

## Literature's Postmodern Condition: Representing the Postmodern in the Translated Novel



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***Declaration***

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or part, by me or another person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

*Dedication*

To Kafka Tamura for sending me into this metaphysical storm

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## Abstract

This thesis offers a close reading of some of the texts of Haruki Murakami through a postmodern lens, offering a new perspective on how the Japanese writer corroborates Lyotard's notion of the 'Postmodern Condition' and in turn offers a new postmodern space that is neither exclusively Anglo-European or Asian, but encompasses both.

Through exploration of both Eastern and Western postmodern thought, this thesis traces where Murakami, as a translated writer, can be conceptually situated, without subjecting him to a western orientalist prejudice. It aims to show that postmodernity cannot be pinpointed to either a specific spatial or temporal location, but is a paradigm that evolves in, and impacts on, all first world societies.

Analysis of Murakami's postmodern perspectives on identity, connection, and working life offers a more substantial understanding of a first world postmodern mood which is central to his writing. Representation of the postmodern female with Murakami's work is also examined, and suggests how feminism and postmodernism interact and mutually inform each other's perspectives.

Finally a comprehensive comparison with Franz Kafka details how, despite their



geographical and chronological differences, both writers reinforce elements of Lyotard's notion of the coexistence of modernism and postmodernism. In conclusion, this thesis attempts to deepen understanding of Murakami and of postmodernism as an intellectual and cultural phenomenon

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## Introduction

A heart that's full up like a landfill, a job that slowly kills you, bruises that won't heal. You look so tired-unhappy, bring down the government, they don't, they don't speak for us. I'll take a quiet life, a handshake of carbon monoxide, with no alarms and no surprises, no alarms and no surprises, no alarms and no surprises, Silence, silence. (Radiohead 'No Surprises')

It seems fitting that the protagonists of Haruki Murakami's postmodern worlds listen to Radiohead as they face up to the crises of their generation, searching for identity, purpose and connection in a world full of mirrors and misrepresentations. The character Kafka, from *Kafka on the Shore*, chose to bring Radiohead's postmodern masterpiece 'Kid A' with him when he ran away from home, and he tells the reader that he listens to it 'over and over' (Murakami 2005, p.394). The band, like Murakami, seems to have captured the mood of a generation, which is one of apathy, loneliness and a wish to escape. Their lyrics, like his imaginative prose, captured the mood of postmodernity, one of apathy, isolation and a wish to escape.

The lives of Murakami's anti-heroes are 'full up like a landfill' with the material needs

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of postmodern commodity fetishism, their jobs are activities which they do not enjoy, and they lack a connection with any form of government, as they are fearful and paranoid about its motives. Murakami's characters want to live in a world of no alarms and no surprises; they crave a world of expected experiences, mapped out for them as consumers of the system. They are themselves totally disengaged, until the journeys they are forced to undertake compel them to look at the lives they have lived, and thence to connect and interact with both the system, and with their fellow human beings. This proves to be the catalyst for a new sense of deciding how they now wish to deal with the society in which they were, up to then, only apathetically a member. The actual journeys they undertake are a motif for the metaphysical and subconscious journey which they must undertake in order to reengage with society and with others

Mapping that sense of marginalization, which is caused by a lack of a clear identity and an inability to connect with a broader social context, the works of Japanese author Haruki Murakami capture the postmodern condition of his readers. The fragmented stories, which intertwine with broken parental relationships, historical events, the surreal and the search for belonging, fictionally embody the theories of Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Linda Hutcheon and Jean-François Lyotard.

## *Introduction*

In this thesis, I aim to analyse the translated postmodern novels of Murakami. I intend to show how his writing exemplifies the ideals of postmodernism through the journeys taken by his fragmented anti-heroes, as well as developing a comparative analysis between his work and the writings of Franz Kafka, a significant influence on Murakami. Comparisons between Murakami and Kafka also reinforce Lyotard's notion that postmodernism is not just a late capitalist concept, but rather one that existed during the modernist era. The similarity between these two translated writers underpins this thesis, and helps to illuminate contemporary ideas about postmodernism. The role of the postmodern female within his novels will also be examined, showing how postmodernist literature has, albeit quite slowly, incorporated the idea of a strong role for the female. Despite the death of the metanarrative, patriarchy still manages to remain a significant part of contemporary society. I will map how the female has moved from the realm of the subaltern into a speaking, contributing protagonist. The argument will be advanced through the following five chapters.

Chapter 1, 'Chasing the Postmodern Condition', explores the effect of postmodernity in Japan, in comparison to Europe. I intend to use the works of Murakami to show that the postmodern paradigm of Baudrillard's theory is an international phenomenon. I will also

consider Lyotard's definition of the Postmodern Condition, a seminal explanation of the postmodern in popular culture, as an analytical lens in relation to the novels. Using the central protagonists of the five main novels I have chosen: *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, *Kafka on the Shore*, and *1Q84*, I intend to define how these characters personify the main elements of what I will classify as the postmodern.

Following a composite definition of postmodernity, taken from the key works of Jameson, Baudrillard, Hutcheon and Lyotard, I will show how Murakami's anti-heroes emulate the major concerns of postmodernism by identifying how their actions, struggles, and journeys for identity and connection are filled with the 'misery of happiness' (Jameson 1991, p.280), and how they help to create the 'gigantic simulacrum' (Baudrillard 1994, p.6):

It is obvious that there are certain elements in Murakami's works which are generally noted to be expressive of a postmodern cultural trend. The transformation of reality into images, the 'used-up-ness' of image linked with the notion of the pastiche, the dominance of nostalgia themes and of historical amnesia all of which we find in Jameson's description of the postmodern. (Ellis 1995, p.146)

While Ellis calls postmodernism a 'cultural trend', I will argue that postmodernism is an ideological reaction to capitalism, and also a prevailing mood that existed during the modernist era. The characters of Murakami's worlds are a by-product of the system, which

forces them to be consumers, and to consume, while at the same time transforming them into commodities of the system.

I will then analyse Japan and postmodernity, and explain how Murakami's fractured protagonists work to forge an identity while 'distancing themselves from all extreme rationalisation, emotionality, totalisation and individualisation, favouring instead indifference and detachment' (Fuminobu 2005, p.8):

Postmodernism in Japan [...] can be seen as a periodizing concept whose formal features express the deep logic of a particular social system, rather than a categorizing concept for the description of a particular style. (Sanehide & Ken 1997, p.511)

The idea that happiness can be achieved through consumption in part explains the 'misery of happiness' as described by Jameson, which is something that all these characters experience. They have all the elements of happiness, except for happiness itself. As individuals, they are consumers, and in order to consume they must have a job; however, affection for this job is not important, and relationships are bought and sold without much thought. This postmodern ideology is something that, despite their 80 year difference, characters in both Murakami's and Kafka's books enact through their enforced journeys:

In this realm, disenchantment with rationality, knowledge and power and at the same time a lack of empathic emotion, in other words apathy, all co-exist [...] this is the postmodern utopia/dystopia specifically narrated in some of Murakami Haruki's fiction.



(Fuminobu 2005, p.3)

I also intend to discuss current criticism on Murakami, in both Japan and further afield. I will charter his prose, identifying common themes and motifs which run through his work, such as the search for identity and the real; the frayed relationships with parental figures; the intertwining of historical events and the present, marginalised characters, the surreal, and the ongoing connections with music. This search for the 'real' which they undertake is ultimately fruitless, as the 'real' no longer exists and has been replaced by a simulation of the real, of hyperreality to cite Baudrillard.

For Baudrillard, it is the image, the simulation of the real, the hyperreal, that are the most important aspects of the postmodern. Baudrillard's most explicit theorization of the term 'hyperreality' that defines the postmodern experience is provided in *Simulations*, published in 1983, where he talks about 'the four successive phases of the image.' These phases have to do with the sign or image's distancing from the object of representation, and are enumerated as follows:

it is the reflection of a basic reality  
it masks and perverts a basic reality  
it masks the *absence* of a basic reality  
it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum. (Baudrillard 1994, p.11)

This chapter will also focus on Murakami's 'attempt to reformulate [...] the binary oppositions between totalitarian identification and individual differentiation' (Fuminobu 2005, p.16).

The second chapter, 'The Condition of the Contemporary: Murakami's Postmodern Identity Chronicle', looks at how Murakami has managed to capture the mood of a generation characterised by postmodern ideologies; by a searching for an essence of identity, and a form of belonging; and by a sense of interconnectedness. Born in 1949, Murakami has become a reluctant cult hero both in Japan, and across the globe, detailing the marginalised feelings of his readers through his lost protagonists. Chronicling the fractured voice of the postmodern era, Murakami's work is becoming an important object of study within contemporary literary theory:

Among the various Japanese postmodern novelists, the most important and the most popular is Murakami Haruki [...] on the surface these are all traditional 'seek and find' stories. However, they are all filled with a lyrical but desperate sense of loss. (Sanehide & Ken, 1997, p.513)

This sense of loss, or incompleteness, that the characters experience will be scrutinized through a postmodern lens. This will highlight how Murakami is chronicling a mood that is not just limited to Japan, but is also internationally relevant, as the *ennui* which his novels

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and characters emanate fulfils some aspects of postmodern criteria. The postmodern mood, coupled with postmodern society, has isolated his individuals, leaving them disengaged with society and the people around them. An atmosphere of fragmentation, and lack of fulfilment and apathy has been created through the postmodern plurality which populates his novels and is experienced by his characters. The lack of clear traditional indicators of self and Other and the need to consume in order to belong has left the characters laodicean towards life.

The breakdown of binary oppositions, and concrete categorisations, has left the characters unable to find stability, both consciously and subconsciously. They must contend with Baudrillard's simulacra and multi-layered realities when they are forced to undergo their journeys. Murakami's characters are forced to strip back the postmodern chaos and address their own selfhood, returning to Lacan's mirror stage, before reengaging with society and finding some sort of perception of reality within it and others.

I intend to explore how this fractured identity has led to broken relationships with the past, especially in the areas of parental bonds and contemporary relationships. Using the development of the main anti-heroes of Murakami's works, Aomame, Tengo, Kafka, Toru Okada, and the unnamed narrators of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, and *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*

*and The End of The World*, I will show how a better understanding of history would lead to better futures for these characters, while broken ties with parents suggests that postmodernism needs to break from the previous generation in order to understand in what ways to best develop. This is also an idiosyncratic characteristic of postmodernism, which looks to the past, in order to shape and create a new identity based on a version of what has gone before:

What am I always so tense about? Why this desperate struggle just to survive? I shake my head, turn from the window, clear my mind of thoughts of a hundred years away. I'll just think about now [...] Thinking about anything else isn't going to get me anywhere. (Murakami 2005, p.59)

Exploring the relationships of his protagonists with their past, their family, and their own identity, I will show that postmodernity, as enunciated by Murakami, has created an individual who is lost and afraid of confrontation, but who is also searching for the real in a world of simulations.

The whole system becomes weightless; it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum - not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference (Baudrillard 1994, p.6).

Using the postmodern theories of Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard, as well as contemporary Japanese postmodern studies, I will undertake an in-depth investigation into

the connections between Murakami's work and the postmodern condition.

Chapter 3, 'When Work Doesn't Work', analyses how the representation of working life in Murakami's books is a fractured and negative one. It mirrors the protagonists' own relationship with their self-hood. They remain disinterested and detached from their work, feeling no real affiliation with the career which they have chosen. If literature is taken to be a socially symbolic act (Jameson 2002), as Jameson has said, then this conflict between the individual and work needs to be assessed.

In this chapter, I will also appraise Murakami's depiction of employment, analysing how it is portrayed in his novels. For the postmodern individual, work no longer holds the same importance as it did for the modernist, or the Marxists, and with ruptured identities, the role of work as an identifying characteristic becomes in some way problematic. Work no longer represents the workers. Many of his characters also display distrust towards their employers, seeing them as unknown entities and viewing them with scepticism. The disengagement with work, has led to a further fracturing of the employer and employee.

Chapter 4, 'Positioning the Postmodern Female', focuses on how, while woman may hold a position of mystery and intrigue for the postmodern anti-hero, her role within the postmodern novel is a troubled one. Fifteen-year-old Kafka Tamura does not know his

mother, or his adopted sister, but searches for them constantly in his journey to find both himself and inner peace. His strained relationship with his evil father, has forced him to idolise both these women in his life:

Murakami, turns the oedipal complex on its head, as Kafka is sexually pleased by a girl he believes to be his sister, and sleeps with a women he believes is his mother, fulfilling the prophesy of his life. Murakami has said himself that the novel is based on the Greek myth Oedipus the King and 'the relation between incestuous sexual desire and violence is succinctly narrated as Oedipal desire' (Fuminobu 2005, p.56).

The protagonist in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Toru Okada, is left by his wife, Kumiko Okada, who has slept with another man. Kumiko is under the control of her brother and her patriarchal family, while the other main female characters, May Kasahara, Malta Kano, Creta Kano and Nutmeg Akasaka, use their sexuality to entice Toru along his search for the truth. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, neither the male anti-hero nor his female companion are named, but her unusual ears, and her sixth sense stand out, making her both sexually attractive to the protagonist, and also of use in his detective quest. She is not narrated as a full person, but rather as a fragmented representation through her body parts. Sex is also a function for the female in the work of Franz Kafka, with Josef K. sleeping with two women in the course of the novel, and their representation in his work shows little change in the function of the female, despite the development of feminism and postmodernism

from 1925, to Murakami's contemporary works.

Using essays from the collection *Third Wave Feminism* edited by Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford, I intend to show that the representation of women within the postmodern novel is fixated on her role as the Other, the subaltern: 'within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced' (Spivak 2009, p.32).

A chronological examination of Murakami's representation of the female will reveal how she viewed, and how the postmodern male initially viewed the female using the modernist binary opposition of madonna/whore, thereby refusing her complete access to a more complex postmodern paradigm. The male narrator's gaze did not allow for the complete female to emerge from the ashes of strictly modernist metanarratives. In line with third wave feminism however, Murakami has created a more complete female, with the character of Aomame in *1Q84*, showing that postmodernism is an evolving paradigm that continues to change, albeit slowly, in relation to the representation of the female.

The final chapter, 'Franz Kafka on Murakami's Shore', will compare and contrast the postmodern characteristics of Murakami's novels with those of Franz Kafka. This parallel analysis will highlight how the postmodern mood is present in the translated novel, despite

seeming anachronisms of chronology and geography. The ideas expressed in the works of Kafka are very similar to those of Murakami, despite the temporal and cultural divide, suggesting that postmodernism is not just confined to an era, but more like a philosophical and ideological response from different generations under the influence of capitalism.

Estranged relationships with parents and history are also connected with weak sexual encounters with the opposite sex. Failed marriages, relationships, and parental bonds, as well as hollow sexual encounters, are scattered throughout the works of both writers, rendering the figure of the female in their work as an indistinct Other. Further similarities, including representations of working life, and attitudes to authority, will also be reviewed, showing additional connections between the two writers. In fact, Murakami's latest translated short story published in *The New Yorker* in October 2013, entitled *Samsa in Love*, is a tale about a protagonist undergoing a metamorphosis and turning into Gregor Samsa.

Having set out its argumentative stall, so to speak, this thesis will begin by outlining aspects of the postmodern condition which are of seminal importance to any fuller understanding of the writings of Haruki Murakami. A comprehensive definition of postmodernity is beyond the scope of this work, so selective aspects of the postmodern



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paradigm, which are deemed to be important to an understanding of the articulation of postmodernism in his work, will be outlined, and this process will begin in the first chapter where an overview of the aspects of postmodern theory and thinking which are salient to this thesis will be offered.

# Chapter 1

## Chasing the Postmodern Condition

My stories are more actual, more contemporary, more the postmodern experience. Think of it like a movie set, where everything – all the props, the books on the wall, the shelves – is false. (Haruki Murakami in an interview with Philip Wray, 2004)

### 1.1 What is postmodernity?

The very concept of postmodernism is, as Linda Hutcheon has correctly said, one of the most 'over used and under defined' terms 'bandied about in both current cultural theory and contemporary writing on the arts' (Hutcheon 1988, p.3). From literary theory to aesthetic and cultural studies, defining what is, without a doubt an international phenomenon, has become increasingly more difficult. Partly resulting from our commodified capitalist existence, postmodernism can no longer be a term used to define just literary and architectural style, nor can it be confined to a particular generation, or geographical region. The postmodern condition is a global phenomenon, more prevalent today than ever before and yet, as Fredric Jameson points out 'the concept of

postmodernism is not widely accepted or even understood today' (Jameson 1998, p.1).

Postmodernism is, as Jean-Francois Lyotard has said, 'the condition of knowledge on the most highly developed societies' (Lyotard 1993, p.71), and as such it affects and infects every aspect of our lives.

Despite the significant number of writers and theorists discussing postmodernism, defining its exact epistemological status seems almost impossible. Due to its very nature, postmodernity is protean, and is impossible to define and simplify into something structured and authoritative. As Jameson has said, postmodernity is not just a description of style but in fact a 'periodizing concept'. It has developed from an idiosyncratic style within the arts and architecture, into a critical concept cautioning against the manifestations of capitalism in every aspect of our lives. Jameson tells us it is a 'periodizing concept' whose function is to 'correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order – what is often euphemistically called modernisation, post-industrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism' (Jameson 1998, p.3).

The term 'multinational capitalism' is an apt one, as traditionally, geographical barriers separated experience for individual countries; however, now, as our society

becomes more multinational, the postmodern experience has become a global one, particularly for first world nations. This instant access to a global culture, via the internet, television and commodity consumption, proves that there is a shared, global postmodern experience. Consequently, Murakami, a Japanese author, could easily place his characters' locations in Europe or America, without changing any of the details, other than the place names. Postmodernity is everywhere in the first world, and its ability to permeate popular culture shows how deeply it has managed to manifest itself into our multinational lives. It has grown from a specific artistic and architectural style, into something that blurs and transcends traditional boundaries: geographical, artistic, aesthetic, cultural, sexual and historical.

To deconstruct the term is hopeless, for the centre will constantly shift, because, like the mood it defines, it is constantly changing and evolving. If there is no single definition of postmodernity, it is because the 'real' is no longer available to us:

In fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere. [...] It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real and short circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have the chance to produce itself. (Baudrillard 1994, p.2)

The real has been lost through representation, and there is as Baudrillard suggests, a nostalgia for this absent state. However, returning to the first stage is impossible, and in order for the characters to evolve they must come to understand the new plurality, or what Baudrillard would call a hyperreal. The only state of real they can achieve is through a sense of self, and for that they need to be reborn to the idea of the self, to return to the mirror stage in order to align their personal hyperrealities of *je* and *moi*. These two terms, refer to different aspects of the human subject, and, as Lacan notes in *Écrits*, the point is 'not to analyze if and how the I [*le je*] and the ego [*le moi*] are distinct and overlap in each particular subject on the basis of a grammatical conception of their functions (Lacan 2006, p.348); rather it is the fact that there is a split between these two, and that the subject is split that is of greatest significance.

With the death of the 'grand narratives' of modernity, Lyotard's notion of delegitimated meaning in society has become a reality. The fragmented society that has emerged means that there can no longer be a single, scientific, definitive characterisation within this postmodern era of multi-narratives and differing perspectives. Meaning has become destabilised by the cross contamination of re-representation. The original concept behind postmodernism has been re-represented, and re-imagined to such a level, that

returning to any real sense of authentic imagining is practically impossible: only simulations of the initial image are available to us, as the attempt to define postmodernism is itself permeated by the postmodern mode of thinking which practices a hermeneutics of suspicion with regard to notions of the real, of the centre, and of the origin. Postmodernism is consistently evolving, because individuals are faced with a continual stream of new images and ideas, and any sense of the original notion of the term has been lost amid the noise of all these competing narratives. Thus, locating the precise origins of postmodern thought, or establishing the point where it began to evolve into a multinational/international condition, is impossible, as the idea of postmodernism itself has become a victim of the postmodern paradigm.

Despite such theorists as Brian McHale and Fredric Jameson locating the start of postmodernity in the 1960's, I believe, and will demonstrate, that this desire to pinpoint an exact date does not take account of the postmodern mood that permeates contemporary thinking. Their starting point represents the evolving of high-postmodernism as a blossoming of postmodern thought, from the alternative avant-garde which has been gradually assimilated into popular culture. I would feel that such a clearly-defined temporally-limited, statement of origins does not allow for the full postmodern implications

of the work of Franz Kafka to be considered, as I would see his style, themes and mode of expression as postmodern *avant la lettre*. However, I do agree with McHale, however, that the 1960's did see a massive growth in the influence of postmodernism, which saw the development of this evolving feeling into a broad cultural movement. It is this movement that has become a global experience, one depicted in Murakami's novels, many of which in fact reference the 1960's, something which strengthens Murakami's attachment to the proliferation of postmodern theory and discussion.

Jean-Francois Lyotard states in the introduction to his seminal work, *The Postmodern Condition*, that the term 'postmodern' refers to transformations that are evident in science, literature and the arts 'since the end of the nineteenth century' (Lyotard 1984, p.xxiii). Postmodernism, he rightly argues, has been running contemporaneously with modernism rather than being a sequential movement that comes after modernism and somehow displaces and replaces it in the cultural consciousness. The work of Franz Kafka therefore, which was written during what is traditionally viewed as the modernist era, underwrites Lyotard's notion, as it refuses to legitimate itself 'with reference to a metadiscourse', or to make 'an explicit appeal to some grand narrative' as a characteristically modernist text normally would (Lyotard 1984, p.xxiii). This postmodern

'crisis of narratives' has been coexistent with the modernist grand narrative (Lyotard 1984, p.xxiii). Postmodernism, as he defines it, then is actually 'a part of the modern' just as modernism became a part of postmodernism (Lyotard 1984, p.79). Lyotard goes on to state that a work 'can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but the nascent state, and this state is constant' (Lyotard 1984, p.79).

Under these principles, modernism can be defined as an Enlightenment discourse which legitimates the grand narrative, of rational discourse leading to emancipation, and a faith in science and knowledge 'such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth' (Lyotard 1984, p.xxiii). In this case a 'hero of knowledge' works towards 'a good ethico-political end —universal peace' (Lyotard 1984, p.xxvi). Neither the male protagonists of Kafka nor Murakami could ever be judged to be active heroes, as they both wallow in their own postmodern response. They exhibit Lyotard's incredulity to progressive or Enlightenment grand narratives, and they all resist any singular drive towards any form of Enlightenment certainty or a single teleological truth.

This modernist teleology of scientific progress and rational thought has been



coterminous with progress in science, culture and the arts. However, in the aftermath of two world wars, where enlightened and rational European and other first world nations used their rational and scientific knowledge to slaughter each other with frightening efficiency, the optimism of scientific rationality suffered a telling blow. The universal faith on the onward and progressive journey of humanity, and in the metanarrative of scientific and technological progress, no longer held sway in the aftermath of the death camps and the atomic bomb. This crisis of legitimacy is enunciated by the postmodern as Lyotard explains:

This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. (Lyotard 1984, p.xxvi)

Within this argument, Lyotard allows for a response to the enlightenment project that is concurrent rather than consecutive, therefore suggesting that a similar postmodern mood could exist decades and nations apart. Josef K. from *The Trial* is not a great hero; he has no alignment with his goal, and wants his voyage to end. At the same time Murakami's protagonists seem irritated that they should be called upon to go on a journey in the first

place, in an attempt to connect with others, or to find emancipation through work. These stories highlight a detachment from the traditional grand narratives of modernism, and yet *The Trial*, is written in a cultural and political context that would be considered singularly modernist. The writing of Franz Kafka which has so much in common with that of Haruki Murakami substantiate Lyotard's hypothesis that postmodern is modernism in its 'nascent state'. I will argue that both Kafka and Murakami are 'working without rules' and that their postmodern writings have strong similarities with each other in theme, tone and ambience. Given that postmodern writers are working without rules, then any attempt to understand interpret them always comes too late (Lyotard 1984, p.81). Therefore, a close reading of Murakami in parallel with Kafka helps to deepen our understanding of the postmodern condition through its evolution and expression in these texts. These writers then can be 'understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (*modo*)' (Lyotard 1984, p.81). The postmodern is grammatically specified as inhabiting the future perfect, what will have been (*modo* being the Latin for 'now'). There is no pure present on the basis of which re-presentation may take place, so postmodern art is always-already there though not often grasped or understood at the time. In this definition, he could have been writing about the connections between Kafka and Murakami.

The development of postmodernism has created an imbalance between the paradigms, engendering the creation of an era of high postmodernism, beginning in the 1960's and ending with the current post-postmodern, or post-post-modern, which refers to paradigms post 9/11. This high-postmodernism is what Lyotard described in *The Postmodern Condition* as the post industrial age or postmodern age where 'the status of knowledge is altered' (Lyotard 1984, p.3). Lyotard believes this transition, in which the balance between the co-existing paradigms of modernism and postmodern shifts, 'has been under way since at least the end of the 1950', just a decade before Brian McHale's theoretical starting point.

This era of high postmodernism creates a Baudrillardian simulacrum:

The whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum - not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference. (Baudrillard 1994, p.6)

This 'weightless' system of Baudrillard's world represents an instability in meaning, and in language. When meaning and language constantly shift, then the idea of the 'Other' becomes less definable, then binary oppositions become indistinct and blurred. Given that binary oppositions are very much the building blocks of modernist epistemology, then such

a blurring has definite effects for knowledge and any theories of knowledge. Therefore defining postmodernism becomes troublesome if there is no opposing concept other than that of historical modernism, which has, in many ways, been assimilated into the postmodern, and if we are to believe Lyotard, is seminally imbricated in that term. This adds to the difficulty in defining the term, but also facilitates the idea that it cannot be defined, and therefore cannot have an opposite, and become a metanarrative. Postmodernism enjoys being everything and nothing, and strives to maintain that position.

Lyotard is correction in his affirmation that it takes 'pleasure' in its unrepresentable stance:

The postmodern would be that which in the modern invokes the unrepresentable in presentation itself, that which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and enquires into new presentations not to take pleasure in them, but to better produce the feeling that there is something unrepresentable. (Lyotard 2003, p.15)

Even the term postmodernism itself, is in fact postmodern. Instead of coining a new phrase to represent our times, the choice of phraseology, 'post' and 'modern', proves that there is no 'new'. Society, it seems, no longer has the ability to create something new but can only work with the tools and products of the past to create the present. However, the inclusion of 'modernism' in the name, does not mean it has superseded modernism, but in fact has

incorporated it, as postmodernism has grown and strengthened. The metanarratives have not disappeared, the major teleological structures of meaning, like religion, Marxism, and capitalism, still endure but in an attenuated state. Like Derrida and Nietzsche, Lyotard insists that the 'essentialist foundations of all these "grand narratives" can no longer be accepted' (Robinson 1999, p.42). For Lyotard, the 'cycles consist of modernist total "grand narratives" being continually repudiated by different forms of post-modern scepticism.' (Robinson 1999, p.44).

Like Lyotard, I believe that there have always been elements of postmodernity in existence, but that in the 1960s, postmodernism really began to emerge as the strongest cultural force in first world society. Postmodernism has managed to break down the metanarratives of modernism, and segregate them into smaller, more individualised postmodern micro-narratives that lack the strength, singular direction and ambition of their original modernist imagining. The evolution of postmodernism has led to a diluting of the enthusiasm of the modernist period; as Lyotard says 'the disappearance of the close bond that once linked the project of modern architecture to an ideal of the progressive realization of social and individual emancipation encompassing all humanity' (Lyotard 2003, p.79). Under postmodernism, this emancipation can never be realised.

Everything, except for an imaginable future, has been assimilated into the postmodern, which commodifies the past and present into an unrepresentable image, making modernism a Jamesonian parody of itself. The disenchantment with modernism has led to a sense of apathy towards the new, and the positivity of the modern period has been replaced with a more apathetic sensibility which is underwritten by a hermeneutics of suspicion. The lack of interest in finding a new term, and the *ennui* evident in the choice of term, prove that creating something new, or putting effort into such tasks, is not as important as it once was. In a manner that parallels the mental state of many of Murakami's characters, there is a boredom evident with life, and there is a concomitant lack of eagerness to follow the principles of previous generation who strove for betterment through the development of the new. The ideals of modernist Marxist capitalism as spelled out by David Harvey, namely 'the search for identity through work, individual initiative, or social solidarity,' are no longer relevant to the postmodern individual, as the modernist metanarratives of work and social solidarity are broken down (Harvey 1992, p.123). Postmodernism has accepted that modernism exists, and proceeds to absorb its ideals, and make them postmodern. The narrative of work ethic and company/brand loyalty no longer dominates the mental space of the characters; however, working to help fund the

creation of an image is accepted. Modernism can still exist once it is parodied:

The most startling fact about postmodernism: its total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity, and the chaotic that formed the one half of Baudelaire's conception of modernity. But postmodernism responds to the fact of that in a very particular way. It does not try to transcend it, counteract it, or even to define the 'eternal and immutable' elements that might lie within it. Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is. (Harvey 1992, p.44)

Karl Marx believed that the working class was the agent of human liberation and emancipation, but with the collapse of modernist ideals, the postmodern working class feel neither oppressed nor angry; neither liberated, nor emancipated; but rather bored, detached and paranoid. For the protagonists of Murakami's novels, work does not set them free, nor does it offer them a sense of social belonging, instead it embodies their distrust of the unknown authority which is in control of their working lives, and the resultant postmodern inertia has left them apathetic towards the job they choose.

The postmodern condition of disinterest in work, in goals, and in progression has meant that what Marx had hoped for cannot be achieved, because as Harvey has said, postmodernism enjoys its condition, wallowing 'in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change' (Harvey 1992, p.44). The distrust of authority that has accompanied postmodernity also means that the goals of those in authority, or involved in capitalism,

differ entirely from those of the proletariat. This distrust, combined with the death of informing and cohering metanarratives, means that the ideals of both sides will never coalesce. In his introduction to *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard explains that contemporary capitalist society depends on economics and control, but he also stresses that there is a sense of disconnect between both sides. However, because of the nature of postmodernity the boundaries between these sides are unidentifiable and continuously shifting, with the proletariat constantly divided and segregated further and never united:

The logic of maximum performance is no doubt inconsistent in many ways, particularly with respect to contradiction in the socio-economic field: it demands both less work (to lower production costs) and more (to lessen the social burden of the idle population). But our incredulity is now such that we no longer expect salvation to rise from these inconsistencies, as did Marx. (Lyotard 1984, xxiv)

There is a definite break with the ideas, and ideals, of modernism, and the attitude to these is one of negativity, fear, and distrust. Consumers now have access to more options and products, but many seem to have chosen apathy, indifference and excess. Postmodernism does not exclude anything, in fact it accepts all narratives, meta or micro, from the right to the left; all hypothesis are assimilated into the concept, and re-represented in the postmodern package, commodified for our contemporary, image-saturated lifestyle. Modernism, and all it stood for, is no longer a harbinger in the contemporary world, as



Madan Sarup explains:

Modernity is usually perceived as positivistic, technocratic and rationalistic. It has identified with the belief in linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardisation of knowledge and production [...] Enlightenment thinkers embraced the idea of progress; they believed in justice and in the possibility of happiness of human beings. In the twentieth century, these hopes have been cruelly shattered. (Sarup 1996, p.94)

There is no new metanarrative, but the old order of 'linear progress, absolute truths, the rational planning of ideal social orders, and the standardisation of knowledge and production', has been discarded by the postmodern consumer generation. Instead there is a sense of listlessness and dissatisfaction arising from a lack of all-encompassing metanarratives.

Grand narratives, so called by Lyotard, are no longer relevant in our contemporary society, as they have been broken down and deconstructed to aid the goals of postmodern capitalism. When this is combined with the distrust of authority, and the lack of stability in the nature and understanding of meaning, then grand narratives cannot have any dominance in contemporary society, as postmodernity would not allow for a secure definition for any of these metanarratives. Thus, Lyotard is correct in his statement that 'the grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses,

regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation' (Lyotard 1984, p.37).

Capitalist consumption has in some manner replaced the lack of grand narratives; people consume to fill the gap in their social cohesion in order to garner a sense of belonging. This in turn supports the capitalist regime which presides over much of the contemporary first world. The 'Postmodern Condition' that is created as a result of the death of the grand narrative leads to the search for alternative narratives which can provide meaning, for individuals and different groups. Multi-micro-narratives compete for affirmation, which in turn furthers the sense of uncertainty and ultimately of apathy. This *ennui* then leads back to increased consumer consumption, and creates a never-ending cycle that offers no linear access to the future, and only offers a past that is remembered through parody and pastiche. As Louise Kaplan explains, there is a 'personal dehumanisation' linked to the production of a commodity which in turn leads to a feeling of alienation (Kaplan 2006, p.139) This alienation leads to a longing for a commodity to regain that 'sense of inner aliveness':

The passionate longings for certain consumer goods is motivated by the alienations that are bred and nurtured in a social world dominated by commodity fetishism. A person who is alienated from her own inner life with all its wondrous range of human

desires feels depleted and incomplete. She looks to the outer world to fill up her inner emptiness with things, with material objects, a pair of shoes, a fur coat, a hat, a chiffon scarf, an iPod, an SUV. (Kaplan 2006, p.140)

Metanarratives have been segregated into smaller micro narratives, or *petit récits*, to aid with categorisation, symbolising a move from a group mentality to one of individualisation. There is a loss of a social bonding, and what Lyotard has called 'the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion' (Lyotard 1984, p.15). This move towards pseudo-individualised narratives has created pseudo-individualised consumerism to meet the needs of the postmodern population. This personalised response and individualised spending gives people a sense that they are being true to themselves, as products are advertised as being customisable, and as being tailored to the individual consumer, even though the choices offered are actually mass-produced. The consumer is structured towards a desire to own the latest gadget, which will serve as a fetish and guarantee satisfaction of desire, and there is the added promise that the mass-produced item can be made unique to its new owner through the downloading of personally-chosen applications from a limited list. It is as if each commodity will allow the individual to become more fully individualistic – such is the power of commodity-fetishism. With the death of old

metanarratives, such as religion, progress and the family, people are following a new creed of late capitalist consumerism, in which objects and spending promise happiness and satisfaction:

Just as rural populations were indoctrinated in the nineteenth century into industrial labour, the production sector, the masses are socialised in the twentieth century into the consumption sector. In the consumer society, consumption has replaced production as the central mode of social behaviour. Consumption is a mode of being, a way of gaining identity, meaning and prestige in the contemporary society. (Sarup 1996, p.107)

Sarup goes on to say that consumption proves that the individual is a member of society, and that 'the consumer believes that possession and display of the signs of affluence will bring happiness and prestige' (Sarup 1996, p.107). Each segregated individual choice is catered for in order to ensure there are no large hegemonic groupings, redolent of the modernist tradition, which are seen to exercise a control over the individual.

This lifestyle leads to an unceasing need to consume more, to isolate oneself more, while surrounded by products designed to make one belong, something that Baudrillard summarizes succinctly: 'we are here at the heart of consumption as total organisation of everyday life, total homogenization, where everything is taken over and superseded in the ease and translucency of an abstract "happiness", defined solely by the resolution of

tensions' (Baudrillard 1998, p.29). Happiness, it seems, is dependent on consumption, on the need to constantly own and purchase new objects in order to grasp a sense of belonging, a sense of living essence 'embodied' in the goods (Kaplan 2006, p.139). As

Kaplan asks:

If the material reality of the patient's existence, the culture that surrounds him and contours the minutes, days, hours, and years of his everyday existence, is a culture that breeds a sense of personal alienation, which in its turn nurtures a desperate longing for consumer goods that might fill the emptiness of his life, what, if anything, can the analyst do to enable the patient to resist and prevail? (Kaplan 2006, p.128)

Consumerism is the only way one can feel a sense of social solidarity, however parodic that might in fact be. Capitalism in the first world has responded by offering to meet the consumer's every need through the purchasing of the newest or latest convenience with the promise of making life better and more fulfilled. As Kaplan argues, this consumerism, this commodity fetishism shapes our very core; it is inescapable, even the analyst she speaks of is part of this culture (Kaplan 2006, pp.128-129). Every inclination has been calculated to realise profit, and as Lyotard observes, 'this realism accommodates every tendency just as capitalism accommodates every "need" - so long as these tendencies and needs have buying power' (Lyotard 2003, p.8).

This spending response does not however bring a sense of fulfilment or purpose to

existence and it becomes almost a form of the misery of purchased happiness. It is Jameson who explains this dispassionate existence best, in his description of the misery of happiness:

The misery of happiness, or at least contentment (which is in reality complacency) of Marcuse's 'false' happiness, the gratification's of the new car, the TV dinner and your favourite program on the sofa - which are themselves secretly a misery, an unhappiness that doesn't know its name, that has no way of telling itself apart from genuine satisfaction and fulfilment since it has presumably never encountered. (Jameson 1991, p.280)

This numbed disinterested reality features a constant bombardment by the images and signs of consumerism, which means that there is no escape from our capitalistic existence. Planned obsolescence has also encouraged further consumerism, keeping the population within the cycle of spending. This cycle mirrors the circular notion of postmodernism which does not contain a linear time structure which can allow for the imagining of a future or a distinct responsible past, it is constantly in operation, as Lyotard reminded us when he saw postmodern time as being in the 'future (post) anterior (*modo*)' (Lyotard 1984, p.81). It is as if there is no exit from the cycle. Due to the very nature of the paradigm of postmodernity, it cannot be just confined to art, architecture or literature, and traditional high-brow culture. Postmodernity exists in every aspect of our lives: in our political system;

in our economic system; in our advertisements, and in everything that is consumed. It is inescapable:

The second feature of this list of postmodernisms is the effacement of some key boundaries or separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and the so-called mass or popular culture. This is perhaps the most distressing development of all from an academic standpoint, which has traditionally had a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism, of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and *Reader's Digest* culture, and in transmitting difficult and complex skills of reading, listening and seeing to its initiatives. [...] They no longer 'quote' such 'texts' as a Joyce might have done, or a Mahler; they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw. (Jameson 1998, p.2)

The ideas of Jameson and Baudrillard ring true, because there is no real, and one cannot imagine a future based on this simulation of existence. Postmodern existence has become a parody of life, a representation of life, based on consumption, on economic worth and on one's spending capacity. And as the traditional boundaries disappear, it becomes increasingly more difficult to know where one fits into this life, as the mix of individualised consumerism, and multi-micro-narratives compartmentalise existence through fluid boundaries. Locating a solid environment on which to base an identity, or from which one can obtain an understanding of the surroundings, seems implausible.

Harvey's description of the society 'wallowing' in the 'fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change', rings true, as in the absence, or deconstruction of metanarratives,

what remains is the constant transitory consumerism that is individualised to increase personal spending. Like Baudrillard's depiction of America, postmodern existence is created through simulations of reality, through representations of a repacked life that is in fact a simulacrum of existence:

Everything is destined to reappear as simulation. Landscapes as photography, women as the sexual scenario, thoughts as writing, terrorism as fashion and the media, events as television. Things seem only to exist by virtue of this strange destiny. You wonder whether the world itself isn't just here to serve as advertising copy in some other world. (Baudrillard 1993, p.32)

The commodification of the human race, with satisfaction linked to economics rather than to personal happiness, means that people are constantly expected to live up to an image in order to achieve happiness, and with the realisation that this image is nothing but a simulation, and does not exist, they are left with a specifically postmodern *ennui*.

Due to the all-encompassing nature of this commodification process in every aspect of postmodern culture, one is left with little else but apathy, because opting out is not an option, it is in fact catered for, within its own individual marketed lifestyle:

As a result, to differentiate oneself is precisely to affiliate to a model, to label oneself by reference to an abstract model, to a combinatorial pattern of fashion, and therefore to relinquish any real difference, any singularity, since these can only arise in concrete, conflictual relations with others and the world. This is the miracle and the tragedy of differentiation. In this way, the whole process of consumption is governed by the



production of artificially diversified models (like brands of soap powder), where the trend to monopoly is the same as in the other sectors of production. There is monopoly concentration of the production of difference (Baudrillard 1998, p.88-89)

Opting out of society is in fact opting in, because the entire system has been monopolised by capitalism to ensure that every possible avenue is included in order to increase the spending potential of the citizen. Economic outlay has been mapped and monopolized by the system, which has tailored its products to respond to any possible sense of rebellion in a manner which makes people feel that they are making personalized choices, although these choices are in fact limited to what the system has created. One cannot survive without interacting with this system:

It has to be made clear from the outset that consumption is an active form of relationship (not only to object, but also to society and to the world), a mode of systematic activity and global response which founds our entire cultural system. It has to be made clear that objects and material goods are not in fact the object of consumption - they are the object merely of needs and the satisfaction of needs. (Baudrillard 2005, p.217)

Baudrillard, referring to Galbraith in *The Consumer Society*, correctly points out that individuals are needed by the system only for their powers of consumption. The system has been devised to derive the greatest economic benefit from each individual by encouraging people to incorporate spending and consumption into their daily lives. The more that is consumed, and the more that sense of consumption is seen as central to

identity, the more the system becomes stronger:

The individual serves the industrial system, not by supplying it with savings and the resulting capital; he serves it by consuming its products. On no other matter, religious, political, or moral, is he so elaborately and skilfully and expensively instructed. (Galbraith 1967, p.45)

As Galbraith says, we serve the system, and the system views us in terms of our yearning for the system, and this, as has been noted already, is a view shared by Lyotard.

This theory is something that is played out in the lives of Murakami's characters, and is a central concern of the postmodern condition as experienced by the current generation:

They allocate our lives for the growth of power. In matters of social justice and scientific truth alike, the legitimation of that power is based on its optimising the systems performance - efficiency. (Lyotard 1983, p.72)

Murakami's world takes this creation of differentiation into account, and his futuristic examination of postmodern living demonstrates just how simulations and representations have become absorbed into the fabric of contemporary being. In *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, even the subconscious has been commodified by the system in order to create a response within the protagonist which will make him of greater benefit to that system.

Boku, or the 'I' character from *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*,

must recreate a whole new world, akin to Baudrillard's *America*, based on representations of what is real. The world of his subconscious must be reconstructed through images from the actual world, which implies that his whole existence will be based on a simulation of real life, as he faces an infinite existence within a simulation created by the system and his own mind:

The food here is different than elsewhere. We use only a few basic ingredients. What resembles meat is not. What resembles eggs is not. What resembles coffee only resembles coffee. Everything is made in the image of something. (Murakami 2003, p.224)

Boku is left with no option but to live within this representation, fabricated from his own ideas combined with images which have been edited and selected by the system. His subconscious uses this amalgamation to create an entirely new world within which he will be forced to live for eternity when his real life comes to an end. His actual, real-world life is ending because of the dominance of his imagined world, which is growing and strengthening. Entitled *The End of the World*, this new existence was created by the system using stolen images from Boku's subconscious, which were edited together by the Professor, another character in the novel. This subconscious world has managed to involve Boku to such an extent that he adds reproductions of his own view of the world in

order to make the new world a direct representation of the old. Boku learns to live in such a world, and he achieves this by leaving behind memories and his shadow, as he strips himself of his own individual experience in order to survive. The world that Murakami has created is a mirror image of our own postmodern lives, where we have lost the ability to live within the 'real' world, as the simulated world of representations gains ascendancy. The way that Boku wallows in this unreal world parallels the way in which contemporary individuals wallow in postmodern consumer-driven culture. Like Boku, the reader is left questioning why he or she can no longer live within the real world. Is it because there is nowhere to belong, due to the death of metanarratives? Or does living with representations and simulacra encourage consumerism and spending, so that capitalism can continue to thrive?

As the grand narratives of work, patriarchy, religion, and progress are gradually broken down, postmodern society is now segregated into pseudo-individualised classifications which are fluid and fluctuating. As high and low culture blend together, so too does the personal experience. The postmodern has become eclectic and seamless, meaning that everything is included, that everybody is part of a group, but at the same time, part of no definite group. As Lyotard has said – 'anything goes':

Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: you listen to reggae; you watch a western; you eat McDonald's at midday and local cuisine at night; you wear Paris perfume in Tokyo and dress retro in Hong Kong; knowledge is the stuff of TV game shows. It is easy to find a public for eclectic works. When art makes itself kitsch, it panders to the disorder that reigns in the 'taste' of the patron. Together, artist, gallery owner, critic, and public indulge one another in the Anything Goes - it's time to relax. But this realism of Anything Goes is the realism of money: in the absence of aesthetic criteria it is still possible and useful to measure the value of works of art by the profits they realize (Lyotard 2003, p.8)

This feeds into idea that the individual is important, countering the group mentality of the modernist era. This refocus on the self can also be seen in consumerism, as products are more individualised, rather than focused on the traditional modernist social groupings, therefore widening the market for products and profit. The illusion of choice, which governs Lyotard's sense of 'anything goes', removes the focus from the larger collective and reorients it onto the self. With an eclectic and fluid identity, the individual is required to purchase more to construct and feed this identity, creating a narcissistic approach to self-fulfilment, and validating the commodity fetish as a crucial part of the sense of self.

As Anthony Elliot asserts in his discussion of Christopher Lash's *The Culture of Narcissism* and *The Minimal Self* in relation to the postmodern self, there is an immediate need for satisfaction of desire:

Lacking any personal, moral or political autonomy, narcissistic personalities are emotionally unable to form caring and open relationships; fragile and brittle, the

narcissistic self instead seeks out consumer substitutes to fill a profound emotional gap. (Elliot 2011, p.78)

Elliot is correct in saying that Lasch has an exceptionally negative view of the individual who has been commodified by consumer culture, and left 'floating' and 'wallowing' in the postmodern currents of chaos as imagined by David Harvey. With so many narratives floating by, the postmodern individual has nothing to do but grapple to hold on to as many as possible in order to stay afloat. The individual is viewed in terms of profit, and in terms of his or her economic benefit, with each individual or economic unit identifying with an increasing number of mini-narratives, then each individual must consume more in order to fulfil this simulated eclectic ideal. Viewing the individual consumer as a commodity in the postmodern capitalist system allows for greater profit and a greater expanse of narratives to attach and sell to each unit.

This commodification of the individual coincides with the death of the metanarratives of modernism. The development and growth of a social solidarity was one of the major aspects of modernism, where grand narratives or metanarratives were all important. Religion, early capitalism and democracy all involved an individual working within a metanarrative to become a successful social actant who, in small but distinct ways, attempted to imitate the hero of these narratives; Jesus Christ, Henry Ford or the

President of the United States. The death of the metanarrative is what Lyotard refers to first in his description of *The Postmodern Condition* where he defines the postmodern as 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lyotard 1993, p.72).

With no social unifying heroes left, but many voices competing for the patronage of individuals, there is nothing to consolidate people, but this very postmodern noise. The death of the metanarrative also spells the death of unifying social groupings, as metanarratives become divided into smaller categories which weaken their appeal to the mass audience. Our own political system is testament to this dilution, as coalition governments feature across Europe. No one political grouping can unite voters, and individual, independent, single-issue candidates are becoming more popular with voters, producing more parties and forming cross party alliances to respond to voters.

These diluted concepts and narratives, then, require supplementary narratives in order to create a representation of a complete concept, confusing the postmodern individual further. Each additional narrative creates heterogeneous individuals who cannot forge secure connections with others, as each individual has identified with so many varying narratives that do not always coalesce or harmonize. The concepts themselves are unreliable as they, like postmodernism itself, cannot not be pinned down securely,

floating as they do in the postmodern realm. This constantly changing world refuses to provide a stable footing, meaning we are unable to grasp a solid place for their existence, something Elliott refers to in his book *Concepts of the Self*.

Transposed to the realm of the self and self-identity, the disorientating effects of the new capitalism means there is little stable ground for an individual to lodge an anchor. 'Keep moving and don't commit yourself' is perhaps the moral to be drawn from today's hi-tech global economy. (Elliott 2007, p.138)

As individuals, people now form relationships with objects and consumption more than with other individuals, and other narrative structures outside of themselves, which in turn, influences the people with whom they align themselves. Individuals' lives have become more and more isolated, despite the constantly new methods of communication introduced into society. These new methods, such as online communities and Facebook, can often attenuate our relationships with real communities, because from the mobile phone to social networking, we are encouraged to communicate with representations of other individuals rather than with the actual people, taking us further away from real contact and connection.

