsider who brings on himself the wrath of the collective. But the nervous adaptability to power is mixed with a restless longing "doing things and going places" to escape it.

The unconscious innervations which, beyond thought processes, attune individual existence to historical rhythms, sense the approaching collectivization of the world. Yet since integral society does not so much take up individuals positively within itself as crush them to an amorphous and malleable mass, each individual dreads the process of absorption, which is felt as inevitable. Doing things and going places is an attempt by the sensorium to set up a kind of counter-irritant against a threatening collectivization [...] Pseudo-activity is an insurance, the expression of readiness for self-surrender, in which one senses the only guarantee of self-preservation. Security is glimpsed only in the utmost insecurity. It is seen as a license for flight that will take one somewhere else with the utmost speed. In the fanatical love of cars the feeling of physical homelessness plays a part. (Adorno 1978:139)

This social environment is the ferment of the increased pull of the temptation of regression, a temptation in which the twin elements of dread and enjoyment are mixed. For Adorno then, just as for Freud, the defeat of the intellect is not only dreaded, but also something the subject itself might desire. As we shall see, this ambivalence is mirrored in the attitude to modernity and to women in Abe's fiction.

Modernity then is not only the rule of the intellect, but also fatigue. It is the denial of rest; it is that which is too big, too complex. Hence the temptation to retreat into a sheltered, smaller, simpler world. Abe once wrote that when he saw big things he wanted to die. This yearning to retreat is immensely perverse, because it is accompanied by the awareness that it is forbidden. It is what Žižek

calls an obscene enjoyment or jouissance, the pleasure of self-destruction. It arises in a modernity that is so tensely suspended between the extremes of shock and reified consciousness that the mind wears itself out. It yearns for a forbidden rest, a rest that is denied it in the societies of shock-modernity.

When the detective's ex-wife in *The Ruined Map* points out to him that he too has run away, and not only the man he is hunting, he asks her from what from her?

‘Certainly not from me,’ she said, shaking her head vigorously. ‘From life, from the endless competing and dickering, the tightrope walking, the scramble for a life buoy. It’s true, isn’t it? In the final analysis, I was merely an excuse.’ (Abe 1993:172).

At another point he drives his car out to freeway for no reason at all, secretly hoping for the journey to go on forever. "When you are driving", he explains, "you never want to think of stopping... But when it's over, you shudder at a state like that, with no end." (ibid 190). The same mentality is referred to again later outside a pinball arcade. "The mental attitude of someone playing pinball", he muses, "is the same as that of a person who disappears" (ibid 225). The same mental attitude is that to which he himself finally succumbs. Unlike the nightmarish hospital of *Secret Rendezvous*, the city in which he finally loses himself has the quiet sweetness of a refuge. The city, to be sure, is the agent which dissolves his identity. As in *Dendrocacalia*, the protagonist is finally "transformed", but not through shock — rather through a process which in tenderness is comparable to that of falling asleep. *The Ruined Map* foreshadows the "naturalization" of the city, a process whereby the city takes on the gentle and enchanted guise of archaic nature.

The city — a bounded infinity. A labyrinth where you are never lost. Your private map where every block bears exactly the same number.

Even if you lose your way, you cannot go wrong. (Abe 1993:3)

Here the city is both a hostile and a friendly entity, in which the individual is both absorbed and salvaged, in which — as in a dream — all is contingent yet necessary. The story, in fact, ends with a smile: the amnesiac protagonist sets out to find a new world which he himself has chosen.

Surrender as the beginning of authenticity — this is a theme immediately recognizable from *The Woman of the Dunes*. This relatively early novel, however, at the same time seems to break the pattern, ending on an unusually sunny note, even offering itself up as an account of possible redemption. For the entrapped Niki Junpei the desire which leads to regression has less to do with the death instinct than with Eros. His imprisonment in the sand village is accompanied by the arousal of libido. The fundamental movement of the narrative is that of the awakening of life, the recovery from the nightmare. As Kimball points out, the protagonist's encounter with sand is a learning process (Kimball 1973:123). It is a process whereby his conventional identity is broken down and with it his acute time-consciousness — Benjamin's "empty and

homogeneous time" and his reliance on the intellect. In its optimism that authentic life is still possible, this novel lacks the dark negativism of Abe's later works. Yet even so it is too simplistic to see it as a straightforward story of the triumph of the subject. It would be an even worse mistake to read it as an unqualified rejection of modern rationality and a celebration of the return to nature. The character of the sandwoman and of the sand community to which she belongs exerts its fascination exactly because of her ambivalence. We will shortly return to this ambivalence. Suffice it here to state, that the sand village is also a rural dystopia, cruel and totalitarian, and that the protagonist's decision to stay on is highly ambivalent.

What explains these different outcomes of the defeat of the intellect? We will now have a closer look at this problem. Its key lies in the way Abe depicts relationships between man and woman in modernity.

Fear and desire, once again

We have already seen how Abe differs from Benjamin and Kawabata by his keener awareness of the smallness and frailty of the subject in relation to the world. Another difference lies in the way he depicts relationships between the sexes. In the fiction of Kawabata the presence of reified relations is felt, for sure, but primarily in an abstract and indirect way covered behind the veil of elegy, as it were. The women loved by Kawabata's protagonists, like Komako or Fumiko, are hardly ever felt to be enemies. If anything, they are characterized by defenselessness a trait which undoubtedly contributes to the cruelty and sadism of the male heroes. No matter how much pain men inflict on their female victims, they rest assured in their knowledge that they will continue to be loved. For these male heroes woman is not yet part of the hostile world of enemies, which we see in Abe. As we will see in the next chapter, women in the contemporary fiction of Murakami Haruki are usually also portrayed as friendly and gentle. Here, however, the cause is quite different from in Kawabata. It seems to lie in the narcissism of the male heroes, who secure in their own self-contained, inward kingdoms become almost invulnerable to external shocks. In neither Kawabata nor Murakami then, although for different reasons, are women depicted as sources of shock or pain. Not so with Abe. If we are to search for a parallel in the works discussed so far, we would have to return to Baudelaire's *A une passante*. As we remember, Benjamin remarks about this sonnet that in it, shock coincides with the moment of enchantment (Benjamin 1997:46). Just as this sonnet brings together shock and enchantment, so the fiction of Abe usually depicts women with a mixture of intense fear and equally intense desire. Consider for example "the boxman's" desire to "snatch" at the nurse, a desire in which his loneliness and feelings of inferiority also shine through. The cardboard box which covers him can easily be interpreted as the "protective shield" of the intellect, a shell which isolates at the same time as it protects.⁷² His libido is still directed outwards, however, to a woman whom he at the same time distrusts as a potential enemy. His suffering stems from the

fact that love is stigmatized without any corresponding interiorization of his libido. The conflict then, is one between fear and desire, a conflict which here becomes a conflict between personal identity and inner nature. While identity is necessary in world of enemies, love would require the trust and vulnerability of nature.

"Auratic" women do appear in Abe's such as the sandwoman in *The Woman of the Dunes*, the wife in *The Face of Another* (1964, *Tanin no kao*) or the woman living in the room with the yellow curtains in *The Ruined Map*. In the latter novel, the narrator is a private eye who is hired by the woman to find her missing husband. After taking leave of her he stands below her apartment, where the husband had last been seen, gazing up at the yellow curtains.

Something I wanted to see was already visible. I would continue to concentrate on the single point I could see. That faint rectangle of light. the lemon-yellow window. the window of the room I had taken leave of only a moment ago. The lemon-yellow curtains mocked me derisively - I who was frozen in the dark, who, for her sake, resolutely held in check the invasion of darkness. (Abe 1993:31)

The lemon-yellow room is endowed with a sexual aura. As Maeda Ai remarks, the yellow curtain is a symbol of sexual desire. Modern literature, he continues, often vacillates between two poles - on the one hand, transparent "landscapes" opened up by sight and ruled by reason, and, on the other, tactile and opaque "erotic spaces" that are permeated by desire. Thus the sandwoman's dwelling in *The Woman of the Dunes* provides an erotic space for the protagonist in the midst of the sand landscape, which is a metaphor of the desolate city world. Similarly, in *The Face of Another*, the masked scientist's obsession with returning home to seduce his wife while effectively endows her with an aura of unattainability. The function of these women, Maeda remarks, is that of a sacred miko (or shaman) who in her room exorcises the evil of alienation (Maeda 1989:330ff). In each of these cases the erotic space of the room would seem to function like what Benjamin and Adorno called the bourgeois domestic interior of the 19th century - auratic spaces defining themselves against the "outside" and functioning as "romantic islands" offering shelter from reification.

However, Abe's protagonists are usually prevented from entering these rooms by their fear and suspiciousness. To live in a modern world is to live in a world of enemies. In such a world, it is impossible to love without pain. As Napier observes about the fiction of Abe, "encounters between male and female are always disastrous and only lead to the final encounter, with death" (Napier 1996:75). To survive in this hell, the protagonists have to don the armor of the intellect. But thanks to this intellectualization, their desire is curiously transformed and objectified. This results in the reified, chilly character of sexuality which is so strikingly evident, for example in the bizarre sexual experiments in the hospital in *Secret Rendezvous*. The problematization of how desire is deformed through hostility and fear is even more explicit in *The Face of Another*, in which the protagonist, reflecting on a sexual episode with an

unknown woman in a crowded train, muses that the intellect necessarily transforms eroticism into an "impersonal" relation between two "enemies".

As long as the definition of "other people" is confined to abstract relationships, those people are merely something in abstract opposition, one against others, enemies; and their sexual opposition is, in short, the impersonal sexual act...Anyway, today the line of demarcation between enemy and fellow man, which in other times was easily and clearly distinguishable, has become blurred. When you get on a street-car, you have innumerable enemies around you rather than fellow men... In such circumstances, enemy encirclement becomes a custom to which we are already inured, and "fellow man" becomes as inconspicuous as a needle in a desert. We have coined concepts of succor, such as "All men are brothers", but where is such a vast, imaginary repository of "brothers"? Wouldn't it be more logical to reconcile oneself to the fact that others are enemies and abandon such highflown, misplaced hopes? Wouldn't it be safer to hurry up and produce some antibody for loneliness? And why shouldn't we men, surfeited with loneliness, become involved in impersonal eroticism even with our wives, not to mention other women? (Abe 1998:146f)

In *The Face of Another* the hero's inability to put aside his "protective shield" which finds concrete expression in the mask by which he conceals his identity brings about the breakup of the relationship between him and his wife. *The Ruined Map* similarly ends on a note of desolation as the amnesiac protagonist sets out to start a new life by himself. By the time Abe began to write this novel, Maeda writes, "he had sharply realized that escaping to the erotic space was nothing but losing oneself in a false community." (Maeda 1989:332). The one possible exception to this pattern seems to be the earliest of the three novels, *The Woman of the Dunes*, which seemingly ends "happily" with the protagonist's "authentic" decision to stay with the sandwoman.⁷³ Let us have a closer look at this apparent solution.

The antinomies of authenticity

It is sometimes asserted that Abe opposes the modern rule of the intellect with a model of the good life based on the notion of "authenticity".⁷⁴ Let us have a closer look at this hypothesis. The novel in which it seems to have the greatest measure of truth is *The Woman of the Dunes*. Here again we encounter the central theme of the conflict between fear and desire. The protagonist, Niki Junpei, who is caught in the sand-village and forced to share a house with a woman, initially clings to his conventional (and illusory) identity as a schoolteacher and husband, and sees nothing but dangers in the woman's approach. There is a scene in which he is seized by fear at her "crouching position", exactly because he is aroused by it. Might she not be part of some criminal conspiracy to trap him?

He couldn't relax his guard. Her charms were like some meat-eating plant, purposely equipped with the smell of sweet honey. First she would sow the seeds of scandal by

bringing him to an act of passion, and then the chains of blackmail would bind him hand and foot. (Abe 1981b:87)

In this rule of the protective shield, with its concomitant distortion of desire through fear, we have the state of inauthenticity. With time, however, and after numerous futile attempts to escape, Niki Junpei's resistance breaks down and he learns to affirm his desire for the woman. In the end he opts for a new life with her and with their child, choosing to stay on voluntarily in the sand village despite being offered the opportunity to escape. Does this mean that Abe believes in the possibility of escaping the nightmare of modernity, with its hellish mixture of fear and desire, into the "erotic space"? Does the "authentic" choice break the evil spell and open up a space in which love without shock is possible?

We have described "authenticity" as an attempt to reconcile the ideals of personal identity and inner nature.⁷⁵ It is also an attempt to overcome the conflict between fear and desire. While fear contributes to the strengthening of identity — to the construction of ever stronger "protective shields" — desire gives rise to a yearning to return to nature. Niki Junpei's "authenticity" would consist in his ability, through a "free choice", to affirm his desire for the feared sandwoman without having to sacrifice his self-integrity. The question remains, however, if this free choice implies any resolution of the conflict between fear and desire. What fascinates in Abe's portrait of the woman is not that she offers a refuge from the conflict, but that she retains her ambiguity throughout — that she, so to speak, essentially inspires fear as well as desire. While offering the protagonist a return to long-lost nature, she is also an enemy threatening his identity, an agent of the system which seeks to entrap him. So is the woman in the room with the yellow curtains in *The Ruined Map*. Both women appear in a kind of double-exposure: being avatars of a superhumanly powerful social system — the sand village or the big city — while simultaneously offering rest from this system by enticing the protagonists into the "erotic space" of their rooms. If one is to seek an explanation for the ambiguous feelings which seize the reader at the end of *The Woman of the Dunes* — a mixture of relief and suffocation — then this is it. Niki Junpei's "authentic" choice does not resolve, but simply reproduces the tension that is to be found also in the concepts of authenticity in Heidegger and Sartre, where freedom is affirmed as "fate", as a "burden".⁷⁶ The "authentic" shouldering of one's responsibilities, portrayed as a release of one's innermost energies, is also a submission to the forces that be. The subject's freedom, in other words, tends to be equated with the victory of the forces that crushes it.

To be sure, *The Woman of the Dunes* does end on a relatively hopeful note. It seems likely, however, that the "nihilism" (Napier 1996:198-206) of Abe's later works reflects a growing disillusionment with the ideal of authenticity. This process can be traced in his portrayals of women. To be sure, enigmatic females similar to the sandwoman continue to appear in his work, such as the woman with the yellow curtains in *The Ruined Map*. Badly beaten, the hero

seeks help at the woman's apartment. While she nurses him, he thinks: "For whom does it beat. this enormous heart of the city that goes on pulsating, not knowing for whom?" (Abe 1993:270). To his feverish eye the woman and the city become identical. Here, however, the perversity of the "double-exposure" through which the image of the city is superimposed on that of the woman is much more conspicuous. The city is humanized, but through the same operation the woman is made to appear uncanny, a mere figura of the inhumanity of the city. As Maeda points out, by the time of this novel Abe had realized that the "erotic space" provided by the woman in her room could only offer a "false community". To stay with her would reproduce the tension between fear and desire rather than overcoming it. Near the end, the amnesiac protagonist escapes. *The Ruined Map* ends in radical loneliness, in contrast to the submission to the community of the sand village in *The Woman of the Dunes*.

The portrayal of women in Abe's later works also reflects the tendency for the ideal of authenticity to fall apart in the two models of personal identity and inner nature. In these works, the sandwoman, so to speak, tends to be replaced by two less complex kinds of females. On the one hand, there is the malevolent, hostile female, whose sole intention is to harm the protagonist. In this group we find, for example, the sexy secretary in *Secret Rendezvous*, who is born from a testtube and lacks all human emotions, and who becomes a kind of emblematic figure of the artificiality and reified character of modern life. On the other hand, there are female characters who appear to be symbols of nature and utopian counterimages to modernity. Here we find the thirteen year old nymphomaniac in the same novel whose bones are gradually liquefying and the single character in *Secret Rendezvous* who approaches the protagonist with complete and naive trust. The triumph of the secretary and the cruel fate of the girl at the end of *Secret Rendezvous* fit in well with the reading of it as a story of the triumph of shock. Incidentally, the two kinds of females correspond almost exactly to Ichirô's wife and the insane woman in Misawa's story in Sôseki's *Wayfarer*. Just as Sôseki never found any convincing solution to the dilemma of hell, so Abe seems to suggest that authenticity is no cure for it either.

The development of Abe's portrayal of women thus demonstrates the fragility of the ideal of authenticity. Unable to reconcile the opposed currents of fear and desire, it tends to disintegrate and take its center around either of the two. This tendency can also be seen if we compare Abe with Heidegger. In Heidegger, there is a tendency to put priority on the need for self-preservation, even at the cost of suppressing desire. Abe, by contrast, tends towards an affirmation of desire even in the face of having to accept shock and final defeat. This tendency becomes even stronger in later novels, in which authenticity finally becomes little more than the subject's full recognition of the catastrophe that is about to befall him. Thus the horror of the last pages of *Secret Rendezvous*, in which Abe's final version of authenticity is captured. Since the ideal puts greater emphasis on affirmation of desire than on self-preservation, it tends to collapse into the paradigm of inner nature. But this

nature is powerless to resist the predominance of shock and the forces of atomization in modern society. Desire offers no way of mitigating the shock to which it exposes itself. After the failure of authenticity to redeem its promises, nothing remains then but the stale and unbridgeable opposition between two sexes, driven towards each other by desire but ending up hurting each other with shocks.

chapter 3

Montages

In this chapter I will attempt a non-theoretical visualization of certain aspects of naturalization through the use of "primal scenes". Some of these images — such as the chance encounter in Baudelaire — have served as "exemplary" instances of shock-modernity since they succinctly present the experience that was given theoretical formulation by Benjamin, Simmel and other classical theorists. Many images in contemporary literature seem to be premised on another experience. They subtly interrupt and subvert the classical accounts of modernity. In order to demonstrate the contrast as clearly as possible, we will juxtapose situations that were "exemplary" for shock-modernity to naturalized settings that are in other respects as similar as possible. The theoretization of the differences will be followed up the next chapter.

First of all, however, I will begin with a discussion stressing a certain aspect that many writers in naturalized modernity share with those of shock-modernity: the vision of society as an overpoweringly powerful system. Then follow four discussions stressing differences: two short discussions of electric light and trains, followed by two longer discussions that contrast the city and the passer-by in Murakami Haruki to our previous discussions of Baudelaire's *A une passante*.

The system

We have seen that the visions of an increasingly total integration of the system, which loom large in Adorno and many other writers and thinkers of shock-modernity, have been theoretically articulated in conceptions of oppressive social structures such as "objective culture", "second nature" and so on. Similar visions appear in writers of naturalized modernity. The reasons why I take up this point for discussion here are two. Firstly, it will demonstrate that naturalization does not necessarily imply any change of the factual content of the representation of society. The decisive change is not, as we will see, that society ceases to be perceived as a reifying system, but that this system ceases to be shocking. The second reason is that it will give us a convenient opportunity to introduce Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû, the two writers

that will stand at the center of our later discussion of strategies in naturalized modernity.

To begin with, let us have a closer look at the characteristics of the modern society which Murakami Haruki depicts. Murakami, born 1949, belongs to the generation of Japanese who grew up during the ideologically turbulent 60's, and the experience of the defeat of the radical political movements epitomized in the student movement Zenkyôto has left an indelible mark on his writings.⁷⁷ Most of his stories are set in the decades following this defeat, the decades of lost idealism and accommodation to the establishment. Most of his protagonists, as Jay Rubin writes, "are men stuck in boring, mundane jobs — ad copy writers and the like, people who have lost their sixties idealism and accommodated themselves to the Establishment" (Rubin 1999:184). In their wish to be left alone, they may not believe in the system, but they nevertheless accept it. The narrator of *Dance Dance Dance* (1988, *Dansu dansu dansu*), for example, readily agrees that the articles he writes as a freelance journalist are worthless. But, he explains, if he didn't write them the magazine would ask someone else. "It's like collecting garbage or shoveling snow. Someone has to do it" (Murakami Haruki 1991a: 29). Although this "cultural snow-shoveling" is a waste of his life as well as of paper, he can't complain.

We are living in advanced capitalist society. Here waste is the highest of all virtues. Politicians call it the sophistication of domestic demand. I call it meaningless waste. It depends on your way of thinking. Anyway, aside from such differences in thinking, this is the society where we're living. If you don't like it, there's nothing to do but to go to Bangladesh or Sudan.

I didn't particularly feel like going to Bangladesh or Sudan.

So I kept on working without complaint. (ibid 41).

As the metaphor of "cultural snow-shoveling" demonstrates, the narrator submits to system-imperatives as casually as if they were dictates of nature. Indeed, Murakami's novels offer us very little of the glorification of rebellion which we find in, say, *Ōe Kenzaburô*. The attitude in Murakami's early works of rejecting political involvement has led to him being criticized for escapism by Ōe, Karatani Kôjin and other prominent intellectual figures (Karatani 1995:89-135, Miyoshi 1991:235, Ōe 1989:234).

Nevertheless, Murakami Haruki clearly shares many of the underlying values of the activists of the 60's. His deepest sympathy goes to the untrendy outsider, while evil is consistently associated with careerism and the pursuit of power. Behind his protagonists' pet expressions "Maybe so" or "I don't know", seemingly expressing nonchalance or indifference, one senses a deep mistrust against the given state of things. The attitude of submitting to the "system" is in fact grimly stoic and has very little to do with any actual enjoyment of it. Their distrust, however, is directed towards many of the variants of active confrontation as well. "I didn't think so then, but the world was still simple in 1969. In some cases, it was enough to throw stones at the riot police for people

to achieve self-expression. In its own way, it was a good time." In today's "advanced capitalist society" even opposition is recuperated into the system: "A net has been stretched from one corner of society to the other. Outside the net there is another net. We can't go anywhere. If we throw a stone it's deflected and bounces back." (ibid 114). In Murakami's world there is no simple way to disentangle oneself and negate the system, no trustworthy point of exteriority on which to lean. What is left is, perhaps, merely the protagonists' awareness that the world in which they are taking part is corrupt and fallen. From his springs their misery: "The shadow of decay and disintegration lurked everywhere, and I was part of it. Like a shadow burned into a wall" (ibid 1999:71). It is a situation in which the straightforward method of externally applied criticism has become powerless, since the protagonists themselves are enmeshed in and part of the decay and fallenness of the world.

Throughout Murakami Haruki's writings one finds the vision of the system as an encompassing whole — mostly composed of big companies, shady right-wing organizations and criminal syndicates — in which all opposition is recuperated and co-opted. Criminality and evil is not an aberration, but part of its logic. "This is not even corruption. It's the system", the narrator sighs in *Dance dance dance* (ibid 1991a: 113). The "man in black" in *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982, *Hitsuji o meguru bōken*) describes the shadowy syndicate headed by the right-wing "boss" in the following way:

We built a kingdom.. A powerful underground kingdom. We pulled everything into the picture. Politics, finance, mass communication, the bureaucracy, culture, all sorts of things you would never dream of. We even submitted elements that were hostile to us. From the establishment to the anti-establishment, everything. Very few of them even noticed they had been co-opted. (Murakami Haruki 1985a:187; quoted in Strecher 1998:358)

Strecher has observed that this syndicate — being an organization which "is neither government, business, industry, nor media, yet which somehow holds all of these powers at its disposal" — is "a manifestation of the postmodern State: hidden, elusive, and unaccountable". Indeed Murakami portrays it as the very "adversary State against which his generation battled in the 1960s" which "is now more powerful, and, indeed, more deadly, than ever" (Strecher 1998:358, 361). The picture of society as a total system is perhaps carried farthest in *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1985, *Sekai no owari to hâdoboירוdo wandârando*), in which Japan is dominated by two giant conglomerates known as the System and the Factory. While perpetually battling each other in a war of information, the two conglomerates are also suggested to be "two sides of the same coin" and maybe even run by the same persons (Murakami Haruki 1993:299). The difficulty of finding an external standpoint from which to criticize the system is well captured in the following dialogue from *Hardboiled Wonderland* in which the narrator is warned by his alter ego, the "shadow", about the "Town" in which he is living.

"I repeat what I said at the very beginning: this place is wrong. I know it. More than ever. The problem is, the Town is perfectly wrong. Every last thing is skewed, so that the total distortion is seamless. It's a whole. Like this " .

My shadow draws a circle on the ground with his boot.

"The Town is sealed," he states, "like this. That's why the longer you stay in here, the more you get to thinking that things are normal. You begin to doubt your judgment. You get what I'm saying?" (ibid 247f)

Since the inhabitants of the "Town" are unable to know or imagine its outside, their awareness of being imprisoned is weak. Despite its seeming perfection, however, it is still sensed to be somehow "unnatural and wrong". Hatanaka Yoshiki has used the theological expression "fallen world" to describe this world - despite containing no truth, its falseness can only be vaguely sensed, not clearly realized (Hatanaka 1985:304f).

Another view often found in Murakami Haruki is that what holds the system together is the pursuit of power and material wealth, in return for which people are expected to sacrifice their ideals, their integrity and individuality. "In every novel he writes", Strecher points out, "a world of perfect contentment is offered to the protagonist [...] in exchange for his individuality" (Strecher 1999:279). Thus the "man in black" in *A Wild Sheep Chase* threatens the protagonist that he can either play along with the syndicate, ensuring the success of his advertisement firm, or he can resist and simply disappear. The supreme embodiment of this system is, of course, the mysterious Sheep in the same novel - a supernatural evil force that inhabits human beings like a parasite and eliminates the contents of their minds. In return it rewards them for their cooperation with material success, power and all the beauty of the world, but once it no longer needs them for its sinister purposes it abandons them as empty wrecks.

A close equivalent to the rewards offered by the Sheep/system can be found in theology - in Satan's temptation of Christ. As is well known René Girard interprets human society as a "Satan's order", based on an endless cycle of scapegoating and its covering up by culture (Girard 1989:161-66). If Christ accepts the worldly glories and riches offered to him by Satan - "the Prince and principle of this world" - he too will "inherit the lie" that covers up the foundational murder:

Satan is absolutely identified with the circular mechanisms of violence, with man's imprisonment in cultural or philosophical systems that maintain his modus vivendi with violence. This is why he promises Jesus domination provided that Jesus will worship him. (Girard 1989:162)

This satanic order corresponds to what Murakami portrays as the reality of contemporary Japan. The similarities, incidentally, do not stop here. Just as Jesus, according to Girard, debunked the lie on which society was founded by withstanding Satan, the protagonist's friend Rat finally stops the Sheep in Murakami's novel by sacrificing himself. The reason he managed to maintain

his integrity and withstand the Sheep's offer of power was his love of weakness. As he explains to the protagonist, he preferred his integrity to the dazzling reward he was offered: "I like my weakness. And my pain and suffering. The light of summer and the scent of the breeze and the sound of cicadas. I can't help it, but that's the kind of things I like" (Murakami Haruki 1985b: 204). Evil, then, resides in the pursuit of power and in siding with power. But there is a way out — to choose the way of a dropout, refusing Satan's reward and accepting failure — like Rat. This, however, implies a rejection of power and material wealth, a rejection which often endangers the very physical survival of the protagonists.

Let us now introduce Murakami Ryû (1952-), who is the more overtly "rebellious" of the two and indeed took the initiative in a spectacular barricading of his high-school in 1969. He likes to discuss controversial social issues of current interest: assisted dating (*enjo kôsai*), fascism etc. However, rather than a critique of power as in Murakami Haruki, he tends towards a critique of nivellation, of the lack of individualism and originality. Where Murakami Haruki likes to call himself "ordinary" (*futsû*), Murakami Ryû is at pains to distance himself from all that is ordinary. Nevertheless, in his work too we find the conception of a total system. Society, he has his heroes say, is a "prison" in which the prison-walls are cleverly hidden behind enjoyments and consumer-articles (Murakami Ryû 1998:317f) and a "circle" of "rotten" things encompassing the entire country (ibid 1995:81f).

The vision of society as a "false whole" or "perfectly false" world appears already in his debut novel *Almost Transparent Blue* (1976, *Kagirinaku tômei ni chikai burû*). Near the end, the narrator has an apocalyptic hallucination. Terrified, he yells to his girlfriend that he sees a black bird flying outside the window, "the bird that's destroyed my city":

Lilly, that's the bird, look hard, that town is the bird, that's not a town or anything, there're no people or anything living in it, that's the bird, don't you see? Don't you really see? When that guy yelled at the missiles to blow up in the desert, he was trying to kill the bird. We've got to kill the bird, if it's not killed I won't understand anything anymore, the bird's in the way, it's hiding what I want to see. I'll kill the bird, Lilly, if I don't kill it I'll be killed. (Murakami Ryû 1981:123).

Later, at the hospital, he pictures himself as swallowed up by the bird. The bird's transformations are interesting. Not only does it destroy the narrator's beautiful fantasy city with its palaces and people, it itself becomes the city, the real city of Tokyo. It becomes a metaphor of everything which distinguishes Tokyo from the ideal city, of the evil which makes Tokyo into a perverted and hellish mirror-image of the ideal city. "It blows your mind, doesn't it, a city? You feel yourself — your body, your mind — being worn down, the life being sapped out of you by the energy of the place", as a character in another novel describes it (ibid 1998:80). Present-day Tokyo is a false city, which has usurped the place of the true one. Perhaps the glass through which the narrator sees the

world reflected at the end can be said to signify the difference between these two cities — in which case it would represent what according to Adorno was the difference between this world and the reconciled one. "In the right condition, everything would — as in the Jewish Theologumenon — only be slightly different from how it is, but not the slightest could be imagined as it would be then" (Adorno 1994:294).

As a "false whole" the bird (=Tokyo) seems to be similar to the "perfectly wrong" worlds in Murakami Haruki's fiction. In both of the two Murakamis one finds the notion of society as a "fallen world": an abominable order screening out the sense of an outside to the system, yet nevertheless felt to be wrong. Their reactions to it are, however, completely different. Murakami Ryû's strategy — "We've got to kill the bird!" — is realized in *Coinlocker Babies* (1980, *Koinrokkâ beibîzu*) when Kiku and Anemone bring the apocalypse over Tokyo. This is prefigured in an instructive passage in which Kiku is overcome by the sudden hallucination of a city that extends over all of Japan as he sits by the side of his dead foster mother in a hotel room in Tokyo:

Outside, concrete was being pulverized, the street was melting in the sun, the buildings panted audibly — and suddenly Kiku thought he could hear the city calling him. Not this city, not Tokyo exactly, but a vast, empty city that stretched from here to the island he'd come from, a huge, dead metropolis rising up inside his head. The vision lasted only a moment, then settled back into the real Tokyo; but the call went on, Tokyo was calling Kiku and he was listening. "Destroy me!" it was saying. "Smash everything!" Looking down from the window on the people and the cars writhing in the street, Kiku [...] saw his own body as he wanted it: an image of himself razing Tokyo, a visionary Kiku slaughtering every living soul, leveling every last building. He saw the city as a sea of ashes, bloodied children wandering among the few surviving birds and insects and dogs[...] "Kill them! Destroy everything!" The voice came from somewhere down there among the people and the cars, blending with the shrill noise of the city, adding its chant to theirs: "Kill them all! Smash everything! Wipe this cesspool off the face of the earth!" (Murakami Ryû 1998:85)

Here the city literally transforms itself into a totally encompassing system. The emphasis is less on any specific social ill than on the need to reject it as a whole. As a "perfectly wrong" world it can only be defeated through total apocalypse.

In the depression and rage they express, Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû alert us to the sense of claustrophobia and suffocation that naturalized modernity can bring about. But to this we shall return later. Suffice it here to point out that conceptions of society as a false, fallen order are found in shock-modernity as well as naturalized modernity. Let us now have a look at a few small differences.

The naturalization of electric light

In a nostalgic essay from 1933, *In Praise of Shadows* (*In'ei raisan*), Tanizaki Jun'ichirô laments that the introduction of Western technology and in particular the light-bulb has extinguished the beauty and mystique of shadows and darkness that is crucial to the reception and proper aesthetic appreciation of Japanese artworks. The disenchanting effects of technology are expressed in similar vein by Tanizaki's contemporary Ernst Bloch, who fears that the invention of the light-bulb will make ghost stories obsolete. They will die out, since "the dark corners of the staircase and attic, the gloom of night, and all the favorite haunts of ghosts have been dissipated by the electric light" (Bloch 1998:310). This conflict between mystique and modern technology is also expressed in Benjamin when he welcomes the transparency and brightness of glass-architecture because of its hostility to the aura. To Bloch, however, the light-bulb not only breaks a spell, but also a taboo. "To children, the lighting of the streetlamps after sunset appears to be quite uncanny, artificial, and even insolent. The light that penetrates the night û in place of the sun's û is one's own, self-generated in violation of natural law" (ibid 305). To Bloch, artificial light represents a hubris precisely because of its unnaturalness, its transgression of the natural cycle of night and day, and is therefore always accompanied by anxiety.

Things look different in Kanai Mieko's short story "1+1" (1982). Here artificial light is no longer feared as a disruption of nature. It has become a new nature, as cyclical and reassuring as the natural lights of the sun, the moon and the stars. "1+1" opens with the narrators telling that it is the time of the day and the time of the year when the secretary usually turns on the fluorescent light in the office before she leaves (Kanai 1982:286). The narrators make it clear that it is not just natural light that changes with the seasons, but also the artificial lights in the city. The story is full of loving descriptions of various lights and the routines surrounding them.⁷⁸

In this season, after the office girl leaves, we usually work late.

You might think that would have no connection with the season, but nonetheless, when we finish the day's work, get on the train and go home, it suits our taste better if it is already dark outside. In this season, the sky doesn't take on its diluted indigo night color until after 7 o'clock. Lights from the countless windows in the buildings crowding this area and the neon signs flashing off and on like festival fireworks from the tops of the buildings for Instant Curry Mix and cosmetic products and pawnshops, intersection traffic lights, lighting used to illuminate the letter on various billboards, the orange glittering night lighting equipment of the batting center and the rooftop driving range with its green net enclosure, the deep red-dyed large-scale night lighting curving in the shape of a covered bowl in the sky over a faraway amusement park and baseball stadium located on high ground, and of course the counterclockwise and clockwise trains [of the circle line] that get more frequent around that hour turn on their bright inside lights, and all the train-cars pass each other packed tightly with commuters. The long thin lights like movie film shaking and glittering brightly as two trains pass each other go by in violent bursts like an old-fashioned flashlight reflected in the black glass of one row of windows in the building opposite ours where the lights have already gone out, but rather than saying that they "go

by" or "rush by", we would say that they scrape by with a deafening noise, leaving invisible, indefinable wounds. (Kanai 1982:288, translated by Orbaugh 1999:256)

In this passage both natural and man-made elements are described and, significantly, they seem to flow together, indicating that natural and artificial lights no longer stand in opposition to each other. Above all, the various lights of the city seem to give a sense of nature-like and reassuring stability. Indeed, the two narrators (1+1), with their monotonous office work and identical voices, which enable them to finish each others sentences, embody what seems to be a world of limitless identity.

Trains and cars

Going south on a California freeway, Oedipa Mass, the main protagonist of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, becomes exasperated at "this illusion of speed, freedom, wind in your hair, unreeling landscape — it wasn't" (Pynchon 1996:16). This illusion, I suggest, is an illusion of exteriority — an illusion that the car ride would take her outside the circle of the repetitious everyday and provide relief from her boredom. In a sense, this illusion will haunt her through the entire novel, since, as we are given to understand in one of her inner monologues, what she is really after is "a real alternative to the exitlessness, to the absence of surprise to life, that harrows the head of everybody American you know, and you too, sweetie." (ibid 118).

In this sense of "exitlessness" we recognize the semblance of mythic closure we have referred to earlier as an aspect of the view of society as a totally encompassing system. When the leading critic and philosopher Karatani Kôjin criticizes the "discursive space" of contemporary Japan as "filled with complacency and almost totally lacking in exteriority", it is this semblance that he has in mind (Karatani 1989:272).⁷⁹ This lack of exteriority is the philosophical aspect of the waning away of shock. In order to understand Karatani's valorization of exteriority, we may recall how for Benjamin shock was not only something painful but also a liberating rupture that would serve to bring about an "awakening from the 19th century" and an increased attention to the real problems of the present. Exteriority, in other words, is something that disrupts identity-thinking and destabilizes the encompassing whole of the "perfectly wrong" world.

Let us return, not to Oedipa Maas, but to her car. Cars, but also trains, airplanes and motorcycles, have often been viewed as symbols of exteriority, as offering exits from the everyday. As such they have also inspired shock, as can be seen in Tanizaki's early short story "Terror" ("Kyôfu") from 1913. The story is about a neurosis — railroad phobia — but what is significant is that it singles out the disembedding aspects of public transportation as the source of a specifically modern type of Angst, a dread that stems from an all too sudden confrontation with technology.

The moment I board a train, the moment the whistle shrills and the wheels begin to turn and the cars lurch forward — at that moment the pulse in all my arteries speeds up as if stimulated by strong drink, and blood mounts to the top of my head. A cold sweat stands out on my whole body, my arms and legs begin to shake as if from the ague. I feel that unless I am given emergency treatment all my blood — every drop of it — will rush into that small hard round vessel above my neck, till the cranium itself, like a toy balloon blown up beyond its capacity, will have to explode. And yet this train, with its utter indifference and its tremendous energy, hurtles down the track at full speed. "What's the life of one human being?" it seems to ask. Belching sooty smoke like a volcano and roaring along in its bold, heartless way, it dashes forward relentlessly into jetblack tunnels, over long, rickety steel bridges, across rivers, through meadows, around forests. The passengers, too, seem excessively casual as they read, smoke, steal a nap, or even gaze out of the window at the dizzily unreeling scene. (Tanizaki 2000:86)

For Tanizaki the exteriority represented by the train is painfully real and not an illusion, as it is for Oedipa Maas. Here we again confront the notion, common in shock-modernity, of things that move "too fast". Tanizaki's train ride is shocking since it disembods the poor traveler from the context with which he is familiar and brutally takes him outside of it. It moves "too fast" in the sense that he feels prevented from establishing any continuity between that context and the "outside" represented by the train.

Highways too can be felt to sever the traveler from the landscape, as Adorno points out in "Landscape", one of the aphorisms in *Minima moralia*. Here he portrays the American highway as a brutal cut, a wound in the immense landscape to which it lacks all connection. Nostalgically, he contrasts it to the roads of the European countryside that centuries of cultivation have integrated into the landscape through which they lead.

The shortcoming of the American landscape is not so much, as romantic illusion would have it, the absence of historical memories, as that it bears no traces of the human hand. This applies not only to the lack of arable land, the uncultivated woods often no higher than shrub, but above all to the roads. These are always inserted directly in the landscape, and the more impressively smooth and broad they are, the more unrelated and violent their gleaming track appears against its wild, overgrown surroundings. They are expressionless. Just as they know no mark of foot or wheel, no soft paths leading along their edges as a transition to the vegetation, no trails leading off into the valley, so they are without the mild, soothing, un-angular quality of things that have felt the touch of hands or their immediate implements. It is as if no-one had ever passed their hand over the landscape's hair. It is uncomfortable and comfortless. And it is perceived in a corresponding way. For what the hurrying eye has seen merely from a car it cannot retain, and the vanishing landscape leaves no more traces behind than it bears upon itself. (Adorno 1978:48)

In what Adorno terms "expression" and "traces of the human hand" we immediately recognize synonyms of the landscape's "aura" (we may recall how the aura was associated with the traces of past love or worship for Benjamin or the "sheen of antiquity" was traced to centuries of handling and loving care for Tanizaki). The brutality that Adorno senses in the incision affected by the

highway in the landscape, then, corresponds to the aura's disintegration in the experience of shock. The shock stems from the break-up of the old mutual interpenetration and interrelation between traveler and landscape, from the sharp, unmitigated disembedding of the former from the latter.

Both Tanizaki and Adorno take for granted that traveling by foot allows the traveler to interact more or less leisurely with the environment through which he is passing, whereas traveling by train or car introduces a gap between the traveler and the landscape. To travel by modern means of transportation means that sensual interaction with the environment is kept at a minimum, being reduced almost entirely to the visual aspect. To the passengers of a train, as Sakabe Shôko remarks, the landscape turns into a mere panorama, a spectacle of otherness (Sakabe 2000:260). Put differently, the vehicle and the landscape come to represent separate contexts that appear "external" and foreign to each other, each unfolding in its own space and time.

There is, however, a third stage beyond this, in which the passenger is re-embedded in the landscape. This can be seen most clearly in commuting, when the train or car no longer brings the passenger or the driver outside the web of the everyday. Here the landscape outside the window is simply an indifferent background that no longer even offers the spectacle of a panorama. Paradoxically, however, at the same time that the landscape loses even its value as a "view", the passenger is reintegrated in it. The train and the landscape are no longer opposed, but part of the same dreary everyday. Despite its tremendous speed, the train no longer leads out of the landscape, but merely connects identical stations in an immense network of the ever-same. This third stage is not limited to commuting, but also expressed, for example, in Murakami Haruki. Sitting on the Shinkansen bullet train, one of his protagonists thinks:

As the train progressed, the air became enveloped in the vague gray of the rainy season. Below it the same boring landscape as always spread out. No matter how much the train accelerated, it would never take us out of that boredom. On the contrary, the faster it went, the more we would get mired down in it. That's how boredom works. (Murakami Haruki 1985a:136)

Far from shocking the passenger, speed has become the source of boredom. The shocks described by Benjamin are gone, but so are the "exits", the alternatives to the given state of things. Needless to say, this is also the stage experienced by Oedipa Maas in Pynchon's novel.

That trains lose their status as symbols of exteriority is sometimes manifested in the vision of the city as a desolate immensity that extends itself without end. When the narrator of Murakami Haruki's 1983 "Slow Boat to China" ("Chûgoku yuki no surô bôto") gazes out at Tokyo from the window of the Yamanote-line train, one is able to follow with one's own eyes how the city induces the hallucination that it is all that exists and that there are no exits.

Our city. For some reason the sight of it made me depressed. [...] As far as the eye could see there was nothing but buildings and houses jostling against each other. The indistinctly clouded sky. Congested cars spouting out smoke. Cramped, shabby wooden apartments (such as where I live) with old cotton curtains hanging in their windows, and behind them countless people and their doings. The endless oscillation between pride and self-pity. That's the city. [...] We can go anywhere, and yet we're locked up. [...] There's no exit anywhere. (Murakami Haruki 1986b: 49ff)

Similar sentiments can be found in various guises in many contemporary works, such as Pynchon's *V.* (1963) in which Benny Profane finds his pleasure in riding the subway up and down Manhattan, going nowhere. Or Itomo Katsuhiro's bestselling manga *Akira* (1984), whose juvenile bikers roar aimlessly around the devastated roads of Neo-Tokyo at full speed, excelling in motion but trapped in the ever-same. "Technology brings motion but it cannot give these young men direction", as Susan Napier comments (Napier 1996:215). Pynchon's and Itomo's cities are without exits, without outside. Just as in Murakami Haruki's *Tokyo*, people are free to go anywhere, yet locked up. These cities are images of a modernity that, in James Berger's words, appears as nothing but a "complex form of stasis", a modernity in which everything is possible yet in which nothing new or surprising ever happens.

The city

The city in Murakami Haruki can be described as a mute, indifferent background, in which sensations of shock and excitement (or oppression and liberation) have subsided to a hardly noticeable "lack of uniformity", as can be seen for example in the following passage from the short story "The Coastline in May" (1986, "Gogatsu no kaigansen"). The narrator wanders about in the city, thinking:

Non-uniform space.

I never noticed it before, but there is something non-uniform about the air that drifts through a city. Every ten meters its density changes. Pressure, light and temperature change. The sound of my footsteps on the smooth pavements is different too. Even time is as non-uniform as a worn-out engine. (Murakami Haruki 1986a:110f)

In this muted sense of non-uniformity we see the remnants of the sensation of shock. It has literally been naturalized \hat{u} turned into little more than atmospheric undulations. We are close to what Benjamin called the "removal of accents" typical of dreams (Benjamin 1999:881, 909). While for Baudelaire the city was shocking because it was changing faster than the "human heart", in Murakami's protagonists the rhythm of the heart is uncoupled from the bustle of change. They thus offer the picture of stillness in the midst of modernity. What matters no longer changes too fast. Their composure differs from "spleen" in that it arises in an environment in which the incomprehensible is no longer shocking. The city has become an indifferent background, a natural environment, as self-evident as ever any mountains or rivers.

Critics such as Karatani, Katô Norihiro and Maeda Ai and have remarked on the abstract character of Murakami's cities, which appear as mere "landscapes", unrelated to the disengaged, introvert spectator (Karatani 1995, Katô 1997b, Maeda 1989:397). Descriptions and place-names are sparse. The cities are simply the indifferent background or setting for dialogues, which are the main thing. This scarcity of names and descriptions is a sign of naturalization. A city that was perceived in a truly naturalized way could only be represented in passing, in insignificant details of description, "from the corner of the eye" so to speak, as an object more or less of indifference. The only thing that needs to be added to the description of such cities as "landscapes" would be that such landscapes must not be confused with what we have called panoramas. The latter are objects of disengaged curiosity, while landscapes are taken for granted backgrounds that usually do not attract attention.

Kawamoto Saburô describes Murakami's cities as abstract, "flat" arenas for the flow of "signs and information", in which all consciousness of any countryside or nature apart from the city is drowned out. This tendency of cities to present themselves as self-contained worlds, independent of their surrounding countryside, has often been observed. Thus the philosopher Hans Blumenberg describes cities as "caves" functioning to screen off all realities that it does not itself bring forth or incorporate into itself as materials. "Like a cave, the city strives with all means to instill forgetfulness of the world outside, in order to let its own world inside take its place." Whatever nature it still includes within itself, it reduces "to ornament, to reserve, from the park to the flowerbox" (1989:79). However, Kawamoto carries the analysis one step further when he observes that in Murakami, the city itself takes on aspects associated with nature, such as "animism" or a likeness to the forest (Kawamoto 1999:40ff, Murakami and Kawamoto 1985:78). This observation already contains the rudiments of a theory of naturalization. The city only begins to resemble nature when it is no longer defined against its putative other, i.e. real or "first" nature.

This can be seen in Wong Kar-wai's film *Chungking Express* (1994). Here the city's presence is so overwhelming that nature does not serve even as an implicit foil. Trains, crowded tenements and junkfood restaurants are quite literally all there is; yet as such not even the "city" any longer exists in the old sense. Exactly by being all there is, it becomes a taken for granted, natural background — the "forest" of the Chinese title (which may be translated as "Chungking Forest").

