

**Memories of Violence and Wartime Discourse: A Study of Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* and Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry***

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**Abstract:** Propaganda has the power to incite violence by spreading discourse that sows seeds of discrimination, division, hatred and feelings of superiority based on race, gender and other factors, thus disturbing social harmony not only in the present time but for subsequent generations. During World War II, the Japanese used war propaganda to garner support, inciting such extreme emotions that suicide became widely prevalent among defeated soldiers on the battlefield. The Japanese propaganda was so persuasive that the war witnessed the phenomenon of Kamikaze pilots and one of the bloodiest battles in history: The Battle of Okinawa between the Allied forces and Japan. This also impacted the civilians who were indoctrinated with a nationalistic ideology based on racial and other grounds. Such an ideology sees a reappearance in Japanese society even today, continuing to spread thinking which can turn violent with the presence of stimulus.

The paper seeks to analyse the perpetuation and transformation of this "memory of violence" in contemporary Japan through the lens of contemporary literature. Kenzaburō Ōe's *The Silent Cry* (1967) and Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994), which are considered representative texts of contemporary Japan, will be analysed for this purpose. The study will explore how these narratives embody and perpetuate the memory of violence fostered by wartime discourse and investigate any evolution in the collective memory of this violent past towards peace or healing. This paper is based on an ongoing doctoral thesis.

**Keywords:** Wartime Discourse, Healing Discourse, Literary Discourse, Mnemonic Politics, Ways of Remembering, Collective Memory.

## **Introduction**

Memories can influence the direction of the future, so a critical look is needed to understand how they influence the individual and the collective. Memories, particularly those of violence, can influence our perception of reality, bringing back feelings of anger and resentment and/or other ideas and beliefs that legitimise violence. The influences that spread through and are countered by literature often remain unacknowledged, yet they have a significant impact on people's actions. Looking back, literature, with its clear-sightedness and wisdom, can reflect upon and alter societal discourse, countering the influence of propaganda such as wartime discourse and promoting a healing discourse concerning past traumatic events. The paper researches the way memories of violence operate within the works of Oe's *The Silent Cry* and Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Whether they revisit wartime propagandistic discourse or if the literature transforms in any way what the memories mean, how they are related and what the change signifies for the discourse.

## **The Silent Cry Analysis**

The novel *The Silent Cry* is set against a backdrop of political unrest during the transition period of 1960s Japan. The novel is a story about two brothers, Takashi and Mitsusaburo Nedokoro (Mitsu), who reunite after a long time and return to their home village together. This return also takes them back to the influences of the past. One important event is a riot in 1860 in their home village, which was organised by their great-grandfather's younger brother. Other violent events, such as the suicide of their younger sister death of their other family members like their brother S, who was killed by Koreans in retaliation for his participation in a raid which killed a Korean community member during wartime Japan, are also recalled and exert their influence on Takashi. Mitsu, a professor who wishes to distance himself from the past, is troubled by different demons instead, such as his friend's bizarre suicide, the birth of his disabled son and his wife Natsumi's growing alcoholism. Upon their return to their village, they wish to sell their remaining land to a Korean businessman, a powerful man in the village who owns a supermarket and much of the resources in the village in comparison to the disparate state of the rest of the villagers. The Korean supermarket owner is referred to as 'The

Emperor', an ironic title given by the villagers, implying his status as a slave brought to the village during wartime Japan.

The brothers Takashi stand antithesis to each other and can be analysed within the broader context of this social and historical backdrop. In the novel, Takashi represents the past—be it wartime Japan or riot of 1860—where violence was revered. Mitsu, on the other hand, represents post-war Japan, where the Japanese adopted a passive stance and renounced violence. The ongoing tug of war between Mitsu and Takashi in the novel symbolises the struggle between the influences of the past and the present.

Takashi seeks to construct himself as a man of violence, and to achieve this, he reconstructs his memories of the past. His memories, or rather the way he chooses to interpret his past, play a pivotal role in his self-fashioning as a man of violence, which in turn influences the villagers, inciting them to violence.