In Baudrillard's terms, contemporary individuals are in the final order of simulation, which has now become an end in itself, and no longer represents anything else. Therefore



people are communicating with simulations, with false representations of individuals, and as a result, connection and communication are simulacra:

In the first case, the image is a good appearance - representation is of the sacramental order. In the second, it is an evil appearance - it is of the order of maleficence. In the third, it plays at being an appearance - it is of the order of sorcery. In the fourth, it is no longer of the order of appearances, but of simulation. (Baudrillard 1994, p.6)

Like Toru in *A Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, we can only hope that the person at the other end of the communication device is the person to whom we wish to speak, rather than a simulation of an individual. Toru's wife has been missing for months, and he is given the opportunity to communicate with her through the internet, and imagines what the image of her should be on the other side of the computer:

Beyond this screen, at the far end of the cable that creeps through Tokyo's underground darkness, may be Kumiko. She, too, should be sitting before a monitor, with her hands on a keyboard. In reality, all I can see is my monitor, which sits there making a faint electronic squeal. (Murakami 2003b, p.485)

This image he has of communication with Kumiko is based on a representation of the real. It is a simulation which he has created from images provided to him in order for him to deal with the fact he is trying to connect with a simulacrum in a society where, as Jameson tells us, exchange value has been 'effaced':

It is for such object that we may reserve Plato's conception of the 'simulacrum' the

identical copy for which no original has ever existed. Appropriately enough, the culture of the simulacrum comes to life in a society where exchange value is effaced, a society of which Guy Debord has observed, in an extraordinary phrase, that in it 'the image has become the final form of commodity reification: (The Society of the Spectacle) (Jameson 1991, p.18)

The problem of knowing, the postmodern epistemological dilemma, leads to two distinct issues on a personal level for the postmodern individual: perception of the self and developing true relationships with others:

Postmodernism is at once so emotionally exhilarating and disturbing for the current experience of selfhood. In an era where global changes in employment, leisure, knowledge, media production and intimacy are increasingly rapid and disruptive, new challenges and new burdens arise for personal identity and the self. (Elliott 2007, p.27)

Due to the over-influx of images and representations of what it is to be an individual, the self is left lost in Baudrillard's world of simulacra. Unable to know the self, the individual cannot know the Other, leaving each individual isolated, while at the same time bombarded with images and with the activity of social networking. People now live in a world where all varieties can be compartmentalised and sold, in order to neutralise and pacify us as a group, thereby giving us a false sense of belonging (Baudrillard 1994, p.48).

As Elliott argues, our world requires rapid changes, and as workers and consumers, we need to constantly adapt to the environment in order to survive, which can be both an 'exhilarating' and frightening experience for those involved:

When people are inserted into a world of detachment and superficial cooperativeness, of weak ties and interchangeable relationships, and when all this is shaped by the pursuit of risk-taking and self-reinvention, the power of traditional social norms and cultural traditions begins to diminish. This can be potentially liberating: the self finds the potential to define itself anew and create fluid and innovative social relationships. But there is also something deeply unsettling. (Elliott 2007, pp.139-140)

These elements of failed postmodern identity are played out by the characters of Murakami's worlds, who are unfulfilled by their lack of self-knowledge. This realisation leads them on a road of self-discovery, where they try and escape in order to learn what the unrealised future can bring them: '[a] typical character in Murakami's works is someone who has already come to terms with the fact that positive human interaction is in vain' (Ellis 1995, p.144). With a constant need to update, upgrade and reinvent, the postmodern individual must be *au fait* with the latest gadgets, internet trends and fashion in today's throw-away society. However, even though surrounded by an unceasing supply of information, products, images and trends, the postmodern individual can still feel lost and lonely amid the noise and the choice, making meaningful communication and interaction much more difficult, or as Ellis so cynically puts it, interaction can be 'in vain'. Murakami's characters are offered the chance of real connections or a genuine experience, if even for only a fleeting moment.

With no clear identifier of the generation, other than apathy, there is no unifying

force, or metanarrative, to link people together, leaving contemporary society very disjointed, and unable to identify itself, individually or as part of a group: '[w]e hear of discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, de-centring, indeterminacy and anti-totalisation' (Hutcheon 1988, p.3), and any of these terms could easily be applied to individuals, society, relationships and, of course, to the fiction of Haruki Murakami. If there is no truth, then what can we rely on other than elements of the past? This realization leads to a growth in pastiche and parody in contemporary arts and literature. With no clear metanarrative of identity available, we use the 'fertile' idiosyncrasies of the modern age to add to our own stories, films, television and culture. Films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *The Matrix*, *This is Spinal Tap* and *The Truman Show*, or novelists such as Don DeLillo, Paul Auster David Foster Wallace or Franz Kafka, rely on pastiche to voice their stories, some mixed with postmodern paranoia and others with hyperreality. The mixing of the styles and elements contributes to the postmodern atmosphere of each novel. Jameson describes this use of pastiche as 'the disappearance of the individual subject, along with its formal consequence, the increasing unavailability of the personal style', as the engendering 'of the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche' (Jameson 1991, p.16).

The importance of history is central within postmodern society. Historical events and style are merged with the modern in order to create a new postmodern style which, due to its familiarity, we seem to trust or with which we can more readily identify. Due to the fleeting and fragmented nature of our society, history is a crucial tool for the postmodern individual in forming an identity. Harvey argues that modernity leaves no room for 'respect' for history:

If modern life is indeed so suffused with the sense of the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fragmentary, and the contingent, then a number of profound consequences follow. To begin with, modernity can have no respect even for its own past, let alone that of any pre-modern social order. (Harvey 1992, p.11)

Nevertheless, in the novels of Murakami, history seems to be the only thing on which we can rely; however, paradoxically, finding a true history, a reliable one, is impossible, given this breakdown in metanarratives. Like the characters in Orwell's *1984*, can we be sure the events of our past have not been altered? Murakami has argued that knowing and being aware of our history, negative or otherwise, is important for contemporary readers, in order to develop a sense of who they are, and how they evolved. In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Jay Rubin points out that Murakami takes a distinctly historical approach to the novel, particularly in relation to his belief in the recognition of the:

[c]rimes Japan committed against the other peoples of Asia. After decades of official silence in which history textbooks hid the unpleasant facts from school children, Japan has begun to face up to its past, and *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* can be seen as part of the painful process. (Rubin 2005, p.214)

This, I would contend, is an essential element for a postmodern individual looking to forge a true identity, rather than a simulated representation of their sense of self. If modernism represented a true break from the past, then postmodernism represents a returning to that past, albeit in a very different manner. If there is no future, no new, then we must look to the past to create a future, and to add to our present, in a manner that parallels the parodies and pastiches of the past of which we have already spoken. As Sarup suggests, knowing the past, helps to imagine a future:

It could be said that an impulse to preserve the past is part of the impulse to preserve the self. Perhaps people try and retain their sense of identity by maintaining their links with the past? Without knowing where they have been, it is difficult to know where they are going. (Sarup 1996, p.97)

As a result of contemporary disinterest in progress, and the growing sense of *ennui*, the future is something that has become unimaginable, and the present is overshadowed by the influence of the 'over-achievers' of the past. With no imaginable future, culture is very much stuck in the immediate present; the past is forgotten; the future non-existent, and [w]hat is implied is simply an ultimate historicist breakdown in which we can no longer

imagine the future at all under any form' (Jameson 1991, p.286).

Murakami has been strongly influenced by the past, and his novels contain many references to some of the bleaker incidents within Japanese history, in an effort to enable his readers to learn from the past. It seems as if Murakami is asking a similar question to Sarup, in regard to both his readers and his characters: if they know where they have been will that help them to know where they are going? With no dependable past, a simulated present and unimaginable future, finding truth in history in order to learn from it is one of the most important issues postmodern society faces:

The postmodern [...] reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in doing so it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge [...] and the implication is that there can be no single, essentialised transcendent concept of 'genuine historicity.' (Hutcheon 1988, p.89)

Hutcheon is correct in saying that referencing the past has become a characteristic of the present, as described in Jameson's notion of pastiche, and while Murakami adds elements of Japan's history to his novels, he does so in order to encourage knowledge and debate among his readers, while at the same time aiding his characters to proceed on their own journeys. This return to history and addition of the past into the present is something that Jameson feels needs more attention and research:

But this unforeseeable return of narrative as the narrative of the end of narratives, this return of history in the midst of the prognosis of the demise of historical telos, suggests a second feature of postmodernism theory which requires attention, namely, the way in which virtually any observation about the present can be mobilized in the very each for the present itself and pressed into service as a symptom and an index of the deeper logic of the postmodern, which imperceptibly turns into its own theory and the theory of itself. (Jameson 1991, p.xii)

Murakami uses this 'emergence of History and the unleashing and reinvestment of historical energies', as an instrument of knowing the self and the world (Jameson 2007, p.239). This is of particular importance for the evolution of Toru's character in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, as we will see later in Chapter 2.

History and identity seem inextricably linked, and postmodern literature seems to highlight this need to know the past in order to create not just a present, but a believable and tangible future. Murakami's characters are asking questions that have troubled our postmodern anti-heroes across the globe, and are looking to the past for real answers. As Sarup says, the past has 'a collective identity' which differs from our current individualised society:

The past is the foundation of individual and collective identity; objects from the past are the source of significance as cultural symbols. The nostalgic impulse is an important agency in adjustment to crisis; it is a social emollient and reinforces (national) identity when confidence is weakened or threatened. (Sarup 1996, p.97)

Postmodernism, and the people who live within it, are plagued by an identity crisis, and



this inability to describe the epistemology of postmodernism is problematic. As a result, we cannot describe our collective identity, or our future, however, so consumed are we by our incapacity to know the self, that we cannot know the Other. This realisation isolates the postmodern individual, who cannot form real connections, but only representations of the image of a relationship, leading to a great sense of loss and isolation. Without knowing the Other, we cannot know the self, so the search must begin with the Other, and away from the narcissism of the image overload in postmodern society:

One of the ways in which the self can try to evade such anxiety is to avoid the difficulties of interpersonal relationships altogether, retracting to the comforting realm of narcissism in order to protect the self against fears of abandonment. (Elliott 2007, p.158)

As Elliott says in his book, *Concepts of the Self*, the rapidly changing postmodern world, creates a difficult environment for interaction, and causes an emotional fear in the self:

The rapidity of social change and the uncertainties promoted by globalisation and multiculturalism can quickly over shadow the emotional capacities of individuals. Where individuals feel threatened or assaulted by social and technological upheavals, toleration of personal differences and cultural particularises sometimes diminishes. (Elliott 2007, p.158)

Murakami's characters embody this emotional difficulty, and have major issues with love and family ties. His protagonists encounter many people along their journeys, and unless

the protagonists force themselves to share and connect with these people, they cannot realise the true nature of their own situation. They must come to know, understand and empathise with the Other in order to move forward. His characters have to throw off the self-imposed shackles of postmodern isolation and individualism, and gain solitude during their journey into the self, while still remaining encased in postmodern narratives and conditions. While this may seem like a contradiction at first, what Murakami's characters come to realise is that the self is not solitary entity, but one that is shaped by the people that surround it, by history and by experience.

This postmodern society is both 'exhilarating and disturbing', as Elliot has said. It creates many pressing issues for capitalist society, which has become obsessed with possession and consumption. Contemporary literature mirrors the struggle of probing the issues and consequences of a commodified lifestyle. The realisation of these issues and the search for the real seems the only antidote to the constant stream of images and representations. This search must be started while living in a postmodern society and culture, as there is no transcendent perspective from which this search can be undertaken. However, understanding the situation of which we are a part gives the postmodern generation a better sense of a real existence:

Postmodernism is at once so emotionally exhilarating and disturbing for the current experience of selfhood. In an era where global changes in employment, leisure, knowledge, media production and intimacy are increasingly rapid and disruptive, new challenges and new burdens arise for personal identity and the self. (Elliott 2007, p.27)

## **1.2 How has postmodernity taken hold in Japan?**

Ironically, postmodernity has itself become a metanarrative; however, understanding exactly what this metanarrative is seems almost impossible as we are undertaking this process from within the postmodern paradigm. Like the Derridean method of deconstruction, the centre constantly shifts, and pinning down how postmodernity has taken hold, and what exactly it is, seems almost impossible. The metanarratives have not disappeared, just become diluted and broken down within a constant stream of multiple representations. The traditional perception that postmodernism is a Western preoccupation has been challenged, as the first world nations of the East embody the same postmodern condition.

The changes in Japan over the twentieth century have both echoed and amended the developments of the West [...] In the post-war period Japan (and Western observers) have seen the dawning and eventual triumph of a careerist, materialist consumer culture so widespread as to seem almost a parody of capitalism's ultimate goal. (Napier 1993, p.5)

Significantly, this is not just confined to traditional Western nations, '[t]he postmodern has

permeated, saturated - has become - our culture', remarks Frank L. Cioffi in the opening statement of his article 'Post-Millennial Postmodernism' (Cioffi 1999, p.82), and Japan is the perfect Eastern representation of this international phenomenon. As Napier points out, 'despite the recent developments in China, it is still Japan which stands alone at the nexus of modernisation and Westernisation, still the only non-Western country to be counted as an equal by the Western powers' (Napier 1993, p.5).

While Japan may differ historically from traditional Western metanarratives in areas such as religion, nevertheless Japan's association with capitalism, the calling-card of the postmodern age, made it an ideal location for the characteristics of postmodernity to take hold. As Sanehide and Ken maintain: it is 'paradoxical and deconstructive in that it exists both within and beyond modernism', like the Western postmodernism discussed by Jameson and Baudrillard in that it is 'closely related' to the emergence of 'late, consumer or multinational capitalism' (Sanehide & Ken, 1997, p.512):

Postmodernism in Japan [...] can be seen as a periodizing concept whose formal features express the deep logic of a particular social system, rather than a categorizing concept for the description of a particular style. (Sanehide & Ken, 1997, p.511)

The traditional culture existent in Japan, where identity was collective, was introduced to the Western notion of the individual as the country modernised, making a definition of the

individual a problematic one for the Japanese, and this is a concern shared by the postmodern generation, as Kawakami explains. In the 1960's, student riots took place at universities across the country, as the students fought against the traditional constructs of Japanese society, but today without the hegemonic ideological structure of the emperor or the imperialist system, there are no metanarratives against which to riot, leaving this society, like Murakami's protagonists, struggling against a wave of representations, even images of themselves:

In the 1960s, throwing stones was possible because an identifiable target presented itself as an identifiable ideological unit, be it the riot police, the emperor, or the state. This situation in turn enabled the establishment of social bonds, whether a particular individual wished to form such ties or not. Murakami maintains that this type of 'simple' relationship between society and the individual is no longer feasible. Instead, his works project a new type of oppression emerging from the fragmentation of the ideological and the dissimulation of power structures. (Kawakami 2002, p.312)

While it is important to point out that the historical experience of Japan differs massively to that of the West, nevertheless Japanese culture still harbours a number of components that are conducive to the postmodern experience, something pointed out by theorists in Japanese studies:

The meaning of postmodernity is, of course, is allusive on this level as all others, but there is no doubt that its relevance to Japan is widely accepted, (Arnason 1995, p.22)

Arnason goes on to add that characteristics such as the decline of a work ethic, the growing role of information technology, and prominence of capitalism within Japanese society, all mimic elements of Western society, but most importantly, he points out that Japan may have always had a postmodern undertone, such as the 'absence of institutionalised orthodoxy' (Arnason 1995, p.27), something with which Clammer also agrees:

It could be argued that in some sense Japan has always been a 'postmodern' society - one in which the 'metanarrative' has never been important, a true culture of feeling in which capitalist consumption is itself turned into an art form in which aesthetics is central and in which emphasis on context create the very relativism so characteristic of postmodernity. (Clammer 1991, p.66)

I feel that Clammer and Arnason are correct up to a point. The ideas behind postmodernism could always have been in existence in Japan, just as they have been in Western Culture, but how they emerged into popular culture in a Japanese context differs significantly from the parallel process in the West. Both occidental and oriental worlds shared an underlying postmodern element that was forced into the open by modernisation. Japan was forced to deal with elements of modernity, particularly the influx of outside cultures, while also dealing with issues emerging as a result of World War II, a time when its own ancient traditions were coming into question.

Japanese culture contains a number of contrasting aspects, which make it postmodern, as mixed with the traditional and historical principles of society, is an embracing of capitalism. This hybridity has seen Western constructs, such as Disneyland and brand David Beckham, thrive, while traditional societal structures still exist. The birthplace of much modern technology, Japan, seems to encompass a large variety of different cultures, and is the country's personification of plurality. Disneyland itself is the embodiment of the postmodern age, as Jean Baudrillard pointed out:

Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulacra [...] Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle. (Baudrillard 1994, p.10)

This 'Disneyfication' as described by Baudrillard and Jameson is something Jameson feels has been in existence in the Japanese approach to their culture for years:

Disneyfication 'the process whereby inherited cultural images are now artificially reproduced, as in all those lovingly rebuilt centres which are 'authentic' reproductions of their former selves: in Japan, it is said, that the wooden temples are rebuilt board by board every fifty years in their entirety, conserving a spiritual identity through all the changes in material. (Jameson 2007, p.215)

While elements of postmodernity were in existence in Japan for many years, the contemporary postmodern era really came to the fore in Japan in the 1990's after the

death of the Showa emperor Hirohito in 1989. In the course of the 1990's, the people of Japan experienced two national catastrophes, the Hanshin/Awaji earthquake, and the nerve gas attack on the Tokyo underground system. These events, coupled with uncovering of widespread political corruption, made the Japanese people question authority more directly, specifically in terms of their economic system and their identity as a nation, as Yoshiko Fukushima details in his article about Japanese Literature:

The decade of the 1990s following his death, with the burst of the economic bubble, was not a particularly joyous period for Japan [...] In short, Japanese writers were confronted with a groundswell of problems from Japan's past and present during the era of the 1990s. (Fukushima 2003, p.40)

Modern Japan was in a confused postmodern state, which left the country searching for its own identity while faced with an overload of images. Embracing the multicultural aspects of its society seemed to create a sense that a traditional sense of 'Japaneseness' was being diluted:

Since the mid-1990's, cultural diversity and its relationship to national identity has become a topic of intense debate within Japanese society [...] prominent in this rethinking of national identity is consideration of the legacy of Japanese colonialism. During the second half of the 1990's, debates over apologies for Japan's wartime aggression stimulated reassessments of Japan's colonial past. (Hudson & Morris-Suzuki 2001, p.287)

However this is not a new departure for Japan, as fear of westernisation has always



plagued the country on a cultural level. Even in the 1930's, the westernisation of Japan, and Japanese culture was something that was being discussed by cultural theorists. In Bruno Taut's study *A Personal View of Japanese Culture*, he observed that 'another factor accelerating the destruction of the good tradition was the westernisation of Americanisation of Japan, represented, above all, by the words "New York"'. Taut's advice to the Japanese was that they should not go 'directly to New York', but 'via Katsura Villa' that is they should return to their good tradition' (Nagao 2001, p.252). A response by the Japanese Anko Sakaguchi in 1942, also titled *A Personal View of Japanese Culture*, stated that 'the culture is interactive and transformative', a perspective which fundamentally overturns the old nationalistic cultural theory which insisted on its purity and originality. His proposition also looked towards the fundamental principle of the global age: 'that one has to change oneself so as to accept and understand the Other' (Nagao 2001, p.248).

This debate over national identity intensified in the 1980's and 1990's, and seems to have influenced the literature from Japan. Post-war Japan has always struggled with its external and internal image, and now in the postmodern world, there seemed to be a sense of Japan as being caught between these two ranges of images, there seems to be

something lost. As Gavin McCormack explains, these two issues have been separate, however, in order to create a new identity, both need to converge:

From the 1980's two phenomena have proceeded on parallel tracks with no sign of converging: internationalisation and the clarification of Japanese identity. (McCormack 2001, p.2)

What emerged from Japan during this time was a plethora of postmodern literature with a Japanese perspective and context, proving that postmodernity was not just a Western phenomenon, but something that could affect all modern nations searching for their identity. The 1980's and 1990's produced a newly-evolved postmodernity, which had grown from its original more European and Anglo-American roots; this postmodernity was much more specific to Japan, though it mirrored and emulated a common first world postmodern experience.

While postmodern debate in the second half of the twentieth century recognised the postmodern currents in Japan, there endured a notion that Japan remained as the oriental Other rather than a first world equal in theory and thought. This Othering of Japan seemed to be a residual consequence of the war, and of the underlying fear generated by the early victories of this other, and the result was the classic binary opposition of Western self versus oriental Other, a thought-process with echoes of Said's notion of Orientalism

The use of this binary opposition returns that postmodern debate to a modernist setting, while the political influence of post-war America and post-war Japan cannot be ignored either. The Japanese postmodern debate in the centre of the twentieth century was overshadowed by the remains of World War II, and the political Othering of the nation. Najita argues that cultural representation of post-war Japan depended on the 'presumption that the Japanese are "unknowable" except to the Japanese', and that social science sees them as accessible in the world of others (Najita 1989, p.14).

Najita also argues that there was a 'perception of the globe as being a cultural map with "fixed" places for easily identifiable and describable national cultures' in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, adding that:

there is a sense that while all of the many distinctive cultures added something of significance to the world cultural order of things, so that the ideal of global civilisation was entirely appropriate, still not all of the places were of equivalent status, some being relatively more appreciated and respected than others. (Najita 1989, p.10)

In this order Japan's cultural identity was as a 'nation outside the ordering cultural framework shaped by Western nations' (Najita 1989, p.10).

However, as postmodernity evolved and grew stronger in the 1980's, combined with the events in Japan during that time, the similarities between the first world West and the

first world East grew, and could no longer be denied. Yet modernist 'grand narratives' still threatened the idea that a shared or common postmodern experience could exist in both the West and East, as issues of nationhood regularly emerge in the debate. For Japan, the idea that postmodernity is a Western event, as Miyoshi and Harootunian have suggested, is present in postmodern debate from the late 1980's. In their introduction to *Postmodern in Japan*, they suggest that 'postmodernism seeks to remedy the modernist error of Western, male, bourgeois domination, it simultaneously vacates the ground on which alone the contours of modernism can be clearly seen' (Miyoshi, M & Harootunian 1989 p.vii).

This vacating of the modernist Western metanarratives means that both Japan and the West are concerned about losing their distinct versions of nationalism. However within the fleeting, fluid nature of postmodernity, and the new eclecticism that has been born as a result of this, fighting the tide of postmodernity is becoming more and more impossible for the traditional standpoint. From an American perspective, in the opinion of Miyoshi and Harootunian, 'Japan [is] a third world copycat, the all-time economic wonderchild, that now threatens to become the hegemon of the twenty first century' (Miyoshi, M & Harootunian 1989 p.ix). The popularity of Japanese culture at present, from Haruki Murakami's books,

to *animé*, film, and even to the Japanese 'gothic Lolita' style of dress, is just as prevalent as the Western cultural indices of McDonald's, Disney, Starbucks and celebrity. Western celebrities feature regularly in Japanese advertisements, with Brad Pitt, Meg Ryan and David Beckham all brand ambassadors for numerous products, while conversely, in America and the West, the gothic Lolita style of clothing, Japanese film, food, cars and technology are widely popular. In fact, even the Japanese 'Bushido' or way of the warrior is popular among the Western capitalists with Miyamoto Musashi's *Gorinsho*, 'a 16<sup>th</sup> century handbook on the warriors code' a best-seller on Wall Street (Najita 1989, p.13).

This cross-cultural pollination in postmodern society leaves nations with a crisis of representation, one that is equally discussed and felt in Japan and in the West, and which is also perceived in all first world nations experiencing postmodernism. As Marilyn Ivy has said in her article on knowledge in postmodern Japan, there is a crisis of representation in the postmodern age, due to what she calls the 'contemporary moment'. 'In this contemporary postmodern moment, the virulence of capital has turned everything into pure commodified signs. National borders give way as information circulates at blinding speeds' (Ivy 1989, p.24). Ivy claims that knowledge is a major stakeholder in the 'global struggle for power', and this being the case, I would suggest that excluding Japan from the

contemporary postmodern condition, and refusing to see the postmodernism of Japan as being equal to that of the west is a further development of the ethnocentric attitudes which came under critique in Said's *Orientalism* (Ivy 1989, p.24).

This shared experience felt by Japan is one which is played out in the writing of Haruki Murakami, and more broadly, in the development of the postmodern novel in Japan. Kojin, in his study of the origins of Modern Japanese Literature, suggests that the modern 'I-novel' is not a Western standard, but in fact something that emerged, both in Japan and in the West, around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He says that 'even if we grant that a "pure" Western novel at some point existed, it is not among the works we read today' (Kojin 1998, p.176), as there has been a blurring of genres. In the case of Murakami's *shishosetsu*, or 'I-novels', this is even more obvious, as his books combine elements of both the East and the West, and his protagonists' experience could be located in any first world city across the Globe. The style of Murakami's work can therefore not be pinpointed as Japanese, Eastern or Western *per se*, but rather serve as an example of a new globalised genre of *Bildungsroman* that has prospered in the past 100 years.

Classifying Murakami's writing requires a cross-cultural, multidisciplinary approach when analysing his work. In fact, the style of his writing, which merges so much of both

cultures, could only be postmodern, as it rejects a definitive categorisation. His work challenges and defies traditional inflexible binary oppositions, and questions conventional ideals, as Fuminobu avers in his study of postmodern Japanese writing: 'Murakami Haruki [...] attempt[s] to reformulate the aforementioned binary oppositions between totalitarian identification and individual differentiation [...] by subverting the desire for the "Other" and instead focusing on desire for "same"' (Fuminobu 2005, p.16).

Drowning in technology, information and images, the individual seems to be searching for a place to fit into while trying to decipher the simulacrum:

Disenchantment with reality, knowledge and power, and at the same time a lack of emphatic emotion, in other words apathy, all co-exist: as we will see later, this is the postmodern utopia/dystopia specially narrated in some of Murakami Haruki's fiction. (Fuminobu 2005, p.3)

Postmodern fiction, from both Japan and Western nations, has followed in a similar vein, containing a preoccupation with fantasy, and with the issue of utopia/dystopia in the protagonist's worlds. In particular, the literature that emerged from Japan in the 1980's and 1990's, has a strong focus on identity, mirroring its own country's cultural crisis:

One can say that Japanese postmodern fiction which was written mostly during the 1980's displays features as: self-referential language and self-reflective structures, the breakdown of temporal and spatial frameworks of narrative, the undermining of traditional fictional conventions, the parodic or pastiche-like use of previous texts, the

framing device of story-within-story. (Sanehide & Ken, 1997, p.514)

This break with conventional narrative structures, such as the use of fantasy, was something that was disliked in traditional Japanese Literature. Back in the Tokugawa period, from 1600-1868, 'this sort of obviously fictional writing was looked down upon as vulgar by the elite' (Napier 1993, p.14). However, in Japan, as well as internationally, the idea of a fantasy world which included elements of the oriental became a popular symbol in postmodern literature, something which Susan J Napier has explored in her study of *The Fantastic in Japanese Literature*. '[t]o its own people, and to many non-Japanese observers as well, Japan seemed to embody both the dreams and nightmares of the twentieth century' (Napier 1993, p.3).

As Napier points out, one only has to look at Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* or William Gibson's *Neuromancer* to see Japan as a utopia/dystopia which is 'both "explosive" and "seductive"':

The Japanese themselves have created memorably bleak fantasy scenarios about their future. From the turn of the century Japanese readers and writers eagerly embraced the science fiction genre, but celebrations of Japanese modernisation are few. Instead, dystopian visions of technology run amok and social and psychological collapse have been a consistent thread throughout twentieth century Japanese science fiction. (Napier 1993, p.3)

The inclusion of a dystopian futuristic cityscape, which was strongly influenced by Japan,



and in particular Tokyo, has been one of the characteristics of postmodern science fiction literature and film. Japan has become the paradigmatic location when searching for a technologically advanced, futuristic, location, just as the Middle East, according to Edward Said, is seen as the ideal location of the mystical Other. While Japan may be seen as the location of the postmodern future, we must look at its postmodern present in order to get a better view of what postmodernism really means in global contemporary society, rather than just taking into account the current Western experience.

### **1.3 Chronicling a new postmodern experience**

While postmodern theory is something that has been traditionally associated with a Western experience, I feel that Murakami's work helps to challenge this traditionalist perspective, and offers us a more contemporary perspective on what postmodernism means in our international, media-saturated world. While one of the major theorists on postmodernity, Linda Hutcheon, said she regards it as a 'primarily European and American' cultural phenomenon (Hutcheon 1988, p.4); however, I would have to disagree, because I feel it is better described as a first world experience, which is not necessarily restricted to just America and Europe, but can be seen to include all first world cities, East

and West. With the onset of social media, and the recognisable growth of a common, often American style, pop-culture, the first world experience is rapidly becoming an instantly shared one, and it is this shared aspect of postmodern culture which is captured in the literature of Murakami. I would contend that this traditional view of the Orient, described by Edward Said as one of the 'most recurring images of the Other', would unfairly disenfranchise so many nations and individuals from what is a late capitalist, technologically influenced experience (Said 2009, p.24). There is a definite argument as to whether such a postmodern is benign or malign or both, but this is not the issue here. The point at issue in my study is that the consumer in Tokyo shares a huge percentage of the experiences of the consumer in New York or Paris or London. This is an issue taken up by Rebecca Suter in the introduction to her book *The Japanisation of Modernisation: Haruki Murakami between Japan and the United States*:

The concepts of modernity, modernism, and postmodernism, as we will see, have been subject to a number of varied and often contradictory definitions. However, while studying ongoing debates on these questions, I was struck by the fact that, despite the nuance and complexity that has been brought to these debates, these theoretical concepts still tend to be mainly West-centred, making it difficult to apply such concepts to non-western cultures. This apparent disconnect would seem to call for a broader perspective. (Suter 2008, p.2)

The reluctance to include Japan, which differs completely from many of its East Asian

neighbours, is, I would maintain, a form of neo-Orientalism, and is inaccurate.

We only have to look at postmodern literature to see the similarities of mood between a writer like Don DeLillo and Murakami. Their stories are both set in the country of their birth, but display a similar sense of longing and a lack of connection to their society. Yet as Murakami is not Western, the postmodern feeling that he details in his novels has been, to date, not completely critiqued in any academic discussion about what postmodernism means on an international level. What I believe is missing in the critical commentary to date is the link he has created between the East and the West with his novels, which suggests that postmodernism is a contemporary paradigm which is not bounded or limited by geographical borders:

No such conflict between Japan and the West exists in the works of Haruki Murakami, arguably Japan's most popular novelist. Whereas the characters in early twentieth-century fiction could and usually did choose traditional Japanese ways, Murakami knows that no such choice is possible now. Japan has come too far. If a conflict exists, his characters are not engaged in or ever aware of it. So enmeshed as they in the forms of western and particularly American, culture that they accept these forms as integral to contemporary Japanese life. (Loughman 1997, p.87)

Current arguments suggest that postmodernism is very influenced by the west and Western culture, and that Japan has to some extent been colonised by Western culture, whereas I would argue that postmodernism that has colonised segments of both the East

and the West, with its own capitalist, isolating characteristics. So when Celeste Loughman talks about how Murakami's characters do not choose traditional Japanese ways, but instead favour a more Western approach to life, I believe she is somewhat mistaken. What in fact has happened is that they have 'enmeshed' themselves in a postmodern approach that includes some elements of Western culture, but nonetheless contains the same feelings and sense of alienation that all postmodern characters feel, regardless of location.

If Lyotard is correct in saying that the postmodern 'produces the feeling that there is something unrepresentable,' and thus creates a gap between what is experienced and what can be imagined, then for Western theorists, the ability to explain what is happening in the postmodern paradigm could be limited by a Western-influenced imagination. To counter this, one needs to take into account Lyotard's suggestion that we should 'invent allusions to what is conceivable but not presentable' (Lyotard 1992, p.15). If the postmodern is unrepresentable, it is only because we are limited by our Orientalism, and by our inability to conceive a similar shared experience in the East. We need, as Lyotard has said, to 'invent illusions' such as this to explore this unrepresentable feeling or atmosphere of the postmodern in order to understand it further and better.

Postmodernism's fluid boundaries mean that the traditional borders have to be

broken down, be they grand narratives, or geographical limits. If what Lyotard claims is correct, namely that postmodernism is the condition of 'knowledge on the most highly developed societies' (Lyotard 1984, p.xxv) and, as such, that it affects and infects every aspect of our lives in 'highly developed societies' in the West and the East, then we must find some ways to account for this new conversation between the Occident and the Orient. Through postmodern literature in translation we need to establish a new space for the cross-cultural exchange that is happening, especially in the work of Haruki Murakami.

The traditional idea of postmodernism is problematised by Murakami, and as Rebecca Suter has pointed out, by Japan itself, through its recent pursuance of a form of cultural imperialism 'problematises the common Western-centred vision of globalisation' (Suter 2008, p.4). While Suter locates Murakami between America and Japan, in Matthew Chozick's article 'De-exoticizing Haruki Murakami's Reception', he argues that locating him in America or Japan is impossible:

To suggest that Murakami could even be Japanese or could even be American is to conceptualize identity based on a nationalistic paradigm that may no longer hold much value. After all, in Murakami's world, Colonel Sanders is a pimp and a Chunichi Dragon fan. (Chozick 2008, pp.72-73)

Chozick is correct in saying that Murakami is neither Western nor Eastern, he is in fact

existing in the unrepresentable, in the liminal postmodern space. He calls Murakami's work, and in particular *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, 'almost universally "foreign", while at the same time universally accessible' (Chozick 2008, p.64). While Chozick deals with Murakami in relation to a binary opposition of location America/Japan, he does say at one point that classifying Murakami as either American or Japanese is difficult as 'he may represent a new cultural plurality that cannot be easily fit into common historical conceptions of national identity or literary canons' (Chozick 2008, p.65). I think the difficulty Chozick has in classifying Murakami comes down to the lack of acceptance or understanding of the universality of the postmodern experience, and agree that Murakami represents this new cultural plurality of which Chozick speaks. While critics argue over where he belongs, either in the American, Western, Japanese or Eastern cannon, they fail to realise that Murakami's work provides us with a paradigm of a shared postmodern space that depicts a first world experience that cannot be pinpointed to a distinct geographical location, but rather to a postmodern mood that transcends such barriers. In other words, the very fact that he problematises paradigms of belonging is part of his postmodern style of writing and thinking.

Japan itself, as Suter explains, also faces a similar categorisation difficulty. She

says that historically 'Japan could not be easily integrated into [a Western] configuration of the world: it did not fit in the binary schema of a modern West and a non-modern non-West' (Suter 2008, p.19). Using the work of Neil Harris, who analyses American images of Japan in the late 19th and early 20th century, Suter explains that there was a 'fundamental desire to prove Japan's backwardness in order to reinstate America's role as an advanced world power' (Suter 2008, p.28). This again strengthens the idea that historically Japan has been subjected to Edward Said's idea of Orientalism, a process which continues today, as exemplified by the claim that postmodernism is a 'primarily European and American' cultural phenomenon (Hutcheon 1988, p.4). Murakami's writing incorporates both the traditional modernist view of the exotic orient, as well as the universality of the postmodern perspective. This new interstice that has emerged as a result of his style of writing has left critics traditionally trying to locate him in America or Japan, or in a space between these two locations, rather than in a shared first world/postmodern space. Chizock has said that he exists 'in a gulf between two cultures', yet suggests that he may 'represent a new cultural plurality that cannot be easily fit into common historical conceptions of national identity or literary canons'. However, Chizock seems to only take into account two cultures in which to locate him, either America, Japan

or a space that is neither (Chizock 2008, p.65). Similar to the gaps within postmodern theory, this return to the metanarrative of America or the East, does not take into account all of the first world cultures that have experienced the postmodern condition. The inability to locate Murakami precisely is the result of postmodernity, and while Chozick agrees that to 'suggest that Murakami could even be Japanese or could even be American is to conceptualize identity based on a nationalistic paradigm that may no longer hold much value', however he does not go as far as to propose a new space for Murakami's writing that is neither Japanese or American but first world postmodern (Chozick 2008, pp.72-73).

The study of Murakami as a writer who displays an internationally recognisable postmodern feeling in his work, challenges that viewpoint and will only broaden our theories of postmodernism.

## **1.4 Murakami's Postmodern Worlds**

While it is true that Murakami is a Japanese writer who writes in Japanese, the cultural sensibility that he draws on, the music, and the films that appear in his works, and the urban way of life that he depicts are all of a nature that cannot be attributed to any single place or people, drifting and circulating as they do in this globalised world. (Yomota 2008, pp.34-35)

Mapping that sense of marginalisation, very much associated with the current generation



due to their living in a culture where there is a lack of a clear identity and an inability to connect, the works of author Haruki Murakami capture the postmodern condition of his readers. The fragmented stories, which intertwine with parental relationships, historical events, the surreal and the search for belonging, embody the theories of Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Linda Hutcheon:

It is obvious that there are certain elements in Murakami's works which are generally noted to be expressive of a postmodern cultural trend. The transformation of reality into images, the 'used-up-ness' of image linked with the notion of the pastiche, the dominance of nostalgia themes and of historical amnesia all of which we find in Jameson's description of the postmodern. (Ellis 1995, p.146)

His anti-heroes, Kafka Tamura, Toru Okada and the unnamed narrator of *A Wild Sheep's Chase*, referred to as Boku (the Japanese for 'I'), are all searching for something that requires them to leave the real behind in search of answers. Murakami's fragmented worlds are full of questions, and he uses magic realism, humour, alienation and the struggle against society in his prose to demonstrate recognition of, and an affinity with, the postmodern condition as described by Jameson and Baudrillard.

Estranged relationships with parents and history are juxtaposed with weak sexual connections with the opposite gender. Failed marriages, broken relationships, and fractured parental bonds, as well as these hollow sexual encounters, are scattered

throughout the works of Murakami, with the female in his work generally being represented as an indistinct Other. The characters come to realise that they are no longer dwelling in the real but stuck in a world of representations of images, as Boku tells his business partner:

It's the same whether we eat margarine or don't. Dull translation jobs or fraudulent copy, it's basically the same. Sure we're tossing out fluff, but tell me, where does anyone deal in words with substance? C'mon now, there's no honest work anywhere. Just like there's no honest breathing or honest pissing. (Murakami 2003, p.49)

Murakami's anti-heroes emulate the major concerns of the era. Their actions, struggles, and journeys for identity and connection are filled with the 'misery of happiness' (Jameson 1991, p.280), and they are played out in a 'gigantic simulacrum' of real relationships (Baudrillard 1994, p.6). His fractured protagonists work to forge an identity while 'distancing themselves from all extreme rationalisation, emotionality, totalisation and individualisation, favouring instead indifference and detachment' (Fuminobu 2005, p.8). As Patricia Welch points out, 'nothing is obviously wrong with their lives, but something is amiss. Many try to fill their only vaguely sensed longing through mindless repetitive action and consumerism' (Welch 2005, p.56). His protagonists know the misery of happiness of which Jameson speaks, and they undertake a journey to a centre of their identity, which

might never be reached.

His work is both internationally relevant, as well as representative of contemporary Japan, making it an important contribution to a global postmodern literature. His books are internationally recognised as significant for their portrayal of a multicultural postmodern society:

Among the various Japanese postmodern novelists, the most important and the most popular is Murakami Haruki [...] on the surface these are all traditional 'seek and find stories. However, they are all filled with a lyrical but desperate sense of loss. (Sanehide & Ken, 1997, p.513)

In Japan, as Kawakami points out, Murakami's work depicts a society at pains to come to terms with a new identity, forging it within its newly multicultural and Western-influenced consumer society:

Murakami's work well represents the current cognitive map of Tokyo, and Japan, where the individual's social ties, once easily attainable – or even taken for granted-by identifying oneself as a member of i.e. (family), *kaisha* (company), or *kuni* (the nation-state) – have become less sustainable. (Kawakami 2002, p.333)

If he is, as Rebecca Suter has called him, 'a cultural mediator between Japan and the United States' (Suter 2008, p.1), then the use of fantasy in his work is the quintessential characteristic of this international postmodernism. His work is proof that postmodernism, through literature, is internationally interchangeable. Taking a text like Philip K. Dick's

novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, and comparing it to *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of The World*, suggests that Murakami is making an internationally important contribution to postmodern literature, and he is doing this from Japan. Napier correctly believes that *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* is one of the most important fantasy novels to come from Japan, with its embodiment of Western characteristics, balanced against an incorporation of the confused culture of present day Japan:

Perhaps the archetypal fantasy for contemporary Japan is Murakami Haruki's *Sekai no owari to hadoboirudo wandarando* (1985) (trans. *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*). Told in a style that mixes Raymond Chandler with *The Forbidden Planet* (and this a splendid reflection of the assimilation of Western influences on modern Japanese culture) the book portrays a future Japan, which has, again, been abandoned by any sort of guardian spirit. But unlike the implicit decision to continue living in the abandoned modern world expressed by the 'I' of Soseki's world, the I in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* ultimately decides to leave the outer high tech world of modern late twentieth century Japan to retreat into a fantasy Utopia inside his own mind. (Napier 1993, p.4)

*A Wild Sheep Chase* was his first novel translated into English, and in it, Murakami creates the ultimate in postmodern anti-heroes, a man so completely unaware of who he is, that he does not even have a name. Boku is a copywriter who leads, as Fuminobu says, a comfortable life, not because he is a man of wealth, but because he is 'free from ambition' (Fuminobu 2005, p.25). After his wife leaves him, he is sent on a search for a sheep which

controls the Government, bringing along a female companion with whom he is unable to forge a real relationship:

The absurd image of the ruler of Japan possessed by a sheep's will constitutes a poignant metaphor for an ideological structure that governs, and even creates, a certain historical time. Sensei's ailment and subsequent death in postmodernity allegorically signal the end of the utilitarian value of right-wing ideology in Japan. (Kawakami 2002, p.317)

Questioning authority, Japanese history, and the current generation's lack of concern, *A*

*Wild Sheep Chase* offers a close reading of postmodern Japan in the 1980s:

I don't know how to put it, but I just can't get it through my head that here and now is really here and now. Or that I am really me. It doesn't quite hit home. It's always been this way. (Murakami 2003, p.142)

In an interview with *The Paris Review*, Murakami said that the reason this was the first of his novels which he allowed to be translated into English was because he felt that he wanted to 'deconstruct' the Japanese novel, and that his first two novels, which were very successful, were part of a 'learning process'. He explained: 'I consider *A Wild Sheep Chase* to be the true beginning of my style' (Wray 2009, p.352). As a starting point for Murakami as a postmodern writer, *A Wild Sheep Chase* is the perfect position from which to observe the author's style grow and develop. Its translation into English establishes the moment when Murakami crossed the East-West boundary, to become a postmodern writer

of international importance.

Critics agree that this book has a universal postmodern theme, one which Fuminobu believes incorporates aspects of Lyotard's seminal text *The Postmodern Condition*. He argues that *A Wild Sheep Chase* deals with 'the crisis of the legitimacy of rationality and the attack on the modernist "grand narrative" (Lyotard 1979) together with its obsession with progress' (Fuminobu 2009, p.20). Therefore, this novel offers the perfect starting point for a study of Murakami, and how his personal observation of postmodern society develops over time.

In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, the protagonist Toru undertakes a journey 'in search of his missing wife, his own identity, and the forgotten past of the nation, exploiting a variety of styles - surreal, fantastic, mysterious, and hard-boiled' (Fukushima 2003, p.40).

Toru asks as he lies beside his wife of six years if it possible to ever know a person:

Is it possible, finally, for one human being to achieve perfect understanding of another [...] I might be standing in the entrance of something big, and inside lay a world that belonged to Kumiko alone, a vast world that I had never known [...] Would I ever see the rest? Or would I grow old and die without ever really knowing her? If that was all that lay in store for me, then what was the point of this married life I was leading? What was the point of my life at all if I was spending it in bed with an unknown companion?' (Murakami 2003, pp.30-31)

It is in this novel that Murakami truly brings the weight of Japanese history to bear on

modern society. Detailing horrific incidents from Japan's past, Murakami will not allow his readers to forget what went before, and he encourages analysis of the past in order for a future to appear.

*Kafka on the Shore* is one of Murakami's finest postmodern works, as it brings together traditional myths in the form of the Oedipus myth, Japan's post war past, fractured parental bonds, the inability to live life to the full, and characters who cannot find their true identities. Only through dealing with the past, and establishing enduring relationships with others, can his characters actually move on from the static present. As Hoshino says in response to Nakata, who notes that he feels like a library without any books, '[w]e're all pretty much empty, don't you think, you eat, take a dump, do your crummy job to get your lousy pay and get laid occasionally if you're lucky. What else is there?' (Murakami 2005, p.329)

In his own life, Murakami emulates many of the postmodern characteristics of his novels. He too broke with the tradition of his parents, who were teachers of traditional Japanese Literature, and studied the contemporary novel, developing a love for American writers, especially that which reflected the movement from modernism to postmodernism. His works often echo those of Raymond Chandler, showing that he can take a style and

adapt it with his comic manner, thus reflecting Jameson's ideas on parody and pastiche (Rubin 2005, p.81). He himself has said that Raymond Chandler and Franz Kafka are major influences on him (Wray 2009, p.348).

His own views on marriage and relationships are also important when compared to the struggles of his characters, many of whom have broken marriages. Quoted in Jay Rubin's *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, he has said:

For a long time after I got married, I used to have this vague idea that the purpose of marriage was for each partner to fill in what the other lacked. Lately, though, after 25 years of marriage, I've come to see it differently, that marriage is perhaps rather an ongoing process of each partner exposing what the other lacks [...] Finally only the person himself can fill in what he is missing. It's not something another person can do for you. And in order to do the filling in, you yourself have to discover the size and location of the hole. (Rubin 2005, p.211)

Murakami, like his characters, has realised that in order to know the self and the function which one holds within society, one has to engage with three main areas of formation of self: identity, influence of history and relationships. When his characters begin their journey, they must address these issues, in order to find answers. They must look within themselves to find the real, identify that within others, and then understand how history has influenced our pathway through life, rather than taking a postmodern approach, and ignoring the past, and living in an isolated present.



## Chapter 2

### The Condition of the Contemporary:

#### Murakami's Postmodern Identity Chronicle

No one here is alone, satellites in every home. Yes the universal's here, here for everyone. Every paper that you read says tomorrow is your lucky day. Well, here's your lucky day. (Blur 'The Universal')

Searching for identity within the postmodern world seems to have become a preoccupation for the postmodern protagonist. As Damon Albarn says, no one here is alone, there are satellites in every home, but due to the commodification of the individual by the system, the unique elements of our existence seem to be disappearing: so while there are multiple senses of connectedness, electronically and wirelessly, there is a profound lack of actual intersubjective connection. The global populous has been segregated and categorised into different consuming-units, in order to increase consumption, and weaken autocratic revolts. The role of the individual has been attenuated in capitalist ideals, meaning that we

as individuals relate more to multi-faceted groups, and as a result are defined by them. The proletariat is continuously being re- and sub-categorised, leaving little certainty for the individual looking for a place within the many new groupings available. These new multi-mini-narratives create a difficulty when searching for the self, leaving the individual looking to many sources when searching for a single form of identity, especially when singularity is the model of identity with which we are all familiar. The postmodern world of high-postmodernism has become, as Baudrillard says, constructed to neutralise and pacify us as group, giving us a false sense of belonging (Baudrillard 1994, p.48). The individual belongs to everything and nothing simultaneously.