Whereas in the naturalized city "first nature" does not even function as an Other or as an "outside", in shock-modernity the city typically provoked rural nostalgia or anxiety in the face of its artificiality. If the initial contact with the city for those who arrived from the countryside was often painful and troubling, the stark experienced opposition of city and nature was later to survive mainly in the form of a conceptual dichotomy through which the city was defined through the countryside and vice versa.⁸⁰ Here "nature" takes on the features of an absent Other for the city-dweller: not so much the subject of pain, of shattering, as an idealized object of nostalgia. Simmel is quite self-conscious about this process when he states that the "remoteness from nature" is what makes the "aesthetic and romantic experience of nature" possible. In words that anticipate Benjamin's definition of the aura as "the unique manifestation of distance, no matter how close the object might be", he endows nature with an auratic "inaccessibility", "distance" and "strangeness", qualities which he claims adhere to nature even in moments of physical proximity (Simmel 1990:478f). This bestowal of aura on nature presupposes that the "break" between city and nature is alive in the minds of the city-dwellers, something which, as we have seen, may be characteristic only of a particular moment in history, before this gap again closes.

The same unwillingness to abandon a dichotomy which is sensed to be spurious is even more obvious in the writings of Bloch, where the idea of a wholesome reunion with nature achieves what is maybe its most brightly shining illumination. Despite this hope, the process whereby the substance of the dichotomy of technology and nature, or the city and the countryside, was being hollowed out was also clearly visible to him — the process of what he called the "reconstruction of planet Earth into a vast Chicago, with a few patches of farmland in between" (Bloch 1998:243). This development not only gives rise to nostalgia but also anxiety. The stunning achievements of science, he states, are accompanied by a feeling of vertigo. The hubris is mixed with an anxiety, which is especially apt in "the Americanized big city", where technology has apparently achieved a victory over nature.

The city of ever-increasing artificiality, in its detachment and distance from the natural landscape, is simultaneously so complex and so vulnerable that it is increasingly threatened by accidents to the same extent that it has rooted itself in midair — that is, the city is built upon roots that have grown more and more synthetic. This grandly suspended, inorganic metropolis must defend itself daily, hourly, against the elements as though against an enemy invasion. (Bloch 1998:307)

The nostalgia and anxiety that we encounter in Simmel and Bloch both rest on a sharp dichotomy of city and nature. Such dichotomies are scars inflicted on language by shock, in this case by the shattering experience of the initial contact with the city. They keep the awareness of the city's outside alive even to those city-dwellers who have themselves not experienced that shattering. Naturalization means that the city loses its outside even as a concept.

The chance encounter

Finally, let us return to the "primal scene" of the anonymous passer-by. Earlier we presented Baudelaire's *A une passante* as a primal image of modernity, because it depicted a moment of collision in which aura and shock were equally present and alive. The chance meeting in the crowd is also the subject of a short story by Murakami Haruki, "About how I met a 100% girl a sunny morning in April" (1981, "Shigatsu no aru harena asa ni 100 percento no onna no ko ni deau koto ni tsuite"). Externally, the events depicted are remarkably similar. Walking along a back street in the fashionable Harajuku-district in Tokyo, the narrator happens to see a girl walking in the opposite direction. Somehow or other, he senses this is not just the average "70 or 80 %" girl, but a girl who is totally perfect for him and meant for him - a "100% girl". But unable to think of a way to address her, he lets her slip past, and she disappears in the crowd.

Let us have a closer look at the narrator's thoughts as he sees the woman coming towards him. He immediately falls into a sentimental reverie about what would happen if he would stop her.

I'd like to speak with her if only for half an hour. Listen to the story of her life and tell her mine. And above all I'd like to retrace the strange paths of fate that had brought us together on a Harajuku back street a sunny morning in April 1981. [...] And after talking like that, we'd have lunch somewhere, watch a Woody Allen movie, and have a cocktail in some hotel bar. And then, if things went well, maybe we would sleep together. (Murakami Haruki 1986a:21)

Unlike the sudden explosion of emotion in Baudelaire, whose words convey that the entire situation is one that he has never had the chance to get used to, Murakami's words suggest that he is familiar with what possibilities are open. Even more significant, however, is the tinge of resignation that already colors the words. We sense that he has already taken a detached and humorous attitude to the situation, something which becomes even more pronounced as he goes on to muse about what he might say in order to stop her, experimenting with a few phrases in his mind. Unable to come up with anything, he finally thinks that maybe he should simply tell her: "Hi, you're my 100% girl."

But the chances that she would take me seriously were close to zero. And even in case she would, what says she'd want to speak with me? "Even if I'm your 100% girl, you're

not my 100% guy", she might point out. In such a situation, I guess I'd be at a loss for words. I'm thirty-two, and after all that's how it is when you get older. (ibid 22)

The moment comes when they pass each other. It is in front of a flower shop. A small, warm puff of air brushes against his skin. He notices that she is carrying an envelope, not yet stamped, and that her eyes are sleepy. Maybe she has stayed up all night to write the letter, he thinks. "And maybe, within that envelope, all her secrets are ensconced" (ibid 22). As he looks back, she has already disappeared in the crowd.

The retelling of the chance meeting is only the first half of the story. The narrator concludes the work with a bittersweet little daydream. A long time ago there was a boy and a girl who were "100%" perfect for each other. When they meet they immediately recognize that they are meant for each other. "Guess if I'm surprised! I've been looking for you all my life. Believe it or not, but you're my 100% girl!" he happily exclaims. She replies "And you are my 100% boy! From hook to nook just as I had imagined you - it's like a dream!".

The two sit down on a park-bench and talk to each other for hours on end without growing tired. They're not lonely any longer. How perfectly wonderful it must be to desire one's partner a full 100%, and to be desired in return a full 100%! (ibid 24)

This passage is one of the few passages in Murakami's oeuvre that depicts perfect bliss. Interestingly, the ironic use of hackneyed labels like "100%" does nothing to diminish the utopian luster of this scene - its only effect is that of emphasizing that the happiness is portrayed from the outside and hopelessly absent from the narrator's own life. Despite their perfect happiness, however, the two youngsters decide to part for a while, as a test to check if fate really had meant them for each other. This was a tragic mistake, the narrator points out, for sadly they catch influenza and wake up with their memories "as empty as the savings box of D.H. Lawrence". Growing up in oblivion of each other, neither happier nor sadder than most people, they find themselves the usual 75% or 85% love partner. Finally, one sunny morning many years later, they happen to meet again on a back street in Harajuku. Something stirs for a moment deep in their unconscious memories, but the signal is too weak and their words aren't as clear as when they were young. They pass each other without a word and disappear in the crowd. "Isn't it a sad story?", ends Murakami.

The narrator's sadness that he might have lost the woman of his life, however, is very different from the "shock" suffered by Baudelaire. While Baudelaire's sonnet vibrates with the sudden, momentary and catastrophic - the gaze of the poet is literally captured and enslaved by what is immediately before his eyes - Murakami's rendering gives the impression of a daydream repetition of something which has already occurred countless times. Not only countless in an actual sense, but in the mythically timeless sense in which something repeats itself forever and ever. Baudelaire is anything but sad - he really desires the woman, which he knows he will never meet again. His

expectations — which he knew were impossible — were aroused and crushed at the same time. His sonnet is marked by a heightened consciousness that is still reeling from the shock it received and from which it has not recovered. It hovers with the encounter and nothing more. This is because nothing but the moment of shock itself — which hits with a force so acute that all semblance of continuity is revealed as a deception — retains any reality for the one who is genuinely shocked. The uniqueness of the encounter is manifested in the aura that flares up around the passer-by, only to be quickly extinguished.

In contrast, Murakami's expectations are not betrayed. His words give the impression of amused detachment and even boredom as if he were repeating an old lesson. To him the 100% girl is not so much an auratic human being as a mere reminder of the fact that auratic relations have become impossible. Resigned to this fact, he reacts to it with sentimentality and humor, rather than shock. His loss was not suffered in the moment of the encounter but long ago. The impression is that his pain is a repeated pain, for which he was well prepared. Rather than hovering with the pain of the moment, as Baudelaire, his reaction seems to be that "this is how things are". This awareness corresponds to the mood, often expressed in his fiction, of the city as an endlessly extending, self-identical space with "no exit". His world is a world of repetition, of identity. The "chance" occurrences are already a "natural" part of it, and do not subvert it. The encounter may have been unforeseen, but does not give the impression of being particularly surprising. The meeting is contingent, to be sure, but contingency no longer means exteriority.

But here we must be careful. Isn't there one detail — the envelope carried by the woman — which suggests the persistence of exteriority in Murakami's story? Isn't this envelope, in which perhaps "all her secrets are ensconced", a scent of another world? However, far from invalidating our interpretation, this detail with the envelope provides us with a further clue to what distinguishes Murakami's modernity from Baudelaire's. An envelope serves to prevent perception. It is a sign for exteriority, which it — however — at the same time effectively conceals. It is not a "scent" of another world so much as a sign for its absence. Instead of inviting the narrator to pursue the secret, it functions like a "gravestone": referring to the experience of exteriority, while at the same time defining it as lost or inaccessible. Although the semblance of identity remains firmly in place, thought is at the same time sadly aware of the non-identity that cannot be perceived and that lies "buried" beyond its reach, in the envelope.

Here we have made a discovery that touches on the heart of our inquiry, the fate of the perception of non-identity. Because "gravestones" do not simply block the way to what is lost. They also draw attention to it and present it, negatively, as an object of mourning. Non-identity is absent, but it is not suppressed, as in the classic forms of reified thinking criticized by Lukács. Thus the "100% girl", abstract and thinglike as she may be, is also more than a mere thing. Her fleeting image is without depth or substance, but this superficiality is more akin to that of a dream image than a reified image in the classical sense. Her subjectivity is preserved from reification since it is permitted a place in the

negative expanse of what is left unperceived. To the narrator, she is far from disenchanted. He may not perceive her aura, but he is conscious of its loss. Thinglikeness itself turns her into an enigma, into a cipher for what is lost.

Now we are in a position to correctly assess the function of the supplementary story of the two children. It functions as a substitute memory, a daydream that attempts to represent and perhaps even conjure back to life that dead or lost experience of simultaneous otherness and togetherness, to which surface appearances refer although it itself remains "buried" beyond the possibility of perception. The desperate insight that comes as a climax in Baudelaire's "we might have loved, and you knew this might be!" is now only represented indirectly, in the helpless manner in which an amnesiac might attempt to imagine his childhood: driven by a sense that something is lost, yet impotent to represent it. Hence daydreams must take the place of memory. This explains why the encounter fails to bring the narrator any liberation from his loneliness or sense of loss. No matter how curious it might seem, we must insist that such a liberation was momentarily achieved in Baudelaire's poem, whose narrator is "reborn" by the very apparition that shocks him—a circumstance which is far from coincidental and which hints at the fact that Baudelaire's modernity was still very much a land of the living, no matter how hellish, while the naturalized modernity of Murakami already has a sepulchral air more reminiscent of Hades, the shadowy land of the dead where there is neither pain nor happiness, and where all memories of life are obliterated.

Although the daydream, unlike the genuine dream, is a "voluntary" activity, it is not governed by any "heightened consciousness" in Benjamin's sense. Murakami's world is a world of identity, but not of identity-thinking. We have described such thinking as a self-preservative reason that—as if sailing past sirens—constantly needs to be on the alert in order to navigate safely between fear and desire. To yield to desire is to invite shock, since it means to dismantle the mistrust, which serves as "protective shield". This statement makes perfect sense with regard to Baudelaire. But in Murakami, we seem to encounter neither mistrust nor desire. His resigned humor and cool detachment seem to preclude the emotional involvement necessary for both. Here we may recall Freud's description of humor as "a mental attitude which makes a release of affect superfluous" (Freud 1990:428). Humour both prevents desire from going too far and dulls the sensitivity to shock. From this stems the tinge of melancholy that adheres to humor. As Freud notes humorous pleasure possesses more dignity than common jokes, but in return it never reaches the intensity of the pleasure typical of the latter. The smile is more typical of it than hearty laughter. Again Baudelaire provides us with a suitable contrast. He, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, was devoid of humor (Horkheimer & Adorno 1981:165).

Among Freud's remarks on humour we find a passage that contains a key to the next halt in our interpretation, which we will explore further later on but to which we may gesture already at this stage. According to Freud, the "grandeur" of humour "clearly lies in the triumph of narcissism, the victorious assertion of

the ego's invulnerability". Through its humour the ego "insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows, in fact, that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure" (Freud 1990:428f). Here Freud makes reference to his theory of the interiorization of libido, i.e. the transformation of "object-libido" directed to other people or things into "narcissistic" libido. This theory helps us to bind together many of the threads left open in our interpretation of Murakami's story. To begin with, it explains the prominent role played by the fantasy or daydream. Freud describes interiorization as a process whereby a person gives up his or her erotic relation to reality, but retains it to people and things in his or her fantasy. As we will see, it is through such interiorizations that shock may disappear in the relation to other people. The more fantasy replaces reality as an arena of wish-fulfillment, the less important actual social relations will become as sources of libidinal gratification. By contrast, Baudelaire's shock at the sight of the passer-by presupposes the vigorous presence of object-libido, ready to ignite even at the sight of a stranger in the crowd. We can now also understand the impression of timeless and mythical repetition in Murakami's story. Being internalized objects the people that populate Murakami's fiction belong to the unconscious. The unconscious, Freud wrote, is timeless in the sense that temporal categories cannot be used to order it (Freud 1991a:296, 1991b:191). Finally, the theory of internalization throws light on the sepulchral elements of Murakami's story, and on why the mood that suffuses it is melancholy and a sense of loss rather than shock.

In the above analysis of Murakami's short story, we have encountered the following elements, which can be spread out like the branches of a tree: the absence of shock (as well as of aura), a mood of humor and detachment rather than emotional engagement, non-shocking contingency, the weakening of the conflict between fear and desire, a particular combination of reification with reenchantment and a preoccupation with loss and memory. What is the significance of all this for the perception of non-identity? The secret that the envelope hides and the perfect togetherness portrayed in the daydream are both "gravestones" marking the place of something that has been buried, but which was still present to Baudelaire: the experience of exteriority, that whole range of manifestations of non-identity which we have associated with the disintegration of the aura. A *une passante* conveys the momentary revelation of non-identity in the sensation of shock that enables Baudelaire to see through the veil of the ever-same, whereas in Murakami's short story this veil is intact. But rather than obliterating the memory of what it hides, it gestures mutely towards what the eye cannot see.

chapter 4

Naturalized modernity

Shadows, being what they are, cannot collide. ∩ Simmel (1964a:54)

As we move to the literature of the latter half of the 20th century, we often find a way of experiencing modernity in which shock, the sensation of the new, of crisis, has subsided. In many works, the experience of "naturalization" seems to have replaced shock as the central experience around which the literary work is formed. That shock has become less and less important as an overarching organizing category of modern experience has often been suggested. Peter Sloterdijk points out that after "a hundred-year long crisis, the word *æcrisis*Æ is as wilted as the individuals who once were supposed to be shaken up by it" (Sloterdijk 1987:385). Similarly, James Berger observes in a recent work that contemporary society lacks the apocalyptic thinking and sense of crisis that Frank Kermode (in *The Sense of an Ending* from 1966, cf Kermode 2000) more than thirty years ago had famously claimed governed contemporary thinking.⁸¹

Modernity is often said to be preoccupied by a sense of crisis, viewing it as imminent, perhaps even longing for, some conclusive catastrophe. This sense of crisis has not disappeared, but in the late twentieth century it exists together with another sense, that the conclusive catastrophe has already occurred, the crisis is over (perhaps we are not aware of exactly when it transpired), and the ceaseless activity of our time ∩ the new with its procession of almost indistinguishable disasters ∩ is only a complex form of stasis. The visions of the End that Frank Kermode analyzed in terms of a sense of an ending have increasingly given way to visions of after the end, and the apocalyptic sensibilities both of religion and of modernism have shifted toward a sense of post-apocalypse. (Berger 1999:xiii)

Naturalization, as we have said, is a matter of perception. It has nothing to do with any return to premodern societal formations. On the contrary, its significance resides precisely in how the features and processes of modern society that were once shocking become familiar and natural. In other words, it does not mean that the "artificial" is rejected in favor of the "natural" but stands for the process whereby the "artificial" itself comes to take on aspects previously associated with the "natural". While the sharp opposition between nature and modernity is characteristic of "shock-modernity", one important aspect of naturalization is the closing of the gap between the two. "Shock-

modernity" presupposes that the destruction of tradition, of the old nature, can still be experienced. In other words, it presupposes that a conflict is experienced between modernity and nature. In "naturalized modernity", by contrast, the artificial itself assumes the place of the taken-for-granted, "natural" environment. Benjamin once remarked that in a ruin, "history has physically merged into the setting" (Benjamin 1985:177). When the awareness of the ruin's artificial origin has subsided to such a degree that it becomes viewed as part of the "natural" landscape, when it no longer exists in opposition to the landscape, then we shall say that the ruin is naturalized. Just as the ruin seems to have merged into the landscape, the office lamps in Kanai Mieko's short story "1+1" have merged with the natural: the regular rhythm by which they are turned on and off and the beginning and end of each day have become as reassuring to the two narrator as the rhythm of day and night.

This closing of the gap between "nature" and modernity has received much theoretical attention. However, the tendency has been to describe it in terms of a "historization of nature" rather than a "naturalization of history". For example, Beck claims that in today's "risk society" nature is wholly artificial, changeable, wholly "social" and historical: "Not a hair or a crumb of it is still ænaturalÆ, if ænaturalÆ means nature being left to itself" (Beck 1992:81). Manuel Castells similarly claims that in the "information society" nature is thoroughly culturally mediated, with the result that the old relation between culture and nature has become one of culture referring to culture (Castells 1996:477). A similar thesis is found in Jameson, who describes postmodernity as a situation in which all residues of the archaic and natural have been swept away. "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good." (Jameson 1991:ix). To add a further example, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that although we continue to have "forests and crickets and thunderstorms" in our world, "we have no nature in the sense that these forces and phenomena are no longer understood as outside, that is, they are not seen as original and independent of the artifice of the civil order" (Hardt & Negri 2001:187). The sense of "no exit", which we encountered in Murakami Haruki, is here traced back to the disappearance of nature as an "outside" to the realm of culture, and to the concomitant dissolution of the metaphysics based on the binary opposition of modernity and nature.

It is certainly correct that nature has become almost fully subjected to the dynamics of history. But to this picture we must add that history is also, simultaneously, being eroded and replaced by nature on the level of experience. For instance, in what Beck calls "risk society", the loss of confidence in science and technology means that risks and dangers no longer run counter to expectations. The terrible accidents have become integral to the system and thus part of the "same". Naturalization, then, is not opposed to historization. One of the merits of the concept of "naturalization" is that it draws attention to the fact that the historization and accompanying melting of solid things into air does not necessarily mean the radicalization of the features characteristic of shock-modernity, but may also at some point give rise to a "qualitative leap" on the

level of perception, when further historicization ceases to be apprehended as shocking. As we shall see in much contemporary literature, it is often the lack of history, the lack of change, that is felt to be problematical. Not only too much "history" is experienced as problematical, but also too much "nature". Modernity must be grasped both as historicized and naturalized.

But naturalization does not simply mean that the new or artificial ceases to shock, to be viewed as something that exists in opposition to the old. It is a process that involves several steps. These can be indicated through a brief look at the concept of nature. In particular two aspects of the concept seem relevant to our discussion. We have already introduced the concept of "naturalization" by reference to how a previously unfamiliar object or environment may come to appear "natural" or familiar. Here "nature" designates that to which one has grown accustomed and which therefore appears immediately acceptable and unproblematic. Being in line with expectations, it never needs to be raised to consciousness as problematic — in other words, it does not trigger what Benjamin calls a heightening of consciousness. This does not mean that it is pleasant. It means that when the unpleasant occurs, it is accepted as natural. Here the "natural" can be said to designate that which, being thoroughly integrated into the tradition of previous experiences, occasions no need for conscious problematization or reflexion. It should be noted that this sense of "nature" is not opposed to the "human", "historical" or "social". Interaction in human society may very well proceed "naturally" to the extent that it is not felt to be unusual.

The concept of nature, however, may also designate that which exists independently of human beings. As Hannah Arendt points out, the ancient Greek concept of nature comprehended "all things that come into being by themselves without assistance from men or gods" (Arendt 1961:41f). Nature in this sense is what is given, as opposed to what is actively created or artificially altered. As such, it may be viewed as an alien and inhuman realm of "necessity", of inevitable regularities that not only precede human history but also exist beyond its reach, impervious to human wishes. As opposed to the constantly changing and developing world of human history, nature in this sense often becomes viewed as something timeless and static. A variant of this view of nature is what is often referred to as the "natural scientific" view of nature — the nature of law-like necessities or nature as a mere *res extensa* consisting of thing-like matter or material that may be utilized by technology.

The two conceptions of nature may seem irreconcilable. While the former presents the natural as something into which human beings are thoroughly integrated and in which they feel part of a continuous whole, the latter presents nature as an inhuman realm alien to the human world.⁸² Despite this, the concept of "naturalized modernity" draws on both conceptions of nature. The nature to which it refers can be defined through the following formula which incorporates both aspects: nature is something which is symbolically integrated into the lifeworld of human beings but is nevertheless viewed as existing independently of those human beings. Put more concretely, a naturalized

society may well appear opaque, impenetrable and "inhuman", but despite this it does not need to be experienced as shocking or as running counter to expectations. Sometimes society glides into the appearance of a standstill. It is no longer history, no longer something shaped through the dialectic interchange of the subject with its environment. It may become something indifferent to us: a background which we take for granted and which we no longer seek to change. Or something which we believe would remain the same regardless of the efforts we take to change it. In such a society, the two aspects of the concept of nature are fused. The way they are fused may be illustrated by the concept of "fate" (which we will discuss later in connection with the occult in Murakami Haruki). Although nature, apprehended as fate, will possess a semblance of "necessity", this is not an "alien" power standing over against society, but natural in the same sense that nature may have been perceived, by pre-modern villagers, as an organic whole larger and more powerful than man: enigmatic but still not alien.

Rather than presenting this experience in an abstract way, I will present it through a discussion of literature and particularly make use of the writings of Murakami Haruki, in which each of the steps of the naturalization process are illustrated. Just as Benjamin served us as our guide to the constellation of shock-modernity, we will rely on Murakami in mapping the constellation of naturalized modernity. Unlike Abe or Kawabata, his writings challenge the very premise on which Benjamin's framework is founded, namely the equation of modernity with the sensation of shock. Even though the story lines do not lack dramatic and unexpected turns of event, the protagonists are rarely shocked. Interestingly, their tranquility does not depend on what Benjamin called a high degree of consciousness. There is no sign of the nervous attitude of being on one's guard. If anything, they show a low level of awareness of their surroundings. They lack interest in much of contemporary reality, whose workings they largely accept without the pretension of being able to look through them. The protagonists embody the intuition, ubiquitous in late modernity, that the inexplicable has become commonplace: it is normal that abnormal things occur. Murakami's novels point to a re-enchanted state of modernity in which social conditions no longer enter into friction with the fantastic. The stories have the calm of fairy tales, in which fantastic events come forward as natural. They illustrate how the artificial may become a receptacle for the fantasies and libidinal attachments that were once directed to nature or the countryside.

Below, in Part 4-1 "Second nature" I will begin by discussing the concept of "second nature" in Western Marxism in order to clarify how it differs from that of "naturalization". The constellation of naturalized modernity will then be delineated in three stages: Part 4-2 ("Naturalization") will present the relatively still and gentle surface appearance of this modernity — the absence of shocks, the lowering of consciousness, the fusion of reenchantment and reification — which contrasts in a striking fashion to the features of shock-modernity emphasized by Benjamin: shock, heightening of consciousness, and the

destruction of aura (or disenchantment). In Part 4-3 ("Non-sociality") I will argue that the experience of naturalization is linked to a process of "privatization" or redirection of libido from social relations, resulting in the weakening of the conflict of fear and desire which we have seen is a prominent theme in shock-modernity. In Part 4-4 ("Hades") I will relate the redirection of libido to Freud's theory of trauma and argue that "Hades" provides a better metaphor of naturalized modernity than what Benjamin calls "Hell". I will also show that the theory of trauma, by directing attention to the issue of "recovery", helps us see the new dilemma that takes form in naturalized modernity, a dilemma centered on the attempts to break out of non-sociality or Hades. I should stress that I don't view privatization and traumatization as "aspects" of the experience of naturalization, but as separate phenomena that are related to this experience in the form of a constellation.

4-1: "Second nature"

There is no such thing as nature. Or, rather, what one takes for nature in its ægivenÆ state is always a more or less bygone invention. There is a stimulating force in the notion of regaining contact with reality in the virgin state. We fancy that such virginities exist. But trees, the sea, the sun itself û and above all the human eye û all are æartificialÆ, in the last analysis. û Paul Valéry (quoted in Adorno 1991:141)

Naturalization occurs when one has grown used to an environment that was once shocking. We must be careful not to confuse this new "nature" with the notion of modern society as a "second nature", which was developed in the tradition of western Marxism and used by Benjamin.⁸³ It will be instructive to compare these two notions of nature.

Fundamental to the theory of modern society a "second nature" is the insight that the domination over nature achieved in modernity not only liberates man but also creates new constraints since economy, technology and the world of social convention turn against him as the reified world of "second nature".⁸⁴ Thus for example, Benjamin writes that the subordination of technology to magic and ritual in ancient society

presents the opposite pole to contemporary society, whose technology could not be more emancipated. This emancipated technology stands opposed to contemporary society as a second nature, and indeed, as economic crises and wars show, it is a nature no less elemental than that of ancient society. (Benjamin 1991:444, tr. by Caygill (1998:106))

The rigidification of modernity into "second nature" is confirmed on the level of perception by numerous observations. The mechanistic metaphor of society as a machine and the ecological one of society as nature are equally frequent. More than once has the city been described as a living, growing organism. Benjamin observes that the surging ocean is the model for the city crowd in Victor Hugo (Benjamin 1997:60ff), and Adorno points to the visual similarity of "industrial mountains of debris" to "alpine moraines and taluses" (Adorno1997: 68). Baudelaire, as we remember, compares "the dangers of the forest and the prairie" to "the daily shocks of civilization", Abe Kôbô describes the city as "a forest, a woods, full of wild beasts and poisonous insects" (Abe 1993:29), and Baudrillard writes about the abundance of consumer goods in today's society that "[w]hile objects are neither flora nor fauna, they give the impression of being a proliferating vegetation; a jungle where the new savage of modern times has trouble finding the reflexes of civilization" (Baudrillard 1988:29). Indeed, great cities resemble nature: no human hand seems to control them, its stream of cars and trains is no less inhuman and elemental than wild cataracts and rivers. They usurp the life that was meant for its inhabitants, who *conversely* are reduced to things. To the eye that is transfixed by the superhuman entity of city human beings are reduced to a role similar to that of the cones, insects, and fallen needles of the forest. They appear as exchangeable, blind cogwheels involved in anonymous ecological cycles. These metaphors, which fuse the images of natural ecology and of the machine, all suggest the fragility of the borderline between society and nature in the city. At any rate, whether the city is described as a machine or as a living organism, it is deprived of humanity.

It has been suggested that Murakami Haruki's novels are rich in this sensibility.⁸⁵ And to be sure, his characters have a thing-like quality. In novels such as *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hardboiled Wonderland* they even lack proper names. Instead they are usually referred to by objectified attributes: "the wife", "the business partner", "the professor" and so on. A world inhabited by such dehumanized emblems is one in which the reification of roles has become natural and humans submit to system-imperatives as casually as if the latter were forces of nature.

Yet the world of Murakami's novels cannot be dismissed as a mere reified nightmare. The problem with directly applying the concept of second nature here is that it is linked to the image of modernity as an arena of shock. "Second nature" is usually portrayed as sterile and oppressive, and life within these structures as a never-ending and catastrophic repetition of shock-sensations. The concept of nature implied in the term "second nature" is that of nature as inorganic and lifeless matter: nature as death, as the antithesis of human creativity, of history, of meaning and of life. Nature appears as a soulless machine, as a never-ending and mechanical repetition of the meaningless. Thus Lukács classically describes second nature as "the embodiment of recognised but senseless necessities", as "man's experience of his self-made environment as a prison", as "a charnel-house of long-dead interiorities", and as a "world of convention" (Lukács 1996:62ff). This image of society as a nature that

endlessly and senselessly repeats itself fits in neatly with what Benjamin variously described as a "continuous catastrophe" and as "hell". The striking degree to which this image is wedded to the shock-sensation can be seen in a passage by Adorno. The "image of the latter-day city dweller as second nomad", he writes, expresses "the dawning ahistorical character of a condition in which men experience themselves solely as objects of opaque processes and, torn between sudden shock and sudden forgetfulness, are no longer capable of a sense of temporal continuity." (Adorno 1995:55). Here the image of society as nature, as beyond the control of human beings, is casually fused with a description of what Benjamin calls *Erlebnisse*, sensations that shatter the sense of continuity and disappear without a trace.

In passing, we may note that the tendency to view the "nature-like" regularity of social life as oppressive is often found outside the tradition of Marxism and critical theory as well. For instance, Lewis Coser summarizes the situation in which the city-dweller is subjected to mechanic, factory-like discipline in the following way:

As the city erodes traditional rhythms of human life, it creates its own mechanical rhythm and imposes it upon its denizens. The clock, the train schedule and the traffic light may govern the life of the city dweller with as tyrannical a force as the prescribed routines of tradition may govern the life of his rural brothers. (Coser 1963b:225)

Words like "mechanical" and "tyrannical" make it amply clear that the concept of second nature that emerges here is a shocking nature whose regularities are oppressive rather than constitutive or fertile.

As a corrective we do well to turn to an entirely different concept of nature which is free from all oppressive overtones. We find it in the writings of Adorno. While Adorno on the one hand uses the term "nature" to designate the oppressive appearance of contemporary society as second nature, on the other hand he also uses it to designate the "first" nature, which is subjugated during the process of modernization: the external nature ravaged by technology, and the realm of mute, preconscious inner impulses repressed by identity thinking. For Adorno nature was not only the spell of the inhuman in society, but also the source of life that might help break this spell. The coexistence of these two concepts of nature in Adorno shows that to him "second nature" is not truly nature, that it is still felt to be distinct from "first" nature. The tension between the two concepts of nature is in fact felt throughout the theorists of second nature, beginning with Lukács himself, who states that second nature differs from first nature since it is impossible to express oneself lyrically about it. Unlike first nature, the structures of second nature "neither carry the consecration of the absolute within them nor are they the natural containers for the overflowing interiority of the soul" (Lukács 1996:62ff). Clearly, in him as well as in Adorno, "second nature" is set up in deliberate contrast to "first" nature. While the former is repressive and shocking, the latter has all that is perceived to be lacking in the reified world of shock-modernity. It is the gentle,

generative, maternal, that which does not put us under pressure, that which is not too fast for us, nature as the habitual and secure.⁸⁶

But here the following question arises: what is the criterion for distinguishing second nature from its supposed victim, non-reified "first" nature? To arrive at an answer let us turn to the notion of "natural history" (Naturgeschichte), which Benjamin put forward in *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, and carefully make use of it as far as it takes us. For Benjamin, the idea of "nature" meant the idea of an original state of things, of whatever appeared to be pre-given as fate. In this sense, it was opposed to the idea of "history", which was the constantly changing sphere of action, the stream of becoming. Benjamin points out that the "historical" often petrifies into nature — into a frozen image of timelessness. Whatever appears to be "natural", however, always contains traces which reveal it to be transient and historical.⁸⁷ This idea profoundly influenced Adorno, who in his 1932 lecture "The Idea of a Natural History" framed it as a critique of the ahistorical appearance of second nature. Following Benjamin he undermines the antithesis of history and nature to the point where the two terms collapse into each other: history is to be understood as nature-like and nature as historical. He argues that the crude version of the theory of reification, which focuses attention on how the historical is rigidified into second nature, merely strengthens the spell of reification. Nature too is transitory, and this insight offers the possibility to see through second nature's pretense of timelessness (Adorno 1973:345-65, cf 1994a:347ff). To borrow the metaphor of Benjamin, one might say that Adorno attempts to reveal capitalist society as a ruin — as a rigidified world of convention on which nevertheless history and change are inscribed.

The idea of "natural history" offers the advantage of showing that nature itself is historical. Nature should not be understood as a fixed, archaic or primordial state that has been lost and replaced by a fake "second" nature. All nature, including "first" nature, is history that has been made to appear ahistorical. This idea, however, still presents second nature — society's resemblance to nature — as an evil to be done away with. Both Benjamin and Adorno insist on dissolving it back into history. But there is another — and equally possible — way to interpret this idea. If all nature is also history, then second nature is not necessarily more evil and lifeless than the natural environment of archaic societies. If archaic nature was the source both of enslavement and of enchantment, there does not seem to be any reason why second nature has to be portrayed merely as a source of the former. Might it not be possible that second nature could assume also those gentle and enchanting features which Adorno associated with the victimized inner nature and the vanquished external nature? If this is true, then the borderline between the older, enchanting nature and second nature becomes diffuse. Rather than to diagnose modernity simply as the reified world of second nature, it seems preferable to speak of a return of nature tout court, albeit nature returns not in the guise of the spirits of the forest or the rivers but in the guise of industrial plants and highways. Just as the conquest of the old nature was an ambivalent

process û encompassing both destructive and emancipatory aspects û so the return of nature in the city is ambivalent û encompassing not only reification but also the gradual disappearance of shock.

To summarize, "second nature" is not yet naturalized modernity. Indeed, it is usually portrayed as source of shock, and as such set up in opposition to genuine nature, or "first" nature û i.e. to what is the traditionally given and inherited, to the impulses of the "inner" nature of human beings, and to the external nature exploited as raw materials for industrial development. This opposition, as we shall see, is much less keenly felt in naturalized modernity. In order to capture the experience of naturalization, it is necessary to develop a new conceptualization and theoretization of nature. Let us now turn to this task.

4-2: Naturalization

Here I will make use of Murakami's works in order to present three significant aspects of naturalization, each of which in a significant way relativizes Benjamin's framework: 1) the waning of shock, 2) the lowering of consciousness, and 3) the reenchantment of modernity. Taken together they represent a reversal on point after point of Benjamin's theory of shock, which as we remember emphasizes the prevalence of shock, the heightening of consciousness and disenchantment (in the form of the disintegration of the aura).

The fading away of shock

As the cultural anthropologist Aoki Tamotsu remarks, coziness and "pleasant sentimentalism" characterize modernity in Murakami Haruki's novels. Despite sinister external attributes û usually the barren city landscape of Tokyo and a world dominated by huge corporations and foul right-wing organizations û it very seldom inflicts any keenly felt pain on the protagonist. That this environment has a friendly feel to it û and thus differs from the cold and "hostile" modernity in the fiction of, say, Abe Kôbô or Kafka û does not mean that dramatic and sudden events do not occur. They do, but they never seem to produce shock. Two examples are the sudden disappearance of "the girlfriend with the beautiful ears" in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and of the wife in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1994-5, *Nejimakidori kuronikuru*). The protagonists' equanimity in both cases is all the more striking, since love between the sexes is the locus classicus of shock. In the fiction of older Japanese writers, like Abe or Kawabata, the loss of a beloved woman never fails to be shocking. In Murakami, by contrast, the vulnerability necessary in order to be shocked is replaced by a masochistically tinged resignation which borders on indifference.

As the protagonist reflects in *A Wild Sheep Chase*: "Things are forgotten, things disappear, things die. And in this, there is hardly anything tragic" (Murakami Haruki 1985a:40).

The absence of shock even in the face of total disaster is well illustrated by the nightmarish plot of *Hardboiled Wonderland*. The protagonist is a young man who works for a giant conglomerate called the System. His adventures start when he is suddenly drawn into the fatal machinations of an eccentric professor, who dwells in an underground laboratory under Tokyo. The story isn't propelled so much by the protagonist's own decisions as by external imperatives — like the warfare between the System and its equally ruthless rival the Factory — which intrude into his life from the outside and which assume increasingly absurd proportions. The chapters dealing with this bleak futuristic world — the "hardboiled wonderland" — alternate with seemingly unrelated chapters about an idyllic and peaceful medieval town surrounded by a high wall and a forest where golden unicorns graze. The town — known as "the end of the world" — is described by its inhabitants to the newly arrived narrator as a perfect town where no one harms anyone else and where every one is content. The reader soon learns that "the end of the world" is an artificial construct implanted into the protagonist's unconscious by the professor with the purpose of facilitating "data shuffling". To make matters worse, thanks to a fatal mistake in programming his brain is about to be irrevocably locked in the "end-of-the-world" mode, ending his conscious life. Although the protagonist is momentarily perturbed when he learns of the bad news, after awhile he accepts it without major protests. The end of the "hardboiled"-part of the story is sentimentally sweet. After shaking off the persecutors sent out by the System and the Factory, he spends his last conscious night with his newly acquired girlfriend. The next morning he drives out to a pier where he awaits the extinction of his consciousness while the car CD-player endlessly repeats a song by Bob Dylan. In the "end-of-the-world"-part, the demise of the protagonist's conscious life is portrayed as voluntary. He is urged to escape from the town by his increasingly weak and emaciated shadow, an alter ego representing his conscious mind. However, he decides to stay and sadly takes farewell of the shadow with the explanation that "I have responsibilities... I cannot forsake the people and places and things I have created" (Murakami Haruki 1993:399).

Despite the superficial kinship of this work to the genre of paranoid fiction, it stands out in a revealing aspect. The protagonist's road towards his demise is gentle, rose-colored, almost painted in an idyllic light. The strange characters that he meets on his way are likable, keep up his spirits, and try to comfort him. Even the brutal Factory thugs who demolish his apartment are portrayed as likable in their own way. All overt symptoms of reification are gone. This is in stark contrast with Kafka or Abe, where the people encountered by the protagonist often reveal a cruel, machinelike quality. The soft, sentimental atmosphere is further strengthened by the protagonist's cool resignation to his

fate. He takes all losses with equanimity and grim humor: "Wasn't much of a life anyway", as he remarks (Murakami Haruki 1993:298).

The lowering of consciousness

"I wouldn't know," I said. I really wouldn't.

"I wouldn't know" seems to be a pet expression with you", she observed.

"Maybe so."

"And maybe so" another."

I didn't know what to say.

"Why are all your thoughts so uncertain?"

I wouldn't know, but maybe so, I repeated over and over in my head...
Murakami Haruki (1993:357)

On the flip side of everything we think we absolutely understand lurks an equal amount of the unknown. Understanding is but the sum of our misunderstandings. Murakami Haruki (2001:146)

In an environment without shock, the protective shield of the intellect becomes unnecessary. In fact, Murakami's protagonists never pretend to understand what is going on around them. In *Hardboiled Wonderland* the protagonist's girlfriend points out that his favorite expressions seem to be "I wouldn't know" and "maybe so" (Murakami Haruki 1993:357). The difference between this kind of tranquility and "spleen" is that the former arises from an acceptance of incomprehensibility while the latter designates the state of mind of one who has intellectually mastered his environment. While Benjamin depicts modernity as an age in which the fear of shock spurs the intellect towards an ever more frenetically watertight grip on its environment, Murakami's protagonists have already come to feel at home in what Habermas calls the "new obscurity" that is said to be characteristic of late modernity (Habermas 1985). The incomprehensible is no longer felt as threatening but accepted as nature.

The clearest idealization of "low consciousness" is found in *The Wind-up Bird*, whose protagonist Okada Tôru personifies the belief that just as long as you stick with your gut feeling and do the little things, like vacuum cleaning, you contribute to the harmony of the world and "wind up its springs". That Okada's stance is accompanied by a belief in fate is not coincidental. The casual acceptance of the incomprehensible resembles fatalism. Indeed, the belief in fate presupposes a chaotic environment. Since the unpredictability of society is indispensable for the production of the "curious coincidences" which are interpreted as fate, the relation between opaqueness and fatalism is complementary. The resurgence of the occult is a telling symptom that modernity has become just a "natural" as nature: the unpredictable event is no

longer shocking the moment it can be interpreted as fate. The popularity of "New Age" and what in Japan is known as the "spirit world" (seishin sekai) indicates that the predominance of reason as a disenchanting force is no inherent feature of modernity.⁸⁸

Okada's attitude, with its celebration of weakness and goodness, is opposed to that of his brother-in-law Wataya Noboru, an academic who has suddenly risen to fame and mounted on what looks to be a brilliant political career. In contrast to Wataya's false omniscience and agitating rhetoric, Okada insists on the way of the fool. While reading the articles of Wataya or listening to his television-speeches, he instinctively feels them to be rubbish, although he never bothers to mount a single rational counterargument against them. The mutual hatred between these two men (Wataya is one of the few crooks in Murakami's novels who is portrayed wholly without sympathy) is raised to metaphysical significance as the conflict between them is transferred to the spiritual world, where Okada bravely fights the forces of darkness, personified by his evil brother-in-law.

Initially, ignorance seems to be a handicap for Okada, since it makes him a passive victim of fate. After the strange telephone call which starts off the novel, one incomprehensible thing after the other happens to him in rapid succession: his cat disappears, his wife Kumiko suddenly leaves him, he inexplicably gets a huge birthmark on his face and so on. Importantly, however, ignorance also becomes a major weapon. It turns out that his misfortunes are linked to a Manichaean drama being unfolded in a spiritual "other world". In order to get his wife back, Okada climbs to the bottom of a dried-out well where he sits down in complete darkness in order to enter this other world. Significant here is the explicitly anti-intellectual nature of his way of dealing with the incomprehensible. To enter the other world he must empty his mind. A few times it forces itself upon him in his sleep, "ripping away consciousness as if by force". To look for rational reasons for Kumiko's disappearance or to chase after her in "this" world never crosses his mind. This is in striking contrast to Abe's protagonist in *Secret Rendezvous* who frantically searches for explanations for his wife's kidnapping. One thus finds in *The Wind-up Bird* a distrust of reasoning and at the same time also an attempt to replace rational knowledge with another, irrational kind, which has its source in intuition. The fate which rules all is beyond the grasp of reason. It can only be "felt", like when the mysterious Kanô Malta feels it in water, and only by certain people, like her or the deaf fortuneteller Honda.

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Here we need to make a brief theoretical detour in order to clarify the notions of "obscurity" and "lowering of consciousness". What is the relation of these phenomena to the social system's apparent growth of "complexity"⁸⁹? And aren't they contradicted by what is often called the increased "reflexivity"⁹⁰ in late modernity?

Let us begin with the first question. What if it is the factual increase of the complexity of the late modern society, rather than the weakening of shock and the concomitant lesser need for a protective shield, that is the origin of the semblance of a "low consciousness"? What speaks against this plausible objection is that society was bewilderingly complex even to many classic writers of shock-modernity, such as Kafka or Abe. In their works, however, the complexity confronted by the desperately struggling heroes spurs a heightening of their consciousness and seems unrelated to what we have termed a "low consciousness". To solve this riddle we need to remind ourselves that the appearance of a "low consciousness" is a function of the relation between the subject and the object. As Marx points out, people are not powerless to change society because of its obscurity. The relationship is the obverse: society appears obscure or "mythological" to the degree that we feel powerless to change it (Marx 1993:110). In other words, it is obscure to the extent that we view it as a "natural" environment beyond our control. This is pointed out by Habermas himself, who writes that "obscurity is also a function of the readiness to act" (Habermas 1985:143). The so-called "new obscurity", then, is hardly a direct reflection of the factual complexity of society, but must also be seen as caused by a widespread subjective readiness to accept incomprehensibility as normal. The decisive factor is the attitude to complexity: in Kafka's or Abe's heroes there is an effort to intellectually master the environment from which they feel alienated, and they make this effort precisely because they refuse to see society as "natural" or beyond human control. They desperately try to comprehend it and it is their failure to do so that produces the sensation of shock. What happens with naturalization, by contrast, is that the incomprehensible object comes to be felt to be so self-evident that it no longer calls for any special intellectual efforts. One can feel at home in modernity without understanding its mechanisms, in just the same way that it is possible to feel accustomed to nature without grasping its complex ecology. The thesis which we will propose, then, is that it is not the complexity of the social system per se, but quintessentially the absence of shock in the way it is perceived that produces the so-called new "obscurity".

Let us now turn to the second question. Does not our observation of a "lowering of consciousness" contradict the widespread emphasis on "reflexivity" in contemporary cultural sociology? In my view, these two phenomena are not opposed, since they refer to different things. While "reflexivity" is a property of the mode of thinking, the "lowering of consciousness" is a relational concept, describing the resignation of the subject to the opacity of the environment. Let us illustrate how well these two phenomena go together by three examples:

(1) We see this complementarity in the "cynicism" that Sloterdijk describes as prevalent in contemporary culture. To begin with, we may note that he links this cynicism to a widespread sentiment that present-day society is far from being either shocking or exciting:

We live today in a cynicism from which absolutely no flowers of evil sprout, no grand cold gazes and fireworks in the abyss. Instead, cement cities, bureau-democracy, listlessness, endless mediocrity, administration of deplorable states of affairs, lamenting prattle about responsibility, miserly pessimism, and insipid ironies. (Sloterdijk 1987:385)

The cynicism that thrives in this society is defined as an "enlightened false consciousness" which is characterized exactly by the combination of reflexivity and resignation just described:

It has learned its lessons in enlightenment, but it has not, and probably was not able to, put them into practice. Well-off and miserable at the same time, this consciousness no longer feels affected by any critique of ideology; its falseness is already reflexively buffered. (ibid 5)

It is clear that this cynicism is actually a low consciousness. It is essentially predicated on the intellect's recognition of its powerlessness in the face of the system. Sloterdijk's cynics stay on the side of the system because they see no way out of it. With "chic bitterness" they see the nothingness of where everything leads, yet keep on working (ibid). This is not a "high consciousness" which aspires to intellectual mastery over the environment. Rather, the object of the cynic's ridicule is exactly such an exalted aspiration. The cynic views the system as nature, as an unchangeable fate that it is pointless and naive to judge by moral standards.

(2) We also see this complementarity, although in a different form, in the cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson. Here, although society as well as the man-made environment of the matrix possesses unfathomable complexity, a new "local" kind of heightened consciousness seems to be emerging. "The world Gibson describes", Andrew Feenberg observes, "is grim but not strictly speaking dystopian. It is true that elites rule it with immensely powerful means, but those means are so complex that they give rise to all sorts of phenomena over which no one really has control. There are many small openings through which a clever hacker can enter the system and commit a variety of unprogrammed deeds." (Feenberg 1995:140). In cyberspace the inability to survey the whole paradoxically serves as the precondition for the emergence of a new kind of "local" Enlightenment subject, who battles the artificial powers of nature with a cunning and bravado reminiscent of that of Odysseus, Horkheimer and Adorno's prototypical modern subject. At the same time, this world is impregnated by a sense of impotence and defeat. The new opportunities for agency are only revealed within the framework of the net, which itself is beyond human control. The "naturalness" of the matrix itself must be accepted, just as Odysseus had to accept the Mediterranean as the natural arena of his adventures. In Gibson we can thus see how the creation of a wholly man-made environment — i.e. the seeming triumph of the "historization of nature" — leads to a reestablishment of the boundary between "history" and "nature" within this environment: one sphere providing a locus for human agency, another being recognized as being beyond human powers.