Takashi is driven by both personal and societal reasons to cultivate such a self-image and to achieve this, so he modifies his own memories. Sociocultural forces exert their influence on Takashi's memories in a phenomenon described by Assmann as 'cultural remembering'. J. Assmann comments, "When 'cultural remembering' is conceived of as an individual act, when the focus is on the shaping force that sociocultural surroundings exert on organic memory - that is, when we speak of 'memory as a phenomenon of culture' (170)." The phenomenon observed here is how sociocultural environments, past and present, exert influence on Takashi's organic memory, whether consciously or unconsciously. The surrounding environment of Takashi's childhood, i.e. during wartime Japan and the immediate post-war years, and the socio-cultural environment of his time period i.e. 1960s, is a crucial factor which influences the way he chooses to form his autobiographical memory in adulthood. Takashi, by participating in socially legitimised and authenticated acts of violence, also wishes to create a screen memory behind which to hide his guilt over having an incestuous relationship with his sister, which ultimately leads to her suicide. Moreover, he also seeks redemption through the inevitable punishment that follows such acts.

The socio-cultural environment is never directly mentioned in the novel. However, its presence is palpable, especially in the way it propagates and legitimises violence. The mother of Takashi and Mitsu is portrayed as immensely proud of their great-grandfather, who defended their home from a mob during the 1860 riot with a gun. She showed favouritism toward Takashi, seeing in him a reflection of their great-grandfather. Conversely, Mitsu, with his more passive nature, has a much more diminished standing in the family.

On the other hand, in the novel's present setting, the violence is accepted by the villagers with an unspoken consensus. Thus, when Takashi recounts his violent 'memories' of the 1860 riot and his ancestors, glorifying the violence and the assault of women committed by the rioters, no significant question is raised in his audience over the legitimacy of violence, nor is there any concern among them for the plight of the victims. Instead, their discussions revolve around debates over other concerns. At one point, Mitsu avoids any discussion on the topic by saying, "I've no desire to interfere in his propaganda activities" (152). While Natsumi defends Takashi by saying, "There's something essentially alive about him, I feel—he refuses to have preconceived ideas about the rising, or to see it as exclusively depressing, as you do" (149).

The socio-cultural environment which propagates violence is also evident when one of Takashi's close followers, Hoshio, loses faith in him when he overhears him confessing to feeling fear. Towards the end of the novel, Takashi confesses to raping and murdering a young woman. Mitsu questions whether Takashi has manipulated the narrative according to his own desires. However, he remains silent about the victim's plight. Moreover, after Takashi commits suicide, Natsumi, who had an affair with him, reconciles with Mitsu while proclaiming, "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" (272). This statement not only suggests a denial of Takashi's crimes but also suggests the perpetuation of continuing glorification of him, as previously done by Natsumi and others in the village. It further highlights Natsumi's subtle attempt to redefine Mitsu's self-

perception and memories in relation to Takashi, with the violence and the moral and ethical issues regarding it remaining conspicuously unaddressed.

The influence of the environment on memories can be seen in the Nembutsu dance in the Bon festival in the novel. The dance serves as a symbolic remembrance of the nation and village's collective past, ingraining these memories in subsequent generations. Takashi attributes his revised memory, which portrays his brother S as a hero and a leader rather than a war-weary traumatised man, to this dance. The festival revives memories but also shapes the emotions associated with them for Takashi and others, influencing their perception of the past. Takashi later harnesses the dance as a call to arms, aiming to incite a riot in his village, where he depicts Koreans in a derogatory light.

Memory and society also influence each other in other ways where more agency is exhibited by the characters. Takashi's act of remembering has far-reaching consequences for his community, while personally, it helps him achieve status. Both Takashi and Mitsu belong to a prominent household in the village. Their status is reflected during events like the Bon festival, where the Nedokoro family is placed at the centre, and the festival dance finishes in the footsteps of their household. Yet this status does not automatically grant them insider status in the village; it takes Takashi's efforts to take the lead, participating in the village's customs and activities, that he gains their acceptance. On the other hand, Mitsu, who stays out of the village's politics and matters, is perceived as an outsider both by the villagers and by villagers as well, cannot attain the same authenticity for his voice as Takashi.