As Haruki Murakami's antiheroes come to realise, there is so sense of self in the imagery of our late capitalist lifestyle. His protagonists, predominantly male, are all stuck in an apathetic rut, and when they are compelled to act outside their commodified realm, they are forced to address the issue of who they are, and what their life means. As Boku, in *A*

*Wild Sheep Chase* tells his girlfriend:

I don't know how to put it, but I just can't get it through my head that here and now is really here and now. Or that I am really me. It doesn't quite hit home. It's always been this way. Only much later on does it ever come together. For the last ten years it's been like this. (Murakami 2003, p.142)

Boku, the unnamed I, embodies the search for identity within postmodernism, and his

inability to find a stable footing within the constant stream of images presented to him as part of his daily life, is something Anthony Elliott explains is an issue for those of us in the inter and multi-national postmodern world. As already noted in Chapter 1, Elliot discusses the 'disorientating effects' of society which leave the individual without a 'stable ground' (Elliot 2007, p.138)

This disorientation, however, is not just limited to Japan and Murakami's protagonists, or the West, as described by Elliot; it is in fact an international issue. And if we take Celeste Loughman's hypothesis that Murakami's characters are 'universal stock figures of contemporary literature', then these characters are representations of reality, a postmodern depiction of postmodern society. In that sense, their 'lonely, fragmented [...] mechanical, purposeless existence' epitomizes the issues facing the search for contemporary identity, where we have become 'merely' our functions (Loughman 1997, p.88). His characters merge the East and the West, as location and mood combine to create this international postmodern condition. Existing in the predominantly era of high postmodernism they are doubly postmodern; culturally and consciously.

The protagonists of Murakami's fiction are disorientated and lost, and while this sense of disillusionment appears in their lives, they have become laodicean, or half-

hearted, towards solving the issues at the heart of their *ennui*. They seem to wallow in their untenable existence, a postmodern reaction to the condition of the contemporary.

Instead, they fill their lives with unimportant tasks, dwelling over shopping, cooking, ironing or as Hantke points out, mundane household chores. It seems they ignore the reality of the situation they are faced with, favouring routine, in the face of marriage breakdown, failed careers and even their imminent death:

Even when un- or underemployed, Murakami's Japanese middle-class Everyman remains strangely unconcerned with money, career, or social prestige. That peculiar lethargy latent in Hammett's Sam Spade or Chandler's Philip Marlowe is brought into the foreground with Murakami's protagonists. They derive pleasure from the minutiae of small household chores, like ironing a shirt or cooking pasta-activities that are explicitly coded as domestic or feminine. Sometimes they are deserted by wives or girlfriends, divorced, abandoned without explanation, or demoted to the status of househusbands after leaving their jobs or being fired. They are slow to get involved in the mysteries life deposits at their doorsteps and often seem incapable of explaining why they persist on the course that has taken them out of their comfortable, aimless daily routines. (Hantke 2007, p.5)

It is the case that for Murakami's protagonists, life is 'meaningless', but as Fuminobu has said, they tend to disregard this fact by filling their time up with these trivial tasks, creating the illusion that they are too busy to deal with the truth, or to see what is happening around them (Fuminobu 2005, p.25). It is, as Patricia Welch has pointed out a 'vaguely sensed longing' and their attachment to 'mindless repetitive action and consumerism' is not giving

them the sense of identity which they desire, as what they believe to be 'identity' is largely a by-product of ideology that supports the interests of the state capitalism (Welch 2005, p.56).

The postmodern mood experienced by these characters is one which isolated them from themselves and from others. This mood, which governs their existence, creates a difficulty in self-understanding. Not only do they exist in high postmodernism, as explained in Chapter 1, but they also are experiencing Lyotard's postmodern condition despite living in the East. I would maintain that Murakami's characters display the typical signs of what has been seen, heretofore, as a primarily Western condition. The postmodern condition does not discriminate based on location, time period, or as we have seen in *1Q84*, gender.

Murakami does not allow his characters to wallow in their narcissistic coma, however, as they are forced to undertake journeys which encourage them to look directly at their own lives and see who they are, and have become, while also allowing them to find some form of the real in their world dominated by imagery. They display a lack of interest in finding a solution, something typical of postmodern response, which can be seen as a reaction to the modernist ideals, as Fuminobu points out: 'the lack of ambition and competitiveness displayed by Murakami's characters reflects an antithetical attitude to

modernist ideals that force people to progress in order to reach an aim based on rationality' (Fuminobu 2005, p.26). Rationality is no longer relevant in light of their fractured realities and identities.

Over the years, Murakami's protagonists have become more and more successful in finding a positive solution to their situation. Following the work chronologically, it seems Murakami himself has come to a greater understanding of the postmodern situation for the individual. From his earlier novels, the untrustworthy nature of the system left the protagonist under the impression that any form of direct access to reality was not entirely possible, although finding a truer version of the self was partially attainable. However, while Murakami moved between the USA and Japan, the Tokyo Underground attacks in 1995, and the Kobe earthquake in the same year, left him personally searching for a similar solid ground to his characters. In his interview for *The Paris Review*, Murakami explains his own sense of displacement, living as he was between American and Japan:

During the four years of writing *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, I was living in the U.S. as a stranger. That strangeness was always following me like a shadow and it did the same to the protagonist of the novel. Come to think of it, if I wrote in Japan it might have become a very different book.

My strangeness while living in the U.S. differed from the strangeness I feel while in Japan. It was more obvious and direct in the U.S. and that have me a much clearer recognition of myself. The process of writing this novel was a process similar to making

myself naked, in a way. (Wray 2009, p.346)

He returned to Japan after nine years in the wake of the Sarin gas attacks, and after the publication of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, undertook a collection of interviews with victims and members of the responsible Aum Cult, published in a complete form as *Underground*. These events seem to have had a major influence on his protagonists, who have come to find some sort of reality in the representations of their worlds, both through forging a real sense of identity, and also through delving into the past of their country. Even though these snatched discoveries are only fleeting, Murakami has come to realise that they do in fact exist, within the simulacra of society. This is an opinion shared by Patricia Welch, in 2005, who also seemed to notice this slow change in Murakami's outlook, as seen through his novels:

His work seemed to capture the sense of disillusionment, disconnection and confusion that lingered close to a placid surface even during halcyon days. In recent works, Murakami no longer seems content to simply capture these feeling; rather, he attempts to explore their origins and demands greater engagement from his still somewhat passive characters. (Welch 2005 p.55-56)

Quoted in Rubin's *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, he talks about how these two incidents had a major impact on him, persuading him to return to Japan:

I spent my last year abroad in a sort of fog when two major catastrophes struck Japan: the Great Osaka-Kobe earthquake and the Tokyo gas attack ... [These were] two of

the gravest tragedies in Japan's post-war history. It is no exaggeration to say that there was a marked change in the Japanese consciousness 'before' and 'after' these events. These two catastrophes will remain embedded in our psyche as two milestones in our life as a people. (Rubin 2005, pp.237-238)

Murakami's own life has been a major influence on his characters, and on the journeys they make, and so it is no wonder that these journeys have changed, developed and evolved since he was first published. The son of Japanese Literature teachers, and the grandchild of a Buddhist priest, he has always embraced an international culture, and does not practice any religion. As Rubin points out, he has discarded any metanarratives in favour of his own individual style:

Somewhere along the way, he became a stubborn individualist. He has constantly avoided groups in a country where the group is the norm. Even writers have their select groups in Japan, but Murakami has never been a member. (Rubin 2005, p.15-16)

In his running memoir, *What I talk about when I talk about Running*, he discusses the desire he has for isolation in his own life, something that aided him in his goals to become a writer and a long distance runner:

Especially for someone in my line of work, solitude is, more or less, an inevitable circumstance. Sometimes however this sense of isolation, like acid spilling out of a bottle, can eat away at a person's heart and dissolve it. You could see it, too, as a kind of double edge sword. It protects me, but at the same time steadily cuts away at me from the inside. (Murakami 2009, pp.18-19)

His own protagonists have the same issue, as they have isolated themselves from life,



from others and from emotions and they too must come to the same realisation as Murakami.

They must accept that difference exists and this lack of understanding, as he says, will bring emotional pain:

If you think about it, it's precisely because people are different to others that they're able to create their own independent selves [...] so the fact that I'm me and no one else is one of my greatest assets. Emotional hurt is the price a person has to pay in order to be independent. (Murakami 2009, pp.18-19)

As Rubin points out, 'Murakami is always talking about this world and our ultimately indefinable place within it' (Rubin 2005, p.135). Unable to find a definite place or role or reality within this world, Murakami's characters often have to travel to the unreal world in order to find the answers for which they are looking. The issues of the identity, their real identity, cannot be bought and sold, and are therefore unavailable in a commodity-rich capitalist world:

In postmodernity representation is not conceived as a dilemma, but as an impossibility, and what can be termed a kind of cynical reason in the realm of art displaces it by way of a multiplicity of images, none of which corresponds to truth. (Jameson 2007, p.212)

Learning to value the 'unpretentious, commonplace' is also important for Murakami, and for his characters:

As each of these memories flits across my mind, I'm sure unconsciously I smile, or give a slight frown. Commonplace they might be, but the accumulation of these memories has led to one result: me. (Murakami 2009, p.6)

Like Murakami, the protagonists of his novels must come to value the commonplace, take joy in the simple things of life, like cooking a meal, and celebrate the difference of people in life. They too must remove themselves from their self-imposed isolation and interact with the world meaningfully.

In this chapter, I will follow the journey into the self of Murakami's protagonists in five of his major novels, detailing the protagonists' voyages in chronological order starting with *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, *Kafka on the Shore* and finally *1Q84*. I will explain how his fractured protagonists work to forge an identity while 'distancing themselves from all extreme rationalisation, emotionality, tantalisation and individualisation, favouring instead indifference and detachment' (Fuminobu 2005, p.8). This postmodern detachment has made identity-formation problematic, as the characters exist in a world without the traditional modernist markers of identity. When the metanarratives of patriarchy, work, marriage, education, government, family, state institutions are broken down, there are no stable identifiers for the individual. With the inclusion of a multi-layered reality, the

simulacra reflects a confused image of self back to the protagonists, and they are left wondering, like Boku/Watashi in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*, which I is the real I?

The development of Murakami's own world view had a definite effect on his novels, and in particular, on his protagonists, who, with the publishing of *A Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, were finally at a stage where they could be given a name. When we approach his most recent work *1Q84*, the role of the protagonist is shared between a man and a woman. This new departure illustrates how Murakami's view on the importance of real human interaction is vital when exploring and discovering identity. His latest work, published in Japan in April, *Colourless Tsukuru Tazaki and the Year of His Pilgrimage* focuses once more on real human interaction:

'At the beginning, I was planning to write something allusive, as in my past works, but this time I developed a great interest in expanding on real people. Then the characters started to act on their own. I was intrigued by the relationships between people,' Murakami said. (Tokyo Times 2013)

All of Murakami's characters undertake a journey or an adventure in order to discover who they are, and to reveal their identity. They search for solid identifiers of self, by making a conscious effort to step back from society and others, and by attempting to slowly peel away the postmodern layers. This process is not one they instigate, but one which is

imposed on them as a result of a task. Once they have deconstructed the unstable image-construction, they can then begin to rebuild a self-hood.

Toshiko Ellis spells this out quite clearly in his article on Japanese postmodern literature saying that '[a] typical character in Murakami's works is someone who has already come to terms with the fact that positive human interaction is in vain' (Ellis 1995, p.144) as mentioned in Chapter 1. Ellis has a negative viewpoint of the worlds that Murakami's characters inhabit, and he is partially correct because, initially, the protagonists have lost all faith in human interaction, etching out solitary lifestyles and careers. When it comes to the protagonists' search for their own true self, the search for the real within the over-simulated postmodern world, they must interact with others, and the past, solving why their relationships are so splintered to begin with. Boku of *A Wild Sheep Chase* refuses to question the failure of his marriage, or the disappearance of his new nameless girlfriend, while Watashi in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of The World* has been chosen for his job due to his independence. Boku decides to live in a world without emotion or memory rather than search for a true sense of self. With *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Toru becomes one of the first characters to really question the failure of his marriage, coming to some sort of realisation after a sustained period of self-

reflection. With Kafka Tamura, Murakami creates a character that actually chooses the journey of self-discovery and escapes to reality through subconscious awakening, and *1Q84* is one of Murakami's strongest arguments for eradicating isolation in favour of constructing valid human interaction.

What Murakami seems to be telling us, is that in order to survive and to find a future in this postmodern age, we must find our identity, develop real relationships, and come to terms with our past. He has said himself that personal relationships cannot depend on a take-take basis, where one person uses the strengths of the Other to make up for what they themselves lack, but rather, that they should benefit from the eye of the Other to see our own faults, and work to eliminate them (Rubin 2005, p.211). And as his work develops from *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982) to *A Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1994-1995) to *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), and *1Q84* (2009-2010), it becomes clear how Murakami himself views the importance of building up solid relationships, and interacting with others in a mutually beneficial way, in order to make the postmodern world meaningful:

No one can tell where 'I' leaves off and others begin. The maze of mind will always stand between us and the real. But the inescapable cavern of the brain leaves a single way out: the empathetic leap, transnational commerce, the mirroring neuron. We can never know the world, but in our shared bewilderment, we can know each other. As the Schoolteacher writes in *Kafka on the Shore* 'As individuals each of us is extremely

isolated, while at the same time we are all linked by a prototypical memory'. (Powers 2008, p.54)

Boku, from *A Wild Sheep Chase*, is the perfect example of this inability to find the real within his own identity; like the postmodern world in which he lives, he is not sure of the reality of either this world or of himself. The protagonists of Murakami's world have come to realise that they must find their real identity in order to forge more than an impartial life in these postmodern times:

His people live in a rich society which they find wanting. They show its insufficiency as a source of fulfilment by, for example, withdrawing from the race for success and riches or attempting to retrieve a lost self. Murakami shows that neither materialism itself nor the preference for Western popular culture is the problem. The problem is that that's all there is. The idealism which has disappeared has not been replaced with anything else as a source of meaning and self-fulfilment. (Loughman 1997, p.90)

By the time we reach *1Q84*, the importance of this shared existence is even more pronounced, as Aomame and Tengo's journey is not only a search for the self, but a search for each other and for a sense of real connection with each other. In *1Q84* the journey and the deconstruction of the representation of identity is dependent on the Other. It becomes a search for connection with the self and with the Other.

## 2.1 A Wild Sheep Chase

Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase* is the ultimate postmodern anti-hero. He lives alone after a failed marriage that he did not try and salvage; he works in a job that does not interest him; he embarks on a sexual relationship with a woman based on his fascination with her ears; his friendships are fragmented; and only during his college years did he feel some sense of reality of emotions and experience. Murakami goes as far as not naming his protagonist, showing that Boku, the 'I', is so ubiquitous in postmodern world that giving him a name would only take away from his societal compartmentalisation, and allow him some sort of identity:

Indeed, it was not until more than ten years into his career that Murakami gave his narrator a definite name at all, and most supporting characters, when named, were called something unconventional, often something derived from their function. (Strecher 1999, p.266)

Neither Boku, nor his new girlfriend, are given a name, and throughout the novel, the problem of knowing and naming continues. Boku is unable to find anything definite; he calls his best friend 'Rat', and is unable to name own cat. This is something that seems unbelievable to the limousine driver he meets on his journey to meet the 'Boss':

'I don't call it,' I said. 'It's just there.' 'But he's not a lump just sitting there. He moves about by his own will no? Seems mighty strange that something that moves by its own will doesn't have a name.' (Murakami 2003, p.152)

As Strecher says, Murakami is pushing the boundaries of self and Other and

problematizing the ideal of identity for the reader, helping us to understand the issue his protagonists have with forging their own identity:

Murakami's implicit question is, always, how can the first-person protagonist forge connections with an Other (conscious or unconscious) and thereby identify himself, prove to himself that he even exists? (Strecher 1999, p.267)

Like Boku, the cat just exists, and despite being able to theoretically move around of his own free will, he does not have a name and surrounds himself with unnamed things. Without a name there is no association with other names or with history. It is a real break from realist fiction, as the lack of naming moves the world further into the surreal, and further from any modernist and realist tradition. As Rebecca Suter suggests, this is a distinctly postmodern element:

Murakami's play with names is another means by which the texts foreground their own textuality and problematize the distinction between reality and fiction. (Suter 2008, p.110)

The characters cannot be segregated because of their names, nor can they find any sense of name-related identity. There is only the present, the here and now of the unnamed person. Bourgeois identifiers such as class and location are no longer relevant; the unnamed person is an unstable entity, an unfastened individual. Those who do exist around him are often nicknamed, like his friend Rat or J, but no real name is given to these



characters, which is symbolic of the system as robbing them of a true or individual identity. Therefore, they cannot be really named, as in effect at this stage in their journey, they are a false representation of themselves. Without a name, they cannot be linked to anything specific, or to any sense of individuality. The unnamed person is a commodified unit of the system; without a name he or she is indistinguishable as an individual; without a name, they are further isolated from the markers of identity. Jameson has said that the individual 'is a social category not necessarily present in all kinds of societies', and in Japanese society this was a process complicated by the interaction with Western society. Thus, forming a true sense of identity, in the postmodern age, has become doubly difficult for Murakami's characters in Japan (Jameson 2007, p.203). This issue of individualism is something Iwamoto deals quite well with in relation to *A Wild Sheep Chase*:

Boku may well be viewed as an exemplar of the diffusion of the ego, the dispersal of the self, the death of the subject, that are an integral part of postmodern discourse. [...] In Japan the issue has been taken up as a problem of *shutaisei*, a word not readily defined that came into existence in the pre-World War II period to deal with the Western idea of individualism which entered the country in the nineteenth century, when its modernization process began [...] *shutaisei* is a compound made up of three characters – *shu* (subject, subjective, sovereign, main), *tai* (body, substance, situation), and *sei* (quality, feature) - which Japanese-English dictionaries define as 'subjectivity; subject hood; independence; identity.' (Iwamoto 1993, p.297)

For Boku, who surrounds himself with nameless friends, the *shutaisei* has come to mean

an isolated independence rather than an engaged identity which depends on the binary opposition of self and Other. His inability to form a true identity can be seen to be as a result of two causes: firstly, because the postmodern society in which he lives depends on a veiled reality of images and representations which he seems to embody, and secondly, because the idea of any individual identity or *shutaisei* within such a period of multi-mini-narratives is nearly impossible, so any solid definition of such an important term seems inconceivable. When the ideals of planned obsolescence are applied to all of the material objects that are postmodern essentials for representations of life, then what hope has the individual when creating and developing that *shutaisei*.

The thinness of Boku's *shutaisei* is exposed by the absence of an interiority and in his relations with other people [...] consciously or unconsciously, Boku tries to escape the self-other confrontation by viewing others as object, no doubt because his own subjective self is wanting in depth. (Iwamoto 1993, p.297)

An individual like Rat, however, who shows strength of *shutaisei*, is seen as both a danger to, and a function of, the system. Rat has been chosen by the sheep as the perfect prophet for the postmodern Japanese. His knowledge of and involvement in the student revolts in the 1960's gave him a revolutionary aura, and his counter-culture lifestyle made him an engaged role model for the current age: he was an active apathetic that could be admired. However, in order to avoid the unified dictatorial government planned by the

sheep, Rat must destroy his life to allow the population to avoid such scenario, where individuality could become globalised, like a capitalist commodity, to be bought, sold and controlled. He can only escape this 'culture of consumption', the machine, as described by Jameson, by committing suicide (Jameson 1991, p.206):

With his third work, *Hitsuji o meguru bōken*, [*A Wild Sheep Chase*] however, Murakami begins to portray the Japanese state as a sinister presence that seeks to promulgate a sense of collective identity, a dictatorship over the mind, among members of contemporary Japanese society. The implicit assumption here—probably a historically correct one—is that the disappearance of the student radicals after 1970 was due either to their mass-assimilation into the 'system' of Japanese society or, alternatively, their destruction by that system, which is intolerant of the individual. This has become the theme in virtually all Murakami literature, fiction and non-fiction, since 1982. In every novel he writes, a world of perfect contentment is offered to the protagonist (or, in the first work, to Rat) in exchange for his individuality. (*Strecher* 1999, p.279)

The connotations associated with the name 'Rat' also leave us questioning if Rat has betrayed postmodern society, or his friends or his identity. Is he an informer for the system or against the system? And if so, who has named him? Rat seems to have defected from the system, through his suicide and his reincarnation, and subsequent visit with Boku. The information he provides helps Boku to complete the journey of postmodern identitarian deconstruction. He 'rats' on the system. Boku begins to shed his postmodern representations of self, and leaves them behind in the cabin.

This struggle to find a stable identity, to understand how selfhood is created in

postmodern society, has been an issue for Boku throughout his life, as he tells his nameless girlfriend:

I don't know how to put it, but I just can't get it through my head that here and now is really here and now. Or that I am really me. It doesn't quite hit home. It's always been this way. Only much later on does it ever come together. For the last ten years it's been like this. (Murakami 2003, p.142)

Boku is struggling to find anything solid within his life; the journey that he has undergone has made him aware of the existence of alternative realities, therefore making him question the representations around him. Their fluctuating nature makes him query his own selfhood, and the representations within it. The images are moving so quickly and so fluidly between the boundaries of reality and the surreal that he cannot process the information quickly enough. His journey into the unreal allows Boku to find some sort of real existence for himself within his own life. His trip deeper into the countryside, gives him an opportunity to converse with his closest friend, and real companion, who is now dead. In order to get some sense of the real, he must converse with a representation of his dead friend who is an example of Baudrillard's fourth order of simulation. This gives Boku the opportunity to see the error of his own life, one from which he has isolated himself throughout his being: geographically, he is in a remote rural cottage; his wife and girlfriend have both exited from his life, and he has no real connection with his job or his life. In

order to find the true meaning, he must reengage meaningfully with life.

Having discarded the simulacra of his former confused selfhood, he then needs to come to terms with who he is, to understand his own identity, and thus to reengage meaningfully with others, and life in general, rather than existing in an isolated space outside of emotion and connection. As Boku departs the cabin, he knows he is leaving his old identity behind, and although he masquerades as a cynical, sarcastic writer, he says goodbye to his old self with a sense of postmodern realism:

I pushed the grandfather clock back in place, then went to the mirror and bid farewell to myself. 'Hope all goes well,' I said. 'Hope all goes well,' the other I said. (Murakami 2003, p.290)

This ability to identify with the Other shows that Boku can also create an identity for himself. The old Boku who he leaves behind is the binary oppositional reflection of himself; it is an image, a representation, of a real person, the real person that departs the cottage. The mirror, as Baudrillard points out, is another extension of the postmodern unreal. The image that returns Boku's glare is him, but not the real him, and it wishes him the best of luck as he departs from the unreal world to find the real in society, and therefore his own true identity:

The universe itself, taken globally, is what cannot be represented, what does not have

a possible complement in the mirror, what has no equivalence in meaning (it is as absurd to give it a meaning, a weight of meaning, as to give it weight at all). Meaning, truth, the real cannot appear except locally, in a restricted horizon, they are partial objects, partial effects of the mirror and of equivalence. All doubling, all generalisation, all passage to the limit, all holographic extension (the fancy of exhaustively taking account of this universe) makes them surface in their mockery. (Baudrillard 1994, p.74)

As Baudrillard says, the Universe cannot be represented, leaving Boku, and his unnamed compatriots without a real or a real Other against which to define themselves. Within this unreal and indefinable world, they are unable to define their true selves, because they are constantly dealing with representations of images. They struggle to get back to the real, to find a sense of identity. Boku has undergone a transformation of sorts on this journey; he has tried to discard his postmodern multi-representational identity. This task allows him to deconstruct his image-laden identity and begin some sort of rebuilding process in the hope of finding out who he really is as an individual, if this is possible.

Boku must identify the ties he has with his postmodern existence, cut them, and then seek out the real in order to forge an existence that will provide him with a satisfying outcome, rather than an unfulfilling need to gather commodities that 'can never know fulfilment' (Jameson 1991, p.202). Identifying his Other self in the mirror as he leaves the rural retreat after a period of self-reflection and isolation, is the first step in his journey into knowing the real self.

This process of repudiation which Boku has undergone, an enforced isolation, allows him to once again enter Lacan's 'mirror stage' and see himself anew. His identity prior to this process was a fiction, and as a result he was unable to know himself with any sense of reality. The dialectic between his 'self' and his image of self was so disjointed as it negotiated the multinarratives of postmodernity, that it is only when Boku revokes his postmodern self, he can then begin to see an image of an ideal self. He returns to the beginning of identity-formation, to Lacan's mirror stage, in order to see the self '*je*' and the image of self '*moi*' and create a sense of selfhood. As Glowinski explains the 'mirror stage constitutes a first structuring moment for the human subject' (Glowinski 2001, p.87). For Lacan, the '*je*' and the '*moi*' signify the subject and the ego; the self and the ideal self; the conscious and the unconscious self. In this sense, their interaction as a representation of the plural self, the postmodern self which is a separated self, and in order to understand the self within postmodernism, the protagonist must come to terms with not only the plurality of the postmodern hyperspace but also with this multi-layered self. In order to do this they must return to a stage when this split and this segregation is most pointed and obvious, specifically the mirror stage. With this return to the mirror stage, the protagonist can consolidate this plurality or recognise it and see it and therefore come to understand it.

The understanding of the segregated, plural self is a starting point in understanding the hyper-layered postmodern reality in which they live. This recognition then allows them to see the fluidity between ego and subject, between consciousness and unconscious between reality and simulacrum.

Without the multi-layered postmodern baggage of identity, Boku can see and acknowledge his reflection. No longer is the fragmented self-confronting him, one that he feels he does not know, but instead it projects a unified whole. If, as Glassner says, a 'familiar aspect of the experience of selfhood in postmodern culture is the sense that one's consciousness floats among images' (Glassner 1990, pp.228-229), then for Boku, this unified ideal self in the mirror has removed him from this floating consciousness to a more stable self on which to build his identity. The inclusion of this mirror sequence in the novel is symbolic of the rebirth of Boku and his selfhood; he is returning to knowing and identifying the self and the Other. Reaching out to his *moi* from the *je* shows a reuniting of conscious and the subconscious, a more complete self on which to form a sense of self.

As Lacan has said the function of the mirror stage is to 'establish a relationship between an organism and its reality', and the return to the mirror stage for Boku aids him in his reengagement with his environment (Lacan 2006, p.78). This allows for Boku to



move from his self-enforced isolation to a sense of a social 'I' that is once again aware of his surroundings, and the people that populate it. This re-maturation in Boku is dependent on what Lacan calls 'cultural intervention' as he begins to become conscious of a social element to the self (Lacan 2006, p.79). With a return to the mirror stage, Boku can grasp the reality of this postmodern plurality as the imaginary and symbolic combine: 'The mirror stage establishes the watershed between the imaginary and the symbolic in the moment of capture by an historic inertia' (Lacan 2006, p.54).

In her discussion of Lacan, Elizabeth Roudinesco posits that the mirror stage 'becomes a psychic or ontological operation through which a human being is made by means of identification with his fellow-being' (Roudinesco 2003, p.29). Prior to this deconstructive journey, Boku struggled to interact or connect with his fellow-being. When discussing his relationship with his ex-wife, he believes he can imagine that she never existed, the engagement with the selfhood of self, and the 'identification with his fellow-being' is missing, and his reintroduction to the mirror stage allows him to move into the second step of selfhood formation, genuinely engaging with people in his life, and forging true connections.

From the beginning of the novel, we are made aware that Boku has failed in his

attempts to establish an authentic connection with anyone in his life since his youth. The book begins with Boku's trip to a funeral of a former girlfriend, a connection formed during a time when 'the air was alive, even as everything seemed poised on the verge of collapse waiting for a push' (Murakami 2003, p.4). According to Boku, the 1960's, a period student revolts, was real living, before his contemporary postmodern life began. Boku feels he is now unable to recreate this feeling of 'the air being alive', and turns to a postmodern nostalgia for the past in the hope of refabricating some sense of modernist stability. Murakami depicts, via a cognitive map, the problematic and incompletely conceptualised relationships between the individual and society in the radically changing social climates of postmodern Japan, where 'authority' has ceased to present itself as a unified ideological entity. (Kawakami 2002, p.310)

When we are introduced to Boku in present-day Japan, he is returning to his marital home to find his wife asleep on the kitchen table, awaiting his return so she can leave their marriage. Boku knows that something is wrong when he see her, but his lack of motivation leads him to do nothing, but just look at her remarking 'she could have been asleep, could have been crying, could have been dead' (Murakami 2003, p.15). As Iwamoto points out, the conversation between them 'skirts everything that might be thought of as essential for

an understanding of their situation' (Iwamoto 1993, p.298):

I sat down opposite her and rubbed my eyes. A short ray of sunlight divided the table, me in light, her in shadow. Colourless shadow. A withered potted geranium sat on the table. Outside, someone was watering down the street. Splash on the pavement, smell of wet asphalt.

'Want some coffee?'

No reply.

So I got up and went over to grind coffee for two cups. It occurred to me after I ground the coffee that what I really wanted was ice tea. I'm forever realising things too late.

(Murakami 2003, p.15)

Boku comes to realise things too late, to realise that his wife is only a shadow to him now, and that her real self is no longer in his life. As the exchange continues, Boku and his wife say very little to each other. There is an awkwardness to their conversation, they are saying nothing, but it is obvious that the marriage is over:

'You've been waiting all this time?'

No answer.

The room had steamed up from the boiling water and strong sun. I shut the window and switched on the air conditioner, then set the two mugs of coffee on the table.

'Drink,' I said, reclaiming my own voice.

Silence.

'Be better if you drank something.'

It was thirty seconds before she raised her head slowly, evenly, and gazed absently at the potted plant. A few fine strands of hair lay plastered against her dampened cheeks, an aura of wetness about her.

'Don't mind me,' she said. 'I didn't mean to cry.'

I held out a box of tissues to her. She quietly blew her nose, then brushed the hair from her cheek.

'Actually, I planned on being gone by the time you returned. I didn't want to see you.'

'But you changed your mind, I see.'

'Not at all. I didn't have anywhere else I wanted to go. But I'm going now, don't worry.'

'Well have some coffee anyway'

(Murakami 2003, pp.15-16)

They continue to avoid talking about the issue, Boku sorts out the mail, and his wife lets him know that there is salad in the fridge. Boku complains that he cannot taste anything, calling everything 'tasteless shadows', and blaming the sun for robbing the taste: 'the light of the morning decomposes everything' (Murakami 2003, p.16). He gives up on the coffee and begins to smoke, and tells his wife he was at a funeral, and went to Shinjuku on his own:

'You don't need to explain anything to me,' she said. 'I'm out of the picture already.'

'I'm not explaining. I'm just making conversation.'

She shrugged and pushed her brassiere strap back inside her dress. Her face had no expression, like a photograph of a sunken city on the ocean floor. (Murakami 2003, p.16)

Her selfhood is so weak, she is not even there, and Boku feels like he is talking to a photograph of her, a representation of her; it is as if the woman sitting at the table is not really there. He continues on with his conversation about his dead friend, exclaiming that he does not know why he is telling her all of this (Murakami 2003, p.17). She tells him to drop off the rest of her belongings to the parcel service, and apologises for 'staying so long'. He responds:

'I can't believe it's that easy. I thought there would be a lot more to it.'

'People who don't know anything about it all think so, but it really is simple. Once it's over and done with.' [...] 'I still love you. But I guess that's not the point now, is it? I know that well enough myself.' (Murakami 2003, p.18)

Over these five pages, Boku and his wife say very little to each other, and never really get to the nucleus of their separation, and as a result, they describe the relationship breakup that neither has discussed, as easy. The lack of communication between the two is emphasised further when his wife asks 'had you wanted children?' (Murakami 2003, p.18). Throughout their marriage, they had never discussed their future, or thought about the responsibilities of marriage, instead they exchange a list of when the rubbish is collected and where papers are filed, and discuss a stale cucumber.

Boku is as disinterested with his now ex-wife as he is with his work, and fails to address any of the important questions in his life, personal, historical or social. After her departure, he is totally lost, and searches for a tangible reminder of her presence, a slip. This is a typical displacement strategy which avoids his having to address why she left him. He even considers trying to convince himself that she never existed:

I could talk myself into believing that she never existed all along. If she never existed, then neither did her slip. (Murakami 2003, p.20)

Boku seems to be unable to form strong relations with women, and when he meets his

new girlfriend, it is her ears, rather than her personality, to which he is attracted. His relationship with her is a by-product of his interest in her ears and his desire to have sex with her. It seems that due to his own apathy, he cannot bring himself to get to know or engage with anyone. It could also be symbolic of how Murakami sees the postmodern commodification of the individual, as it is to the part rather than to the whole that Boku is attracted. His individual identity or in Japanese, his *shutaisei*, is hidden and weak, leading to the formation of weak relationships with others:

The thinness of Boku's *shutaisei* is exposed by the absence of an interiority and in his relations with other people. If, as Jean-Paul Sartre claims, true identity is forged in the crucible of the dialectic between self and other, Boku fails the test. (Iwamoto 1993, p.297)

As discussed in Chapter 1, this postmodern condition is doubly difficult for the Japanese, as the idea of the individual was only introduced at the turn of the last century. For Boku who has created a detached, isolated existence, based on simulacra, the dialectic with the Other is consequently much more difficult, as even when his wife is in the room, it is as if she is only a shadow. His attitude to sex expands our knowledge of how he feels about intimate relations with the opposite sex:

To sleep with a woman: it can seem of the utmost importance in our mind, or then again it can seem like nothing much at all. Which only goes to say that there's sex as

therapy (self-therapy that is) and there's sex as pastime. (Murakami 2003, p.25)

Boku does not deal with his divorce, but moves on to a new girlfriend whom he uses in order to further his search for the sheep, who has controlled the political system of Japan for decades. For Murakami, the sheep is a 'kind of symbol of the reckless speed with which the Japanese state pursued a course of modernisation' (Rubin 2005, p.91). Murakami added that he spent time researching the history of sheep in Japan, an animal not native to the country, and discovered that the 'exotic' animal was imported into the country by the Meiji Government, but the process was 'abandoned [...] as an uneconomical investment' (Rubin 2005, p.91):

When I learned all this, I decided once and for all that I would write a novel with 'sheep' as a key word. These historical facts regarding sheep turned out to be a major plot element when it came time for me to write the novel. The character I call the Sheep Man is almost surely a being that floated up out of that vast historical darkness. At the time I was deciding to write a novel on sheep, however, I knew nothing about such facts. The Sheep man was a product of great coincidence. (Rubin 2005, p.91)

When Boku's one strong connection returns and his girlfriend leaves, he is not really disappointed, because her presence is no longer required; she has, along with her ears, fulfilled her use. He tells us that he can sense she is gone, that it was 'a feeling he had known well in the couple of months between the time my wife left me and the time I met my girlfriend' (Murakami 2003, p.243).

While he does not say that he is hurt or saddened by her departure, he refuses to do anything about it, because like the postmodern anti-hero he is, he cannot bring himself to face the fact that she has left him:

I could not accept the fact of her disappearance. I was barely awake, but even if I were totally lucid, this - and everything that was happening to me - was far beyond my realm of comprehension. There was almost nothing one could do except let things take their course. Sitting on the sofa, I felt a sudden hunger. (Murakami 2003, p.244)

Unable to deal with emotional loss, he has an insatiable hunger on which he focuses, which is another displacement activity that diverts attention away from the true source of his craving, which is for emotional intimacy. This displacement of his desire is very Freudian. He craves to fill the void of connection in his life, so he decides to fill a physical void instead. Similarly, the basis of his relationship with his new girlfriend elaborates aspects of the Lacanian mirror stage in which he connects with a body part, rather than a complete and whole physical being:

The relationship with his new girlfriend is carried out on no firmer ground than that with his former wife. First attracted to her by her beautiful ears glimpsed in a photograph, Boku regards her, perhaps unknowingly, as an object (her ears), thus depriving her of a subjectivity. (Iwamoto 1993, p.298)

It is after the disappearance of his girlfriend that Rat appears in the form of the 'sheepman'. Boku's need to find attachment and a meaningful relationship leads his dead



friend Rat to appear to him, solving the mystery of the sheep, and leading Boku to realise that human interaction is important, and life is worth living. Rat explains to him that it was weakness that allowed Rat to become susceptible to the control of sheep. For Rat, because of his own personal weakness, the only way to escape this complete commodification of his body and mind within the system was to take his own life. Rat explains to Boku that every kind of weakness is a disease: 'moral weakness, weakness of consciousness, then there's the weakness of existence itself' (Murakami 2003, p.282). Rat warns Boku against such weakness: 'give your body over to it and everything goes. Consciousness, values, emotions, pain, everything gone' (Murakami 2003, p.283). Rat leaves Boku with a choice of being weak, of allowing the disease to isolate him and take over his existence by staying behind when the bomb explodes, or of leaving in time to begin again, and to become renewed. When Rat leaves, Boku is left with nothing but silence because 'there is nothing else left' (Murakami 2003, p.286). Boku wakes to the sound of the birds, he feels hungry and he expels the toxins from his body urinating a bucket and a half. This focus on the physical is significant of a new dawning of his own identity. His journey has taught him that he must work at relationships rather than treat them with the same apathy that he has done to date. This journey into the historical source

of political power has led him back to relationships that were sincere, starting with the funeral of his ex-girlfriend. He departs from Hokkaido and decides to visit his friend, J, where he makes a financial contribution to the business, so he can become a co-partner. Boku has finally realised the importance of solid friendships, and when he leaves, as J's partner, he can finally emotionally deal with the events of the novel: 'I sat down on the last fifty yards of the beach, and I cried. I never cried so much in my life' (Murakami 2003, p.299). The cathartic ending to the book mirrors the symbolic shedding of the postmodern identity. Murakami is subtly critiquing the postmodern condition that has robbed the individual of identity, subjectivity and connection, and instead provided an isolated disengaged existence, overseen by an untrustworthy authority.

## 2.2 Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World

Murakami's depiction of the contemporary struggle to forge a true identity is most pointed in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*. His unnamed protagonist is a public servant whose life revolves around the system, within which he lives a perfectly isolated, detached, and contemporary existence. When he realises that it is impossible to live an engaged life in his futuristic dystopian world, he must recreate a whole new world, akin to

Baudrillard's *America*, which is based on representations of what is real in his subconscious world. The Boku of this novel must decide if reality and truth are important in the formation of an existence, or if the difficulty in discovering ones true self is actually worthwhile.

Boku, the 'I' protagonist, is fighting for survival in a world contaminated by the system's need to gain sovereignty over all aspects of life, private and public. In this novel published in Japan in 1985, Murakami details a postmodern society that has consumed all elements of identity, making a true, uncontaminated life all but impossible. Boku's subconscious as well as his conscious has been commodified by the system, in order to make him of greater use to that ruling system. All elements of the individual, in Murakami's disquieting vision of the future, are treated as commodities, as objects that can be developed and manipulated in order to be of greater benefit to the overall system. The consequence of this futuristic capitalist nightmare means that locating one's individuality is nearly impossible, as the self has to contend with, come to terms with, and separate the external additions of the system in order to reach a true sense of itself. As Watashi explains, his core consciousness has been completely restructured, and made inaccessible to him:

After I passed the final exam, they put me on ice for two weeks to conduct comprehensive tests on my brainwaves, from which was extracted the epicentre of encephalographic activity, the 'core' of my consciousness. The patterns were transcoded into my shuffling password, then re-input into my brain—this time in reverse.

I was informed that End of the World was the title, which was to be my shuffling password. Thus was my conscious mind completely restructured. First there was the overall chaos of my conscious mind, then inside that, a distinct plum pit of condensed chaos as the centre.

They refused to reveal any more than this.

(Murakami 2003a, p.113)

Entering his core consciousness means entering *The End of The World*. He cannot know himself, or his subconscious self, or he will die. In order to get to grips with his self, and with his subconscious, he must negotiate the chaos of both consciousnesses, a postmodern chaos as described by David Harvey in Chapter 1.

If we take the novel in two separate sections, with the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section relating to the public life of the protagonist, and *The End of the World* section accounting for the internal life of the character, we can get a clearer picture of Murakami's vision of the future of contemporary society. The novel alternates between the two co-existing worlds, that of the public life of the protagonist, and the private world within his subconscious. The protagonist has become aware of his internal self, or in Lacanian terms, he has been living through his *je*, and is now going to be switching to the *moi*, an internal, non-physical self. This *moi* is created not only by the *je*, but by the system, that

authority for which he works, and interestingly this self, the ideal 'I', is an incomplete composition, an egoless being as he tells the librarian:

The unicorns absorb the egos of the townspeople like blotter paper and carry them outside the wall. So the people in the town have no ego, no self. (Murakami 2003a, p.359)

The Professor tells him he can create the ideal 'I' in his subconscious world, by recreating a new *je*, through his *moi*.

'Everythin' that's in this world here and now is missin' from that world. There's no time, no life, no death. No values in any strict sense. No self. In that world of yours, people's selves are externalized into beasts.' (Murakami 2003, p.270)

This separation of the two worlds and the character is much more obvious for the Japanese reader, as Rubin points out, because the protagonist in the public sphere is referred to as the more formal 'I', 'Watashi', the Lacanian *je*, while the more informal 'Boku' is used to denote the private, subconscious 'I', the *moi*. With this 'psychological bifurcation' (Rubin 205, p.117), the identity that Watashi has created in *Hard-boiled Wonderland* is, like the Japanese translation suggests, a facade, something which strengthens the idea that identity in the postmodern world is based on image and representation. His identity lacks substance, and when he tries to recreate a reality in his subconscious, he depends on representations to depict this reality, thereby choosing to avoid and ignore anything

genuine. For *Watashi/Boku* the separation of the *je* and the *moi* has created a disjointed sense of self. The walled town that holds his *moi* strips the internal I of ego, and of emotion, not allowing any dialectic between the *je* and the *moi*. Glowinski speaks of how this disjointing can cause a sense of paranoia within the self:

The realization of the gap between lived experience of the minimally competent and fragmented body on the one hand, and narcissistic identification with the unity of the visual image during the mirror stage on the other, produces disturbing feelings which are displaced as aggressive tendencies towards others. (Glowinski 2001, p.6)

For *Watashi*, there is a definite gap between his lived experience and his narcissistic identification, as he has been separated from his *Boku*. His existence is fragmented in both of his worlds, which exist concurrently, causing him to suppress his paranoia, by literally stripping his body of a shadow.

These two parallel worlds co-exist and are co-dependent. Murakami suggests that inside each of us is a world, where the informal, private 'I' exists. This *Boku* is the key to the real in our contemporary lives, and we must search for it and explore it in order to forge this sense of reality. Our public identity, however, is shaped by the system, exists for the system, and therefore lacks individuality. The public image does not require unique input from the individual, as individuals have been compartmentalised by the system according to their uses and economic benefits, and therefore develop to become those expectations.

The distinction between the two I's is important. *Watashi* is completely commodified, except for the shadow within his subconscious. The translation of the word 'watashi' is the perfect term for the postmodern individual: a shop front-like facade, a public image, a creation, a re-representation, a simulacrum. In the novel, *Watashi's* life revolves around the system, but now that he is no longer of use to that system, he becomes more aware of the reality of his world. Prior to this realisation, he took the images at face value, but he has come to realise that everything has been commodified; everything is part of a system. In *Watashi's* world, both the system and the underground work in unison, so that if one defects from the system, one turns to the factory, where one can still be of benefit to the overall system. There is no opposite of the system; the whole structure is one all-encompassing organisation, pretending to be two opposing sides, as Junior explains to *Watashi*:

The System monopolizes everything under the info sun, the Factory monopolizes everything in the shadows. They don't know the meaning of competition. Whatever happened to free enterprise? (Murakami 2003a, p.137)

This realisation leaves *Watashi* in limbo, because, like the identity struggle within the self, there is no other available or binary opposition. His world is truly a circular floating chaos of fleeting and changing images, as discussed in Chapter 1. Traditional oppositions such

as the System/Underground are no longer available to Watashi, and the only person he meets outside this circular all-inclusive world is the Professor. The Professor has found a way of existing without either the system or the factory, yet like Watashi, the Professor lives in total isolation; however, he must hide underground, constantly hiding from society. Murakami himself spoke in his memoirs about the pleasure involved in isolation, and how he had always enjoyed spending time on his own. Murakami tells us however that he 'learned the importance of being with others and the obvious point that we can't survive on our own', a realisation his protagonists also have to reach (Murakami 2009, p.16). The Professor does not does not have any quality of existence, living as he does in a series of tunnels beneath Tokyo, knowing that during his employment with the system, he manipulated the minds of many calcutecs in order to increase their potential benefit.

Watashi explains the process of becoming a calcutec to the librarian:

I had undergone a full year of Calcutech training. After I passed the final exam, they put me on ice for two weeks to conduct comprehensive tests on my brainwaves, from which was extracted the epicentre of encephalographic activity, the 'core' of my consciousness. The patterns were transcoded into my shuffling password, then re-input into my brain—this time in reverse. (Murakami 2003a, p.113)

This process, which was conducted on 26 men, has ultimately lead to their death, as the

Professor tells Watashi:



'Exactly as y' say, twenty-five of the twenty-six Calcutecs who underwent shuffling actualization have died. All died the same way, as if their fates were sealed. They went to bed one night; come morning they were dead.' (Murakami 2003a, p.364)

When Watashi comes to terms with the reality of his situation, it becomes apparent that there is no place for him in society. The system has used and adapted him to its benefit, and as a result his body and his mind cannot deal with the consequences. Consequently he cannot function, physically, mentally or emotionally, for two reasons: firstly, because the system's interference with his mind in order to increase his functionality has backfired, and secondly, because his own real life within the public sphere is false and based on images which are intangible. As Watashi tells the librarian, his life is composed of junk:

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. (Murakami 2003a, p.375)

His own identity has been lost to a system, and his physical body is a by-product which will no longer be of use. Now, for the first time totally aware of his situation, Watashi knows there is no place for him in society, and that there is no possibility of him existing within this public world; a real existence is not possible: he will live on, but in a static coma. His response to this is a perfectly postmodern one; surrounded by images he cannot grasp the real: 'I was standing in the middle of it all, only I couldn't see a thing' (Murakami 2003a,

p.139). As Watashi prepares for the switch over within his consciousness, he comes to the realisation that his life adds up to very little other than the 'meaningless' remnants of a capitalist nightmare:

My world foreshortened, flattening into a credit card. Seen head on, things seemed merely skewed, but from the side the view was virtually meaningless—a one-dimensional wafer. Everything about me may have been crammed in there, but it was only plastic. Indecipherable except to some machine. (Murakami 2003a, pp.305-306)

In the *End of the World*, a domain created from images of the real world, and Boku's shadow, is his only remaining link with the real world. Their segregation is important, as it shows that we can separate ourselves from our true selves, and that we can create a simulation of existence, while being aware that by doing so, we are losing our true identity to representation, to simulacra, and ultimately, to postmodernity. Boku's shadow tells him that he cannot have a real life while existing in a simulation of his subconscious:

'Maybe you can't die here, but you will not be living. You will merely exist.' and while Boku persists in believing that through memories of images of reality he can forge an existence 'as I remember I may find the key to my own creation, and to its undoing' his shadow disagrees. 'No I doubt it. Not as long as you are sealed inside yourself. Search as you might, you will never know the clarity of distance without me' (Murakami 2003a, p.399)

What Boku's shadow describes is, not just Boku's new existence in this walled circular town, where everyone lives in what could be described as a postmodern, Marxist, utopic

Hotel California, but also the life that Watashi faces, a life sealed inside within which he will merely exist. At this point, Boku, is aware that his life has become ruled by images, and by a representations of images, and that he has chosen the easy commodified postmodern existence, devoid of reality, music, love and friendship. He is, in Baudrillard's terms, in the final order of simulation, which has now become an end in itself and no longer represents anything else. In Baudrillard's words 'everywhere the hyperrealism of simulation is translated by the hallucinatory resemblance of the real to itself' (Baudrillard 2006, p.23).