The ambiguity inherent in the word "matrix" makes it peculiarly apt as the name of this environment. Gibson's matrix seems visually modeled on its mathematical meaning of a rectangular arrangement of quantities. Its original meaning in the Renaissance, however, was that of a surrounding substance which gives birth to a thing, or a "womb". Gibson's matrix clearly encompasses this latter aspect as well. *Neuromancer* (1984) depicts how it gives birth to a god-like artificial intelligence, through which the human race is seemingly relegated to the margins of history. The sequels *Count Zero* (1986) and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988) depict how voodoo gods begin to appear in cyberspace as avatars through which this entity attempts to communicate with human beings. The interaction between humanity and the matrix, in other words, becomes framed in religious terms that replace the rational categories that would have made the matrix appear comprehensible and, to use Weber's term, "disenchanted". This means that Gibson's cyberpunk hackers never attain more than a "limited mastery". The whole remains elusive and obscure.

Sometimes, falling asleep in Santa Monica, he wondered vaguely if there might have been a larger system, a field of greater perspective. Perhaps the whole of DatAmerica possessed its own nodal points, infofaults that might be followed down to some other kind of truth, another mode of knowing, deep within the gray shoals of information. But only if there were someone there to pose the right question. (Gibson 1996:39)

Just as cynicism and reflexivity only open up limited areas of relative freedom of action, these heroes are never allowed to question the system itself, in relation to which their local high consciousness is forced to remain a low consciousness.

(3) To clarify this point through yet another example we can turn to the sociologist Louis Wirth, who *speaking in 1948 of the "suicide of civilization in the face of the new physical power" (the atomic bomb)* explains how a seeming high consciousness can be combined with powerlessness, since in actuality it is a low consciousness in one decisive aspect: "There may be some among us who feel that we already have the knowledge to prevent disaster but that we lack the power to put that knowledge into effect. Such a claim, however, is a confession that we lack perhaps the most important knowledge that we need, namely the knowledge to unlock the power requisite to put our existing knowledge usefully to work." (Wirth 1964b:18f). Reflexivity often produces the first kind of "knowledge" mentioned by Wirth, a knowledge which, however, is lacking in a crucial respect: the knowledge how to act. While reflexivity may possess all the trapping of a high consciousness, it is often linked to a feeling of powerlessness in the face of the system and in this respect it remains a low consciousness

What these examples have in common is an atmosphere of resignation. They present an amalgam of reflexivity and sensed powerlessness that is not uncommon and that we also encounter in many sociological accounts of "reflexivity". "Everything could be different", Luhmann writes, "but by myself I

can (hardly) change anything" (quoted in Ziehe 1993:174, also cf Luhmann 1998:45). Sloterdijk expresses the same thing in his description of contemporary society as a "cross between prison and chaos" (Sloterdijk 1987:xxxiii). These statements are not paradoxical. Reflexivity and powerlessness work in conjunction and are complementary rather than contradictory. The distinctive quality of late modernity would seem to be that it is both much more historicized and much more naturalized than classical modernity: it is bewilderingly chaotic but immobile, unpredictable but never shocking, contingent but self-evident.

The fusion of reification and reenchancement

The third aspect of naturalization is the fusion of reification with reenchancement. As the hard, thing-like world governed by system-imperatives takes on the soft and gentle appearance of natural ecology, the process of "disenchantment" which Max Weber saw as an inherent attribute of modernity loses momentum and shrinks back.⁹¹ This fusion of reality with the fantastic in the mode of perception has profound sociological implications, not least in the changed character of reification.

The changed character of reification is directly detectable in the way people appear to the protagonists in Murakami Haruki's fiction. The tendency in his early works to reduce people to objectified attributes instead of referring to them by proper names is notorious. Thus for example the protagonist's girlfriend in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is casually reduced to "the girlfriend with the beautiful ears". The reduction, however, is drastic enough to be parodical. Like a small peephole in a wall, the reifying epithet never pretends to reveal everything. The reader is never allowed to forget the vast expanse of her subjectivity which is left untold behind her epithet, but which nevertheless is felt to be there. Since the reifying epithet appears as a sign of what is left untold, it turns her into a riddle rather than demystifying her. When she suddenly decides to leave the protagonist at the end of the novel, the act keenly brings out how little either the reader or the protagonist knows about her. Unlike the reificatory labels so dreaded by Lukács or Adorno, it cannot be used as a classificatory device. The classical operation of reifying thought in what Adorno calls "identity-thinking" is to master non-identity by subsuming it under the concept. The result is a disenchantment of the object. In Murakami Haruki, by contrast, the reifying epithets serve to emphasize the unknowability of the things they designate. What the epithet fails to convey is more significant than what it reveals. The result here is that objects become re-enchanted.

This is what makes it a mistake to assert simply, as Iwamoto Yoshio does, that the characters of *A Wild Sheep Chase* are presented as depthless objects which are deprived of subjectivity (Iwamoto 1993). Rather, people come forward in a double-exposure: transcending their attributes while being imprisoned in them. In this respect Murakami's epithets would seem to have less in common with customary reifying labels than with mythological epithets

(Minerva "the flashing eyed", Ulysses "the man of many wiles" etc). Homeric gods, just as Murakami's characters, were never wholly captured in the predicates attributed to them. It was in their essence to be limited to a function while retaining an enigmatic extra. This holds true even for crooks and bad-guys, such as the "man in black" in *A Wild Sheep Chase* or "Skin-flayer Boris" in *The Wind-up Bird*. Although they never break out from their predestined roles, they seem curiously detached from their functions and free from personal ill will. This is explained by their fatalism. In fate the reified role, however brutal, is affirmed because of its givenness, not because it possesses any intrinsic value in itself. Just as nature returns in the midst of the metropolis, so fatalism conveniently fuses humanity with brutality. As in the case of the epithets that point beyond their limits, here too reification is fused with enchantment.

The towering role of the occult in *The Wind-up Bird* should not surprise us.⁹² It is another example of the fusion of reification and reenchantment. Occultism has all the reifying attributes of science and social engineering. In suggesting that humans are ruled by stars or blood types, it shuts out freedom just as effectively as any reificatory scheme (cf Adorno 1978:238-44). On the other hand, the violence occultism exerts by subsuming people under pre-established categories and locking them into causal relationships is tolerated because of the reenchantment it offers in return. In contrast to established science, occultism does not reduce the phenomena of nature to mute objects without moral or metaphysical significance. The regular movement of stars or the inescapability of one's blood type offers a fixity that is not felt to be reifying, since the natural phenomena to which one is subordinated are themselves never objectified as "facts". This is why Benjamin is insightfully and correctly able to portray the notion of fate as a "category of natural history".

For fate is not a purely natural occurrence — any more than it is purely historical... It is the elemental force of nature in historical events, which are not themselves entirely nature, because the light of grace is still reflected from the state of creation. (Benjamin 1977:129)

The causality of fate is thus not the mechanistic causality of natural science. The powers that govern the human world are natural, to be sure, but this nature is not the dead matter of modern science. Rather it is a stream of becoming in which human history forms part and which — to the tiniest of its fractals — is shot through by historical significance.

What we can observe in these examples is that reenchantment does not imply the return of the aura or the end of reification. Despite reenchantment, Murakami Haruki seldom portrays other people as unique or "auratic". We recall that the "100 % girl" encountered by one of his protagonists on a Harajuku back street appeared replaceable and utterly lacking in aura. But this does not mean that she is disenchanting. We remember that, seeing her pass him, the protagonist reflects that perhaps "all her secrets" are contained in the envelope she is carrying. This envelope functions like what we have called

"gravestones", just as the reified epithets mentioned above. We cannot see what they purportedly designate, but what we do perceive is exactly its absence — we perceive our inability to perceive. Unlike auratic objects, these epithets and envelopes enchant negatively, by absence.⁹³

We have presented the three moments of naturalization — the dying away of shock, the lowering of consciousness and the fusion of reification with reenchantment. We must now turn to question of what makes this reversal at point after point of Benjamin's framework possible.

4-3: Non-sociality

"Don't you feel lonely?"

"I've gotten used. By practice." — Murakami Haruki (1983:105)

The waning of shock has not made late modern society resemble a pre-modern community or *Gemeinschaft*. The reason, I will argue, is that naturalization is made possible by privatization, the redirection of libidinal investments away from relations between people. This is why the "100% girl" in Murakami Haruki's story appears as a mere abstract sign devoid of aura and why auratic human relations fail to reappear despite the waning of shock.

Privatization does not mean that actual human interaction decreases, but means that such interaction becomes less important as a source of gratification for individuals. It is a process whereby individuals get used to solitude, or — to be more precise — their instinctual needs and fundamental impulses become channeled in such a way that their gratification is made less dependent on relations to other people. The term must be clearly distinguished from the so-called "atomization" of social relations which exists under shock-modernity as well and which is one of the most important sources of shock. Atomization is the "objective" process whereby system-imperatives (the labor market, bureaucratic directives, and so on) splinter relations based on libidinal ties, while privatization is the "subjective" withdrawal of libidinal investment from society. Thanks to privatization, atomization ceases to be experienced as painful and shocking. Privatization enables the shocking character of social life to subside without any decrease in the strength of previously shocking societal processes such as atomization. Naturalization, in other words, is not the result of a reversal of atomization, but comes into being when atomization is complemented by privatization.

This explains why naturalization cannot bring about the return to the "auratic" human relations. As we remember, libido and aura are intimately related. If libido is not directed outwards, there can be no auratic others. Instead

we have the pleasant loneliness of Murakami Haruki's heroes. As Aoki Tamotsu observes, it is their isolation that enables them to maintain their tranquility even in the midst of the apparent turbulence of the modern city. He also suggests that their individualistic outlook is a reflection of the loneliness and isolation prevalent in daily life in contemporary Japan.

The Murakami hero is content with the isolation that is so much a part of contemporary life.[.] He lives in a world in which it is not only possible, but desirable, to avoid interference with others, and this is precisely the character of Japanese society during the twenty years of rapid growth. (Aoki 1996:272)

Aoki's observations suggest that the disintegration of shock is made possible through a self-imposed isolation from shock-producing areas of modernity. The process of getting used to the modern environment takes the form of increased inwardness. Peace of mind is paid for by loneliness. The reason for this shift is easy to surmise from Aoki's remarks. Modern social relations are inherently unstable and likely to disintegrate. To be libidinally attached to such relations would mean an exposure to pain and a vulnerability which would return the subject to the "shocking" modernity portrayed by Benjamin. What remains true in Benjamin is that auratic or libidinous relations are a source of shocking disruptions. What has changed is that the libido, unlike in the modernity depicted by him, has been redirected away from the realm of social or human relations to a "non-social" realm.

The non-social spheres of society

The "non-social" realm consists of objects of desire that are neither social nor human. It should be pointed out from the beginning that this realm still forms part of society since it fulfills important social functions. Perhaps its greatest significance for the perception of modernity is that it provides a sphere of life in which desire is freed from fear. Earlier we described the conflict between fear and desire as one of the principal sources of shock. This conflict reaches its peak at the juncture at which libido is still predominantly social in nature and consequently drawn into a traumatic contradiction with the logic of atomization. However, as desire is redirected from social to non-social objects, it gradually becomes disassociated from fear and the likelihood of shock is diminished to the same degree. Consumerism is one example of non-social desire. Another is the narcissistic interiorization of libido. Common to both is that they no longer expose the subject to shock. Both locate the object of desire outside social life, which is increasingly avoided as a source of gratification since it remains an arena of antagonism.⁹⁴ It is when society becomes an object of indifference that it takes on the semblance of nature. From the point of view of the non-social, society will remain a mere background or "landscape" no matter how antagonistic it is. Shock, by contrast, is tied to the sensation of crisis, to the sense that something is happening to which one needs to respond. It robs people

of their indifferent attitude, abolishes distance and plunges them back into the realm of the social. This, however, becomes unlikely to the degree that the realm of the "non-social" is consolidated. The shift from social to non-social areas of gratification also means a shift from shock-modernity to naturalized modernity.

Before we proceed with our argument, let us have a brief look at two treatments of the non-social spheres of consumerism and narcissistic interiorization in Jean Baudrillard and Miyadai Shinji. Baudrillard is among those theorists who have been most explicit in diagnosing the realm of consumer objects as a non-social space. One of his chief claims in *Consumer Society* (1970) is precisely that the effect of consumerism is to replace social relations with a "system of objects". We make believe, he claims, that "purchasing and consumption must have the same value as any human relation." (Baudrillard 1988:14). However, the resemblance of commodity-relations to human relations is deficient in one revealing aspect. The "personalized" relations to commodities lack the conflictual \hat{u} shocking \hat{u} character that becomes characteristic of libidinally charged human relations in modern societies. Importantly, Baudrillard emphasizes that one function of the "system of objects" is the neutralization of conflicts, and thus of shocks. Objects are infinitely more pliant to our desires than human beings. This is the reason why the system of objects does not really resemble society at all, but rather \hat{u} as Baudrillard points out \hat{u} appears to us as an image of "nature" \hat{u} a festive nature of profusion or cornucopia (ibid 30). This artificial nature is clearly not so much a reference to "real" nature as an attempt to usurp its place through what Baudrillard in his later writings would call a simulacrum of nature. It is of course because of the neutralization of conflicts that he argues that consumerism means the end of the "dialectical" development postulated by Marxism (ibid 13) \hat{u} all tensions and contradictions that may destabilize the system are pacified and recuperated by means of the redirection of libido to non-social objects. Desire is liberated from fear, but at the same time prevented from posing a threat to the social order. The non-social objects serve as the "black holes" which absorb the desire which might have led to social unrest. Here we may note that consumerism duplicates the familiar Freudian model of libidinal transformation, the difference being that libido is transferred to commodities instead of introjected objects. The basic similarity persists, however, since shock is avoided through a transfer of libido from the shock-producing area of real human interaction to "non-social" objects. In both cases, desire is diverted into tracks which are free from shock.

Perhaps this is the place to relate our discussion to Miyadai Shinji's concept of "desocialization" (*datsushakaika*).⁹⁵ He uses it to explain the repeated occurrence of cold-blooded juvenile crime in Japan (starting with a notorious murder-cum-decapitation committed by a 14-year old in Kôbe 1997), which is often characterized by a lack of "comprehensible" motive as well as a lack of subsequent remorse. A noteworthy fact is the considerable sympathy the Kôbe murderer elicited from a great number of school-children. Not only did many

share his resentment towards school, there were also faxes from children expressing admiration for the "kakkôii" (smart, fine, cool) murder. The "message" of the murder that struck such a responsive chord, Miyadai suggests, was the following:

Everybody, it's hard to live in society, isn't it? This is why everyone is busy struggling to change his place in society or to change society as a whole. But it's surely no use. If life in society is hard, it is much better to take leave of society instead. If we can break through to the outside of society, we'll all be much more comfortable. (Miyadai & Fujii 2001:9f)

As society grows more complex life in society demands greater "communication skills". Those who lack these skills can react in a number of ways. The most radical solution is "desocialization", to step out of society in the sense that communication ceases to be related to one's self-regard. Miyadai is careful to distinguish this solution from what is ordinarily meant by "anti-social" or "asocial" behavior. Many so-called "anti-social" acts of violence are in fact very "social" in the sense that the perpetrators still care about their place in society or attempt to communicate something through their violent acts. Thus the Aum Shinrikyô sect's gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995 — which was committed with the purpose of changing society through grand-scale apocalyptic terror — is described as the last desperate attempt of people lacking "communication skills" to win a losing game. In contrast, "desocialized existences" don't even participate in the game and couldn't care less about society. Neither should "desocialized beings" be confused with the notorious so-called otaku and hikikomori.⁹⁶ The otaku — introvert male adults obsessed with video games, computers, comics or other asocial hobbies — react to the increasing demands on communication skills by physically secluding themselves from society. The strategy of physical seclusion is even more pronounced in the case of the hikikomori — adolescents or young adults who, frustrated in life, confine themselves to their room or apartment. The reason for the seclusion of the otaku and the hikikomori is not that they don't want to communicate: often they want to, but feel that they lack the necessary skills. In this sense, they are still at heart "socially" oriented. In contrast, the desocialized don't retreat physically from society. They may very well know how to interact "normally", but this interaction is unrelated to their sense of self-worth (ibid 36).

Clearly, both consumerism and "desocialization" are related to what we call non-sociality. Neither Baudrillard nor Miyadai, however, link these phenomena to Freud and the theory or the internalization of libido. Here I will suggest that turning to this theory makes it easier to understand why they occur. While Miyadai sees the "rationale" behind desocialization — the quite logical decision to quit a losing game — he doesn't identify the psychological dynamics that explain why this logic suddenly comes into force. The neutralization of shock through the "system of objects" and the withdrawal from the game of communication are both, at the most fundamental level, a corollary of the

indifference towards society that results from the redirection of libido. Let us have a closer look at how Freud presents this process.

The redirection of libido

How does this escape from shock through taking refuge in the non-social differ from the strategy delineated by Benjamin and Simmel, the setting up of a "protective shield" of intellectualism? To be sure, the phenomenon of privatization may have been sensed to some extent by Simmel in its negative aspects — as what he called reserve and aversion towards other people. But he neglected to consider if libidinal energies were merely suppressed or if they were redirected to new "safe" areas where the risk of shock was lower. Instead he took for granted that it would be sufficient to focus on the purely intellectual efforts needed to adapt oneself to the metropolitan environment. Adaptation, however, is quite possible without an improved intellectual grasp of the mechanisms of modernity. One can feel at home in modernity without understanding its mechanisms, in just the same way that it is possible to feel accustomed to nature without grasping its complex ecology. Naturalization, as mentioned, means that modernity has come to be felt to be so self-evident that it no longer calls for any special intellectual efforts.

A predilection for overemphasizing the purely intellectual side of adapting oneself to a shocking environment is evident in Benjamin too. As we have already seen, he interprets Freud's theory of the origin of consciousness as a "protective shield" as a theory that explains the prevalence of the intellect in modernity. The typical way of consciousness to relate to its environment is taken to be equivalent to the reduction of sense-data to objects of information and the distortion of time into "empty and homogeneous time". A heightened degree of consciousness thus comes to mean something close to reified thinking or what Adorno usually refers to as identity-thinking. This, however, is bound to strike the reader as strange, since Freud himself never equated the workings of consciousness to those of rationality. For example, according to Freud the operations of consciousness include sublimation and redirection of libido. Benjamin chose not to emphasize this aspect of consciousness. For us, however, it is exactly this more shadowy and secretive aspect which is of interest. It is these silent processes — which transform the surface of consciousness as if from below — that will help us to understand the curious solitude of Murakami's heroes.

It is clear that neither Simmel nor Benjamin can help us to understand how shock can subside without the help of intellectual efforts. In order to gain a clear theoretical picture of the process of privatization we need to turn to Freud's theory of the interiorization of libido in *On Narcissism* (1914) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923).⁹⁷ According to Freud, the ego usually does not react to an experience of loss or to a trauma by totally extinguishing the libido or affection felt for the lost object. Instead, it compensates itself for the loss by setting up a replacement for the lost object inside itself — "introjecting" it — thus

making it easier for the real object to be given up. Thus the ego may seem to react to unrequited love by extinguishing its libido, but in reality the libido is merely redirected inwards towards the introjected object, transforming itself from "object-libido" to "narcissistic libido" (Freud 1991a:267). In this way, Freud writes, the ego is able to enjoy "a happy love once more" (ibid 94).

When the ego assumes the features of the object, it is forcing itself, so to speak, upon the id as a love-object and is trying to make good the id's loss by saying: "Look, you can love me too — I am so like the object." (Freud 1991a:369)

This process implies an "abandonment of sexual aims", or a "desexualization" of relations to other human beings (ibid 369). When the ego experiences the loss of someone it had loved or desired, the ability to love a new object never recovers completely. Instead, as we have seen, the ego reacts by internalizing the lost other, incorporating the other's traits of character, and thus preserves the other within itself. As Freud points out in *The Ego and the Id*, this transformation of libido into narcissistic libido is characteristic of the development of "character" in any person's life. He portrays such a fully developed "character" as more or less immune against further disappointments in love. With each new internalization, the ego becomes increasingly independent of external relations for its libidinal gratifications and less easily hurt. Simultaneously, the ego loses libidinal interest in the external world. It becomes, as Freud remarks, "desexualized". The end result of repeated introjections is a state in which the ego has become independent of its environment, since all libido is transferred from object-libido to narcissistic libido. Dependence on an unstable and hostile environment is neutralized. Peace of mind is restored and made independent of actual relations to other people or things.

This state bears a strong resemblance to the dominant mood of Murakami Haruki's protagonists. Their immunity against shock, their "intense indifference" and their equanimity of mind, seem to make them prototypes of such fully developed "characters". The protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase* was happy with his girlfriend, but seems just as happy without her. In making himself indifferent to the bustle of change in society, he is not just isolating himself from the material realm but the realm of human interaction as well. Love that is torn away from a real person and redirected to an interiorized object expresses itself as sentimentality. In Murakami sentimentality tends to displace love. This accounts for the scarcity of shock in his writings. We could observe this phenomenon already in the contrast between Baudelaire's *A une passante* and Murakami's retelling of a similar chance meeting on a street in Harajuku. As we remember, the city crowd depicted in the latter is free from the fierce conflict between fear and desire that we saw was typical of shock-modernity. The meeting was not shocking since the narrator never feared that the woman would really disappear. His desire, we could say, was directed towards an internalized object. Even in *The Wind-up Bird*, Okada's decision to retrieve

Kumiko seems to be less motivated by any actual pain of living without her, than by loyalty to an internalized image which he has of himself and of his responsibilities to her. To rescue her back is "something from which he cannot escape" if he wants to be true to himself; it is not primarily a gratifying act in itself. In Kawabata or Abe, by contrast, one feels the intact presence of painful, vigorous libidinal attachments to women. In both of these writers human relations — especially love-relationships — are mined with shock and pain. Shock hits hardest when the heart makes itself most vulnerable and expects the most tenderness. To be sure, one finds narcissism and sentimentalism in Kawabata too, but these elements are always neutralized by the senseless pain of shock, in which the protagonists awaken to the reality of their loss.

Freud helps us to conceive of an alternative response to shock than that which was predicted by Benjamin or Simmel. The latter two assume that the subject will react to the prevalence of shock by becoming more "conscious" about the risks facing it in the dangerous world of human relations where it has to seek libidinal gratification. In contrast, Freud's theory suggests that libidinal investment in the long run might be redirected from external relations to "safer" areas. Rather than arming itself with a heightened degree of consciousness when venturing into external relations, the subject will abandon them and turn to new areas of gratification inside the self. Benjamin and Simmel, in other words, presuppose that society will always be viewed with a mixture of fear and desire, while Freud helps us to see how desire may be redirected from such objects that may inspire fear. In naturalized modernity libido is internalized. Reason is no longer needed as a protective shield against shock since there is no longer any desire which makes the subject vulnerable to shocks in the first place. Instead of becoming more "conscious" about the risk of shock in external relations, the ego may withdraw libidinal investment from them. In this way the instances of shock will decrease, but only to the price of privatization.

Later we will return to a more comprehensive discussion of the interiorization of libido in order to explore its link to trauma. As I will argue Freud makes it easier to diagnose the instability and the contradictions inherent in non-social spheres than either Baudrillard or Miydai, or in other words to locate the dilemmas and points of resistance that disrupt them. To find these dilemmas is the task of part 4:4 of this chapter. At this point, however, our aim is merely to suggest that the dying away of shock, the dismantling of the protective shield and the reenchantment of life are made possible by a mechanism that essentially involves the unconscious — privatization

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The family and the love-relationship are where libidinal relations are strongest and the disruptive effects of atomization are most keenly felt, and it will be especially revealing to study briefly how atomization extends into these areas of life and how a variety of non-social areas of libidinal gratification arise to take their place, using a few examples from Japanese literature.⁹⁸

A striking illustration of the non-social space's function as a refuge and place of freedom from the family is given in "The Boring Room" ("Taikutsu na heya"), a manga by Tsuge Yoshiharu from 1975. A man rents a room without telling his wife and sneaks out to it every day pretending to go for a walk. He uses it for doing nothing — lying on the bed and simply farting, looking at the sunflowers in the window or doing gymnastics. The room is the very picture of freedom. One day, however, his wife knocks on the door, having found out about the room from the mailman. She starts bringing food, furniture and decorations to make the room more comfortable, the irony of this "understanding" attitude of course being that by doing so she recuperates the room into the family life he wanted to escape and makes it meaningless (Tsuge 1998). Susan Napier has observed that, while the longing to escape from the wasteland of urbanized, industrialized culture characterizes pre- as well as postwar literature in Japan, the portrayal of women has undergone an ominous change. Unlike in prewar writers like Izumi Kyôka or Tanizaki, woman no longer serves as an "oasis woman" or guarantor of a magical past, but tends instead to be portrayed as "part of the web of entrapment" (Napier 1996:54ff). The male protagonist therefore tends to turn inwards, towards his own self, in his search for a refuge.

Escape from the family to the non-social can also be seen in female authors. This is strikingly illustrated in the fiction of Shôno Yoriko (1956-). Her protagonists are mostly single women living alone in the city, preferring to dwell in their own dreams than with other people. They often display an allergic hypersensitivity to the rigidly traditional family-system. Although they resolutely opt for non-sociality, this does not mean that they give up love; rather their ideal is a "love without a partner". Tellingly, she has stated that a main motive for writing one of her stories was to explore the possibility of such love (Shôno 1998:169f). Thus the narrator of *Timeslip Industrial Complex* (1994, *Taimusurippu konbinâto*) is a young woman who falls in love with a tuna in a dream and next morning takes the train to Tokyo-bay in search for the tuna. Another striking example of non-social libido is found in *Shaman of the Sun* (1995, *Taiyô no miko*), where the protagonist can only meet her husband in her dreams by taking various "medicines" — this husband being a god to whom she has been betrothed as a miko or shaman (Shôno 1997:20). Her works constitute one of the most determined attempts to furnish, through the force of imagination and dreams, non-social space with the "exteriority" — the presence of otherness which is the precondition of love — that is usually only found in painful, real, human relations in the external world.

Many contemporary writers are less preoccupied with the shocking breakdown of the family than with protagonists who lack a family from the very start. John W. Treat points out that Yoshimoto Banana's young heroines persistently feel their real families to be "false" and nostalgically long for another, ideal family, which is "never a genetic given but instead a willed construct" (Treat 1993:374). Approaching her work through a discussion of so-called *shôjo* culture in Japan — the popular culture of young girls centered on

the supreme value of cuteness (*kawaisa*) — he emphasizes the desexualized nature of this culture. Clearly he is referring to what we have called the redirection of libido to the non-social. Interestingly, however, although libidinal energies are deflected from actual heterosexual relationships, it is not entirely non-social. What instead emerges to take precedence over the family and erotic love in Yoshimoto Banana's fiction is the horizontal "pseudo-sibling relationship" of friends.

The pseudo-sibling relationship is always powerful in Banana's fiction: seldom sexual, never Oedipal, nothing but smug and non-threatening, the pseudo-sibling relationship engenders a kind of lateral parity that contrasts with the hierarchal schema of a patriarchal family organization. (Treat 1993:373).

What Banana's heroines nostalgically picture as their lost home, Treat suggests, is this ideal family of pseudo-siblings. Their nostalgia is not a nostalgia for the past, since the lost perfect world of youth never existed to begin with, but is rather a wistful longing to have had the perfect and unblemished past they are imagining. Even the present is somehow "lost", never actually experienced in its present fullness, but rather perceived as an object of future nostalgia. Treat observes that the pervasive feeling of nostalgia in Banana's work coincides with narcissism, both of which contribute to a sense of loss and emptiness: nostalgia by idealizing something gone and narcissism by the self-referential pursuit of things related to one's own past (ibid 381). Treat's observation on the coincidence of nostalgia and narcissism is helpful since it helps us to conceive of the idealized family of "pseudo-siblings" as a non-social space.

Atomization and privatization

What is the social background of privatization and the rise of the non-social? Two social developments in modern industrialized societies suggest themselves as presuppositions of this process: (1) an unprecedented material wealth that for the first time in history makes it practically feasible for large portions of the population to live in self-imposed isolation, and (2) the increasing penetration of even the most intimate human relations by atomization. Let us start by scrutinizing the first of these presuppositions.

(1) A seemingly plausible explanation of privatization is the affluence and technological development that have made it possible for a large part of the population to afford the "luxury" of living isolated lives. The example of the otaku mentioned above shows that technology, so long viewed as a source of shock, is also a means for individuals to isolate themselves from shock. Their retreat from society is made possible by the high level of technological development and automatization in their environment. Not only the need of mechanical power and efficiency, but also the need for excitement, self-esteem and sexual stimulation is increasingly possible to fulfill through the

manipulation of machines and computers rather than thorough human relationships. Miyadai too claims that one of the reasons of "desocialization" is the trend whereby it has become increasingly feasible — through convenience stores and the internet — to lead lives without communicating with others (Miyadai & Fujii 2001:26). While this explanation helps us to see how the system can facilitate the redirection of libido to a certain kind of "non-social" objects, it is clearly insufficient for a number of reasons. One reason that the world of the otaku shouldn't be confused with genuine non-sociality is that — as Miyadai himself argues — the otaku is usually at heart a very "social" being, who often would like nothing better than to communicate and be part of society. The most important reason, however, is that the world of the otaku is still to a large extent a world of shock. The retreat from society into a mere physical seclusion is a very poor strategy of defense against shock, since the threat of intrusion by the outside world will always loom large. In this sense, the apartment of the otaku is nothing but a contemporary attempt to resurrect the "auratic" space of the 19th century bourgeois domestic interior.

(2) Atomization may be a more important cause of privatization. As the risk of shock infects an ever increasing number of human relations, the aura of the community and then of the family are successively disintegrated. Finally the subject may well be driven to seek refuge on the only firm ground left: non-social areas, such as the interior of its own mind or the world of consumer objects.

A useful preliminary formulation of the connection between atomization and privatization is presented by Napier, who as mentioned observes that male Japanese writers of the post-war period have increasingly turned inward in their search for a refuge from the wasteland of modernity. "Women are no longer part of wish-fulfillment fantasies. Instead, they are part of the reality which the male protagonist longs to escape" (Napier 1996:54). She sees part of the explanation in the "increased expectations and disappointments among the sexes" in industrialized society (ibid 55f). In other words, Napier portrays the privatization in male authors as a response to the transformation of the family and the love relationship into arenas of shock. The reason that woman cannot serve as a refuge from reification for the male is that relations between the sexes have themselves become reified.

Let us return to the concept of atomization, which we defined as the disintegration of social bonds through system-imperatives. We have seen that in the analyses put forward by Benjamin or Bloch, areas such as the bourgeois domestic interior were still not entirely subject to this process. The interior could still be elevated to a sanctuary of the ideology of patriarchal family life. In more contemporary analyses such as Habermas's and Beck's the family — or any other "safe haven" — has already become part of the reified realm. Thus Habermas sees the "juridification" of the family as a topical manifestation of the "colonization of the lifeworld" (Habermas 1992a). Beck points to the demands of the labor market as a "motor of individualization" that does not stop at the

gates of the family and states that the antagonisms of late modernity erupt "mainly in private relationships, and they are fought out in the kitchen, the bedroom and the nursery." (Beck 1992:88, 106). In both writers, system-imperatives are presented as the cause of the break-up of the family. The disappearance of the "oasis woman" seems to be the correlate of the latest advance of atomization, through which libidinal bonds have become increasingly perilous even in such "intimate" areas as the family or the love relationship. As long as libido is invested in such bonds — as long as the relation has "aura" — this process is experienced as painful or shocking.⁹⁹

This explanation makes it perfectly understandable why so many writers of the early postwar-generation portray the family as an arena of shock. Thus Abe Kôbô's *The Face of Another* is a supreme illustration of a scientist's mistrust towards his wife, while Γε Kenzaburô's *A Personal Matter* centrally revolves around a man's wish to escape from his wife and child. The problem with this explanation, however, is that it is better suited to explain the spread of shock than to explain privatization, or what Napier calls the search for a refuge in the self. It explains the break-up of the nuclear family and the increasing fragility of sexual relations, but not the creation of new areas of libidinal fulfillment. Shock and the tension between "fear and desire" is characteristic of periods in which we have atomization but not yet privatization. Here we see why it is crucial to distinguish clearly between atomization and privatization. Atomization is what makes libidinal relations perilous and turns them into minefields of shock. Privatization means the withdrawal of libido from human relations. Privatization, we could say, is the libidinal adaptation to an atomized society. But this adaptation itself remains a riddle. On the level of system-development we are confronted with a basic continuity — the continuity of the increasing power and complexity of the economic and administrative systems, the continuity of atomization and of the spread of reifying relations into more and more spheres of life, and finally the continuity of automatization or the outright replacement of human relations by technology. All of these developments were certainly characteristic of Benjamin's time as well. Why, then, would the spread of atomization provoke reactions of privatization in one case and a heightening of consciousness in another? How does the continuous growth in the power of the system relate to the shift in perception? How, in short, can the "same" society be perceived both as a shock-modernity and as a naturalized modernity? How do we explain this mysterious "qualitative leap"? To solve this riddle we need to scrutinize the notion of trauma.

4-4: Hades

CLOV: There are so many terrible things now.

HAMM: No, no, there are not so many now. û Samuel Beckett (1958:44)

In Murakami Haruki's *Pinball 1973* (1980, 1973 nen no pinbôru) the protagonist sits all day in a cozy little office listening to Stan Getz while doing translations conveyor belt style. Every time the office girl asks him how he is doing or how work is going, he answers: "Fine" or "Not bad" (Murakami Haruki 1983:74). Kawamoto Saburô, who confesses himself to be drawn to the "fabricated lightness" in this work, nevertheless argues that Murakami's enjoyment of "surface" and a consumerist lifestyle is a mere "pretense". The reason that the narrators keep repeating that they are feeling fine is not, he points out, that they really feel fine û it is that they enjoy saying it (Kawamoto 1997:82, 1998:44).

Murakami Haruki always carefully pretends to enjoy life and enjoy the lie that "I'm feeling fine", but that's all. This cynical writer makes plentiful use of "the playfulness and superficiality" of city life but at the same time he is resigned that "there is nothing left for us but taste and mood". His attachment to lies actually derives from his "resignation" that in our modern times it is already impossible to live as a "modern subject". (ibid 1998:47)

I will later argue that Murakami Haruki's protagonists are not as completely "resigned" as Kawamoto seems to suggest, since their resignation is itself a sort of pretense through which they express their rejection or distrust of the status quo in a negative fashion. Nevertheless, Kawamoto's observation is helpful, since it perceptively underscores the stoic quality of their "fabricated lightness". Something û perhaps best described as the absence of passionate happiness û tells us that this is far from a good life.¹⁰⁰ This in turn suggests that naturalization is not simply a harmless consequence of having "gotten used" to modernity. But how should we understand this discomfort, these darker aspects that are hidden behind its "pleasant" façade? Kawamoto leaves the question unanswered, yet it is of crucial importance if we want to grasp the dynamics that is inherent in naturalized states and that may threaten their stability. Here I will suggest that these aspects can be conveniently grasped theoretically in the concept of "post-trauma" and graphically in the image of Hades, the land of the dead where there is neither pain nor happiness.

Post-traumatic states are less reminiscent of what Benjamin calls "hell" than of the joyless shadow-world of Hades. Unlike the Christian or Buddhist hell, the Hades of Greek mythology is not a place of tortures and horrors.¹⁰¹ It was thought to be situated beyond five rivers, last of which was Lethe, the river of merciful forgetting whose waters obliterate all memories of the lost life on earth. Hades itself was pictured as a melancholy meadow of white lilies, where the innumerable shadows billow in a perpetual haze that no sun dispels. European paintings of hell and Japanese jigokue (Buddhist paintings of hell) usually portray the physical body as the object of torment. By contrast, Hades is

populated by ghosts and shadows. Whereas the inhabitants of hell are alive û albeit in a life of eternal physical suffering û those of Hades are dead, or û more precisely û "living dead", shadows that merely exist, without pain or joy. If the characteristic metaphor for shock-modernity is hell, then for naturalized modernity it is Hades.

We can clarify the difference between hellish and Hades-like images of modernity if we recall the hellish city-life of the expressionist German painter Georg Grosz. It is no coincidence that Grosz leads the thought to certain medieval paintings of hell. Here too the gaze wanders, unable to capture the depicted object at once, from one painful scene to the other. Reification hurts not through insensitive indifference, but through insensitive cruelty. Shock-modernity is not in the slightest degree any more "lifeless" than pre-modernity. Only, its life is somewhat more hellish, somewhat more intense. In later times, portrayals of the city are no longer hellish. The muffled sense of doom remains, as in *Blade Runner* or cyberpunk fiction, but the weariness and fatigue permeating these dying civilizations is also one in which people seem to have lost the tactile organs necessary in order to experience acute pain. The same holds true for the societies portrayed in contemporary authors such as Pynchon and Don DeLillo. This, to use the words of Richard Lehan, is a world of "urban entropy" rather than apocalypse, of slow decomposition rather than crisis (Lehan 1998:123ff).¹⁰²

A highly interesting attempt to apply the concept of trauma in cultural analysis is made by James Berger, who in a recent study works out a theory of contemporary culture as "post-apocalyptic" through analyses ranging from Pynchon to Wenders and from Derrida to Reaganism.¹⁰³ The sense of crisis and imminent apocalypse said to be characteristic of modernity have shifted towards a sense that the catastrophe has somehow already occurred, that we are now living in the aftermath of time, "after the end". This paradoxical situation is defining for "post-apocalyptic" culture: the end is never the end, since the world "impossibly" continues and one lives on. Yet, how is one to continue living "after the end"? How is one to express the event that was so shattering that language itself seemed to disintegrate? Post-apocalyptic fiction must struggle with the paradoxical problem of "saying the unsayable". Survivors are faced with the problem of having to refer to an "absent" referent, groping their way towards recovery while at the same time being marked by all the familiar symptoms of trauma: denial, fetishism, the compulsion to repeat. A prime feature of such traumatized cultures is thus that they are structured around a lack, a void that gapes in their midst, that can only be referred to indirectly. Indeed, reading Murakami Haruki one has the overpowering sense that he is struggling to express something which is extremely painful for him. He explicitly states û in the beginning of *Hear the Wind Sing* (1979, *Kaze no uta o kike*) û that writing is painful for him, and the "search for the right word" is a theme to which he explicitly refers throughout his writing.

In this connection we might mention a second characteristic of post-apocalyptic writing emphasized by Berger, namely compulsive repetition. The

post-apocalyptic sense, Berger argues, almost always entails the desire for another, more complete catastrophe, for another apocalypse that will be absolutely conclusive, that will end what should already have ended, and bring about the revelation that failed to occur at the initial catastrophe.

In the wake of some catastrophe, the apocalyptic writer creates a greater and conclusive catastrophe. Surely, he thinks, the world cannot and should not have survived such destabilization and horror. And yet it has. The world, intolerably, continues. But it should, it must, end. (Berger 1999:35).

Consequently, post-apocalyptic representations prevalently "put forward a total critique of any existing social order" since only an "absolute, purifying cataclysm" can make possible an utterly new, perfect world (ibid 7). Here we recognize the criticism against society as a closed, "false" totality, which we have found to be strongly present in the fiction of Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû. Sloterdijk too describes contemporary cynic culture as "catastrophile", as suffused by "an eerie readiness for catastrophes" and a sympathy with the "catastrophic, the apocalyptic, and the violently spectacular" (Sloterdijk 1987:120).¹⁰⁴ Significantly, he describes it as a culture that yearns for "life" because it lacks any itself.

More than ever, we wait for something corresponding to that feeling of better days, that something has to happen. And more than a few want to add: I doesn't matter what. We feel catastrophic and catastrophile [...]. We do our work and say to ourselves, it would be better to get really involved. We live from day to day, from vacation to vacation, from news show to news show, from problem to problem, from orgasm to orgasm, in private turbulences and medium-term affairs, tense, relaxed. With some things we feel dismay but with most things we can't really give a damn. [...] In weak moments we donate something for Eritrea or for a ship for Vietnam, but we don't go there. We would still like to see a lot of the world and in general "to live a whole lot more". (Sloterdijk 1987:98f)

The state described by Sloterdijk strikes the reader as a state suffering from an absence of "life", a Hades whose dead feel cheated of their promised resurrection. What he calls cynicism is a bitterness shot through by a longing for transformative experiences, for felt contact with reality, for being in touch with one self, for being touched and moved for what we, in our discussion of Murakami Ryû, will call a nostalgia for shock. The philosopher of religion Nakazawa Shin'ichi describes this as a desire to strip oneself of illusions and to "touch and caress naked reality with one's bare hands" (Nakazawa 1997:11). This desire to regain a lost contact with "reality" is a manifestation of the compulsion to repeat. For the traumatized, the last time they "really lived" was the moment of the trauma. Since then they feel shut up inside a depopulated nature, a land of the dead. "Life" cannot be regained except by the same level of stimulus which caused the trauma, which must therefore be repeated.

The view that the non-social is a refuge from the hardships of life is wrong for the same reason that the prevalent criticism of Murakami Haruki's fiction as

mere "surface" — playful, frivolous, cynical etc. — is wrong. It overlooks that "pleasant loneliness" is often unpleasant. The sources of this displeasure, however, function as the traumatic events described by Berger: they "effect their own erasures from memory and must be reconstructed by means of their traces, remains, survivors, and ghosts: their symptoms" (Berger 1999:19). The landscape of these symptoms is what we call Hades.

It is in helping us to elucidate this landscape theoretically that the concept of trauma proves its usefulness.¹⁰⁵ In particular, there are four reasons for us to resort to this concept at this point in our inquiries. To begin with, it is a logical extension of our inquiry into privatization, since Freud saw the interiorization of libido as a response to loss. Secondly, this extension will help us to bring clarity into the problem of the "qualitative leap" between the two modes of perception, since it will enable us to argue that the exposure to shock in shock-modernity may produce effects analogous to those of trauma and thus occasion a shift to naturalized modernity.

Thirdly, the concept of trauma will enable us to get behind or relativize the peaceful surface appearance of life in naturalized modernity. Without the concept of trauma as a counterpoint to this surface, we would be at a loss to explain the signs or symptoms telling us that "something is wrong", signs such as selfhatred, loneliness, boredom, and an ill-defined sense of loss that insistently keep appearing in contemporary fiction. Although conscious shocks may no longer be a central experience all these signs point to some previous loss or catastrophe, perhaps too great to be entirely worked through consciously. This explains how blocks and inhibitions may remain in the unconscious, acting as "anchors" that make so-called postmodern culture just as closed and "centered" as classical modernity despite its surface appearance of playfulness and uninhibited flux.

Fourthly, and most importantly, the concept of trauma will help us to locate the dynamics inherent in the phenomenon of naturalization. The curious stillness characterizing literary representations of naturalized modernity coexists with the persistent theme of "recovery". This reflects the ambivalence of privatization — a process that liberates from shock, but only at the price of traumatization. The dilemma of naturalized modernity crucially centers on this ambivalence, which is also the point at which an immanent questioning and destabilization of naturalization may set to work.

The concept of trauma

"We describe as ætraumaticÆ any excitations from the outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield", Freud writes (1991a:301). This protective shield is the one we have already encountered in our discussion of Benjamin: the shield set up by the ego as a protection against the shocks and excessive stimuli of the external environment. "The more readily consciousness registers these shocks", Benjamin adds, "the less likely are they to have a traumatic effect" (Benjamin 1997:115). Here Benjamin touches on

one of the defining features of trauma — a trauma is a shock that is so overwhelming that it is unacceptable to consciousness, which fails to fully grasp or "register" it. Unable to rise to consciousness the traumatic memory instead manifests itself in symptomatic form. Berger sees the most central importance of Freud's concept of trauma in its power to describe how events can continue to have influence long after they occur, or in other words, how "an overpowering event, unacceptable to consciousness, can be forgotten and yet return in the form of somatic symptoms, or compulsive repetitive behaviors" (Berger 1999:22).

Here already we begin to see how a traumatic event differs from the "shocks" mentioned by Benjamin. If a shock is what brings about the disintegration of the aura, then trauma is what brings about the disintegration of the protective shield of consciousness. A shock, as Benjamin points out, tends to lead to a strengthening of the protective shield. A shocking event may very well shatter the tradition of previous *Erfahrungen*, but it can be domesticated by being turned into an *Erlebnis*, an object of "information" for heightened consciousness. Not so a trauma. A trauma shatters the very capacity of the ego to grasp objects by means of such a heightened consciousness. This is why the experience of trauma eludes the grasp of Benjamin's two categories of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. Since a trauma is not primarily registered in consciousness but in the unconscious, it resists the grasp of heightened consciousness as well as assimilation into the tradition of previous experiences, being perceived neither as a reified thing nor as an auratic object.

This difference between shock and trauma can also be formulated succinctly using the terminology developed by the later Freud, who broadly distinguished between three principles of mental functioning: the pleasure principle (representing the demands of the libido), the reality principle (representing the demands of the external world) and the Nirvana principle (representing the death-instinct) (Freud 1991a:415). We could say that in an environment that is merely "shocking" in Benjamin's sense, the pleasure principle tends to be subordinated to the reality-principle. The prototypical example here is the cunning Odysseus depicted by Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* — the rational "enlightenment" subject who constantly represses his inner nature in the name of self-preservation. In a traumatized state, however, the subject no longer adheres to this model. Here the pleasure principle is no longer subordinated to the demands of reality but rather, as Freud discovered, to the death instinct, to the compulsion to repeat the trauma. Here we may observe in passing that the inability even to represent the shattering event in consciousness and the compulsion to repeat correspond to the two features of post-apocalyptic literature emphasized by Berger — the attempt to say the unsayable and the desire to bring about a conclusive repetition of the apocalypse.