In Takashi's efforts to gain power, memory is one tool utilised by Takashi. In actuality, Takashi does not possess any significant memories of his brother, S, or the 1860 riot. Instead, he draws upon material from the past to fabricate or fantasise about those memories. He aims to bring the past to the present, transitioning from stored or collective memories to more immediate, actionable ones, using historical events to justify his current violent actions. According to Aleida Assmann, stored memories act like a repository where information from the past can coexist with the present. Functional memory, or what can be likened to "communicative memory", is more dynamic,

characterised by “its relevance to a group, shared values, and its future orientation (Assmann and Assmann 123).” When the past is used for defining the present, often the narrative weaved has singular interpretations of the events, heavily influenced by the intentions and desires of the weaver. Such homogenised memory evokes in the novel in the villagers a feeling of unity and pride while making it easier for Takashi to mobilise the masses for a riot and propagate a divisive agenda.

Takashi stokes enmity among the villagers against the Korean supermarket owner, and he admits to Mitsu that he has his own motivations for doing so. This becomes starkly evident in how the villagers respond to external influences, like the Korean shopkeeper, also called ‘The Emperor’. This can be evidenced by Mitsu’s observation of his housekeeper Jin, “Until yesterday, like most of the valley folk, she’d never so much as hinted that the all-powerful supermarket owner who had wrought such havoc in the valley was a Korean. But now she deliberately stressed the word “Korean,” unhesitatingly broadcasting his nationality as though to emphasize how the looting of the supermarket had reversed the balance of power in one fell swoop (187-188).”

The villagers are also taken in by the profit that such a protest would bring them. This greed is one of the reasons they reject a more rational perspective. As evidenced by Mitsu’s interaction with Jin, who directly his rational thinking, which suggests similar sentiments on the part of villagers. Such inference is further supported by the novel’s frequent depiction of the villagers as a collective group, often sharing similar motivations and rationales. Hence, neither Takashi nor the villagers are simply reflecting their sociocultural environment but are actively using their agency in choosing to propagate or accept respectively the narratives.

The villager’s acceptance of violent narratives may also be influenced by the way Takashi chooses to relate the memories of the past. When Takashi relates the memory of the riot to the villagers, he leaves out graphic details of what the violence caused to the victims. Natsumi tells Mitsu how Takashi related “some amusing episodes’ to the village youth, which involved a description of how the overseers and the local officials in the villages were made to kneel and endure a single blow on the head by the peasants as they went past. Nevertheless, as Mitsu points out, Takashi leaves out

how the mob of peasants was about tens of thousands in number, and the victims had their brains reduced to “broken bean curd in their skulls” (150). Instead, Takashi spins the violent tales in a positive manner, making his audience immune to the violence but still censoring the descriptions within a certain limit so as not to raise the alarm. At one place, Takashi says, “The young men were very brutal, I admit, but in a way, their brutality served to give the ordinary farmers a kind of security (150).”

While things may be unclear for the characters in the novel, Ōe’s narrative style makes them evident to the reader. A lot of things are told in absence, Takashi’s propagandistic narrative is largely absent in the novel as Mitsu avoids Takashi and his activities deliberately. Rather, the presence and impact of propaganda are related indirectly, as exemplified by Jin’s statement: “Everyone feels things have gone to pieces since the Koreans came. They should kill’ em off. (188)” As a result, rather than being swayed by the charismatic personality of Takashi mentioned by the narrator, readers are provided with a more lucid analysis of the ramifications of the character’s actions. The story instead highlights the character study of Takashi, his emotions, motivations, his character nuances.