Therefore there we are communicating with simulations, with false representations of individuals, and as a result, connection and communication is a simulacrum:

It is up to us to again become the nomads of this desert, but disengaged from the mechanical illusion of value. We will live in this world, which for us has all the disquieting strangeness of the desert and of the simulacrum, with all the veracity of living phantoms, of wandering and simulating animals that capital, that the death of capital has made of us - because the desert of cities is equal to the desert of sand - the jungle of signs is equal to that of the forests - the vertigo of simulacra is equal to that of nature - only the vertiginous seduction of a dying system remains, in which work buries work, in which value buries value - leaving a virgin, sacred space without pathways, continuous as Bataille wished it, where only the wind lifts the sand, where only the wind watches over the sand. (Baudrillard 2006, p.153)

Watashi/Boku embodies the nomadic search for identity within postmodernism, and his inability to find a stable footing within the constant stream of images presented to him as part of his daily life, both in the public and private sphere, is something which Anthony

Elliott sees as an issue for those of us in the inter and multi-national postmodern world:

How does the society of information overload impact upon the processes of self formation? [...] Certainly in our consumer driven culture in these early days of the twenty-first century, identity is private and privatizing; everywhere, identity is sold as the means for personal happiness and freedom. From the Nike culture of just do it to the micro made-to-measure world of iPods, selfhood is advertised, televised and talked about as the principal means for both joining and enjoying the modern world. (Elliot 2011, pp.3-4)

The shadow is the only thing tying both Boku and Watashi to the real world, or to a true identity; however, as the book progresses, and the role of images and representation moves from the conscious world to that of the subconscious in the *End of the World* Section, so the shadow loses strength and becomes weaker.

Watashi approaches his coma-like state, while Boku increases his level of apathetic selfhood and numb emotional connections. His shadow begs him to look for the truth, to see past what the town seems to be, and to not just accept the image that is presented to him. But Boku, a creation of simulation who is nurtured by the system's interference, is unable to face the truth, and turns his back on his shadow. His shadow refers to the residents of the town as 'half-persons' because they have no internal conflict, no opposite, no Other, no true identity. Watashi and Boku are the separated self, the *je* and the *moi* have become disjointed, and the overall vision of self is also severed. With the loss of his

*je*, or his shadow in the town, he becomes like the townspeople, a person with 'no ego, no self' (Murakami 2003a, p.359). His self needs the balance of the *je* and the *moi*, the conscious and subconscious, the *Watashi* and the *Boku*, to create a sense of self. The system has robbed him of his *je*, a self-based on images of identity, his *moi* now wants to live without emotion or depth of feeling. His shadow wants him to see past the representations, to leave the town and have a true existence, to join with his *je* with this knowledge, but *Boku* has been sold a sense of happiness by the town in exchange for his mind. His shadow argues:

You tell me there is no fighting or hatred or desire in the Town. That is a beautiful dream, and I do want your happiness. But the absence of fighting or hatred or desire also means the opposites do not exist either. No joy, no communion, no love. Only where there is disillusionment and depression and sorrow does happiness arise; without the despair of loss, there is no hope. (Murakami 2003a, p.334)

This statement is central to understanding Murakami's postmodern protagonists: 'without the despair of loss there is no hope', as they refuse to experience depth of feeling in any aspect of their lives, and they must come to realise this in order to develop a true identity. As *Watashi* approaches the end of his dystopian existence, trying to decide whether he wishes to know his true self or live in a 'world of his own making', the Professor tells him that '[n]obody's got the keys t' the elephant factory inside us' (Murakami 2003a, p.257).

Watashi has the 'keys' to his core consciousness, even though it has been locked by the system's experiments. Were he to escape with his shadow into the unknown subconscious, he may be able to reset the circuits in his brain, and reawaken a complete self, with access to his *je* and his *moi*. In both worlds, he has had to question what his life means, who he is as an individual, and what has led him to this point in his life. Watashi does not like change, and declares that he is happy to maintain an apathetic attitude to what goes on around him; he just likes things to be 'convenient' (Murakami 2003a, p.4).

When his journey forces him to engage with his identity he wishes to stay as he is:

'So it's all a foregone conclusion. I'm screwed. Both sides are after me, and if I stand still my existence is annulled.'

'No, not annulled. Your existence isn't over. You'll enter another world.'

'Interesting distinction,' I grumbled. 'Listen. I may not be much, but I'm all I've got. Maybe you need a magnifying glass to find my face in my high school graduation photo. Maybe I haven't got any family or friends. Yes, yes, I know all that. But, strange as it might seem, I'm not entirely dissatisfied with this life. It could be because this split personality of mine has made a stand-up comedy routine of it all. I wouldn't know, would I? But whatever the reason, I feel pretty much at home with what I am. I don't want to go anywhere. I don't want any unicorns behind fences.'

(Murakami 2003a, p.273)

Interestingly Watashi declares that he is comfortable with 'what' he is rather than who he is, because without the internal self, he is an incomplete individual. He does not know his core, and the identity that he has created is an image, a 'what', rather than a real sense of

selfhood. He is comfortably numb, and does not want to go anywhere. He has taken the system at their word, that he can never know the contents of his core consciousness:

But you can never know its contents. It transpires in a sea of chaos into which you submerge empty-handed and from which you resurface empty-handed. Do you follow?

'I believe so,' I said.

'One more point,' they intoned in solemn chorus. 'Properly speaking, should any individual ever have exact, clear knowledge of his own core consciousness?'

'I wouldn't know,' I said.

(Murakami 2003a, p.114)

Murakami alludes to the solipsistic nature of our existence here suggesting that if Watashi does not get to know his 'core consciousness', then he cannot fully understand the self.

If, as Susan Napier has said, *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of The World* is solipsistic, suggesting that the only truth one can know and trust is oneself, then Murakami's characters must get to know themselves, and in order to do, so they must venture inside themselves to find the real within them. Watashi must become the less formal Boku, and find his shadow in order to learn who he is, and what he will chose to become as part of an inner world. What we learn is that Boku is fearful of ever truly knowing himself, and of taking that metaphorical and physical plunge into the truth. Instead, he chooses to stay within the walls of confinement, existing on representations of the real, letting his only link to the real, his shadow, and sink into the depths of the lake.

Murakami is asking if we are ready to get to know the real, a real that is exempt from commodification and simulacrum.

However, with Murakami's protagonists, the nature of self is more complex than mere solipsism can allow for, as the *je* and the *moi* must also interact with others. Interaction is a vital component of the development of self, matching Lacan's notion of the mirror self and connection:

It is an integral part of the subject's experience of another like him-/herself, the visual image being a determining factor in the person's relations with others. (Glowinski 2001, p.5)

The question of the struggle between the conscious and unconscious is something that remains an issue in Murakami's work. Matthew Stretcher refers to the friction between light and dark in Murakami's work appertaining to a similar conflict of self-identity, something that faces the main protagonist of *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*.

While there is the obvious struggle between Boku and Watashi, the additional struggle between Boku and his shadow highlights the underlying conflict between the conscious and the subconscious. In *The End of The World*, Boku, as a result of his job, has photosensitivity, and his shadow, although dark can only be seen with light:

The darkness, for Murakami, is always the place where the unconscious minds reigns



supreme, where the conscious visitor feels unnerved, even unwelcome, and wrestles with an alter ego, an inner self struggling with the other consciousness for dominance over the whole identity. (Stretcher 2006, p.18)

In *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, Murakami's protagonist plays out this struggle in both worlds. His struggle for a sense of self is very pointed as he is forced to live in the subconscious, and ultimately compelled to choose between his true identity and his imposed late capitalist-created identity. There are elements of the Freud's uncanny and the dark double also at play here, as the internal Boku threatens the existence of Watashi. The subconscious is familiar yet strange, elements from the conscious world, like Danny Boy and unicorns appear in both, and the 'otherworldly' feeling of *The End of The World* section could also allow for a Freudian reading of the text.

For Watashi and Boku, their sense of self is also limited due to the weak personal connections they make. Both are marked by failed or emotionally vacuous relationships, and lack friends or family connections. They are isolated, lonely souls with no Other to help complete the definition of self. We learn from the start that Watashi, like his predecessor in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, has a failed marriage behind him, one that left very little impression on him. His ex-wife is not named, and his marriage is dismissed as an unwanted product. He has no understanding why she left, and jokes about his marriage

with the librarian he meets and with whom he sleeps:

'Why'd you get divorced?' she asked.

'Because she never let me sit by the window on trips.'

She laughed. 'Really, why?'

'Quite simple, actually. Five or six summers ago, she up and left. Never came back.'

'And you didn't see her again?'

'Nope,' I said, then took a good swig of beer. 'No special reason to.'

'Marriage was that hard?'

'Married life was great,' I said. 'But that's never really the question, is it? Two people can sleep in the same bed and still be alone when they close their eyes, if you know what I mean.' (Murakami 2003a, p.388)

Despite five years of marriage, he says he feels like he was always alone, reading at night while his wife slept, and he also feels that there is no reason for marriage or companionship:

[...] now I can hardly remember what it was like. It seems as if I'd always lived alone.'

'You never thought of remarrying?'

'Would it make any difference?' (Murakami 2003a, p.277)

Watashi uses his career as a reason to not get involved in a serious relationship, saying that it might 'endanger' the lives of a wife and children. He tells the Professor's daughter that he does not have a 'special someone', and in order to fulfil his sexual desires he uses different women, including prostitutes, but not women he knows, as it would 'complicate' things (Murakami 2003a, p.56). Despite his involvement with the librarian, whose only role seems to be the provision of sex and information, Watashi realises that his isolated

lifestyle leaves him as an insignificant presence in the world; he will be missed by no one:

Did my existence offer anything against its own extinction? [...] Even if no one would miss me, even if I left no blank space in anyone's life, even if no one noticed, I couldn't leave willingly. Loss was not a skill, not a measure of a life. And yet I still felt I had something to lose. (Murakami 2003a, p.391)

For Boku, as he has shed his shadow, a true emotional connection can never be attained as a 'half person' within the town. Mirroring Watashi, he falls for a librarian, who due to life in the town, can never experience or understand love. Boku learns that the option of emotional attachment is completely removed within the town, as any true feeling is impossible when one removes one's sense of self. The metaphorical and physical shedding of his shadow only further adds to his inability to know the self or the Other, and to his eventual homogenisation into numb, simulated existence.

During Boku's transformation into a town 'half person', he still retains the emotional ability to feel love, and tells his shadow that he wants to stay with the librarian rather than reunite with his shadow and leave the numb state of the town. His shadow does not agree that a desensitising existence is preferable to a chance of experiencing the true depth of emotion:

'Then, of course, there's love. Which surely makes a difference with this Library girl of yours. Love is a state of mind, but she has no mind for it. People without a mind are

phantoms. What would be the meaning of loving someone like that? Do you seek eternal life? Do you too wish to become a phantom? If you let me die, you'll be one of the Townsfolk. You'll be trapped here forever.' 'I cannot leave her here,' I brave to say. 'No matter what she is, I love her and want her. I cannot lie to my own mind. If I run out now, I will always regret it.' (Murakami 2003a, p.334)

The love that Boku feels is a love that can never be returned or complete, yet the concept of a life without emotion is the one which he chooses. Boku is left with a struggle between a snatched, unrequited unfulfilled love, and a complete life with a complete breadth of emotional experience. In comparison to Watashi, Boku, due to his interaction with his shadow, and his addressing of his subconscious, has much more of a real choice when it comes to knowing the self, but chooses to discard his shadow and live without emotion: a formidable comment by Murakami about postmodern selfhood. This continues Murakami's observation of identity within postmodernity in from *A Wild Sheep Chase*, suggesting that the postmodern individual needs, not only to shed or deconstruct their postmodern sensibility, but also to journey internally into their core consciousness, and return to the beginning of identity formation, the mirror stage, and once again engage authentically with others so they can garner a genuine selfhood. This study offers us a real engagement with the postmodern self that is not just west centred, but a more contemporary representation of the individual, and the struggle for selfhood.

## 2.3 The Wind-up Bird Chronicle

By the time *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* was published between 1994 and 1996<sup>1</sup> Murakami was a household name, after the massive success of *Norwegian Wood*, published in 1987. His return to the detective-style novel was one that was not greeted with the same success as previous works, and his decision to add an additional section to the work, after calls from readers, changes the entire journey of his protagonist. During the period in which the novel was published and written, Japan was undergoing great change after the 1995 Underground Sarin gas attack and the Kobe earthquake. The Third section of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* was written after this attack. These events had such an effect on Murakami that he returned to live in Japan, and wrote a factual account of the Sarin Gas attacks based on survivors interviews, entitled *Underground* (1997-1998) and published a collection of short stories *After the Quake* (2000).

Murakami has set out to write 'a mystery without a solution' with this novel, but after

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<sup>1</sup> *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* was published in in monthly instalments in Japan before being released in two volumes. After complaints in Japan over the ending a third volume was added. The English translation comprises of the final three volume collection

readers complaints, he decided to add a third section to the novel, making the protagonist much more engaged as the novel ends, something that mirrored a change in his own life. This 'new sense of "activism"' accounts for his desire to write a third volume' (Stretcher 2006, p.73). Like his protagonists, Murakami creates a more engaged character as a result of a dialectic with the reader, Toru becomes a more engaged individual through a dialectic with the Other. Unlike the Boku of the previous novels, Toru gains a sense of activism, and by the end of the journey, he has become involved in the return to the mirror stage in order to know the self and the other. As a result, his journey is much more successful.

This change from passive self-identity search to a more involved one for protagonists marks an important development in Murakami's work. While his protagonists still face that same journey, and are apathetic postmodern antiheroes who have lost their place and goal in a society by drowning in imitation, they can still grasp a sense of the real, and forge a true self, even if briefly. They manage to get back to the stage before representation, back to the ideal 'I', returning to relive the mirror stage, through stripping back the representations, the simulacra of identity. The positive incorporation coincides with a change in Murakami's outlook, which is that of someone coming to terms with his fame, and also of an international Japanese writer coming to terms with what it means to

be Japanese in the face of the events of 1995.

The first and most important change in Murakami's return to this surreal style is that his protagonist is finally named. Boku has disappeared in favour of a person who can be identified, and while the name may locate him as Japanese, the elements that surround him, and the inertia he experiences, are fully understandable to a postmodern audience. The cultural postmodern divide between East and West has become somewhat transparent, and allows Toru to pass back and forth into the first world postmodern space, despite the addition of traditional cultural markers, such as names. For Murakami, the naming of Toru does not inhibit his identifiable first world postmodern struggle anymore. Murakami had personally questioned his own culture in the wake of the underground attack and the earthquake: the multi-mini-narratives he had incorporated into his own life: postmodern, Japanese, first world, translator, writer, researcher, and interviewer. This meant that his own protagonists could begin to feel somewhat secure in their own narratives that shaped their world. The inclusion of a name allows the protagonist a more effective connection to a possible individuality.

Toru Okada's world is in disarray, and he is so detached from any form of reality he did not even notice his world collapse. His cat has disappeared, he has given up work in

order to find a career path he would actually like to follow, and his wife has left him. His ability to form any personal identity is nearly impossible as he has isolated himself entirely from life. He has become so remote that the strange sisters that he encounters, Malta and Creta Kano, have to physically invade his world, while Lieutenant Mamiya writes to him about Japan's past, helping him to reengage with life, by forcing him to take action to find his wife, and also to find the answers to the questions that plague him:

I had left my job at the beginning of April - the law job I had had since graduation. Not that I had left for any special reason. I didn't dislike the work. It wasn't thrilling [...] but I left anyway. Not that leaving would help me realise any particular hopes or prospects. The last thing I wanted to do, for example, was shut myself up in the house and study for the bar exam. I was surer than ever that I didn't want to become a lawyer. I knew, too, that I didn't want to stay where I was and continue with the job I had. If I was going to get out, now was the time to do it. If I stayed with the firm any longer, I'd be there for the rest of my life. I was thirty years old, after all. (Murakami 2003b, p.9)

Toru has no real reason for leaving his job, he does not dislike the work, all he knows is that he just does not want to study for the bar exam, and he does not want to be constructed by a modernist metanarrative: working in the same job for the rest of his life. He is literally living in a limbo, unaware of anything outside his own lack of self-knowledge. He does not realise his wife is leaving, he does not know where his cat has gone, and he is very unsure about what he wants to do with his life.

Even his unconscious is impossible to define, other than as an empty hotel, which



contains a dark room where his wife is hidden, which remains as Strecher says 'at the core' (Strecher 1999, p.270). In Toru's world, at both the conscious and subconscious levels, everything is just an image, and nothing is as it should be. He must be spurred into action, and the mark that appears on his face is just a symbol of what is wrong. His lack of identity and his inertia manifest themselves physically, while the wall between reality and the surreal, or Baudrillard's simulacra is so weak that the Kano sisters can pass through it and make him physically experience sex, forcing him to physically and literally come out of his somnolence. This illusory existence is more prominent in his subconscious when he manages to journey through the walls of the well into a hotel full of faceless people. Just as in real life, the connections he has made are hollow and frail, and, therefore, the people he meets in this world are tenuous: 'I reached out and pushed the faceless man aside. He wobbled like a shadow and fell away' (Murakami 2003b, p.243). Toru lives in the postmodern world described by Elliott, one where images and representations are what Jameson and Baudrillard refer to as 'Disneyfication':

It is a world where images become more powerful than reality, where everything is a copy of something else, and where the distinction between representation and what is represented is done away with. (Elliott 2007, p.149)

When he dreams and enters room 208, which is at the centre of his search, and a room he

needs to understand in order to solve his mystery, things are not as they seem:

What looked like doors were actually well-made imitations of doors. I tried pushing and pulling on the various protruding parts, but the cabinet remained firmly shut. 'It's not easy to open, Mr. Okada,' said Kano. I realised she was standing there - and in her early-sixties outfit. 'Some time must go by before it will open. Today is out of the question. You might as well give up.' (Murakami 2003b, p.102)

Like many of Murakami's characters, Toru's journey into himself, and his own identity, leads him on a search for the real through the unreal and surreal. The people that Toru encounters encourage him to find real connections in order to help him forge a true and real identity. It is Mae who alluded to the well, which leads him to address the issues in his life, and their source, his subconscious, while the Kano sisters lead him to the hotel room, and prove to him that real experiences can happen in the surreal. Lieutenant Mamiya reintroduces Toru to Japan's violent past, stimulating the time-flow from past to present and to the future, through learning from history, to aid the present and help imagine a future. In the end, through these intercessions Toru is aided in dismantling the postmodern identity of images, allowing him to renew his mirror stage and begin again to create and develop a sense of selfhood. These meaningful interactions allow him to find a genuine purpose to his life, even if it is fleeting. What he does learn is the difference between self-isolation and being alone:

I closed my eyes and tried to sleep. But it was not until much later that I was able to get any real sleep. In a place far away from anyone or anywhere, I drifted off for a moment. (Murakami 2003b, p.607)

Toru has managed to escape the constant bombardment of images to find this 'real' sleep. Away from the unreal aspects of his life, the 'anyone' and 'anywhere', he can truly get a sense of his self, something he delved into during his time in the well, the subconscious and the surreal.

Like Murakami's previous protagonists, the issue of failed relationship plagues Toru. From the very outside, he mirrors the previous protagonist from *A Wild Sheep Chase*, as he too is coping with the aftermath of a supposed failed marriage, and like both protagonists in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the relationships he forms, in particular with women, are constructed through ambiguous sexual encounters and the need for information. Toru is a very isolated lost character with no one to whom he can turn; in fact he is so remote that the Kano sisters must invade his subconscious in order to encourage him to engage with the outside world. Murakami has foregrounded the marriage issue by making sure that the reader is aware from the outset that Kumiko and Toru's relationship is just like his life, boring. Toru, like Boku, has no understanding of the Other, and especially of their wives, and the second

chapter begins with Toru wondering if it could ever be possible to know or understand another person:

Is it possible, in the final analysis, for one human being to achieve perfect understanding of another?

We can invest enormous time and energy in serious efforts to know another person, but in the end, how close can we come to that person's essence? We convince ourselves that we know the other person well, but do we really know anything important about anyone? (Murakami 2003b, p.24)

By 1995, marriage was still an issue for Murakami's characters, and like his story, *The Second Bakery Attack*, published in 1986, the concept of knowing the person to whom one is married remains something with which his protagonists were attempting to deal on an ongoing basis. Toru Okada has not realised there is anything wrong with his marriage until the family cat disappears and spurs his wife to vanish. He has left his job and is trying to find a purpose for his life, but his lack of attention to his relationship, and in particular to his wife, means that he is completely oblivious to their problems. He does not know himself, and, therefore, he cannot know his wife:

I had lived with her all this time, unaware how much she hated these things [...] Maybe this was it: the fatal blow. Or maybe it was just the beginning of what would be called the fatal blow. I might be standing at the threshold of something big, and inside lay a world that belonged to Kumiko alone, a vast world that I had never known. I saw it as a big, dark room. I was standing there holding a cigarette lighter, its tiny flame showing me only the smallest part of the room. Would I ever see the rest? (Murakami 2003b, pp.30-31)

Even after years of marriage he still blissfully unaware of the likes and dislikes of his wife, which comes to light as he cooks dinner for her. As Strecher points out, Toru knows that there is something 'mysterious' about Kumiko but 'he clearly has no idea how deep the problem lies, not how truly alienated he really is from his wife' (Strecher 2006, p.25)

In this book, Murakami takes a deeper focus, not just on Japan's past, but also on connections and marriage. In the 13-year difference between *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* and *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami has engaged more deeply with the postmodern identity crisis being experienced by his protagonists, and has encouraged them to engage not just with themselves, but also with those around them, an additional progression from *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*. Toru takes a more proactive role in his dismantling of the simulacra of identity, considering not just his self as an isolated entity, but one that is connected with others and the society he lives in:

The central focus of the book is on human relationships [...] in many ways *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* can be read as a re-telling of *A Wild Sheep Chase*. It is as if Murakami had asked himself: 'What if the Boku of that novel had not been so cool about the breakup of his marriage?' (Rubin 2005, p.205)

Like the wife in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Kumiko has had an affair, and both women seem unfulfilled by their husbands, both sexually and emotionally, and they leave; however, as

Rubin points out, in this novel, Toru decides to find out what led to her leaving him. Rubin is correct in saying that something was always held back in their relationship, as Kumiko never seemed able to confide emotionally in Toru, about her abusive brother, her abortion or her wish to cheat. Her 'expressionless' response to the abortion proves that she, just like Toru, is emotionally removed from the relationship (Murakami 2003b, p.232). Neither of them was willing to remove themselves from their isolated, apathetic, detached existence in order to engage with the issues of their lives. They have both chosen to step back from these issues, and to remove themselves from dealing with them. They have also taken a solitary attitude to their concerns, as rather than benefitting from sharing their problems, they choose to isolate themselves further into a postmodern cocoon.

As Elliott says in his book, *Concepts of the Self*, the rapidly changing postmodern world creates a difficult environment for interaction and causes an emotional fear in the self:

The rapidity of social change and the uncertainties promoted by globalisation and multiculturalism can quickly overshadow the emotional capacities of individuals. Where individuals feel threatened or assaulted by social and technological upheavals, toleration of personal differences and cultural particularises sometimes diminishes. (Elliott 2007, p.158)

Toru is so afraid of the social change happening around him, that he leaves behind the

outside world and stays at home. He becomes so obsessed with his personal fear, that he ignores the problems in his marriage, convincing himself that he is focusing on finding a direction for his life, when in fact he is isolating himself more and more through narcissism:

One of the ways in which the self can try to evade such anxiety is to avoid the difficulties of interpersonal relationships altogether, retracting to the comforting realm of narcissism in order to protect the self against fears of abandonment. (Elliott 2007, p.158)

The fact that they did not have a wedding ceremony is also telling. While Toru says it was because they could not afford it, the fact that they did not want to 'feel beholden' to their parents is telling. Not only did they not have a public ceremony where they could declare publicly the depth of their emotions, but also, they did not want to deepen their connections with their parents by adding a financial dimension to the relationship, which on both sides were already strained (Murakami 2003b, pp.231-232). It is as if they both see the marriage as a temporary structure from the beginning, mirroring the society in which they live. The lack of stability in identity and representation has led to a deficiency of dependence or trust in others, and in the structures of society, or in modernist terms, in the metanarratives of society. In *A Wind-up Bird Chronicle* patriarchy, work, marriage, identity, consciousness have all broken down, and their new fluid boundaries make it a very unstable environment in which to base anything: a career, an identity, a marriage. When

Toru realises that Kumiko was fearful of giving birth to a child who could have the characteristics of her evil brother, he can finally begin to get to know her:

When you got pregnant, you panicked because you were worried the tendency would show up in your own child. But you couldn't reveal the secret to me. The whole story started from there. (Murakami 2003b, p.578)

It is then, when he has that realisation, that he can 'pass through the wall' (Murakami 2003b, p.582).

In the end, Murakami does not allow us a positive conclusion, yet it is not purely negative either. Kumiko is still not with Toru, but the problems with their relationship, which manifested themselves in a blue mark on his face, have disappeared, and the cat, which Kumiko says 'was always a symbol of something good that grew up between us', has returned (Murakami 2003b, p.603). Toru had ignored the issue that had plagued his existence for so long, specifically his problematic sense of selfhood, which meant that he is not only emotionally and subconsciously detached, but that he is also physically removed from his social context. Kumiko's leaving has highlighted his emotional detachment, and the Kano sisters must infiltrate his subconscious in order to aid him in reengaging with his ego and internal self.

Sharing information and avoiding secrets seems vital to successful relationships,



and Kumiko and Toru could not do this; their emotional relationship, like their sex life, was unfulfilling and repressed, showing signs that neither of them was willing connect with the Other, as this would entail vacating their numb cocoons. It is fitting that the book ends with Toru visiting Mae Kasahara, a young teenager who is very willing to share and eager to feel. The fact that Toru never received her letters seems symbolic of his inability to hear others, or to receive any intimacies from his relationships. Like the Kano sisters, Mae tries to reach out to Toru and fails, as he seems unwilling to accept any positive intrusion. He is so closed off from connecting to people that he must travel to the bottom of a well in an abandoned house and journey into his own subconscious in order to find a connection with his own wife. The inability to connect to people through tangible and genuine means shows that, for the postmodern protagonist, the real is no longer available to him. And in the case of Toru, the further we remove ourselves from the real, from the true self, the harder it is to venture out of the postmodern status and into an authentic existence. In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami extends his thesis on decoding the postmodern identity crisis, from a detailed self-analysis and deconstruction, as well as genuine interaction with the Other, to a social or historical dialectic, helping the individual find a more sustainable, meaningful existence within the postmodern worlds which they inhabit.

## **2.4 *Kafka on the Shore***

Kafka Tamura is the postmodern Holden Caulfield, a 15-year-old desperate to escape the influence of his parents, anxious to experience life, and obsessed with sex. He feels like he needs to run away from his father in order to avoid the prophecy laid out for him, and that he needs to close himself off from human interaction in order to survive. Kafka's wish to escape from the oedipal prophecy can be seen as a desire to avoid the modernist oedipal trope, as modernism is not something that fully defines him. Yet, he cannot elude his 'destiny', although he does manage to change it and mould it into a postmodern journey that is no longer as destructive and violent. His oedipal journey is more one of enlightenment and knowledge that frees him from the strong male father that controls him, and instead moves him into a more matriarchal location that allows him to shed the postmodern representations of identity and reimage his selfhood:

What Murakami's stories aim to overcome is the oedipal desire of modernity, the desire to grasp the outside power and endure it, and to go back to one's imagined nostalgic family with oneself as a part of it. (Fuminobu 2005, p.56)

However, it his journey that forces him to connect meaningfully with people and to fulfil the oedipal prediction laid out for him. Despite sleeping with both his sister and mother, it is

due to this forced interaction that Kafka ends the story on a positive note, by looking forward to the future, rather than hiding himself away from people as he did at the start: 'I've built a wall around me, never letting anybody inside and trying not to venture outside myself' (Murakami 2005, p.7).

Rubin describes the character of Kafka as 'not merely a 15-year-old protagonist of interest to 15-year-old readers, but a surrogate for all who feel rootless in the world' (Rubin 2005, p.271), and this description matches perfectly with the character. Kafka is lost and alone and unable to come to terms with his past, present or future. He seems, with his imaginary companion Crow, to be stuck in a static present that appears to be unending. The reality of completing an action, such as running away from home, takes all the strength he can muster, and his self-enforced isolation means that he only trusts one person with the news of his plan, an imaginary friend. As he prepares for his departure, he envisions that he is in a sandstorm, a storm which rages inside him and empties his mind of all else. 'I'm a total blank', he says as he imagines the storm changing direction and walking through it, 'step by step. There's no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time', as Crow tells him:

And you really will have to make it through that violent, metaphysical, symbolic storm.

No matter how metaphysical or symbolic it might be, make no mistake about it: it will cut through flesh like a thousand razor blades [...] when you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in. That's what the storm's all about. (Murakami 2005, pp.3-4)

With Kafka, Murakami seems to offer us an account of the postmodern condition in our youth, a time when a sense of selfhood emerges, and the individual becomes sexually aware. Kafka could easily be any of Murakami's previous protagonists as a teenager, before the numb inertia of adulthood suppresses his desire to wear out this metaphysical storm. Like previous protagonists, Kafka, too, wishes to be alone, and wants to be in total isolation and form a postmodern cocoon around himself to survive. Murakami seems to suggest that raging inside all of us is a 'metaphysical storm', urging us to seek out the real, to take action and to become active and engaged. Kafka tries to escape modernity by fleeing from both the oedipal prophecy and also the metanarrative of patriarchy. This journey combines both Kafka's selfhood and sexuality, a rejection of modernity, and confusion in postmodernity. He is experiencing Jameson's nightmare of the 'big other':

The anxiety about the family combines with the great political issues of gender on one hand and more obscure fears about sexuality on the other, while laterally linking up with patriarchal images and narrative fragments whose final form is the nightmarish Big Other of the anti-utopias as such. (Jameson 2007, p.209)

Kafka can no longer rely on modernist meta-narratives, yet nor can he depend on

postmodern representations, as Jameson explains:

In postmodernity representation is not conceived as a dilemma, but as an impossibility, and what can be termed a kind of cynical reason in the realm of art displaces it by way of a multiplicity of images, none of which corresponds to truth.' (Jameson 2007, p.212)

Like Toru, Kafka must deconstruct the multiplicity of postmodern images that surround him, and attempt to resolve the dilemma. Just as Toru climbed down the well, and enabled an opening between his conscious and subconscious, so Kafka disappears into a cabin in the woods, where reality and the surreal merge.

After this isolated submerging into the unconscious, Kafka needs genuine interaction with others, and the past, in order to grow and develop. Unable to deal with the destiny set out for him, Kafka wanted to acknowledge how each person is connected, and also to stress the importance of establishing and understanding these connections in order to develop a sense of self. Unable to kill his father in reality, he subconsciously enters the spirit of Nakata to murder 'Johnny Walker', although he is thousands of miles away. This event proves to him how life cannot be lived solitarily, and he immediately contacts Sakura, his possible sister. He cannot deal with real emotions, and he tells Sakura that his anger forces him to black out and feel like what is happening is in actual fact false: '[i]t's as if I'm here, but in a way it's not me' (Murakami 2005, p.92). He cannot incorporate true

emotions into his own identity, because he has not forged a true or complete form of identity.

Interestingly the issue of naming once again returns with Kafka, who has chosen his own name to mask his true identity. The influence of westernisation is also obvious with names like Johnny Walker and Colonel Saunders. Firstly, the fact that the protagonist chooses the name of another writer in translation, a writer who focuses on our indefinable place in the world, and our inability to know the world we inhabit, is very fitting. As we will see in Chapter 5, there are many similarities between Franz Kafka and Murakami, despite the difference in time and location. Kafka is just as confused as Josef K. about what is happening to him. These characters can take on mysterious roles and tasks, like collecting the souls of cats to make a flute in order to control the world, or quoting philosophy and summoning prostitutes. These Western symbols are just as ubiquitous as McDonalds or Manga. Kafka, as a teenager growing up in this multinational environment, has a much more diverse cultural pond on which to draw for influence and knowledge.

Nakata on the other hand, is living his life as half a person. He seems like the simple representation of postmodern consumers. When he worked, he worked well, with no desire to better himself. He is dependent on the state for everything; he cannot picture a

life outside of how he lives; he is a blank canvas for the government to control. However, when Nakata receives his calling, he realises that his life is only half lived. We learn that in his past, he never fully emerged from a coma:

It seemed like the real Nakata had gone off somewhere, leaving behind for a time the physical container, which in his absence kept all his bodily functions going at the minimum level needed to preserve itself. The term: spirit projection 'sprang to mind'. (Murakami 2005, p.70)

He requires the help of others to succeed in his mission, and he forges a true connection with Hoshino, proving that postmodern isolation will not lead to successful searches for purpose and identity. Nakata, like Kafka, cannot exist in an isolated vacuum:

All of a sudden I was wondering - what am I anyway? [...] It's not just that I'm dumb. Nakata's empty inside. I finally understand that. Nakata's like a library without a single book. But you know, Mr. Hoshino, Nakata doesn't have anybody. Nothing. I'm not connected at all. I can't read. And my shadow's only half of what it should be [...] if I'd been my normal self, I think I would've lived a very different kind of life. Like my two younger brothers. I would have gone to college, worked in a company, gotten married and had a family, driven a big car, played golf on my days off. But I wasn't normal, so that's why I'm the Nakata I am today. It's too late to do it over. I understand that. But still, even for a short time, I'd like to be a normal Nakata. Up until now there was never anything in particular I wanted to do. I always did what people told me as best I could. Maybe that just became a habit. But now I want to go back to being normal. I want to be a Nakata with his own ideas, his own meaning. (Murakami 2005, pp.329-330)

Nakata and Hoshino both reach a potential that they could not have done alone. Their interaction allowed them to find within themselves a purpose, a destiny and true self that

had, like Nakata's shadow, been hiding, and had lost in the false representations of the postmodern world. Isolation enables them to become a false representation of themselves, but interaction forces them to become more, to become real.

The blood bonds of family once again appear *Kafka on the Shore*, as it seems that Murakami is saying, through Kafka's *Catcher in the Rye*-like journey, that problematic relationships cannot be escaped, but must be dealt with in order to move on and find a future. Kafka's relationship with his father is far from satisfactory, with no real father-son bond, and there is a prophecy that he will sleep with his mother and his adopted sister hanging over his head. His father was emotionally detached, leaving Kafka very much alone and dependent on his imaginary friend, Crow, for companionship:

To my father I'm probably nothing more than one of his sculptures. Something he could make or break as he sees fit. (Murakami 2005, p.271)

Kafka enters a postmodern form of Freud's Oedipus complex, despite his wish to escape it, as his father has separated him from his mother, with whom Kafka will later have sex. This inclusion of the oedipal myth stresses a break with the modernist trope, as it shows a postmodern individual running away, trying to escape a modernist prophecy. The metanarrative of the complex is no longer relevant to the postmodern individual, and as a



result Kafka cannot kill his father, but must do so through the body and consciousness of another individual. The postmodern family is too complex and segregated, making the traditional metaphor for maturation a much more labyrinthine expedition for the postmodern Kafka:

The child entering the Oedipus complex becomes caught up in frustrating and restrictive emotions in respect of its parents. In emphasising that the child experiences intense love and aggression at this point of life, Freud sought to understand the complex ways in which the symbolic dimensions of culture stir internalised or appropriated by children [...] The legacy of the Oedipus Complex is that on the one hand, we spend much of our lives trying to discover ourselves and define our experience better, while, on the other, we do this within the tangled frame of a family history shot through with illusion, repetition and repression. (Elliott 2007, pp.62-64)

With no family ties, and a prophecy to fulfil, Kafka tries to be alone, but he cannot be, for as the teacher says in her letter regarding the Rice Bowl Incident, 'we are all linked by a prototypical memory' (Murakami 2005, p.103). Therefore, his experience demands that he must interact with people in order to allow him to progress, to develop and to have a future. Murakami has found an extremely suitable character to represent, as Rubin called it, the 'rootless' nature of our postmodern world (Rubin 2005, p.271).

It is through interaction with his imagined mother and sister, as well as a tangible friend in the shape of Oshima, that Kafka experiences affection, emotionally, physically and sexually. He comes to realise that it is not just his journey and relationships that are

important, but also the journeys of those around him with whom he has forged relationships. Miss Saeki needs Kafka as much as he needs her; both fulfil each other's destinies without taking anything from each other. In comparison to his relationship with his father, where his father needs Kafka's soul to do the work of the devil, Kafka can benefit from positive relationships, just as Miss Saeki can benefit from his appearance in Skikoku.

The notion of connection being an important component for the development of a more engaged individual is tied to the idea of Lacan's mirror stage. The mirror stage becomes a formative element in the journeys of Murakami's characters, as they begin a rebirth of selfhood, based on the deconstruction of postmodern identity through an enforced isolation, followed by a re-engagement with society and a genuine interaction with others. While narcissism is an essential factor within the reimagining and re-understanding of self, so too is the mirror that the Other offers. At the start of the novel, Kafka looks carefully at himself in the mirror as he prepares to create an image that will allow himself to hide and be isolated from the modernist Oedipus narrative, as well as his evil father. He has tried to create an isolated *je*: 'My eyes in the mirror are cold as a lizard's, my expression fixed and unreadable. I can't remember the last time I smiled or

even showed a hint of a smile at other people. Even to myself' (Murakami 2005, p.8). The image he seeks to portray in the mirror is not that of an engaged individual, but of one surrounded by an impenetrable wall. This means he cannot fully complete the mirror stage, as he is locked inside a solitary image that reflects only his own inaccessible self:

I gaze carefully at my face in the mirror. Genes I'd gotten from my father and mother-not that I have any recollection of what she looked like-created this face. I can do my best to not let any emotions show, keep my eyes from revealing anything, bulk up my muscles, but there's not much I can do about my looks. I'm stuck with my father's long, thick eyebrows and the deep lines between them. I could probably kill him if I wanted to-I'm sure strong enough-and I can erase my mother from my memory. But there's no way to erase the DNA they passed down to me. If I wanted to drive that away I'd have to get rid of me. (Murakami 2005, p.9)

In the mirror, he can identify with both the mother and the father, his postmodern oedipal prophecy, something he also wishes to avoid, but which he cannot escape. Kafka works out in front of the mirror, gazing as he flexes his muscles, happy that he is achieving the look of physical strength he desires (Murakami 2005, p.58) The mirror, especially the rear-view mirror in cars, feature repeatedly in the novel, even helping to tell when Nakata has died, as Kafka undergoes his journey. It is when Kafka looks in the blurry mirror of the public toilet that he realises he is covered in blood, and, leaning his head against the mirror, he tries to come to terms with what has happened (Murakami 2005, pp.74-75).

When Oshima recounts his first impression of Kafka, as someone who is searching for something but who is also running away from it, he glances in his rear view mirror (Murakami 2005, p.164). Hoshino shaves in the rear view mirror of his truck, while Nakata looks in the mirror and remembers the faces of all the cats he has spoken to and it is a hand mirror that Hoshino uses to confirm that Nakata is dead (Murakami 2005, p.440). The former idea of self has changed, as the journey of isolation becomes one that forces Kafka to also connection, consciously and subconsciously with the Other.

His arrival allows her to fulfil her destiny and close the entrance stone to her sorrow at the loss of her soul-mate, while Kafka can ask his mother why she left him behind. Kafka tells us that his mother leaving was 'a white hot flame burning my heart, eating away at my soul' (Murakami 2005, p.429). Like Kumiko in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Miss Saeki was worried about the blood-ties that Kafka had as a child with his father, and was also afraid that he could carry the evil nature of his father in his blood. However, when both of them finally meet and converse in the same world, she asks for his forgiveness for leaving him behind. Miss Saeki realises that, like her boyfriend, who was murdered due to a mistaken identity, Kafka is also innocent, without the evil DNA of his father:

'You were discarded by the very one who never should have done that, Miss Saeki

says, 'Kafka - do you forgive me?'

'Do I have the right to?'

She looks at my shoulder and nods several times. 'As long as anger and fear don't prevent you.'

'Miss Saeki, if I really do have the right to, then yes - I do forgive you,' I tell her. Mother, you say, I forgive you. And with those words, audibly, the frozen part of your heart dissolves. (Murakami 2005, pp.476-477)

With Nakata, Hoshino is awoken into life too, as for the first time in years, he allows himself to make up for the sins of his past through making a connection with someone who reminds him of the relationship he had with his caring grandfather. Hoshino, too, can reimagine himself through meaningful interaction with the Other, just as Kafka can become a more complete individual by shedding his modernist and patriarchal past for a more postmodern compatible selfhood. Finding Nakata allowed him to find a new joy and purpose in life, while also giving him a purpose and direction within Nakata's own journey. He too, like Nakata, feels empty, but he is concerned as to the source of his emptiness, when he meets with Nakata, and forms a strong bond with him, this sense of incompleteness dissipates:

I am helping Mr Nakata out[...] I've hardly noticed this before but it feels kind of nice to be helpful to someone [...] I don't regret any of it [...] I feel like I'm exactly where I belong. (Murakami 2005, p.349)

## 2.5 *1Q84*

The importance of genuine connection becomes one of the principal issues for the protagonists of *1Q84*. The story revolves around Aomame and Tengo, who met as school children, and around their search for each other through the alternative hyperrealities of 1984 and *1Q84*. Their personal journeys of self-discovery are intertwined with the quest to find each other, and as they begin to learn more about themselves and address questions of selfhood, they get closer to finding that connection. As Aomame learns, each of us is connected, even if only through violent acts:

A person's life may be a lonely thing by nature, but it is not isolated. To that life other lives are linked, and I surely have to bear some responsibility for those as well.  
(Murakami 2011, p.549)

The lead protagonist of *1Q84*, Aomame, is one of Murakami's strongest characters throughout the years. Fulfilling the traditionally Murakami roll for a female of medium, more in touch with the subconscious, as we will see in Chapter 4, Aomame's journey of self-discovery is a much more spiritual one compared to that of many of the previous male protagonists. Aomame is much more engaged with her job, and has taken a stand against societal issues, as an assassin of abusive men. She tried to use her job as an instructor at a health centre to aid women through self-defence; however the aggressive nature of the

classes caused her employers to terminate them. Nonetheless, Aomame continued to pursue her goal of helping women, and through meeting the Dowager at the club she has become a funded, part-time assassin of these men.

Despite Aomame's engagement with her work, she still mirrors many of the other protagonists in the previous novels, etching out a very isolated existence, devoid of friends and family. Her sparse flat, filled with dead plants is an example of just how disengaged she has become, as she is fearful of even committing to a plant. Eventually when the assassination of the leader of the cult means she will have to disappear forever, she knows it will be easy to pack up her life and start again:

'We can set things up so that you are alone with Leader,' the dowager said. 'It won't be easy, and it will take a good deal of time, but I can make it happen. All you have to do is what you always do for us. Except this time, you'll have to disappear afterward. Have plastic surgery. Quit your current job, of course, and go far away. Change your name. Get rid of all your possessions. Become another person. Of course you will be compensated with a suitable payment. I will be responsible for everything else. Is this all right with you?'

Aomame said, 'As I said before, I don't have anything to lose. My work, my name, this life of mine in Tokyo: none of them mean anything to me. I have no objections at all.'

(Murakami 2011a, p.340)

Throughout the novel, Aomame dreams of Tengo, and she longs for some form of connection with him. She meets Ayumi by accident and ends up forming a friendship.

Their relationship begins at a bar when they decide to join forces to pick up men for

one night stands. Both Aomame and Ayumi have a similar desire for sex without connection, like many of the previous protagonists. They normally go out looking to pick up men on their own, taking what they need from the experience, namely the physicality of the encounter, rather than any form of emotional connection. Aomame has made a pact with herself not to forge friendships in order to avoid getting hurt. The death of her closest friend five years previously had a major impact on her:

Aomame had no other real friends; as her contact with Tamaki diminished, she became increasingly unsure what to do with each passing day. [...] Aomame was twenty-five but still a virgin. Now and then, when she felt unsettled, she would masturbate, but she didn't find this life especially lonely. Deep personal relationships with people were a source of pain for Aomame. Better to keep to herself. (Murakami 2011, p.183)

When her closest friend, Tamaki, takes her own life, Aomame decides to isolate herself totally from society. She describes this incident as if something switched inside her, and she begins to formulate a plan to assassinate Tamaki's husband. This marks the start of her career as an assassin.

Over the next five years, Aomame does not make any friends; she remains a solitary figure, eventually joining forces with a character called the Dowager to fulfil her new vocation. So the friendship with Ayumi becomes a very important element of Aomame's journey. Ayumi approaches Aomame and engages her conversation. Together they work



as a team to pick up men in bars for casual sex. However, Ayumi fulfils another role for Aomame, by providing her with information and becoming an ally. Ayumi becomes Aomame's medium, and although she is not fully honest with her friend, Aomame begins to open up to emotion and to genuine connection. This strengthens Aomame's drive to complete her task of assassinating the leader of Sakigake. It is this action that brings her closer to Tengo, and also sends her on an isolating journey where she can deconstruct her life and identity, and travel inside her subconscious, and understand who she is. Aomame tries to come to terms with the links between people, and realises she cannot remain an isolated entity, as the lives of others will impact her own. She considers suicide, and at the end of Book Two, she is left at the side of the highway with a gun in her mouth, finger on the trigger. Her connection to Tengo, who calls her name in his world, reaches her and stops her completing her suicide:

In the end, though, she didn't pull the trigger. At the last moment she relaxed her right index finger and removed the muzzle from her mouth. Like a person surfacing from deep under water she took a long breath, and exhaled, as if replacing every molecule of air within her.

She stopped moving toward death because she had heard a distant voice. At that point, she was in a soundless space. From the moment she put pressure on the trigger, all noise around her vanished. She was wrapped in silence, as if at the bottom of a pool. Down there, death was neither dark nor fearful. Like amniotic fluid to a foetus, it was natural, self-evident. This isn't so bad, Aomame thought, and almost smiled. That was when she heard a voice.

The voice sounded far away, as if coming from a distant time. She didn't recognize it. It reached her only after many twists and turns, and in the process it lost its original tone and timbre. What was left was a hollow echo, stripped of meaning. Still, within that sound, Aomame could detect a warmth she hadn't felt for years. The voice seemed to be calling her name.

She relaxed her finger on the trigger, narrowed her eyes, and listened carefully, trying to hear the words the voice was saying. But all she could make out, or thought that she made out, was her name. The rest was wind whistling through a hollow space. In the end the voice grew distant, lost any meaning at all, and was absorbed into the silence. The void enveloping her disappeared, and, as if a cork had been pulled, the noise and clamour around her rushed in. And she no longer wanted to die. (Murakami 2011, pp.27 -28)

The symbolism of the water and silence in Aomame's revelation brings to mind the empty well of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, and the stream and lake of *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*. She shuts out the world completely, and submerges herself in her own subconscious, her own *moi*. She becomes reborn, as she leaves behind the warm amniotic fluid of her pseudo womb-like, subconscious, state of silence, and starts once again to rebuild her selfhood. Hearing the voice of Tengo highlights the importance of the connection that she had wished to avoid, and leave behind, through suicide. The connection with Tengo becomes a vital component to her survival, her rebirth, piecing together her disjointed existence. Through this connection, the social 'I', the social Aomame, can begin to form. She has seen aspects of herself in Tengo and desires him. Aomame was faced with the same choice as Rat in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, and chose not to

die, but to actually engage with the social I, with the Other. She allows the outside world to intervene through the voice of Tengo, and the noise and clamour rush in when she realises she does not want to die because she can see an image, something with which to identify and desire in Tengo. In this moment, Aomame can see that she is not alone, she can see the self.