If the ego cannot master a trauma by a further heightening of consciousness, then how does it respond to it? Instead of aiming at an improved mastery over the shocking environment, the traumatized subject needs to concentrate its

energies on the more pressing task of recovery û on mastering the traumatic intrusion retrospectively. As Freud points out, this task is so urgent that all other psychical functions are paralyzed during the period of convalescence, including the pleasure principle. In contradiction to this principle, the subject reacts to the trauma by compulsively repeating it, for example in dreams, which therefore no longer serve as arenas of wish-fulfillment (ibid 304). A final way to articulate the difference between trauma and shock, then, is to say that with the former, the issue of recovery becomes central.

*

How is the concept of trauma related to naturalization? The shattering of the protective shield in trauma leads to a paralysis of the ego's capacity to register shock-sensations, since the ego becomes so absorbed by the task of recovery that it loses interest in the outside world, no matter how "objectively" turbulent and shocking this world may appear to be. This obsession with something that no longer bears direct relation to what is immediately perceived explains the indifference to society, which we see in privatization, as well as the curious stillness characteristic of perceptions of this society, which has become naturalized.

Metaphorically, this stillness should not be pictured as a result of the abatement of the "maelstrom" of shock-modernity, but as a result of a qualitative leap that comes about when the maelstrom becomes viewed from the vantage point of the "drowned". Murakami Haruki's protagonists behave as if some great roaring wave had swallowed them up, plunging them into a submarine world of silence and apparent tranquility.

How much time passed I don't know. I walked on in a silence without end. For months and years I was sitting on the bottom of a pool all by myself. Warm water and soft light, and silence. And, silence. (Murakami Haruki 1983:34f)

It is not that modern society in his fiction has become any less turbulent or insecure û "objectively" it still remains the competitive and unfeeling Gesellschaft described by Tönnies û but a qualitative change has come about in the way that this turbulence and insecurity is perceived.

Naturalization, then, is an experience which, when analysed, proves to be far less transparent than the shock sensation. Traumatization plays a central role in it. The trauma, however, is not immediately evident in the moment of experience itself. It is denied, creating the semblance of nature. This semblance is superimposed on the settings of shock-modernity û the atomized social relations, the technology, the crowds and the cityscapes û which turn into the indifferent or dreamlike backgrounds, or "landscapes", diagnosed by Karatani and Katô.

But from where does the sense of traumatization, which brings about this change in perspective, stem? If technology and the atomization of social

relations are the classical sources of shock, what are the corresponding sources of trauma? Here is the point at which we need to return to the question of the social "background" of non-sociality and settle it. This demands that we clarify the nature of the relation between trauma and atomization. The latter would seem to be insufficient to explain any widespread sense of trauma since it is a characteristic of modern society as such, whether perceived as "shocking" or as "naturalized". Why would atomization cause trauma in one mode of modernity, when it is "merely" a cause of shock in another? Here it might seem that we need to search for another, "additional" cause. But there is a simpler and more economic way to solve the problem. As Masud Khan points out, events can have a traumatic quality even if they are neither gross nor acute when taken into account one by one. They become traumatic only cumulatively and retrospectively. Seemingly trivial frustrations may silently and imperceptibly build up until an untenable situation is created (Khan 1963). In other words, the subject may react to each single shock within shock-modernity through a heightening of consciousness, but at the same time the effect of the accumulation of these shocks taken together may give rise to a traumatic effect. Shock-modernity would then come to function in a manner similar to what Khan calls a "cumulative trauma". Atomization may be a source of shock and a traumatic event at the same time. If this is true then there is no need for us to search for a clear demarcation between shock-modernity and naturalized modernity, since there need not be any single great traumatic event that serves as their watershed. More reasonable would be to posit a slow and maybe uneven shift towards a state in which culture as a whole more and more takes on the appearance of being traumatized and in which each single shock counts for less and less, finally becoming lighter than a feather, meaningless and insignificant in relation to the enormity of accumulated trivial setbacks and tensions. The result is a state in which culture, paradoxically, will seem to be simultaneously "immune" against further shocks and unable to "take it anymore": numb and hypersensitive, stable and unstable at once. A single shock may mean nothing, yet it may be the drop that causes the chalice to overflow.

This state can be studied in Murakami Ryû. Generally speaking resentment with society in his novels doesn't spring from any single source, but can be triggered by the most trifling event. There is an episode in *Coin Locker Babies* (1980, *Koinrokkâ beibîzu*) in which Kiku and Hashi, the two "coin locker babies", arrive at the home of their new foster parents on a small island off the coast of Kyûshû. A bug flies in through the window and Kiku stamps on it. "You mustn't kill living things like that", his mother reprimands him and tells him to go to bed.

Kiku suddenly wanted to scream, to turn himself into a huge jet plane, and bomb the hell out of the bugs, the leaves, this window, Kuwayama's machine, the lighthouse. The smell of the summer night, of sun-warmed trees cooling in the darkness, was somehow unbearable. (Murakami 1998:17)

The causes of resentment are variable and often trivial. Almost anything suffices to set off an allergic reaction. The only constant is resentment itself, and the process through which it becomes pent up and insisting on release. This is also evident in the tripartite novel *War Will Break Out on the Other Side of the Sea* (1977, *Umi no mukô de sensô ga hajimaru*), in which the different protagonists of the three parts — as Murakami Ryû himself points out in the postscript — are all driven to wish for war, but for completely different reasons. What makes people wish for war is not any specified social ill, but the fact that they are fed up with the frustrations of their respective everyday lives. As Miyadai has remarked, the "motives" that trigger the "desocialized" variety of juvenile delinquency are uninteresting in order to explain the rise of this type of criminality in contemporary Japan, since what is crucial is that the threshold for such crimes has become so low that they can be triggered by the most trivial and diverse kinds of motives (Miyadai & Fujii 2001:13).

The concept of cumulative trauma makes it possible for us to view naturalization as an inherent possibility in shock-modernity. The sense of post-trauma is born from the constant rain of shocks that falls on the realm of "social" relations and from which people seek refuge in the "non-social". Instead of postulating a single trauma, we can view it as the result of a long-term exposure to an environment in which we are continually made to suffer shocks. We can thus avoid the Zizekian position that trauma is a structural and inevitable condition without having to rely exclusively, as Berger tends to do, on the traumatic impact of great, shattering historic events (such as the Holocaust or the cultural upheaval of the 60's in the US). There is a middle ground between saying that trauma is structural and that it is contingent and accidental. Berger is no doubt correct to point to the contingency of the great "singular" catastrophes.¹⁰⁶ But the sense of posttrauma in contemporary culture does not necessarily stem from any single, great shattering event. Its advent has been gradual, not sudden, and can be discerned among many writers and artists belonging to the milieu of shock-modernity itself.¹⁰⁷ Although the great traumatic events in history — the Holocaust, wars, failed or successful revolutions and upheavals — importantly contribute to the post-traumatic sense in late modernity, these events are themselves only part of the general milieu of shock that Benjamin called hell or the "continuous catastrophe" and that retrospectively assumes the form of trauma.

Ghosts without the uncanny

Saying this perhaps I will be misunderstood again, but I feel an immense sympathy for the dead. When all is said and done, my sympathy for the dead is stronger than for the living, and my sympathy for the non-existent stronger than for those who exist. — Murakami Haruki (Murakami-Kawamoto 1985:67)

Here I would like to suggest that the function of ghosts in literature changes in a striking fashion with the shift from shock-modernity to naturalized modernity. What, to begin with, is a ghost? Berger provides one of the most useful definitions. The ghost, he writes with a paradoxical twist, is "the ultimate survivor" (Berger 1999:50). What this means is that the ghost is someone who, after surviving some catastrophe, can only live in the past and for that reason is "dead" to the present in which he nevertheless lives on meaninglessly. The ghost, then, is a traumatized survivor who is neither dead nor really alive, but a "living dead", a person who has "outlived himself". With Žižek we could also refer to the ghost as someone living "between the two deaths", biologically alive but symbolically dead (Žižek 1989:135). A typical example would be Miu, one of the heroines of Murakami Haruki's *Sputnik Sweetheart* (1999, *Supûtoniku no koibito*), who dyes her hair black after it turned white a certain night in her twenties. During a dinner she tells her admiring friend Sumire:

"I'm sure you don't know this", she said calmly, returning her glass to the table. "The person here now isn't the real me. Fourteen years ago I became half the person I used to be. I wish I could have met you when I was whole û that would have been wonderful. But it's pointless to think about that now. (Murakami Haruki 2001:51)

Many similar "ghosts" appear in Murakami's fiction.¹⁰⁸ They all live on as "living dead" or "empty shells" after some traumatic encounter with pure evil (the "darkness" of the "other side"). As lieutenant Mamiya in *The Wind-up Bird* says: although he "couldn't die" in Outer Mongolia, that's where his "real life" ended, leaving him to "fulfill his duty of living on", without friends or family, experiences or emotions (*ibid* 1997a:309ff). Something similar holds true for the main protagonist himself, who is typically portrayed as a kind of "eternal survivor", mourning for dead friends and girlfriends.

Curiously, although the inhabitants of Murakami Haruki's Hades are ghost-like, they are hardly "uncanny" in Freud's sense of the term. Freud defines the uncanny as the return of something familiar that has been repressed, as "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (Freud 1990:364). Let us look at Baudelaire's *Les sept vieillards* (*The Seven Old Men*) for a classic example of the classical Freudian uncanny. The famous first lines of the poem û "Swarming city, city full of dreams / Where the spectre in broad daylight accosts the passer-by!" û take us back to the Baudelairean setting par excellence, the shocking city crowd. As is well known, the poet runs into seven identical-looking, horribly crooked old men on the street before fleeing in alarm back to his apartment and locking his door. The following words close the poem.

I was ill, overcome, hot and cold, deeply troubled,
At once baffled and hurt by the absurdity

And in vain did my reason attempt to take charge,
For its efforts were foiled by the tempest in me,
And my soul began dancing a jig, like a barge
Without masts on a monstrous and infinite sea.

(translated by John Goudge, Baudelaire 1997:125)

As if to confirm Benjamin's analysis of shock-modernity, the poem is organized around the poles of shock and a desperately struggling heightened consciousness. The vigorous struggle of the latter "to take charge" is especially noteworthy here, since consciousness is also the crucial agent of repression, without which there could be no "return of the repressed". The seven apparitions are indeed a classical example of such a return — inducing exactly the "uncanny" feeling of repetition which according to Freud stems from the familiarity with the repressed object (Freud 1990:360f). Naomi Segal explains why the creepy old men of this poem seem so familiar: we recognize them in the fairy tale motif of the seven dwarfs. The dwarfs only become uncanny by being ripped out from the folk tale where they would have been at home and unfrighting. It is only when nature as such, the setting of the folk tale, is repressed in the course of modernity and the "jolly sprites" are made to reappear in the wrong context — transplanted from countryside to the city — that they turn into grotesque "demons" (Segal 1985:98). The key to interpret this poem, then, is the repression of nature, through which the things once associated with it are made uncanny. In passing, this means that modernity was never really disenchanted, not even shock-modernity. Instead it is more correct to say that shock-modernity is characterized by the uncanny as its privileged form of enchantment, or in other words by a form of enchantment that arises through repression by heightened consciousness. The difference between shock-modernity and naturalized modernity is not that the former is disenchanted. The "gods" of shock-modernity are torn out of context, "stray-gods" that uncannily resurface in a fragmented world of flux, in which they collide with and shock the passer-by.

In contrast, Murakami Haruki's ghosts are no longer out of tune with their world and no longer either shocking or frightening. This can be most conveniently attested to by returning to the narrative of *Dance dance dance*. When for example Yumiyoshi, the "receptionist with the glasses", anxiously tells the narrator of her encounter with a ghost on one of the hotel floors, he is as unperturbed as always:

"Do you believe in what I said? About the sixteenth floor?", she asked while looking at her fingers.

"Of course", I said.

"Are you serious? Don't you think things like that are abnormal?"

"Maybe they're abnormal. But such things happen." (Murakami 1991c:98f)

In the Hades described by Murakami, ghosts are part of the trivial everyday. The reason for this is simple. Ghosts are only uncanny to those who identify with the living. By contrast, Murakami's heroes are themselves "ghosts", i.e. traumatized survivors, and tend to assume the perspective of the dead. The "other" world in his fiction is in fact not radically other at all, but rather comes forward as a place where the protagonist feels comfortable. This can be seen in "end of the world" narrative in *Hardboiled Wonderland*, in which the old Town where the narrator lives is clearly modeled on Hades. Although some of the "phantoms" inhabiting the town — such as the librarian — seem to be "doubles" of people met by the narrator in his conscious life, there is nothing frightening or vengeful about them. Rather they comfort the narrator and try to help him. Rather than these fellow phantoms, it is the "shadow", the representative of the narrator's own conscious mind, who appears as an uncanny reminder of the conscious world outside the town.

This curious inversion of roles can also be seen in Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (1990), which is remarkable for its portrayal of New York as a naturalized non-social space, a comfortable "nowhere", in which to disappear.

New York was an inexhaustible space, a labyrinth of endless steps, and no matter how far he walked, no matter how well he came to know its neighbourhoods and streets, it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well. Each time he took a walk, he felt as though he were leaving himself behind, and by giving himself up to the movement of the streets, by reducing himself to a seeing eye, he was able to escape the obligation to think, and this, more than anything else, brought him a measure of peace, a salutary emptiness within. By wandering aimlessly, all places became equal and it no longer mattered where he was. On his best walks, he was able to feel that he was nowhere. And this, finally, was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere. New York was the nowhere he had build around himself, and he realized that he had no intention of ever leaving it again. (Auster 1990:3f)

This is the very opposite of being shocked. Earlier, we described the early moderns "fascination" with the city in terms of a delight in the unpredictable, gentle chaos of the city. This fascination with novelty and change is absent in Quinn, the main protagonist. Neither do we find any traces of the painful intermingling of fear and desire, which seemed to be so typical of shock-modernity. Quinn uses the streets to disappear into himself, to escape to nowhere. This would be impossible if there were anything disrupting or disquieting about the city. Here are no crowds to jostle him and no "fugitive beauties" to tempt him. He is more alone and undisturbed than if he had been completely on his own. In fact, the passage conveys the strange impression that New York is an empty city, deserted by its inhabitants.

We can add that this appearance of the city is a pendant of the protagonist's post-traumatic state: Quinn is a "ghost", a man who has been unable to "live" fully since the death of his wife and child a few years earlier. But Quinn's "fallen state" is not only his own. The central importance of the arrival of the gruesome professor Stillman to the city can only be grasped if Quinn's "fallen

state" is interpreted as a metaphor of modern society. As the mad professor says: "I have come to New York because it is the most forlorn of places, the most abject. The brokenness is everywhere, the disarray is universal. You have only to open your eyes to see it. The broken people, the broken things, the broken thoughts. The whole city is a junk heap..."(Auster 1990:78). Here the professor provides a view of the city from the outside. Indeed, his role in the story is to provide a point of exteriority. This exteriority, however, far from being of benefit to the city results in renewed and intensified destruction, a repetition of the trauma, exactly by virtue of the professor's all too direct, all too externally applied and "mad" attempt to save it and "resurrect" it as a place of authenticity. This testifies to the surprising fact that what is truly shocking for the poor, traumatized protagonist Quinn is the encounter with the "living" û the mad professor intent on resurrecting the fallen city. Why does the professor seem so uncanny? The answer seems to consist in the fact that, in the "rubbish heap" of New York, he alone lives on as if there had never been any trauma. In other words: he is an "impossible" embodiment of the past "pre-traumatic" world. It is his very health which is uncanny, since such health can only be maintained by madness. Uncanniness consists precisely in the "strange" persistence of a heightened consciousness earnestly intent on restoring a lost wholeness to modernity. With naturalization ghosts are no longer viewed primarily from the perspective of such a heightened consciousness. Experience is increasingly narrated from the viewpoint of the ghosts û the survivors û themselves.

Let us briefly mention a third example. The central trauma of Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990) is of course the American betrayal of the ideals of the 60's. The image of Hades is centrally present û both as an implicit metaphor of "the spilled, the broken world" of the late 80's America (Pynchon 1991:267) and in the concrete depiction of Shade Creek, the village of the Thanatoids. The Thanatoids are people who are physically dead, yet for some reason û some grudge they continue to bear because of wrongs they suffered in their lives û are unable to die completely. Among them we find former radical students killed in the violent suppression in the late 60s of the People's Republic of Rock and Roll at the University of the Surf. What is interesting here is how differently the two characters who are most directly responsible for the clamp-down are portrayed: the maniac FBI-boss and "megacreep" Brock Vond and Frenesi, a hippie who betrays her comrades to become his mistress. While the former û the embodiment of the ever-recurrent fascist desire for authority û identifies with the living, Frenesi is a kind of ghost, living "between the two deaths" just like the Thanatoids and symbolically dead after her betrayal. Not surprisingly, the Thanatoids are depicted with more sympathy than Vond, but so is Frenesi (who, after all, is just an allegory of "ourselves"). Just like her victims, she too is dreaming of recovery û in what she calls her "Dream of the Gentle Flood" in which divers descend into the water, which has flooded California, and bring back up for us "whatever has been taken" and "whatever has been lost" (ibid 256). What we find here, then, is again that the writer assumes the perspective

of the "ghosts", of the victims of the "living". Just as in Murakami Haruki and Auster, there is a solidarity with the ghosts û a "sympathy for the dead", as Murakami writes û who often tend to appear reassuring and familiar rather than uncanny. The measure of this solidarity is also the measure of naturalization.

Fallen language and parody

I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more,
teach me others. Or let me be silent. û Beckett (1958:44)

Let us move on to one of the most fundamental characteristics of "Hades". Post-trauma is the state of one who is imprisoned in the past but unable to remember it and communicate it. The survivor is prevented from living fully in the present, since only the past seems to possess "reality". We can see in the poetry of Paul Celan how this imprisonment in the past is connected to a devaluation of the present. The present no longer matters in the face of the overwhelming past. Sorrow rather than shock is conveyed by the poems of *Mohn und Gedächtnis*. Denuded of reality, the only function of the present becomes that of a screen on which past horror is replayed.

In the cherry tree's branches a crunching of iron shoes.
Summer foams up for you out of the helmets. The blackish cuckoo
with diamond spurs draws his image on the gates of the sky. (ibid 1996:49)

To eyes transfixed by the past, even the most harmless nature turns into a horror-chamber. Celan's poems abound in the names of flowers and trees, but each one is an instrument of torture. "Aspen tree, your leaves glance white into the dark./ My mother's hair was never white" (ibid 41). Clouds or breezes are "where you will have your grave" (ibid 65). A similar devaluation befalls language. Adorno writes about Celan that his poems "want to speak of the most extreme horror through silence". Their language, in its silence, is no longer human: "they imitate a language beneath the helpless language of human beings, indeed beneath all organic language: It is that of the dead speaking of stones and stars" (Adorno 1997:322). Celan's poetry shows us that, when all that matters is a past that cannot be put in words, language and the experience of the present become lifeless, meaningless and indifferent. That time goes on, that people still speak, that û to speak with Borges û "the vast unceasing universe" is already moving away from the dead, comes to appear absurd. This is reflected in the sense of startled disbelief that things still exist: "So there are temples yet. A star probably still has light" (Celan 1996:151). This is a "fallen" nature, in which things no longer correspond to essences: language no longer truly communicates, the present seems unrelated to oneself.

Fallen, or "mute", language was one of the early preoccupations of Benjamin. Fallenness meant that human language no longer conveyed the divine essence

of things, that it was guilty of an "excessive naming" (Überbenennung) in which things could not recognize themselves. This "excessive naming" was therefore paradoxically the cause of the "muteness" of nature (Benjamin 1988:9-26). If we disregard the theological phrasing of this observation, we find that it is a surprisingly accurate description of how language must appear to a traumatized person. Language is splintered into a true language, which is inaccessible to us and which would have been capable of expressing and redeeming the traumatic loss, and another "fallen" language, which is available to us but hopelessly insufficient to express the trauma. Or as Naoko puts it in a story by Murakami Haruki: "It feels like my body is split in two, and they're playing tag with each other. In the middle a thick wooden pillar is standing, and they're playing tag chasing each other around that pillar. And my other self is always the one who's carrying the proper words, and I will never catch her." (Murakami Haruki 1987:25).

It is easy to show that such a "fallen" state of language is the point of departure for the use of language in Murakami Haruki. Although his language may seem diametrically opposite to the language used by Celan, it is not unreasonable to state that whereas the latter chooses to express the fallenness of language through "silence", the former expresses it through a deliberate "excessive naming". Kawamoto has remarked that Murakami's protagonists prefer to discuss Charlie Parker to raw emotions, and small talk about California Girls to confessions. Words are no longer used for expression, but for play and enjoyment (Kawamoto 1997:80). Better than to dismiss this chitchat as mere "noisy silence", as Iwamoto does (Iwamoto 1993), is to interpret it as a traumatized language, a language that expresses the trauma in a negative way. In all their differences Murakami and Celan both manifest a condition in which language is mute and denuded of meaning, since all that matters is a past that cannot be put in words. What separates them is that Murakami deliberately confines himself in the "muteness" of a fallen language, often tactfully circumventing all painful spots and thus condemning his prose to an intentional triviality. This usage of language functions like the parodical "epithets" we mentioned earlier — epithets that are so obviously insufficient to describe their bearers that they keenly bring out how little we know about them. We can now grasp the reason for the use of these epithets. It is a way for Murakami to acknowledge the muteness imposed by his own language. He gives people epithets out of consideration for their true names, which they have lost.

Murakami's language, we could say, brings out its own muteness by parodying communication. In order to grasp the post-traumatic character of this kind of parody, Samuel Beckett will serve us well. *Endgame* takes place after the catastrophe, when everything, including meaning and language, is "corpsed". Language itself is in fragments, patches, remnants. As Adorno points out in his essay on the *Endgame* the *dramatis personae* are living dead, paralyzed by shock, who are unable to do anything but hopelessly mimicking over and over the catastrophe that hit them (Adorno 1991:251). But these gestures are not mere meaningless repetitions. More interestingly, they take on a

clownish, comic quality. They become parodies of what was once meaningful, as in the following exchange:

HAMM: Do you remember your father.

CLOV (wearily): Same answer. (Pause.) YouÆve asked me these questions millions of times.

HAMM: I love the old questions. (With fervor.) Ah, the old questions, the old answers, thereÆs nothing like them! (Beckett 1958:38)

Let us have a closer look at the role of parody. The artistic force behind the parodic repetition of phrases, Adorno observes, is *dégoût*. A disgust with the world, which mirrors its reification in exaggerated, parodical form. "Exhorted to play along, he responds with parody" (Adorno 1991:243). Just as a chess player who resigns in order not to suffer the humiliation of checkmate, one parodies oneÆs own coming death. This attitude, to be sure, implies resignation and can even be seen as a kind of "identification with the aggressor".¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Adorno defends the critical potential inherent in the negativism of parody. Parody is a denial of society but also a critical engagement with it, a tool for changing society. "In its emphatic sense, parody means the use of forms in the era of their impossibility. It demonstrates this impossibility and by doing so alters the forms."(Adorno 1991:259). In the same way we could say that Murakami Haruki, by "using the form" of fallen language, with its wordplay and trivialities, demonstrates its fallenness, its muteness and its impossibility.

Parody, however, does not just serve the purpose of criticism.¹¹⁰ We remember FreudÆs famous description of the fort-da game, in which a child attempts to master the distressing experience of the motherÆs departure retrospectively. By repeating it as a game he no longer has to experience it as a passive victim, but can pretend that he wished it to happen himself. "All right, then, go away!", he pretends to tell the mother, "I donÆt need you. IÆm sending you away myself." (Freud 1991a:285). FreudÆs ambiguous attitude towards this game is famous: it is both a symptom of a trauma and an attempt to work through it. Similarly parody is not just a passive symptom of trauma. It is also a kind of cure, a self-treatment. It is a way of, little by little, laughing away and thus dispelling oneÆs paralysis. Exaggeration of the catastrophe is a way of gaining the upper hand over it, of slowing being able to master it. Parody is implicated in the struggle of liberation, and not only because of its critical potential but also because it is a tool for recovery.

Recovery

A common feature of post-traumatic representations is that they directly or indirectly refer to the issue of recovery. But in what does this reference to recovery consist? Freud distinguished broadly between, on the one hand, a symptomatic "acting out" of the trauma, and on the other, a narrative, therapeutic "working through". As in the fort-da game the acting out can take

the form of an attempt to master the trauma, but genuine recovery cannot occur until the trauma is brought to consciousness through narrative. Otherwise, Freud writes, the patient "is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past" (Freud 1991a:288).

As Berger points out, the distinction between conscious working through and unconscious acting out is crucial to Freud's discussion of mourning and melancholy (Berger 1999:27). In his 1917 paper *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud presents mourning as a working through of the traumatic loss, including all unresolved conflicts that may have existed in the relationship to the deceased. Recovery is achieved as libido is gradually detached from the lost object through the ego's acknowledgement of the loss. During the period of mourning the ego loses interest in the external world, but once this period is over the ego is once again free to transfer its libido to a new object. In melancholy, by contrast, the loss is denied expression in language. The sufferer is not released from the lost object, which instead becomes introjected, i.e. interiorized into the ego itself. Libido is not freed to be displaced to a new object but remains tied to the introjected object as narcissistic libido (Freud 1991a:251-8). In *Mourning and Melancholia*, then, Freud sees the main difference between mourning and melancholia in the narcissistic regression of the libido into the ego in the latter case. In both cases recovery is conceived as the restored ability to transfer libido to a new object.

Both of these views are abruptly changed in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Firstly, he blurs the distinction between mourning and melancholia by admitting that what was supposed to be the distinguishing feature of melancholia — the interiorization of the lost object — is at work in mourning too. Interiorization, he writes, may be "the sole condition" under which the id can give up an object as lost (Freud 1991a:368). Secondly, the need for recovery is pushed to the background since the process of interiorization is now said to make an "essential contribution" towards building up the "character" of the ego — in other words, it becomes conceived of as part of the "normal" development of a person's character through which the ego becomes increasingly immune against shocks stemming from its environment (ibid 368). It is noteworthy that Freud never refers to the formation of a "character" as "recovery", despite its function to neutralize experiences of traumatic loss. Indeed, recovery is not even mentioned in *The Ego and the Id*. However, the modification of his theory in this work still forces us to distinguish between two quite separate ways in which experiences of loss can be overcome.

- (1) Through "recovery" in the sense of a restoration of the ability to transfer libido to a new object. In this case, a "socially" oriented libido would be restored. This would also be a recovery of the ability to live fully in the present, including the ability to feel pain.
- (2) Through the development of "character" through a mechanism similar to what Freud thought to be typical of melancholy. In this case, we have an

immunization against pain rather than a recovery of the ability to feel it. Social libido is not restored but safely stored in a "non-social space". The subject attains a kind of mastery over the trauma through getting used to solitude, which not necessarily amounts to a recovery of the ability to transfer libido to a new object.

By keeping in mind is that these two conceptions of overcoming loss exist, we get a clearer view of the distinctly different problems that are encountered in each of them. "Recovery" in the first sense would risk leading lead back to shock as libido is again invested in "social" bonds threatened by atomization. The neutralization of loss in the second sense avoids this danger, but the price to be paid is that something essential seems to be missing for this to qualify as genuine recovery. This indeed is the reason why the theme of recovery comes so prominently to the fore with naturalization. Developing a "character" may very well deliver the subject from the shocks of hell, but it cannot offer any recovery from the painless solitude of Hades. Herein resides the ambiguity of "character". Hades is both pleasant and lonely, both a place of narcissistic wish fulfillment and a melancholy desert, both a revivifying "world of green" and a land of ghosts.

In these two different sets of problems we discern what may be called the central dilemma of naturalized modernity. First, however, let us turn to Shôno Yoriko for an example from literature of the wish for recovery, an example that demonstrates the two-faced nature of Hades as a place of death/resurrection in a concrete way.

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Naturalization may very well result in the portrayal of modern society as a sinister land of death, but at the same time, this sepulchral country is suffused by a mute longing for resurrection and life. At the end of his essay on Beckett's *Endgame*, Adorno intriguingly suggests an equation of death and resurrection, or traumatization and recovery. He describes the catastrophe in *Endgame* as a situation in which "there is no more nature", as a "complete reification of the world" (ibid 245).

But the imageless image of death is an image of indifference, that is, a state prior to differentiation. In that image the distinction between absolute domination — the hell in which [...] absolutely nothing changes any more — and the messianic state in which everything would be in its right place, disappears. The last absurdity is that the peacefulness of the void and the peacefulness of reconciliation cannot be distinguished from one another. (ibid 274f)

Adorno's horror in the face of this perverse equivalent of reconciliation is obvious. For him it would be the final victory of second nature, the rigor mortis of history. Yet he himself, in *Minima Moralia*, once described true

reconciliation as death, as eternal rest and stillness: "only death is an image of undistorted life" (Adorno 1978:77f). Indeed, what from one perspective appears as nothing but a perverse semblance of reconciliation, from the perspective of naturalized modernity reveals itself as a glimpse of restored life.¹¹¹ What Adorno here portrays is the ambiguity of what we call Hades. Just as Benjamin attempted to utilize the ambiguity of hell in order to search for possibilities of "awakening" in its very midst, it is possible to discern attempts in contemporary literature to transfigure the land of death into a place of resurrection. Let us have a look at intriguing possibility.

One example is Shôno Yoriko and her persistent search for recovery and new strength through images of death. We see this in her 1994 short novel *The Water of the Paralyzing Dream* (*Shibireru yume no mizu*), where the sea becomes the medium of this dialectical reversal of death into life. After losing her cat the heroine falls into depression and apathy. She shuts herself up in her flat where bloodsucking flies start to appear, filling the room with the "music" of their procreation û something that particularly irritates her since she herself leads the solitary life of someone "sexually deceased" (1998:122). As the story progresses, the flies grow bigger and start to resemble fish, giving her the feeling of leading a submarine life. Increasingly emasculated from anemia she finally collapses. In a dream she finds herself floating in the sea, with only her eyes above water. Unlike her "sexually dead" waking life, the sea is associated with fertility. Someone, she senses, is there with her, floating close to her û maybe her boyfriend or her child. However, they simply love each other without touching. The sea is also associated with death. Innumerable dead flies cover the bottom of the sea and at one point she thinks of herself as a rotting corpse. Nevertheless, she feels as if she were floating in the middle of love.

In this world I was in the very midst of love. I was sure of it. This love was not a metamorphosis of my feelings for the cat. Rather the cat had been a lid or seal on this rhizomic love. Only with the annihilation of the cursed world in front of my eyes, the exhaustion of the hell of flies, could this ambiguous love have come into being, this aimless sensation. (ibid 145)

When she wakes up, the flies in the room are dying. She is tired, but the feeling of love lingers on after the dream. As she goes out for a walk, her body is filled with an amorphous, aimless love. Although it is "not directed at anyone", she still feels that it is a "requited love" (ibid 151).

A similar pattern of reversal of death into life can be seen in *Shaman of the Sun*. This novel opens with the wedding dinner of the heroine, Yakumo. It is not a usual wedding, however, but a *tanshikon* or "solitary wedding" through which she will be "betrothed to a dream", as a *miko* or shaman to a sun god. In accordance with tradition the lights in the room are almost out, but the sea is visible through a big glass wall. Repeatedly relatives and guests refer to the marriage as a "death" and to the dinner ceremony as a "last supper". She also hears voices, one of them saying, "So youÆll die after all" (Shôno 1997:10).

Part of the reason for her decision to "marry"/"die" is her family's unwillingness to recognize her life as an independent, single and childless working woman. Because of her refusal to conform to the norms of a patriarchal society, she is surrounded by the malice of her relatives and even her mother loathes her. But Yakumo's decision is not simply an escape. The marriage, she claims, is not a "sacrifice" to the god. She is the one who will be the husband, she emphatically asserts, not the god (ibid 26, 61). Having successfully met with her husband in a dream during her wedding-night — in the course of which she herself becomes transformed into the sun — she displays her newfound strength when she pays a visit to her parental home next morning. The final scene describes how she enters the house and sees the shoes of her male relatives lined up in the entrance hall. "With my seven-centimeter high heels", she writes, "I scrupulously stepped on each of the shoes before I entered" (ibid 76f).

As Susan Bouterey points out, Yakumo's final triumph becomes possible because of her successful union with the god in her dream world. Bouterey links the dream where Yakumo meets her husband to the life-giving powers of nature. Her "new-found strength", she writes, "is derived from an imagined fusion with the entire universe". She compares the dream to the "world of green" in Tsushima Yûko's *Woman Running in the Mountains* (1980, *Yama o hashiru onna*), whose ostracized pregnant heroine "finds solace and strength in dream and fantasy in which she imagines herself to be part of a world of bright, snow-capped mountains and lush vegetation. Attracted to the 'sheer vitality' plants appear to possess, she envisions herself metamorphosed into a plant or, at times, the entire surrounding vegetation".

Takiko stood still at the water's edge. Receiving that dazzling sparkle gave her a sense that something was rapidly melting away from around her body. The opposite bank was emerald green. The cherry trees along the top were also mantled in translucent green. She was sure the eight-month fetus must be as enraptured as she was. She wanted to drench it in the light from the water's surface and the green of the grass and trees, as if she were watering a plant. (quoted in Bouterey 2001)

Just as the "green world" revitalizes Tsushima's heroine, the retreat into the dream revitalizes Yakumo. Through the "journey inwards", Bouterey writes, "long lost, forgotten powers are revived, to be available for the transfiguration of the world" (Bouterey 2001:165-79). Here we gain a fresh perspective on the question of the "system-functionality" of the non-social. The retreat into dreams / non-social space may seem to be an escapist solution, but is nevertheless, as Bouterey points out, at least temporarily empowering to Shôno's heroines and frees them from ideological blinkers by opening up an alternative world liberated from the constraints of a patriarchal society. Retreat to the non-social, then, is not a revolt, but at least it provides a "world of green" from which the "recovery" needed for possibly more active forms of resistance may sprout.

But this world is also a place of death. This is obvious both in *The Water of the Paralyzing Dream* and *Shaman of the Sun*. The same can be said about Tsushima's world of green. The universe with its nebulas and stars imagined and dreamed of by the heroine of her 1978 novel *Child of Fortune* (Chôji) is both the "nothingness" of extinction and the origin of new life (Tsushima 1991:42, 123). For both Shôno and Tsushima death is life: new life. This superimposition of images of death on the images of life is hard to formulate logically except as a paradoxical equivalence or dialectical reversal: it is by dying that life is regained, it is through the apocalypse that the world will be renewed. These two authors illustrate what Adorno theoretically anticipated: that dead nature may reveal itself as a new nature through a reversal of perspective.

As mentioned, it is possible to interpret the dreams and fantasies of Shôno's heroines as illustrations of non-social libido. They depict the healing power of love in a non-social space (in a sea or to a husband who only appears in dreams). Bouterey points out that the "alternative green world" is a recurrent archetype in women's fiction. However, this pattern of inward flight towards a sheltered space where love can unfold unconstrained by real social relations can be found in male writers too, like Murakami Haruki. Just as Yakumo goes to see her husband in a dream, the hero of Murakami's *The Wind-up Bird* communicates with his run-away wife through dreams and the unconscious. What is striking with this novel is that the hero's interaction with his wife in this "other world" is far more significant for maintaining their relation than their failed attempts to communicate in the atomized everyday world of reality, where their relation is marred by misunderstandings and quarrels. In both Shôno and Murakami the dream world serves as a compensation for disappointing external relations. The parallel is further strengthened by the fact that Murakami's "other worlds" — often depicted as dark cold attics, mazelike corridors, cold-storage and the like — are consistently sepulchral places associated with death, repositories for ghosts and lost things.

Writers like Shôno, Tsushima and Murakami Haruki help us to bring into view the dynamic nature of "Hades" or non-sociality. Like the inner states of traumatized people, they present an image of dead nature, but this inner state is also where the process of recovery is prepared, often unbeknownst to consciousness. The condition of Hades is not as irreversible as it tends to appear to its inhabitants. Just as the exposure to shocks and pain in the hell of shock-modernity may give rise to traumatization and privatization, Hades is not necessarily a permanent state. In Freudian terms, "characters" are not the necessary end-state of personal development. As new life begins to stir, a corridor is opened up that may lead to renewed shocks. With this we have arrived at the dilemma of naturalized modernity.

The dilemma of naturalized modernity

The focus on trauma and the issue of recovery has suggested that the freedom from shock as well as the gentler and enchanting aspects of naturalization are bought at the price of privatization and a deintensification of life comparable to melancholia or a post-traumatic state. In many authors a discomfort with naturalized modernity can be felt, which is expressed as a longing to regain the ability to live fully in the present and to break out of the loneliness and desolation of non-social space. Let us recall the two conceptions of overcoming loss that we discussed earlier. On the one hand, recovery is the renewed ability to detach libido from a lost object and transfer it to a new one. On the other hand, in *The Ego and the Id* Freud allows for the possibility of overcoming the pain of loss through the development of "character", i.e. through internalizing the lost object and retaining the love felt for it in the form of narcissistic libido. We can say that naturalized modernity, with its peace and tranquility, represents the latter alternative but that the dream of a recovery in the first, emphatic sense still lives on — the dream of a recovery not only from the pains of hell but also from the loneliness and melancholy of Hades.

While the prime cultural contradiction according to Benjamin's model is the conflict between the aura and the predominance of the intellect, in naturalized modernity a new fundamental contradiction takes form which instead centers on the conflict between painless solitude and the struggle to maintain or regain human contact. Not only increasing isolation, but also the frantic vigor with which this isolation is denied, the desperation of the search for belonging, is characteristic of societies today, as evinced in the resurgence of nationalism, ethnic struggles and religious fundamentalism. The resurgence of ethnic and other struggles testify to the price for which the attempt to renew the aura in the realm of human relations is to be had: the return of shock and terror. This confirms our argument that privatization is a precondition for the fading away of shock. If privatization is negated, the sensation of shock is likely to return.

In other words, the attempt to "return" to the social — or, to use Freud's formula, the renewed libidinal investment in social relations — means to make oneself vulnerable to shock. Here we are again confronted with the decisive importance of the operation of the social system in present-day society as a factor obstructing the "return to society". Any attempt to "return to society" is bound to run up against the unrelenting process of atomization, the individualization and colonization of human relations by ever more powerful system-mechanisms. In such an environment, vulnerability to shock almost by necessity becomes an invitation to shock. Here the benjaminesque proposition again becomes valid that lowering one's guard will mean inviting pain. Naturalization thus does not mark any irreversible transition away from the shock-modernity of Benjamin. Rather it opens up a "corridor" away from it, which might be traveled both ways. The decisive difference compared to Benjamin is that shock-modernity is no longer defining for modernity as such, but only one of two alternatives. At the vanishing point of the one alternative, there is hell with its shocks and repressive heightened consciousness. On the

extreme end of the other is Hades with its "obscurity" and painless solitude. The mirage of a good life, embellishing both, remains a mirage.

The absence of any neat "solution" to this contradiction tells us that we are here in contact with a structural dilemma in naturalized modernity. Most contemporary writers in whose fiction loneliness is a predominant element in some way or another wrestle with the dilemma of having to choose between hell and Hades, the shocks of social space and the melancholy existence of non-social space. Shôno Yoriko's "love without a partner" would be the fulfillment of the dream of naturalization without loneliness. It would mean recovery in the full sense of a restoration of the ability to live without either loneliness or shock. Such love is brittle. As we shall see, Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû both explore the brittleness of such recovery, each in their own way.

chapter 5

Strategies in naturalized modernity

Just as Abe and Kawabata's strategies are best understood in relation to the experience of shock, Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû's strategies are best understood in relation to naturalization. The two Murakamis's attitudes to the loneliness and boredom of naturalized modernity, however, are diametrically opposite. While Murakami Haruki seems intent on stoically immersing himself in it, Murakami Ryû appears to rebel against it. In other words, the former would seem to affirm naturalization, while the latter would seem to deny it. Studying their respective strategies will enable us to see what happens to the ideals of the good if the central experience is no longer shock but the experience of naturalization. Let us start with Murakami Haruki.

5-1: Murakami Haruki: loneliness and waiting

Why do people have to be this lonely? What's the point of it all? Millions of people in this world, all of them yearning, looking to others to satisfy them, yet isolating themselves. Why? Was the Earth put here just to nourish human loneliness? û Murakami Haruki (2001:196)

There is some truth in Karatani Kôjin's designation of Murakami Haruki as the "contemporary version of Kawabata Yasunari" (Kawabata Yasunari no gendaiban) (Karatani 1998). Truth in the sense that both Murakami and Kawabata are preoccupied with loss, with what the former has called a "sympathy for lost things" that strongly colors their perception of modernity. Truth also in the sense that neither actively resist the predominant experiences of their time. Both, in their own ways, suspend their instincts for self-preservation and dispense with the paradigm of personal identity, as if they had

deliberately chosen to trust these experiences and the unknown fate taking form within them. What distinguishes them, however, is the quality of their respective experiences of modernity: shocking in the case of Kawabata, naturalized in the case of Murakami. The elegiac dream worlds of Kawabata are always in danger of dissolving by the slightest contact with the reality of modern Japan. They are thus set up in the starkest possible opposition to modernity, which is about to destroy them. In Murakami there is no such sense of future threat and consequently nothing like the consciousness of the vulnerability of beauty that we find in Kawabata. His protagonists seem to be able to wait for ever, exactly because each second is as good as the next and nothing ever seems to change.

The attitude of Murakami's protagonists is well illustrated by the parable of the coalmine tragedy at the end of his short story "The New York Coal Mine Tragedy" ("Nyûyôku tankô no higeki") from 1981. The main part of the story, laconically related, is about a young man who needs to borrow a black suit again and again from a certain friend for all the funerals he has to attend. Added at the very end of the story, without further explanation, is the following passage:

In order to save air the torches were blown out and everything was enveloped in pitch-black darkness. Everybody was silent. Nothing was heard except the sound of the drops of water that came dripping down from the ceiling once every five seconds.

"Everybody, breath as little as possible. There is not much air left."

It was the senior coal miner's voice. It was subdued, but even so the rocks in the ceiling squeaked faintly. The miners gathered close to each other in the darkness and sharpened their ears, waiting for a single sound. The sound of pickaxes, the sound of life.

They kept waiting like that for hours. In the darkness reality dissolved little by little. It all began to seem as something that had occurred long, long ago in some faraway world. Or as something that would occur in a faraway world in a distant future.

Everybody, breath as little as possible. There is not much air left.

Needless to say, outside people continued digging. As in a scene from a film. (Murakami Haruki 1986b:116f)

The waiting depicted here is passive yet intense and desperate. Running out of air, passivity is a condition of survival. The miners must suppress all the usual manifestations of life, such as bodily motion or speech. In a sense it is only by mimicking death that they can vouchsafe a minimum of hope. It is easy to associate the dark subterranean world in which they are waiting with Hades. By analogy the rescue for which they are waiting would be their resurrection. Interesting is also the detail that the situation begins to appear unreal, as if they themselves were not really present. Passivity, ghostliness, detachment from reality — as we will see, all these elements are in fact prominent themes in Murakami's fiction.

But let us return to the attitude of patient waiting, which recurs over and over in Murakami's works. The following passage from *Dance dance dance* is typical.

In any case, all I had to do was wait.

I just had to wait for something to come. It is always like that. There's no need to rush about when there's a deadlock. Just stay put and wait, and something will happen. Something will come. All you need to do is strain your eyes and gaze steadily at the twilight until something begins to move. I've learned that from experience. Something always begins to move. If it is necessary, it will certainly move.

All right, let's be patient and wait. (ibid 1991b:186f)

This attitude is very reminiscent of the attitude of the miners in the coal-mine. Still another example is the fortuneteller Honda's advice to Okada Tôru in *The Wind-up Bird*:

Don't go against the current. When it is time to go up, go up. When it is time to go down, go down. When there is no current, just keep still and wait. (ibid 1997a:97f)

Later Okada puts this advice into practice by sitting, day out and day in, on a bench in Shinjuku, silently watching the passers-by. "When it is time to wait, then wait. When it is time to act, then act" — this attitude may call to mind the cyclic sense of time associated with agrarian societies, but it is more correct to associate it with a fatalistic submission to the unpredictability of modern society, a fatalism which in turn transforms this modernity into the semblance of nature. The narrator of the "end of the world"-chapters of *Hardboiled Wonderland* asks the Gatekeeper how long he is to continue his job as a Dreamreader. "How long? I cannot say", answers the Gatekeeper. "Until the right time comes"(ibid 1993:39). This is a time consciousness which is adapted to an environment in which society itself has taken on the inscrutable impermeability of nature.

I will here argue that the attitude of waiting is fundamental to Murakami's strategy of dealing with the dilemma of naturalized modernity. Despite appearances to the contrary, he is far from "resigned" to the present state of modernity. A person who is resigned does not wait. Seen as a strategy, however, waiting has a paradoxical quality in the sense that hope can only reside in passivity. Not resisting the loneliness and boredom of naturalized modernity becomes the way protagonists resist it — their way of waiting for recovery, or resurrection.

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Before we can go on to discuss the strategies for the good life used by Murakami Haruki, we need to consider briefly the traumatized condition of the subjectivity which serves as their starting point. Traumatization is a mental state in which inner nature has ceased to stir and is felt to be dead. There is no longer any subject or desire that can express itself. This means that the substratum from which the conflict between the ideals of "inner nature" and "personal identity" draws force has been pulverized. With the exception of *The Wind-up Bird* we find very few attempts on the part of Murakami's protagonists to

"build" or "construct" a personal identity. Like Musil's "man without qualities" they are content to live without life-continuities. The protagonist of *Hardboiled Wonderland* compares his life to a beach where junk is washed ashore by the waves and then washed back into the sea.

When I look back over my life so far, I see all that junk on the beach. It's how my life has always been. Gathering up the junk, sorting through it, and then casting it off somewhere else. All for no purpose, leaving it to wash away again.[.] This is all my life. I merely go from one beach to another. Sure I remember the things that happen in between, but that's all. I never tie them together. (ibid 1993:375)

In other words his self has stability and durability even without him identifying with anything. It is as if inner nature by itself had acquired the stillness undisturbed by subversive impulses that is longed for by the advocates of the paradigm of personal identity. The self turns into an empty, almost lifeless structure that fulfills the functions of identity without necessarily being conscious. Consciousness no longer needs to struggle to subjugate a rebellious inner nature, but regrets its victory, and longs to get back what it has killed. The problem is not that the spontaneous forces of inner nature are oppressed by identity. It is rather that inner nature has lost vitality and grown silent.

Was there ever anything to begin with? I've forgotten. But I'm sure there was something. Something that agitated my heart and made me agitate the heart of others. But anyway, all there was has been lost. Was there anything I could have done instead of letting it go?