Other research on the topic attributes Takashi’s way of remembering to a heritage and emotion-based approach (Petznick 13). On the other hand, Mitsu, representing the intellectual elite, has access to historical facts and approaches the past with a history-based approach. (Petznick 13). David Lowenthal, in his book *The History Crusade and the Spoils of History*, differentiates between history and heritage: While history is a factual recounting of past events, heritage is more of a celebration of the past, which may not strictly adhere to factual accuracy. Takashi admits that “I’m not saying my memories tally with the facts,” nor he does he feel the need of being factual. He justifies this with, “... the facts were reworked in visible form through the communal emotions of the people of the valley ... That surely means that I’ve still got roots linking me to the communal sentiments of the valley (123).” The heritage-based approach aims to escape responsibility for past events and take pride in the past. While Mitsu’s approach of simply theorising and talking and not taking any action (Petznick 39) renders him ineffective against an emotional, propaganda-laden approach.

The violent discourse in the novel is not independent in itself but embedded within the wartime discourse of Japan. This is not only due to recurring themes like the glorification of violence and death but also because of the repeated cultural narratives. One could speculate that Takashi's audience, given the historical context, might be more receptive to propaganda due to previous wartime experiences. Other themes such as racial bias against Koreans evidenced in the novel, a lack of empathy for the victims, and the trauma displayed by many characters such as Mitsu and Gii, a hermit in the village, who could have been agents of change but aren't as they themselves are caught up with their own traumas, are also part of a continuation of wartime and its propaganda's impacts.

While Takashi is alive, Mitsu is unable to discredit memories of violence. However, after Takashi's death, new evidence discovered in the hidden attic of their home both authenticated and transformed Takashi's memories of violence. The heroic image of their great-grandfather's younger brother that Takashi held is confirmed. Yet, the intergenerational memory that Takashi and Mitsu held of this figure is redefined. Instead of being remembered for inciting a riot, for Mitsu at least, his great uncle becomes known for his penance, his care for his family, and his role in a non-violent movement.

Memory is a living entity constantly reshaped by new experiences and discoveries. The journey of Mitsu and Takashi underscores the malleability of memory, revealing that it is not fixed but rather dynamic. However, reframing violent memories can lead to growth and a narrative of hope.

### **The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle Analysis**

The novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* addresses Japan's aggressive past in a more direct manner rather than the fictional setting and symbolic reference in *The Silent Cry*. The novel delves into the impact of individual and collective memories of war on the collective consciousness. This impact can be seen in both the generation who do have memories of war and the violence and trauma it involved and the next generation who does not have any such memories but is still impacted by its trauma. As described by Arthur A. Cohen, "...the generation that bears the scar without the wound, sustaining memory without direct experience (2-3)." Eduardo Duran suggests that such historical (collective)



trauma is “not only is the trauma passed on intergenerationally, but it is cumulative (49).” Thomas Hübl, a frequent speaker on collective trauma and collective healing, says, “The consequences of trauma—indeed, the cumulative effects of personal, familial, and historical traumas—seep across communities, regions, lands, and nations...trauma’s legacy weaves and wires our very world, informing how we live in it, how we see it, and how we see and understand one another (18).” This perspective is also shared by the author, who said in an interview, “It’s all there, inside me: Pearl Harbor, Nomonhan, whatever” (Murakami and Kawai 59). Thus, the research and the author’s own words suggest that the collective traumatic pasts are present in the individual psyche and need to be dealt with.

The central character of the novel, Toru Okada, is the archetype of the explorer (Jung) who goes on an external quest to look for his wife Kumiko, who goes missing and on an internal quest which seeks to reflect upon Japan’s imperial past and combat its persisting influence in the present. Toru descends into a well, which serves as a metaphor for exploring Japan's collective unconscious. This act allows him to access a dream world, an arena where he enacts a symbolic struggle to achieve his aims. Toru comments:

Everything was connected in a kind of circle, and the thing in the middle of this circle was the Battle of Nomonhan, Showa, in Manchuria, in Asia, before the war. But why Kumiko and I were being dragged into the middle of this kind of historical karma, I couldn't understand. It was something that had happened long before Kumiko and I were even born.  
(275)