Tengo, too, is a disjointed individual, and as will be discussed later in Chapter 3, Tengo's attitude to work is torn between being a mathematics teacher and a writer. Often seen as opposing disciplines, Tengo himself is also struggling with his clashing physicality and emotionality. A large man, he struggles to fit the representation of himself with the individual that he actually is:

Tengo was a big man (he had been a key member of his judo team in middle school, high school, and college), and he had the eyes of an early-waking farmer. He wore his hair short, seemed always to have a tan, and had cauliflower ears. He looked neither like a youthful devotee of literature nor like a teacher of mathematics. (Murakami 2011, p.30)

Compared to Aomame, Tengo is also grappling with who he is, but without the strong desire that she contains. Throughout the novel, the connection he made with Aomame plagues him. This coupled with the rewriting of Fuki-Eri's story, and the approaching death of his father, sends him on a journey to question how he became the man he is today. He

journeys into his past, his own personal history, to seek out the issues that have troubled him, and caused him to be very much a separated self, emotionally, physically and socially. He must learn to merge the person he is, and the body in which he lives, with the mind. When, in the nursing home, an air chrysalis appears in his father's room, a *moi* to his *je*, he knows he must explore it, and get to know this form he has created:

But what could possibly be inside of Tengo's air chrysalis? (Tengo felt intuitively that this air chrysalis must be his own.) Was it something good or something evil? Was it something that would guide him somewhere or something that would stand in his way? And who could possibly have sent this air chrysalis to him here?

Tengo knew quite well that he was being asked to act. But he could not find the courage that would enable him to stand and look inside the chrysalis. He was afraid. The thing inside the chrysalis might wound him or greatly change his life. The thought caused Tengo to grow stiff, sitting on the little stool like someone who has lost a place of refuge. He was feeling the same kind of fear that had kept him from looking up his parents' family register or searching for Aomame. He did not want to know what was inside the air chrysalis that had been prepared for him. If he could get by without knowing what was in there, that was how he wanted to walk out of this room. If possible, he wanted to leave this room now, get on the train, and go back to Tokyo. He wanted to close his eyes, block his ears, and burrow himself in his own little world. (Murakami 2011, pp.620-621)

Travelling to his sick father's nursing home becomes much more than a visit; the process becomes the location for Tengo's metaphorical stripping of the postmodern simulacra of identity. This process of reengaging with the self is something that frightens Tengo, he is like many of Murakami's previous male protagonists, and wishes to stay within the isolated

cocoon which he has created. Once again, the failure of the male protagonist to address his selfhood and plural postmodern identity requires the intervention of a postmodern female. Aomame's ten year old self has literally split in two since their meeting as children, and has remained a fragmented body until she can reconnect with Tengo. It is this segregated body that appears before him in the air chrysalis. This memory of the ten year old Aomame, and the connection he once made with her, is calling to him to make a connection once again. He must once again look in the mirror and see the reflection of a social I, something that frightens him terribly:

If I leave here without seeing what is inside, I'll regret it for the rest of my life. I'll probably never be able to forgive myself for having averted my eyes from that something, whatever it might be. (Murakami 2011, pp.620-621)

Tengo knows that he must reengage with life, and with his selfhood in order to escape this inertia, and now that a memory from a formative moment has reappeared, he can no longer ignore his rebirth. He must depart from his isolated 'town of cats' and unite his *je* and his *moi* in order to find Aomame. However, like Boku in *Hard Boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, taking that jump into that lake is not an easy task:

Tengo remained seated on the stool for a long time, unsure of what he should do, unable to go either forward or back. Folding his hands on his knees, he stared at the air chrysalis on the bed, glancing occasionally out the window, as if hoping to escape. The

sun had set, and a pale afterglow was slowly enveloping the pine woods. Still there was no wind, nor could he hear the sound of the waves. It was almost mysteriously quiet. And as the room's darkness increased, the light emitted by the white object became deeper and more vivid. The chrysalis itself seemed like a living thing to Tengo, with its soft glow of life, its unique warmth, its nearly imperceptible vibration.

Finally Tengo made up his mind, stood up from the stool, and leaned over the bed. Running away now was out of the question. He couldn't live forever like a frightened child, averting his eyes from the things before him. Only by learning the truth-whatever that truth might be-could people be given the right kind of power. (Murakami 2011, pp.620-621)

Like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Tengo must make that choice between knowing and remaining apathetically unaware. He must find Aomame, and make peace with his father, or he will be forever disjointed from his selfhood. He must enter the stage of identification once more, and achieve what Lacan describes as a 'transformation' and 'assume an image', such as recreating the moment Tengo and Aomame first met, a 'predestined' image (Lacan 2006, p.76). Aomame and Tengo saw in each other at the age of ten something that they have never shown or experienced with anyone else:

Then, one day, the girl took Tengo's hand. It happened on a sunny afternoon in early December. [...] No one else was there. She strode quickly across the room, heading straight for Tengo, as if she had just made up her mind about something. She stood next to him and, without the slightest hesitation, grabbed his hand and looked up at him. (He was ten centimetres taller, so she had to look up.) Taken by surprise, Tengo looked back at her. Their eyes met. In hers, he could see a transparent depth that he had never seen before. She went on holding his hand for a very long time, saying nothing, but never once relaxing her powerful grip. Then, without warning, she dropped his hand and dashed out of the classroom, skirts flying.

Tengo had no idea what had just happened to him. He went on standing there, at a

loss for words. His first thought was how glad he felt that they had not been seen by anyone. Who knew what kind of commotion it could have caused? He looked around, relieved at first, but then he felt deeply shaken. (Murakami 2011, pp.168-169)

Having isolated themselves from world, they have been unable to garner that sense of connection since that time. It is at this moment that Tengo's self begins to fragment; it becomes a defining moment for him. For the rest of his life he cannot recreate that feeling, so he isolates himself with an image of Aomame and of this defining moment. Without her and this indescribable event he cannot see a true sense of self. Without her mirror, he is not complete and nobody can fill that void for him. Despite Tengo's affair with the married women, he is alone in the world until Fuki-Eri arrives and forces him to act. Visiting his father allows him to venture deep into his own psyche, and to consider his sense of identity.

Like the protagonists of Murakami's previous novels, he is fearful he will never return back to real life. He reads a story on the way there called 'The Town of Cats', a metaphorical description of his own self-study. The story focuses on a young man who alights from a train at a station he does not know. The station is empty, as is the town, and he decides to explore. At night the town becomes filled with cats, who do not want humans in their town. The next day, he watches the train stop and depart from the station, with no

one getting off, and he decides to stay longer exploring the town. The cats come close to discovering him, but do not see him despite being in the same space. He decides to leave the next morning, but no train stops:

The sun begins to sink. It is time for the cats to come. He knows that he is irretrievably lost. This is no town of cats, he finally realizes. It is the place where he is meant to be lost. It is a place not of this world that has been prepared especially for him. And never again, for all eternity, will the train stop at this station to bring him back to his original world. (Murakami 2011, p.428)

Tengo will become like Boku in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* if he does venture inside himself, and become reborn. When this journey is complete, he makes his way back to Tokyo, and then can focus on finding Aomame. Tengo's journey is reminiscent of Toru and Watashi/Boku, as he must delve into his own subconscious, and then choose to re-emerge from the well in order to enter a symbolic mirror stage in his new selfhood. Tengo could easily get stuck in his metaphorical 'Town of Cats', like Boku in *The End of The World*, or Toru in the well. In order to have this rebirth of the self, he must return to society, and begin interacting genuinely with people. Tengo becomes more active in his search for Aomame on his return, complimenting his new selfhood, one which no longer apathetically allows life to control his actions or path. The connection with the Other becomes so important that it transcends the hyperreality of their situation.



While Aomame and Tengo are the focus of the novel, the issue of the segregation of the self, in terms of Lacan's *je* and *moi*, and understanding this separation is of major importance to the action. The two journeys of Aomame and Tengo are linked through Fuki-Eri, a teenage girl who has written an award-winning story that describes the segregation of the body and the soul, or the *doh*ta and *maza*. The *doh*ta is just an empty vessel without its *maza*, and like Boku in *The End of the World*, it lacks emotion. The leader of the cult calls a *doh*ta without its *maza* 'a living shadow'. It is a person, a physical being with no substance, an incomplete *je*. The *doh*ta becomes a stand in for the body, like Boku becomes the stand in for Watashi, as the Little People tell Fuki-Eri in her story 'Air Chrysalis':

'The *doh*ta serves as a stand-in for the *maza*,' the screechy-voiced one says.

'Do I get split in two?' the girl asks.

'Not at all,' the tenor says. 'This does not mean that you are split in two. You are the same you in every way. Don't worry. A *doh*ta is just the shadow of the *maza*'s heart and mind in the shape of the *maza*.'

[...]

'What will this *doh*ta do as the shadow of my heart and mind?' the girl asks.

'She will act as a Perceiver,' the small-voiced one says furtively.

'Perceiver,' the girl says.

'Yes,' says the hoarse one. 'She who perceives.'

'She conveys what she perceives to the Receiver,' the screechy one says.

[...]

'Make sure you take good care of this *doh*ta,' the baritone says. 'She is your *doh*ta.'

'Without the *maza*'s care, the *doh*ta cannot be complete. She cannot live long without

it,' the screechy one says.

'If she loses her *dohta*, the *maza* will lose the shadow of her heart and mind,' the tenor says.

'What happens to a *maza* when she loses the shadow of her heart and mind?' the girl asks.

The Little People look at each other. None of them will answer the question.

(Murakami 2011, p.571)

The disjointed nature of the postmodern identity creates a second representation of the self, Baudrillard's second order of representation. This fragmentation of the self is very different from traditional conceptions of the self, and of identity. The splitting, like the multitude of realities, causes an unstable location for the self. Aomame and Tengo have been operating as the *je*, or the *dohta*, without their *maza*, or *moi*, meaning that they can never garner a full sense of self. They need to journey into themselves in an isolated pilgrimage where they can register the fragmentation, and merge the two elements of self and begin again. In order to do so, they must recognise the hyperreality or simulacra of their current situation. Aomame does so hiding out in the apartment, processing all the information she has received, while Tengo does so in his personal 'Town of Cats'.

*1Q84* is Murakami's clearest declaration of this segregation or disjointing of the self.

Fuki-Eri's story becomes a model for the separation of the *je* and *moi*, disjointing the individual, mirroring the two worlds which have emerged, *1Q84* and 1984. For the

postmodern individual, when the self tends to move into the second order of simulation and becomes a postmodern representation, then the self begins to fragment.

## **Conclusion**

It seems that Murakami's characters in general just exist until an event pushes them into questioning their identity and their reason for living. He forces his characters, as Nakata says, to have their own ideas and own meaning, as well as connecting with life and people.

His criticism of postmodernity seems to be that his characters are so isolated within simulacra and from their own identity and that of others, that they have no real concept of selfhood. Identity has been based on modernist dialectics that are incompatible with postmodern selfhood. The breakdown of binary oppositions, and modernist tropes, has meant that the postmodern individual must return to the mirror stage and begin again, he or she must return to as close to the original state of self, in order to rebuild a more congruent postmodern self that is more in tune with the subconscious, the Other and society. So in order to find a more accurate representation of the self, the postmodern individual must search for it, and as a result find a more engaged existence:

Although Murakami is not proposing a return to the traditional Japanese life-style as a remedy for the restlessness, confusion, and dissatisfaction that he portrays, he is conscious of the loss of idealism that marked Japan earlier in the century. (Loughman 1997, p.90)

Murakami's protagonists have isolated themselves in their postmodern worlds, but each of them finds a quest that requires them to undertake a journey into the real, whereby they question their existence, their reasoning and themselves. This quest, which forces them to establish connections with others, leads them on a journey into their own subconscious, and their identity, which results in them finding aspects of their own true self, and shedding their postmodern identity of simulacra. In order to know themselves, they must get to know the Other, the outsider; they must make genuine connections:

Lonely and isolated, they must nevertheless battle to forge an authentic identity in a dystopic world. Though his protagonists are ordinary individuals, they can do extraordinary things if they live their lives meaningfully, use knowledge responsibly, and caution themselves not to follow blindly another's questionable utopian narrative. (Welch 2005, p.59)

This blended theory of existence comes from Murakami's belief and faith in history, and in building up strong relationships while finding one's own meaning. He sees the postmodern apathy and jadedness as reactions to our dissatisfaction with postmodern noise and commodification, and as something we need to rectify, in order to establish a meaningful existence in a world of postmodern simulacra:

Through immersion in the realm of images and representations, the ego is built upon various narcissistic identifications that defend against the painful and unsettling turbulence of the unconscious [...] the postmodern self, created upon fleeting narcissistic images, is a transient identity with precious little in the way of deeper affective ties or emotional roots. (Elliott 2007, p.146)

In Murakami's works, a sense of belonging is vital, but to find their identity, his protagonists are required to develop relationships, and to question the ones that have failed. Boku can only solve his mystery through reengaging with the real connections he once made, while Toru cannot allow secrets and inadequate interaction to overpower his marriage. Kafka cannot deny his family, and he must not isolate himself from the world in order to survive; instead, he must establish true friendships which are mutually beneficial, allowing him to find a place in this world.

Each of Murakami's anti-heroes is perfectly situated to undertake his quest, as each lacks a connection that roots them to a location or a person. They can easily disappear from existence, as they no longer engage in society. They have become an image of themselves, the postmodern simulacrum of their own existence, and in order to escape this Disneyfication of their identity, they must find the real, and interact with the real. Their quests force them not only to learn about themselves, and the importance of the past, but also to establish meaningful social interactions where they learn about their own

experience and the journeys of their companions.

## Chapter 3

### Postmodern Literature: When Work doesn't work

Dull translation jobs or fraudulent copy, it's basically the same. Sure we're tossing out fluff, but tell me, where does anyone deal in words with substance? C'mon now, there's no honest work anywhere. Just like there's no honest breathing or honest pissing.

*(A Wild Sheep Chase, Murakami 2003, p.49)*

The relationship between work and the protagonists in Murakami's novels is a worrying one for contemporary society. If Jameson is to be believed, and literature is a 'socially symbolic act', then the representation of working life in these texts offers us a damning insight into the attitude towards work of the postmodern individual. This frayed and fractured link with work needs to be examined further, so we can analysis how postmodernism has transformed from the modernist ideal of work as 'setting us free' and as offering us a solid identity.

In this Chapter, I will discuss the relationships which the protagonists of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, *The Wind-up Bird*

*Chronicle, 1Q84* and *The Second Bakery Attack*, have with work, and also how working life is portrayed in these texts. As one of the most prominent postmodern writers, Murakami's voice is an important one when we want to examine how contemporary society is reflected in literature. In the postmodern worlds of his transnational fiction, the detached, unfulfilled protagonists lack an interest in work, and have no real connection with their careers. Their postmodern apathy has eliminated the modernist metanarrative of hard work as being an integral part of life. Murakami can offer us a glimpse of positivity in the negative postmodern world when his protagonists engage and connect with the world and people around them. However when it comes to employment, his characters remain disinterested.

The ideals of modernist Marxist capitalism which David Harvey sees as 'the search for identity through work, individual initiative, or social solidarity', are no longer relevant to the postmodern individual, as the modernist metanarratives of work and social solidarity have broken down (Harvey 1992, p.123). The ideals of the work-ethic, and of company or brand loyalty are no longer hegemonic values, and have been replaced by the desire to create an image which can be seen as a simulacrum of modernist ideals: modernism can exist once it is parodied:



The most startling fact about postmodernism: its total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity, and the chaotic that formed the one half of Baudelaire's conception of modernity. But postmodernism responds to the fact of that in a very particular way. It does not try to transcend it, counteract it, or even to define the 'eternal and immutable' elements that might lie within it. Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is. (Harvey 1992, p.44)

Karl Marx believed that the working class was the agent of human liberation and emancipation, but with the collapse of modernist ideals, the postmodern working class does not feel liberated or emancipated, but rather bored, detached and paranoid. For the protagonists of Murakami's novels, work does not set them free, nor does it offer them a sense of social freedom, but their distrust of the unknown authority in control of their employment, and their postmodern inertia, has left them apathetic towards the job they choose.

Traditional social classes, as spelled out in Marxism and modernism, no longer have the same meaning, or power, within postmodernism. They have been broken down, and therefore the function of the working class or the bourgeoisie is often confused. In the forward to *The Postmodern Condition*, Jameson explains that these social groupings 'no longer function as such today, but are rather displaced by different, non-class formations such as bureaucracy and technocracy' (Lyotard 1984, p.xiv). The loss of affiliation, and the

growth in 'bureaucracy and technocracy' when it comes to work, is something with which Murakami's protagonists are constantly contending in his novels. Traditionally-accepted ideas of the nature and function of work, and the working class, are no longer relevant to them and they are unsure where they function in relation to working life.

As Harvey asks, if the working class no longer have any power, what will this era bring for the working class? What will be the function of the industrial working class in postmodernism as a result? It no longer holds a strategic position of power (Harvey 1992, pxiii). Without a function, the workers become futile, replaceable, and unimportant. For Murakami's characters, this leads to a total disconnect, leaving them apathetic towards their jobs. Murakami's protagonists are not inadequate employees; they work to a level that allows them to pay for the lifestyle which they want to sustain. However, they remain disconnected from their employers, unaware of who is in control, and with no desire for advancement.

As Jameson continues in the introduction to *The Postmodern Condition*, work is there to benefit the system, to increase profitability, and also alleviate the issues associated with an idle population:

They allocate our lives for the growth of power. In matters of social justice and of

scientific truth alike, the legitimation of that power is based on its optimizing the system's performance – efficiency. The application of this criterion to all of our games necessarily entails a certain level of terror, whether soft or hard: be operational (that is, commensurable) or disappear.

The logic of maximum performance is no doubt inconsistent in many ways, particularly with respect to contradiction in the socioeconomic field: it demands both less work (to lower production costs) and more (to lessen the social burden of the idle population). But our incredulity is now such that we no longer expect salvation to rise from these inconsistencies, as did Marx. (Lyotard 1984, p.xxiv)

This commodification of the individual coincides with the death of the metanarratives of modernism. The development and growth of a sense of social solidarity was one of the major aspects of modernism, where grand narratives or metanarratives were all important. Religion, early capitalism and democracy all involved an individual working within a metanarrative to become a successful hero, attempting to mimic, to some degree, the hero of these narratives. With the growth of postmodernism, faith was no longer totally invested in the metanarrative; individual success is not required for capitalism to succeed, individual commodification is encouraged, so that rather than achieve we must consume. With no social unifying heroes left, but many voices competing for the patronage of individuals, the voice of modernist emancipatory ideals has been replaced by postmodern noise. For the workers, as we come to learn from the books of Murakami, this has left them disinterested, distrusting and bored of work.

In Chapters 1 and 2, we looked at how Murakami's work is internationally important

and relevant, and how it represents a new postmodern space, as well as how his characters interact with each other and form relationships. Within this space, the positioning of working life is something that must be examined, as an international representation of how attitudes to work have changed in postmodern society. The link between work and identity-formation is also important, and as we have seen in Chapter 2, the difficulties his characters have with selfhood, can also be seen to impact on their working life, and on their feelings towards career and employment. The postmodern *ennui* that exists for these characters leaves them just as apathetic towards work, as life and relationships.

Harvey has said that 'postmodernism also ought to be looked at as mimetic of the social, economic, and political practices in society' (Harvey1992 p.113), and when we consider Lyotard's view about the changing composition of the work force in highly developed societies, then this representation in literature offers a new analytical tool to aid our understanding of postmodern societies. Thus, in any analysis of work in postmodern society, there is an acknowledgement that something has to change regarding work practices in order to deal with this shift from modernism to postmodernism. Research on working life has recognised a change in the relationship between the individual and work,

a change that is apparent in Murakami's writings. Jerry Biberman and Michael Whitty suggest a more spiritual organic response to work, claiming that '[i]n the postmodern future, humankind's eternal search for meaning will require not only reinventing work and the workplace but also a renewed sense of the deepest intentions behind human activity' (Biberman & Whitty 1997, p.135). Published 15 years ago, their response to the postmodern work ethic was to change work into something more accessible and compatible with the postmodern lifestyle. More recent examination of work in postmodern life centres on the transience of the worker, as well as on the development of technology allowing workers to work anywhere. This mobility of the work-force frees up the worker, but also reduces job-commitment in favour of experience, as noted by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler in their article 'Transience and The Postmodern Self: The Geographic Mobility of Resort Workers'. They explain that the transient nature of this new workforce is something with which we have not fully come to terms, as 'we sorely lack knowledge about the worldly skills of survival and interaction that accompany all this coming and going' (Adler & Adler 1992, p.32). The lifestyle of the travelling working also ties into the isolated self, as these migrating workers do not wish to be tied down to location, job or people:

Seekers valued fluidity and flexibility, the freedom to follow their own whims.

Commitment to significant others tied them down and restricted their lifestyle. (Adler & Adler 1992, p.44)

Seth Ovadia's study of American High School Students in 2003, demonstrates that there is now less emphasis on working life (Ovadia 2003, pp.239-256). However, despite the numerous amount of research on work and working life in the postmodern era, there is very little analysis of working life within postmodern literature. This lack of scrutiny suggests that the representation of postmodern working life within literature needs further exploration and detailed interpretation.

In the world of Murakami's characters, the traditional structures of family, love, hard work, these metanarratives of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, have all been fractured, and his disconnected anti-heroes are as lost as the metanarratives of capitalist evolution and progress. As noted in Chapter 1, Arnason suggests that this decline of a work ethic, the growing role of information technology, and prominence of capitalism within Japanese society contribute significantly to the shared postmodern experience of East and West.

The protagonists of Murakami's fiction are, as Anthony Elliot would argue, disorientated and lost, filling their lives with mundane tasks, becoming practitioners of the commodity fetish *par excellence*. As Hantke points out, they are unconcerned with money

or career (Hantke 2007, p.5). The dispassionate protagonists of Murakami's work are torn between the goals of modernism, the traditions their parents have grown up with and instilled in them, and the realities of the postmodern age, where they dismiss the myth that strong is good, and instead opt for lives without enthusiasm.

Modernism and the class system were linked, with definite categories of social structures and classes helping to unite and divide. The enlightenment ideal of a classless capitalism that could bring benefits to all was no longer possible as modernism took hold:

It became less tenable as the century wore on and the class disparities produced within capitalism became more and more evident. The socialist movement increasingly challenged the unity of Enlightenment reason and inserted a class dimension into modernism. Was it the bourgeoisie or the workers' movement which was to inform and direct the modernist project? (Harvey 1992, p.29)

Murakami's books seem to confront the struggle between the death of the modernist metanarrative of work being good, and the individualised postmodernist society that has emerged, focusing on selling an unachievable self-identity based on capitalist ideology. As already noted, the first two works on which I focus in this chapter, *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, were published in Japan in 1982 and 1985 respectively. Written during Japan's economic boom, just before the bubble burst, these two works mirror the situation in the Anglo-European first world of today. *A*

*Wild Sheep Chase* was first published in English in 1989, and *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* in 1991. His protagonists and stories could just as easily slot into any city in Europe or America, sharing what is seems to be a common first world, postmodern experience, one of disillusionment and detachment with society, people and work:

His people live in a rich society which they find wanting. They show its insufficiency as a source of fulfilment by, for example, withdrawing from the race for success and riches or attempting to retrieve a lost self. Murakami shows that neither materialism nor the preference for Western culture is the problem. The problem is that's all there is. The idealism which has disappeared has not been replaced with anything else as a source of meaning and self-fulfilment. (Loughman 1997, p.90)

Marx's arbitrary fictions of modernism, the agreed symbols of representation, have become cloudy and chaotic. They no longer stand for what they originally were, but are in the fourth order of simulation. Harvey describes these 'arbitrary fictions' best:

If money is to perform its functions effectively, Marx argues, it must be replaced by mere symbols of itself (coins, tokens, paper currency, credit), which lead it to be considered as a mere symbol, an 'arbitrary fiction' sanctioned by 'the universal consent of mankind.' Yet it is through these 'arbitrary fictions' that the whole world of social labour, of production and hard daily work, get represented. In the absence of social labour, all money would be worthless. But it is only through money that social labour can be represented at all. (Harvey 1992, p.101)

Murakami's protagonists still maintain that balance of labour for money, so that the distance between labour and wage has not really shifted, but it has changed regarding the



mode of production. They work for the symbol, the coin, the currency, but they produce very little 'social' labour. It is usually a solitary profession, working for a large cooperation or an unknown authority. While Marx explored the division of labour, seeing the labourer as an appendage of the machine, and the constant insecurity of a system looking for new and cheaper ways of making money, the speculative capitalism of postmodernity has removed the worker into a different reality to that of the employer:

The fact that postmodernist architecture regards itself as being about fiction rather than function appears, in the light of the reputations of the financiers, property developers, and speculators that organize construction, more than a little apt. (Harvey 1992, p.108)

Harvey talks about 'the factional forces and fragmenting effects of widespread individualism', which are operative within postmodernism, combining with capital circulation to create this hyperreal situation for the labour force. Harvey explains that capitalism may rely on the same principles as it did in modernity, but now, within postmodernity, 'it reflects a shift in the way in which capitalism is working' (Harvey 1992, pp.108-112). As Daniel Bell has argued, there is a death of the work ethic, and interest in work. Traditional ideas of the importance of work as seen in modernism and the enlightenment are no longer existent:

The bourgeois world-view - rationalistic, matter-of-fact, pragmatic; neither magical,

mystical, nor romantic; emphasizing work and function; concerned with restraint and order in morals and conduct – had by the mid-nineteenth century come to dominate, not only the social structure (the organization of the economy), but also the culture, especially the religious order and the educational system which instilled 'appropriate' motivation in the child. (Bell 1972, p.29)

He claims that this is not something that began with the 'counter culture' of the postmodern 1960's but was there under the surface all along. For the individual experiencing the *ennui* of the postmodern condition, or the individual in the high postmodern era, 'work and accumulation were no longer ends in themselves (though they were still critical to a John D. Rockefeller or an Andrew Carnegie) but means to consumption and display. Status and its badges, not work and the election of God, became the mark of success' (Bell 1972, p.32): it is the simulacrum and not the real that has become important.

The Protestant work ethic of Daniel Bell's thesis is no longer applicable; the protagonists of Murakami's novels belong to a new postmodern working class, filled with a subtle detached *ennui*, and only working to fund the creation of an image.

### 3.1 A Wild Sheep Chase

In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the character of Boku is a solitary, detached individual, without any family connections, no close alliance with friends and no affiliation to his job. He goes

on to reweave his new relationship with the girl with the ears in a similar apathetic manner to his job: with a detached devotion. Boku is the ultimate, anonymous postmodern anti-hero:

Anything requiring sustained thought, spiritual input, or a committed stance bores him, perhaps even frightens him. What he finds hard to handle or to bothersome, he dismisses with slick, flippant aphorisms. (Iwamoto 1993, p.299)

Boku's postmodern scepticism can be clearly seen when analysing the relationship he has with work. He and his friend set up a copy-writing company, which developed into a marketing business. Yet, he holds no enthusiasm for his company, or for the work he undertakes. He and his partner believe they are 'tossing out fluff' and not dealing in 'words of substance'. Work does not provide Boku with any particular satisfaction; he does not have any specific goals. He goes into work and completes his day without committing too much of himself to the role. Iwamoto feels that Boku's job is significant; he is 'a member of the advertising world' which he says is a 'symbol of media-dominated and consumer-orientated contemporary Japanese culture' (Iwamoto 1993, p.297). In a conversation between Boku and his partner about their work, they discuss how the success of their business has led them further away from job satisfaction. Boku explains that their job contributes nothing to the world, but keeps them well paid and allows them to buy the things they need; however his partner responds: '[a]t the very least in the old days we did

work we believed in and we took pride in it. There's none of that now. We're just tossing out fluff' (Murakami 2003, p.48). They could easily be referring to the change in attitude to work from modernism to postmodernism.

Iwamoto is right in saying that anything requiring sustained thought, spiritual input, or a committed stance, bores or perhaps even frightens him (Iwamoto 1993, p.99), because Boku never gets to the crux of the matter during the discussion with his partner. He avoids looking at why his lack of job satisfaction has come about. He refuses to deal with the issue that he is apathetic to the fact he is 'tossing out fluff', and turns the conversation back on his partner's drinking problem to deflect attention from the issue. In response, his partner asks Boku about his impending divorce, another topic which Boku is unwilling to confront.

It is only fitting that Boku's journey into self-identity is as a result of a job he has been given by a man known as the 'boss'. Boku undertakes the mission as Kawakami says 'out of curiosity and boredom', rather than for money (Kawakami 2002, p.316). The job itself becomes of major importance to the development of the plot, but in a truly postmodern paranoid fashion, the job is given by an unknown and untrustworthy right wing authority. The real reason Boku was picked to undertake the task is hidden from him, but the

completion of the task is something that will benefit the system, and the perpetuation of that system. In order to undertake the mission he is given, Boku must leave his advertising job, something that gives him great pleasure:

With my job out of the picture, I felt a huge surge of relief. Slowly but surely I was making things simpler. I'd lost my hometown, lost my teens, lost my wife, in another three months I'd lose my twenties. What would be left of me when I got to be sixty, I couldn't imagine. There's no thinking about these things. There's no telling even what's going to happen a month from now. (Murakami 2003, p.149)

The eradication of his career helps him in stripping back all traditional modernist identity markers. Throwing off these identification-shackles means he can no longer be defined in the modernist sense, because the loss of his job was the final obstruction to his postmodern 'un-identity'. Thinking about how he has nothing from property to a wife he decides 'I've made no name for myself, have no social credibility, no sex appeal, no talent [...] I am an utterly mediocre person' (Murakami 2003, p.139).

The idea of work remains a negative issue for him, and as he watches people work in the 'dingy ash grey' office buildings from the window of his room in the Dolphin Hotel, he sees no purpose, no aim or joy in their work: 'I couldn't tell what line of work it is, but none of them looked terribly happy' (Murakami 2003, p.166). By day eight at the hotel, he still has not figured out the purpose of these workers across the street, as all work seems

pointless and mundane to Boku: '[s]tare as I might all day long, I couldn't figure out what the company did. The company had ten employees, people were constantly running in and out like in a basketball game' (Murakami 2003, p.174).

Harvey has suggested that postmodern society swims in the 'fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change' (Harvey 1992, p.44), and that is exactly the society that the boss in *A Wild Sheep Chase* wished to create – one based on chaos, where 'individual cognition and evolutionary continuity lose their meaning, language loses meaning. Existence ceases for the individuum as we know it, and all becomes chaos. You cease to be a unique entity unto yourself, but exist simply as chaos' (Murakami 2003, p.120). As Rat explains when one gives one's body over to it 'everything goes. Consciousness, values, emotions, pain, everything. Gone. What it comes closest to is a dynamo manifesting the vital force at the root of all life in one solitary point in the universe' (Murakami 2003, p.283).

Chaos has subsumed the metanarratives of modernity, and as Fuminobu has said *A Wild Sheep Chase* becomes an 'attack on the modernist "grand narrative"' (Fuminobu 2009, p.20). Boku has dismissed every modernist metanarrative, and is existing in a chaotic current of images and representations. This chaos which has filled the void left by

the death of the 'grand narrative' has created a society, and a mood that will not allow the individual, the Boku, to find a purpose. Boku has deconstructed his identity, and negotiated his way through the chaos, realising that he has no affiliation to work, that he never knew the authority that controlled the government and that he has detached himself from society. Yet, in the final few lines, he continues to acknowledge that he lives his life through simulating the image of life: 'I brushed the sand from my trousers and got up, as if I had somewhere to go' (Murakami 2003, p.299). For Boku, Daniel Bell's work ethic is irrelevant; work is nothing more than one of his inconsequential relationships, an image that simulates the idea of a life. He has no attachment to labour, or production, or authority, but he does have a connection to the wage that allows him to build this representation of individuality.

### **3.2 Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World**

The issues that Murakami explores in relation to working life are investigated further in the novel that followed *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*. The first section, the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* portion of the novel, presents us with a dystopian postmodern capitalist future in which individuals are compartmentalized according to their functions

and uses within the system. The second section of the book, *The End of the World*, sees the protagonist create a new life within a walled Marxist-influenced town, where emotion, desire, music and memories are erased.

The novel alternates between the two co-existing worlds, that of the conscious/public life of the protagonist, and that of the world within his subconscious. This separation of the two worlds and the character is much more obvious for the Japanese reader, as Rubin points out in his book *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, because, as has been already noted, the protagonist in the public sphere is referred to as the more formal 'I', 'Watashi', while the more informal 'Boku' is used to denote the subconscious 'I', creating what Rubin describes as 'psychological bifurcation' (Rubin 2005, p.117). The internal or subconscious world of the novel provides is with an image of how Watashi truly sees work, as something that is pointless, and that only helps to fill time during the day.

The identity that Watashi has created in *Hard-boiled Wonderland* is, like the Japanese translation suggests, a facade, strengthening the idea that identity in the postmodern world is based on image and representation. Watashi works for the system as a calutec. His brain has been developed by the system to scramble and store confidential



information for the system. But when asked what he does he responds: "Oh, computer-related business." My standard reply. It wasn't really a lie, and since most people don't know much about computers, they generally don't inquire any further' (Murakami 2003a, pp.92/93).

Like the protagonist of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, he has a job, he has money and he has all the material possessions he believes are important for a man of his stature, yet he is unable to build successful relationships with the opposite sex, and feels that something is missing in his life. When a new job puts him in contact with the Professor, who has defected from the system, he learns that his mind was experimented with by the system in order to create a more beneficial and pliant worker. However, the experiment has not been as successful as first thought, as all workers experimented on are now dead, apart from him. He is forced to look at his life, which has never satisfied him:

My life is nothing, I thought. Zero. Zilch. A blank. What have I done with my life? Not a damned thing. I had no home. I had no family. I had no friends. Not a door to my name. Not an erection either. Pretty soon, not even a job. (Murakami 2003a, p.164)

The quandary which Watashi faces again suggests the condition that confronts the postmodern worker: an unknown, unseen employer that withholds information from the employee, creating a detached worker that has no bond with the career they have chosen.

Like Boku, in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, he does not know the authority that orders his tasks; once again, the division of labour has become mysterious, and unknowable. As a result Watashi, shares the same uncertainty about what his function really is within the system, and does not trust that the system is truthful with him and with the other workers. Until now, as he faces a coma-like existence, he has not had to confront that issue:

The whole time I worked for the System, I never heard anything about what went on inside System Central. We received directives; we carried them out. We terminal devices never got access to the CPU. (Murakami 2003a, pp.299-300)

The relationship which he has with work is mirrored in his other relationships. He maintains no strong connection with his family or friends, and he fills the void with material possessions. He declares that the reason he does not subscribe to a newspaper is because he feels 'disconnected' (Murakami 2003a, p.235). As he counts down his final hours, he wonders what he should do and he chooses to shop, hiring a fast car and purchasing an eclectic collection of albums to match the style of the car: "[h]ow was I to know what kind of music would go with a Carina 1800 GT Twin-Cam Turbo?" he asks' (Murakami 2003a, p.345).

Watashi is the ultimate example of the posthumanist individual, a man who has been commodified by a system to be of more benefit to that system. They have adapted

his brain to allow it to launder and shuffle data, in order to become a storage device, making him not just postmodern, but posthuman. The system's work on the mind of the worker shows the influence of Norbert Wiener, as discussed in N. Katherine Hayles' book, *How we became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*, where he wished to align cybernetics and the liberal humanist subject:

He was less interested in seeing humans as machines than he was in fashioning human and machine alike in the image of an autonomous, self-directed individual. (Hayles 1999, p.7)

The human and the machine have been combined in Watashi. His machine is now autonomous, with its own world, which threatens the world of the human. And if, as Hayles suggests, literature is not a passive voice in the posthuman debate, then Murakami is making an interesting point about the commodified worker:

Literary texts are not, of course, merely passive conduits. They actively shape what the technologies mean and what the scientific theories signify in cultural contexts. (Hayles 1999, p.21)

Even in his subconscious, the reason for working is unknown. In the simple walled town in which Boku comes to live, everyone has a job, and completes their tasks without question or joy. If we factor in Freud's hypothesis on the repressed subconscious, then what Watashi really feels about work is an uncertain apathetic detachment. When Boku arrives

at the town, he wonders what is the reason for his job, and what is his purpose, but as in the conscious world, the worker is once again detached from the goals or aims of employment. The gatekeeper of the town explains: 'this is a poor town. No room for idle people wandering around. Everybody has a place, everybody has a job. Yours is in the library reading dreams. You did not come here to live happily ever after, did you?' (Murakami 2003a, p.39).

Boku does not question the logic of purposeless job and responds that it is 'Better than having nothing to do'. Boku becomes a dreamreader, reading the dreams from skulls in the library. He is told by the gatekeeper that he will become known as his job and therefore lose his name, leaving him without an individual identity, a further desensitising of his sense of self. Everyone in the town has a 'singular function', as Patricia Welch points out (Welch 2005, p.56). Their names are replaced with their functions, which are usually jobs without a known purpose, mirroring their personal situation, people without a purpose or known goal. As a dreamreader, he deletes the elements and subconscious of the individuals in the town, leaving them egoless:

[E]ventually he realises that he is releasing into the atmosphere the very qualities of personality and memory that permit of passionate feelings - feeling towards other individuals and towards the world itself.

In exchange for eternal life, the residents of the town must sacrifice their hearts and minds. (Rubin 2005, pp.124-125)

As passionless individuals, they make preferable workers, not questioning their tasks or seeking betterment. Fuminobu refers to an incident in the *End of the World* section where a group of men in the town dig a hole for no reason in the town: 'this hole, which has no special function or meaning does not transport them anywhere. They have nothing to achieve by their labours, nowhere to get to, no victory, and no defeat' (Fuminobu 2009, p.25).

Fuminobu maintains that they enjoy this task, that Murakami's characters extract some sort of pleasure from this meaningless exercise, however, I do not believe this is true. They take part in the work, they complete their task, but they remain unfulfilled by any completion or achievement from labour. Boku is confused by their incessant digging of a hole which gets filled in with snow daily:

'Tell me, what is that hole for?' I ask the Colonel.

'Nothing at all,' he says, guiding a spoonful of soup to his mouth. 'They dig for the sake of digging. So in that sense, it is a very pure hole.'

'I don't understand.'

'It is simple enough. They dig their hole because they want to dig. Nothing more or less.'

I think about the pure hole and all it might mean.

'They dig holes from time to time,' the Colonel explains. 'It is probably for them what chess is for me. It has no special meaning, does not transport them anywhere. All of us

dig at our own pure holes. We have nothing to achieve by our activities, nowhere to get to. Is there not something marvellous about this? We hurt no one and no one gets hurt. No victory, no defeat.'

'I think I understand.' (Murakami 2003a, p.317)

This hole which the unemployed, somewhat defunct, elder men in the town dig, is pointless, daily it gets filled with snow and they return to digging without joy, or achievable goal. These men have nothing to do and decide to complete a meaningless task in order to fill their days. This is what work is to them. It is a pointless activity that leads to nothing. There is no victory, no defeat, no teleological goal; it is just a time filling exercise. Boku understands this because his job in the town is to take memories from the dead and extinguish them forever. It is a task that benefits no one, and in fact, it is a task which leaves him with an aversion to daylight, and aids in the numbing of free will and desire for the residents of the town. His comes to realise that his work is not valuable, but rather is robbing the residents of the town of their personal freedom, without emotion and depth of consciousness they have no free will. In Murakami's postmodern world, the work force has become anesthetised.

*Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World* was Murakami's fourth novel, and was critically well received, winning the prestigious Tanizaki Literary Prize. Moreover, its negative focus on work, and its unfavourable portrayal of the employer or 'the system',

was something that had continued to develop from Murakami's first novel, only published in Japanese, *Hear the Wind Sing*. This lack of enthusiasm for the traditional idea of work as being beneficial, or self-defining, became representative of Murakami's characters. And while some of his characters work 'honestly and systemically' as Fuminobu has said, the unknown authority remains as an underlying concern throughout Murakami's career. The fear and lack of understanding towards the controlling system seen so obviously in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, becomes more subtle, while the apathetic employee of this large controlling body becomes more apparent, especially in Murakami's short story *The Second Bakery Attack*.

### 3.3 The Second Bakery Attack

Murakami took a break from writing novels after *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* and wrote a collection of short stories, which appeared in his first English short story collection *The Elephant Vanishes*. This collection contained the original incarnation of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, *The Wind-up Bird* and *Tuesday's Women*, and *The Second Bakery Attack*.

In this text, his sarcastic tone in reference to working for the unknown employer, and

his indifference towards employment, is comic and pointed. The story focuses on a newly married couple who wake up one night overcome with an insatiable hunger and an empty larder. Over the course of the night, the male protagonist tells his wife how he and his best friend at the time held up a bakery some ten years previously, while they were in college. The owner of the bakery made a contract with the protagonist and his friend that they could have the bread they asked for if they listened to a complete album of Wagner overtures 'so we put our knives back in our bag, pulled up a couple of chairs and listened to the overtures to *Tannhauser* and *The Flying Dutchman*' (Murakami 2003d, p.40). The unnamed protagonist feels that a curse has remained with him since his failed bakery attack, and his wife and he decide to attack another bakery that night in order to lift the curse.

While the story really showcases the lack of knowledge this newly married couple have of each other, the second 'bakery' attack is an excellent example of how the generic attitude to work and the employer in Murakami's texts is one of indifference. In the first attack, the bakery owner transformed the robbery into a bartering exchange, removing the criminal element of the attack. When compared and contrasted with the second attack, Murakami sets out the differences between modernism and postmodernism, between



direct ownership and the faceless large scale employer. In both cases, the postmodern individual is left unsatisfied, as the modern era and postmodern era cannot gratify the perpetual postmodern mood, displayed by Murakami's characters. The Boku of *The Second Bakery Attack* is experiencing a postmodern condition in the postmodern era.

The couple are unable to find a bakery in their late-night search, and decide to hold up a MacDonald's instead, but the indoctrinated employees are not as cooperative as the couple had hoped. After the husband is welcomed to the store by the cashier, he pulls on a ski mask much to the confusion of the female cashier:

Obviously the McDonald's hospitality manual said nothing about how to deal with a situation like this. She had been starting to form the phrase that comes after 'Welcome to McDonald's,' but her mouth seemed to stiffen and the words wouldn't come out. Even so, like a crescent moon in the dawn sky, the hint of a professional smile lingered at the edges of her lips. (Murakami 2003, p.46)

Murakami's decision to include how the McDonald's hospitality manual would not include any procedure to deal with such a situation, and also the hint of a professional smile remaining on the cashier's face, implies a sense of sarcasm in the narrative tone, a sarcasm that strengthens as the incident continues. The husband realises that the three young staff members are perfunctory in their attitudes towards his requests. The young manager tells the couple he will give them all the money in the restaurant as 'they are

insured'. Even the protagonist's request to turn off the sign and pull down the shutters does not sit well with the manager who replies: 'I can't do that. I'll be held responsible if I close without permission'. Even though threatened with a gun, the Manager is only able to deal with the situation according to procedure. However, the most obvious display of this adhering to company policy comes when the couple demand their payment:

'Thirty Big Macs. For takeout,' said my wife.

'Let me just give you the money,' pleaded the manager. 'I'll give you more than you need. You can go buy food somewhere else. This is going to mess up my accounts and -'

'You better do what she says,' I said again.

The three of them went into the kitchen area together and started making the thirty Big Macs. (Murakami 2003, p.47)

The attitude of the Manager of the McDonald's is one of apathetic resignation. He does not want to deal with additional work as a result of this un-policied interruption yet does not put up any resistance to the robbery. He shows no loyalty to the company or pride in his job. Murakami's subtle criticism highlights the disconnected employee from the faceless employer and the system.

### 3.4 The Wind-up Bird Chronicle

The laissez-faire attitude of the Manager is reminiscent of *Boku in A Wild Sheep Chase*, or

Hoshino from *Kafka on The Shore* who declares that life is empty: '[w]e're all pretty much empty, don't you think, you eat, take a dump, do your crummy job to get your lousy pay and get laid occasionally if you're lucky. What else is there?' (Murakami 2005, p.329). The system of contemporary capitalism holds the employees in this ideological captivity of working in a pointless job in order to fund the image of postmodern identity. Capitalism has evolved to make more money by breaking down traditional metanarratives, and depending on fictional realities and speculative economics. The breaking down of the metanarratives weakened traditional uniting forces, such as the trade union movement and the solidarity of the work force, as Harvey argues:

Post modernism has come of age in the midst of this climate of voodoo economics, of political image construction and deployment, and of new social class formation. That there is some connection between this postmodernist burst and the image-making of Ronald Reagan, the attempt to deconstruct traditional institutions of working- class power (the trade unions and the political parties of the left), the masking of the social effects of the economic politics of privilege, ought to be evident enough. (Harvey 1992, p.336)

Coinciding with the prominence of the image, is the exchange between work ethic and temporary, flexible, transient employment. Attachment to any job refuses to give the characters in Murakami's worlds any sort of identity. Work becomes something they endure passively, and yet it is never a positive aspect in their lives, other than the wage it

garners. As Kawakami points out, as already noted, Murakami's work depicts a society at pains to come to terms with its new identity, forging it within its newly multicultural and Western influenced consumer society, which means that the old certainties of belonging to the '(family), *kaisha* (company), or *kuni* (the nation-state)' have 'become less sustainable' (Kawakami 2002, p.333).

Murakami viewed *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* as one of his most important books, as it marked a change in his engagement with his writing. Rubin has described the novel as 'clearly a turning point' for Murakami. This new named central protagonist, Toru Okada was central to Murakami's transformation, and as Rubin continues '[h]e wanted to care deeply about something and to have his hero's quest lead to something' (Rubin 2005, p.205). There is a definite change in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, not just the naming of Toru, but also his decision to pursue a cause or a belief, and significantly, Toru is unemployed.

Despite Murakami's changes to his protagonist, particularly in terms of his level of engagement with life, and importantly, in their relationships with others, Murakami significantly chooses unemployment for Toru. The action of the novel takes place between June 1984 and December 1985, during Japan's economic boom and the height of the

Postmodern era, which Rubin described as 'the decade when consumer culture seemed to obliterate everything but the pursuit of wealth' (Rubin 2005, p.212). Murakami said afterwards of the novel that he wanted to write something that reflected the 'ideas and attitudes' of society and be focus more on 'the problems of his own society' (Rubin 2005, p.231). The decision to have Toru unemployed is thus a significant one. Toru, at the age of 30, has no idea what he wants to do with his life. He studied law, and worked as a paralegal in a law firm since graduation, but resigned because he was unsure if law was the right career for him. When we meet him a number of weeks later, he is still unsure, and by the end of the novel, while he may have taken a journey and grasped some sense of reality and connection, he is no closer to knowing anything about what career path he will follow. If, as Murakami has said, he wished to write a more engaged novel with the issues of society, then this lack of occupation and job satisfaction is a significant comment of work, and its role within in postmodern society.

Toru explains to his wife that he could go back to work, as there are jobs out there, but he does not want to 'pick a job out of a hat', as he has no idea what career path he would like to follow. Work for Toru is not an identifier of self; it is secondary to his construction of identity, and to him, being the breadwinner in the home is not something

that defines him as a man. Kumiko tells him not to worry about a job, as she can support both of them, but without a financial motivation for working, Toru cannot find any other reason to find a job as he tells her:

I don't know what kind of a job I should take. For a while after I quit, I just figured I'd take some other law-related job. I do have connections in the field. But now I can't get myself into that mood. The more time that goes by, the less interest I have in law. I feel more and more that it's simply not the work for me. [...] But knowing what I don't want to do doesn't help me figure out what I do want to do. I could do just about anything if somebody made me. But I don't have an image of the one thing I really want to do. That's my problem now. I can't find the image. (Murakami 2003b, p.122)

Toru is clearly unable to even conjure an image of himself in employment, as the idea of a career, based on modernist ideas, of work being good in itself, and as a defining factor in one's identity, is so foreign to him. Elliott has said that one of the ways 'in which the self can try to evade such anxiety is to avoid the difficulties of interpersonal relationships altogether, retracting to the comforting realm of narcissism in order to protect the self against fears of abandonment' (Elliott 2007, p.158). Toru has totally disengaged from his life and gone into the realm of narcissism.