At least I have survived. (Murakami Haruki 1985a:136f)

Rather than nature moving in freedom after the collapse of identity, this is the very opposite: a state in which the impulses of nature have withered away, and nothing is left but the heavy structure that oppressed it while it was still alive. "Life no longer lives", is the motto which Murakami could have appropriated with even greater justification than Adorno, who used it as the motto for one of his books.¹¹² Since subjectivity is no longer animated by inner impulses, it does not need to be harmonized through the efforts of conscious identification. Identity is recognizable as such directly only where it is still struggling against nature. But where it has already triumphed, where nature is thoroughly subjugated, it echoes hollowly like the interior of a mausoleum.

The withering away of inner nature explains the aimlessness and passivity of Murakami's protagonists. In *The Wind-up Bird*, Okada Tôru thinks of himself as a "deserted house" that has lost its inner voice. When a woman caresses his cheek, he imagines her moving around inside the house, touching its walls and pillars, and adds that there is "nothing he can do about it" (Murakami Haruki 1997c:68). This state of passive acceptance and openness is the opposite of a closed world — he accepts everything but also lets everything depart.

This openness is perhaps best illustrated by the protagonists' apartments in Murakami's novels, which never function as auratic "islands" sheltered from the outside world. When for example a pair of twin sisters appear in his bed one

morning, the protagonist of *Pinball 1973* admits them without surprise, just as easily as he accepts their departure when he sees them off at the end of the novel (Murakami Haruki 1983:174). Similarly, in *The Wind-up Bird* the borderline between inside and outside seems wholly permeable: people come and go as they like in the protagonist's house, his wife unexpectedly runs away, strangers wait for him in his sofa etc.

How can we explain the ease by which the protagonist accepts this coming and going? Unlike the auratic bourgeois interiors of Simmel or Benjamin, in which everything "expressed" or showed "traces" of the inhabitant, the apartment of a Murakami hero seems denuded of traces.¹¹³ Clean and sparsely furnished, it never contains more than the basic stuff. "Your room is terribly empty, isn't it?", one of his visitors remark, and he agrees: the room is practically empty (ibid 62). Since his apartment is already "deserted" from the beginning, intrusions hardly ever produce any keenly felt shocks. That the apartment no longer serves as a privileged area of self-expression is confirmed by the protagonist's unconcerned air, bordering on indifference, when two thugs break into his apartment and smash everything to pieces in *Hardboiled Wonderland*. Even when intrusions are violent and unpleasant, then, they lack the nightmarish quality of similar violations in Abe Kôbô — such as the sudden kidnapping of the wife in *Secret Rendezvous*, the unexpected invasion and occupation of the apartment by a parasitic family in *Friends* or the discovery of a murdered corpse on the floor in "An Irrelevant Death".¹¹⁴ What makes Abe's intrusions so shocking is not their absurdity or their brutality per se, since Murakami's are just as absurd and often just as brutal, but that they are felt to violate the "sheltered island" of the protagonist's private space. Here the dualism of inside and outside is still acutely felt. The inside ought to be a private, sheltered space, but it is brutally invaded and violated. The chilling undertone in Benjamin's call for "transparency" is felt here. The anxiety is that of the individual threatened by its absorption in the collective or by the totalitarian state. "Transparency" means panopticon. In Murakami, by contrast, there no longer seems to exist any auratic "inside" to be invaded by the forces of the "outside".

The passive stance of admitting and letting go, which we can see in Murakami's protagonists, is in striking contrast with the closure and exclusiveness of the auratic interior. Despite this, it can hardly be described as what Benjamin calls "porosity". Porosity is a state of mutual openness and intermingling of inside and outside. It is a state in which the "inside", by allowing what is different to enter into it, prevents itself from closing itself off in the manner of the 19th century bourgeois interior. The openness of Murakami's protagonists, however, is more like that of a deserted house or a ruin. Here is no playful intermingling of spaces, despite the fact that nothing obstructs people from coming and going. What is lacking is precisely the presence of an active "inside" that might mingle with the outside forces. To use a metaphor, inwardness only persists as a "ghost" incapable of resisting or communicating with the visitors. This is precisely the perspective adopted by

Okada Tôru when he imagines himself as a deserted house somehow able to sense the woman moving around inside it yet unable to interfere with her.

The point of departure for Murakami then, is a subjectivity which might best be described as "deserted" or "empty" — it is animated neither by the stirring of inner nature nor by the convulsions associated with the forceful imposition of identity. Whereas this structure seems immune against the danger of shock, loneliness and boredom emerge as new major problems.

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Privatization, we have said, is an ambivalent phenomenon that makes naturalization possible but only to the prize of traumatization. We will now turn to Murakami's attitude to privatization, which is best brought out by focusing on the mood of loneliness and desolation in his work.¹¹⁵ Few things are as striking in his protagonists as their loneliness, even when they are with other people. Much has been made of the shift from the alleged "cool" and depthless subjectivity of his early novels to the "authentic" and committed stance of more recent works like *The Wind-up Bird*. Even in the earlier novels, however, loneliness is far from being unreservedly celebrated. Here we have the protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase* who has just gotten on a train and has an experience of total freedom, of being totally on his own:

There is no place for me to return to. As I thought this, I felt an immense relief. Nobody wished to see me any longer. Nobody needed me, and nobody wanted to be needed by me. (Murakami Haruki 1985a:135f)

His elation soon passes, however. After a nap, it is replaced by weariness. Soon he will be 30 years, he reflects, and the curtain will go down for his 20's. "How empty these ten years have been, how completely empty. Everything I've acquired is worthless, everything I've accomplished is meaningless. All I've gotten out of it is boredom" (ibid 136). The relief he feels is thus no straightforward affirmation of privatization. Loneliness in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is accepted, maybe even felt to be comfortable, but hardly celebrated. In the beginning of the novel the protagonist divorces his wife. When he takes out his photo albums after she has left, he discovers that she has removed all pictures of herself, or neatly cut out the part showing herself from those on which they were together. The only pictures left intact are those of him alone or pictures of landscapes and animals. He has a feeling that he is looking at a revised and corrected version of his past. "I was always by myself, and in between there were pictures of mountains, rivers, deer or cats. It felt like I had been alone ever since my birth, and would continue to be alone for ever." (ibid 37).

A similar undertone of intense loneliness pervades his most recent novel, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, where he expresses it through the metaphor of Sputnik and the other manmade satellites circling the Earth. "Lonely metal souls in the unimpeded darkness of space, they meet, pass each other, and part, never to

meet again. No words passing between them. No promises to keep" (Murakami 2001:196). Here the atomizing logic of society is presented as a natural law, just as inexorable as the laws of gravity governing the movement of satellites and heavenly bodies. Its myriad of operations constitute as "second" fate, a fate drained of subjective meaning. In the opaque night of this fate, Murakami seems to suggest, human contact is rare and precious. To use the words of Nadine Gordimer, here "contact is more like the flash of fireflies, in and out, now here, now there, in darkness" (Gordimer 1994:264).

These passages are instructive since they evoke a loneliness that seems entirely different from the kind of loneliness that we find expressed in thinkers of shock-modernity like Benjamin or Simmel. Their loneliness stems from the "protective shield" of reserve which they feel forced to adopt. A writer of naturalized modernity, such as Murakami, is not lonely because he wants to shut out others. On the contrary, one feels that he would like nothing better than to reach out to them, yet that he for some reason is unable to do so. This is not at all the loneliness of someone who feels forced to repress his or her social impulses or object-libido in the interest of self-preservation. Rather, it is a nostalgia for such impulses or for such libido. This alters the meaning of the concept of loneliness itself. Loneliness of the former kind arises from the "protective shield" of heightened consciousness whereas the latter kind of loneliness arises from privatization. To put it schematically we may say that in shock-modernity people strive to distance themselves from others in order to gain protection against the shocks of hell, whereas in naturalized modernity they seek to connect to others in order to relieve the loneliness of Hades.¹¹⁶

In short, although discomfort in naturalized modernity / non-sociality / Hades is manifested in many ways in Murakami, loneliness and longing for contact is one of the most clear and obvious ones and it is on this which we will focus in the following discussion, hoping thereby to be able to spread light on his strategies against the drawbacks of the system in general.

Naturalization and privatization provide us with a useful framework for interpreting Murakami's fiction. According to our interpretation, the following dilemma is at its heart: how is one to have naturalization without privatization? How can loneliness be overcome without a return of shock? In regard to this question, his novels can be divided into two groups. Early novels — like *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball 1973*, *A Wild Sheep Chase* or *Hardboiled Wonderland* — affirm the naturalization of modernity and portray protagonists who accept loneliness as their sad but also sentimentally sweet fate. Later novels — like *Norwegian Wood* (1987, *Noruei no mori*), *Dance dance dance*, *South of the Border*, *West of the Sun* (1992, *Kokkyô no minami*, *Taiyô no nishi*) or *The Wind-up Bird* — depict protagonists who attempt to combat the trend towards privatization by forcefully committing themselves to other human beings. By their struggle, however, they find themselves having to deny naturalization as well, at least to a certain extent. Shock returns to their world, and even where mutual communication is achieved it tends to be painful, casting doubt on the success of their struggle. While the earlier novels present us with the clearest

and most unblemished picture of a wholly naturalized and privatized world, the later novels show us that Murakami is unwilling to affirm this world wholeheartedly.

In Murakami's fiction we can thus see two quite different strategies. The former route is chosen in early novels, in which the protagonists by their very passivity and refusal of identity seem to be preparing themselves for new life to awaken inside them. The second route is one of actively shaping an identity in opposition to privatization. Let us now to examine these two strategies. The first strategy will be discussed with emphasis mainly on *Hardboiled Wonderland*, the latter with emphasis mainly on *The Wind-up Bird*.

Passivity as strategy

In Murakami Haruki's early works his protagonists seem to be deliberately immersing themselves in the boredom of naturalized modernity. "Most people try to avoid boredom, but I try my best to enter it", the hero of *A Wild Sheep Chase* asserts (Murakami Haruki 1985a: 64). They seem similarly satisfied with solitude. During a dinner conversation in *Pinball 1973* the girl at the office asks the hero: "Don't you feel lonely?". He answers laconically: "I've gotten used. By practice" (ibid 1983:105). However, the attitude of these heroes is not a simple and straightforward affirmation of naturalization. Although they may look as if they have resigned themselves to the impossibility of breaking out of Hades, their attitude should not be confused with what Kracauer calls a "skepticism based on principle". Rather, early Murakami is probably the most typical representative among contemporary Japanese writers of what Kracauer calls "waiting". They are reminiscent of ships waiting for wind. In the absence of an inner voice driving them on, they can do nothing but to wait patiently for new life to stir in them. His protagonists do accept life in naturalized modernity, but only for the time being. For them it is pregnant with the new \hat{u} below its peaceful surface something new is taking form, for which they are waiting. The reason that they appear passive is that they try to let themselves be guided by this process.

What we find here is a paradoxical strategy that can be expressed in the formula of negating by accepting. The conviction that the only way to achieve anything is by not consciously trying to, is quite explicit in Murakami. Observing in a recent essay that attempts to change one's habits for some reason always fail, he concludes that "In the final analysis, it seems that in life resolve is nothing but a waste of energy", and then immediately adds: "But at the same time, as soon as one starts thinking that it is okay not to change, strangely enough one starts changing." (Murakami Haruki 2000:7). These formulations are strikingly close equivalents of Benjamin's law that "effort brings about its opposite". This suggests that Murakami's heroes immerse themselves in naturalized modernity with the hope that the opposite result will follow. They stoically endure non-sociality harboring the secret expectation that

the day will come when they will once again be shocked, maybe in the manner in which a traumatized patient passively waits for recovery or a believer in negative mysticism waits for grace. We will now first have a look at an example of this strategy, from *Hardboiled Wonderland*, before examining its relations to passivity and the idea of Other-power, the pulverization of linear time and the problematization of the idea of identity.

"The End of the World"

Let us turn once more to *Hardboiled Wonderland*. In this novel the ultimate fate of the protagonist is to be locked up inside an artificial implant in his mind, a "perfect town" where people don't hurt each other and are all content, but which is surrounded by almost impenetrable walls. From the point of view of overcoming privatization, the ending of this novel would seem dark indeed, since it effectively shuts out the protagonist from any contact with real others. Rather than negating privatization, this ending confirms it. Nevertheless, this novel provides a helpful illustration of the paradoxical strategy of deliberate passivity. It also demonstrates how this strategy is correlated to a perception of society as a "fallen" and deceptive totality, a Hades or post-traumatic world, in which recovery is the overruling necessity.

Murakami's fiction offers some of the most accomplished visions of a joyless shadow-world in modern literature. The city wanderings of his heroes often lead them down to dried out wells, moist cellars, damp attics, long labyrinthine corridors, subterranean passages and the like — all with a distinctly sepulchral air. It has often been pointed out that these typically cold, dark and lifeless places represent an "other world" mirroring the unconscious of the narrator.¹⁷ As such they are the repositories of forgotten memories and ghosts. One of the most illustrative examples of Hades in Murakami's works is the quiet old town in the "end of the world"-chapters of *Hardboiled Wonderland*. The image of the town as a land of the dead is explicitly hinted at in the "hardboiled"-chapters (which take place in near future Tokyo and alternate with the "end-of-the-world" chapters). Here the protagonist arrives on an island in a subterranean lake under Tokyo, finds the professor responsible for implanting the "end of the world" in his brain and learns that his brain will be perpetually locked in the "end-of-the-world"-mode, effectively ending his conscious life. The professor comforts him by telling him that, since life in the "end of the world" is timeless, he will achieve a kind of immortality (Murakami Haruki 1993:270). It is hardly a coincidence that the name Styx is mentioned shortly afterwards. After taking leave of the professor the protagonist and the girl back swim across the subterranean lake, over the surface of which "the heavy silence of death itself ruled" (ibid 298). Stoically self-possessed as always, the protagonist thinks: "Orpheus ferried across the Styx to the Land of the Dead.[.] At least Orpheus didn't have to balance laundry on his head. The ancient Greeks had style" (ibid).

The description of the town in the "end of the world"-chapters offers us a convenient miniature model of a society in which the naturalized, the non-social and the Hades-like aspects are interwoven. The walled-in old town in the forest may at first glance appear idyllic — a rural utopia counterpoised to the bleak futuristic Tokyo of the "hardboiled"-chapters, which is under the sway of a nightmarish system over which no one has control. To be sure, the town is naturalized. The soothingly regular, cyclical rhythm of nature is the law of this world. "We do it this way", the Gatekeeper says, "and that is how it is. The same as the sun rising in the east and setting in the west" (ibid 15). Similarly, the female librarian who teaches "dreamreading" to the narrator tells him: "As the birds leave south or north in their season, the Dreamreader has dreams to read" (ibid 183).

Secondly, the town is privatized. Despite the narrator's vague romantic attachment to the librarian it is a remarkably chaste and desexualized world. Although seemingly archaic, it lacks the vigorous community-life of the prototypical premodern *Gemeinschaft*. It is a lonely place whose inhabitants, devoid of a consciousness of their own, have the quiet unobtrusiveness of ghosts. Like the narrator himself, they have all had their "shadows" — representing their conscious mind and all their memories — cut off by the gruesome Gatekeeper at arrival. Lacking memories, the town-dwellers also lack consciousness of time. The clock in the clock-tower doesn't move. Just as the unconscious, this world is timeless.

Thirdly, with its absence of music, love and memories, it is unmistakably post-traumatic. "This is a very quiet town," the librarian says, "if you came seeking quiet" (ibid 43). Another inhabitant tells the narrator: "In time your mind will not matter. It will go, and with it goes all sense of loss, all sorrow. Nor will love matter. Only living will remain. Undisturbed peaceful living" (ibid 170). Although the town seems associated with the unconscious and with dreams, it is not a world ruled by the pleasure-principle. Rather than serving the purposes of wish-fulfillment it serves the purpose of recovery. Adding to peacefulness is the perpetual twilight in which the narrator sees the town. We could add that the surgical operation on the protagonist's brain — through which the "end of the world" was implanted — can be read as an allegorical expression of a trauma. It is a literal penetration of the "protective shield". Like a true trauma it results in privatization (i.e. in the protagonist's confinement to the town).

The old town has strange features: it is both lovely, charming and manufactured, without real people. With its golden unicorns and forests it has an air of a rural utopia, yet it is at the same time a false and artificial world, in which all memories of the real world, the Tokyo of the "hardboiled"-chapters, are eliminated. Being an implant in the protagonist's brain modeled on his unconscious, the town is radically solipsistic and non-social. Nevertheless, in the "end of the world"-chapters the process whereby the narrator loses his conscious life is portrayed as a voluntary decision. Let us have a closer look at this decision and what it tells us of Murakami's strategy for dealing with

naturalization. Near the end, the protagonist's "shadow" is an alter ego representative of his conscious mind which was cut away from him when he entered the town and urges him to escape with him and return to the real world. The shadow warns him that life in the town is tantamount to becoming a "living dead". As mentioned previously, he also warns him about the "perfect falseness" of the town. The town is wrong, but so perfectly wrong that it appears true and right. Clearly, it is what we have called a "fallen world", a world whose falseness is not even realized by its inhabitants. The shadow is the point of exteriority who reminds the narrator of this falseness, of those who are excluded from the perfect world of the town: the shadows, the unicorns and the Woodsfolk, outcasts whose shadows were never completely cut off and who are driven out into the woods. "This is the price of your perfection. A perfection that forces everything upon the weak and powerless... All imperfections are forced upon the imperfect, so the imperfect can live content and be oblivious. Is that the way it should be?" (ibid 336).

In the end, the narrator decides to stay, although he chooses to live with the outcasts. "I have responsibilities," he says. "I cannot forsake the people and places and things I have created". He is aware that the town only exists in his own mind, but nevertheless maintains that the possibilities of a reawakening of memory, not only for him but also for the librarian and other town-dwellers, are real. Before taking farewell of the shadow, he says: "A little by little, I will recall things. People and places from our former world, different qualities of life, different songs" (ibid 399).

Similar decisions not to escape can be found throughout Murakami's fiction.¹¹⁸ Let us recall the scene in "Slow Boat to China" where the protagonist, gazing over Tokyo from a train, is overcome by the impression that the city has no exit. Traveling abroad is no solution. "I won't go to New York or Leningrad. Those places are not meant for me. My vagrancy will take place in the subway cars and in the back seats of taxis. My adventures will take place in the waiting rooms of dentists and the windows of banks" (Murakami Haruki 1986b:50). In the same way, the narrator of *Hardboiled Wonderland* seems to be saying that the real world outside the town is "not meant" for him.¹¹⁹

It is hard to deny that the narrator's final choice to bid farewell to the real world implies a narcissistic rejection of society. Clearly, there can never be any genuine human relations, nor any genuine "exteriority", in a world that is entirely interior to the narrator's own mind. The professor's assurance to the protagonist that once he has entered the "end of the world" he can reclaim everything that has been lost is nothing but a futile echo of Freud's observation that the narcissist never needs to give up a lost object, since he retains it in his fantasy.

The force of the concept of trauma, however, is shown in the fact that it just as much discredits the shadow's "external criticism" of the town. The dialogue between the narrator and the shadow effectively problematizes the straightforward, "simple" solution of escaping the town to the shocks and high consciousness of the real world of the living. When the shadow describes the

town as "perfectly wrong", we recognize the vision of the modern world as a false world order built on a lie, the fallen world of Girard, Adorno, and Kafka. Such a "fallen world" resembles a post-traumatic condition in which the patient is too crippled to save himself by his own powers and can only wait passively for recovery. The narrator is quite correct in pointing out that it is not as easy as the shadow seems to think to find a point of exteriority to which to escape or from which to criticize the town. It has been said about another fallen world — the world of Kafka's *The Castle* — that "in this degraded world every isolated attempt — such as the land surveyor K's — to oppose the lie by truth is doomed to failure" (Löwy 1992:102). If the town appears "perfect" to consciousness, then it cannot be effectively opposed by any strategy that relies on consciousness, such as the morally upright stance of the shadow or the land surveyor K. The danger of directly opposing an external "truth" to this "deceptive whole" is also well illustrated in Auster's *City of Glass*, where the mad professor's externally applied attempt to resurrect the fallen city is structurally perfectly analogous to the external criticism levied against the Town by the shadow or against the castle-bureaucracy by the land surveyor K.

By deciding to stay Murakami's narrator avoids such a too direct and externally applied negation of the town. This decision, however, does not mean that he submits to it. Although the town is "perfectly false", a whole which cannot be relativized or criticized from the outside, it can still be sensed to be somehow "unnatural and wrong". This is the Brechtian feeling that *etwas fehlt*, that something absolutely essential is missing. The narrator's strategy is paradoxical. He hopes to recover truth, reality and society by immersing himself in what he knows to be false. But in this he behaves just like a traumatized patient, who has realized that recovery can only be had by accepting the illness, not by negating it and pretending to be well.

Other-power

The most conspicuous consequence of the strategy of stoic immersion in Murakami's heroes is their intentional passivity. Here I will suggest that this passivity plays an important role, since "emptying" the self is a way of preparing for recovery, for the reception of grace.

Passivity is indeed one of the most striking characteristics of the protagonists of *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hardboiled Wonderland*. In the former novel, his wife describes him as an hourglass: he needs somebody to put him into motion. In the latter, the protagonist at one point recalls that his ex-wife had accused him of never having chosen anything by himself. "And she'd be right. I'd never decided to do a single thing of my own free will." (Murakami Haruki 1993:391). In both novels he is pulled along by others who are more active and resolute than himself. A characteristic of both novels is that he is pulled into the chain of events mechanically, through external pressure and not by his own will. Both novels also suggest, interestingly, that this very passivity is a strategy

employed by the subject û a strategy of deliberate aimlessness û to prepare the ground for the return of inner nature.

The mechanism through which the subject may seek salvation through self-surrender is familiar from religious mysticism.¹²⁰ We find it for example in Tanabe Hajime's philosophy of "metanoetics", according to which the self attains salvation only when it ceases to strive for it by its own efforts û through "self-power" (jiriki) û and instead entrusts itself entirely to external grace û "other-power" (tariki).

I affirm myself only insofar as I, who am a being emptied (ku-u) through absolute transformation, can serve as a negative mediator of the absolute. All I can do is submit myself to "natural-ness" (jinen-hôni) and let the absolute do as it will. (Tanabe 1986:27)

The grace of "other-power" is preceded by self surrender. In the darkness where the protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase* is waiting to meet the ghost of his friend Rat his self is dissolved. "As my wife said, I'm losing everything. I'm even losing myself." (Murakami Haruki 1985b:188). When he touches his cheek, he thinks that it's not his cheek. His memory becomes unsure, he ceases to think, and gives the stream of time free rein. Tellingly enough, it is only when this process of dissolution is completed, that Rat's voice begins to speak. But even earlier in the novel there has been a readiness on the part of the protagonist to abandon his self. Strikingly, he seems to lack any instinct for self-preservation, and this absence of any obstacles for the dissolution of the self, brings him into close vicinity of the ideal state of reconciliation as the subject's mimetic self-surrender to its objective environment depicted by Adorno.

Passivity in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is thus not only portrayed as an abject state from which the subject wishes to escape, but also as a kind of strategy in its own right. The protagonist's life is not a good one, but his discomfort never expresses itself in any active pursuit or any setting up of various projects. Exactly this absence of activity, this state of not being busy with projects, enables the passive subject to have time for everything and to be open to everything, in somewhat the same sense as Musil's "man without qualities". This is why the girl with the beautiful ears likes him. He is more fantastic than he thinks, she says, because "you only live with half of yourself" (Murakami Haruki 1985a:70). Just as she hides her ears, he hides half his life. What is good about him is his potential, his character of not being entirely finished, of having all possibilities.

The absence of any identification with any goal-directed pursuit makes him a model of the passive waiting attitude that seeks redemption through "other-power". Since this longing must remain mute, relying only on grace from without, it cannot raise any explicit claims, much less contain any blueprints for success. Is the strategy successful? The novel's answer is vaguely affirmative. The convulsions of emotions that emerge in the ending are trickles of life, that slowly drip into the empty halls of his soul. A new beginning seems to have become possible.

The pulverization of time

The deliberate aimlessness and passivity of the protagonists expresses itself on the level of time-consciousness as a pulverization of linear time. The protagonist seems to be able to wait forever without impatience. The temporal distance between events seems to lack relevance for the narrative. "The past as well as the present are presented as if they were a far away past", Miura Masashi comments (1997:40). Indeed, one has a feeling that the time separating one event from the next could be ten years as well as ten minutes. The seconds do not flow past, as much as they are immediately forgotten. Time is no longer a line, but an unarranged series of dots.

We have already mentioned that the time-consciousness of passive waiting differs from that of elegy. It also differs from what Benjamin calls empty-homogeneous time, since there is no irritated waiting, no progress and no shocks to intercept. There is no identity which demands of him that he relates himself to his history, or that he ties together the instances of his life to a continuity. In *A Wild Sheep Chase* there is a scene where he coolly sits watching a clock on the wall while he is waiting for the car that is to take him to the "man in black":

That a human being should only be able to confirm his own existence through the needle of an electric clock seemed somewhat strange. Surely there must be many other ways of self-confirmation in this world. But however much I racked my brain I couldn't think of a single one. (Murakami Haruki 1985a:101f)

The passage exudes listlessness and boredom, but hardly irritation or impatience. His attitude is that of someone who accepts waiting as his fate. In *The Wind-up Bird*, as mentioned, the old soothsayer tells him to "simply wait" and he obediently spends half a year sitting on a bench in Shinjuku.

Neither does this time bear any resemblance to the ecstatic timelessness of auratic time. It is neither "destroying" nor "completing", but indifferent. The intellect is dismantled but the impulses which it had once suppressed are silent. Linear time is not broken through by the messianic light of what Benjamin calls "now-time", but is rather slowly pulverized as if from within. It falls apart as heightened consciousness itself falls into ruin. The final result is the no-time of waiting for nothing, so frequently encountered in Murakami, without either impatience or happiness. It might be objected that the "old town" of *Hardboiled Wonderland*, as well as the hotel room in the "other world" of *The Wind-up Bird*, are explicitly designated as "timeless" and as "a reality with a different speed". But this is not the ecstatic timelessness of mysticism, but simply a state where things don't change. In the dark hotel room, for example, the mysterious woman doesn't know how much time passes between Okada's visits, and everything in the room — the smell, the moist, the half-emptied bottle of whisky — remains more or less the same. Both the old town and the hotel room, then, come forward as places where there is never any need to hurry, as places of rest.

In the consciousness of time, the absence of identity as well as of inner nature manifests itself as the denial of linear time as well as of timelessness. What remains is a time-consciousness of indifference and boredom, to be sure, but this is also a time-consciousness that prepares itself for new life. The breaking down of linear time into isolated dots is a corollary of the passive waiting for the grace of "other-power". If salvation is to come wholly from without, the subject necessarily lacks any object on which to pin his hopes. Neither time nor any other concept can be this object. To hope for "other-power" then means that hope is deprived of any specified object, that the line connecting it to the level of concepts is broken. This is why Tanabe has to describe "other-power" as "absolute nothingness" (Tanabe 1986:8). There is nothing with which to identify. The future is empty, but paradoxically this emptiness is the protagonist's only hope.

The rejection of authenticity

What immediately strikes one about this passively waiting, empty subjectivity is that it neither resembles authenticity nor inauthenticity. The protagonist is typically one who has suspended all efforts to make up his mind about his life, which remains undefined and unsettled. There is no will either to establish continuities nor to establish any identity vis-à-vis others. But neither does the label "inauthentic" seem appropriate. The cool of the Murakami hero is light-years removed from the desperate intellectualizations characteristic of bad faith or conventional identity portrayed in Abe Kôbô. The nervous accommodation to others and the indulgence in "curiosity", "gossip" and "clamor", through which Heidegger defines his prototype of inauthenticity, *das Man*, are simply just as antithetical to the mode of the Murakami hero as to the concept of authenticity itself.

What we see here is that the attitude of waiting leads to a suspension of identification. Passivity and self-surrender come forward as traits of a subject that awaits the reawakening of life. This strategy differs from prevalent variants of the ideal of inner nature, that affirm the impulses of the subject, the growth of its experiences and the utmost flourishing of its possibilities. In Murakami there is no inner nature, only the passive waiting for grace, which befalls the subject as God befell the mystics. That this strategy is incompatible with the paradigm of personal identity goes without saying. The insight that everything that happens to the passive protagonist is a gift from above, and not the result of his own efforts, opens up a chasm between the self and the source of the good. It is not possible to establish any link between the causes of grace and the activity of the self. The self is thus prevented from identification. Since there is nothing which it can claim as its own, it cannot identify itself. When happiness comes, it comes as something alien, as non-self.

According to a common misunderstanding, identity is not a good in itself but is a "necessary evil" in order to secure a good life since it helps the subject to maintain itself amidst the shocks of the modern world. The strategy of passive

waiting in Murakami, however, demonstrates that the absence of identity too can be employed as an instrument to further the good life. This possibility is often overlooked. Iwamoto, who judges Murakami exclusively from the standpoint of the Sartrean ideal of authenticity, describes the selfhood of the protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase* as a hair-raising example of "postmodern" superficiality and vacuity (Iwamoto 1993). While Iwamoto's critique possesses a measure of validity from the standpoint of the ideal of authenticity, he fails to recognize that Murakami's early works are propelled by an alternative ideal of the good which is quite incommensurable with authenticity — an "emptying" of oneself in preparation for redemption by "other-power". In the language of psychoanalysis, this is the attitude of a patient who, unable to recover by his or her own powers, can do nothing but wait passively for the wounds to heal.

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To summarize the strategy of passive waiting, the following three points seem particularly important: 1) It constitutes a strategy aiming at an ideal distinct from authenticity, stressing self-dissolution rather than self-preservation. 2) It proceeds aimlessly, relying more on external "other-power" than on conscious steering. 3) It operates paradoxically or dialectically, utilizing what Benjamin called the "law that effort produces its opposite". The last point is of particular significance for understanding Murakami's attitude to naturalization. The central aim of this strategy can be said to be the facilitation of recovery through a stoic and deliberate immersion in Hades and in the non-sociality of naturalized modernity. The strategy of passive waiting for the reawakening of nature is never wholly abandoned by Murakami, and is retained even in novels such as *The Wind-up Bird*.¹²¹ In the latter novel, however, it is visibly weakened and replaced by a budding paradigm of authenticity and identity. We will now have a look at this paradigm.

Authenticity in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*

The reversal from the passive waiting in his early works to the determined attempt to reverse privatization in *The Wind-up Bird* is undeniable. Although Okada Tôru is still a fundamentally solitary hero, his quest to retrieve his lost wife Kumiko marks a significant shift in Murakami's output. For the first time a protagonist appears who resolutely commits himself to another person. What occupies Okada in much of the novel is the restoration of destroyed communication with his wife. In order to achieve this he has to "remember" her name. The volte-face of Murakami's previous nonchalance towards proper names is striking. While the reliance on epithets in the earlier novel in an — albeit parodical — way made their bearers exchangeable and dispensable, the insistence on proper names in this work must be seen as an attempt to combat

this exchangeability and attempt to hold fast her uniqueness, or in other words her "aura".¹²²

The Wind-up Bird also brings out the difficulty of combating privatization. What is striking with this novel is not only Okada's attempt to rescue the aura of his wife, but also the reappearance of shock and pain. The unpleasant conjugal quarrels and the violent hatred which he feels towards his enemy Wataya Noboru are only the reverse side of his new sense of responsibility. As the attempt to restore community ends up in the affirmation of violence, this marks the failure of his attempt to restore the aura. The very commitment with which he engages in the struggle to retrieve his wife ironically leads him back to the sensation of shock rather than to the realm of auratic human relations. This much is still true in Benjamin: that in modernity external relations without shock are impossible.

Kasahara Mei, disciple of Heidegger

Let us have a closer look at the ideal of authenticity in *The Wind-up Bird*. To begin with, the thematization of recovery remains central. For example, Okada Tôru's attempt to regain contact with the underworld and the water, by climbing down the dried-out well, is an attempt to revive his dead inner nature (Murakami Haruki 1997c:40). However, Okada is no longer the passive hero waiting for grace, but has become what one would have to describe as a mythical hero who by his faith, purity and resolute action saves the world from evil. Not only has he become active, he is also trying to break out of his isolation. Unlike *A Wild Sheep Chase* or *Hardboiled Wonderland* this is a novel where the hero won't let go of his beloved one, where he fights to get her back. "I cannot escape", he says. Like Bird in *A Personal Matter* the hero finds that the escape to Africa or Crete would betray the authenticity and commitment which is demanded of him at home. His enemy, Wataya Noboru, on the contrary is depicted as the image of inauthenticity: an unreliable chameleon who will take any theoretical position which enables him to crush his opponents and behind whose brilliant argumentative powers there is no central belief or core.

However, Okada is not authentic from the start. In exploring the ideal of authenticity in *The Wind-up Bird* and the process whereby Okada gradually awakens to his responsibility, a good point to start is Kasahara Mei, a girl who is living in Okada's neighborhood and who gives him a lesson in "being until death" and a few other Heideggerian ideas that will prepare him for his later authentic decisions. Although Heidegger's name is not mentioned, we will find that his conception of authenticity corresponds fairly well to that of this novel. After his wife Kumiko has left him, Okada climbs down into a dried-out well in the garden of a deserted house in the neighborhood with a knapsack, a torch and a bottle of water to do some thinking. When he falls asleep Mei removes the ladder and lets him sit at the bottom of the well for days in order to make him taste the fear of approaching death. From time to time she speaks to him in

order to check if he is beginning to feel any fear, but each time she is disappointed and angered to find that he is as unruffled as always. Here she has just warned him that she might let him die down there.

"Hey, Wind-up Bird, you don't really believe it yet, do you? That I'm capable of being as cruel as that?"

"I'm not sure. I don't believe you're capable, but I don't believe you're incapable either. Both outcomes are possible. That's what I believe."

"I'm not talking about possibilities", she said in an ice-cold voice. "I just got an idea, a pretty neat one. Since you took the trouble to climb down there to think, I'll let you concentrate even more on that thinking of yours."

"In what way?", I asked

"In this way", she said. And closed the well's lid, which until now had been half open, completely. (Murakami Haruki 1997b :157).

Later she tells him of her theory that people only take life seriously because they realize that they are mortal, and asks him:

"Have you been thinking about your death down there, in that complete darkness of yours? About in what way you are going to die?"

I thought about it for a moment. "No", I answered. "I haven't been thinking very much about that."

"Why?" she asked as if she were appalled. She sounded as if she were addressing a hopeless pet. (ibid 162f)

To Mei's disappointment, Okada seems to live as if he were immortal. Her words acquire a certain significance in view of what he had said to Kumiko earlier: that they had lots of time to solve their problems and that there was no need to hurry (ibid 151). But shortly afterwards Kumiko had ran away. Mei's cruel experiment, then, becomes a dress rehearsal for him to take responsibility for his marriage.

Here she is telling him about *Jemeinigkeit* (the idea that *Dasein* is always "mine")

"Why are you trying so hard to make me think about death? I don't get it. Would it help you in any way if I would think seriously about death?"

"Hardly!", she answered, this time as if she had really given up hope. "How on earth would that be of any help to me? Where did you get that strange idea? Don't you realize it's your life? I have nothing to do with it." (ibid 165)

Then she gives him a lesson in *Geworfenheit* (being-thrown). When he explains to her about how he and his wife had tried to start a new life when they got married, she says there's something wrong in their way of thinking.

I think what you just said, Wind-up Bird, would be impossible for any human being. I mean things like "All right, let's build a new world" or "All right, let's create a new self". That's what I think. Even if one thinks one's made it, even if one thinks one has become a

different person, below the surface the old you still exists and when the time comes it pops up again with a hello. Haven't you understood that yet? (ibid 169)

As long as he is "inauthentically" refusing to take his place in his own history, i.e. to recognize his existence as his "own" (*jemeinig*) and no one else's, he cannot feel any fear of death. History will appear as something external and unrelated to him — a view of history that is that of an "immortal" (or perhaps a ghost secure in his non-sociality) who views the world from outside. There is reason to believe that Murakami takes these Heideggerian lessons seriously, considering the prominent place of history in his recent fiction and essays — and especially the dark and calamitous history of modern Japan. The Japanese occupation of Manchuria and the battle of Nomonhan 1939 provide the setting of one of the sub-plots of *The Wind-up Bird*.¹²³

Mei's attempt to convert Okada to authenticity fails, however, since he is saved from the well by the "mental prostitute" Kanô Creta. In the novel, it will still be some time before he turns "authentic" and makes up his mind that it is his responsibility to retrieve Kumiko. Far from chasing after his wife, he gets involved with Kanô Creta and is on the verge of accepting her offer to go to Crete with her. Here it is close-at-hand to compare Okada with another "bird", Bird in *ΓeÆs A Personal Matter* who is similarly tempted to abandon his wife and newly born deformed child and escape to Africa with his former girlfriend Himiko. Just as Bird, however, Okada rather abruptly makes up his mind that he must stay and take responsibility. "I can't escape and I should not escape", he realizes (ibid 332). Instead of looking for a new life, he stays on, determined to rescue Kumiko from evil Wataya Noboru. In sharp contrast to in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, here the protagonist believes that "something is demanded of him here" (ibid 336). What this means, to put it in Mei's terms, is of course that he has finally become "mortal" and accepted his place in history. Before he lived in the world of "possibilities" — what Musil called the hypothetical life. What angered Mei most during her experiment was that he stubbornly used the word possibility and probability in his answers to her. Now as he decides not to "escape", this is because he realizes that he can't do otherwise, i.e. that there are no other possibilities. He has returned to what Heidegger called the "simplicity of his fate".

The same association of possibility with inauthenticity is found in *A Personal Matter* as well, in Himiko's cosmology of "the plurality of the universe", an idea according to which we simultaneously inhabit countless universes, since every possibility is always realized in its own universe. (Γe 1995d:59f). That's why Bird doesn't need to be sad about putting his son to death, she says — in another universe the child lives on and is growing stronger and healthier every day. A decisive point in her theory is that it robs death of its finality — there can be no single death, as Heidegger (and Mei) thinks, since each person has several lives. What Bird finally realizes when he refuses to escape with her is that there is no other reality than the one single reality of what he wants to escape. This, needless to say, is a return to "authenticity", but also at the same time an

abandonment of another way of thinking about the good life, found or example in Musil's idea of hypothetical living.

To return to the *Wind-up Bird*, we can observe that Okada finally has to live through and experience all of the lessons once taught to him by Mei, including the fear of death. Near the end of the novel, Okada wakes up at the bottom of the well after his show-down with Wataya and rescue of Kumiko in the other world. But it is no longer dried-out. Water is rising in it, but his body is paralyzed. He cannot move and is close to drowning. At this moment he thinks of Kasahara Mei. He imagines her coming to the well and rescuing him. He hears her voice in the darkness: "Hey, Wind-up Bird". "What are you doing down there? Thinking again?". And again she asks him if he is scared. "Of course", he answers while the water continues rising. His agony and his scream at the end signals that he is "resurrected" to life exactly when he is on the verge of physical death. He is no longer a mere spectator, but part of history. He has finally accepted his "thrownness".

This discussion of authenticity in *The Wind-up Bird* has revealed how close the concept is to what we find in classical accounts of authenticity such as Heidegger's. There is however one great difference, which we have saved till last. As we remarked earlier, the state of Murakami's heroes before they turned to authenticity was not at all reminiscent of the "inauthentic" state of *das Man*, with its desperate intellectualizations, bad faith or clinging to conventional identities. This suggests that when the ideal of authenticity reappears in naturalized modernity, it no longer draws strength from people's wish to overcome the experience of shock or resolve the contradiction between fear and desire. Instead, it becomes an ideal which presupposes that the subject has already chosen to reject non-sociality and search for a good life in society, to locate objects of desire in the relations to others. Works like *The Wind-up Bird* or Wim Wenders 1987 film *Wings of Desire* (*Himmel über Berlin*) depicts heroes who begin their quest for fate, continuity and belonging not by turning their backs to inauthentic engrossment in society, but by turning their backs to the pleasant loneliness of non-social disengagement. As the non-social areas of life grow larger, we have said, the central contradiction ceases to be one between fear and desire. This conflict is only encountered if one chooses to remain within society. The central problem now, we have suggested, is whether one feels like affirming society or not. All contemporary culture, including the discussions about the good life, is affected by this problem.

Return of shock and heightened consciousness

Ironically, the attempt to revive community through authentic commitment may well further atomization. It is not the auratic community that is revived by Okada's struggles so much as the dilemmas characterizing the shock-modernity theorized by Benjamin. Anyone who wants to gain community by authenticity — i.e. by drawing borders between good and evil — must face the reappearance of a world which is hostile, interspersed with enemies. We have

already commented on the limited success of his attempts to revive communication with his wife. Rather than gaining access to the world of the aura, he is compelled to follow the path outlined by Benjamin, leading to shock and to the heightening of consciousness. Shock reappears when he is about to die in the well and screams for Kasahara Mei, and in the anguish in the nightmarish scene where the guests of the hotel chase him through the dark corridors. It is indirectly present in the violent hatred which he feels towards Wataya and in the blind rage with which he kicks the man who had attacked him with a baseball bat. The attempt to restore community thus ends up in the affirmation of violence. It is no coincidence that the final showdown is barbaric, despite Murakami's efforts to pass it off as a happy end: Wataya's head is crushed with a blow of a baseball bat in the spirit world, while Kumiko unplugs his respirator in the real world.

Parallel to the increase in pain and suffering is the development towards a heightening of consciousness. At the same time as Okada Tôru's "I don't know why" — the emblem of his "low consciousness" — is still in contrast to the false omniscience and brilliant intellect of the unreliable and inauthentic Wataya, knowledge has now also become the key to escape from the "darkness". This is not a knowledge gained by the efforts of the intellect, however, but an esoteric one that has its origin in the fusion of reification with reenchantment which occurs in occultism. Only by remembering the name of his wife can he manage to escape from the "darkness" of the incomprehensible. As he forces his way into the hotel corridor on the "other" side, he says: "I have to know. I can't live in confusion for ever." (Murakami 1997b:135). Occult knowledge, as mentioned, imitates rationality while denying it. It is never divorced from the discursive. It is not mystic, but discursive in another form. The other world thus becomes demystified and strangely similar to our own, although with a different logic and on a different plane of reality. The occult knowledge becomes a new impenetrable "protective shield". Knowledge and consciousness triumphs over nature, and is rivaled only by shock. To the degree that this knowledge leads to the good, the good is "interiorized" — it is reflected back from the inside of the prison walls. Outside these walls shock reigns. And this prison — the "other world" — is just as lonely and solitary as the privatized existence from which it was believed to offer an escape.

This means that the attempt to combat privatization leads back not only to a world of enemies, but also to heightened consciousness. We are back in the modernity of Benjamin. This marks the failure of Okada's attempt to restore auratic human relations with his wife. Far from landing on the paradisiacal soil of the aura, he becomes caught in the mechanism depicted by Benjamin and has no alternative but to oscillate helplessly between shock and the heightening of consciousness. This confirms our thesis. The choice is not between "belonging" and privatized existence, but between two modes of modernity with their respective dilemmas.

Rain falling

Before we leave the discussion of the two strategies of passive immersion and "authentic" denial, we need to raise the question of their relationship. Why did Murakami Haruki change from one to the other? As a matter of fact, the shift towards a steadily more forceful negation of privatization was gradual — visible already in *Hardboiled Wonderland* and then gradually accentuated in novels such as *Norwegian Wood*, *Dance Dance Dance*, *South of the Border, West of the Sun* and *The Wind-up Bird*.¹²⁴ However, there is a scene which, like a crystal, seems to reflect the change in a flash and gives us the key to the transformation. It is provided in the ending of the 1992 novel *South of the Border, West of the Sun*.

Crushed with remorse and guilt, the narrator agrees with his wife to give their marriage a second chance and start anew. After she goes to bed, he stays up through the night until he notices that day is breaking. Sitting at the kitchen table, he feels drained of all strength and utterly paralyzed.

Both elbows on the table, I covered my face with my palms.

Inside that darkness, I saw rain falling on the sea. Rain softly falling on a vast sea, with no one there to see it. The rain strikes the surface of the sea, but not even the fish know it's raining.

Until someone came and rested a hand lightly on my shoulder, my thoughts were of the sea. (Murakami 1999:187)

The sea is totally inhuman and cold, yet paradoxically comforting — perhaps because the inhuman washes away the human and with it, all guilt. It is his "world of green", his nothingness and his void. And the unknown hand? The novel stops without telling whose hand it is. It is thus the return of shock and exteriority. Maybe it is what he has been waiting for all the time — a grace that makes it possible to start afresh. "A new day had begun. But what this day would bring, I had no idea." (ibid 186).

The scene is trivial, yet there is nothing similar to it in either *Hardboiled Wonderland* or *The Wind-up Bird*. Scenes like this make it possible to see how the strategies of these two novels belong together. I will suggest that what the early protagonists are waiting for is "new days" like the one depicted, days when new life appears to bud. Newness appears paradoxically through their immersion in the sameness of the everyday, signaling how shock may reappear as grace in the midst of naturalized modernity itself. Furthermore, the new life that the protagonist is embarking on is clearly that of a mature and responsible father to his family (ibid 186), suggesting that it is the experience of such newness that enables them to return to "society", at least temporarily, equipped with the "authentic" stance of the latter novel. At the same time, this grace is chimerical, a mirage that only holds reality for the moment. As we have seen, the return to society brings hell with it, and the re-encounter with old dilemmas.

Conclusion

Murakami Haruki's modernity is characterized by the dilemma of how to affirm the disappearance of shock without relinquishing human relations. This is a dilemma since the very attempt to combat privatization — depicted forcefully in *The Wind-up Bird* — leads to a return of shock, i.e. to the kind of modernity depicted by Benjamin. The alternative of stoically submitting to privatization — as seen in *Hardboiled Wonderland* — is only to be had to the price of profound loneliness.

The modernity portrayed by Murakami is thus caught between two evils. Either privatization can be denied, in which case shock and reification will be reawakened. In Murakami we have seen how this option — which orients itself towards the paradigm of personal identity — might enable the subject to relate himself to the world, to regain history and to define himself conceptually. At the same time the very attempt to hunt down authenticity and to compel a sense of belonging and community through the imposition of identity entails the risk of a return of barbarism, violence and hatred on the one hand, and to a rigidification of the protective shield of consciousness on the other.

In Murakami, however, we also see attempts to explore another possibility: not to search for a way back to the old modernity of Benjamin, but to accept the loneliness offered by deep modernity. To follow the current of the two trends of naturalization and privatization implies waiting for the process of recovery. Thus we see in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hardboiled Wonderland* subjects who, rejecting identity, empty themselves of certainties in order to simply wait for the impulses of inner nature to come back to life.

