

**„Die Wüste lebt.“ – Transgenerational vermittelte Kriegs-/Beziehungstraumata und das
Durcharbeiten in der Literatur der zweiten Generation bei
Haruki Murakamis Roman *Gefährliche Geliebte*.
(Harald Weilnböck)**

Abstract:

The analysis of Murakami's *South of the border, west of the sun* reconstructs how the novel presents its narrator and protagonist Hajime as a personality which in his biographical development, present situation, and style of (inter-) action quite typically reflects a kind of person, who – born in Japan shortly after the World War – struggles with what has been unconsciously handed down to him as 'trans-generational psycho-traumatic effect' by his parents who suffered from and/or were implicated in war action. While Hajime after what may be called a mildly unhappy, non-dramatic, but stable and in the end economically successful biography, in his thirties arrived at a point where he feels the urge to think about and recounts his life history, his 'second-generation' biographical situation becomes increasingly discernible.

But not only is this particular biographical situation depicted in the novel. Most importantly, it is, as it were, staged and put on scene via the novel's particular mode of narration, so that 'being second generation' is directly acted-out in the mediated author-text-reader relationship. This means that the narrator – and in large part also the author's focalization of the text – act like trans-generationally traumatized persons act when narrating stories. As a result the reader is offered a particular opportunity to enter in a mental transference relationship with the narrative and thus engage in analogous processes of trauma defense and working through. The high degree of fascination which Murakami's novels have exerted internationally may be attributed to this trauma-specific transference effect.

Reconstructive analysis picks up on different observations both on the allegoric/metaphoric and on the literal level of narration. It identifies screen memories, dissociative phenomena of mental defense, of de-realization, interactional dynamics of deeply internalized guilt feelings on the borderline level, and the dissociative buttressing of family secrets. Mechanisms of an unconsciously trauma-compensatory choice of relationship partners go along with concretistic enactments of trans-generationally conveyed experiences from the World War, which in turn generates an enormous risk for the second generation protagonist's biographies and the wellbeing of their families and children. The novel – intuitively and almost unwittingly – depicts these psycho-dynamic phenomena partly even on the level of their quasi-psychotic manifestations. However, it also conveys the tremendous capacity of sublimation and creativity which the novel's second generation protagonists possess. Contrary to the more seriously affected and tragic characters of the plot, the narrator Hajime in particular shows how the dynamic of his rich and creative fantasies allows him to develop an increasingly conscious

access to his trans-generationally internalized mechanisms of nameless misery and unleash his self-therapeutic and developmental potentials.

The narrator's therapeutic work of fantasizing – in which he intuitively performs elements of what is known as 'imaginative trauma therapy' – does, however, confront a particular challenge when visions about an overwhelmingly disheartening 'atomic desert' appear with an almost invincible strength. This notwithstanding, Hajime begins to reclaim even this utmost desert of trans-generationally induced suicidal depression and transforms it into the fruitful grounds of biographical memory and personal healing. All this is at work – almost secretly – in a novel which had been called a trivial love or mystery novel more than once. It is, thus, hardly surprising that the novel's explosive transference dynamic had effects in Germany, too, where, for instance, it resulted in the fact that Marcel Reich-Ranicki's famous *Literary Critics' Quartet* broke off in a scandalous clash while discussing Murakami's novel.