The characters who help Toru in his quest have been impacted by violence and its resulting trauma in different ways. They relate their memories of violence to Toru and help him realise violence in a more three-dimensional manner. Mr. Honda relates to Toru his memories of war, relating the extreme thirst he and his comrades faced in the Battle of Nomonhan. Lieutenant Mamiya also relates to Toru his harrowing experiences: witnessing a person being skinned and spending time trapped at the bottom of a well. He also relates his violent memories of the labour camp in Russia. Creta Kano

relates to Toru her experience of different types of physical pain, prostitution and being raped. Through Nutmeg and Cinnamon, Toru gets to know the traumatic experiences of a vet in China. As the plot progresses, Toru gets to personally experience some of these memories in real life or in his dreams, such as experiences of hunger, thirst, the feeling of being prostituted, witnessing the skinning of a person and so on. An overview of these tales told to Toru tells us how Japan's experiences in war have been related from two perspectives: perpetrator and victim point of view. These perspectives encompass Japan's atrocities against China, its exploitation of its own soldiers, and the suffering of the Japanese under Russia. This suggests that Toru's personal experience of these memories is a journey towards understanding Japan's imperial past from all perspectives.

Over the course of the events, Toru's knowledge and understanding of violence at the collective and individual levels undergoes a change. His semantic memories (general and specialised knowledge of the world) are converted into episodic memories (individually experienced). While initially, Mr. Honda's memories of violence only evoke fascination and interest in Toru, which suggests that violence and its impact aren't sufficiently understood by him. As Toru is increasingly exposed to violent memories, particularly after his act of violently beating someone with a bat, he is able to experience nightmares and discomfiture, something that signals a growing understanding on his part. The progression of events in the novel supports this interpretation. After experiencing this discomfort, Toru is able to more deeply immerse himself in his dream world, which symbolically suggests a deeper engagement with Japan's collective consciousness. He is also able to grasp the desire for violence within himself, transforming him from a passive person to someone capable of committing violence.

It is suggested in the novel that Toru's experiences, both inside the well and outside, which mirror the tales of various characters, endow him with healing powers and psychic abilities. These abilities enable him to enter the dream world where a symbolic conflict between him and Noboru takes place, representing the clash of forces shaping Japan's destiny. This bridge between the past and

present within Toru might not have been forged without his encounters with the violent memories of various characters.

Another perspective is explored in the novel through a group of characters exhibiting traumatised behaviour but with no discernible cause. Instead, this group's suffering can only be originated in collective trauma. However, they have no memories to associate their trauma with. Hence, the construction of fabricating memories becomes essential for making sense of the culture that gave rise to their trauma.

For example, Cinnamon, who seems to have a deeper, almost spiritual, understanding of traumas that affected his grandfather and father, suddenly stops speaking one day. This seems to be triggered by a bizarre dream, leading to a 'split' within him. This split represents trauma, a recurring symptom described by many characters in the story. In his dream, he witnesses a man resembling his father bury a living heart underneath their garden tree. Later, Cinnamon's father is abruptly murdered, having previously exhibited signs of trauma—specifically, unexplained detachment and distance. Cinnamon's dream turns out to be a prophecy. His dream also signifies his deep connection with his father's trauma.

Cinnamon had been fed fabricated stories about his grandfather since birth, leading him to develop more consciousness of the past. He realises, like his mother, Nutmeg, that rather than knowing what actually happened, what is more crucial is understanding what could have happened. This can be interpreted to mean that the knowledge and understanding gained through the process of storytelling is more important than the factual details of the past. Consequently, both Nutmeg and Cinnamon create fabricated memories of their ancestral history, perhaps as a way to comprehend the influences that continue to affect them. Their fabricated memories are violent and traumatic, recounting possible narratives of what could have happened to Nutmeg's father or Cinnamon's grandfather. Their actions showcase the necessity of remembering memories of violence in our individual or collective past in order to heal from it.

Their profound understanding of the need for healing collective consciousness is reflected in their actions. Both are deeply involved in the healing processes of numerous women, emphasising their commitment to mending the societal fabric. Similar to Toru, their deeds can be viewed as symbolic gestures aimed at healing the collective feminine psyche of Japan, which has been deeply scarred by historical traumas.