Just like Benjamin, Murakami maintains an attitude of hesitant openness to the dilemma that is central for his perception of modernity. His ambivalent stance to the loneliness that is a precondition for naturalization is akin to Benjamin's ambivalence to the disintegration of the aura in the sensation of shock. Both are equally unwilling to affirm completely the modernity of their day. Just as Benjamin, Murakami's protagonists, rely on a "tactile" reception of their environment, in which they grope for a dialectics of awakening that will solve their dilemma. The difference is, of course, that the dream they seek to awake from is not one about shock but about nature.

5-2: Murakami Ryû: boredom and the nostalgia for shock

I love boredom. —Okazaki Kyôko

War is not boring. û Murakami Ryû

Boredom is the threshold to great deeds. û Walter Benjamin

Jorge Luis Borges once defined the baroque as "that style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its own possibilities". He adds that it "is the final stage in all art, when art flaunts and squanders its resources." (Borges 1999:4). Murakami Ryû's 1976 debut novel *Almost Transparent Blue* is baroque. It seeks to exhaust the possibilities of a way of perceiving modernity which is strongly colored by the sensation of shock. It is a book "filled with the rage of an impotent counterculture determined to persist with its experiments with sex, drugs, and violence" (Strecher 1999:263). Its "extreme imagination" (Snyder 1999) is a symptom of this exhaustion. Going to extremes and escalating risks is an attempt to resuscitate the sensation of shock.

No doubt *Almost Transparent* was shocking to many of its readers. Everything in it is marked by the conscious attempt to produce shock. It contains endless, repetitive descriptions of details calculated to be revolting. The first pages set the tone. Insects, sweat, grease, booze leftovers, rotten food, cold sweat and shooting up are among the things carefully and minutely described. The following chapters contain descriptions of sexual orgies, quarreling, OD'ing, vomiting, mad car driving, strangling games, concerts, fights, suicide-attempts, getting sick and hallucinating. There is something strenuous in this list. It is shocking and tedious at the same time.¹²⁵ The enumeration is baroque. In Benjamin's words: "For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly [and] to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification" (Benjamin 1994:178). The details are boring, yet carefully added, as a matter of style. The shocking, if repeated often enough, sinks back into harmless monotony, it becomes naturalized, part of the everyday. Shock is only shocking if it is new. It resembles the baroque use of allegory as described by Benjamin. "If it is to hold its own against the tendency to absorption, the allegorical must constantly unfold in new and surprising ways", Benjamin writes, "Allegories become dated because it is part of their nature to shock" (ibid 183). Murakami's putatively nauseating list is baroque in the sense that it amounts to endlessly repeated allegories of the same through which the exhaustion of the possibilities for shock becomes visible. This fatal mechanism forces the revolt against naturalization to search for ever new shocks and also points to the paradox of such a search, since it neutralizes itself in a monotony of shocking repetitions. This paradox, as we will see, is central to Murakami Ryû's strategy for dealing with naturalized modernity.

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We have seen that Murakami Haruki, although vacillating between affirming and negating naturalization, tends to make use of a paradoxical strategy that can be expressed in the formula of negating naturalization by accepting it. Here we will study a strategy that proceeds in the opposite direction: Murakami Ryû's attempt to fight the boredom of naturalized modernity head on, a strategy which, however, involves a paradox of its own. I will also attempt to show that, although he chooses a different strategy from Murakami Haruki, they both share the underlying vision of modernity as naturalized and characterized by privatization and traumatization.

In order to bring out the strategy employed by Murakami Ryû most clearly, we will focus less in this chapter on loneliness than on the experience of boredom. How does the peculiar kind of boredom — the tedium of endlessly repeated shocks, shot through by its own kind of ceaseless, monotonous intensity — which we encounter in *Almost Transparent Blue* relate to shock and naturalization as ways of perceiving modernity? How is it related to the "pleasant boredom" of Okazaki Kyôko's flâneuse, which we encountered at the very beginning of our investigation? And how does it differ from the boredom that Benjamin, following Baudelaire, called spleen and which he associated with shock-modernity? What is the peculiar nature of boredom in Murakami's works and its relation to naturalization? By clarifying these questions it will be possible for us to delineate the constellation of ideas that guide his fiction. We will focus on the relation between three such ideas: the image of present modern society as the soil of apocalyptic longing, the affirmation of social libido, and the valorization of a peculiar kind of uncompromising "authenticity" as an ideal of the good life.

Boredom and naturalization

To begin with, we need to be wary of confusing the "boredom" in naturalized modernity with the notions of boredom that dominate classical social thought, such as what Simmel calls the blasé attitude (*Blasiertheit*) or what Benjamin calls spleen. What these notions have in common is that they rest on a conception of modernity in which shock-sensations are abundant. As we recall, spleen or *Blasiertheit* is not a boredom that stems from the absence of shocks or of stimuli, but on the contrary a boredom that is fuelled by an excess of shocks and that results from the development of heightened consciousness or intellectualism. This means that it is dubious whether the theories of the blasé attitude and spleen are applicable to naturalized modernity. What we must do, in other words, is to find a concept of boredom which is neither reducible to *Blasiertheit* nor to spleen. A quick glance at contemporary literature and popular culture in Japan suggests at least two important varieties of boredom. One of them is linked to the affirmation of naturalization and the other to its negation.

A fundamental gesture in much of contemporary literature — including manga — is that of accepting or even celebrating boredom. As we remember, Okazaki Kyôko depicts her flânerie in the bustling Shibuya crowd as the epitome of pleasant boredom. To her, the city environment is naturalized — it has turned into a taken for granted and natural environment, which no longer contains anything surprising. Like the natural environment, it is characterized by a pattern of cyclical repetition rather than by the linear pattern of evolution or progress. *Taikutsu ga daisuki*, the title of her manga-collection, literally means "I love boredom". The title-piece of the collection, which depicts the "elegant boredom" of two lovers out on a picnic in the country, is idyllic and uneventful. Boredom is associated with things like watching the sky or strolling around town looking at people. At one point, Marie Antoinette's notorious dictum "I was afraid to be bored" is mentioned, but only to be resolutely rejected in favor of an endorsement of boredom (Okazaki 1987:140ff). The fiction of Yoshimoto Banana and Murakami Haruki too, is permeated with a basic acceptance of everyday life, tedious and vacuous as it may be ("sono nanimo nasa", as Yoshimoto calls it, Yoshimoto 1992:230). Exactly the same fondness for boredom that we saw in Okazaki pervades the work of Yoshimoto — the boredom that stems from being among familiar things that evoke fond memories. In the post-script to *Tugumi* (Tugumi, 1989) she writes:

Every summer, my family and I go to the Western Izu peninsula. We have been going to the same place, the same inn for over ten years, and it has become like a home to me. There we spend our summers in boredom, without anything special to it. I wrote this book since I wanted to store the mood of these days somewhere — the vacuity, the constant presence of the sea, the walks and sunsets that were repeated day out and day in. Now everyone in my family will be able to think back fondly on it all, even if they would lose their memory. (Yoshimoto 1992:230).

In the case of Murakami Haruki, the boredom that envelops modernity is a sense of meaninglessness and listlessness that is far less idyllic. Nevertheless, as we have seen, his protagonists make hardly any attempts to escape it. Their attitude is that of stoically immersing oneself in boredom. At one occasion the hero of *A Wild Sheep Chase* is allowed ten minutes to tell the story of his life. His diagnosis is that he affirms boredom:

Most people try to avoid boredom, but I try my best to enter it — just like when somebody goes against the current during rush hour. That's why I don't complain if my life is boring. (Murakami Haruki 1985a:64)

The mood of a typical Murakami Haruki hero, Aoki Tamotsu writes, "suggests an intense indifference; neither happy nor sad, replete nor empty, lonely nor loved, he simply exists. This is life in the 1980s" (Aoki 1996:271). As these words indicate, we are a far way from the "hell" depicted by Benjamin. Here are neither shocks nor any desperately struggling heightened consciousness. This is

rather Hades, the shadowy land of the dead where there is neither pain nor happiness.

This brings us to the second kind of boredom and to Murakami Ryû. His "sensational" or "scandalous" style should not be interpreted to mean that boredom has ceased to play any role in his writings. As Shimada Masahiko has observed, Murakami Ryû "wages war on boredom" (Shimada 1998:25). But this war is itself nourished by a very distinct kind of boredom, conveniently captured in Japanese by the word *unzari* — a state of being "fed up", "bored to death", "sick and tired", "disgusted", or "bored stiff". This is a boredom that revolts against boredom. It implies a rejection of the tedium of everyday life. In contrast to the more idyllic or pleasant kinds of boredom, its source is resentment rather than indifference. It is splendidly illustrated in a passage in *Coin Locker Babies*, in which Anemone visits her older friend Sachiko in hospital. While Sachiko chatters away about parties, jewels and lovers, Anemone looks out through the window at the Shinjuku skyscrapers. She feels pity and contempt for her friend. She has seen through her talk: "all Sachiko's trips and lovers and experiences amounted to the same thing: boredom."

The whole city stinks of age and stagnation and boredom, and it makes Sachiko as sick as it does me; but she goes on listening to the same old songs, trying to keep from dying of boredom, while I'd rather puke it all out, puke up a great cloud of boredom and let it rain down all over Tokyo, rain till your lungs rot in your chest, till the streets crack and wash away and rivers of puke runs between the buildings... puke going higher and higher, the air so thick it chokes you, and mangroves sprouting from the cracks in the sidewalks... the old trees washed up by the roots, rotting in little pools to become nests for poisonous bugs, horny bugs that hatch out in swarms to creep all over you, Sachiko. (Murakami 1998:129f)

As Anemone's daydream suggests, the feeling of "being fed up" involves a longing for shock. It is a discomfort with the lack of stimuli in a naturalized environment, a discomfort that aims at the restoration of shock. To revert to our theological metaphors, it is the nostalgia for hell among the inhabitants of Hades.

It should be observed that the boredom of indifference and that of "being fed up" are both based on the presupposition that modernity is a basically stable world that no longer contains any surprises, novelties or shocks. The important problem in response to which both kinds of boredom arise is not how to deal with shock but how to deal with its absence. The difference lies merely in how this absence is evaluated — whether it is accepted or rejected. Neither attitude could arise in shock-modernity.¹²⁶

These two stances towards naturalization may seem to correspond to two strands in Japanese popular culture since the beginning of the 1980's, which the sociologist Miyadai Shinji has identified and associated with their respective subcultures. The distinction appears in his 1995 book *Live the never-ending everyday* (*Owarinaki nichijô wo ikiro*). The book is an analysis of Aum Shinrikyô, the doomsday sect responsible for the sarin-gas attack on the Tokyo

subway earlier the same year, and is also a vigorous defense of the casual affirmation of the everyday in the controversial gyaru (girl) youth culture, which Miyadai sees as a healthy alternative to the popular religious sects and "self-cultivation seminars".¹²⁷ The future belongs to the gyaru, he believes, thanks to their superior "adaptive capability". Still, the conflict between the two cultural strands will continue and will even be radicalized:

The more those kids who have acquired a heightened adaptive capability increase, the more those who are unable to adapt feel cornered and deprived of a place to be. In other words, the conflict will be radicalized. The boom in religions and "self-improvement seminars" since the latter half of the 80s to this day must be understood in this context. (Miyadai 1995:140)

Miyadai argues that the conflict between the two strands first became visible as a conflict between two different "eschatologies" in the media of popular culture, such as manga or anime. The first is the eschatology of the "never-ending everyday" (*owaranai nichijō*), which has been a conspicuous current in Japan since the first half of the 1980s. Suffused by the sentiment that "the future will not be different from the present", it is embodied in the gyaru subculture and socially manifest in notorious phenomena such as burusera-shops¹²⁸ or telephone dating clubs enlisting female high school students. Since the future will bring neither "brilliant progress" nor any "terrible collapse", there is nothing left to do but to take it easy and play about endlessly, as in everyday life in a school or in a junior collage. Apocalyptic visions are explicitly and mercilessly poked fun at in manga such as Takahashi Rumiko's popular *Urusei yatsura*, a typical manifestation of the "never-ending everyday" that, despite containing many SF-elements, depicts the future as similar in all basic respects to the status quo. Miyadai portrays the "never-ending everyday" and its carriers among the controversial gyaru in a positive light as a down-to-earth affirmation of reality, claiming that the girls are better equipped to deal with the complexities of present-day life than those who revolt against the everyday, a revolt which he sees epitomized in Aum Shinrikyō's gas attack in the Tokyo subway system.

The "never-ending everyday" provoked a reaction from those, predominantly boys and young men, who were frustrated by the endless play and who often lacked the necessary "communication skills" required for participating successfully in it. A second type of eschatology thus came to the fore in the second half of the 80s, which Miyadai calls the "post-nuclear war community" (*Kakusensōgo no kyōdōtai*). Its violent message of "redemption through Armageddon" was expressed in smash hits such as *Tomoto Katsuhiro's Akira* or *Miyazaki Hayao's Nausicaa (Kaze no tani no Naushika)*. Just as the "never-ending everyday" this eschatology found social expression through the establishment and spread in the 1990s of its own subculture. Whereas the culture of the "never-ending everyday" gained a strong foothold in the lifestyle of the gyaru, the "post-nuclear war community" found a ghastly embodiment in

the apocalyptic terrorism of Aum Shinrikyô. Feeling cornered by the establishment of the "Tokyo utopia of burusera", Miyadai writes, those kids who had been hoping for "redemption through Armageddon" feared that they were losing the battle. "As revenge and miracle-cure they planned the realization of their own fantasy: to build the æEmpire of AumÆ in the ruins and to proclaim Asahara Shôkô as the æFirst and Holy Emperor of the DharmaÆ." (Miyadai 1995:86ff).

To be sure, it would seem that MiyadaiÆs "never-ending everyday" is wedded to a stance of accepting or enjoying boredom, while its rival, "the post-nuclear war community", is permeated with feelings of being "fed up" and feelings of revolt. However, his distinction between the two eschatologies should not be confused with the distinction between affirming and negating naturalization in, say, Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû. The affirmative stance towards naturalization in Murakami Haruki is far from a simple and straightforward affirmation of the "never-ending everyday". As for Murakami Ryû, the raw and basic fight for survival in *The World Five Minutes After* (1994, *Gofungo no sekai*), which literally depicts a post-nuclear war community, as well as the sinister fantasy which inspired him to write the apocalyptic *Coin Locker Babies* ù a cloud of deadly poison released over Tokyo ù seem to qualify him as an exponent of the "post-nuclear war community". However, two significant facts make such an identification problematic.

Firstly, his fiction combines imagery from both eschatologies. Two years after *The World Five Minutes After* he published *Love & Pop* (1996, Rabu & Poppu), which is a study of the "never-ending everyday" in general and the phenomenon of "assisted dating" (*enjo-kôsai*)¹²⁹ in particular. In the postscript, Murakami Ryû thanks the girls who provided him with background information, and concludes by assuring them that he is on their side (Murakami Ryû 1997a:226). Here is none of the fear of a "burusera-victory" which Miyadai attributes to the adherents of the "post-nuclear war community". In fact, Murakami Ryû is notorious for his tendency to poke fun at todayÆs *wakai osu* (young male animals) for being unpopular losers with communication problems (cf Murakami Ryû 1993: 36f, 172, 235). In such denigrating remarks he and Miyadai are brothers-in-arms.

Another fact that should caution us against reducing him to either of the eschatologies is his noteworthy confession in an interview with Asada Akira in 1996 that he had grown tired of the twin themes of his previous production, the themes of sex and destruction. "If we look at Aum, they have realized the breakthrough I imagined in an extremely boring form, right?". It is not only Aum ShinrikyôÆs realization of the apocalyptic elements of his own imagination which bores him, but also the Tokyo subcultures with their "girls who get in a frenzy about drugs and SM", which he finds "tedious to look at and speak to" (Murakami Ryû & Asada 1998:103). Murakami Ryû, then, is "fed up" even with the revolts against naturalization, which has become part of the boring everyday.¹³⁰

While Murakami Ryû is clearly revolting against boredom, he straddles both of the positions identified by Miyadai and also distances himself from them, rejecting both as boring. The revolt against naturalization is a wider and more inclusive position than the revolt against the "never-ending everyday". How are we to understand this position theoretically? We must now have a closer look at how the "war against boredom" is being waged in Murakami Ryû's work.

The idealization of shock

Now there are no more explosions, now everything goes on silently. That gets on one's nerves... û Franz Schauwecker (quoted in Sloterdijk 1987:415)

As the world as a whole sinks back into the apparent stillness of nature, a nostalgia for shock makes its appearance. Shock itself, rather than the tranquility of peaceful picnics, assumes an idyllic aura. I would like to suggest that the revolt against the everyday in Murakami Ryû feeds on such nostalgia. For his characters, as Stephen Snyder points out, "the mundane represents a kind of threat from which they must flee, an anxiety for which they seek therapy in violent conditions and degraded situations." (Snyder 1999:201). Murakami Ryû's writings abound with shocks as well as with representations of apocalyptic violence and of self-destructive excesses in drugs and sex, but unlike for Simmel or Benjamin, these shocks are no longer given but have to be consciously produced. They are actively intended or yearned for rather than passively experienced. His heroes are agents rather than victims of shock.¹³¹

Nowhere is the yearning for a harsher, simpler and more authentic life expressed more clearly than in *The World Five Minutes After*, a science fiction novel whose protagonist, Odagiri, is transported from his life in contemporary Tokyo to a parallel world in which Japan never surrendered in the Pacific War and still fights on from a subterranean network of tunnels, the country devastated and the population decimated to the point of extinction. Odagiri is taken prisoner by the Japanese side and subjected first to forced labor and then to a bloody battle. As he is about to be executed, his interrogator asks him what he thinks of the place. "In a word", Odagiri answers, "I like it".

Where I was before, everybody was always butting in where they weren't wanted, shooting off at the mouth. Somebody was always telling you what to do and where to go. In train stations, there were loudspeakers yelling æDanger! Keep away from the tracks!Æ or æWatch your step! Wide space between the train and platform!Æ æKeep your arms and head in the car....Æ And it did no good to tell them to leave you alone; that only brought the meddlers in swarms. Money was everything back there, and yet people didn't even know what they wanted to buy with it; they just bought what everybody else was buying, wanted what everybody else wanted. (Murakami Ryû 1997b:119f, trans. Snyder 1999:200)

Here we see a reversal of the relationship diagnosed by Benjamin. What we see here is not a nostalgia for nature or the premodern aura. Odagiri, sick and tired of the naturalized everyday, seeks to escape to shock rather than from it. He prefers the "cruel but simple and totally unambiguous world" where people "know for what purpose they risk their lives and fight" (ibid 117, 118) to the bland and peaceful life — the "auntiness" as he calls it — of contemporary Japan, with its consumerism and mania for regulation.

As the appreciative words about simplicity and unambiguity indicate, Murakami Ryû's heroes prefer the painful simplicity of shock to the vagueness of peace. To use Snyder's words they prefer "high-tech firefight" to "waiting for a train". A stylized nostalgia enwraps everything that is painful — having to fight, struggling for bread or dying for a cause. "Don't you think that it is sexy with places like deep in the desert or other countries where civil war is on the verge of breaking out, or countries where they are already raging, starving countries or countries with extreme disparity of wealth?" Machiko asks her lesbian companion in *Ibiza* (Ibiza, 1989-91). Although she is reprimanded, Machiko refuses to budge: "In a world that won't go around if you don't get your ankles cut off for ten dollars, at least something is bound to be unambiguous" (Murakami Ryû 1995:183). Of the same opinion as Machiko is a sympathetically portrayed sado-queen in *Topaz: Tokyo Decadence* who gives the following piece of advice to the heroine:

Perhaps you need to make things clearer? Ambiguity should be detested, you know. Every time you seek advice about life, there is only one answer. The answer is always the same. To make things clearer. For that sake, it wouldn't matter if the entire world would have to perish. That's what I think.

Machiko and the sado-queen share the aversion to living in a normal, indistinct world which make them irritated and bored. Even violence is preferable. Naturalization has meant the relativization and blurring of many of the schemata and binary oppositions which had helped structure the worldview of the early days of modernity (like the distinctions between classes or nations, technology and nature, enlightenment and myth, and even the one between modernity and tradition itself). The revolt against naturalization here becomes a revolt against the "new obscurity" which results from the absence of clear-cut alternatives and sharp distinctions. The last refuge for those who are dissatisfied with this obscurity is apocalypses and wars. Apocalypses and wars are means to make the world simple again.

Shock as a criterion of authenticity

A man who doesn't admire F1 is, at heart, an aunt. — Murakami Ryû (1993:95)

The idealization of shock is evident in the model of good life in Murakami Ryû, in which it is expressed as a valorization of going to extremes. "The world is full of light", Machiko explains in *Ibisa*, "We can feel this light, without any help of religion or drugs, if we hold our own will higher even than ourselves." (Murakami Ryû 1995:96). In the post-script, the author adds the comment that: "This is a story about destruction. It is the story about a woman who carried out the journey to meet her self. To meet oneself is dangerous. Drugs, religion, art and sex [...] exist so that we can evade meeting our selves." (ibid 272). In words like these we recognize the rhetoric of authenticity.

"Authenticity" as an ideal of the good life is often taken to mean "being true to one self" or to "follow one's own will" against the demands of society or conventionality. Authenticity in this sense takes the notion of a "self" or a "will" apart from society for granted. Such an ideal plays a large role in Murakami Ryû. To be oneself is to go to whatever extremes it takes to follow one's own will, even to the point of breaking with and rejecting society as a whole. To give up one's will and align with the established order is to become part of the circle of "rotten" things. An example of this is Hashi, one of the two protagonists in *Coin Locker Babies*, who denies his homosexuality and his friends as he rises to fame as a rock-star. The alternative is to choose the path of revolt, which means being true to one self. This is the path of Kiku, the other coin locker baby, who finally gets back on society by wiping out Tokyo. As Kawanishi Masaaki remarks, in this novel "the confirmation of one's self-existence" is only made possible through "the destruction of the existence of the Japanese state and of the Japanese people" (Kawanishi 1998:133). We can also add that Kiku, by choosing the path of confrontation, follows the advice of Machiko and the sado-queen. To be authentic means to inhabit a world which is clear-cut and unequivocal (*hakkiri*) once again.

The term that in Murakami Ryû corresponds to the Heideggerian *das Man* is "aunt" (*obasan*). "Aunts" embody the dreary conformism and lack of originality which he laments as typical above all of young Japanese men.

Why has the way of thinking of aunts gained power in Japan? To begin with, what is an aunt? (God, this will take time). Aunts lead a settled life. Aunts are content with their place. Aunts strive for stabilization. Aunts depend on others. Aunts love the average. Aunts worry about what others think. Aunts don't assert themselves [...] Aunts can deceive themselves endlessly. Aunts lack self-insight. Aunts are inevitably calculating. Aunts dress unfashionably. Aunts lack courage but possess endurance. Aunts lack independence. Aunts don't notice that. Aunts try to obstruct the independence of others. Aunts talk loudly wherever they are. Aunts walk slowly. Aunts do everything slowly. Aunts love processions. Needless to say, aunts are unrelated to age and gender. Male aunts are increasing. [...] I'm exhausted. Aunts exhaust me. [...] "Enjoy life!" - not even for their death would an aunt say anything like that. (Murakami Ryû 1993:197ff)

Murakami Ryû is as vehement as Heidegger in his rejection of conformism. Significantly, however, he differs from Heidegger in his contempt for stability and continuity, and his glorification of shock and excitement. The "authenticity"

of Heidegger was essentially predicated on the unity and temporal continuity of the self (or Dasein). To be authentic meant to simultaneously feel at home with one's roots, to actively anticipate one's future and to be open to the present. The true self of Murakami Ryû, however, is a punctual instantaneousness, which is created from moment to moment by the pulsating excitement of intense shock sensations. "Authenticity" is sought for in the isolated outbursts of extreme conduct rather than in the assurance of continuity of life envisioned by Heidegger. It is visceral rather than intellectual. Transformative experiences, felt contact with reality, being in touch with one self — all this is supposed to be attained in the single flash of the instant. This, I believe, amounts to saying that while Heidegger envisioned authenticity as Dasein's ability to "remain itself" and preserve its inner peace and its continuity over time by pulling back from or transcending the shocks and the restlessness of everyday life, Murakami Ryû's quest is basically in the opposite direction. His quest is not for stability, but for instability. This reflects the changed character of the environment in which he is situated, compared to that of Heidegger. For Murakami Ryû, the driving force of authenticity is not the Angst of the turbulent interwar years, but the unzeitliche felt in the oppressive immobility of a naturalized modernity.¹³² In contrast to the ideal of authenticity in Heidegger the ideal of authenticity represented by Murakami Ryû is a response to boredom. "Authenticity" has become an ideal of the good life based on the thrilling pleasure of being hurt to the marrow of one's being, debased beyond redemption, touched to the heart with pain: an ethics of shock. The longing for disruption is a longing for the very thing from which Heidegger sought refuge in the ideal of a unitary self. As shock-modernity fades away, the ideal of authenticity becomes an ideal which, nostalgic for its old enemy shock, tries to revive it artificially in order to pretend to conquer it, tries to revive the desire for sociality in order to produce fear and Angst, imagining that it still has an enemy to defeat. It becomes a desire for fear, for shock, to be "moved" and traumatized, to produce a ripple in the peaceful surface of contemporary life.

Escalation

Any "cure" against naturalization will, if it is repeated, sooner or later itself be naturalized. This mechanism threatens to undermine the revolt against boredom at each step, and with it the ideal of authenticity. In its race with naturalization, the production of shock is driven towards an ever-increasing escalation — an escalation which therefore can be seen as a symptom of continuing naturalization. We will now have a closer look at this process.

The revolt against naturalization begins as a glorification of "fun". In the comic self-biographical novel *Sixty-Nine* (1984) sex, artistic creativity, rock festivals and barricading a school figure as devices which help keep boredom at bay and which the novel posits as opposites to the routines of everyday life. Near the end Murakami Ryû confesses that, as a thirty-two year old writer, he still is as much driven by "the promise of endless fun" as when he was

seventeen back in 1969 (Murakami Ryû 1995:181). But he is well aware that the search for fun contains its own fatal dialectic. In *Almost Transparent Blue*, a girl called Moko appears. To have fun is a favorite topic of her. At an open-air concert in Hibiya park she dances half-naked in front of the stage. "Don't you just lose out if you don't have a good time?", she explains to her friends (ibid 1981:81). "Ryû, put on some music", she says at another occasion, "I'm tired of just fucking, I think there must be something else, I mean, some other ways to have fun." (ibid 88). When Moko and Ryû talk on the way to the station, she says: "When nothing's fun anymore, I'll just get married." (ibid 90). This succession of remarks is illuminative. Even to have fun sooner or later becomes boring. As this becomes increasingly evident, stronger countermeasures become necessary. Going to extremes and escalating risks is an attempt to resuscitate the sensation of shock, which is constantly on the verge of disappearing.

We have already mentioned how for Anemone, her friend Sachiko's "trips and lovers and experiences" are hopelessly enmeshed in the boredom which they seek to remedy. For Anemone, "fun" is not enough. Her revolt against boredom is caught up in a logic of escalation which drives it towards the apocalypse as its logical outcome. The flight from boredom is bound to end up in a search for ever stronger stimuli or "kicks" which becomes increasingly desperate in its efforts to drown the nagging suspicions of failure. As claustrophobia in a world without escape routes, it becomes a boredom with no approved remedy, which can only be cured by the wholesale destruction of a world which is seen as oppressively and hopelessly dull. The apocalypse is the ultimate drug. "Blow up! Go on and blow up for me!", a man yells at the nuclear missiles in the Nevada desert in *Almost Transparent Blue* (ibid 1981:116). "Never mind festivals! Let the war begin!", the tailor exclaims in *War Will Break out on the Other Side of the Sea* (ibid 1980:177). "Destroy me! Smash everything! Wipe this cesspool off the face of the earth!" is the call that Kiku hears from the streets of Tokyo as he hallucinates by his foster mother's dead body in a hotel room in *Coin Locker Babies* (ibid 1998:85).

*

"You could be right. I wouldn't say I want much of anything, but I'm waiting for something" (Murakami Ryû 1998:129). This is how Anemone replies when Sachiko accuses her of belonging to a spoilt generation not knowing what really wanting something means. The ominous undertone in her reply cannot be explained solely by reference to the compulsive streak that can be sensed in her "waiting". Even more important is perhaps that her "waiting", unlike Sachiko's "wanting", lacks a clearly definable object. Her reply neatly captures two characteristics of what Berger calls post-apocalyptic literature: a longing for the catastrophe, which at the same time cannot be fully represented by words. To put it in the terms of the theory of trauma, what is to be repeated is also "unsayable".

The theory of trauma provides us with additional means to formulate the nostalgia for shock and to make it comprehensible. Let us approach this question by looking at the ambivalence in regard to social libido, which we find in Murakami Ryû's protagonists.¹³³ In *Coin Locker Babies* the simultaneous presence of rejection and belonging is strikingly portrayed, above all perhaps in Hashi's wish to embrace his mother and kill her at the same time. Seeing an old homeless woman, he wonders if she could be his mother.

I hate seeing women like her going around begging and scraping. It makes me think my mom's probably having the same kind of bad luck for throwing me away. She couldn't be happy, not after doing something like that. So when I see some poor old lady, I feel like running up and hugging her and calling her Mommy. But then I think, if it really were my mom, I'd probably kill her instead. (Murakami Ryû 1998:26)

Later when he actually sees a woman whom he believes might be his mother from a car, his first impulse is to scream for her, but then he stops, scared to death that she might reject him again (ibid 203).

As Miura Masashi writes, "DATURA" and the "sound of heartbeat" are the twin themes of this novel — the former referring to the lethal nerve gas by which Kiku brings apocalypse on Tokyo, the latter referring to Hashi's efforts to recall his mother's heartbeat. Miura links these twin themes to what he calls "autism", claiming that autistic children are extremely afraid of the violence others might perpetrate against them and answer by perpetrating it themselves, projecting their anger at the mother at society (Miura 1998:58). In other words, the pain of being rejected is dealt with beforehand by making oneself the agent of rejection. Kiku and Hashi call for mother and for society by killing the mother and laying society to waste.

We have already encountered this mixture of rejection and longing in Freud's description of the fort-da game, whereby a child tries to master a traumatic experience retrospectively by repeating it, pretending that he himself is the agent that brings it about. In the same way, Kiku and Hashi repeat their trauma, this time as perpetrators rather than victims. We remember that for Freud repetition was both a symptom of a trauma and an attempt to master it. This insight is found in Murakami himself. In *Melancholia* (1996, Merankoria), the protagonist Yazaki lives as a homeless in New York after a trauma and meets a man who gives him a recipe for recovery: to repeat the act in through, for by repetition one frees oneself from it little by little — just as even a horror-movie "ceases to be frightening after seeing it many times" (Murakami Ryû 2000:134). Yazaki treasures these words as therapy, as his weapon in his fight against "melancholy".

For the traumatized, we have said, "life" must be regained by the same level of stimulus which caused the trauma, which must therefore be repeated. Here we recognize what Berger writes about the post-traumatic desire to repeat the "apocalypse", what Sloterdijk calls the catastrophile disposition of cynic culture, and what Nakazawa calls the desire to regain contact with "naked

reality". This compulsion to repeat is the background of the idealization of the search for shock and of its desperate escalation. For the trauma is not only something to be repeated, but also something "unsayable". When this repetition is actualized, it hardly ever corresponds quite to the "unsayable" thing longed for. Nakazawa points out that the desire to be in touch with "reality" usually ends up in disappointment and frustration, in the vague feeling that: "This wasn't what we really wanted" (Nakazawa 1997:14). This feeling can be strongly sensed in Murakami Ryû as well, in whose writings it is manifested as a vague apprehension of the futility of "waging war" on boredom.

The victory of boredom

Let us return to the question of what makes it possible for Murakami Ryû to transcend the category of the "post-nuclear war community". I would like to suggest that the answer, or at least part of the answer, lies in his awareness of the difficulty associated with the mechanism of escalation which we have just discussed — the ever present danger that the production of shock will be overtaken by naturalization.

This awareness is clearly exhibited in the following scene from *Almost Transparent Blue*, which is pervaded not only by fatigue but also by a strange, nature-like stillness:

At one side of the car Yoshiyama stood in front of a woman bent over reading a book. Noticing the spittle trailing from his lips, she tried to get away. Yoshiyama yelled, seized her arm, spun her around and hugged her. Her thin blouse tore. Her shriek rang out higher than the screech of the wheels. Passengers escaped to the adjoining cars. The woman dropped her book and the contents of her handbag scattered on the floor. Moko made a face of disgust in that direction and mumbled, her eyes sleepy, I'm hungry.

Ryû, wouldn't you like a pizza, an anchovy pizza, with lots of Tabasco sauce, so hot it prickles your tongue, wouldn't you like that? (Murakami Ryû 1981:84)

This scene could be subtitled "the victory of boredom". Much of Murakami Ryû's work is pervaded by this kind of boredom. It is a result of repetition. The stubborn enumeration of debased or extreme states in *Almost Transparent Blue*, calculated to be nauseous or revolting amount to a repetition of what cannot be repeated. In this and other works, shocks seem to be consciously multiplied until they revert into nature.

Everything which is repeated sooner or later becomes naturalized, part of the everyday. This fatal mechanism forces the revolt against naturalization to search for ever new shocks. In the notion of the apocalypse — the only shock that cannot be repeated — it believes itself to have found the final cure for boredom. But not even the fetishism of the apocalypse promises a cure for boredom. Murakami Ryû's professed boredom, quoted earlier, at Aum Shinrikyô's realization of his fantasies might be taken to mean that the apocalypse had finally been repeated one time too many. In the bored indifference produced by repetition "hell" would seem to make its reappearance. Murakami Ryû offers us

a present-day version of the hellish dialectic of the new and the ever-same, not so unlike the one identified by Benjamin. The difference is that in his works the "pains eternal and ever new" are consciously produced by the subject rather than passively experienced by it as a given feature of modernity.

The reappearance of boredom has implications for the ideal of authenticity. If there is no "cure" that is immune to naturalization, then not even "being true to one self" or "following one's own will" can serve as a guarantee against boredom. "Authenticity" too, is reduced to a moment in what it is trying to oppose. The distinction between an extraordinary interiority and an everyday society collapses. "Authenticity", posited as that which can never be naturalized, recedes to the horizon as a *fata morgana* enticing to deserts as dry out as those from which one started. In Murakami Ryû, I would suggest, the ideal of authenticity does not reign supreme, but is always relativized through a slight skepticism, resembling despair, that stems from the awareness of the mechanism of escalation, from the repeated frustration that "this wasn't what we really wanted". In Benjamin we found the insight that spleen cannot be dispelled by any conscious attempt to dispel it. Even in Murakami Ryû one finds moments of similar insight, in which the pursuit of shock is suddenly suspended and the everyday affirmed. When Asada Akira asked him how come he had suddenly decided to make a "pure and fairy-tale like" film like *Kyoko*, which contrasts so much with the extremes of his previous fiction, he answered that he had grown tired of the themes of sex and destruction and become more interested in "ordinary" people trying to achieve something of "first priority" (Murakami & Asada 1998:102f).¹³⁴

Although at first sight his works seem to manifest something similar to what Kracauer calls a "short circuit", in actual effect they are so strongly pervaded by the awareness that shocks tend to become caught up in naturalization that the final impression is one of resignation. This distinguishes his attitude of revolt against naturalization from the attitude of the "post-nuclear war community", something which amounts to saying that it also differs from the attitude of the "short circuit people". That he nevertheless continues his pursuit of shock despite this awareness of course remains a striking difference in comparison with, for example, Murakami Haruki. The latter waits for the new to appear through his immersion in the same, while the former knows that the same will return through his pursuit of the new.

Conclusion

The fiction of Murakami Ryû is filled with "shocks", with action and violence. But this is not because he sees modernity as a shocking age. On the contrary, the acceleration of the search for shock is a symptom of continuing naturalization. His fiction testifies to the naturalization of modernity just as much as the fiction of Murakami Haruki. While the basic experience in the modernity portrayed by Benjamin was that of "the disintegration of the aura in

the sensation of shock", the modernity we see in the two Murakamis is dominated by "the disintegration of shock in the experience of naturalization".

At first glance, a host of similarities seem to exist between Benjamin and Murakami Ryû. They both adopt a more or less affirmative stance to shock and a critical stance to society. While the former sees society as a catastrophically unfolding "hell" permeated with spleen, the latter portrays protagonists who regard it as a disgusting and "rotten" prison house. This similarity is deceptive. What distinguishes Benjamin are his eyes for the present, his faith that salvation can spring only from being open to and accepting the experience of his time, even if this experience is shock and spleen. In Murakami Ryû, by contrast, we see an idolization of shock, which stems from a rejection of the basic experience of the present ù the experience of naturalization. While for Benjamin, shock was something given, for Murakami Ryû it is something which has to be created. When it comes to accepting the present, the similarity is rather between Benjamin and Murakami Haruki. In their case, however, there is a difference in the content of the present that is being accepted ù a shocking modernity in the one, a naturalized one in the other.

Just as Benjamin was preoccupied with the decay of the aura, Murakami Ryû is preoccupied with the decay of shock. His protagonists long for shock, for a state before the onset of naturalization. What they are nostalgic for is not premodernity, but the kind of modernity that Benjamin portrayed, when it was still possible to be shocked. His fiction thus demonstrates that when experience changes, the content of nostalgia changes too. To the nostalgia for the aura must be added the nostalgia for the destruction of the aura. Furthermore, both Benjamin and Murakami Ryû are aware of the tendency for conscious attempts at nostalgic revival to be self-defeating. Benjamin prophesized that the fascist attempt to resurrect the aura would lead back to shock. Analogously, in Murakami Ryû's work we can study how the nostalgia for shock leads back to naturalization.

We can thus see what Benjamin calls the "law that effort brings about its opposite" in both Murakami Haruki and Murakami Ryû. But rather than searching for signs of convergence between these two writers, it is better to see them as representing two distinct moments in the dialectic of shock and nature. If Murakami Haruki represents a basic acceptance of naturalization that still seems to be waiting for something new, then Murakami Ryû represents a basic revolt against naturalization that acknowledges its own futility. In the former, we see the mute expectation that new shocks will arise through his affirmation of nature. In the latter, the grim foreboding that he will get mired down in nature through his pursuit of shock.

Conclusion

We now need to return to the theoretical implications of the difference between shock-modernity and naturalized modernity. The presence or absence of shock is pivotal to how modernity is perceived. Let us recall the three tasks we posed at the beginning of our investigation, concerning (1) the applicability of classical sociological concepts, (2) dilemmas and strategies, and (3) the perception of non-identity. In each of these three issues, the results we have obtained have been strikingly different depending on whether we have been considering shock-modernity or naturalized modernity. Here I will start with a brief discussion of the two first issues, in order to be better prepared for the discussion of the third, which will conclude this thesis.

(1) Concepts, whenever applied, tend to shift in some respect \hat{u} by revealing inner tensions or unfolding new aspects. Such shifts can be demonstrated in most classical sociological concepts based on shock-modernity when applied to naturalized modernity. This should not be taken as a criticism of the concepts. On the contrary, their usefulness is proven by the fact that it is precisely by means of such movements that that it has been possible for us to trace the distinctiveness of naturalized modernity.

Let us recall some of the shifts encountered during the course of our investigation. To begin with there is a group of concepts designating phenomena that are noticeable for their absence or near absence in naturalized modernity: concepts such as "shock", "heightened consciousness" or "disenchantment". A more interesting group contains concepts that are highly applicable while changing in some revealing aspect. Such a concept is "reification". Reification \hat{u} in the sense of isolating an object from the context of its social or historical mediation \hat{u} is certainly a valid description of the way that for instance people are presented in Murakami Haruki. Here, however, the reifying epithets no longer serve a classificatory or disenchanting purpose, but emphasize what they leave unsaid. They do not simply extinguish otherness, but rather serve to express its regrettable absence. This novel aspect of reification does not apply merely to epithets but also more generally to the mode of "negative" perception which we have encountered so often during our analyses and which we compared in function to the gravestone \hat{u} the function, namely, of

referring to an absence. The surface appearance of phenomena is in itself insignificant and inessential, like that of a stone, but since this appearance never pretends to be the whole truth, it "reenchants" what it keeps hidden out of sight.

Another change concerns the perception of "contingency", which no longer appears shocking. Instead it comes forward as something unforeseen yet self-evident and natural. This is a mode of perception we recognize from dreams, where the incomprehensible often appears natural. This absence of shock also explains the shift in the meaning of the designation of society as "nature": naturalized modernity may appear to be governed by inhuman forces just as much as "second nature", but unlike the latter it is not associated with shock or with the antagonistic world of *Gesellschaft*. In our investigation we presented this subsiding of shock as predicated on the development of spheres for "non-social" desire in society, spheres which play an important social function by creating a medium for by-passing the shocks and conflicts characteristic of *Gesellschaft*. The important role of the non-social is manifested in the changed meaning of concepts like "boredom" and "loneliness". Unlike the "spleen" and "blasé attitude" of Benjamin and Simmel, the boredom of Murakami Haruki or Murakami Ryû is not fuelled by an excess of external stimuli, but by the absence of such stimuli. Similarly, the loneliness of Murakami Haruki does not spring from the suppression of libido under the "protective shield" of consciousness, but rather from the interiorization of libido. The theory of the interiorization of libido and of trauma in Freud also explains the changed character of "ghosts", which no longer appear uncanny. Instead, we may even find, as in Murakami Haruki, a "sympathy for the dead" or a solidarity with the ghosts. The development of the non-social also leads to interesting changes in concepts such as "authenticity" or "recovery", which no longer present themselves as means to overcome the "hell" of shocks, but as means to overcome the desolation of non-sociality.

This summary of shifts is clearly insufficient in the sense that the wider theoretical implications of each of the changes stands in need of further exploration. That is a task for future research, which cannot be pursued here. What we intended to demonstrate was that the meaning of concepts is crucially dependent on whether they are seen in the context of shock-modernity or naturalized modernity and this I believe we have achieved.

(2) The perception of modernity as shocking or naturalized also determines what dilemmas are perceived as central. Benjamin depicts shock-modernity as a "hell" torn between the affirmation and negation of the experience of the disintegration of the aura in the shock-sensation. In Kawabata, we find an ingenious way of affirming shock by reinterpreting it as *samadhi*. While portraying modernity as antithetical to the elegiac dream-worlds which he longingly constructs, he is able to extract intense pleasure through the shock when they fall to pieces. In the dystopian bleak world of Abe Kôbô, by contrast, the attitude to shock is far darker. His fiction is a cry of despair against the modernity he helplessly depicts as victorious. Benjamin himself rejects the

nostalgic attempt to resurrect the aura — as seen above all in fascism — since such an attempt would be caught in the "law that effort produces its opposite". Thus fascism is driven towards war, the greatest shock of all. Equally skeptical of the straightforward affirmation of shock, he chooses instead a strategy of "waiting", a "tactile" getting used to the shocks and the reification of the nightmare of modernity in order to discover the dialectics of awakening within it.

The dilemma of naturalized modernity is of a fundamentally different kind, centering on the desolation, boredom and loneliness of a Hades-like interior space in which shocks are absent. We have seen that Murakami Ryû negates this experience by "waging war on boredom". Although his fiction abounds in seemingly shocking or nauseating episodes, these shocks are never simply given as part of experience itself, as the shocks characteristic of the modernity depicted by Benjamin, but consciously produced in order to resist naturalization. The paradox of this attempt to resurrect shock, however, is analogous to that of resurrecting the aura: the effect produced is the opposite of the one intended. Thus Murakami Ryû enables us to study how the efforts to combat naturalization themselves become naturalized, i.e. part of the boring everyday. In Murakami Haruki, we can see a diametrically opposed strategy resembling Benjamin's attitude of "waiting" and passively immersing oneself in the experience of the present — the one significant difference being that while this experience was shock for Benjamin it is naturalization for Murakami Haruki.

(3) Finally, let us return to the question of the implications of naturalization for the perception of non-identity. As we recall, the critique of myth in Benjamin and Adorno relied on such perceptions to dispel the semblance of sameness or identity. What they had in common was that they both experienced modernity as the simultaneous presence of shock and identity-thinking, of the forces which disrupt and reinforce myth. This simultaneous presence was captured in the complex and intriguing notions of modernity as "hell" and as "continuous catastrophe". Often it was in experiences such as shock or mental and physical suffering that they sought potentials for resistance against the ideological veil of myth and nature. Thus it was in the sensation that "there must be something else" (Ist das denn alles?) stemming from pain that Adorno sought the impulse to negative dialectics, to a questioning of the status quo. Here the question arises whether the subsiding of shock in naturalized modernity must also mean the obliteration of the perception of non-identity which serves as the precondition of the critique of myth. Does naturalization also mean the obsolescence of such critique?

One of the purposes of exploring the subjective dilemmas that open up inside naturalization was to find other forms of perception of non-identity. To be sure, naturalized modernity is often presented in the form of undisturbed stillness and endless sameness, as a "landscape" characterized by an absence of "exteriority". However, as we have seen in literature, such a landscape often gives rise to

feelings of discomfort. Murakami Haruki's works are pervaded by an ill-defined feeling of loss or the sense that something is missing. His protagonists stoically accept the "perfect world" in which they find themselves placed, but they do so with a feeling of disbelief, as if thinking: "This cannot be all there is". This is the Brechtian feeling that *etwas fehlt*, that something absolutely essential is missing. A similar disbelief fuels Murakami Ryû's revolt, where it is expressed as resentment and disgust precisely with the dull immobility of the world and its absence of shocks.

Here we have made a surprising discovery, for this *etwas fehlt* is precisely the inarticulate protest against the status quo that Adorno saw as originating in the experience of pain. This means that the impulse for criticism in naturalized modernity is no longer generated through the shocking fluidity of the world, but through its immobility and closure. Somehow, the very semblance of identity of the world arouses the feeling that "something is wrong". But how can we explain this phenomenon? How can the semblance of identity be relativized if perceptions of non-identity are absent?