As we can see from his search for his own image in the mirror, he has become so lost inside his postmodern identity that the defined image of self is totally unavailable to him. He is so unable to know himself and others around him, that the concept of a career

as a constituent part of his sense of identity, currently a passive, apathetic, isolated self, is impossible. As an unqualified attorney, Toru was also unidentifiable, he was neither an attorney nor a student, but existing somewhere in between, and as a result he felt he had no goals or aims at the firm:

Working at a law firm without an attorney's credentials, I had virtually nothing to look forward to [. . .] Neither of us was dissatisfied, though. We were pleased just to be able to survive without intrusion from anyone. (Murakami 2003b, p.232)

Yet when Toru resigns from his job, he decides not to take the exams to become an attorney, so his claim that the lack of attorney-credentials was the reason for his lack of job satisfaction is as unstable as his own self-knowledge. Toru is both lacking in self-awareness and external awareness. He has completely lost any sense of self, and as a result, is blissfully unaware of his wife's unhappiness, and is totally unable to deal with his own self identity crisis. Looking at Toru through Elliot's premise that the ego is built on 'various narcissistic identification that defend against the painful and unsettling turbulence of the unconscious', and keeping in mind that the postmodern self is 'created upon fleeting narcissistic images, is a transient identity with precious little in the way of deeper affective ties or emotional roots' (Elliott 2007, p.146), then Toru validates this theory. His transient identity is so loosely rooted in postmodern society, that he attributes his lack of interest in

his legal job to that fact that he has not taken the examinations to become an attorney, but decides he will not take these exams and instead considers changing his career entirely.

However, this consideration is not progressed, as he chooses to occupy his days with household chores and a half-hearted search for the family cat. He fills his days with routine tasks in order to avoid dealing with anything or addressing the cause of his resignation. After a mysterious phone call interrupts him from cooking spaghetti at 10.30am, the caller tells him she knows he is out of work, and wants to get to understand each other's feelings; however he gets upset at this intrusion into his perfectly isolated simple existence:

I decided to iron shirts instead. Which is what I always do when I'm upset. It's an old habit. I divide the job into twelve precise stages, beginning with the collar (outer surface) and ending with the left-hand cuff. The order is always the same, and I count off each stage to myself. Otherwise, it won't come out right. I ironed three shirts, checking them over for wrinkles and putting them on hangers. Once I had switched off the iron and put it away with the ironing board in the hall closet, my mind felt a good deal clearer. (Murakami 2003b, p.6)

He has become so introverted that his world, especially after his wife leaves, becomes very closed and isolated. He has become so secluded that even his own image is nearly inaccessible:

Brushing my teeth in the bathroom, I studied my face in the mirror. For over two



months now, since quitting my job, I had rarely entered the 'outside world.' I had been moving back and forth between the neighbourhood shops, the ward pool, and this house. Aside from the Ginza and that hotel in Shinagawa, the farthest point I had travelled from home was the cleaner's by the station. And in all that time, I had hardly seen anyone. Aside from Kumiko, the only people I could be said to have 'seen' in two months were Malta and Kano and May Kasahara. It was a narrow world, a world that was standing still. But the narrower it became, and the more it consisted of stillness, the more this world that enveloped me seemed to overflow with things and people that could only be called strange. They had been there all the while, it seemed, waiting in the shadows for me to stop moving. And every time the wind-up bird came to my yard to wind its spring, the world descended more deeply into chaos.

I rinsed my mouth and went on looking at my face for a time.

I can't find the image, I said to myself. I'm thirty, I'm standing still, and I can't find the image. (Murakami 2003, p.125)

As we saw in the previous chapter, Toru's isolated state has caused him to become oblivious to the needs and concerns of others. In fact he is so disconnected from his self that when he is before a mirror, he cannot see own image. He is so fragmented and disengaged that he is unable to identify the self in the mirror, he has returned back to a state before identification. He is acting without what Lacan would call 'an essential moment in the act of intelligence' as discussed in Chapter 2 (Lacan 2006, p.75). Without a job, a relationship and a social I, his sense of selfhood has become increasingly weaker, to such an extent that he is a non-existent image to himself. His relationship with his wife is a prime example of his inability to engage with others. He realises that he has spent the majority of his married life caught up in the routine of daily life and working, using these

humdrum of these activities and their postmodern noise, to drown out any self-questioning or valid interaction.

Within the comfort of the modernist metanarratives, he would not need to work towards constructing an identity, as the traditional markers of class, age, gender and ethnicity would have helped to easily categorise who he was. However postmodernism has clouded this categorisation and forced him to think critically about whom he is, and accept the hyperreality of his existence:

Is it possible, finally, for one human being to achieve perfect understanding of another? We can invest enormous time and energy in serious efforts to know another person, but in the end, how close are we able to come to that person's essence? We convince ourselves that we know the other person well, but do we really know anything important about anyone? I started thinking seriously about such things a week after I quit my job at the law firm. Never until then- never in the whole course of my life-had I grappled with questions like this. And why not? Probably because my hands had been full just living. I had simply been too busy to think about myself. (Murakami 2003b, p.24)

Toru's realisation that while at work he was engaged in what he calls 'living', a numb unsatisfying existence, that did not allow him see the reality of his situation, is ironic, because his current activity of displacing any critical thinking about his situation onto household chores and ironing, is in fact replacing one circumstance with another one more isolated than before.

However, Toru does realise that having a job, and the pursuit of a career, are

important elements of his public reputation. When he crosses into the abandoned house down the street from his home, he hesitates as he contemplates what would happen if he was questioned by the police for his behaviour. To not have a job aligns him with a negative persona:

They would demand to know my address and occupation. I would have to tell them I was out of work. That would make them all the more suspicious. They were probably nervous about left-wing terrorists or something, convinced that left-wing terrorists were on the move all over Tokyo, with hidden arsenals of guns and home-made bombs. (Murakami 2003b, p.60)

This negative attitude to the lack of employment by the protagonist continues during his meeting with Kumiko's brother, Noboru Wataya. Toru feels he lacks security because he has no secure job, he feels that he is an untrustworthy and incomplete person. He suggests that someone like him, who is searching for himself, to 'risk marriage' would be a 'reckless act' (Murakami 2003b, p.77). Yet Toru is unsure if he actually wants to work, and refuses to make any positive progress in finding a career path to reflect and gratify him. His 16 year old friend and neighbour, May, questions him about his planned return to work:

'Are you serious about working?'

'Sure am.'

No sooner had the words left my mouth than I began to wonder how true they were.

'Actually, I'm not so sure,' I said. 'I think I need time. Time to think. I'm not sure myself what I need. It's hard to explain.' (Murakami 2003, p.61)

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, the choice of the name Toru is very apt for the protagonist. This suggestion of 'passivity' and passing through, as discussed by Rubin, is something that Toru also applies to his employment (Rubin 2005, p.208). Murakami's decision to name his central protagonist with a word that translates as 'to pass through' is a very important choice, as Toru is just passing through his life, without attachment or engagement. This attitude of Toru is equally applied to his working life, which gave him no satisfaction, and which he has now replaced with a life of household chores. Toru, like the blocked lane at the back of his house, is trapped, but is happy to spend his times in an ever declining space. While he is forced to venture into himself to actually find a way out of his malaise, the issue of the value of work, employment or career is never answered by Murakami. Toru obviously needs some activity to fill his time, throughout the novel he turns to domestic chores, traditionally associated with the female in order to fulfil his time, work is replaced with other work. Murakami's wish to write a novel which brought together the ideas and issues of contemporary society has shown that the question of work in postmodern society is very much an unanswered one.

### 3.5 1Q84

In Murakami's latest work *1Q84*, published 15 years later, the attitude to work has not altered. While Murakami has incorporated a change into his writing regarding the success of the journeys which his protagonists take, when it comes to attitudes to work, little has altered in all that time. Like *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, the action of the novel takes place in 1984, in Japan, again during what could be considered the zenith of the postmodern age, and features characters that experience an isolated postmodern *ennui*. The mood of the novel, which was published in three books, is distinctly postmodern.

As already explained, the novel alternates between the two main protagonists, Aomame and Tengo, with the story reliant on the actions of the female characters for narrative development. Unlike previous novels, both Aomame and Tengo each have two jobs, one to which they are not committed, and a second at which they excel, and perform in their spare time. Their main source of employment is not satisfying, and they feel the familiar sense of postmodern lack in their lives. Their second form of work is one in which they have a vocation, but do not pursue it full-time.

We are introduced to Aomame as she is making her way to complete a task in her secret second career: she is an expert assassin of men who abuse women. After the

suicide of a friend as a result of an abusive marriage, Aomame, as already noted, was prompted to use her main job, as a fitness instructor, to teach women to defend themselves against such abuse. However, the health club management did not appreciate her approach, and she was forced to stop the classes. With the help of one of the health club members, a wealthy dowager, Aomame merged her physiological knowledge and anger and set about assassinating men guilty of crimes against women and children. Thus, her official profession, that of fitness instructor, serves as nothing more than a disguise for her true vocation. Yet despite her abilities, Aomame is unfulfilled. She refuses to discuss her occupation with anyone, which isolates her further. She tells a man she picks up at a bar that she will not talk about it: '[l]ook, I told you before. I don't want to discuss my job here. I can say this much, though: it's not that easy being a woman' (Murakami 2011, p.73).

Her friendship with Ayumi is based on their shared wish not to reveal their true profession in terms of the opposite sex. Ayumi and Aomame make a pact to pretend they are employees of an insurance firm, the most inoffensive profession in their eyes. For Aomame, her secret vocation is just that, secret, only known to her, to the dowager and to the dowager's bodyguard. Her decision to become an assassin has made her even more

isolated, and she has created a very solitary, secluded existence for herself, careful to avoid any emotional connection. She tells the dowager that her life means nothing to her:

As I said before, I don't have anything to lose. My work, my name, this life of mine in Tokyo: none of them mean anything to me. (Murakami 2011a, p.348)

While Aomame is an expert at killing men, with a specially designed ice pick, she is not fulfilled by the work. She does not feel comfortable in the job, and knows that she cannot put a stop to all violence against women in the world. She always feels uncomfortable in the clothing she has to wear to her jobs; earlier in the novel she felt her skirt, heels and lacy bra were restrictive, and now when she goes to her final mission, she feels completely out of place:

In this place so full of legend and suggestion, Aomame was truly out of place, with her pale blue cotton pants, simple white blouse, white sneakers, and blue Nike gym bag. She probably looked like a babysitter sent by her agency for a hotel guest, she thought. (Murakami 2011, p.414)

Despite her uncomfortable relationship with work, both physically, and emotionally, Aomame is similar to Murakami's other protagonists in previous novels. While she cares little about work, and feels discontented and unfulfilled, she still works with dedication and effort.

Like Boku from *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Aomame does not understand why she gives

the Cult Leader a full restorative massage, even though she is going to kill him before the appointment is over. She stills works with 'all' of her strength, even though she is feels the work is pointless, something she cannot understand:

Whenever I have work before me, I have to pour all my strength into getting it done. That is just the way I am. If I am given the job of curing muscles, then I will pour all my strength into that. If I have to kill a person and have a proper reason for doing do, I will do that with all my strength. (Murakami, 2011, p.465)

Her desire to work well can never be matched by her desire to work. She can never be fulfilled by work, yet she wishes to do her job, however pointless, satisfactorily. In *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hard-boiled Wonderland*, the male protagonists are the same in that they also do their jobs well, but still remain disconnected from the idea of a career or fulfilling profession. The purpose of work is to achieve a standard of living rather than job satisfaction, or fulfilment through hard work. The 'Protestant work ethic' of which Bell, via Max Weber, speaks, is outdated:

The 'higher standard of living' not work as an end in itself, then becomes the engine of change. The glorification of plenty, rather than the bending to niggardly nature, becomes the justification of the system. (Bell 1972, p.33)

As Bell argues, traditional values are 'increasingly incongruent with social reality', and have become 'ideologically impotent' (Bell 1972, p.33). For the postmodern worker, the purpose of work is the money it brings, allowing one to interact economically with the



system. Aomame completes her tasks at work diligently, but with no joy. When she did use her initiative to devise a self-defence class for women, she was stopped, and the class was diluted to correspond with company policy, and corporate image:

She made a large canvas dummy in the shape of a man, sewed a black work glove in the groin area to serve as testicles, and gave female club members thorough training in how to kick in that spot. In the interest of realism, she stuffed two squash balls into the glove. The women were to kick this target swiftly, mercilessly, and repeatedly. Many of them took special pleasure in this training, and their skill improved markedly, but other members (mostly men, of course) viewed the spectacle with a frown and complained to the club's management that she was going overboard. As a result, Aomame was called in and instructed to rein in the ball-kicking practice [...] he manager did not take well to her passionate defence. 'You know perfectly well that we're one of the few truly exclusive clubs in the metropolitan area,' he said with a frown. 'Most of our members are celebrities. We have to preserve our dignity in all aspects of our operations. Image is crucial. (Murakami 2011, pp.143-144)

Initiative is not rewarded if it does not correspond to the image of the business. For the postmodern employee, there is no motivation to do better in work, Aomame must just do her job to the accepted standard, and invest no further in the job.

Tengo differs slightly from Aomame in his work practices; however he still is ungratified by either of his professions, those of a mathematics teacher and a writer. Tengo was a gifted student, and never had to work hard to achieve in school. He was a talented musician and scholar, and he was also physically large. His physicality and both his careers seem at odds with one another. Tengo does not fit in with his family, as he is

not a successful writer, he has failed relationships, and is very much an isolated misfit. Tengo's father always believed in hard work, and brought Tengo with him on Sundays to collect NHK subscriptions. Tengo's ability at school only seemed to aggravate his father as it came so easily to him, with little effort or toil. Tengo is now torn between two occupations, that of a mathematics teacher at a 'cram school', or that of a fruitless writer. He is a good teacher, but unsatisfied by the profession, and is drawn towards writing, yet he has had very little success with any of his work. When he is clandestinely commissioned to rewrite with Fuki-Eri's short story 'Air Chrysalis', he does so with skill:

Tengo had a gift for such work. He was a born technician, possessing both the intense concentration of a bird sailing through the air in search of prey and the patience of a donkey hauling water, playing always by the rules of the game. (Murakami 2011, p.80)

Tengo lacks the flair and creativity needed to write, and Murakami compares him to a 'donkey hauling water', who plays by the rules. Like the manager of McDonald's in *The Second Bakery Attack*, Tengo follows the manual when it comes to writing and style, rather than following a unique personal style that would make his work stand out for more than technical excellence, and which might involve some form of expression of his sense of self. His own lack of identity has meant that any internal creative resource has remained untapped. His subtle jealousy of Fuki-Eri's story is masked by his smug realisation that her

story needs his input, his skills. He gets a great sense of satisfaction from actually rewriting the story, which masks his own sense of lowered self-worth:

This was a great source of happiness for Tengo. The long hours of mental concentration had left him physically spent but emotionally uplifted. For some time after he had turned off the word processor and left his desk, Tengo could not suppress the desire to keep rewriting the story. He was enjoying the work immensely. (Murakami 2011, p.83)

He comes to realise that his technical ability is not enough to make him a great or successful writer, and that without a great story or idea, his talents do not matter. For the first time in Tengo's life, something does not come easy to him:

After he finished rewriting *Air Chrysalis*, however, Tengo was truly chagrined for the first time in his life. While engaged in the rewrite, he had been totally absorbed in the process, moving his hands without thinking. Once he had completed the work and handed it to Komatsu, however, Tengo was assaulted by a profound sense of powerlessness. Once the powerlessness began to abate, a kind of rage surged up from deep inside him. The rage was directed at Tengo himself. *I used another person's story to create a rewrite that amounts to literary fraud, and I did it with far more passion than I bring to my own work. Isn't a writer someone who finds the story hidden inside and uses the proper words to express it? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You should be able to write something as good as Air Chrysalis if you make up your mind to do it. Isn't that true?*

But he had to prove it to himself. (Murakami 2011, p.215)

Tengo, like Aomame and Murakami's other protagonists, gets involved in the work, completing it in a precise and diligent manner, yet he still manages to feel unfulfilled.

Tengo, unlike many of Murakami's characters, comes to the realisation that he is a fraud,

that he is suppressing an internal passion to fulfil his career dreams.

While Aomame is unsure what her role should be, as neither of her careers bring her any great satisfaction, Tengo is lucky enough to recognise that writing could be the profession that will bring him fulfilment. Despite this, Tengo demonstrates a postmodern sense of apathy about this knowledge by remaining at his cram school job, and changing little about his life. With the help of Fuki-Eri, he manages to escape from this cycle, and begins a journey into his own past and family, a search for his own sense of identity, which removes the old habits and allows him to write. He travels to the town where his father is in care, and, as he questions his father and learns more of his past, he garners a clearer picture of how he wants his future to develop. There is his 'Town of Cats' and he finds that getting out of his routine is 'invigorating' and writing comes much easier to him (Murakami 2011a, p.39).

Both Tengo and Aomame experience that postmodern insecure sense of self 'in which doubt is increasingly placed on the very assumption of a bounded identity with palpable attributes' (Gergen 1991, pp.15-16). Unlike their modernist counterparts, for them, the traditional concept of career no longer accommodates the plurality of the postmodern self. When discussing the ersatz being, Gergen suggests that the traditional

career was a 'singular endeavour' and this is no longer the case for Tengo and Aomame, both of whom undertake two opposing professions, as mathematics teacher and as creative writer, and as health professional and assassin, respectively (Gergen 1991, p.183). At least for Tengo, one of his chosen jobs is something at which he wishes to succeed, and for which he has a passion, but for Aomame, neither occupation provides her with any modernist goals. In the midst of ersatz being, Gergen explains that there is 'no concept of fixed or deep identity anchors one's choice, there is no powerful necessity to select one form of pursuit over another' (Gergen 1991, p.184).

As Gergen explains, this multiplicity of choice has led to a surge in career management agencies, as within the postmodern age, careers are no longer for life. Aomame and Tengo both have two jobs, and mirror this new found plurality. This constant need to change professions also influences any satisfaction garnered from one specific labour role. As a result, 'there is little in the way of an 'essential person' for whom a niche is to be sought' (Gergen 1991, p.184). The lack of niche, either within a metanarrative or a mini-narrative, means that the postmodern working individual is lost without any function. This modernist identity marker provided a sense of stability for the individual, and now without it, the postmodern self is wallowing in David Harvey's currents, trying to utilise

some of them in order to stay afloat. However as none of these currents are strong enough to keep the individual afloat, there is a sense of struggle to find stable footing, and most especially for the postmodern worker.

The representation of work and working life in Murakami's books is not a positive one, but a postmodern one. The ideology behind our first world, late capitalist society is one which has detached the worker from the goals of work. The reason for completing the task is not always obvious or clear for the worker, and this separation often leads to an insecure suspicious relationship between the employee and the employer. As a result, their work lacks enthusiasm and commitment. The tasks they undertake are often for an unknown authority, with an unknown result, and their apathetic response to this is something that is echoed in their dispassionate lives. Rather than living by the ideal that work could set them free, they seem to believe that consumerism will bring them answers and fill the void that exists in their lives:

These characters indicate a society in which the idea of development or evolution on the basis of rationality – a main cause of domination and suppression of people – does not exist. The lack of ambition and competitiveness displayed by Murakami's characters reflects an antithetical attitude to modernist ideals that force people to progress in order to reach an aim based on rationality. Once we discard the desire to evolve, rationality no longer functions as a driving force for people in society. (Fuminobu 2009, p.26)

This consumption necessitates the need to work, the need for a wage, and as Harvey explains, consumerism helps create an image created by capitalism, which perpetuates a circular relationship between production and labourer:

[T]o look carefully at the kind of circularity within the cultural mass which brings together producers held in thrall by pure money power on the one hand, and on the other hand relatively affluent consumers, themselves part of the cultural mass, who look for a certain kind of cultural output as a clear mark of their own social identity. (Harvey 1992, p.348)

He calls this culture of consumerism a driving force for production, the production of a non-tangible image:

This directs our attention to the production of needs and wants, the mobilization of desire and fantasy, of the politics of distraction as part and parcel of the push to sustain sufficient buoyancy of demand in consumer markets to keep capitalist production profitable. (Harvey 1992, p.61)

Work is no longer a modernist metanarrative, a defining feature of a person, but a task that allows them to pay for the image they wish to portray, as Baudrillard has said 'work has passed from being a force antagonistic to capital to the simple status of employment' for the postmodern worker (Baudrillard 1994, p.90)

For the postmodern worker, the death of the metanarrative has led to confusion as to what desire and function mean. Major uniting forces are no longer in existence, and the traditional ideals have been lost. The lack of any clear ideology in society has led to an

influx of competing mini narratives confusing the postmodern individual, who turns to the only persuasive narrative remaining – consumerism. This constantly changing world refuses to provide a stable footing for the characters, as they are unable to grasp a solid place for their existence, something to which Elliott refers in his book *Concepts of the Self*:

Transposed to the realm of the self and self-identity, the disorientating effects of the new capitalism means there is little stable ground for an individual to lodge an anchor. 'Keep moving and don't commit yourself' is perhaps the moral to be drawn from today's hi-tech global economy. (Elliott 2007, p.138)

Murakami's protagonists do not commit themselves to work, to their families or to their lives. Susan Napier has said that the postmodern 'protagonist feels that his responsibilities are to himself; not to a wider society or history' (Napier 1996, p.5). The postmodern worker is disconnected from his or her work, from a common good, from society, and therefore is wrapped up in competing simulacra of identification. Unaware as to the true nature of their desires, they have a vague sense of longing, which they fill with material possessions. As Kawakami points out 'his works project a new type of oppression emerging from the fragmentation of the ideological and the dissimulation of power structures' (Kawakami 2002, p.312). This leaves the postmodern worker of his novels in a very confused state, and throughout Murakami's work, while the protagonist may find and forge stronger relationships and find some sort of self-identity, the issue of their attitude to work is never



resolved clearly. Murakami's representation of the postmodern worker is not a favourable one, and raises a lot of questions for the sociologist as how to progress the role of work in society in our contemporary postmodern world.

## Chapter 4

### Positioning the Postmodern Female

In this chapter, I will examine the function and representation of woman as Other within the postmodern novels of Haruki Murakami. Appraising the role of the postmodern female within Murakami's work chronologically illuminates a new aspect of his writing for the Anglophone reader and researcher, contributing significantly to knowledge from this new intercontinental theoretical perspective.

The depiction of woman within his novels will be examined, showing how, despite postmodernity, the role of the woman remained within the realm of the subaltern: '[w]ithin the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced' (Spivak 2009, p.28). The female starts out within his novels as subjected to modernist tropes and the madonna/whore binary opposition; interestingly, the male does not allow her access to his own hyperreality: she must penetrate his worlds.

In his 1910 essay, 'A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men', Sigmund

Freud spoke of what he called the madonna/whore complex. This complex leads the sufferer to polarise the women in their lives by sorting them into two distinct sets, the madonnas, who were very much 'mother-surrogates' (Freud 1957, p.169), and the whores, 'women who practice sexual intercourse as a means of livelihood, and who are for this reason held in general contempt' (Freud 1957, p.171). This complex was 'derived from the infantile fixation of tender feelings on the mother' (Freud 1957, 168/9) and it means that the sufferer 'always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexuality, and only develops full potency when he is with a debased sexual object' (Freud 1957, p.174). It causes a sharp disparity between love and desire as: 'where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love' (Freud 1957, p.173). This opposition can be seen in a lot of Murakami's female characters, and in how they are represented by the male protagonists.

The female is often subalternated through a process of modernist characterisation by the male protagonists, who feel that the female is incompatible with their postmodern reality. However, while the male gaze has misjudged the female and tried to categorise her in the modernist realm, Murakami's females evolve into something more complex and eventually share the postmodern space. Their ability to access the subconscious, and to

negotiate the multitude of fragmented worlds, forces the male characters to recognise the equivalence of the female experience, and not just see them as silent facilitators of male experience.

Using comparative analysis starting with *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982), where the female character remains unnamed, and concluding with his latest novel *1Q84* (2009-2010) where Aomame is the lead protagonist, I will demonstrate how the role of the female has expanded in the postmodern novel, from the realm of a subaltern, a modernist male gaze, into a fully-functioning and complete protagonist who can affect the action within the hyperreality maintaining an equal status to that of the male protagonist.

Looking at *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* and *Kafka on the Shore* which were all published in the intervening years, there has been an obvious development in the role of the female within Murakami's writing. From the unnamed mysterious females that populate his earlier novels, to the strong independent, yet still mysterious Aomame from *1Q84*, there has been a slow but consistent chronological change in the role of the female, which has fully matured in his latest offering. While Murakami has featured a central female protagonist in two of his previous novels, *Sputnik Sweetheart* (1999) (although narrated through a male character),

and *After Dark* (2004), Aomame is one of the strongest females in Murakami's writing, and as his most recent, her inclusion is important.

Chronological analysis of the female represents a new departure in Murakami studies, with very little written on the topic. It will add to our understanding of the female as Other in postmodern literature. Adopting a chronological analysis of Murakami's work will enable an innovative investigation of the postmodern female in the translated postmodern novel. The source language of the text may be Japanese, but considering the universal postmodern mood which Murakami enunciates in his writing, as clarified in Chapter 1, analysis of his work is vital to understanding the construction of identity and the Other. It also provides an opportunity to see how the postmodern male views the female, and how this gaze has changed from a hierarchical, modernist position to a more egalitarian postmodern status.

Like Stephen Hankte, I too am reading him in translation, and feel that due to Murakami's cultural sensibility, his work as read in English is just as relevant to analysis of the original text:

True, it does impose limits on interpretation but also implicates me as a reader in the same global contexts in which Murakami operates. As much as any proliferation of contextual awareness carries the risk of producing misreadings, it also opens up new

interpretive options that remain unavailable to those operating within a single cultural framework. (Hantke 2007, p.4)

These new interpretations are important to fully understand how postmodern literature represents the female, either as Other or self. In Chapter 2, the difficulty of self-knowledge and creation of identity was explored, highlighting how Murakami's protagonists have difficulty in forming strong identities. Postmodernity has broken down many of the binary oppositions of identification, making subjectivity difficult for Murakami's protagonists, who are mainly male. The loss of the Other has created a fragile situation on which to base the self. Within literature, which, as has been already mentioned, Jameson has called 'a socially symbolic act'; this conflict is one of the defining features of Murakami's style (Jameson 2002, p.17). Initially, the prominent protagonist in Murakami's works was male, he was struggling with his identity, and had vague females populating his life and having minimal influence in his journeys. As weak and unnamed others, Murakami's postmodern females are resigned to the realm of Spivak's Subaltern, primarily by the male character. They are characters 'without lines of social mobility' (Spivak 2009, p.28). They have no input into the action or equal narratives of their own that correspond to the dominant male story. Often secondary characters, the representation of the female, and this changing position over time, is an important element for analysis. If the male protagonists are

struggling with issues of postmodern identity, then how are the subalternated females coming to terms with their identity? How does postmodern literature voice the voiceless, and in this case, nameless female?

As Judith Butler says, the female needs to speak, but within the fragmentary nature of postmodernity, how is the female represented? (Butler 2002, p.641). The traditional roles assigned to the female, those of 'child bearer' or whore, and specific versions of feminine 'ways of knowing', have already fractured any kind of unified feminist debate:

The effort to characterise a feminine specificity through recourse to maternity, whether biological or social, produced a similar factionalisation and even a disavowal of feminism altogether. For surely all women are not mothers; some cannot be, some are too young or too old to be, some choose not to be, and for some who are mothers, that is not necessarily the core point of their politicization in feminism. I would argue that any effort to give universal or specific content to the category of women, presuming that that guarantee of solidarity is required in advance, will necessarily produce factionalisation, and that 'identity' as a point of departure can never hold as the solidifying ground of a feminist political movement (Butler 2002, p.641).

Categorisation of the female, and feminism, does not aid the cause of the subalternated sex, and when Murakami's male protagonists try to place the female within these defined categories, the female is silenced, unknown, and unequal. It is only when the recognition of a multi-layered female begins, can this postmodern voice be heard. This female is not unified or compartmentalised, but allowed to embrace their fragmented identity of

Murakami's world, and their strength and voice comes from this plurality.

Spivak talks of the re-representation of the subaltern within art – and as such Murakami's representation is significant. The slow expansion of his female characters is even more noteworthy. Murakami has moved from an unnamed often inconsequential female character, to a strong female protagonist that guides the narrative, while still preserving his postmodern style. The formidable woman who does not deny her femininity that emerges in his *1Q84* is very important. It effectively shows that, over that time, the role of woman within postmodernity has changed and developed. She is no longer in the realm of the subaltern, but has moved into a realm within which she can contribute equally. Murakami, as a male writer, has acknowledged this transformation, and while both books discussed in this chapter engage postmodern techniques and a hard-boiled detective style. Thus the development of the woman from an unnamed sex companion to an undercover assassin in his work must be seen as a noteworthy change in his outlook. With this significant advancement, the voicing, and naming of the female, we can hear the subaltern speak, through a somewhat subalternated male Japanese writer, therefore developing the postmodern female onto, as in the case of *1Q84*, a level playing field with the male protagonists. The original male modernist gaze has been removed to reveal a



female in control of the fragmentary nature of femininity and postmodernism.

In discussing Foucault and Deleuze's idea that the theorizing intellectual cannot represent those who act and struggle, Spivak wonders if those who act and struggle are mute, as opposed to those who act and speak. If the female is mute, but represented in literature, which is in turn, associated with the cultural aspect of postmodernism, then the representation of this individual within this genre is vital to understanding this theory. I have always felt that postmodernism is an evolving cultural reaction, that develops and changes, as it expands and matures. The representation of women within the novels of Murakami is one such developing and changing paradigm.

When speaking of the colonised subject, Spivak believes that the female is doubly effaced, and while her argument is primarily applied to postcolonial and colonial texts and subjects, it is equally applicable to the postmodern female of Murakami's novels. As Morton has said: 'the term "subaltern" is useful because it is flexible; it can accommodate social identities and struggles (such as woman and the colonised) that do not fall under the reductive terms of "strict class analysis"' (Morton 2003, p.45). Murakami hints at the power of the female, an element that is often missed by the narcissistic male protagonist. While the male has initially resigned her to helper within a madonna/whore trope, the reader, and

eventually the male protagonists, comes to see her as a postmodern feminist, fragmented, composite and transcending modernist categorisation. The development of a speaking, acting, named and contributing female protagonist in the postmodern novel demonstrates that the doubly effaced female character is becoming a thing of the past.

Murakami himself can be seen as a subaltern in some sense when it comes to the translated postmodern novel, and in terms of the inclusion of his work into a first world postmodern style. For many years, Murakami has been subject to a subtle Orientalism, by being seen as an Eastern writer. His exotic style, mixed with Western influences, seems to leave him without a definitive home, adding further to his postmodern nature. Interestingly, the Orientalist approach to Murakami as a postmodern writer also extends to the book covers of his novels, which often featured images of naked Japanese women in their English translations. As Matthew Chozick noted, these women, like the naked oriental model on the cover of *Sputnik Sweetheart*, do not feature on the Japanese versions:

English-language versions of Murakami's novels are outwardly exotic, not due to foreign language song names printed on the covers, but through the use of images of Japanese women. Erotic photographs are not on the Japanese editions of Murakami's works. On the front of an English-language edition of [*Sputnik Sweetheart*], a bare Japanese model waits in bed for the reader. The undressed woman does not reveal her culture, yet her culture is explicit with the word 'Japanese' printed numerous times on the book. (Chozick 2008, p.66)

The models do not wear any clothing that would identify them as Western or Eastern. Chozick is correct that the exotic nature of the English-language translations is reinforced through the inclusion of the female form. Recently however, coinciding somewhat with the change in Murakami's own representation of the female, the books have been rereleased with new covers. None of these covers feature the female form, and his latest release *1Q84*, again features an abstract cover, without any representations of women. The change in the covers parallels the progression and representation of the female within the texts.

Analysis of gender representations within his work have been sparse, and are mainly confined to the opinion that his writing reflects the patriarchal system at work in Japan. References to the female in analysis of his work are infrequent, and Gitte Marianne Hansen is correct in saying that it is often ignored. Hansen suggests that Murakami highlights three themes of the female experience in contemporary Japan: what she calls 'housewife isolation', 'contemporary femininity' and 'women and violence' (Hansen 2010, p.231). Her argument is that Murakami does not ignore the female experience, however, what I wish do is show how this female experience or female narrative has changed chronologically in his writing, paralleling a change in the role of the postmodern female in

literature. Unlike Hansen's work, this is more than a study of the female confined to Japan as it focuses on the international significance of the representation of women in his work.

#### 4.1 The girl with the ears

My first two books have not been published outside of Japan; I didn't want them to be [...] what I was trying to do in my first two books was to deconstruct the traditional Japanese novel. By *deconstruct* I mean remove everything inside, leaving only the framework. Then I had to fill the framework in with something fresh and original. I discovered how to do it successfully only after my third book, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, in 1982. The first two novels were helpful in the learning process – no more than that. I consider *A Wild Sheep Chase* to be the true beginning of my style. (Wray 2009, p.352)

This novel really develops Murakami's postmodern perspective on the hard-boiled detective style, as a young disillusioned copywriter is sent on a search for a sheep with a star on its fleece, which he discovers may secretly rule Japan. The novel contains all the elements of the traditional postmodern novel, the apathetic isolated, anti-hero protagonist, the distrust for authority, the lack of clear ending, pastiche, intertextuality, pop culture references, and unnamed female characters that, once they are of no more use, either as a sexual friend or a detached companion, are tossed aside.

The main protagonist is male and also unnamed. He begins a sexual relationship with a woman based on his fascination with her ears. The decision to sexualise the ears

rather than the predictable use of breasts is a subtle play on the traditional metonymy of the representation of the female. Boku's obsession with the ears, which heightens his sexual arousal, accentuates the fatuous manner in which he sees and represents this new girlfriend, using modernist metanarratives of the female as helper/whore. Boku does not see past these outdated patterns of praxis when he sees the woman, in the same way that he cannot ignore her ears. His perspective is so fallacious that he cannot see a complete female, only a woman with ears, who will listen to him and sexually please him. His friendships are fragmented, and only during his college years, did he feel some sense of reality of emotions and experience. The issue of naming is problematic throughout the novel; his wife and girlfriend are unnamed, his friends are given nicknames, and he even refers to his cat as 'cat', because he cannot decide on a name for the pet as noted in Chapter 2. The irony in this incident just adds to the postmodern paradigm of the novel. Boku has been forced to undertake the journey of discovery, and his girlfriend joins him due to their relationship. In that case, according to the limousine driver's logic, both Boku and his girlfriend are lacking in free will. If the story, therefore, revolves around Boku, and his girlfriend is secondary to the action, then her lack of name effaces her further into the background and into the realm of Spivak's subaltern through his representation of her.

As she is seen and represented through Boku, it is his decision not to name her, to refer to her only through her function or physicality reducing her subjectivity. When combined with his own unnamings, and his inability to know the self, as seen in Chapter 2, then the unnamings as, Matthew Strecher also argues, problematizes the idea of identity and the boundaries of self and Other:

Murakami's implicit question is, always, how can the first-person protagonist forge connections with an Other (conscious or unconscious) and thereby identify himself, prove to himself that he even exists? (Strecher 1999, p.267)

Without a name there is no association with other names or with history. There is only the present, the here and now of the unnamed person. The postmodern system is robbing them of a true or individual identity, and, therefore, because they cannot be really named, they are a false representation of themselves. Jameson has said that the individual 'is also a social category not necessarily present in all kinds of societies', and in Japanese society, this is something that was introduced through interaction with Western society, and so forming a true identity, within the postmodern age has become doubly difficult for Murakami's characters (Jameson 2007, p.203).

As we have seen in Chapter 2, this issue of individualism is something Iwamoto deals with quite well in relation to *A Wild Sheep Chase* (Iwamoto 1993, p.297). For Boku,

who surrounds himself with nameless friends, the *shutaisei* has come to mean an isolated independence rather than an engaged identity which depends on the binary opposition of self and Other. For Boku's girlfriend, her *shutaisei* is even weaker, as she is the only true Other to Boku's male; she too lacks any defining features apart from her ears. The binary opposition of male/female is lacking any clear boundaries, as how can the girl with the ears create a sense of selfhood if her Other is an unnamed informal I? Boku's inability to know himself directly affects his ability to know the female Other. His own weak *shutaisei* means that the Other is weaker still. To him, his wife's presence is so fragile and inconsequential that he believes he could even convince himself that she never existed.

After finding one of her slips he declares:

I could talk myself into believing that she never existed all along. If she never existed, then neither did her slip. (Murakami 2003, p.20)

The female *shutaisei* is so weak and intangible that Boku can talk a woman out of her own existence.

In Lisa Blackman's discussion of the body, she claims that 'the Other is that which is usually constituted as inferior, lacking, deviant or deficient in some way' (Blackman 2008, p.72), and for Boku the female is lacking not only in name but in physical presence, she is

the subaltern. The female Other is constituted in terms of her absence in this case, she is nothing more than a slip that can be erased. His ex-wife is being denied an existence, a corporeality represented only through a flimsy feminine undergarment. His relationship with his girlfriend is a by-product of his interest in her ears, and of his desire to have sex with her. She is known as either the 'girl with the ears', or as Boku's girlfriend, she has no identity other than her sexually-arousing ears or as the property of the unnamed protagonist.

While this may seem bizarre, it is no more so than women being seen in terms of more overtly sexualised parts of their anatomy. As call girl and model, her lifestyle creates a subjectivity that relates back to her physical body. Yet Murakami's decision to add proofreader to her list of occupations highlights the plurality of this misrepresented and under-represented female. When Boku sees her picture, he calls the photographer to get the 'name and number of the ears', even though he is told she is nothing special apart from her ears (Murakami 2003, p.27):

To your typical P.R. man or makeup artist or cameraman, she was just an 'earholder,' someone with ears. Her mind and body, apart from the ears, were completely out of the picture, disregarded, non-existent.

'But you know that's not the real me,' she'd say. 'I am my ears, my ears are me.'

Neither her proofreader self nor her call girl self ever, not for one second, showed her



ears to others.

'That's because they're not really me,' she explained. (Murakami 2003, pp.27-29)

She is known for the fetishisation of her body, particularly by men; to cameramen, P.R. men and Boku, her selfhood is concentrated in her ears, but to herself she is more; her ears are a part of her being, but not all of her. While she is represented by men as a deprived of her mind and an integrated corporeality, she tells Boku that is not who she is, she is more than that, 'a chameleon' who can 'change with place and circumstance', yet despite knowing this and her name, he refers to her as 'the ears' (Murakami 2003, pp.27-28). This shows a complete lack of knowledge of the person by Boku, as he fetishises an element of the female, fracturing her into body parts, and then focusing on just one fetishised component, thereby failing to see her plurality, both physical and abstract. This is, as Covino argues, a restricted viewpoint:

What inspired abjection may license is the recognition that fetishizing the elements of beauty corresponds with a severely limited understanding of human functionality, versatility, capacity, and both interbodily and intrabodily diversity. (Covino 2004, p.109)

Boku is not only out removed from an understanding of himself, but also of the female. He has subjected her to either the madonna/whore binary, and then fetishised her fractured body, showing a limited understanding of, as Calvino says, her functionality, versatility, capacity, and both interbodily and intrabodily diversity. Boku is unaware of her potential,

capacity and multiplicity. He only sees her as a singular, as a person without lines of social mobility, as a subaltern.

This deficiency of understanding is compounded by his inability to name his girlfriend. As Iwamoto has suggested, Boku's decision to not name the people he meets creates a sense that he is denying them their independent subjective identities, moving them to the realm of the subaltern:

The relationship with his new girlfriend is carried out on no firmer ground than that with his former wife. First attracted to her by her beautiful ears glimpsed in a photograph, Boku regards her, perhaps unknowingly, as an object (her ears), thus depriving her of a subjectivity. (Iwamoto 1993, p.298)

When read in the context of Jameson's idea about the death of the subject and the ego (Jameson 1991, p.15), then the girl with the ears is nothing more than a function, a sexual object, for Boku:

She'd show me her ears on occasion; mostly on sexual occasions. Sex with her with her ears exposed was an experience I'd never known. When it was raining, the smell of the rain came through crystal clear. When birds were singing, their song was a thing of sheer clarity. I'm at a loss for words, but that's what it was like. (Murakami 2003, p.39)

The girl with the ears is not only unnameable but unknowable to Boku, and as a result to the reader. Once Boku gathers all the information regarding his journey, she 'drops into the background'; as Rubin has said 'her only remaining role in the novel being not to have

sex with him anymore and then to disappear as he undergoes a process of purification' (Rubin 2005, p.84). Her disappearance is not really questioned by Boku, and he does not search for her with any real determination. Her intuition and motivation throughout the novel are then questioned by male characters with some scepticism after her disappearance. Although her role within the novel is mainly a sexual one, she predicts that Boku will get a phone call about a sheep and also suggests that they travel to Hokkaido together. These roles are vital for the progression of the narrative and for the development of Boku's journey. There is some sort of glimmer of positivity associated with the girl with the ears due to her interest in progression and action; however, her disappearance negates this favourable perspective according to the male characters. As Rubin asks, were her actions a ruse? Was she paid off to bring Boku on this journey? (Rubin 2005, p.84). The hotel owner agrees saying 'she seemed kind of sick' and tells Boku to 'never mind' her disappearance. All Murakami reveals through Rat is that she has lost her 'certain something' (Murakami 2003, p.286). The female is something that Rat had not counted on, something he didn't want to become part of this adventure. He tells Boku that he wanted an 'in-group' only, which would have been exclusively male (Murakami 2003, p.295):

'I meant this to be an in-group party. But she stumbled into the middle of it. We should never have allowed her to get mixed up in this. As you well know, the girl's got amazing powers. Still, she wasn't meant to come here. This place is far beyond even her powers.' (Murakami 2003. p.285)

To Rat this postmodern dilemma is not a place for a woman. She is again denied a role within the action by the men, who never call her by her name. Both Rat and Boku cannot even contemplate that the girl with the ears could have played a vital role in the wild sheep chase. They do not see her as an equal, a contributor or helper, but as a nuisance, what Rat describes as 'an extra factor' they hadn't counted on (Murakami 2003, p.285).

The girl with the ears does not offer a positive portrayal of the female, and even as Other, she is so subalternated that she cannot be named or known. Yet Murakami, in the narrative, offers us glimpses of the potential of the female once she is truly represented, voiced and named. As an incomplete being himself, unable to come to terms with his own fragmented selfhood, he has subjected the female to a false representation. Unlike the protagonist, she displays interest in progression, and as such she, as the prototypical female character, has the ability to develop as Murakami continues to write. Throughout his career, the female continues to be uncovered and the gender discrimination becomes attenuated. This change in the role of the Other also coincides with a clearer resolution to

this novels, where the main protagonists are more likely to achieve a stronger sense of self on their respective journeys. As the male protagonist gains a greater insight into the self and into the world around him, he becomes less narcissistic and more aware of the world and of the people in it. As the male characters begin to perceive and understand the hyperreality and plurality of their postmodern existence, they obtain the ability to see the female as both fragmented and whole.

In an interview with John Wray for *The Paris Review* in 2004, Murakami said that his female characters had a specific function in his writing, namely that of 'medium', which can be clearly seen in *A Wild Sheep Chase* and in his subsequent works. The girl with the ears does lead to protagonist on his journey, and many of the females position themselves in the action of the novel, functioning in the role of mysterious 'harbinger':

[I]n a sense the function of the medium is to make something happen through herself. It's always a kind of system to be experienced. The protagonist is always led somewhere by the medium and the visions that he sees are shown to him by her [...] women are mediums – harbingers of the coming world. That's why they always come to my protagonist; he doesn't go to them. (Wray 2009, p.353)

For Murakami, sex is an integral component of the role as medium, as it is to him a 'soul commitment': if the sex is 'good', then 'your injury will be healed, your imagination will be invigorated. It's a kind of passage to the upper area, to the better place' (Wray 2009,

p.353). He goes on to say that the female as medium exists in both worlds of his novel, the realistic, but also the spiritual world. In the spiritual world, all characters are 'quiet, intelligent, modest, wise', while in the realistic world they are 'very active, comic, positive' (Wray 2009, p.353). The male protagonist is split between these two worlds, existing in both and trying to mesh these worlds in order to make sense of life, identity and the journey on which he finds himself. The female characters however, especially in Murakami's early career, do not transcend these worlds; they exist in one or the Other. In both worlds, she remains an unknown entity, who encourages, as the girlfriend with the ears did, the protagonist to go on the journey, to enter the other world. Yet, the name of the protagonist's journey *A Wild Sheep Chase* suggests that the journey on which she had led Boku is one that can never be resolved. Based on the phrase 'a wild-goose chase', the hopeless pursuit of something unattainable, the connotations are quite negative, not only for Boku's quest, but also for the girlfriend's motives. The original title of the book was *An Adventure Surrounding Sheep*, but as Jay Rubin reveals, Murakami's translator for the English novel, Alfred Birnbaum, is responsible 'for the hint in the English title that Boku's search for a mysterious sheep will be something of a wild goose chase' (Rubin 2005, pp.79-80).

As a medium, the girl with the ears should know that the undertaking would not be successful, yet the novel finishes without the protagonist coming to any real conclusion. The girlfriend with the ears does predict some aspects of what the future will hold, but then she disappears, remaining a mysterious individual, known predominantly only for her physical attributes. She is, as we have discussed at the end of her appearance in the novel, seen as untrustworthy by the other male characters. Her role as medium, which sends Boku on this journey, is not a wholly positive one. She is an unknown, unfathomable female, whose motives cannot be understood. She remains to the end as someone who is neither positive nor negative. This mystical element to her character subalternates her further, as some sort of exotic Other who should not be trusted, but used emotionally and sexually in order to get access to this 'upper area' which Murakami mentions.

The male protagonist fails to see the female as trustworthy or as a real companion; he uses her to aid him in his own journey, discarding her when what he sees as her use is fulfilled. The protagonist cannot see the female as she is, as a complete postmodern individual, fragmented, and multi-dimensional like himself, but rather he uses outdated concepts through which to categorise her. He has reduced her to a madonna/whore binary, a good versus evil creature, and used her as such. She is her ears, and not to be

trusted due to her ability to be sexual. He sees her through a modernist gaze, rather than a postmodern one, due to his own fractured identity issues. The girl with the ears is much more in touch with her *je* and *moi* within the postmodern realm, and as such, can transcend the plurality of postmodernity much more successfully. As a result she can guide the male protagonist, but his failure to see her correctly, as we can see through his representation of her, means that he is still struggling with identity in this profusion of realities. If he cannot see himself, how can he see or represent the Other clearly or accurately?

This mystical element to the female in Murakami's novels, and in particular *A Wild Sheep Chase*, evokes Barbara Claire Freeman's concept of the feminine sublime. This gendered element which Murakami ascribes to the role of medium reverts it to this feminine ability to negotiate the plurality of the self and of the postmodern, something with which the male protagonists in the earlier novels have difficulty. In Lisa Hinrichsen's discussion on the femininity of the sublime, she suggests that the 'sublime object implicitly reveals a power or reality beyond the merely human, the encounter with which paradoxically reaffirms one's individuality, reducing otherness to a fiction subsumed by the imagination' (Hinrichsen 2011, p.35). While the girlfriend with the ears fulfils this function of



the gendered sublime, this process further consigns the female into the position of subaltern. As someone with a power that is 'beyond the merely human', the girlfriend with the ears is not an equal to the male. The male can be viewed as realistic or human, but the female is a mystic unknown Other; she is the sublime that cannot be known, nor can it be truly part of this world. The female has embraced the postmodernity of her situation, and learned to adapt to this plurality, to transcend into the sublime, to merge worlds, and come to terms with her fragmented self, something which the male still has to learn to accomplish.

## 4.2 Librarians and granddaughters

In his next novel, *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*, the action takes place in two locations, the real and the subconscious, corresponding to Murakami's desire to include two parallel worlds within his work. There are three main female characters featured, and all three act as love interests for the main character. The splitting of the central protagonist, as Watashi in the 'realistic' future of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* and as *Boku* in *The End of The World*, is mirrored in the addition of the equivalent female characters in each world. Both of the main female characters, who are both librarians,

become a love interest for the central protagonist, and are less medium-like in relation to his journey. The third female, in the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section, the Professor's granddaughter, is also a guide to Watashi, and declares her wish to sleep with him regularly during their encounters. Murakami adheres to his trope of comic, active traits for the 'realistic' world, and a more serious, quiet quality in terms of the characters that inhabit the town in the subconscious world of the text. Both his male and female characters fall into these assigned roles or traits.