The theme of gender also offers an important critique of the novel. While female characters guide Toru towards a world of ever-increasing violence, these women themselves bear traumas that cannot be solely attributed to their personal histories. Intriguingly, their fears and behavioural tendencies resonate with the harsh realities faced by Japanese women during wartime—experiences marked by exploitation, assault, and other atrocities. This alignment draws a poignant parallel between the individual and national narrative, suggesting that the feminisation of the nation might also be a reflection of Japan's wartime defeat and subsequent vulnerabilities.

May Kasahara, a teenage neighbour of Toru, is captivated by the process leading to death and harbours fears of being raped. May exhibits this peculiar behaviour early on, which culminates in the demise of her boyfriend. Moreover, her fears of rape lack any discernible root cause. This conundrum is expressed by May when she says, “Like when something happens, whether it’s a big event that affects the whole of society or something small and personal, people talk about it like,…” “A is like this, so that is why B happened.” I mean, that doesn’t explain anything...but maybe if you take the path my life has followed as an example and really think about it, you can see it has had nothing about it that you could call “consistency”... I cannot explain it (Pg. 460).” Also, simultaneously, as Toru confronts Noboru in a dream and emerges victorious yet wounded, May, who sometimes pretends to be Kumiko to herself, bathes herself in the moonlight in what seems to be a purification ritual. She then breaks into tears, her shadow mirroring her as if having achieved catharsis. Symbolically, her actions align with the conclusion of Toru's battle against Noboru in his quest to rescue Kumiko, suggesting that Toru has successfully achieved his aims for both Japan and Kumiko. This

interpretation also underscores the novel's theme: just as individual trauma is deeply intertwined with collective trauma, individual healing is deeply intertwined with collective healing and vice versa.

Another character, Creta Kano, who suffers from unexplained pain most of her life, she turns to prostitution upon recovery — a choice that seems to her 'natural and bearable', especially after her suicide attempt. Toru plays a pivotal role in Creta's healing process by actively listening to her story. This act of listening is intertwined with a series of sexual encounters between them, in dreams as she, being a prostitute of the mind, has "things pass through her" and in the real world so that she may forget the feeling of being defiled by Noboru. This also facilitates, in some manner, a psychic connection between Toru and Kumiko, as Creta is a mirror image of Kumiko, bearing a striking resemblance to Kumiko from the neck down, and she also mirrors to some extent Kumiko's past and represents alternate future self. Afterwards, Creta relocates to Hiroshima, the site of the atomic bombing, as a final sanctuary for resolving the conflict within her psyche. Creta's journey embodies both the individual and collective paths toward healing, emphasising the importance of understanding and revisiting the past, being heard, and forging connections with others.

The novel is also filled with various imagery, themes and archetypes which harken back to the Japanese wartime propaganda and Japanese violence culture. One such theme is the positive portrayal of violence. Although the novel problematises violence by representing 'good' violence and 'bad' violence, the very notion that violence can be good and crucial for transformation and healing is problematic. Moreover, from readers' interpretative perspectives, the distinction made by the author may be more ambiguous. In the novel, bad violence is identified through dark ambience, and its perpetrators are stereotyped for their malevolence. 'Bad' violence is exemplified by the characters of Ushikawa and Noboru. Ushikawa, who is described as very untidy and the 'ugliest man I have ever seen,' has a history of physically abusing his wife and children. His actions, which include threats and bullying to achieve his goals, represent a form of 'bad' violence. Noboru also exercises 'bad' violence through the use of money, power, and manipulation to impose his will on others and to have others willingly commit violent acts on his behalf. Toru also commits bad violence when he beats up a

person with a bat. This act can be identified as bad by the dark atmosphere of the scene during and immediately after the action. However, overall, Toru is depicted as committing 'good' violence. For example, beating up Noboru in the dream world; in a way, by committing this act, he becomes a hero in his internal quest to rescue Japan's consciousness from the clutches of corrupt politicians and his external quest to save a damsel in distress, i.e. his wife, Kumiko.