In order to explain this paradoxical phenomenon, we must seize on the perception of absence itself. It may be that the protagonists perceive modernity as a landscape of compact identity, that non-identity is no longer perceptible. But although they may not perceive non-identity, at least they perceive that they do not perceive, they perceive that something is missing. Here again we encounter the sort of perception associated with what we earlier referred to as "gravestones" and reifying epithets. Such epithets conceal what is missing, but they do not suppress the consciousness of this lack. On the contrary, they emphasize it and make it more poignant. Paradoxically, then, it is precisely in the absence of what we thought would reveal it to us that we find what we searched for. To understand why this perception of absence gives rise to feelings of discomfort, we need to return to what we have said about trauma. The concept of trauma, as we have said, enables us to throw doubt on and relativize the peaceful surface appearance of naturalized modernity. This appearance is not stable, but suffused by a longing for recovery that generates a critical impulse, despite — or perhaps because of — the fact that non-identity is not directly perceived.

In naturalized modernity, then, the perception of non-identity indeed disappears. It turns into a mere hope, a mute longing for an absent experience. But this does not mean that the possibilities for a critique of myth have vanished. Although such criticism can no longer take its point of departure in the sensation of shock, the collision between the order of naturalized modernity and the wish for "recovery" opens up the possibility of a renewed critique. Such critique must take its point of departure, not in the perception of non-identity but in the perception of its absence, and not in the experience of shock but in the experience of post-trauma. This points to the necessity of developing a new form of critique of myth, but also guarantees its continued possibility and validity.

Notes

- 1 Why the term "naturalization"? To my knowledge, all existing alternatives miss important aspects of naturalization. Terms like "routinization", "trivialization" or "saturation" give the impression that objects that have ceased to shock become indifferent or trivial. These terms are insufficient to capture the reenchantment that I see as an important facet of naturalization. As the novelties become part of a familiar environment, they do not simply become trivial but also, in many cases, integrated into symbolic space. Instead of disrupting people's dreams, fantasies and world-views, they become part of them (see chapter 4:2). Terms like "getting used to" or "familiar with" a modern environment are also unsatisfactory, since they tend to obscure the darker aspects of and the discomfort in naturalized modernity (see chapter 4:4). Arnold Gehlen's term "crystallization" (derived from Pareto's "cultural crystallization") overlaps with that of naturalization in some respects while leaving others out (cf Gehlen 1980, 1987). The main reason that I reject this term is that his thinking, even while anticipating naturalization, is still profoundly marked by the experience of shock-modernity. "Crystallized" culture is portrayed as a soulless, desolate structure that lacks the genuine motivating force of what Gehlen calls "institutions". The conception of a "crystallized" culture is thus more akin to Lukács's "second nature" than to what I call "naturalized modernity" (I will discuss the difference between the conceptions of "second nature" and "naturalized modernity" in chapter 4:1). In short, existing concepts would create more confusion than clarity and the best way to avoid that confusion is by introducing a new term, "naturalization".
- 2 Modernity has thus not "evolved" from one to the other. Neither do I claim that contemporary society "is" naturalized (elements of "shock-modernity" exist today as we will see in chapter 5-1). Terms like shocking modernity and naturalized modernity are useful as analytic tools, but not as period-labels. A thinker like Ernst Jünger demonstrates this. As Karl Heinz Bohrer has argued, the "terror" (Schrecken) of his writings is related to the experience of what Benjamin calls shock (Bohrer 1978:65ff, 190ff). At the same time, they evince anticipations of naturalization (such as the idea of an extinction of the gap between technology and humanity in the stage of "perfected technique", or the problematization of boredom and the everyday, cf Heidegger 1997:31-5). Similar ambivalence can be detected in Benjamin (cf n99) and Gehlen (cf n1).
- 3 It is about this phenomenology that Coser writes when he recommends the sociologist to turn to literature. "When sociologists talk, say, about post-Napoleonic France, they surely have in mind a picture drawn for them by Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* rather than by some social historian. When they lecture on Victorian society, they are apt to think of the novels of Dickens or George Eliot. Few, I think, would deny that their image of nineteenth-century

Russia was formed in large part by Tolstói or Dostoevsky. Why then not make manifest and explicit what has been latent all along?" (Coser 1963a:4).

- 4 By "dilemma" we mean the subjective apprehension of a contradiction that prevents subjects from realizing their ideals of the good. The term "strategy" may refer both to the narrated activity of the protagonists and to the form of the literary work itself, but above all it refers to the way in which a work as a whole attempts to effect a transcendence of a given dilemma.
- 5 Identity-thinking is thinking that strives to make unlike things alike. It is inherent as a tendency in all conceptual thinking but prototypically manifested in "idealist" philosophies that by reducing dissimilar phenomena to a first principle attempt to capture them in a unitary system. In such a system concepts will refer only to each other and cease to accommodate to the object. Such systems rest on the claim that concept and object are identical, i.e. that concepts can subsume the objects without violence. Adorno rejects this assumption. What he calls "negative dialectics" is defined as the "awareness that objects are not exhausted by their concepts" and thus as the "consequent awareness of non-identity". Instead of striving to construct internally coherent systems, negative dialectics is a "logic of disintegration" that "obeys the object even where it fails to conform to the laws of thought" (Adorno 1994a:16ff).
- 6 "Reification" (Verdinglichung) was made into a major theoretical concept by Lukács on the basis of Marx's classical discussion of commodity fetishism (cf Marx 1990:61-73). Lukács describes reification as a social mechanism that is primarily related to commodity exchange but also permeates capitalist society as a whole. A significant manifestation is the formalistic use of concepts in what he calls "bourgeois thinking" (Lukács 1968). For a discussion of the concept of reification, cf. Israel (1971:303-410), Jameson (1991:314f), Rose (1978:27-51). For some eloquent elaborations of the concept (based on Lukács), cf. Bloch (1988:22f, 154-162).
- 7 Adorno quite explicitly states that identity-thinking itself produces the perception of non-identity. Phenomena only appear "divergent, dissonant, negative" as long as thinking strives for unity and totality. "Since this totality is constructed on the basis of a logic the core of which is the proposition of tertium non datur, everything that does not fit in, everything qualitatively different, takes on the signature of contradiction. Contradiction is the non-identical under the aspect of identity" (Adorno 1994a:17).
- 8 Using the classification of Raymond Williams of the fields of study in the sociology of culture, our approach is neither a study of "institutions", "content" (in the sense of quantitative analysis), nor "effects", but rather closer to what he terms the study of "social relations in the art work" (Williams 1995:16-25). However, Williams still seems to consider this approach from the point of view of the aim of discovering to what degree the analysis of content can be considered "representative" of a culture. This is a conception we will here criticize.
- 9 We also need to be wary of naive variants of ideology-criticism, in which the critic believes himself to be already in possession of the necessary knowledge of society and then proceeds, in one-sidedly critical fashion, to judge the work in the light of this reality. Although ideology-criticism is a legitimate moment in the course of literary analysis, sometimes we need to move in the opposite direction, to learn from fiction rather than explaining or judging it. Making use of a distinction introduced by Jürgen Habermas, we can say that "ideology-criticism" must to be balanced against a "redemptive criticism", which seeks to rescue the "truth-content" of what is criticized (Habermas 1981). This was the approach to

literature of Benjamin, for whom the truth-content which determined the form of the literary work was never a given, but something which needed to be discovered in the course of critique. Rather than judging the work, his main concern was to learn from it and use it to deepen his understanding of society, to use it as a key to unlock experience.

- 10 The reference to Simmel is to his famous methodological claim in the preface to *Philosophy of Money*, that his research rested on the possibility of "finding in each of life's details the totality of its meaning" (Simmel 1997:55, for the epistemological justification of this claim, cf *ibid* 101-8, 450ff). For a discussion of the problems of grasping totality through an "impressionist" sociological approach like Simmel's, cf Frisby (1985:152). In short, Frisby criticizes Simmel for using a concept of totality that is not historical, but based on the attitude of the observer — unlike in the equally impressionistic yet more materialist approaches of Kracauer and Benjamin.
- 11 In other words, the confrontation of contexts reveals the false timelessness of each (Cf Benjamin 1994:182, Buck-Morss 1991:67, 159, Caygill 1998:46).
- 12 For Benjamin on his method as montage, cf Benjamin (1999: 458, 460, 461). An implication of this methodology is that cultural and historical distance between the juxtaposed elements is harmless. Indeed, Benjamin emphasizes that the elements to be brought together in a juxtaposition should be as extreme as possible, in order to reveal the range of its possible manifestations. It is "only when extremes are assembled around them", Benjamin writes, that "ideas come to life" (Benjamin 1994:35, also cf *ibid* 47).
- 13 This is what Adorno means when he urges that thought should fashion its perspectives "from felt contact with the objects" (Adorno 1978:247) and what Kobayashi Hideo means when he recommends the critic to lay aside the "armour" of readymade designs and, "be patient and allow the object of criticism to make clear its destiny" (Kobayashi 1995:22).
- 14 On Adorno's concept of "constellation", cf Adorno (1991:13, 1994a:62, 164-8), Többecke (1992:75-). His concept was inspired by Benjamin, who in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* claims that ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars. Ideas are not defined by any abstract identity among the various historical phenomena that manifest it, but by the interrelation of the phenomena themselves (Benjamin 1985:34). What Adorno and Benjamin mean by constellation should not be confused with the "constellations" of Karl Mannheim. For Mannheim, a "constellation" is a tool for theorizing causal relationships in the sociology of knowledge. It is a "specific combination of certain factors at a given moment" that makes "the appearance of a given problem in the cultural sciences possible" (Mannheim 1952:134, 136). For Adorno and Benjamin, by contrast, there is no causal significance in the constellation. It answers the question what an object is, not what causes it. It concerns the meaning of objects — in our case, the meaning of "shock-modernity" and "naturalized modernity" respectively.
- 15 A consequence of these differences is that the "object" of a constellation should not be confused with the "empirical facts" of conventional theories. While the relation of concept and object as a conflict relation, the relation of "theory" to "empirical data" is a relation of complementarity. Unlike "objects" empirical data are used in theory-construction. Although they may challenge individual theories they do not destabilize the medium of identity-thinking as such. Theories, then, are perfectly able to handle "facts", but what they miss is the individuality of the "objects" with which these facts are presumed to be identical.
- 16 It is incorrect to assert that the focus on non-identity leaves the sociologist incapable of gaining any positive knowledge about society, or mediation. Social mediation is generally not an identity-relation, but a relation of difference (cf Jameson 1981:41f).

- 17 This is a recurrent problem in the sociology of literature. As R. Williams points out, the range of validity of the findings of such sociology is extremely difficult to pinpoint. The basic experience which is discovered may refer either to a whole epoch, a particular society at a particular period, or to a particular group within that society (Williams 1995:24f). I would argue, however, that this is a false problem, which only arises if one neglects the specific task of a sociologically informed literary analysis. It doesn't aim at the abstract and representative, but at the concrete and prototypical. Any attempt to define the range of validity in advance would lead to the redirection of attention from what is subjective in literature to that which is believed to be a shared characteristic of the epoch or social group. The value of literature for sociology, however, is precisely that it is eminently subjective. The task of the model is not to downplay or elide what is subjective or "un-representative", but on the contrary, to examine its social significance and thus to search for traces of the general in it.
- 18 Here, "laying bare a contradiction" or exposing a "non-identity" should not be understood in the ideology-critical sense of exposing the false identity claimed by the concept to its object. Instead the contradiction is to be understood as our tool to "feel" history. It is precisely by hitting upon contradictions like this that enable us to learn about society through literature.
- 19 In his discussion of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin, Frisby emphasizes that their central concern was the discontinuous experience of time, space and causality as "transitory, fleeting and fortuitous or arbitrary" (Frisby 1985:4). For the centrality of contingency in the experience of modernity in Weber, Simmel and Musil, among others, see Isenberg (2001). The Weimar republic is often treated as an embodiment of the experience of chronic crisis, of the contingency of all things (Cf Heidegren 1997:15-9, Sloterdijk 1987:483, 500-14).
- 20 I should stress that my concern is the experience of modernity as shocking, not the literary theme of shock. Whenever I use literature, I am interested in finding to what degree this experience of shock has left its imprint on the work. I am not interested in pursuing the theme of shock, horror etc. This is important to point out, since literature may revolve around the theme of shock without being based on the experience of it. Thus Bohrer points to the "ideological" ritualization of horror in fin de siècle works like Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, where horror is no longer founded in the modern shock-experience at all. To this decadent ritualization he contrasts the "authentic" horror that resonates in Baudelaire. While the former is vague and expressed as anxiety, the latter is concrete and experienced in specific settings like the street (Bohrer 1978: 67ff, 191). In my view, there are two additional useful criteria for distinguishing "authentic" horror from its ritualization as aesthetic ideal. (1) While aestheticized horror is a play with evil, shock as an experience always upsets ready-made categories of good and evil. (2) While the ritualization of horror is a romantic protest against the Enlightenment, shock is allied with modernity and technology — to Benjamin it is even the motor of the sort of Enlightenment which he describes as the disintegration of the "aura". Romantic horror, by contrast, is allied the "aura". Unlike shocks, this horror never serves to pry open and let light into the musty interiors, but to plunge them farther into darkness. It is only with the experience of modernity as a shock-modernity that horror is transformed, from a ritualised anti-modern protest into something specifically modern. This is why I choose not to delve into romantic horror or even into Edgar Allen Poe, in whose fiction the modern sensibility to shock is still mixed with this romantic inheritance. Instead I prefer to discuss Baudelaire, Kawabata and Abe, whose writings more obviously resonate with the modern experience of shock.

- 21 For the mixture of fear and desire in writers like Balzac and Proust, see Adorno (1991:127, 180f), Sennett (1986:154ff).
- 22 The description has the quality that one finds in time-accelerated sequences in film. Ernst Bloch remarks that while slow motion sequences "with the impression they give of "caressing boxers and swimming runners" "give a peaceful impression, time lapse technique creates an uncanny "pseudo-frenzy" that turns time into "a merciless driving wheel". "This does not induce a state of ecstatic frenzy, but rather a feeling of pursuit and drivenness for its own sake. A demonic clockwork drives activity from the outside, and human beings are caught up in it. If the tempo of a street scene is overwound, then people are transformed even more into automata" (Bloch 1998:483). "There is comical excitement in the accelerated, as it transcends meaning by explosion; but there is poetic enchantment in the decelerated, as it destroys meaning by implosion", writes Baudrillard (Baudrillard 1988:194). In films the technique is often used in factory scenes "such as Chaplin's Modern Times (1936). Certain passages in Kafka, especially those that at the same time transmit a sense of nightmarish monotony "give the same impression of time-acceleration. One thinks of the depiction of the "inhumanly regular and quick" tempo of production in the company driven by Karl Rossman's uncle or the endless, fatiguing and monotonous work at the hotel Occidental in The Man who Disappeared (Kafka 1996).
- 23 See for example his classical definitions of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. "The germinal forms of Gemeinschaft are motherly love, sexual love, brotherly and sisterly love. The elementary fact of Gesellschaft is the act of exchange, which presents itself in the purest form if it is thought of as performed by individuals who are alien to each other, have nothing in common with each other, and confront each other in an essentially antagonistic and even hostile manner" (Tönnies 1971:76f).
- 24 According to Simmel the "indifference", "reserve" and "aversion" that isolate people from each other in the city is indispensable to avoid being overwhelmed by its turmoil and latent antagonisms (Simmel 1990:477).
- 25 Adorno laments "the glacial atmosphere" prevailing in modern human relations (Adorno 1978:30). Gehlen points out the need for self-preservation in the destabilized world of modernity and the "keen feeling of the threat others may represent to us" (Gehlen 1980:77). Human contact in Benjamin's works, it has been suggested, is often either failed or else violent and destructive (Cohen 1993:180f).
- 26 Just as the pedestrian, the worker is torn between incompatible, non-identical contexts, forever "alienated" from the context of production. In Marxism this alienation is of course the fulcrum that enables the proletariat to see through the veils of false consciousness. Although Benjamin does not pursue the argument that far, it is obvious that this Marxist argument is structurally homologous to his account of how shock contributes to a dissolution of aura. The frustrations of the flâneur may seem a marginal phenomenon, but his account must be read as an attempt to theorize shock as the central experience of modernity and its implications.
- 27 Weber's view of the bureaucrat as "a single cog in an ever-evolving mechanism" (Weber 1968:75) or Ernst Bloch's laments that in capitalism "people count as no more than cogs in the machinery" (Bloch 1998:241) are but a few examples. In a figurative sense we see this motive, for example, in Fritz Lang's Metropolis, Chaplin's Modern Times, in Yokomitsu Riichi's Kikai (The Machine, 1930).
- 28 While Gemeinschaft is linked to the heart and grows out of tradition and habits, Gesellschaft is linked to the brain and is an artificial "mere coexistence" based on deliberate calculation

and the weighing of ends against means. It is linked to a soulless rationality in whose hands the organization or association turns into a machine, a means to an end. "The societal (Gesellschaft-like) process is essentially one of rationalization, and shares fundamental characteristics with science. It elevates the rational, calculating individuals who use scientific knowledge and its carriers in the same way they use other means and tools. An establishment in trade or commerce is comparable to a mechanical construction [Mechanismus], the entrepreneurial will being the motor" (Tönnies 1971: 273).

- 29 Although he admittedly devotes less attention to them than to the concept of the "aura", they are indispensable to him. The critique of the aura in *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility* and the critique of the dream world of capitalism in the *Arcades Project* would be untenable without them. We will here attempt a kind of reconstruction of these concepts from the scattered notes that Benjamin offers us — an undertaking that is necessary in order to proceed with our argument, but which nevertheless contains innumerable uncertainties, similar, perhaps, to those of the reassembling of a building from a rubble heap in which many of its original parts are missing.
- 30 For porosity in Benjamin and Bloch as an anti-mythical force, cf Ely (1998:195).
- 31 Simmel's awareness of the privileged social conditions necessary for this play-form to blossom to its full splendor is betrayed by his choice of examples — his prime example of sociability is the court life of the ancient régime in France. He is careful to stress that a certain measure of economic and social equality among the members in a social gathering is necessary for this "play-form" of sociation. Although sociability has a democratic quality, "this democratic character can be realized only within a given social stratum: sociability among members of very different social strata often is inconsistent and painful." (ibid 47). Simmel is thus far from ideologically preaching play as a true transcendence of real social contradictions. The pain and awkwardness of sociability when its participants belong to very different social strata thus represents nothing but what we have been referring to as the intrusion of "shock", i.e. of the direct contact with the rigid social reality, with its reified structure, into the hothouse atmosphere of play.
- 32 Expressed in the theological terms of Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, the aura functions like a "symbol" and shock as an "allegory". The symbol's appearance of immediately representing a truth, which was so valorized by the romantics, is only possible by concealing its origins — it proceeds, in other words, in a "heretic" way: presenting truth as if truth were still accessible in a fallen world. The allegory, by contrast, points precisely by virtue of its artistic inferiority and clumsiness to the absence of truth and was therefore well suited for the dramatists of the baroque to express their view of the fallenness of the world (cf Benjamin 1985:159-235).
- 33 "Is not the aura invariably a trace of a forgotten human moment in the thing", Adorno asks in a letter and Benjamin agrees to this suggestion (29 Feb 1940, Adorno & Benjamin 1999:322). Also see the passage in Benjamin (1999:447), which is a paraphrase of his famous definition of the aura in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility*.
- 34 This shows how closely associated the concept of "experience" is to the one of the "aura". The concepts of the aura as reexperience and as a unique manifestation do not contradict each other. The moment of involuntary memory "is itself marked as something unique", since "[e]ach situation in which the chronicler is touched by the breath of lost time is... rendered incomparable and removed from the sequence of days." (Benjamin 1997:147n87).

35 On the obliteration of traces, cf Benjamin (1997:32). Incidentally, this suggests that Benjamin's definition of the aura needs to be supplemented. The aura does not merely spring from the memory of the past, but may just as well arise from the expectation of the future. What bursts forth like a flame at so-called moments of "love at first sight" is an aura, but one that consists solely in expectations — in the anticipation of future happiness. But for this aura to take root, one has to be able to feel that one has time to "complete" the wish. In contrast, Baudelaire's "love at last sight" plunges the flâneur into a non-auratic limbo, a "night", in which the past as well as the future is blocked for imagination. Here neither memory nor hope can repair the loss. "He burns in this flame, but no Phoenix arises from it", as Benjamin puts it (Benjamin 1997:45).

Shock effects a drastic shrinking of the sense in the sense of time since, at a stroke, it abolishes both the "past" (tradition) and the future (the wish). This can also be illustrated from a different angle. As we recall, shock is often related to the appearance that things change "too fast". This phenomenon of a "too fast" change has direct bearings on the conception of time and history. In a captivating formulation Reinhart Koselleck has described the modern as an age characterized by a divergence of the "experience of the past" and the "expectations of the future"). In modernity the future is opened up for rational planning and expectations proliferate (Koselleck 1985: xxiv, 276). This observation is partly correct, but it neglects the really dramatic and significant divergence: namely that this increase of expectations is dwarfed by the much vaster increase of unknown future dangers. The future seems to rush into the present, bombarding it with novelties. This leads to a foreshortening of future perspective: since the future constantly surpasses and overwhelms expectations, it increasingly appears as a terra incognita. What happens in shock-modernity is not only that the future is "opened up" for expectations, but also — and to a far greater extent — that it is shrinks down or even that it is completely "closed off". When things happen too fast, the capacity for expectation is paralyzed. The future goes blank. "Thus history seems to have been extinguished. All events are things that happen to men, not things they bring about themselves" (Adorno 1995:59). Nothing expresses this with more radical clarity than Adorno when he writes that Auschwitz paralyzes the capacity for even imagining what could possibly exist other than the shocking present (Adorno 1994a:355). Drained of experience as well as expectations, nothing remains of history but what Benjamin calls "empty and homogenous time". Similarly, Samuel Beckett's dictum "I've seen the future: take cover!" can be interpreted to express the experience that the only thing that can really be expected of the future is that it will be shocking.

36 This is the first of three factors that contribute to this destruction. The second factor is the "consecutive differentiation" of products, like in the quick changes in fashion, that "disrupt that inner process of acquisition and assimilation between subject and object" (ibid 461). The third is the multitude of styles.

37 Adorno's argument that the attempt of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie to step out of history — to escape the reality of capitalism — forced it into the realm of the mythical confirms the connection between the aural and the dreamlike. Benjamin too, following Valéry, characterizes perception in dreams as aural (Benjamin 1997:148). What is torn out of its historical context and frozen into an isolated image will also appear dreamlike. This idea is clearly stated by Simmel: "What we designate as *ædreamlike* is nothing but a memory which is bound to the unified, consistent life-process by fewer threads than are ordinary experiences" (Simmel 1997:222). Memories, in other words, become dreamlike, auratic or "mythical" when they are not assimilated into the continuity of everyday life yet

for some reason seem to bear an inner relation to the soul, to the unconscious or to what Adorno calls "inwardness". These two conditions — the disembedding from history and the semblance of a direct expression of the soul — are in fact present in all of the concretizations of the concept of aura we have mentioned so far: the auratic work of art, love, and the bourgeois interior. They are of course also present in dreams that, being torn off from their context of waking life, come to appear to possess timelessness. Freud points out that the rational ordering of events into a coherent whole is a feature of waking life, not of dreams. In dreams, each element tends to be viewed in isolation and accepted as self-evident, without having to be explained by reference to other dream-elements (Freud 1991b:191).

- 38 This reified continuum is also the repository of the historicists *Erlebnisse* or "dead experiences". Benjamin criticizes the historicist methodology of "empathy" as a branch of voluntary memory. "Perhaps the special achievement of shock defence may be seen in its function of assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents" (Benjamin 1997:117). Instead of the resurrection of the lived content of the past achieved in moments of "now-time" (*Jetzt-Zeit*) — a montage-like coming together of the past with the present in a "now of recognizability" — empathy into past epochs gives rise to a "melancholy", arising from the reification of its object which does not permit its resurrection and which is a continuation by intellectual means of the repression of the losers of history by its victors (Benjamin 1977:245, 254).
- 39 What is the difference between the repression of non-identity in reification and the foreclosure of non-identity in the aura? Here we have arrived at a point of some importance, because here we face the problem that there seems to be two different threats against the perception of non-identity. It is not only the blunt and naked reduction of human beings to conceptual labels in bureaucracy and economy. It also seems to signify the almost unconscious closure of horizon, the false finality which lacks all or almost all traces of repression. For the sake of simplicity I will use the term "reification" only for the former threat. This runs counter to Benjamin's use of the term in a passage in the exposé to the *Arcades Project* written in 1939 where he seems to state that reification is immediately linked to the appearance of "phantasmagoria" on the level of actual perception (Benjamin 1999: 14). I believe, however, that there is good reason to distinguish between the two threats to non-identity. The reason is that the aura presents the object as part of a tradition, while reification proper abolishes tradition. The reason is thus same as the reason why Benjamin distinguished between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*.
- 40 Although Benjamin seldom uses the term reification, the concept is everywhere present in his writings, often only thinly disguised. His theory of the shift from assimilated experience (*Erfahrung*) to superficial sensation (*Erlebnis*) can be read as a theory of how reification manifests itself on the level of perception, i.e. how people and social products come to be perceived as "things" in isolation from their mediation. Mediation can only be grasped through the integrative movement of *Erfahrung*, whereas *Erlebnisse* tend to fragmentize perception and to make things appear independent of each other.
- 41 The bifurcation of shocked inner nature and heightened consciousness in two and their personification in two separate characters may, however, be accidental. In *Kokoro* (1914) they appear united in a single character, the *sensei*, who is marked both by shock (*K's* suicide) and his heightened consciousness (which imprisons him in distrust, loneliness and inactivity).
- 42 This terminology is justified partly because a conceptual personal "identity" is what results when the objectifying tendency of the consciousness, the aspect of consciousness stressed by

Benjamin, is turned against the self. The description of Benjamin as a critic of personal identity might seem to run counter to the yearning for a lost wholeness that is also detectable in his writings. Indeed his work has been described as "marked by a painful straining towards a psychic wholeness or unity of experience which the historical situation threatens to shatter at every turn" (Jameson 1971:61). This description is true, but one-sided. Benjamin's concern was not to deny the fluidity and polymorphous character of inner nature. He never wanted forcibly to stop its disintegration by the artificial means of personal identification. The artificial restoration of the aura would remain under the sway of heightened consciousness and precipitate a catastrophic outcome, but the alternative route to revive experience, that of involuntary memory, would require a state of mind which was defenseless against shock.

- 43 For Benjamin on fascist production of aura, cf Benjamin (1977:154, 167ff) and Caygill (93-116).
- 44 The ambivalent stand towards tradition is treated in Habermas (1981). Even though Benjamin sometimes treated auratic perception as synonymous with experience he never affirmed the former as unambiguously as he affirmed the latter. He continuously sought to find new forms of experience that could survive the disintegration of the aura. This is the background of his cautious defense of dadaism, film, photography, or literary and artistic techniques such as montage, or the technique of reproduction. Yet even in *The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility*, with its tentatively optimistic assessment of the disintegration of the aura as the "emancipation from ritual" and as the precondition for the emergence of a new kind of sense perception, he acknowledges the possibility of a "regressive" or fascist response to this development (1977:67f, 86f). Later, in *Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, its disintegration is equated with the destruction of the conditions of experience itself. The aura here assumes utopian qualities, as the setting of the past stored in involuntary memory. As "disintegrating" and belonging to a lost world, it becomes a utopian counterimage to the prevailing mode of perception in modernity. Finally, in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* the possibility of a renewal of experience is removed from the sphere of modern time-consciousness altogether. Experience becomes synonymous with the unpredictable infusion of messianic energies in the continuum of homogeneous and empty time. The ironic lyricism to which Benjamin gives free rein in passages dealing with the concept of experience must be seen in the light of the fact that he increasingly came to see it as incompatible with modernity. The artificial restoration of the aura would lead to a catastrophic outcome, but the alternative route to revive experience through involuntary memory would require a state of mind which was defenseless against shock.
- 45 For Benjamin, the significance of Baudelaire's poetry lay in its emphatically non-auratic nature. Poetry was wrestled from the realm of shock and spleen itself with a heroism that was as fierce as Weber's. "Baudelaire did not know nostalgia", as Benjamin noted (Benjamin 1977:240).
- 46 The question of "the good life" must be distinguished from the question of moral rightness. Here I use a distinction that has nowadays gained some usage in philosophical circles between moral and ethical spheres of validity (e.g. Habermas 1993:8ff). The moral concerns what is "right" or "just" and takes into account the interests of all, while the ethical concerns what would be a "good" or existentially satisfying life for oneself or for one's own particular group. One of the points I would like to make in this inquiry is that in many cases this critique is best understood, not as a mere moral critique, but as a critique that articulates an alternative ethical ideal.

- 47 Also cf Taylor (1994:38ff), Trilling (1972:9-12, 93). The most influential articulation of the need to remain true to oneself is probably when Heidegger ties authenticity to insight in the *Jemeinigkeit* of one's *Dasein* (Heidegger 1967:42f)
- 48 Whichever version of this ideal one looks to one finds a striving to affirm both at once. This is true not only of Fe, Abe and Heidegger, but also of Sartre, Taylor, A.Ferrara and other theorists of authenticity. Conventional identity is criticized, but only in order to be replaced by an "authentic" identity, defined as the awareness of freedom. In Heidegger, as we will see, the authenticity of *Dasein* is defined as remaining one self and keeping out whatever is alien, yet even so it is supposed to remain "open to the situation" and capable of "grasping the moment". In Sartre, freedom is valorized but only as the freedom to chose "burden" (Sartre 1995:433-556). Similarly, in Abe one finds the theme of the illusory character of all identity repeated over and over again, yet at the same time a stubborn insistence on the necessity to search for new identities (Yamanouchi 1980:161f). Also cf Taylor (1989: 368-, 488ff), Ferrara (1992).
- 49 Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel is a historical marker of the transition whereby authenticity replaces "self-realization" as a dominant ideal of the good in Western thought. The ideal of "self-realization" in German Idealism differs on several accounts from the "authenticity" found in existential thinkers. Firstly, in the ideals of self-realization in Hegel or the young Marx the self-realization of the individual must concur with that of mankind. To end alienation would be, in Novalis's words, "to be at home everywhere" (*überall zu Hause zu Sein*). It cannot be accomplished in privacy, since privacy itself is a result of alienation. The self must be realized with the world, not apart from it. The universalism of this ideal contrasts with the parochialism and the particularistic identities that are often advocated by proponents of authenticity. Secondly, the ideal of self-realization credits development as such with a vital and crucial importance. To realize oneself means to realize one's potentials, to open oneself up to change in Faustian manner. By contrast, what is emphasized in Heidegger's concept of "authenticity" is not development or change, but that the agent directing such a change must be *Dasein* itself. While "authenticity" includes a possibility for *Dasein* to transcend its "being thrown", i.e. its past, through "projections" towards the future, nothing in the concept of authenticity itself necessitates such transcendence. We can observe that the ideal of self-realization fails to fit into either of the two "paradigms" we have proposed. This, I suggest, is not because the distinction is invalid or lacks clarity but because this ideal originates in an epoch before the arrival of shock-modernity. The ideal of self-realization is tied to very particular historical circumstances – the "heroic" initial stages of the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in Europe and the expectations and the sense of historical change generated by the French revolution and the industrial revolution in Britain. Today it can only be revived under exceptional circumstances in which atomization and the "shocking" quality of social relations seem temporarily suspended. These are the moments of what Victor Turner has called "communitas", one example of which may have been the student movement of the 60's (cf Turner 1992:45ff, M.Berman 1992:33f).
- 50 From a different perspective Bohrer too points to the experience of shock as a point of departure for Heidegger. Rather than seeing his philosophy as a defensive reaction against shock, like Adorno, he stresses the way this experience – in the guise of what he calls the category of "suddenness", which he also finds in contemporaries like Jünger or Carl Schmitt – is reflected in certain Heideggerian concepts (Bohrer 1978:340ff).

- 51 To use the brief Heideggerian formula, authentic Dasein is "anticipating-instantaneous-recollecting" (Vorlaufen-Augenblick-Wiederholung), while inauthentic Dasein is "expecting-presentation-forgetting" (Gewärtigen-Gegenwärtigen-Vergessen).
- 52 For a discussion of Musil and the role of contingency in the experience of modernity, cf Isenberg (2001).
- 53 This is made clear in a conversation between Ulrich and his friend General Stumm von Bordwehr. What does one find, the general exclaims, whenever one tries to express the "darkest recesses" of one's innermost being? "Stimuli and strings of reflexes, entrenched habits and skills, reiteration, fixation, imprints, series, monotony!" (Musil 1981:410; 1995:378). The self, as Jonsson remarks, is made up of stereotypes and clichés, and is hence just as reified and "external" as its environment (Jonsson 1996:46).
- 54 See for example Peter Berger's analysis of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* from the point of view of the problem of the modern I (Berger 1970, 1988).
- 55 For an analysis of Musil's critique of "reality", cf Drevermann (1955).
- 56 Ulrich and Agathe also refer to it as *das Tausendjährige Reich*. This expression, which was also used by the Nazis, derives from the Bible.
- 57 One reason for the difference between Musil and Adorno may be that their respective criticisms are rooted in different images of modern society. In a sense, the immanent criticism of Adorno is tailored to the presupposition that we are "trapped" within one single and more or less homogeneous cultural system. This is why he is not content with simply relativizing the ideas that he criticizes, but wants to show how they are internally inconsistent, and therefore, that historical reality itself still leaves possibilities for change. Granted that the "identity thinking" that he criticizes has become the very concrete reality of the contemporary west, as he claims, then it makes sense that it cannot be challenged merely by juxtaposing it to what in Marxist jargon is called "abstract" ideas that lack historical weight, but only by entering them and by use of their internal contradictions — turning their own historical force against them.
- 58 Seidensticker likens his novels — with their "loose form, a stringing together of episodes with no clear beginning, middle, and end" — to *renga* or traditional linked verse (Seidensticker 1984: 114f, 119).
- 59 A similar impression is expressed by another critic, who comments on the same scene as follows: "One has a sense of near paralysis, of having been reduced by events to a state of catatonic immobility." (Kimball 1973:106). The same goes for many of his shorts stories (the palm-of-the-hand stories, e.g. Kawabata 1990:106, 177).
- 60 In 1953 Kawabata started to write a continuation to this novel, *Namichidori* (1953, *Wave Plovers*), which was never completed. However, one cannot help feeling that there must have been a reason for Kawabata to cut off *Senbazuru* where he did. This suspicion is strengthened by that fact that *Namichidori* starts off one and a half years after the end of *Senbazuru*, when the setting and the problematics are already entirely different.
- 61 *The Sound of the Mountain* may seem to be an exception in this respect, but it too ends on an ambiguous note — even though there is a change of atmosphere in the family, its future is still uncertain. The beauty of such endings is a beauty of ambiguity, of suspense, not of finality. Boardman Petersen points out that this novel too ends on a note of "tragic disappointment", even though it is masked by the seemingly prosaic domestic bustle. Shingo calls out to Kikuko but his voice remains unheard, drowned in the sound of dishwashing (Boardman Petersen 1979:177). The elegiac dream is shattered against the everyday sound, again repeating the pattern of the "shocking" dissolution of elegy.

- 62 The role of Buddhism in Kawabata is also emphasized by the literary critic Hatori, although he discusses it from a quite different standpoint (Hatori 1997b, 1997c). Boardman Petersen has analysed the prolific use of Buddhist symbolism in Kawabata's fiction (Boardman Petersen 1979).
- 63 For the relationship between Taoism and Chinese Buddhism, cf Fung (1997:95, 241f,249), Kasulis (1981:29-38), Nakamura (1964:286ff).
- 64 The Sanskrit term *samādhi* (Japanese *sanmai*) is usually translated as concentration or total mental involvement.
- 65 Although it is detectable even there, as we have seen in the case of *Snow Country*. About *Thousand Cranes* Kawabata himself states that it is a criticism of modernity: "In passing, it is a mistake to read my novel *Thousand Cranes* as depicting the beauty of the spirit and form of the tea ceremony. It is rather a negative work, an expression of doubt about and a warning against the vulgarity into which the tea ceremony has fallen in today's world" (Kawabata 1973b:181).
- 66 Already in 1934 Kawabata writes: "I am a citizen of a lost country" (quoted in Seidensticker 1984:127). When living in Tokyo 1928-36 he described the places that interested him most as "islands in a distant sea" (ibid 113). The snow country is regularly labeled an "other world" by commentators (Hatori 1997:44, Mizuta Lippit 1980:126). Kawabata himself describes Mrs Ota's world in *Thousand Cranes* as "another world" (Kawabata 1992a:73) and the Kyoto of *The Old Capital* as "a universe in a jar" separate from today's Japan (ibid 1989:251)
- 67 As has often been pointed out, the sense of loss pervading Kawabata's "other worlds" is also a consciousness of death (e.g. Kimball 1973:94-, Mizuta Lippit 1980:127). Indeed, the position from which shock can be greeted as a gate to beauty is death, or what Kawabata himself – citing Akutagawa Ryūnosuke – calls "eyes in their last extremity" (*matsugo no me*). Before his suicide in 1927 Akutagawa wrote: "I am now living in a world of morbid nerves as clear as ice.[...] I don't know when I will summon up the courage to kill myself. But in my condition nature is more beautiful than ever before. No doubt you will laugh at me for my paradoxical wish to kill myself while still loving the beauty of nature. But nature is beautiful because it is reflected in my eyes in their last extremity" (quoted in Kawabata 1973a:57f). Kawabata adds that all art strives for such eyes. He also links them to the state of meditation in Zen (not so surprising in view of Dōgen's well-known Zen recommendation to "live as one who has died"). Kawabata's own fiction very much belongs to that "literature of death" which he once diagnosed as typically Japanese (Kawabata 1973d). The close link he establishes between beauty and death explains the prevalence of ghosts or ghostlike memories in Kawabata. In the short story "Snow" ("Yuki"), the protagonist spends New Year in a hotel room dreaming about a world of snow where he meets all the women who ever loved him (Kawabata 1988:224-27). There is an awareness that they belong to the past that makes them seem like ghosts. The memories and dreams in *Sound of the Mountain* and *the House of the Sleeping Beauties* also have a chilly, ghostlike beauty. Not even Komako in *Snow Country*, Kawabata's perhaps most vivid character, is an exception. He is once said to have remarked about her: "Obake desu yo" (She is a ghost) (quoted in Seidensticker 1984:169) To dare to believe in her is to open oneself to prehistory, the unreal other world painted by elegy, which is equivalent to inviting and exposing oneself to shock. This is what distinguishes the ghostlikeness of Kawabata's characters from that of Murakami Haruki's (which we will encounter in chapter 4-4): they are vulnerable constructions that disintegrate in the moment of shock.

- 68 In the second version of this article, Benjamin remarked that, apart from bronzes, terra cotta and coins, all other Greek works of art "were unique and technically not reproducible. Therefore they must have been made for eternity" (Benjamin 1989:361). This is even clearer stated in "Small History of Photography", where he states that "inimitability and durability are as intimately tied together in the former [the auratic picture or Bild] as ephemerality and reproducibility in the latter [the reproduction or Abbild in magazines and films]" (Benjamin 1977:143, 1989:355).
- 69 Itô Sei hinted at this risk with his observation, that the pursuit of beauty led writers like Kawabata to turn away from reality, losing in that way the only environment where occidental rationality could operate. As Powell comments: "They were bound to be conscious that their artistic method would collapse and their order or beauty would tumble if it came into contact with the vulgar reality of life" (Powell 1983:89).
- 70 Which is of course not say that he has found the "solution" that Benjamin failed to find. What counts as a "solution" within a limited context pretty often proves to be insufficient in a wider one. A prime concern for Benjamin, which I have excluded in this article, was the criticism of ideology. That samadhi also has darker, potentially ideological sides is no secret. A full treatment of these would have meant calling into question the ontology of immediacy, since "reality" is usually much more than the immediate "here-and-now". To put it in a nutshell, the appearance of immediacy is usually itself (socially or historically) mediated. Does not this the immediacy of samadhi block this mediation from view? As Adorno insisted, spontaneity must be balanced by critical reflexion. Kawabata's "solution" must therefore be seen, both as ideological and as in possession of its own "truth-content". For a critique of Kawabata's novels as lacking "exteriority" and shutting out historical context, cf Karatani (1995:243ff). For a critique that reveals the machinations of power behind the "immediacy" of Zen, cf Faure (1991:123, 308).
- 71 It is therefore highly misguided to portray Kawabata as yearning for authenticity or identity, as for example when Yamanouchi Hisaaki describes the work of Kawabata as flawed by his "failure" to attain personal authenticity (authenticity defined in opposition to imitation, as being true to one's hearts desire and to protect one's moral integrity in opposition to the demands of society) (Yamanouchi 1980:4, 136). If one shifts one standpoint from that of the paradigm of authenticity to that of nature, the alleged failure too drops out of view.
- 72 The mask that covers the protagonist's face in *Face of Another* is another materialized "protective shield", one that breaks in the end when his wife sees through him: "My mask, which I had expected to be a shield of steel, was broken more easily than glass." (Abe 1967:227). The isolating effect of such shields is pointed out by his wife, who writes: "You don't need me. What you really need is a mirror. Because any stranger is for you simply a mirror in which to reflect yourself. I don't ever again want to return to such a desert of mirrors." (ib 212)
- 73 To be sure, the reader is never explicitly told about the Niki Junpei's decision. It is, however, strongly suggested that he has decided to stay on in the village, both by his desire to tell the villagers of his invention of a machine for extracting water from the sand (needless to say, here the machine itself appears significant as a metaphor) and by the death-certificate issued in his absence by the authorities. For an interpretation emphasizing the "sunny" aspects of the ending as the end of a learning-process whereby Niki learns shed his conventional identity and to affirm himself and his Eros, cf Kimball (1973:115-39). For an interpretation stressing the problematic aspects of his decision to stay in the village, cf Yamanouchi (1980:156f).

- 74 For a discussion of authenticity/identity in Abe, especially in relation to *The Woman in the Dunes*, cf. Kimball (1973:115-39), Napier (1996:202), Yamanouchi (1980:153-62).
- 75 The dual of affirmation of freedom from identity and the necessity of identity is the theme of several of Abe's works. Most obviously maybe in "The Crime of S.Karma" (1951, "S.Karuma shi no hanzai"), in which the protagonist's visiting card takes on a life of its own, usurping the name and, with it, the life of the protagonist. The protagonist, however, insists on the hopeless task of finding his true name, instead of running away from his enemies. In his battle against the "copy" he has to assert his authenticity. It is also a theme of *The Face of Another*. Here we see the notion of authenticity is to realize that identity is illusory and yet to keep searching for identity.
- 76 For a criticism of authenticity as conflating freedom and surrender and thus weakening the critical impulse, cf. Adorno (1978:154, 1996:67).
- 77 Zenkyôtô or Zenkoku Kyôtô Kaigi (All-Student Joint Struggle Conference) was a nationwide radical student organization that evolved out of the university struggles of 1968-9. For discussions of Murakami Haruki against the background of the draining of utopian hopes after its defeat, cf. Katô Norihiro (1995:36-41), Kawamoto (1998:48f), Murakami & Kawamoto (1985:37), Napier (1996:207), Rubin (1999:184), Strecher (1998:371ff, 1999:264ff, 298ff).
- 78 Here I am indebted to the analysis of this story in Orbaugh (1999).
- 79 Karatani defines exteriority as a correlate to a "transcendental" consciousness capable of stepping out of given contexts and "being external to the system", as opposed to the formalistic "transcendent" consciousness that tries to catch history within the confines of a single unitary perspective (Karatani 1989:262). In particular he is concerned that the abundance of information in Japan in no way disrupts the stability of its "discursive space" but is an integral part of it. He sees the "postmodernism" in Japan since the 70s as a dangerous repetition of the complacency of the Taishô period (1912-26) that resulted in the militarism of the early Shôwa period (1926-89). He celebrates the transcendent consciousness of Meiji writers like Natsume Sôseki or Okakura Tenshin, for whom the Chinese and Indian cultural legacy provided a sense of exteriority that enabled them to relativize the discourse space of Japan, or of the Christian writer Uchimura Kanzô for whom Christianity played a similar role. With Taishô-writers like Kawabata this discourse space was consolidated and exteriority was extinguished (ibid 1995:26f, 143ff). The background of Karatani's harsh criticism of the lack of exteriority in Murakami Haruki and others is his fear that it is the flipside of nationalism. "There is an almost pathological play with language, with the reign of the superficial on the one hand, and the regeneration of ultra nationalistic ideology on the other" (ibid 1989:272). I will argue, however, that the thesis that the last decades simply repeat the Taishô-period can lead to serious distortions since there are crucial differences between authors such as Kawabata and Murakami. I would thus argue that exteriority was never really lacking in the Taishô-writers, but rather actively utilized as the implicit foil of their dream-worlds. In other words, to them the "lack of exteriority" was never apprehended as a problem in the acute and explicit way that we can observe in Murakami Haruki or Pynchon for that matter.
- 80 On the importance of the provincial immigrants to the great capitals like London, Vienna, Paris, Berlin or St Petersburg for the development of literary modernism, cf. Williams 1999:39-. A similar shattering initial experience can be sensed behind the early paradigmatic formulations in the sociological theory of modernity. That the problematic of modernity was particularly acute in "provincial" Germany is no coincidence. Tönnies was raised in the rural

culture of provincial Schleswig-Holstein and Simmel lived in Berlin during the most rapid period of its expansion (cf Frisby 1985:69f, Leck 2000:33ff). Something similar can be said about Japan, where, according to Carol Gluck, "agrarian symbols were strong, [and] each generation was wont to feel that the final loss of the rural past was occurring in their lifetime" (Gluck 1985:178).