Once again the issue of naming reduces the females, as well as the other characters, to little more than their functions or attributes. Thus we see characters referred to in terms of their jobs: the librarian (in each world), the Professor, the Professor's granddaughter, the Gatekeeper; or in relation to their size: like Junior and Big boy. The lack of self-knowledge displayed by the main character extends to his ability to know the Other. He himself is not named and appears as a first person narrator, in both sections, which makes it easier for the reader to understand his subjection of the Other, and in particular of the female. From his first representation of the Professor's granddaughter, we can see how he lacks an understanding or is incapable of knowing the female. She cannot speak, and he decides the problem is with her, and then like Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the focus on

the female form begins:

The woman was on the chubby side. Young and beautiful and all that went with it, but chubby. Now a young, beautiful woman who is, shall we say, plump, seems a bit off. Walking behind her, I fixated on her body. (Murakami 2003a, p.7)

Dealing with the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section first, Watashi, as explored in Chapter 2, is a typical Murakami protagonist, an isolated anti-hero with no relationships or emotional ties, who is plunged into a hard-boiled detective journey of self-discovery that uncovers little, but his own lack of self-knowledge or understanding. When we are introduced to him, in the opening chapter of the novel, the journey he takes to the appointment with the Professor is reminiscent of Alice's fall down the rabbit hole, except this time, the white rabbit is replaced by a 'chubby' young female in a pink suit. He immediately objectifies her and her body, walking behind her to get a better view of her body:

Around young, beautiful, fat women, I am generally thrown into confusion. I don't know why. Maybe it's because an image of their dietary habits naturally congeals in my mind. When I see a goodly sized woman, I have visions of her mopping up that last drop of cream sauce with bread, wolfing down that final sprig of watercress garnish from her plate. And once that happens, it's like acid corroding metal: scenes of her eating spread through my head and I lose control. (Murakami 2003a, pp.7-8)

As the Professor's granddaughter is what he describes as a beautiful fat woman, he decides he could end up sleeping with her. He tells us he has slept with fat women before,

even though it is a 'challenge', and as she is his kind of 'chubby' he is turned on and 'fixated' by her. Like Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, an unconventional physical aspect of the female engrosses him. Murakami once again plays with our traditional ideas of the female body by having his protagonists attracted to unorthodox elements while still allowing them to categorise the female in modernist metonymic metanarratives. The juxtaposition of this unusual fixation with the traditional characterisation of the female highlights how the protagonist is in conflict. He has been unable to consolidate his self with his postmodern situation, and as we have seen in Chapter 2, his own fragmentation has disrupted his sense of selfhood. In this novel, he is literally separated and in conflict with the self, and this in turn causes a rupture in his ability to see the Other correctly, hence the merging of the unusual and the traditional.

The first female introduced to us, the virginal granddaughter of the Professor, is not only objectified by the central protagonist, she is also prevented from speaking by her own grandfather, and she is referred to through her relationship with men, as 'granddaughter'. Refused a voice, and unaware that Watashi cannot hear her when they first meet, the granddaughter is very much a subaltern in the Spivakian sense. The Professor has quite literally removed the sound from her voice with one of his inventions, and she can only

mouth the words to Watashi. Thus the first female in the novel cannot be heard, because the oldest patriarchal generation has eliminated all sound from her speech. As Watashi says '[t]he problem must be with the women's mouth' (Murakami 2003a, p.7). As a representation of the postmodern female, she provides a rather negative first impression of how the female is seen and unheard in the literature of the postmodern era. Unheard, unvoiced, unnamed and not respected, other than for her sandwich-making abilities, the Professor's granddaughter is positioned in a very secondary role to the male characters. As her representation is through the male, we can see that it is his manner of seeing her that is at fault, it is as Spivak has said 'the problem is that the subject's itinerary has not been left traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual' (Spivak 2009, p.32). The male has not come to terms with the female within postmodernity, in the same manner that he has not come to terms with his own self hood. The postmodern male decides not to sleep with her, not to see her as an object of sexual seduction, or as an object worthy of true representation, leaving her misrepresented and silent. When she does speak, it is guided by this male dominance around her, and she tries to gain access to this male-influenced realm. She does not have the language to be seen as equal, yet she still maintains elements of postmodern transcendence, as seen in

the girl with the ears earlier. Her youth, she is still a teen, combined with this patriarchal hegemonic existence thus far, show a still evolving and vacillating female.

Her innocence and lack of experience, coupled with her honesty and positivity, make her quite childlike. Unlike the self-assured girl with the ears, the Professor's granddaughter is still a child under the influence of patriarchy, so much so that she is referred to in terms of her relationship to her grandfather. The girl with the ears, while also misrepresented, at least is known by something that is unique to her own corporeality. She is very conscious of her body image, and really looks up to both the Professor and Watashi, who she asks to take her virginity:

'Would you sleep with me?'

'No. Probably not.'

'Why not?'

'That's just the way I am. I don't like to sleep with people I know. It only complicates things. And I don't sleep with business contacts. Dealing with other people's secrets like I do, you have to draw the line somewhere.'

'Are you sure it's not because I'm fat or I'm ugly?'

'Listen, you're not that overweight, and you're not ugly at all,' I said.

She pouted. 'If that's the way you feel, then, do you simply pick up someone and go to bed with her?'

'Well... yes.'

'Or do you just buy a girl?'

'I've done that too.'

'If I offered to sleep with you for money, would you take me up on it?'

'I don't think so,' I replied. 'I'm twice your age. It wouldn't be right.'

'It'd be different with me.'

'Maybe so, but no offence intended, I'd really rather not. I think it's for the best.'

'Grandfather says the first man I sleep with should be over thirty. He also says if sex drive builds up to a particular point, it affects your mental stability.' (Murakami 2003a, pp.56-57)

The Professor's granddaughter takes her knowledge of sex, and her ideas about sexual experience, from her grandfather. So eager is she to fulfil his concepts of sex that she offers to have sex with Watashi in exchange for money. When he declines her offer, she assumes his decision is related to her body, suggesting she has a negative body image. The lack of a sexual acceptance from a male counterpart, suggested as suitable by her grandfather, is seen as a negative reaction to her looks, it is a sign that her image is not appealing to the opposite sex. She continues throughout the novel to make advances to Watashi, indicating a belief that sexual acceptance from a male, respected by her grandfather and fulfilling his ideals, will make her feel attractive and accepted. The influence of her grandfather can be seen clearly in her need to be objectified by the male. As a teen, she has not yet developed into the strong postmodern misrepresented female so often seen in Murakami's novels. She is still evolving, but under the influence of a nearly pre-modern male, who has told her success will derive from her sexual acceptance by an older male. The Professor's granddaughter is like Watashi, as she has a conflicted sense of selfhood due to the strong patriarchal influence in her life. She is being effaced

from both sides, through her misrepresentation by Watashi and by a grandfather who controls her speech and tries to mould her selfhood, while coming to terms with postmodernity.

The Professor's granddaughter has learned that attractiveness and body size are an important when it comes to her place in society, a notion to which Sheryl A. Monteath and Marita P. McCabe gestured in their study, 'The influence of Societal Factors on Female body Image', in 1996. Looking at perceptual and attitudinal factors mediating between the female body and society, they state in relation to a study by Allan Mezur that:

Women quickly learn that their social opportunities are affected by their beauty, and consequently their sense of their own attractiveness may become an integral part of women's self-concepts (Monteath & McCabe 1996, p.711)

For the Professor's granddaughter, her body size is preventing her from losing her virginity, and generic societal attitudes towards women above normal body weight are exhibited by Watashi, who discusses the many different ways of having sex with women of different sizes and attractiveness:

Your plain fat woman is fine. Fat women are like clouds in the sky. They're just floating there, nothing to do with me. But your young, beautiful, fat woman is another story. I am demanded to assume a posture toward her. I could end up sleeping with her. That is probably where all the confusion comes in.

Which is not to say that I have anything against fat women. Confusion and repulsion



are two different things. I've slept with fat women before and on the whole the experience wasn't bad. If your confusion leads you in the right direction, the results can be uncommonly rewarding. But of course, things don't always take the right course. Sex is an extremely subtle undertaking, unlike going to the department store on Sunday to buy a thermos. Even among young, beautiful, fat women, there are distinctions to be made. Fleshed out one way, they'll lead you in the right direction; fleshed out another way, they'll leave you lost, trivial, confused.

In this sense, sleeping with fat women can be a challenge. There must be as many paths of human fat as there are ways of human death. (Murakami 2003a, p.8)

The objectification of the female form, and of the female as a sexual object, features heavily in *Watashi's* descriptions of the Professor's granddaughter. She is not seen as an individual, but as a voiceless female who should be judged negatively as a result of her weight. *Watashi* views her through her sexual attractiveness, and dismisses her ability to navigate through the plural Tokyo that confuses and dislocates him. The patriarchal influence is asserted further through her clothing decisions, as she chooses the colour of her clothing based on what a male, in this case her grandfather, thinks is nice on her, rather than relying on her own ability and tastes:

'You seem to like pink,' I said.

'Grandfather likes it. He says I look pretty in pink.'

'You do,' I said. And she did. Chubby girls in pink tend to conjure up images of big strawberry shortcakes waltzing on a dance floor, but in her case the colour suited her.

(Murakami 2003a, p.187)

The Professor's granddaughter picks her clothes according to societal pressures, as she is

aware that being attractive to the opposite sex is a symbol of her success as a woman. As we can see from Watashi's response, this is true, he too thinks that the traditional effeminate, and sometimes juvenile, shade of pink suits her. Watashi is constantly relying on traditional metanarratives in relation to the Professor's granddaughter.

However, despite Watashi's opinion of the Professor's granddaughter, she is the only one who can guide him through the underground tunnels to the Professor's hiding place. Without her help, and mental strength, Watashi would have succumbed to the hypnotic power of the INKlings. Watashi suspects that the Professor's granddaughter could not have the same depth of feeling as he has, and as a result he does not believe that she can avoid the control of the INKlings. Before they leave to venture under Tokyo he tells her that he is having a drink to feel brave:

'I'm scared too, but you don't see me drinking.'

'Your 'scared' and my 'scared' are two different things.'

'What's that supposed to mean?' she asked. 'As you get older, you don't recover from things so easy.'

'And as you get older, you also get tired?'

'Yeah,' I said, 'you get tired.'

She turned toward me, reached out her hand, and touched my earlobe.

'It's all right. Don't worry. I'll be by your side,' she said.

'Thanks.' (Murakami 2003a, p.190)

At this moment, before the journey underground begins, the Professor's granddaughter,

moves from being a sex-obsessed, large, pink-wearing girl, into the stereotypical mother figure, nurturing, and guiding the protagonist. While she has been subjected to patriarchal dominance and misrepresentation throughout the novel, and her youthful uncertain selfhood has been obvious, the power and depth of the Professor's granddaughter is highlighted here. Her potential to evolve into one of Murakami's postmodern heroines is seen through her capacity to traverse the plurality of Tokyo, while her ability to focus on elements of each world is something that Watashi cannot match. This madonna/whore opposition in her character coincides with Watashi's declaration that her ability to feel equal emotion to that of a male was impossible. The Professor's granddaughter is once again, seen and represented as not equal to a man, but as a figure of childlike simplicity, comparable to a Lolita figure, but once her nurturing side is allowed to develop, she develops into a madonnaesque mode of existence. When this is coupled with their journey into underground tunnels existing under a futuristic Tokyo, there seems to be an almost fairy tale element to her character; she is, despite existing in the realistic element of the novel, entering into what is essentially an unreal world, populated by unreal characters. Her ability to navigate through this world adds an air of mystery to her, something that the protagonist cannot grasp or represent, but on which Murakami has chosen to shine a light,

namely the potential and capacity of the postmodern female.

The Professor's granddaughter is not the only female to appear in the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section of the novel. During the course of the action, Watashi befriends a librarian with an insatiable appetite, who becomes his lover. The character of the librarian fulfils Murakami's role for the female, as she provides him with the information and the clues to aid him on his journey, and is comic and active. However her character's role is much more important as, like Watashi, she has a counterpart in the *End of the World* section of the novel. While we are not told that these characters are the same, mirroring Watashi's own psychological bifurcation, they have many similarities. Watashi and Boku are both attracted to librarians, who help him with a task relating to unicorns. The relationships are opposites of each other, the librarian in the 'real' *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section, has an unquenchable appetite, and she embarks on a very physical relationship with Watashi, and is comic, informative and nonchalant. The librarian in the *End of The World* section however, has been robbed of her shadow, and cannot experience any emotion, she is not sure exactly what Boku has to do, other than read the skulls, and she nurtures and cares for him in a very non-sexual manner. Boku begins to fall in love with her, but she cannot reciprocate due to her long term separation from her shadow. The

obvious madonna/whore dichotomy played out by these two characters mirrors that of the Professor's granddaughter's permutation in the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section.

This binary opposition that plays out between the two librarians strengthens the idea that they could be the two sides of the one person, the madonna and the whore. However as Rubin has suggested, the librarian in the walled town is the same age as the Professor's granddaughter, meaning that the librarian could be the subconscious Other of either of the two main female protagonists in the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section. The *Hard-boiled wonderland* librarian has much more in common with the girl with the ears in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, as she very self-assured, unlike the Professor's granddaughter. Her access to knowledge, her independence, her unusual voracious appetite, and her sexual relationship with Watashi, make her an important female within the narrative. In this case, her influence on him has helped him to learn more about his situation, and obviously made an impact on his subconscious. The obvious access to knowledge through the library that the librarian controls, offers a further comment on the female. She becomes an intermediary between knowledge and the male, who has been unable to retrieve any information on the hyperreality around him. The librarian, a female, is perfectly positioned to obtain this information, as she, like many of Murakami's females can bridge between the

postmodern pluralities.

The powerlessness of the librarian in the *End of The World* section is escalated further by her lack of emotional freedom. In order to become a resident of the town, members of the population must forgo all emotions and memory, and as Boku becomes more and more immersed in life in the town, he too slowly loses his ability to feel and experience. He must also say goodbye to his shadow. However, as we read the novel, we realise that this world is a culmination of the images inside Watashi's subconscious and of the Professor's experiments. Together, they have created a world with an emotionally detached madonna female, the binary opposite of the two main females in *Hard-boiled Wonderland*. Watashi's subconscious has created, and become attracted to, a madonna-like female, that cannot reciprocate love, or feel emotion, yet she can fulfil a motherly function for him. We are not told if it is possible for the librarian in the town to have sex, but as we have seen in the *Hard-boiled Wonderland* section, Watashi does not need emotion to engage in sexual intercourse. Yet the only woman he falls for is the unrequited madonna figure of the walled town.

Watashi told the Professor's granddaughter that he does not like to have sex with people he knows. He is single and has managed to forge an isolated, solitary existence for

himself in his hard-boiled wonderland life. He believes that sex can complicate things, and his representation of the female is spurious based on outdated tropes. His categorisation of the female has led him to create a madonna-like companion within an emotionless walled town, where sex will not complicate things. He chooses a passionless, flat existence that cannot be penetrated by anyone other than these two-dimensional characters. They must leave all traces of desire outside the walls and avoid pain, connection and selfhood eternally.

The female protagonists of *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World* play out a very traditional binary opposition of madonna/whore, where they either worship the male protagonist sexually, or wish to nurture and protect him. None of the females are in any way satisfied either: the Professor's granddaughter is still a virgin, desperate to have sex; the librarian's sexual appetite cannot be satisfied; and the librarian in the walled town is disappointed that she cannot be equal to Boku in appreciating love and music. These three characters are fulfilling societal and cultural roles, but it is as if feminism has never existed for them. The trinity of their representation is not a positive one, although they remain at times interesting, mysterious and intelligent, in the realm of the subaltern, constantly misrepresented by the males they encounter. The metanarratives through

which Watashi has represented the female have caused him to misread them as conforming to these binary oppositions. He has failed to see them as postmodern, diverse and transcendental, and missed the indications that Murakami has left for the reader on the true potential of the postmodern female.

### 4.3 The female as medium

After *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, Murakami focused on short story writing, before completing *Norwegian Wood*, a realistic novel that was so successful that he left Japan. During this time he published *Dance, Dance, Dance* and *South of the Border, West of the Sun*, along with a number of short stories. In 1992, while living in America, he began the serialisation of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, which eventually was published in three volumes in 1994 and 1995. As Rubin points out, this work, his longest to date represented a 'turning point for Murakami, perhaps the greatest in his career' (Rubin 2005, p.205). There is a clear change in style in this novel, as pointed out in previous chapters, and this alteration extends to the female protagonists of the novel. The sheer number of important female protagonists that appear during the course of the action provides a stronger female element to the story. In fact, the action is mainly spurred on



due to the actions and interjections of the women in the story. With this novel, there is a clear change happening, not just with Murakami's style, but also with his protagonist's representation of women in his writing, moving them from the role of subalterned sexual accessories to a more progressive significant function within the text. In this novel, the change is motivated through the protagonist's engagement with the subconscious, his acceptance of the hyperreality, and his eventual desire to know and understand the self and Other. As a result, the postmodern female glimpsed in earlier novels come to the fore due to their strength, and ability to merge the self and postmodern plurality. This progression is also noted by Jonathan Gil, who suggests that this change aids our understanding of contemporary society:

Earlier female companions in Murakami's works often offered a mix of compensation and direction as they tried to lead their male counterparts towards some vague promise of meaning. What one sees in this work, however, is a dramatic confrontation, through the search for a female other, with desire, violence, and ultimately the absence at the heart of subjectivity. In this way, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* offers an important shift in Murakami's writing and a radical response to his search for meaning in contemporary Japan. (Dil 2009)

While Dil is conducting a Lacanian reading of *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, he is correct in saying that there is a change in the representation of the female in this novel. His previous novels in the lead up to *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* still managed to maintain this

unknown female, with the dichotomy of madonna/whore ever present. *Dance, Dance, Dance* was a continuation of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, and names the girl with the ears as Kiki, while *Norwegian Wood*, contrasted females, both young and old, and madonna and whore. With *South of The Border, West of The Sun*, the main protagonist is fascinated with a female former school friend who has returned into his adult life as a mysterious, attractive female, that refuses to divulge any information of her life. Yet the miss-categorisation of the female continued due to the protagonist's inability to engage with the plurality of existence, and to really connect with his subconscious selfhood. The narcissism of earlier male protagonist gives way to a man who wants to save his marriage, and who wants to connection with the world around him and learn about his history, while also getting to know the self.

*The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* sustains many of these traits for its female characters; however, it does increase the level of female interaction. Toru, the central male protagonist, is surrounded by women, though still totally mystified by them; yet without their input, he would remain within his isolating *ennui*. It is the actions of the female characters, most importantly that of his wife, that eventually cause him to question his life, his relationships and his reality. Many of the women in the novel have also been violated

by men, and fulfil the role of medium. The women still possess a mystical element that allows them to move between the spiritual, unreal world, and the present day, real world, and aid the male protagonist by communicating with him in both worlds, and encouraging him to enter into his subconscious/spiritual world in order to cope with the *ennui* that surrounds him.

While Dil claims that Toru is the shaman in this novel, relating to his ability to cross into the subconscious/spiritual world, I would suggest that it is largely as a result of the input of the female characters that he attains this transcendent ability. The female characters in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* continue the tradition of Murakami's female mediums from his earliest novels. Without the input of these often misrepresented females, Toru would never achieve anything in this chronicle. Over the course of the novel, five females play major roles in his awakening from apathy; these are his wife, Kumiko, the Kano sisters, Malta and Creta, his young neighbour May, and the medium healer, Nutmeg. This female role is something removed from second wave feminism, and apart from the hegemonic roles imagined for the female by the male. It is a role that expresses the plurality and power of the female without reverting to the traditional narratives of male/female and madonna/whore. It shows how gender, especially within postmodernity,

is alterable and complex, or in a period that Amanda D. Lotz calls the Intermezzo, somewhere between postfeminism and third wave feminism:

Such mutability and adaptation are necessary for the intermezzo, while this conceptual framing also allows us to view the construction of binary gender distinctions as a strategy particular to the early second wave feminist era. At that time, feminists particularly needed to defy hegemonic gender roles and power structures that appeared naturalised and as 'common sense'. After years of critique and deconstruction, many of the constructs once confining women have been denaturalised to an extent decreasing the utility of emphasising their commonality. (Lotz 2007, p.83)

Within this postmodern space, the female role can bend and change, it can be multi-layered, and while it has been misrepresented based on the reliance on outdated gender tropes. The female characters in Murakami's works demonstrate these multifaceted role-transformations, which correspond to the plurality of the postmodern experience.

Each of these female characters has issues with finding their place in the world, yet each tries to take definite steps to address these issues. Their journeys interconnect them with Toru, a static figure in need of guidance. If Dil is correct in saying that '[w]hat these women seem to be seeking compensation for is a system that has metaphorically, and sometimes literally, raped them, a system symbolised primarily through the male protagonist's brother-in-law' (Dil 2009), and if, as Rubin points out, Murakami wished to 'contribute to an evolutionary change in the ideas and attitudes of society at large' (Rubin

2005, p.231), then this change can undoubtedly be seen through the female characters. Murakami has changed the two-dimensional female characters into a social commentary, on the role of the women in postmodern society. As Dil argues, the female in this novel has been violated by a system, and for the first time, Murakami really addresses the issues through the inclusion of three-dimensional females, as represented through the male. Toru becomes one of Murakami's first male protagonists to take cognisance of the postmodern female, and as a result, his representation provides the reader with a fuller picture. The female characters are not just secondary characters that act as catalysts for the male protagonist, but rather, are an integral part of the overall story and message. With *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami starts to critique postmodern society from both a male and female prospective. He manages to maintain a postmodern mood in his style, but the addition of stronger females can be seen as a major factor in his decision to focus more on the 'problems of his own society' (Rubin 2005, p.231).

Kumiko, Toru's wife is the main female protagonist in the novel. It is her sudden departure that causes Toru to realise that something in his life is wrong. His cat, and now his wife have left him. He is jobless, and aimless, spending his days cooking pasta and ironing, taking on a traditionally-female role as a homemaker. Kumiko had become the

sole bread-winner in the household, after Toru gave up his job. Working as an editor for a magazine, she was quite successful in her career, and was able to comfortably support Toru, as he apathetically searched for a new career path. This traditional role-reversal highlights that Kumiko is no longer one of Murakami's passive females, but is a more independent character. Her initial reason for walking out on the marriage also accentuates her awareness of her own sexuality, and transfers the focus of sexuality from the male-centred experience of his previous novels. The emotionally-devoid and sexually-subdued marriage they had created did not fulfil Kumiko, causing her to make a decision and leave. Unlike her husband, Kumiko can make decisions, find career success, and allow herself to become sexually awakened. Toru does not recognise her when she calls anonymously for telephone sex, as he is unable to see his wife as a sexual being:

It is not possible for Toru to recognise this, however, for this unconscious manifestation of Kumiko expresses her desire in terms so direct that Toru cannot associate them with his self-controlled wife. Thus he misses his early chances to "discover" Kumiko and save his relationship. (Strecher 2006, p.29)

His idea of Kumiko is so one-dimensional, so embroiled in metanarratives, that he is unable to see her actual plurality, her actual self.

Rubin has called Toru 'sexually repressed', and stated that the novel boils down to

‘a story of a somewhat sexually repressed husband whose even more repressed wife leaves him when she awakens to her true sexual appetite in the arms of another man’ (Rubin 2005, p.205). *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* is often referred to as a retelling of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, where Boku’s wife has left him, and there are obvious connections; however, in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami, having evolved his female characters, allows for the story of the wife to be told as well.

Interestingly, if as Murakami has said, that he wants his writing to ‘contribute to an evolutionary change in the ideas and attitudes of society at large’, then Dil’s assertion that the system is represented through the character of Wataya Noboru, Kumiko’s brother, is important. Dil states that ‘what these women seem to be seeking compensation for is a system that has metaphorically, and sometimes literally, raped them, a system symbolised primarily through the male protagonist’s brother-in-law’ (Dil 2009). And if we look at *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* as tackling the issues of postmodern society, in conjunction with the changing role and representation of the female, then it points to Murakami suggesting that contemporary society is not only unfulfilling for the male, but also disregards the needs of women. They are so displaced that they must live, like Kumiko, suspended between the real and spiritual/subconscious world.

Kumiko remains unknowable to Toru, who admits that he never knew her, despite being married to her for six years:

Is it possible, finally, for one human being to achieve perfect understanding of another? We can invest enormous time and energy in serious efforts to know another person, but in the end, how close are we able to come to that person's essence? We convince ourselves that we know the other person well, but do we really know anything important about anyone? (Murakami 2003b, p.24)

The word essence adds further to Kumiko's mysticism, and as the story progresses, Toru realises he knew very little about his wife, her history, her sexuality, her emotions and her fears. Toru is completely confused why his wife has run away, and he is unable to pin down what are her reasons for leaving. She writes him a letter to explain:

I slept with him because I wanted to sleep with him. Because I couldn't bear not to sleep with him. Because I couldn't suppress my own sexual desire. [...] one moment, by accident, we touched, and all I could think of was that I wanted to be in his arms. The instant we touched, I knew that he wanted my body, and he seemed to sense that I wanted his. It was a totally irrational, overwhelming charge of electricity that passed between us. I felt as if the sky had fallen on me. My cheeks were burning, my heart was pounding, and I had a heavy, melting feeling below the waist. I could hardly sit straight on the barstool, it was so intense. At first I didn't realize what was happening inside me, but soon I realized it was lust. I had such a violent desire for him that I could hardly breathe. Without either of us being the first to suggest it, we walked to a nearby hotel and went wild with sex. (Murakami 2003b, p.274)

This sexual awakening for Kumiko seems to mark a change in Murakami's writing about the female persona. The female has moved from a two-dimensional character into an



awakened character that contributes positively to the action. This sexual awakening summons up images of a rebirth, and of the death of an older order. The violent imagery in her letter: of death, and of the sky falling in on her, along with the intense feeling in her reproductive organs, suggests a death and rebirth for the female. Despite her rebirth, Kumiko cannot be seen or be reached in this world, indicating that the world is not ready for such an awakened female, like the world of *1Q84*. She retains Murakami's trope of female as medium, and within postmodern society, she must exist within the unreal or spiritual world in order to find a true sense of self. When we consider her brother as a representation of a system that does not respect women, as his sexually-violent past demonstrates, then we can see how society, within the novels of Murakami, was not ready for such an awakened female. Before she had such an awakening, she was incomplete, and unlike her male counterparts in Murakami's novel, she takes full responsibility for her own lack of self-understanding and weak *shutaisei*.

I am sorry to have to tell you this, but the fact is that I was never able to have true sexual pleasure with you, either before or after we were married. I loved it when you held me in your arms, but all I ever felt was a vague, far-off sense that almost seemed to belong to someone else. This is in no way your fault. My inability to feel was purely and simply my own responsibility. There was some kind of blockage inside me, which would always hold any sexual feeling I had in check. (Murakami 2003b, p.276)

Kumiko knows that she must take control of her identity, and not live in the apathetic *ennui* that had filled her life. She, like many of Murakami's male protagonists, just existed, with a vague sense of self, and with an inability to grasp any real sense of emotion.

For Kumiko this created a blockage which prevented her from feeling anything profoundly. As she exists now, she is divided between her old life of lethargic subsistence and an awakened reality, as combining the two is difficult in a society that is not able to accept such an inspired female. Her brother wishes to keep her hidden, her husband wants her back, but Kumiko does not wish to choose between the two, but rather to live within postmodern society as a more enlightened female:

The home I shared with you was the place where I belonged. It was the world I belonged to. But my body had this violent need for sex with him. Half of me was here, and half there. I knew that sooner or later the break would have to come, but at the time, it felt as if this double life would go on forever. Over here I was living peacefully with you, and over there I was making violent love with him. (Murakami 2003b, p.275)

Their marriage was fine, but dispassionate, like the life on which they both had embarked, and Kumiko is now willing to change this, as opposed to Toru, who was willing to continue on with this existence until Kumiko's disappearance. Kumiko, however, maintains a sense of the unknowable, a mysticism or spirituality, and by the end of the novel, she remains somewhat ambiguous, both to the reader and Toru. Kumiko is existing within this plurality

of meaning, within the space of what Lotz calls the intermezzo in relation to the shift to third wave and postfeminism (Lotz 2007, p.72). Like postmodernism, there is not one single definition, but a multi-layered and uncertain movement, and Kumiko, in this novel is existing and evolving in the intermezzo.

Kumiko's mysticism and strength is also connected to her menstrual cycle, which like her, is precise. Her neatness and precision is noted by her husband in her everyday habits, and Toru makes a point of noting how her period is equally as punctilious. This highlights the movement of the moon to Toru, adding to that spiritual element of the strong

Kumiko:

What induced me to see things this way was the absolute precision of my wife's twenty-nine-day menstrual cycle. It corresponded perfectly with the waxing and waning of the moon. And her periods were always difficult. She would become unstable- even depressed-for some days before they began. So her cycle became my cycle. I had to be careful not to cause any unnecessary trouble at the wrong time of the month. Before we were married, I hardly noticed the phases of the moon. I might happen to catch sight of the moon in the sky, but its shape at any given time was of no concern to me. Now the shape of the moon was something I always carried around in my head. (Murakami 2003b, pp.28-29)

The sisters, Creta and Malta Kano progress the issue of the mystically powerful female, overcoming a system that has not been accepting of them, or of their personal struggle to find a solid identity. Like Kumiko, they exist in a liminal space between the real and the

imaginary. Malta is a clairvoyant that Kumiko recommends to Toru in order to help find their missing cat. Her sister, Creta worked as an escort, and now calls herself a prostitute of the mind, and she is able to enter the subconscious of men, causing reactions in the real world. Their subliminality keeps them from existing totally in the real world, but is also related to a system that has defiled them. Creta Kano, while working as an escort, was raped by Noboru Wataya, Kumiko's brother, who symbolises the negative representation of the postmodern system and its control. The capitalist system within which Noboru Wataya operates, is one dedicated to control, and as a politician, he works to exert this control further, through what David Harvey refers to as 'social control'. This concept of control over space is fundamental to an 'all-pervasive source of social power in and over everyday life'. As he says 'in money economies in general, and in capitalist society in particular, the intersection command of money, time and space forms a substantial nexus of social power that we cannot afford to ignore' (Harvey 1992, p.226). Noboru is not only involved in political control, but also in the physical control over the female body. This incident has removed Creta further from reality, and Malta explains that elements of her selfhood have been disconnected. She has relocated to the subconscious space, a space that has not been accessible to the male, and indeed both sisters exist between the two

worlds, maintaining an ability to move into either space, while preserving elements of themselves in a pseudo-limbo, neither in reality nor in the unreal.

The sisters realise that Toru is becoming more and more disconnected from reality, and that they must enter his subconscious in order to connect with him. Their strength is such that Creta can cause Toru ejaculate in reality, after infiltrating his subconscious:

Creta Kano then said, 'Of course, we did not have relations in reality. When you ejaculated, it was not into me, physically, but in your own consciousness. Do you see? It was a fabricated consciousness. Still, the two of us share the consciousness of having had relations with each other.'

'What's the point of doing something like that?'

'To know,' she said. 'To know more-and more deeply.' [...]

'Maybe I'm not very smart,' I said, my voice dry, 'but I really can't claim to have understood everything you've been telling me.'

'In your second dream, when I was in the midst of having relations with you, another woman took my place. Isn't that true? I have no idea who she was. But that event was probably meant to suggest something to you, Mr. Okada. This is what I wanted to convey to you.' I said nothing in return.

'You should have no sense of guilt about having had relations with me,' said Creta Kano.

'You see, Mr. Okada, I am a prostitute. I used to be a prostitute of the flesh, but now I am a prostitute of the mind. Things pass through me.' (Murakami 2003b, p.212)

Malta and Creta open up Toru's mind to the possibility of his subconscious, and they enter his subconscious in order to aid in his search for his missing wife. Their ability to traverse and exist within the postmodern realm of the subconscious means that what happens in the mind can affect and effect the action of the present. They have accepted the plurality

of reality, and use this multi-layered space to transform the narrative. With the aid of his neighbour, the 16 year old May, and the two sisters, he enters the well. This well, with its dark womb-like properties, sends Toru back into the embryonic state, as he ventures into his subconscious to Room 208, where he can find Kumiko. Comfortable in this foetal subconscious, it is Creta Kano who rescues him in a dream, and forces him to return to the real world and make genuine steps to find his wife in actuality, so that he can try to forge a true reality. It is the female who has realised the potential of these multiple realities, in line with their own fractured and mutable selfhoods. The female has learned to move through these fluid boundaries between conscious and subconscious, harnessing the link between the two in order to affect change. The females with whom Toru comes in contact teach him to harness the power of his own subconscious in order to reach out to his estranged wife.

The association with the female as healer is continued with the character of Nutmeg, a shaman-like figure. She, and her son, are very much clouded in secrecy, not revealing their real names, and gaining a healing power that is very much rooted in otherworldly unexplainable sources. As Myles Chilton explains, the work that they do 'the restoration of equilibrium to women in need of healing is secretive because of the nature of the illness of the women themselves':

The secrecy echoes the intense interiority of the women's ailment: all is calm and ordered, even pleasing, on the surface (like nutmeg and cinnamon), while inside they experience the pain of hollowness. The recuperative therapies conceived by Nutmeg and Cinnamon, shaman and delivered by Okada, are magical both in their constitution and in their effect. (Chilton 2009, p.401)

This restoration of the female is something that is not mainstream, or known in society, for, as we have learned from Creta and Malta Kano, and from Kumiko, women must disappear when they come to realise they are not living to their full potential. Kumiko, after her sexual awakening, is forced by her brother to leave her husband and hide, as society cannot deal with this more enlightened female. The Kano sisters must exist within this limbo. Yet their ability to access this subconscious world suggests a great power available to the female characters, something which is also accessible to Nutmeg. Through his interaction with these mysteriously powerful females, Toru learns to access this subconscious well, and to communicate with Kumiko, thereby healing himself inside and out.

The mark that appears on Toru's face, the 'size of an infant's palm' becomes an important symbol as described by Strecher. It becomes a link between the male and female worlds and signifies Toru's growing understanding of the female as medium and healer:

The mark is a new, embryonic consciousness, one that will live and grow in his cheek

until it is “born” coincident with the completion of his quest. In short the mark may be read as yet another manifestation of Kumiko herself, providing a living, real-world link to the unconscious realm in which she lies trapped. (Strecher 2006, p.31)

This idea of the female as healer is nothing new, and the female as barred from traditional methods of accessing conventional medicine has led to a ritual, often spiritual, gendered connection with healing then associated with the female, as Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English point out:

Women have always been healers. They were the unlicensed doctors and anatomists of western history. They were abortionists, nurses and counsellors. They were pharmacists, cultivating healing herbs and exchanging the secrets of their uses. They were midwives, travelling from home to home and village to village. For centuries women were doctors without degrees, barred from books and lectures, learning from each other, and passing on experience from neighbour to neighbour and mother to daughter. They were called ‘wise women’ by the people, witches or charlatans by the authorities. Medicine is part of our heritage as women, our history, our birthright. (Ehrenreich & English 2010, p.25)

Murakami’s decision to associate his female characters with healing ties them then, not only to the mystical healing elements of which he spoke, but also to a history of female ‘wise women’. Unlike the male characters in his novels, who must learn their history, the female characters are untenably linked to the past, and carry with them a tradition of healing. This healing ritual offers the female a passageway to the unconscious, to a spiritual world, where they can learn to accept and tolerate postmodern society. As



Jameson has said 'the second feature of this list of postmodernisms is the effacement of some key boundaries or separations', and this hybridity and fluidity between the conscious and the subconscious is a feature of postmodernity (Jameson 1998, p.2).

Toru's engagement with this unconscious world provides him with access to an element of healing. Through his connection with Kumiko in the unconscious hotel, and through his acceptance of Nutmeg and Cinnamon, he can utilise the knowledge he has gained through the physical representation of this new transitionary power, as symbolised by the blue infant palm shaped mark:

Toru becomes a 'healer' of sorts, a medium by which women who suffer from a mysterious unconscious imbalance restore their internal equilibrium. The process by which they are healed is, for Toru, both passive and sexual; as he sits blindfolded in a darkened room, his mind blank, the women kiss, fondle, and caress the mark on his cheek. (Strecher 2006, p.37)

The mark on his cheek, which he receives after his journey to the hotel in his unconscious, becomes a physical link to this female world, to the female plurality. It shows that he can negotiate between these worlds, and therefore come to realise that there is a multi-layered reality that surrounds him where modernist metanarratives, including the Madonna/whore paradigm are no longer relevant.

For the characters of Murakami's novels, this is something with which they are

trying to come to terms, and once they accept this ease of movement between realities, the female protagonists learn to negotiate the fragmented boundaries. The plurality is something that they learn to use to their advantage, and which they then use to guide the men to this process. In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, the female characters choose to spend more time existing within this parallel existence. The multi-layered worlds offer solace and reflection for the female, something Toru realises when he delves into his subconscious in the well. As Brian McHale has said '[t]his, I would maintain, is precisely the postmodernist condition: an anarchic landscape of worlds in the plural' (McHale 1987, p.33). It is interesting that the location of Toru's communication is close to this well, the location of his subconscious rebirth, where he becomes scared with a birthmark-like blemish on his cheek. The well is no longer there, so he cannot return to his safe womb, but he can be close to its location, with the help of a maternal figure, Nutmeg.

At the start of the novel, Toru strikes up a friendship with his neighbour May, a teenage girl who does not easily fit into any societal conventions. May seems to be a very self-assured young woman, but like the women that Nutmeg and Cinnamon help, she is a lost individual, unable to find a place within society. Eventually she is sent out of the city to a school for girls in the mountains where she can recover. The addition of May to the list of

restless female characters within the novel, shows that there is little room in a patriarchal society for women who wish to become enlightened, and transform their received gender-position within society, thereby making it more postmodern. Each of the women must leave their home and enter some other space in order to deal with their abundance of strength and emotion, as society is unable for them. May is reminiscent of the Professor's granddaughter, unsure of her position, immature, and lacking in self-confidence. Like many of Murakami's females, she is subject to the misrepresentation of gaze that does not take account of her postmodernity. This novel signifies a broadening of the representation of the female, by a male protagonist, and through his own examination of the self and the plurality of existence, he can see a more composite May who still has to discover her way through the postmodern noise. Around Toru, May and the other main characters, there are still many, like Noboru, or May's parents, who refuse to acknowledge the plurality, and therefore do not fully grasp the complexity and plurality of the postmodern individual.

Significantly, Murakami names the missing cat Noboru Wataya, after the political, media-savvy, violent brother of Kumiko. The cat's disappearance is also noteworthy, symbolising a system that has lost its way. In his dream, Toru tells Malta about the cat's return, explaining that the cat's tail is different than before. Malta strips naked to reveal a

cat's tail attached above her buttocks:

There, to be sure, attached above her buttocks, was a cat's tail. Proportioned to her body, it was much larger than the original, but its shape was the same as Mackerel's tail. It had the same sharp bend at the tip, but this one was far more convincingly real than Mackerel's.

'Please take a close look,' said Malta Kano. 'This is the actual tail of the cat that disappeared. The one the cat has now is an imitation. It may look the same, but if you examine it closely, you will find that it is different.' (Murakami 2003b, pp.536-537)

The cat has not just returned, but is changed completely. Toru goes as far as to replace the name, displacing Noboru Wataya further, something which brings him great joy:

Yes, that was it: I would call him Mackerel. Rubbing him behind the ears, I informed him of the change: 'You're not Noboru Wataya anymore,' I said. 'From now on, your name is Mackerel.' I wanted to shout it to the world. (Murakami 2003b, p.378)

This statement suggests the altering or changing of the system, which previously wanted to violently control and dominate the female. The female has had a direct relation to the return of the system, and to the revision of that system. Within the novel, the female has adapted to postmodernity in order to allow her to traverse the many realities, something that the male has not been able to accomplish, without input from the female characters.

This movement through the worlds allows the female to harness the potential of the subconscious mind, and to affect change. Here, the influence of the female allows Toru to contact his wife, and also alters the cat, which can be seen as symbol of patriarchy. The

outdated dominant hegemonic trope is no longer of relevance, and as we have seen in previous novels, it lead to a misrepresentation of the female and her potential. It is so changed that Toru must now call it by a new name. The evolution of this change is seen in *Kafka on The Shore*, through the eyes of a 15 year old teenage boy.

#### 4.4 Oedipal Females

Published in 2002, *Kafka on The Shore* is the story of Kafka Tamura who decides to run away from home, fearful that he will fulfil an oedipal prophecy. Kafka's mother left home when he was a small boy, bringing with her his older sister. He was then raised by his evil, artistic father, and Kafka created an imaginary male friend called 'Crow'. On his journey to find his mother and sister, he ends up sleeping with someone he thinks could be his sister, and living in a library run by a woman who he thinks could be his mother, and where there is also a gender-ambiguous female receptionist. He completely reverses his earlier existence to a completely feminine one, on this journey to return to the birth mother.

Within the novel, the female, and in particular the transgendered Oshima, again play the roles of nurturer, and healer, operating between the spiritual and real world. All of the female characters again have a connection with healing and the surreal, easily moving

between the conscious and the subconscious, while assisting Kafka to fulfil his oedipal curse and find a truer sense of self. This novel once again extends the representation of the female, and her ability to move fluidly between boundaries, metaphysical and corporeal.

The first female that Kafka encounters is Sakura, a character very much situated in the realistic world. Sakura is a friendly hairdresser that Kafka meets on his bus journey to Takamatsu. She immediately plays the role of nurturer, and establishes a sisterly affection towards Kafka, which leads him to believe she could, indeed, be his sister. Sakura fulfils Murakami's requirements for the female in the real world as she is 'very active, comic, positive' (Wray 2009, p.353). She is comfortable in her body, and also with any of the issues that arise with Kafka. When he comes to her covered in blood after blacking out in the park, she does not worry, but manages the situation in her 'realistic' style, actively, comically, and positively. Her location in the real world is also referred to by Kafka when he visits the apartment she lives in, when he describes it as having the feeling 'of real people living real lives' (Murakami 2005, p.77).

Like her counterparts in previous novels, Sakura is objectified by the male protagonist. Her physical appearance is critiqued by 15 year old Kafka:

She's kind of funny-looking. Her face is out of balance—broad forehead, button nose, freckled cheeks, and pointy ears. A slammed-together, rough sort of face you can't ignore. Still, the whole package isn't so bad. For all I know she may be not so wild about her own looks, but she seems comfortable with who she is, and that's the important thing. There's something childish about her that has a calming effect, at least on me. She isn't very tall, but has good looking legs, and a nice bust for such a slim body. (Murakami 2005, p.19)

Unlike the Professor's granddaughter, she is not obsessed with her looks, and despite the 'childish' vibe that Kafka feels in her company, he is still physically attracted to her. Again, Murakami plays with the established notions of female attractiveness, and allows the female character's comfortable nature to become her most alluring feature. The strength of the female lies in her comfort within the postmodern, and in her ability to find a sense of selfhood in the micro narratives which proliferate around the individual. Murakami's males have moved from ears, to weight, to confidence in terms of the aspects of women which to which they are attracted.

Sakura contains many similarities to previous Murakami female characters: her physical appearance has been objectified; she sexually satisfies the protagonist, and makes vague references to her own medium-like quality. Her mysterious appearance in his life, her willingness to help, and her acceptance of Kafka's metaphysical bifurcation indicates that Sakura understands, and is comfortable with, the surreal. During their first

meeting, while stopped at a bus rest area, Kafka wonders where they have stopped.

Sakura tells him that this rest stop is not important, it is just a break in the journey, the destination is more important:

‘What does it matter what it’s called? You’ve got your restrooms and your food. Your fluorescent light and your plastic chairs. Crappy coffee. Strawberry-jam sandwiches. It’s all pointless—assuming you are trying to find a point to it. We’re coming from somewhere, heading somewhere else. That’s all you need to know, right?’ (Murakami 2005, p.23)

Her suggestion that Kafka should not concern himself with this journey, but rather with his destination, demonstrates an undisclosed knowledge of how important the Library will be to Kafka. Her mystical characteristics are further explored through her reference to menstrual blood. When Kafka arrives at her apartment covered in blood, she is unconcerned:

There’re plenty of reasons why someone might get blood on them, and most of the time it’s not nearly as bad as it looks. I’m a girl, so I’m used to seeing blood – I see that much every month. You know what I mean? (Murakami 2005, p.94)

Her connections with the mystical or spiritual world are strengthened by her sexual encounter with Kafka. As already noted, in his interview in *The Paris Review*, Murakami said that sex is an integral component of the role as medium, acting as ‘a kind of passage to the upper area, to the better place’ (Wray 2009, p.353). The sexual experience between



Sakura and Kafka is very strange. Kafka has called to her apartment after his blackout in the park, and Sakura took on the role of nurse or mother. She then allows him to sleep in her bed, and when he gets an erection, she makes reference to it while also asking him about his sister. Knowing as we do about Kafka's oedipal prophecy, the incident is very strange:

She hesitates for a moment, then lowers my boxers, pulls out my rock-hard cock, and cradles it gently in her hand. Like she's making sure of something, the way a doctor takes a pulse. With her soft hand touching me, I feel something—a stray thought, maybe—spring up in my crotch.

'How old would your sister be now?'

'Twenty-one,' I say. 'Six years older than me.'

She thinks about this for a while. 'Do you want to see her?'

'Maybe,' I say.

'Maybe?' Her hand grasps my cock a little harder. 'What do you mean, maybe? You really don't want to see her that much?'

'I don't know what we'd talk about, and she might not want to see me. Same thing with my mother. Maybe neither one of them wants to have anything to do with me. No one's searching for me. I mean, they left and everything.' Without me, I silently complete the thought.

She doesn't say anything. Her hand on my cock loosens a bit, then tightens. In time with this my cock relaxes, then gets even harder.

'You want to come?' she asks. (Murakami 2005, pp.96-97)

Afterwards she asks him to sleep in his sleeping bag on the floor, and Kafka has a deeper sleep than before:

This time I can get to sleep. A deep, deep sleep, maybe the deepest since I ran away from home. It's like I'm in some huge elevator that slowly, silently carries me deeper

and deeper underground. Finally all light has disappeared, all sound faded away.  
(Murakami 2005, p.98)

The sleep he has after ejaculation is almost like a spiritual meditation. The association of sex with healing returns to Ehrenreich and English's concept of the female witch or healer who was so distrusted. They discuss the belief that the female healer was held responsible for crimes of lust against men, while also being charged with crimes of healing: '[t]he are accused of having magical powers effecting health – of harming, but also of healing. They were often charged specifically with possessing medical and obstetrical skills' (Ehrenreich & English 2010, p.39). The overt sexuality of Murakami's female characters is reminiscent of these distrusted, or misrepresented, healing females detailed.

The whole experience, while it does offer him sexual pleasure, becomes something different, something more than just a physical exchange. The concept of sex is completely altered, from Boku's girlfriend with the ears, in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, to a transcendental meditation that transfers the mystical energy from the female medium to the lost male protagonist. Kafka feels a stray thought during the experience, and then enters a very deep sleep, which refreshes him, thus preparing him for what lies ahead. The association between sex and healing has been something of a Murakami trope, which began with the Kano sisters in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, and is further explored in *1Q84*.

The Komura Library, where Kafka ends up living, acts like the well in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, as it seems to exist within the spiritual world. Murakami has indicated that within the unreal world, the women were quiet, intelligent, modest and wise, and both Oshima and Miss Saeki adhere to those characteristics, while the location itself becomes a healing location for Kafka. The imaginary and the surreal combine with the female aura to allow Kafka to blend the real and the unreal together and contact the dead within the confines of the building. As Maria Flutsch has said '[h]ere, even though it is a library full of the written word, the patriarchal symbolic order does not hold sway' (Flutsch 2006, p.72).