Another theme present in the text is the treatment of death and suicide, which continues the narrative of Japanese wartime propaganda and other cultural narratives. During the war, suicide was glorified among soldiers and civilians. While during war, soldiers were encouraged to commit suicide by their superiors as the war progressed if they faced defeat in battle. The government propaganda described the soldier's suicide as "gyokusai", meaning shattering like a jewel. On the other hand, for civilians, the defeat of Japan in the war was the impetus for many suicides. The participation by the populace in the self-destructive phenomenon can be explained by many cultural narratives weaved around the idea and the resulting increased social acceptance of the act.

Murakami, through the war tales of Mr. Honda, exposes how death was normalised among soldiers, and he also identifies the actors responsible for this normalisation. This critique of the casual treatment of soldiers' deaths by Japanese authorities is crucial for holding the responsible accountable and for resisting the glorification of such deaths in Japanese popular culture. However, the same critique is not extended to the death by suicide of civilians. Creta Kano's suicide attempt is normalised by her, and Toru also reacts not to her suicide attempt but to her decision to be a prostitute.

Many other suicides are prevalent in the novel. In Chapter 7 of Book 3, "The Mystery of the Hanging House", a tabloid reports the history of a particular house, reporting how it has been the site of numerous suicides by its residents. The treatment of the topic in the report is sensationalised and framed as mere gossip. Indeed, these incidents are discussed in other chapters as well, where the matter is not given much attention except as interesting factual information. Toru's uncle comments on one suicide, "...You realise, of course, that to die that way, you have to be pretty damned determined (118)."

Death is also represented in a more spiritual manner or in a way that lessens its finality. Mr. Honda's advice is shown to have a subconscious influence on Toru, who says, "Dying is the only way/For you to float free:/Nomonhan" (52). After May Kasahara traps Toru in a well, she asks him to think about death, commenting, "we need death to make us evolve...Death is this huge, bright thing, and the bigger and brighter it is, the more we have to drive ourselves crazy thinking about things (258)." Such comments indicate towards beautification of both suicide and death, a feature of Japanese violence culture. However, the contrast in intensity of death fantasy in characters pre-war and post-war is also visible, which makes it possible for a knowledgeable person of Japanese history to take cognisance of the shift. The veterinary doctor, whose life story is fabricated by his daughter and his grandson, is described as contemplating, "The doctor loved his wife and child. ... For them he would have gladly given up his life. Indeed, he had often imagined doing so, and the deaths he had endured for them in his mind seemed the sweetest deaths imaginable" (510 ).

In the novel, the presence of wartime discourse suggests that past ideologies and beliefs can persistently echo, threatening to resurface and potentially be exploited in the future if left unaddressed and unchallenged. To critically engage with such wartime/violence narratives, it is imperative to confront memories of violent pasts, facilitating healing from the deep-seated traumas they engender. Through his exploration of Japan's wartime history from both perpetrator and victim points of view, Murakami addresses Japan's collective trauma and propagates a more healing discourse.

## **Conclusion**

The examination of the two texts underscores the potent influence of mnemonic politics. Such politics, rooted in the manipulation or selective remembrance of past events, can perpetuate violence and give rise to the recurrence of violent narratives. For example, in *The Silent Cry*, Takashi selectively recalls and modifies memories related to the violence surrounding the death of his brother S and the 1860 riot for the express purpose of inciting a riot. On the other hand, in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami delves into the comprehensive history of Japan during World War II. This exploration counters the selective remembrance of the past encouraged by post-war Japanese leaders,

exemplifying another facet of mnemonic politics wherein selective memory is strategically propagated.

Yet, paradoxically, memory also serves a vital purpose in society. A critical look at memory is needed for introspection, allowing one to confront individual and collective responsibilities and culpability. Acknowledging and confronting the collective memories, especially the violent and traumatic ones, but in a more empathetic and critical way can heal and help build a more peaceful society. The dual nature of memory—as both a catalyst for conflict and a tool for healing—underscores its indelible influence on human behaviour and actions.

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