- 81 A strikingly similar sense of living on "after the end" is registered among other contemporary thinkers as well. Katherine Hayles, for example, asserted the following in 1990 that we now feel that we are already living in the aftermath of time: "Since the 1960s, the consensus that there is a fixed end point has been eroded by our growing sense that the future is already used up before it arrives... The rhythm of our century seemed predictable. World War I at the second decade; World War II at the fourth decade; World War III at the sixth decade, during which the world as we know it comes to an end. But somehow it did not happen when it was supposed to. By the ninth decade, we cannot help suspecting that maybe it happened after all and we failed to notice. (quoted in Falconer 1998:705f). Similar sentiments are found in 1983 statement by Baudrillard: "The future has already arrived, everything has already arrived, everything is already here... I consider we have to expect neither the realization of a revolutionary utopia nor on the other hand an explosive atomic event. The explosive force has already entered into things. There is nothing more to expect... The worst eventuality, the dreamt of final occurrence on which every utopia was based, the metaphysical appeal to history etc... the endpoint already lies behind us..." (quoted in Wellmer 1985:340).
- 82 Despite this, both conceptions can be traced back to the Aristotelian notion of nature. This nature, to be sure, is defined in opposition to the human. At the same time it is what occurs spontaneously, in the absence of conscious intervention (thus a "natural" movement, for example, is the movement a body would take unless interrupted by human intervention).
- 83 The basic idea of capitalism as second nature is found in Marx. The mutual interaction of individuals produces the semblance of "an alien social power standing above them", a power which appears as if they had arisen "spontaneously from nature" (naturwüchsig). As a consequence conditions of existence "appear as if they were natural conditions, not controllable by individuals" (Marx 1993:158, 164, 196f). The (originally Hegelian) term "second nature" was revived and popularized by Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel* and further developed in *History and Class Consciousness* where he explicitly related it to the "social laws of nature" produced by capitalism (Lukács 1968:196). It should be kept in mind that my discussion of "second nature" concerns the concept as it was used in the tradition of Western Marxism from Lukács on: as a concept designating a modern phenomenon. Outside the tradition of Western Marxism term "second nature" is used in a wider and more ahistorical sense. This usage goes back to a classic idea expressed by Cicero: that habit is another nature ("Consuetudo est altera natura"). We find it for example in Gehlen, for whom "second nature" is a universal human phenomenon designating all culture and not only tied to modernity. Gehlen's second nature is the cultural arrangements and institutions whereby human beings create an artificial environment that compensates for the vulnerability that results from their lack of natural instincts (Gehlen 1988:26ff).
- 84 This is a central tenet in Horkheimer and Adorno's classic *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. "Civilization", they write, "is a victory of society over nature that transforms everything into nature" (Horkheimer & Adorno 1981:216).
- 85 Kawamoto claims that Murakami's work is pervaded by a "metropolitan sensibility", in which all consciousness of any individual self or of any countryside apart from the city is

drowned out. As a consequence, the city assumes many of the aspects previously associated with nature, such as "animism" or a likeness to the forest (Kawamoto 1999:40ff, Murakami & Kawamoto 1985:78).

- 86 These two, seemingly irreconcilable notions of nature to some extent mirror the two aspects of "nature" which we discussed previously: nature as the familiar and nature as the inhuman and "alien". In Lukács, Adorno and others, this ambiguous oscillation between two separate notions of nature seems to reflect the confluence of, on the one hand, a romantic conception of nature as the origin of "life" and as spontaneous self-creation with, on the other hand, a conception of nature as dead, thinglike matter derived from the natural sciences. The former is an enchanted nature, at one with history as the unfolding of qualitative change and sometimes (by Benjamin and Bloch) associated with the fairy-tale. This romantic conception derives from German Idealism, with its concern for a "resurrection of nature", a "mimetic balance between humanity and nature", or "reconciliation with nature". The latter concept, by contrast, is nature as reified through technology and science, the object of *Naturbeherrschung* (domination of nature). It is in this guise that nature returns in society itself, according to the theory of "second nature" (cf Benjamin 1977:256f, 404, 1979:103f; Bloch 1998:109, 301; Ely 1998). The two notions can be traced even further back in history. It is possible to see them as reflecting the old scholastic dichotomy between *natura naturans* — nature that brings forth, or nature as a productive force — and *natura naturata* — nature that has been brought forth, or nature as a product.
- 87 For Benjamin's treatment of the dialectics of nature and history, see Benjamin (1985:45f, 62, 91f, 129ff, 165ff, 177ff, 223ff), Buck-Morss (1991:58ff, 68ff, 78f, 159).
- 88 The role of the supernatural in Murakami's work is emphasized by Strecher (1999) and Hatori (1995). For the popularity of the "spirit world" movement in Japan since the late 1960s, see Shimazono (1996). Shimazono's thesis that the religious boom is a growth not of community religion but of "individualistic religion" lends support to our discussion of "privatization" in the next chapter (Shimazono 1996:171-83).
- 89 The theme of the "complexity of the system" in late modernity is frequently met in social thought and often linked to a thesis of the fragmentation of consciousness. Cf: Castells (1996:475ff), Habermas (1992a:354ff), Hardt & Negri (2001: 354ff), Harvey (1995:58, 301), Jameson (1991:316, 394-), Luhmann (1998:75-), Melucci (1989), Sloterdijk (1987:510ff).
- 90 For reflexivity and its link to the breakdown of certainties and to contingency, cf Zieve (1986:345ff, 1993:44), Luhmann (1998:44ff).
- 91 That much postmodern fiction (Pynchon, De Lillo, Gibson) has become the stage for a comeback of religion, particularly in the form of New Age, has often been commented on — to the extent that some prefer the label "post-secular" literature (McClure 1995). The return of "mythology" in the post-industrial, post-historical, and postmodern world is also discussed in, for instance, Gehlen (1980:30ff, 43-59, 101) and Lehan (1998:187).
- 92 In *The Wind-up Bird*, a large part of the action takes place in a spiritual "other world", to which it is possible for the mind to travel and which governs the everyday reality through strange correspondences. Divination also plays a prominent role in the plot, and we even find an instance of telepathy. In fact, the supernatural abounds in Murakami's fiction (cf note 79). It should be observed that the supernatural in his fiction does not serve as a sign for tradition or for a lost or vanishing past, as it did for earlier writers such as, for example, Izumi Kyôka (1873-1939). The mystery is not located outside the modern, but is the modern. Thus the magical sheep in *A Wild Sheep Chase* does not stand as the embodiment

of any "lost world" threatened by rationality, but of the dark forces that continue to operate in the midst of the modern world. Similarly, the occult spiritual world in *The Wind-up Bird* is far from fading away and rules the everyday world of modern Japan.

- 93 Let us take a further example. Referring to Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* Jameson argues that postmodern art confronts us with an end of "expression", a "new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality" in the cultural artifacts. According to him, Warhol's works do not speak to us, but rather confront us in a mode of impersonal facticity or even boring monotony, devoid of affect yet charged with a strange "exhilaration" that Jameson also refers to as a free-floating "intensity" or "euphoria" (Jameson 1991:8ff). However, I believe there is a certain negative sense in which even Warhol's works gesticulate towards a beyond. This negative reference should not be confused with the "sublime" — the quality that makes us sense, if not the beyond, then at least the impossibility of grasping this beyond. Rather, Warhol's works transcend their "facticity" by their refusal to offer such gestures. As Jameson's own reaction shows, the shoes both call for interpretation and frustrate it. To put it drastically, they refer to expression as to a corpse. They function as what we have called "gravestones", referring to the expression that one senses "should" have been there. Depth is not cancelled so much as it persists in a way that inverts the classical hermeneutic aesthetics of expression.
- 94 That a socially oriented libido remains a source of shock is illustrated by the hypersensitivity to encroachments on one's private space in human contact — an attitude that calls to mind what Žižek refers to as the "the late-capitalist Narcissistic mode of subjectivity within which the *æother* as such — the real, desiring other — is experienced as a traumatic disturbance, as something that violently interrupts the closed equilibrium of my Ego. Whatever the other does — if s/he fondles me, if s/he smokes, if s/he utters a reproach, if s/he looks at me lustfully, even if s/he doesn't laugh at my joke heartily enough — it is (potentially, at least) a violent encroachment upon my space" (Žižek 1994:7). The allergic reaction to too close human contacts described here reflects a fear of sociability itself as a source of shock.
- 95 The issue of an increasing self-centeredness or inability to engage in social life (in Japanese *jiheisei*) has received vast attention in recent years. I single out Miyadai as one of the clearest examples. Much attention has been directed to the various "dangers" posed by libido-interiorization, despite the "gentleness" by which it often seems to be accompanied. Thus Hidaka Rokurô criticizes the "gentleness" (*yasashisa*) of young Japanese as "interchangeable with submissiveness" (Hidaka 1984:120). Similarly, Yôrô Takeshi argues that the gentle attitude among young people serves to conceal and protect a "true self" that is withheld from interaction with the outside world. "In other words, there is a true self and another, external self that associates with the outside world. The latter self is endlessly variable. Perceiving things in this manner, they readily produce sarin gas if someone tells them to do so. However, they prefer to leave the true inner self out from the discussion. This self they preserve, treasure and hide. On the other hand, today's young people dislike hurting others as much as they dislike being hurt. They are gentle, in other words, and this gentleness is their means of firmly preserving themselves." (Yôrô 2000:88). Yôrô's point is the danger to society posed by "gentle" selves that are so withdrawn into themselves that they are incapable of viewing other people as fellow humans and who are indifferent to society even to the point of being willing even to perform terrorist acts (sarin gas referring of course to Aum Shinrikyô's Tokyo subway attack 1995). Clearly, "gentleness" is structurally homologous to what Sloterdijk calls cynicism. In both we encounter the stance of an "inner refuge", an inner rejection of the system combined with outward conformity.

These analyses, although helpful, all share one weakness: the inability of explaining satisfactorily why this splitting occurs, a weakness I will here attempt to overcome with the help of Freud.

- 96 For otaku, cf Kinsella (1998), Treat (1993:354ff). For a brief analysis of the development of otaku, hikikomori, stôkâ (stalkers), AC (Adult Children) and gyaru (lit. girls), cf Miyadai & Fujii (2001:29-38).
- 97 Freud's theory of narcissism must be clearly distinguished from many current theories of narcissism. While Freud portrays the internalization of libido as a means for the self to become more self-sufficient and independent of the object-world, Christopher Lasch and Ziehe instead portray narcissism as characterized by an abnormally high degree of dependence on the esteem of others as a "reinforcement" or "compensation" for insufficient self-esteem (Lasch 1979:10, Ziehe 1982, also cf Alford 1985). Neither has Richard Sennett's concept of narcissism much to do with Freud's original concept. For Sennett, narcissism is an inability to respect the otherness of the world, which is instead expected to conform to infantile desires of oneness and intimacy. It is therefore an impossible yearning, a "search for gratification which itself prevents this gratification from occurring", and thus far from the self-sufficient "happy love" independent of the environment portrayed by Freud (cf Sennett 1986:323ff).
- 98 In contemporary literature the atomization of the family and its penetration by system-mechanisms is treated in many ways, perhaps most strikingly through such figures as the "coin locker babies" of Murakami Ryû's novel with the same name, or the "rental children" and "temporary wives" that populate the fiction of Shimada Masahiko - the latter, in fact, providing a striking image of an all-out colonization of the lifeworld by the media of money and power (e.g. cf Shimada 1993:194, 217). More interesting in this connection are the examples of desexualization and the "pseudo-sibling" relationship, which are also easy to find. One could mention Miyadai Shinji's observation of the collapse of the ideal of romantic love in the "never-ending everyday" subculture (Miyadai 162f, 165). This picture is confirmed in Murakami Ryû's portrayal of this subculture in *Love & Pop* (1996, Rabu & Poppu), whose heroine has a boyfriend but prefers being with her female friends. Desexualization and the flight from modern life to the quasi-society of friends can also be seen in Douglas Coupland's best-selling *Generation X* (1991), in which three close friends - Andy, Claire and Dag - escape to the desert where they engage in a "pseudo-sibling relationship" telling cozy stories to each other.
- 99 Bloch points out the ambiguous intertwining of utopian hopes and ideological denial involved in the idealization of the "alienation-free" domestic sphere. On the one hand, "closer, more intimate circles" such as the bourgeois patriarchal family are havens from reification, but on the other, the danger of their ideologization increases the more they are glorified as such (Bloch 1998:242). Just as Bloch saw the idealization of the family as an ambivalent phenomenon, so its destruction through atomization too is ambivalent. Napier points out that this disappearance of the "oasis woman" is often experienced by the male writer as the loss of a richer and purer past and as the victory of the wasteland of modernity. At the same time, however, this very same process liberates the "oasis woman" from many of the power structures of traditional society. This emancipation wouldn't be possible without the juridification of the relation between the sexes. To "affirm one's right" means that formal codes of justice take precedence over the "natural" (which of course means pseudo-natural) bonds of tradition or affection. These codes kill the aura of the "oasis

woman", but at the same time liberate her by exposing the hidden power relations that had structured the patriarchal order or even the "love" which once had appeared natural.

- 100 Murakami Haruki admits that the coolness to a large extent is a façade in an interview (Murakami-Kawamoto 1985:45, 48, also cf Kawamoto 1998:48). We shouldn't forget that not even his earliest works are positive to naturalization. In the words of one of his critics, they "feature brooding loneliness, impersonal sex, troubled relationships, suicide, and, above all, boredom" (Rubin 1999:183). It is hard to miss the "traumatic" nature of some experiences depicted in his fiction (e.g. Murakami 1991a).
- 101 Only few souls were thought to be taken to the Greek "hell" of Tartarus or the bliss of the Elysian fields. By the term Hades I do not intend to imply any "Western" influence on Japanese writers. The two conceptions of Hell and Hades correspond rather accurately to the Buddhist notion of hell and the Shintoist notion of the land of the dead (Yomi or Ne no kuni). The former is a place of horrors and torture, the latter a comparatively mild place (cf Umehara 1996). This bifurcation of conceptions of the land of dead can be found in several cultures (e.g. Sheol / Gehenna in Judaism).
- 102 According to Lehan, in postwar literature "a sense of apocalypse gives way to entropy" (Lehan 1998:8). James Berger's "post-apocalyptic" perspective provides a frame for understanding these visions of urban entropy. Just as Lehan he emphasizes the centrality of "waste" in post-apocalyptic fiction (Berger 1999:14ff). Particularly clear examples include the famous "kippleization" of Philip K. Dick's (Dick 1982) and the obsession with "waste" in Pynchon (1995, 1996) or DeLillo (1997). Interestingly, similar notions of social decay have found its way into social theory. Thus Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri write that "corruption" has replaced "crisis" as the defining trait of contemporary society. What they call "Empire" is "organized not around one central conflict but rather through a network of microconflicts". The "Empire" is always breaking down, but without "heading to ruin", since paradoxically it "is calmed by the panic and anxieties it continually engenders". Corruption then is not exceptional or temporary but the norm, a view of society that is strikingly reminiscent of what can be found in Japanese authors like Murakami Haruki or Murakami Ryū (Hardt & Negri 2001:201ff).
- 103 By apocalypse Berger firstly means a vision of the expected end of the world, which is often combined with the expectation of revelation. The apocalypse "must clarify and illuminate the true nature of what has been brought to an end" (Berger 1999:5). Secondly, he also uses it to refer to actual historical catastrophes — such as the Holocaust — that resemble the final ending and through their traumatic impact come to function as historical divides.
- 104 Sloterdijk illustrates this "catastrophic complex" with the "war psychosis" of August 1914, with its promise of life and rejuvenation, and adds that this schizoid climate is no less intense today. True, although caution is necessary whenever cross-historical comparisons are made. I prefer to see the "cynical" cultural climate from which Sloterdijk takes his point of departure as characteristic above all of the German 1980's — an impression strengthened by his use of expressions like "we", "our culture", "today's cynicism", and so forth.
- 105 In utilizing the concept of trauma we are not interested in pursuing the psychology of individual writers, but in the question of to what extent a culturally widespread mode of perception can be said to be characterized by mechanisms analogous to those in Freud's theory of trauma.
- 106 Indeed, it is tempting to single out World War II as the great — if not chronological, then at least symbolic — divide that separates shock-modernity from naturalized modernity. Nothing expresses with more desolate clarity the experience of shock than Adorno's meditations on

life after Auschwitz. The final solution, as he points out, paralyses the "capacity for metaphysics", for even imagining what could possibly exist other than the reality of the present (Adorno 1994:354ff). The image of the death-camp, in which the modern hell culminates, is also a turning point after which modernity becomes characterized by the experience of post-trauma rather than by the daily experiences of shock. "After the Second World War, everything, including a resurrected culture, has been destroyed without realizing it; humankind continues to vegetate, creeping along after events that even the survivors cannot really survive, on a rubbish heap that has made even reflection of one's own damaged state useless" (ib 1991:244). Adorno's well known dictum that it is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz is itself post-traumatic, expressing the powerlessness to articulate what happened, the inability to say the unsayable, the reluctance to sully the horrible experience by draping it in words that must seem hopelessly insufficient.

- 107 Stravinsky is one example, as Adorno has showed (Adorno 1994b:156f). In Benjamin too, the borderline between shock and trauma is far from sharp. Indeed, it is not difficult to find traces of trauma even in Baudelaire himself, as Benjamin points out when he describes the former as "traumatophile" — a man who, driven by a kind of compulsion to repeat, returns to the crowd since he has become addicted to shock (Benjamin 1997:117). This becomes evident when his account of shock in Baudelaire is juxtaposed to his account in the essay "Erfahrung und Armut". The accounts are similar on a number of points, but in the latter account the reaction to shock (in the first world war) is not described as a heightening of consciousness but as uninterest, apathy and escapism (Benjamin 1977:291ff). Benjamin, in other words, seems to be describing a traumatized state.
- 108 The embittered Sheep-professor in *A Wild Sheep-chase*, Reiko in *Norwegian Wood*, Izumi in *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (1992, *Kokkyô no minami, Taiyô no nishi*), Mamiya in *The Wind-up Bird*, and so on.
- 109 DeLillo illustrates this well in the character of Nick, the hero of *Underworld*, whose laconic style is akin to Murakami Haruki's. His conversations typically go like this: "I was in Houston.", "You're leading a regular life.", "Shave every day", "Pay taxes — good" (DeLillo 1997:89). His style is that of a former delinquent who has made up his mind to accept society, to identify with order, to accept getting stunted, a person who never again lets his impulses run wild with him. It is also clear what this style never permits to be articulated: Nick's obsession with "waste", which recurs in variation after variation in the novel as failed approximations of the "unsayable" underworld which he is required to make sense of (ibid 88, 184, 826).
- 110 Usually parody is defended against the charge of system-functionality as a form of ironic distance. An example of this form of defense — in this case not of parody per se but of "ironic consumption" — can be seen in a 1995 statement by the editors of *Hermeneut*. "Ironic consumption" may not overthrow the system but it "keeps us intact and autonomous within that system, which may be the best for which we can hope... Going to Disney World to drop acid and goof on Mickey isn't revolutionary; going to Disney World in full knowledge of how ridiculous and evil it all is and still having a great innocent time, in some almost unconscious, even psychotic way, is something else altogether. This is what de Certeau describes as 'the art of being in-between', and this is the only path of true freedom in today's culture" (quoted in Klein 1999:78). Klein points out the (obvious) limits of this variety of resistance: "What's left is little more than a vaguely sarcastic way to eat Pizza Pops" (ibid 83). People may believe that they are resisting the system while, in fact, they are behaving exactly in the way the system wants. In fact, both those who defend parody and

those who point to its system-functionality are right. The significance of parody resides more in its capacity to facilitate recovery, to empower the subject, than in the active resistance it offers.

- 111 This shift of perspective is a central theme in much science fiction. The difficulty of imagining it has meant that it is often portrayed as the result of a drastic technological manipulation of the human sensory apparatus, a mutation or a metamorphosis. One typical example is Shimada's Rococo-city, where the protagonist is in a permanent state of disgust and bewilderment at what he encounters in Rokoko-city until he agrees to the "genetic analysis" that he knows will brainwash him into a content citizen. Significantly, the chapter depicting his metamorphosis shows him as a "ghost", flying over the city, until he again materializes in his body. Shimada seems to affirm this metamorphosis. The end can only be seen as happy (Shimada 1993).
- 112 Benjamin's theory of "natural history" helps us to understand the futility of attempting any strict determination of the contents of identity and nature. Nature congeals into identity, and this identity soon takes on the air of naturalness. The identity that oppresses nature is itself nothing but sedimented nature, which has turned aggressively against the nature which is still amorphous. The "oppression of inner nature by identity" is a theory with a limited, historical, range of validity. If all nature, as soon as it loses its first energy, tends to solidify into identity, then that explains the process whereby the "old town" and other similar fantasies of the premodern have ceased to oppose modernity and merged with it. This merger seems almost complete in Murakami's protagonists. The conflict between the two opposing moments of nature and identity has lost its force. This stands out clearly when one compares Murakami to earlier writers. Kawabata, Abe, Ōe and Mishima all depict a tension between nature and identity – Kawabata gets the reader to feel the beauty of having one's identity shattered, Abe depicts the torture perpetrated on inner nature, Ōe writes about the construction of an identity that is nourished by the riots of nature, Mishima forges a synthesis of identity and nature in samadhi. In Murakami this tension is lacking. There is no tension between what his protagonists tell themselves that they ought to do or be, and what they do or are. He depicts subjects who have reached a threshold point – they are depicted at the moment when almost all of nature has become identity, and before a new nature has yet arisen to challenge this structure.
- 113 Baudrillard observes a similar lack of "traces" in an apartment minutely described in a novel by Georges Perec. "Clearly, nothing here has any symbolic value, despite the dense and voluptuous nostalgia of the interior's décor. It only suffices to compare this description with Balzac's description of an interior to see that here human relations are not inscribed in things" (Baudrillard 1988:23). There is no need for us to use Baudrillard further, to develop his theory of consumption as a "system of objects" that annuls reality. However, his description of a "universe of consumption", in which everything is a mere sign devoid of reality, is also an apt description of the indifferent and arbitrary interior of Haruki's apartment. We must add, however, that Baudrillard commits the usual postmodernist mistake of forgetting the unconscious. The objects only appear as arbitrary "signs" because subjectivity has retreated inside the mind. They continue to be deeply significant, but only in relation to an internally preserved trauma, not in relation to an externally sanctioned meaning.
- 114 The invasion of private space of the "inside" is a recurring theme in Abe's fiction, even where this inside does not correspond to traditional notions of a home – thus the invaded "inside" in *The Ark Sakura* (1984, *Hakobune no Sakura maru*) is Mole's cave, in *The*

Boxman it is the protagonist's cardboard box etc. Typical of these private spaces is that they only admit of a single inhabitant. As soon as Mole invites company into the cave, it immediately deteriorates into a reified "society", an arena for power-struggles. Here Abe seems to have reached the conclusion that shock has infected all human relations. In *The Boxman* the interior has shrunk to a box. Yet shock is everywhere, even in a box. When, in the hallucinatory ending, it turns out to contain a city of dizzying complexity, this means that there are no longer any auratic spaces. In *The Ruined Map* we have similarly seen that the room with the yellow curtains, auratic at first, in the end turns out to be a "false community". Here we should mention that the motif of invaded privacy is central to Kawabata as well. What is shown over and over in his fiction is how painstakingly constructed dream worlds — often felt to be somewhat suffocating in nature, as Mishima remarked about the house in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* (Mishima 1980:7) — that attempt to assert themselves over against the reality of modern society are made to collapse through shock. In this respect too, Murakami differs from both Abe and Kawabata. An even more dramatic reversal is evident in the young writer Shimada Masahiko's *Rococo City* (1990, *Rokoko-chô*), which portrays a wholly nomadic lifestyle. The protagonist and his girlfriend lack a permanent address and always stay at a hotel in the area where they happen to be. Neither do they need maps: hotels are everywhere, and existing hotels may be gone tomorrow anyway (Shimada 1993: 182f). In this somewhat facile postmodern utopia "private space" has lost its meaning and the aura of the bourgeois interior is totally gone.

- 115 Self-imposed isolation and detachment was a recurring theme in Kawamoto Saburô's interview with Murakami 1985, where the writer speaks of his "intent not to be caught up in any kind of group", neither family nor nation (Murakami & Kawamoto 1985:43, 67, 70f, also cf Miura 1997). Although he tries to communicate with his readers, he realizes that "perfect communication is impossible" and that "miscommunication is the rule" (Murakami & Kawamoto 1985:70f). "It's not that I am especially autistic, but as a matter of fact I can't relate to people one hundred percent. Or perhaps one should say I can only relate to them partially" (ibid 67). The problem of the possibility of communication is also a prominent theme in his novels, which are filled with protagonists who have difficulties communicating and prefer the calm of their interior worlds, in which they pursue a kind of idealized pseudo-communication with the memories of deceased friends or lovers.
- 116 A clear illustration of the longing for contact that can result from privatization can be seen in the daydream at the end of "About how I met a 100% girl a sunny morning in April" about how good it would be if auratic relations existed. This is reminiscent of what Ziehe describes as the yearning for "intimacy" and the increasing "subjectivation" of human relations in late modernity (Ziehe 1993:71-9). Another example is the valorization of "otherness" — of the "thrill" of meeting others — seen, for instance, in Murakami Ryû (Murakami Ryû 1997:213f).
- 117 Murakami Haruki explains that his "sympathy for lost things" makes him see them as belonging to a world in its own right, parallel to our own (Murakami-Kawamoto 1985:67ff). For discussions of the "other world" in Murakami, cf Katô Norihiro (1997b:137), Strecher (1999:270). One commentator remarks that Murakami Haruki's cities are not energetical bustling cities, but museum-like cities of the dead (Murakami-Kawamoto 1985:69). Several commentators have pointed out the significance of the dried-out well as a metaphor for the unconscious: Inoue Yoshio (1996:344, cf also 333), Shigeoka (1996:4).
- 118 In *Dance Dance Dance*, as we recall, the protagonist stoically chooses to remain in "advanced capitalist society" since it is "where we are living". In statements such as these,

the decision not to escape in *The Wind-up Bird* is adumbrated, although here, as we shall see, the decision has turned into a formula for authenticity and commitment.

- 119 Katô Norihiro captures this attitude aptly when he describes Murakami as a man who would feel forbidden to take off a wrong-sized T-shirt. It's not that he enjoys wearing it or believes it to be right, but that changing it would be "too easy". It would not be the "answer" to the wrongness of its size. Put in more direct theoretical fashion: to negate a reality from the outside is not to negate it. In order to negate a reality, one has to live it (Katô 1997b:132f). To Katô, then, Murakami is the very opposite of an escapist — he is rather a martyr. He even remarks that there is something Buddhist, a deep suffering about this author (ibid 1997a:18).
- 120 Here we should point out that Murakami Haruki himself is an atheist (Murakami-Kawamoto 1985:65)
- 121 A peculiar trait of the model of authenticity employed by Murakami in *The Wind-up Bird* is its fusion with the belief in fate. By locating the source of the directives that the subject must follow if it aspires to act authentically outside the self, in the realm of fate, he manages to convert to the paradigm of identity without letting go completely of the rhetoric of the paradigm of nature. In a sense, the subject is still as "passively" waiting as in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Authenticity is gained by emptying the self and by waiting for the "outside" force to set the self in motion when the time is in. There is thus a continuity visible connecting Okada Tôru to the belief in "other-power" of his predecessors in earlier novels. The passive subject is a subject for whom any outside influence is mystical and assumes the shape of fate.
- 122 See Hioki (1998) for a discussion of *The Wind-up Bird* from the point of view of reproducibility and uniqueness.
- 123 In the afterword to *Underground* (1997, *Andôguraundo*), a non-fiction work about the Tokyo subway gas attack in 1995, he writes that the time had come for him to "return to Japan" and shoulder his "responsibilities". This text is also interesting because of the emphasis it puts on the construction of personal identity through narrative (1997:700f, 710f). For Murakami's comments on individualism, history and community, cf. Murakami & Kawamoto 1985:43, Murakami 1997d:710f, 1995:276, 288.
- 124 Thus in *Dance Dance Dance* one can begin to see an intensified wish to reawaken to life and regain lost contact, accompanied by a turn towards activity and responsibility. In a novel like *South of the Border*, the problems of communication, guilt and responsibility are already as much foregrounded as in *The Wind-up Bird*. In a late novel like *Sputnik Sweetheart*, renewal of life through death ("blood") is prominently foregrounded. A significant middle position is occupied by *Norwegian Wood* where the theme of broken communication and the recognition of uniqueness is strongly present. In *Norwegian Wood*, the protagonist Watanabe maintains a stubborn faithfulness to his mentally unstable girlfriend Naoko, who has withdrawn to an asylum in the mountains. Naoko is a tense, silent girl who has to make immense efforts to find the right words for what she wants to say. She always asks Watanabe for more time before she can answer his questions. There is something in her which craves to get out, to find expression, but which she cannot let out. This continuing inability leads to the worsening of her condition. The ultimate failure of her efforts is signified by her suicide. In this novel we thus see a protagonist who commits himself wholly to a one and only, a girl who has nothing of the easy exchangeability of the girlfriends and the wife in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. We also find immense efforts on the part of both Naoko and Watanabe to break out of the confinement of the solitary self to reach out

for each other. Unlike in *The Wind-up Bird*, however, these efforts fail. As they sink into futility the protagonist is thrown back into loneliness and isolation. It is thus only in the latest novel in which a relatively successful restoration of communication is portrayed.

- 125 As Snyder observes, the extremes of sexual and political violence depicted in Murakami Ryû's fiction are to a large extent already part of everyday life and even recuperated by the system as commodities (Snyder 1999:214f). This is in line with Jameson's claim about postmodernism that its "offensive features [...] no longer scandalize" (Jameson 1991:4). The mixture of shock and repetition in *Almost Transparent* is reminiscent of what Gerhard Schulze describes in the pattern of values he calls *Spannungsschema* (excitement-schema) in contemporary German culture, with its emphasis on the body, intensity of stimuli, speed, high volume and sharp contrasts (Schulze 1992:154). This scheme discards the traditional slow building up of tension towards a climax in art. "You enter the current, let yourself be shaken up and stop when it's no fun anymore." He calls it an "aesthetics of excitement as permanent condition, not as a cyclical process", which is the principle of enjoyment in computer games, TV and disco. (Schulze 1992:155). The prevalence of this "aesthetics" is attested to by Jameson as well, who sees the monotonous "total flow" on TV ù "the contents of the screen streaming before us all day long without interruption" ù as particularly "postmodern", in contrast to the "modern" film with its clearly defined beginning and ending (Jameson 1991:70).
- 126 Benjamin's discourse on spleen cannot explain the boredom of Murakami Ryû since spleen is the feeling of not having anything exciting to do, while being fed up is an expression of frustration. The former is resignation, the latter linked to a revolt against the ever-same.
- 127 *Gyaru* (or for younger girls *kogyaru*) is a term that became popular in the 90's to designate girls characterized by extravagant hairstyle (including the spectacular *yamamba* or "mountain-witches"), innovative make-up (including the so-called *ganguro* or "black-faces") and a way of dressing that was often seen as provocative. About *Aum Shinrikyô* numerous analyses have been published, for instance: Castells (1997: 97-104), Maekawa (2001), Miyadai (1995). Miyadai's portrayal of the two cultural strands is supported by Kinsella (1998:305ff). Interestingly, his pairing of these two cultural strands ù the "never-ending everyday" of the *gyaru* and the "post-nuclear war community" of the doomsday sect ù seems to mirror Sloterdijk's pairing of cynicism and catastrophism. In a sense, the two strands can be seen as the two "logical" expressions of the kind of society that Sloterdijk portrays. A similar pairing can be seen in Nakazawa, who discusses the parallel rise in contemporary Japan of religious sects and of the culture of "parody" (Nakazawa 1997:37f), and in Karatani, who diagnoses the Japanese "postmodernism" of the 80's as a discourse space characterized by "the reign of the superficial" on the one hand and the "regeneration of ultra-nationalistic ideology" on the other (Karatani 1989, 1995, 1999).
- 128 *Burusera*-shops trade in the used undergarments of female high school students. The word is derived from a conjoining of the Japanese words for bloomers and sailor blouse.
- 129 "Assisted dating" is a form of prostitution mediated by telephone-clubs (so-called *terekura*). Becoming widespread during the 90's, it is today one of the most debated issues in Japan (cf Miyadai 2000, Miyadai & Fujii 2001). In Murakami Ryû's novel we follow a high school girl who engages in "assisted dating" to afford to buy a diamond ring.
- 130 Murakami Ryû's TV drama (which has also appeared as his latest novel) *Saigo no kazoku* (*The Last Family*, 2001) unusually features an "ordinary" family rather than provocative or extreme conduct. "As long as things like drugs and sex were hidden in the background in society it was meaningful to expose it. Today it is already out in the open, and the ills of

society are there for all to see. I feel the need for a new method", Murakami explains (quoted in Harada 2001).

- 131 Murakami Ryû's active pursuit of shock clearly belongs among what Cohen & Taylor call "escape attempts" (1992). Fuelled by a desire for an "alternative reality", such attempts are a reaction against the boredom and predictability of paramount reality, or what they call the "open prison" of routine and the "nightmare of repetition". Escape routes discussed by them include fantasy, hobbies, travel, gambling, sex, drugs, political utopias, madness and crime. To their instructive discussion I have two things to add: (1) Although stating that their interest concerns a particular mood in Western society after the upheavals of the late 1960s (1992:12), they never relate their discussion of the various escape attempts firmly to this historically specific environment. Examples are gathered together from a far broader historical spectrum. As a result I believe that they fail to locate "naturalized modernity" as the historical background of the sort of escape attempts that seem to be their chief interest. Their explanation of escape attempts centers on the "frustration" of needs among people who "have absorbed too much of the ideology of individualism to accept themselves as useless non-entities, destined to be buried in dreary jobs" (ibid 226). To this one needs to add that it is the dying away of the shock-experience in modernity that leads to the boring monotony they portray as a prison. (2) What Murakami Haruki aims at may perhaps be what Cohen & Taylor refer to as "momentary slips through the fabric". Their discussion of these slips, however, is curiously unintegrated with the rest of the book. Above all, attention to the fact that such slips only seldom arise as the result of conscious "attempts" — as indicated by the word "slip" — might, I believe, have facilitated a clear distinction between the various strategies possible against the experience of naturalization. Such a distinction is what I aim at by comparing the two "Murakamis".
- 132 This fact may also be connected to the "apocalyptic" strand in Murakami Ryû's fiction. Heidegger presents us with the ideal of authenticity in a relatively "free" and unsettled environment — the turbulent, unpredictable maelstrom of the Weimar republic. By contrast, the background of Murakami's ideal of authenticity, at least in apocalyptic dramas such as *Coin Locker Babies*, seems to be the vision of an increasingly total integration of the system. If the whole world has become a lie, then authenticity demands that the whole world has to go. Like in Murakami Haruki there is no porosity in his modernity. He replaces the one-sided, passive acceptance of all in the latter writer by an equally one-sided rejection of all.
- 133 A variant of this is found in the ambiguous character of the glorification of the ideal, elitist community of shock-seekers, depicted in novels like *The World Five Minutes After*, *Love and Illusory Fascism* (1987, *Ai to gensô no fuashizumu*), and *Exodus to the Land of Hope* (*Kibô no kuni no ekusodasu*). We can thus see that Murakami's heroes, on the one hand, tend to reject social libido — those who thirst for "belonging" are weaklings or aunts — and, on the other, affirm it in the form of an elitist community of the "authentic". They reject actually existing society as a reified and unresponsive "prison", but affirm a society or community in which communication as a balanced exchange between equals — a genuine dialectics of subject and environment — is possible. As Katô Hirokazu points out, there is a paradox involved in this idealization of a community of the authentic: the paradox that they attempt to break away from the state by creating a "mini-state" of their own (Katô Hirokazu 2000:174). I suggest that it is the absence of any clear demarcation between what is rejected and what is affirmed that forces Murakami to oscillate between the vain idealization of a community of the authentic — which can never come into being — and the apocalyptic rejection of society as such.

134 We may also recall the story recounted in *Ibisa* about an SM-establishment in New York called "Hell", in which a sudden commotion outside one of the rooms made all the members present interrupt their activities to go and see what it was about. As they peeked into the room they saw the cause of the excitement — a boy and a girl gently kissing each other (Murakami 1995:174f). The "kiss" performs an analogous function in the context of spleen to that of "Kyoko" in the interview with Asada. In both instances, it is as if Murakami Ryû was saying: the only way to escape boredom is to stop trying to escape it.

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Biographical reference of Japanese writers

Since Western readers may be unfamiliar with some Japanese writers, I have included the following reference list of writers mentioned in the text.

Abe Kôbô (1924-93) Born in Tokyo and grew up in Manchuria. He received a medical degree from Tokyo Imperial University in 1948, but never practiced medicine. Abe is famous for his often absurdist and dystopian fiction, which is usually narrated in an objective lucid style. He received the Akutagawa Prize in 1951 for *The Crime of S. Karma* (S. Karuma-shi no hanzai) and the Yomiuri Prize in 1962 for *The Woman in the Dunes* (Suna no onna). The film-version of the latter (directed by Teshigahara Hiroshi) was awarded the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Other works include *Inter-Ice Age 4* (Daiyon kanpyôki, 1958), *The Face of Another* (Tanin no kao, 1964), *The Ruined Map* (Moetsukita chizu, 1967), *The Boxman* (Hako otoko, 1973), *Secret Rendezvous* (Mikkai, 1977), and *The Ark Sakura* (Hakobune Sakura-maru, 1984). He directed his own theatre company in Tokyo, for which he wrote several plays.

Akutagawa Ryûnosuke (1892-1927) Famous as writer of short stories in a distinctive ironic style, often located in premodern times.

Izumi Kyôka (1873-1939) Pre-eminent writer of fantastic fiction, often involving ghosts and demonic females. Napier calls him "the greatest of twentieth century Japanese fantasists" (Napier 1996:240).

Kanai Mieko (1947-) Born in Takasaki, Gumma Prefecture. Her first collection of fiction, *Love Life* (Ai no seikatsu) was published in 1968 and the same year she was awarded a prize for her collection of poems, *The House of Madame Juju* (Madamu Juju no ie). She has published several volumes of short stories, novels, poetry and essays.

Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) Born in Ibaraki outside Osaka. An orphan in infancy, he was brought up by his grandparents, who also died while he was a child. He graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1924 and participated in the forming of the New Perceptionalists (Shinkankaku-ha), a modernist literary group. He combines lyricism and a poetic feeling for nature with a particular sensitivity to the morbid. Purity, loneliness and beauty are recurrent themes. His novels include *The Izu Dancer* (Izu no odoriko, 1926), *Snow Country* (1935-37, 48, Yukiguni), *The Master of Go* (Meijin, 1942-54), *Thousand Cranes* (Senbazuru, 1949-51), *The Sound of the Mountain* (Yama no oto, 1949-54), *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* (Nemureru bijo, 1960-1), and *The Old Capital* (1961-62, Koto). He was also a prolific writer of short stories, including many extremely short "palm-of-the-hand stories" (Te no hira no shôsetsu). He received the Nobel Prize for Literature 1968.

Mishima Yukio (1925-70) Flamboyant writer of great international reputation. His works include *Confessions of a Mask* (*Kamen no kokuhaku*, 1949), *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (*Kinkakuji*, 1956), and the great tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility* (*Hôjô no umi*, 1965-71). He committed ritual suicide after a failed attempt to induce the Self-defence forces to a coup d'État.

Miyazaki Hayao (1941-) Born in Tokyo. Manga-artist who established Studio Ghibli, where he has created several celebrated anime (animated movies) including *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushika*, 1984), *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (*Tenkû no shiro rapyuta*, 1986), *My neighbor Totoro* (*Tonari no Totoro*, 1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majo no takkyûbin*, 1989), *Princess Mononoke* (*Mononoke hime*, 1997), and most recently *Spirited away* (*Sen to chihiro no kamikakushi*, 2001).

Murakami Haruki (1949-) Born in Kyoto and grew up in Kôbe. He studied Greek drama at Waseda University. Disappointed with the failure of the radical student movement, he opened a jazz café in Tokyo in the 70s. His style is marked by a distinct lightness, understatement and simplicity. He made his debut with *Hear the Wind Sing* (*Kaze no uta wo kike*, 1979), and went on to write *Pinball 1973* (*1973 nen no pinbôru*, 1980), *A Wild Sheep Chase* (*Hitsuji o meguru bôken*, 1982), *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (*Sekai no owari to hâdoboירוdo wandârando*, 1985), *Norwegian Wood* (*Noruei no mori*, 1987), *Dance Dance Dance* (*Dansu dansu dansu*, 1988), and *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (*Kokkyô no minami, Taiyô no nishi*, 1992). After a sojourn in the US he returned to Japan to write *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (*Nejimakidori kuronikuru*, 1994-5), *Sputnik Sweetheart* (*Supûtoniku no koibito*, 1999), *All God's Children Dance* (*Kami no ko wa minna odoru*, 2000). He has also written two non-fiction accounts of the Tokyo subway gas attack *Underground* (*Andôguraundo*, 1997) and *At the Promised Place* (*Yakusoku sareta basho de*, 1998) *and translated works of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Raymond Carver, among others, into Japanese.*

Murakami Ryû (1952-) Grew up in Sasebo, where he played drums for a rock group and participated in a barricading of his high school in 1969. He was awarded the prestigious Akutagawa Prize in 1976 for his debut novel *Almost Transparent Blue* (*Kagirinaku tômei ni chikai burû*) written during his years at Musashino College of Art in Tokyo. Other works include *War Will Start on the Other Side of the Sea* (*Umi no mukô de sensô ga hajimaru*, 1977), *Coinlocker Babies* (*Koinrokkâ beibîzu*, 1980), *Sixty-Nine* (*Shikkusutei nain*, 1984), *Ibiza* (*Ibisa*, 1989-91), *The World Five Minutes After* (*Gofungo no sekai*, 1994), *Piasshingu* (*Piercing*, 1994), *Love & Pop* (*Rabu & Poppu*, 1996), and *Exodus to the Land of Hope* (*Kibô no kuni no ekusodasu*, 2000). He has also directed several of his own movies (including *Topaz: Tokyo Decadence and Kyoko*), hosted a TV talk show, and written several TV-drama series.

Natsume Sôseki (1876-1916) Regarded by many as the greatest writer of the Meiji period. He began writing late in life and his major novels comprise a dozen works written in the final decade of his life. Beginning with playful and humorous novels like *I am a Cat* (*Wagahai wa neko de aru*, 1905-6) and *Little Master* (*Botchan*, 1906), his novels steadily grew darker and more realistic: *Pillow of Grass* (*Kusamakura*, 1906), *Autumn Wind* (*Nowaki*, 1907), *Wild Poppy* (*Gubijinsô*, 1907), *Sanshirô* (1908), *And Then* (*Sorekara*, 1909), *The Gate* (*Mon*, 1910). His last three works portray estrangement, loneliness and difficulty of communication with great psychological insight: *The Wayfarer* (*Kôjin*, 1912-3), *Kokoro* (1914), and the unfinished *Light and Darkness* (*Meian*, 1916). He also wrote the autobiographical *Grass on the Wayside* (*Michikusa*, 1915) and two substantial critical works, *A Theory of Literature* (*Bungakuron*, 1907) and *Literary Criticism* (*Bungaku hyôron*, 1909).

Okazaki Kyôko (1963-) Famous for manga such as *River's Edge* (*Ribâzu ejji*, 1993) and *UNTITLED* (1998), her last work so far. She has been in coma since a tragic car-accident 1996.

Œ Kenzaburô (1935-) Born in a village on Shikoku. He studied French literature at Tokyo University and won the Akutagawa Prize in 1958 for *The Catch* (*Shiiku*, 1958). He spent much of the 60s in Paris, where he met Sartre who became a major influence. Like Abe his style deliberately breaks with Japanese tradition, but where Abe's style is lucid and objective, Œ distorts syntax, intentionally creating an "ugly" prose. His writing took a decisive turn when his first son was born in 1963 with cerebral hernia, the subject of *A Personal Matter* (*Kojinteki na taiken*, 1964). His masterpiece is *The Silent Cry* (*Man'en gannen no futtobôru*, 1967). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1994 and the same year declined the Imperial Order of Culture. Finishing *The Burning Green Tree* (*Moeagaru midori no ki*, 1992-5), he declared he would stop writing fiction.

Œtomo Katsuhiro (1955-) Manga-artist, creator of *Akira*, which was serialized 1982-90 and made into a blockbuster anime (animated movie) in 1989.

Shimada Masahiko (1961-) Born in Tokyo. He majored in Russian at the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages and made his debut with *A Divertimento for Gentle Leftists* (*Yasashii sayoku no tame no kiyûkyoku*) in 1983. His prolific publications include *Music for a Somnambulist Kingdom* (*Muyû ôkoku no tame no ongaku*, 1984), *Dream Messenger* (*Yumetsukai*, 1989), and *Rococo City* (*Rokoko-chô*, 1990). He has also written and produced plays, and appeared in several plays himself.

Shôno Yoriko (1956-) Born in Mie Prefecture. She made her literary debut with *Paradise* (*Gokuraku*) in 1981 shortly after graduation from Ritsumei University with a degree in law. Her works include *Doing Nothing* (*Nanimo shite inai*,

1991), Haruchi, Ise City (Ise-shi, Haruchi, 1991), Timeslip Industrial Complex (Taimusurippu konbinâto, 1994), Shaman of the Sun (Taiyô no miko, 1995), and A Mother Evolves (Haha no hattatsu, 1996).

Takahashi Rumiko (1957-) Born in Niigata Prefecture. One of the first successful female manga artists. Urusei yatsura is a so-called gyagu-manga (a "gag" or comic manga) first serialized in 1978. Ranma H has sold millions of copies around the world.

Tanizaki Jun/Eichirô (1886-1965) Born in Tokyo, where his father owned a printing establishment. He studied at the Tokyo Imperial University and lived in Tokyo until the great earthquake of 1923, when he moved to the Kansai Region around Osaka and Kyoto. Here his writing took a new turn as he was inspired to return to Japanese tradition. His output includes Some Prefer Nettles (Tade kû mushi, 1928-9), Manji (Quicksand, 1928-30), The Makioka Sisters (Sasameyuki, 1943-8), The Key (Kagi, 1965), Diary of an Old Man (Fûten rôjin nikki, 1961-2) and modern versions of the classic Tale of Genji (1941, 1954, and 1965).

Tsuge Yoshiharu (1937-) Born in Tokyo. He began working a gilding factory before becoming a manga artist, publishing his first work in Garo in 1962. Works like The Red Flower (Akai hana, 1967), The Screw Ceremony (Nejishiki, 1968), The Master of Genshenkan (Genshenkan shujin, 1968) and The Incompetent (Munô no hito, 1985) have become classic. Several of his manga were subsequently made into films.

Tsushima Yûko (1947-) Born in Tokyo as the daughter of the novelist Dazai Osamu, who committed suicide when she was one year old. Her heroines are often single women with a strong sense of independence. She is herself a single mother with two children. Her works include Child of Fortune (Chôji, 1978), Territory of Light (Hikari no ryôbun, 1979), Woman Running in the Mountains (Yama o hashiru onna, 1980), and On the Banks of the River of Fire (Hi no kawa no hotori de, 1983). She has received several literary awards.

Yoshimoto Banana (1964-) Born the daughter of the writer and prominent intellectual Yoshimoto Takaaki. She is the author of several best-selling novels, including Kitchen (Kitchin, 1987), Tsugumi (Tugumi, 1989), N.P. (1990), Lizard (Tokage, 1993) and Amrita (1994). Banana is a pen name which she claims was inspired by a flowering banana plant in a restaurant where she worked as a part-time waitress.

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