At the start, Kafka believes that Oshima is a man, commenting on his slight build and handsome physicality. He too is subject to Kafka's objectification. Later on in the novel, Oshima reveals that he has never been comfortable within his gender, and was born a woman, but lives as a man. The world of the library is a very surreal one, where gender, spatial and temporal rules can blur and disappear, much like the well in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. This world allows Kafka to exist in a female persona, the opposite of his original home life, and also to access a form of healing. Maria Flutsch regards Oshima as an important component of this maternal world, and as a catalyst for Kafka's evolution:

Oshima is revealed as a powerful symbol of the body/mind/heart split that Kafka is

dealing with. He was born physically female but with the mind of a male. Emotionally he lives as a man with a sexual preference for other men. He never uses his vagina for sex and has no periods. In fact, the seemingly perfect, maternal world of the library is apparently blood-free. Miss Saeki, who mostly wears dark blue, is well over 50 years old, and presumably menopausal. [...] Oshima's [...] as a haemophiliac, he must never bleed. Nevertheless, the maternal world of the library is far from perfect. Rather, it is full of dark, underlying abjection, much like Kafka himself. (Murakami 2006, p.73)

Like the well, the library is spectral. Its lack of solid location within either world creates an ideal space for Kafka to explore his subconscious, and to find an identity and an answer to his search. Oshima is the human representation of this unsettled position, existing between genders, as the library exists between two worlds. This allows Oshima to become shaman-like for Kafka, educating him on life and providing him with the opportunities Kafka needs to deal with the issues that haunt him.

Oshima also acts as an agent of intercession between Kafka and the most supernatural female character of the novel: the possible mother and lover of Kafka, Miss Saeki. She tells him that her soul mate died at the age of 21, and she has been lost since, barely existing, waiting for death. Kafka has such a strong connection with her, that he sees a ghost of her 15 year-old self, and sleeps with her present-day self, in a surreal dream-like experience. Like his incestuous experience with Sakura, the encounter with Miss Saeki becomes more maternal for Kafka, who compares the feeling of sleeping with

her to being inside the womb. Miss Saeki enters Kafka's room in the middle of the night in what seems like a dream-like state, and undresses, before getting into bed with the 15 year old Kafka. The relationship with the unconscious evokes the sense of woman-as-medium that has been an ongoing trope, and in this instance is associated with Miss Saeki. This is further developed through Kafka's previous dream-like meetings with the ghost of Miss Saeki's teenage self. When Miss Saeki gets into bed with Kafka and starts to engage in sexual foreplay, Kafka believes that she thinks, in her unconscious state, that he is her old soul mate. As the episode continues, Kafka himself enters into the narrative of his imaginary friend Crow in order to describe what is happening and how he feels:

And you're sucked into a time warp.

Before you know it, her dream has wrapped itself around your mind. Gently, warmly, like amniotic fluid. Miss Saeki will take off your T-shirt, pull off your boxers. She'll kiss your neck over and over, then reach out and hold your penis, which is already porcelain-hard. Gently she wraps her hand around your balls, and wordlessly guides your fingers to her pubic hair. Her vagina is warm and wet. She kisses your chest, sucking your nipples. Your fingers are slowly sucked inside her.

Where does your responsibility begin here? Wiping away the nebula from your sight, you struggle to find where you really are. You're trying to find the direction of the flow, struggling to hold on to the axis of time. But you can't locate the borderline separating dream and reality. Or even the boundary between what's real and what's possible. All you're sure of is that you're in a delicate position. Delicate - and dangerous. (Murakami 2005, p.302)

The delicate position that Kafka finds himself in is wrapped in amniotic fluid in the fragile

subconscious world that Miss Saeki and Oshima can move between in the library. Miss Saeki, even if post-menopausal, cannot get pregnant from this intercourse as Crow tells is that the seed is carried into 'a place apart' (Murakami 2005, p.303). The intercourse with Miss Saeki is part of a process of maturing and understanding this mutable boundary between dream and reality, between conscious and subconscious. Even the confines of time become unstable, as Miss Saeki returns to her 21 year old self, and can sleep with what could be her son. Through this event, she can guide Kafka through the plurality of postmodernity, and show him that the 'place apart' coexists.

With *Kafka on the Shore*, Murakami has enhanced the role of the female, retaining her medium qualities, but also expanding her role. The female is still secondary to the male protagonist, but her role is vital as healer, rather than as catalyst for change. Many of the female characters have their own journeys, and the level and importance of these journeys is growing in significance from the girl with the ears in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. With *Kafka on the Shore*, the journeys of these female characters are somewhat occluded, as the egocentric Kafka propels the narrative. Interestingly, the idea of the female as sexual companion, initially enunciated at the start of Murakami's career, has very much changed. Sex has become an important phenomenon that allows the male character to share the

female ability to relocate into the unconscious or spiritual world. This stronger representation of the female evokes a postmodern female that has embraced the multiplicity of reality and can move between these different realities easily. Sex becomes one of the tools for this healer-female to help the male access these realms. Brian McHale has said: 'postmodernist fiction does hold the mirror up to reality; but that reality, now more than ever before, is plural' (McHale 1987, p.34), and the novels under discussion bear this out. With *Kafka on The Shore*, Murakami developed this idea of sex as an elemental recovery process and portal to a spiritual awareness that is not always sexually driven. However it was not until his novel *1Q84* that Murakami allowed the female to take what had previously been a male pilgrimage.

#### 4.5 The central female

In his most recent work, *1Q84*, Aomame's story alternates with that of the male protagonist, Tengo, who becomes the Other for her, in a reversal of the structure of *A Wild Sheep Chase*. *1Q84* is written over three books, and revolves around a number of female characters who bring about real change in the world. Most prominently the story begins and focuses on Aomame, a strong individual female who Hansen correctly says 'is

different from Murakami's other female characters' (Hansen 2010, p.236).

Many of Murakami's novels in the intervening years have featured women, and have had women as central protagonists, but with Aomame, Murakami has reversed the role of the Other to refer, at times, to Tengo who creates his entire sense of self through Aomame and a secondary, yet vital young female, Fuki-Era. As already referenced, Aomame has taken a stand against female victimisation, and works undercover as an assassin, expertly killing men who abuse women. As Hansen also explains, from the very start of the novel, Aomame 'symbolically frees herself from the social norms for women by rolling up her tight mini skirt and taking off her high-heeled shoes [...] two essential contemporary female clothing items that, at least symbolically, restrict women's mobility' (Hansen 2010, p.236). Hansen suggests that Aomame is the 'much needed' heroine for the next generation of girls. Unfortunately when Hansen's paper was published, the third book of *1Q84* had not been published so she could not see how Aomame's journey ends.

Murakami leaves the reader at the end of book two with Aomame in the process of a suicide attempt, and with a man who is unable to see what is before his eyes. For Hansen, this ending suggested that life as a strong female in postmodern literature is impossible. However, with the publication of book three, Aomame chooses to solve the



hard-boiled mystery of the novel. She becomes pregnant after assassinating a Christ-like cult figure, and the cult see her as the bearer of a new messiah, again returning the female to the role of a vessel or physical identity. However, when Aomame finds Tengo, they escape the parallel world of *1Q84*, and she escapes her destiny as a pseudo Virgin Mary figure. The positive ending is slightly marred by the fact that this world where a woman is no longer the Other, and where the man has been relegated to the realm of the subaltern, can only exist in an alternative universe, as Murakami subtly suggests that Aomame and Tengo have not returned to 1984 but into another alternative reality. They have entered Toru's well, Kafka's 'place apart', the town in *The End of the World*, and the world of the sheepman in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Aomame's Immaculate Conception not only affiliates her with the Madonna-role, but also connects her to Fuka-Eri, suggesting a bond between females that can materialise physically. This interconnected female capacity brings the women closer to their subconscious potential, something that all of Murakami's male protagonists need to realise.

Aomame's pregnancy is undoubtedly related to the intercourse between Tengo and the 17 year old Fuka-Eri. Knowing that Murakami has been developing the idea of sex as a portal to the subconscious, and removing the erotic connotations from the act, the reader

can see that the act of intercourse between Tengo and Fuka-Eri cannot be compared to relations between Boku and the girl with the ears in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. This sexual experience differs further as it results in the physical pregnancy of the most important protagonist in the novel, Aomame. However, more importantly, Fuka-Eri, who is doubly named, has managed to separate herself into two similar beings, *maza* and *dohta* as we have seen in Chapter 2. She has created a *dohta*, a perceiver, in her own likeness that acts as a passageway between the real and the spiritual:

'In other words, the *dohta* becomes our passageway,' the tenor says.

'Instead of the goat?' the girl asks.

'The dead goat was only a temporary passageway,' the bass says. 'We must have a living *dohta* as a Perceiver to link the place we live with this place.'

'What does the *maza* do?' the girl asks.

'The *maza* stays close to the *dohta*,' the screechy one says.

'When will the *dohta* wake up?' the girl asks.

'Two days from now, or maybe three,' the tenor says.

'One or the other,' says the one with the small voice.

'Make sure you take good care of this *dohta*,' the baritone says. 'She is your *dohta*.'

'Without the *maza*'s care, the *dohta* cannot be complete. She cannot live long without it,' the screechy one says. (Murakami 2011, pp.570-571)

Fuka-Eri now exists without her *dohta* as she ran away, knowing that the male-centred process of receiving her was what she calls 'going against nature'. Her real name is Eriko Fukada, however as her *dohta* and *maza* have separated, in a manner similar to the loss of the shadow in *The End of The World*, so her name has been shortened. She is not

complete; her *maza* cannot exist without the shadow of her heart and mind. The separation of the female into *dohta* and *maza* creates an ambiguous physical female being that is not complete, and which exists between two worlds. Therefore the coitus which occurs between the Leader and the *dohta* cannot be seen as sexual, but rather as emblematic of the passing of knowledge between the perceiver and receiver. The *dohta* is the shadow of the heart and mind; it is the emotional, metaphysical self, like the shadow that Boku separates from *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*. The *maza* that is left behind is not the complete self, like Nakata from *Kafka on the Shore* Fuki-Eri is not a complete being, she has been fragmented into two, with her metaphysical self living elsewhere, in the 'place apart'.

Even so, the relationship between the ten year old Tsubasa and the Leader troubles Aomame. While he claims to have had intercourse with her *dohta*, the idea that he had destroyed her uterus in the process suggests a violent raping of the young female. He explains to Aomame that it was not sexual congress, as it was the shadow of the real person with whom he had intercourse, something with which she tries to come to terms:

If Leader had sexual relations not with the girls' actual *mazas* but with their other selves, their *dohtas*, then Leader's expression—'ambiguous congress'—made sense. It also explained Tsubasa's flat, depthless eyes and her near inability to speak.

(Murakami 2011, p.576)

The religious cult was started by the Leader after the student riots in the 1960's, and despite its origins as an anti-authority commune, it develops into a patriarchal structure that leads to female members of the commune separating into self and shadow. The Leader then proceeds to have sex with the shadows of the young girls in the hope of becoming enlightened. Like the protagonists of the previous novels, the Leader is hoping to gain access to the spiritual portal to which all of Murakami's females have access. The creation of the *doh*ta does not allow this to happen completely, as the controlling nature of the patriarchal community is what Fuka-Eri says is 'against nature'. The only person who gets to access the passageway is Tengo as a bi-product of his relationship with Fuka-Eri. He helps her weak *shutaisei* to communicate the immorality of the commune, and allow her a connection to the powerful Aomame.

The entire story is also dependent on the Dowager who provides the space, finances and support for Aomame to complete her vocation as assassin. This strong, elderly female character is crucial to the entire action of the novel, and acts as a catalyst for Aomame's journey. This switches Murakami's narrative to a completely female-centred one, with Tengo playing the secondary role of the female protagonist. While Tengo, and in

book three, Ushikawa, feature as first-person narratives, and are given their own chapters, which alternate with Aomame's chapters, the entire focus of the story is female-centred.

Aomame remains the major protagonist, while Fuka-Eri and the Dowager play important supporting roles. Without losing the mystical healing elements that have marked Murakami's female characters, the female characters have managed to come to the fore in terms of agency over the past 30 years.

Following Murakami's work chronologically and through a postmodern lens, there is an obvious evolution from the female as Other or as secondary character into a stronger, more prominent character that can advance and control plot and outcome. In his more recent works, the chance of his protagonist garnering a greater sense of self is becoming possible. Hand in hand with this metamorphosis is the increase in depth of his female characters, which has really manifested itself with the character of Aomame. With Aomame, Murakami has removed the postmodern female in literature from the realm of the subaltern, and brought her to the fore as an important character with her own subjectivity and agency through which his other characters can find a sense of self. It also shows how the male representation of the female has changed and evolved to allow for a more genuine enunciation of this plural postmodern female.

The female still retains a mystical sense of self, an unexplainable element that ties them to the surreal or spiritual world, and acts as a healing element, but the female character no longer lurks in the unconscious, but exists, and acts within the real. Elements of Ehrenreich and English's misrepresented female healer merge with a plural postmodern female that has more in keeping with Lotz's Intermezzo feminist period. She is the embodiment of the postmodern world that McHale imagines in postmodern literature, plural and complex, and at one with her Lacanian *je* and *moi*. This change in the representation of the female in the postmodern novel is important in the evolution of a female voice within society. If the female voice is now heard, and no longer subalternated, and this change is represented within literature of this society, then the female can be said to have escaped the postmodern subalternity, through her action in the novels of Haruki Murakami.

## Chapter 5

### Franz Kafka on Murakami's Shore

Over seven decades, and 5,600 miles, separate them, but the similarities between Haruki Murakami and Franz Kafka's translated texts are undeniable. The postmodern current that runs through their writing links their styles, themes and characteristics, despite the geographical and chronological differences. This connection highlights a postmodern mood that has been underlying literature and culture, prior to beginning of the postmodern era proper, which established itself in the 1960's. As Lyotard has said, postmodernism was not just something that followed modernism, but was something that has been there all along. Furthermore, as stated in Chapter 1, Lyotard posits that a work can become modern only if it is first postmodern, for postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in its nascent state, that is, at the moment it attempts to present the unrepresentable, and this state is constant (Lyotard 1984, p.79).

So, while many critics have situated Franz Kafka within the realm of high modernism, his postmodern characteristics cannot be denied. Like many writers prior to

the 1960's, including Flann O'Brien and Samuel Beckett, Kafka exists in a limbo, between both modernism and postmodernism, or to put it another way, in a Lyotardian coexisting paradigm. Taking account of Lyotard's standpoint that postmodernism is an enduring concept, Kafka's writing can be seen to demonstrate that postmodernism thinking was also evident back in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and specifically during the height of modernism. Looking at his texts through a postmodernism lens, and in comparison with the work of Murakami, offers us a new perspective from which to appreciate his work.

If we take postmodernism in the sense used by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*, and separate it from Brian McHale's putative timeline of 1967 and 2001, this allows for a postmodern reading of many texts outside of those dates, dates which could be seen to demarcate the period of high postmodernism. The postmodern mood that is so associated with the postmodern era, I am suggesting, is something that can be encountered in many works of literature and art, and in particular the writings of Franz Kafka. It no longer is limited to Western, English speaking locations, or bound to the agreed era of postmodern saturation as discussed in Chapter 1. Franz Kafka fits with Lyotard's contention that he can be 'understood according to the paradox of the future'. Some of this quotation has already been cited in the introduction, but it is worth looking at



it in full

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an event; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (*mise en oeuvre*) always begin too soon. Postmodern would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (*modo*). (Lyotard 1984, p.81)

In this sense Kafka can be seen as just such a postmodern philosopher, who is making new rules which will shape the future of writing but which, paradoxically, can only be understood after the works have been written. Thus now, in the temporal period of postmodernism, and after the temporal period of modernism, that this aspect of Kafka's work can be fully comprehended.

While Haruki Murakami slots into the time frame for high postmodernism, the mood he emulates is a postmodern one, and one that is echoed in the writings of Franz Kafka. In fact many critics of Murakami's work have made comparisons between the two writers, and in 2006, Murakami was awarded the Franz Kafka Prize in Prague. Despite the differences in location, language and the time span, this shared postmodern tone unites their style of writing.

Murakami, like Kafka, wished to distance himself from his father, a teacher of Japanese Literature, and moved towards Western culture, admiring such writers such as Kafka and Chandler. In Murakami's interview with *The Paris Review*, he tells Philip Wray that he started to read Kafka at the age of fifteen (Wray 2009, p.328). While the similarities to Chandler have been teased out, his shared qualities with Kafka have not been as widely examined. They strengthen the notion of this existent postmodern mood prior to 1967. As Harvey points out in his description of the move from modernism to postmodernism, the characters are confused as to what reality they exist in, as their world collides with other realities. The 'singular reality' that defined modernism is not prevalent in the postmodern:

A shift from the kind of perspectivism that allowed the modernist to get a better bearing on the meaning of a complex but nevertheless singular reality, to the foregrounding of questions as to how radically different realities may coexist, collide, and interpenetrate. The boundary between fiction and science fiction has, as a consequence, effectively dissolved, while postmodernist characters often seem confused as to which world they are in, and how they should act with respect to it. (Harvey 1992, p.41)

For both Murakami and Kafka, these colliding worlds and realities are featured heavily in their writings. From Boku's crawling through the underground of Tokyo in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*, to K.'s journey into a cramped, crowded courthouse in a tenement building belonging to a legal system which he never knew

existed, the fluid boundaries between alternative realities leave the protagonists 'confused as to which world they are in'. While Boku/Watashi is in the process of bifurcation, K. is, as Rolf J. Goebel points out, 'finding himself expelled into some quasi-foreign territory' (Goebel 2002, p.42). The fragmentation and instability of the postmodern mood has taken its toll on the protagonists of both Murakami and Kafka, who maintain a disengaged and ambiguous distrust of the systems that surround them:

Fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or 'totalizing' discourses (to use the favoured phrase) are the hallmark of postmodernist thought. (Harvey 1992, p.9)

In Chapter 1, Murakami's postmodern style and credentials were scrutinized. Those properties will be compared and contrasted with Kafka's own writing, highlighting the similarities in writing and mood. Shared characteristics will be examined through a comparison of Kafka's *The Trial* and several of Murakami's novels, looking at areas such as the lack of a definite ending, alternative realities, the unnamed anti-hero protagonist, and distrust in authority, isolated existences and the role of woman.

Deleuze and Guattari propose the concept of 'minor literature' when reading Kafka to 'open up new avenues of research', and 'give the modern reader a means by which to enter into Kafka's work without being weighted down by the old categories of genres,

types, modes, and style':

The concept of minor literature permits a reversal: instead of Kafka's work being related to some pre-existent category or literary genre, it will henceforth serve as a rallying point or model for certain texts and 'bi-lingual' writing practices that, until now, had to pass through a long purgatory before even being read, much less recognised (Bensmaïa 1997, p.xiv)

This hypothesis of the bilingual writer, or in the case of a comparison with Murakami, a translated writer, offers the perfect location within which to situate both Kafka and Murakami. The concept of 'minor literature' again brings to mind the postmodern breakdown of meta-narratives, the deconstruction of traditional and agreed modes of thinking, and indeed, the notion of reading literature. Therefore, removing what Bensmaïa describes as the 'old categories' of reading, understanding and analysis, creates an interpretive space for understanding both the uncategorizable Murakami and Kafka.

Deleuze and Guattari's sense of minor literature as opening up new ways of reading Kafka can be seen as a way of validating a postmodern reading of his work, in comparison with that of Murakami. It is a way of comparing both writers in terms of how they break down Western or Eastern literary borders. If 'Kafka is the initiator of a new literary continent, where reading and writing open up new perspectives, break ground for new avenues of thought, and above all, wipe out the tracks of an old topography of mind and

thought', as has been suggested by Bensmaia in her introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's thesis, then Murakami's style of writing has allowed this literary continent to be further explored over 80 years later, on the other side of the world. If so, then this new continent is neither oriental nor occidental, but a new postmodern space that is not just attributed to a district and rigid timeframe (Bensmaia 1997, p.xiv).

If we see the translated text as a minor language, this would be congruent with Deleuze and Guattari's definition of a language that 'a minority constructs within a major language' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, p.16). The translated text is constructed through the translation of an original text, into a major language, that of English in the case of Murakami and Kafka. As a result of this translation, the text, or as Deleuze and Guattari call it, the minor language, 'is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialisation', so that it is no longer a Japanese text, an Asian text, a German text, a Czech text, but can now be seen as an example of minor literature in the English language (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, p.16).

The political concerns connected with a minor literature are obvious in both Kafka and Murakami, through their subtle criticism of the system, history and present apathy, while the third characteristic, that of 'a collective value', is realised through their

postmodern commentary:

[W]hat each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement [...] literature finds itself positively charged with the role and the function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation. It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of scepticism; and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allow the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility. (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, p.17)

This 'solidarity' in the collective is one that Murakami and Kafka have as a result of their minor literature, their translated texts, their message, and underlying postmodern critique.

As a result of their writings, they have entered a collective that makes them inextricably linked as translated postmodern texts, despite the chronological or geographical differences.

## **5.1 The lack of an ending**

While much of Kafka's work can be seen as unfinished, as many of his manuscripts were published posthumously, Murakami's endings have always seemed ambiguous. Both Murakami and Kafka share this sense of an irresolute conclusion to their writings. Although endings are in place, all the elements of the story have not been resolved, and the reader

is left to determine what really happened, and to piece together all the segments into a coherent conclusion.

In his discussion of Heidegger and modernism, Harvey discusses how the belief in linear progress and absolute truths was 'particularly strong' in this 'positivistic' period, in which Kafka was writing (Harvey 1992, p.36). Thus, Kafka's writing addresses many of the characteristics of the modernist period, the 'alienation, antagonistic to all sense of hierarchy (even of the subject, as cubism showed), and is frequently critical of "bourgeois" consumerism and life-styles' as is Murakami. However, the two writers differ through their postmodern opposition to the 'singular underlying reality' of modernism (Harvey 1992, pp.29-30). The lack of linear conclusion to the writings of both Kafka and Murakami shows a definite link to the disjunctive and open postmodern traits, as foregrounded by Hassan (Hassan 1985, pp.123-124). The remaining feeling from this 'discontinuity' is Harvey's sense of the chaotic, as after all of the action which the protagonists undergo, they still end up nowhere, and no closer to any solution, but 'wallowing' in 'the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is' (Harvey 1992, p.44).

For example, at the end of *The Trial* when K. is murdered, we do not know why. We are still unaware of his crime, and of his innocence or guilt; it is unclear if the case actually

went to trial, there is no conclusive proof that he dismissed the advocate and so on. The ending does not lead the reader to a linear conclusion, or a singular reality, as a modernist text would, but plays with the perception of reality, leaving the reader confused in chaos. K. is left wondering if this is really the end, unsure of what he sees and of what is happening as he focuses on an open window before he is killed:

Who as it? A friend? A good man? One who sympathised? One who wanted to help? Was it one person? Was it everybody? Was there still help? Were there objections which had been forgotten? There certainly were. Logic is of course unshakeable, but it cannot hold out against a man who wants to live. Where was the Judge he had never seen? Where was the high court he had never reached? (Kafka 2000, p.178)

Like the reader K. is left without an answer or a linear conclusion. He can, like the reader only assume he has been found guilty, and that this is the legal punishment for his unknown crime, but we, like K., can never be sure.

For readers of Murakami, corresponding questions emerge. At the end of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, we do not know who is left running Japan or where the girl with the ears went. An ending is so impossible in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World* that Boku can only exist in a comatose state, living in a pointless, emotionless subconscious town. For Toru, in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, there is no conclusion to his



marriage or self-identity issues, and in fact Murakami said he set out to write 'a mystery without a solution' with this novel (Strecher 2006, p.73). While the fate of Aomame and Tengo, in *1Q84*, is the closest to a definite ending Murakami has given us, they are still uncertain if the reality they have entered is in fact the real world.

The lack of ending is tied to this clash of realities that exist in both Murakami's and Kafka's worlds. There is a sense that the layering of realities that is created leaves the protagonists very confused and even unsure of their place in the world, or the hyper world, as the boundaries between the real and the unreal disappear. The world that is created is fluid, and full of simulations, representations of the law, of other worlds, of dead people, of the past, or to use Baudrillard's term, simulacra:

In this new postmodern world, images and signs proliferate to the point where previous distinctions between illusion and reality, signifier and signified, subject and object, collapse, and there is no longer any social or real world of which to speak, only a semiotically self-referring 'hyperreality' (Baudrillard 1995, p.41-42)

This hyperreality is present in both the texts of Murakami and Kafka, and due to this proliferation of worlds and realities, the protagonists are unable to come to a decisive ending, a definite decision or a complete understanding of their situation. Josef K. will never know his crime, all he does know is that he is innocent, yet this does not prevent his

death. The conscious death of Watashi in *Hard-boiled Wonderland*, and the decision by Boku, in *The End of the World*, to forgo any emotional or passionate existence, echoes this sense that there are no clear answers. In any reality there is no 'happy ending' and no linear conclusion to what has occurred, because of the submersion of the characters into the postmodern plethora of realities. In *1Q84* Aomame and Tengo are constantly contemplating what this situation means for them:

She sometimes felt she was on the verge of losing track of her location. Is this actually the real world? She asked herself. If it's not, then where should I look for reality? She had no idea where else to look, and so she had no choice for now but to recognise this as the one and only reality and to use all her strength to ride it out. (Murakami 2011, p.376)

The appearance of a second moon in the sky offers the characters a clue that their reality has changed. But the silent appearance of this second moon gives them no signal as to when their reality changed, as everything else seems to have remained the same. They must accept this change, this reality, as Ushikawa comes to realise:

If something really existed, you had to accept it as a reality, whether or not it made sense of was logical. This was his basic way of thinking. Principles and logic didn't give birth to reality. Reality came first, and the principles and logic followed. So he decided, he would have to begin by accepting this reality: that there were two moons in the sky. (Murakami 2011a, p.279)

The acceptance of the alternative reality is a difficulty that the protagonists have to

overcome. They must go against their own logic, and principles, and acknowledge that a new reality can occur. Despite a warning at the start of *1Q84* that only reality can exist, Aomame must trust her own sense of simultaneity. The taxi driver tells Aomame not to 'let appearances fool you. There's always only one reality' (Murakami 2011, p.18). The existence of alternative realities is unsettling for Aomame and Tengo. She is unable to distinguish the boundaries between reality and representation:

It feels like I'm experiencing someone else's dream. Like we're simultaneously sharing feelings. But I can't really grasp what I means to be simultaneous. Our feelings seem extremely close, but in reality there's a considerable gap between us. (Murakami 2011a, p.204)

The answer to what reality they currently occupy is inaccessible to them. Tengo seems to understand that the boundaries between realities are fluid, and that he could end up within in his own subconscious, forced to live in the 'Town of Cats'. As he boards the train he wonders: 'was this reality actually real? Or had he once again boarded the wrong reality?' (Murakami 2011a, p.147). The unstable nature of their location adds a sense of indeterminacy to everything. Nothing is reliable, including endings, locations, relationships, and identity.

Re-representations of realities and of people inhabit each of the writer's worlds.

Josef K. had to deal with the plethora of false and altered judicial portraits, all of which were modified images of the truth. The legal system is so corrupt that the artist tells K. that he would be better arguing his case with a painting of a Judge rather than with the real thing, so pervasive are these simulacra (Kafka 2000, p.117). As McHale maintains 'there is no denying that "unreal reality" is a recurrent theme and object of representation in postmodernist fiction' (McHale 1987, p.170), and K.'s unreal reality is such that it becomes subject to 'recursive replications' in such a postmodern fashion:

Insofar as identity is increasingly dependent upon images, this means that the serial and recursive replications of identities (individual, corporate, institutional, and political) becomes a very real possibility and problem. We can certainly see it at work in the realm of politics as the image makers and the media assume a more powerful role in the shaping of political identities. (Harvey 1992, p.289)

K. is surrounded by these simulacra, by replications of images of power, of justice, as imagined by Harvey, making K.'s situation very much a postmodern one.

For Watashi/Boku, his subconscious, *The End of The World*, is a modified representation, a representation of his reality; his Boku is a depiction of himself, and it poses the question as to which representation is the real one, the original one? He only survives in *The End of The World* section of the novel, so the original reality ends, like the strange death sequence in *The Trial*.

He raised his hands and spread his fingers wide.

But the hands of one gentleman were at K.'s throat while the other drove the knife into his heart and turned it there twice. With his failing sight K. could still see the gentlemen right in front of his face, cheek pressed against cheek, as they observed the decisive moment. 'Like a dog!' he said. It was as if the shame would outlive him. (Kafka 2000, p.178)

The entire sequence of the final pages of *The Trial* is extremely surreal as identities shift and become unstable. Why these men have come to arrest him is unclear, and under what authority they operate is also unknown. Even within the quotation, the decision to call the pseudo guards 'gentlemen' sits uncomfortably against their actions, while the source of the final utterance 'Like a dog!' is unclear. Is this K. describing his killing, or one of the men referring to the dying K.? They themselves are unsure how to carry out the task and spend time exchanging questions as to who should complete the 'assignment' (Kafka 2000, p.177). No one is sure what is going on, not least the reader.

In both cases, Josef K. and *Watashi/Boku* cannot survive in this new world, within a plethora of images, a plurality of existences. They were apathetically unaware of the existence of this multilayering, but outside circumstances forced them to enter into and acknowledge the hyperreality. The protagonists find themselves in a maze, or labyrinth, of realities with no exit or ending. Kenneth J. Gergen describes this multi-layered reality of postmodernity in terms of MTV music videos, with constantly changing shapes and

identities, and the breakdown of a coherent and linear world, creating a dilemma of identity:

With the demise of a rational coherence, a long standing demarcation of self-identity also recedes from view. For it is the sense of continuity – that I know I am I by virtue of my sense of continuous sameness – that for centuries has served as the chief criterion by which a self is to be identified. (Gergen 1991, p.133)

For the postmodern protagonist, there is no continuity; rational coherence does not exist:

a sheep runs Japan, the defendant is not allowed to know their crime, the system for which one works has implanted an alternative reality inside the subconscious, one's father is stealing the souls of cats to build a flute to rule the world, one wakes up and discover one is a cockroach. Rational, linear, and logical conclusions are impossible to these postmodern literature dilemmas.

While these realities exist in what could be Prague, Tokyo or the subconscious, they all share a postmodern non-linear space that allows this occurrence of multiple worlds. This represents a portrayal of the isolation of postmodern society, a world where otherness has been commodified, thereby allowing all alternates to exist concurrently:

The superimposition of different worlds in many a postmodern novel, worlds between which an uncommunicative 'otherness' prevails in a space of coexistence, bears an uncanny relationship to the increasing ghettoization, disempowerment, and isolation of poverty and minority populations in the inner cities of both Britain and the United

States. It is not hard to read a postmodern novel as a metaphorical transect across the fragmenting social landscape, the sub-cultures and local modes of communication, in London, Chicago, New York, or Los Angeles. (Harvey 1992 p. 113-114)

Preece describes K. as a 'stranger in his own city', ghettoised by his own detachment from reality (Preece 2002, p.3). This sense of being an outsider, or of being unfamiliar with one's own city, is something that also happens to Watashi in *Hard-boiled Wonderland*, when he enters the underground layer of the Professor. Dis-empowered, as Harvey would say, by his lack of knowledge, Watashi is literally in the dark, crawling on his hands and knees across this 'fragmenting social landscape'. As he makes his way in the dark in the INKlings layer under Tokyo, he cannot be sure that his body is even real. Even in his subconscious, he becomes a real stranger, a visitor to a town, which has been created by his subconscious and by the editing of the Professor. Boku/Watashi is so unacquainted with himself he is an outside even in his subconscious.

The postmodern non-linear, multi-layered reality has created these isolated existences, and that generates a lack of familiarisation with the location in which the characters live. They are completely detached, emotionally, and geographically, so when Preece suggests that Kafka was 'first and foremost an internationalist', this bi or multi-location that the characters experience means they could be in any city, in any continent of

relative economic status (Preece 2002, p.1). This lack of association with a fixed or defined location helps to promote this postmodern narrative:

His images of anxiety and cultural dislocation, his multi-layered prose which partakes of a multitude of discourses simultaneously, and his ignorance of ultimate answers still speak to us directly (Preece 2002, pp.1-2)

As Josef K. says himself in *The Trial*: 'one can't say anything definite' (Kafka 2000, p.125).

The emergence of postmodern society has created this simultaneous existence, meaning that the characters can exist in the west or the east, in a world of inklings, unicorns and in a dangerous overreaching power system that controls everything. While Harvey limits it to the west, the inclusion of this confusing simultaneity in both Murakami and Kafka, shows a link across the occidental/oriental divide. This lack of stable location, leads to an absence of a definite ending, and also adds to this sense of 'cultural dislocation' which manages to unite these geographical and chronological differing texts.

## 5.2 The anti-hero protagonists

The similarities between 'pseudo-named' Kafka protagonists and the Boku of Murakami's novels are quite obvious, as they play the part of the postmodern anti-hero of their respective worlds. Detached from any real relationships (familial, social or work), they are



isolated individuals who forge a comfortable, unconsciously numb existence until they are forced to deal with a situation that forces them to engage with their context. So, unexpected events like a court case, the sudden metamorphosis into a cockroach, or the contractual task to find the sheep that controls Japan, awaken them to their hyperreality.

Preece, referring to Kafka's protagonists, calls them 'metaphorical itinerants who have ventured out from home into a threatening and puzzling environment' (Preece 2002, p.3). Again, this is also something that is true for Murakami's postmodern anti-heroes. They wonder around the country, consciously and subconsciously, after they were forced to leave the comfort of their aphetic existence. Similarly, Josef K. lived a perfectly acceptable, detached life before the intrusion of the warders and the court, and is now obliged by law, and the people he meets, to engage with the 'threatening and puzzling' legal proceedings. Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase* was a numb divorced male, content to continue 'tossing out fluff' until the boss called for him (Murakami 2003, p.49).

Interestingly, both Kafka and Murakami choose to either leave their protagonists unnamed or nicknamed. Although in his later works, Murakami has begun to name his characters, his earlier novels were populated with unnamed narrators, surrounded by partially-named characters. This 'un-naming' has often led to critics suggesting that the

protagonists were semi-autobiographical, particularly in the case of Kafka. The unnamed 'I' becomes an everyman, a fluid identity that is both no one and everyone, and corresponds with the fluctuating realities of their postmodern worlds.

This 'un-naming' also highlights a lack of self-knowledge by the protagonists, and a core theme of each writer is that, if they fail to know themselves, how can they recognise and understand the world and the people that surround them? K. is completely at odds with the legal system which had him arrested, while Gregor Samsa in *Metamorphosis* is in such conflict with his own self-identity that his body evolves into a large cockroach. As a true Murakami/Kafka protagonist, Gregor Samsa does not want to face his new reality and thinks he should go back to sleep in order to 'forget about all this nonsense' (Kafka 2007, p.87).

Detached from their contexts, the protagonists do not want to deal with consequences, or think about their actions. In relation to Murakami, Fuminobu has said that his characters are 'distancing themselves from all extreme rationalisation, emotionality, tantalisation and individualisation, favouring instead indifference and detachment' (Fuminobu 2005, p.8). And in *The Trial*, we are told that Josef K. 'had always been included to take everything as easily as possible, to believe the worst only when the

worst happened, not to worry about the future even when everything seemed threatening' (Kafka 2000, p.3). Both Kafka and Murakami create these postmodern anti-heroes that emulate the same sense of apathetic nonchalant attitude to life, their characters are detached, and completely unaware of the hyperreality in which they live until an event forces them to become involved.

So unaware are the protagonists of their self-hood, that even their physicality can become a mystery to them. In the dark, crawling through a surreal hidden Tokyo to the Professor's layer, the darkness confuses Watashi to such an extent he becomes detached from his corporeality:

The further we travelled in the darkness, the more I began to feel estranged from my body. I couldn't see it, and after a while, you start to think the body is nothing but a hypothetical construct. Sure, I could feel my wound and the ground beneath the soles of my feet. But these were just kinesthesia and touch, primitive notions stemming from the premise of a body. These sensations could continue even after the body is gone Like an amputee getting itchy toes. (Murakami 2003a p.211)

Without the visual presence of the body, Watashi is lost as to the nature of his own identity; he becomes a stranger to his own physicality. When the image of self is unavailable, the ability to define or know himself becomes even more difficult. The darkness creates a location without a simulacrum, that is so unfamiliar to the postmodern

individual that he or she becomes, not only dislocated from the self, but also from the body.

The characters in both Murakami and Kafka are dealing with an inability to engage, and have isolated themselves as a result of this underlying postmodern *ennui* that subconsciously plagues them. Anthony Elliott describes this manner of dealing with this postmodern identity crisis as a self-enforced narcissistic apathy:

One of the ways in which the self can try to evade such anxiety is to avoid the difficulties of interpersonal relationships altogether, retracting to the comforting realm of narcissism in order to protect the self against fears of abandonment. (Elliott 2007, p.158)

This multi-layered hyperreality that refused to provide a stable footing for the characters has led to this subdued identity crisis, where the individual isolates themselves, and gradually becomes less engaged socially and emotionally, but becomes more and more narcissistic. As a result 'the postmodern self, created upon fleeting narcissistic images, is a transient identity with precious little in the way of deeper affective ties or emotional roots' (Elliott 2007, p.146). Thus, the postmodern, instead of focusing on the system, or the grand narrative, instead focuses on the relationship between the individual and this system, a relationship in which the individual feels dis-empowered and at sea.

Josef K. expresses his apathy through his disengagement with the legal process, and through his lack of knowledge about his own workplace. He is so engrossed with himself that it is not until his uncle pressurises him that he engages the services of a lawyer, or an 'advocate'. His modernist uncle tells him 'your indifference is driving me out of my mind', yet it does not seem to bother Josef K. (Kafka 2000, p.76). K. wishes to ignore the case, but due to the intrusion of all these people, he realises that he cannot (Kafka 2000, p.99). Goebel in his essay 'The Exploration of the modern city in *The Trial*', says quite correctly that 'K. prefers to be the detached, coolly analytic and at times, ironic spectator' (Goebel 2002, p.46). Like Murakami's laodicean protagonists, K. becomes a nonchalant, slightly apathetic commentator on his own situation, and an unwilling participant. Half way through his visit to the court offices in the attic, he wants to leave, already wearied by his experience:

Finally K. said, just to bring an end to his discomfort: 'I've now see what it looks like here, I'll go now.' 'You haven't seen everything yet,' said the usher with the utmost innocence. 'I don't want to see everything,' said K., who in any case felt really tired, 'I'd like to go, how do we get to the way out?' (Kafka 2000, p.52)

K. becomes bored by his case, unwilling to follow any enquiries through to a conclusion.

He find the attic repressive, and instead of completing the reason for his visit he departs

early, tired by the incident, and decides 'to make better use of all Sunday mornings in future' (Kafka 2000, p.58). To K., the case is not important enough to warrant his time or effort despite the ramifications of the proceedings.

Critical responses to Murakami's protagonists are similar to that of Goebel. Celeste Loughman has said that Murakami's protagonists are 'bored and dissatisfied, some quit their jobs; others escape into dream and fantasy; all are emotionally and psychologically detached from their work group', something that is also true of Kafka's characters (Loughman 1997, p.87). Josef K. is totally disassociated from the people with whom he works, and is sceptical of their motives, and their actions. Despite his high-level position within the bank, he remains concerned about his co-workers, distrusting their behaviour, particularly those in more senior posts. He is, as Loughman suggests of Murakami's characters, 'dissatisfied' and 'detached' from his work group. Rubin calls the characters a surrogate for 'all who feel rootless in the world' (Rubin 2005, p.271), while lawmoto, in discussing *A Wild Sheep Chase*, argues that 'Boku may well be viewed as an exemplar of the diffusion of the ego, the dispersal of the self, the death of the subject, that are an integral part of postmodern discourse' (lawmoto 1993, p.297).

This 'postmodern discourse' of which lawmoto speaks is also applicable to Kafka's

characters, with their dispersed selfhoods, absence of proper names, and lack of emotional investment. The postmodern death of the subject has robbed them of the subjectivity, the true individualism that would allow them to find a stable identity. And while 'Murakami's implicit question is, always, how can the first-person protagonist forge connections with an Other (conscious or unconscious), and thereby identify himself, prove to himself that he even exists?', this also seems to be a concern for Kafka (Strecher 1999, p.267). How does the postmodern apathetic individual find their place in a multi-layered social reality?

Throughout *The Trial*, Josef K. is positive that he is innocent, and, although he does not know what the charge is, he maintains his innocence. Despite all the information and assistance offered to him, he is still left confused. He never seems to make any progress in solving the case or finding out anything about it, other than it is pointless. When he asks '[a]m I to depart as an utterly stupid man?', the question resonates with that of Watashi in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*, who, on hearing of his unavailable fate (Kafka 2000, p.179), asks:

Did my existence offer anything against its own extinction? [...] Even if no one would miss me, even if I left no blank space in anyone's life, even if no one noticed, I couldn't leave willingly. Loss was not a skill, not a measure of a life. And yet I still felt I had

something to lose. (Murakami 2005b, p.391)

Both he and Josef K. have 'something to lose', something indefinable, their selfhood. For Boku in the subconscious, he decides to become a townspeople, what his shadow describes as 'half persons' as a complete identity is impossible.

As Kafka, in *Kafka on The Shore*, says '[i]t's as if I'm here, but in a way it's not me' (Murakami 2005, p.92). It is entirely fitting that Kafka Tamura chooses his first name as a cover, while he searches for his identity and fulfils his oedipal prophecy. The character is an avid reader of Franz Kafka, and identifies with his themes and stories, and so choosing the name of 'Kafka' for his own, transfers some of the characteristics of Kafka's protagonist to that of Murakami's. In a way, as Kafka Tamura says, he is not himself, but a reimagining of Josef K., playing the part of a character in a Kafka novel. He has to reassure everyone that his name is Kafka, because, like the Kafka protagonists, his real name is not revealed. In this conversation with Oshima at the library the true influence of Franz Kafka is uncovered:

'Kafka Tamura?'

'That's my name.'

'Kind of strange.'

'Well, that's my name,' I insist.

'I assume you've read some of Kafka's stories?'



I nod. 'The Castle, and The Trial, 'The Metamorphosis,' plus that weird story about an execution device.'

'In the Penal Colony,' Oshima says. 'I love that story. Only Kafka could have written that.'

'That's my favourite of his short stories.'

'No kidding?'

I nod.

'Why's that?'

It takes me a while to gather my thoughts. 'I think what Kafka does is give a purely mechanical explanation of that complex machine in the story, as sort of a substitute for explaining the situation we're in. What I mean is [...]' I have to give it some more thought. 'What I mean is, that's his own device for explaining the kind of lives we lead. Not by talking about our situation, but by talking about the details of the machine.'

'That makes sense,' Oshima says and lays a hand on my shoulder, the gesture natural, and friendly. 'I imagine Franz Kafka would agree with you.'

[...]

Oshima most likely found my explanation of the Kafka story convincing. To some extent at least. But what I really wanted to say didn't get across. I wasn't just giving some general theory of Kafka's fiction, I was talking about something very real. Kafka's complex, mysterious execution device wasn't some metaphor or allegory--it's actually here, all around me. But I don't think anybody would get that. Not Oshima. Not anybody. (Murakami's 2005, pp.60-61)

This exchange shows how the self-titled Kafka is experiencing a Kafka-esque reality that is all around him, inescapable perhaps, like Josef K.'s death, or Watashi's coma. The issues with which Kafka's protagonists are dealing, are shared by Kafka Tamura, and by all of Murakami's protagonists. This postmodern *ennui* and lack of self-knowledge binds the protagonists across the decades, showing the existence of this postmodern mood long before the 1960's. The world that is described by Kafka is the world in which Kafka

Tamura finds himself, a world of plural realities, of untrustworthy control, of false representations, of an isolated protagonist, a postmodern hyperreality, that is just as relevant in Japan in the 1990's as it was in Prague in the 1910's. The location and the era are irrelevant to the shared postmodern mood.

The shared, self-imposed isolation of the protagonists is further bound by the fact neither Kafka's nor Murakami's protagonists have any strong familial ties. For Josef K., in *The Trial*, the input of his uncle is an annoyance and a bore rather than a helpful influence. K. does not call to his family for help, and it is only his uncle that visits him to discuss the case. K. has also managed to withdraw from his cousin Erna, and no other family members are mentioned. Uncle Karl visits K. in a panic over the proceedings, after Karl receives a letter from Cousin Erna regarding K.'s situation: "I've heard about the proceedings against you." "From whom then?" K. asked. "Erna told me in a letter," said the uncle. "She hardly sees you. You don't have much to do with her, I'm sorry to hear" (Kafka 2000, p.73). K. has 'completely forgotten' about Erna, forgetting her birthday, and admits to himself that going to visit her and converse with a 17 year old it is not something of interest to him (Kafka 2000, p.74). Familial bonds are also noticeably absent from Murakami's work; Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase* only mentions a failed marriage, but when

these blood ties are brought up, it is usually in negative terms. One thinks of the plight of Kafka Tamura, as he runs away from his evil father; of Kumiko's evil brother Noboru in *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*; of the frayed familial relationships in *1Q84*, and the system chooses Watashi because of his 'independent' nature:

We selected twenty-six healthy males with no history of mental disorders, who exhibited strong psychological independence, and who could control their own behaviour and emotions. (Murakami 2003a, pp.260-261)

This could easily be the simple description for either of the characters in Murakami's or Kafka's worlds; it could be a belief that they can control their own behaviour, a tendency to avoid emotion, and an independent lifestyle.

### 5.3 Approaches to work

Another strong thread between the two writers is their protagonists' shared distrust in authority, and their postmodern attitude to work. While the protagonists have been dealing with a plethora of layered realities populating their worlds, this has made it difficult to form a concrete sense of selfhood, and in turn, has affected their day-to-day lives in a number of ways. Firstly, Murakami and Kafka's protagonists exhibit a laodicean approach to their work, allied to a disconnection with an unseen authority and secondly, they have difficulty

forging and maintaining plausible relationships with the opposite sex.

This attitude to work, combined with the distrust of the unknown authority, marks a departure from the modernist and enlightenment project. While a critique of social norms and systems was present in modernist literature, the distrust and the paranoia demonstrated in Murakami and Kafka is a break with the project of modernity. In the modern period, the idea was, as Harvey has said, to use the accumulation of knowledge generated by many individuals working freely and creatively for the pursuit of human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life (Harvey 1992, p.12). It is entirely possible that the ideas of the modernist period, such as work being good, and working hard, were not something to which everyone aspired, and the opposite, the fragmented meta-narrative, became much more relevant. As a result, the social bonds deteriorate, and the individual no longer strives for success, and betterment of the community or self, but instead, achieves an isolated, detached existence, as hypothesised by Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*:

This breaking up of the grand Narratives [...] leads to what some authors analyse in terms of the dissolution of the social bond and the disintegration of social aggregates into a mass of individual atoms thrown into the absurdity of Brownian motion. (Lyotard 1984, p.15)

For the working individual, this creates a disillusioned employee, who is working for an unknown authority, which the postmodern individual distrusts, and from which he or she disengages. Neither Murakami's nor Kafka's protagonists display any interest in knowledge about the authority for which they work, or which calls on them and forces them to begin a journey. They do not exude a sense of emancipation as a result of any of the information they gather, but rather, become further convinced that searching for truth and reality, and for this 'enrichment of daily life', may all be in vain. While many critics maintain that this paranoia stems from the events of the twentieth century, Kafka, who is writing towards the start of the century in Europe, and Murakami who is writing in Japan at the end of the same century, would have a very different experience from which to draw.

Harvey claims that the postmodern thinkers always knew that modernity was doomed:

The twentieth century - with its death camps and death squads, its militarism and two world wars, its threat of nuclear annihilation and its experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki - has certainly shattered this optimism. Worse still, the suspicion lurks that the Enlightenment project was doomed to turn against itself and transform the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression in the name of human liberation. (Harvey 1992, p.13)

It is this doom, or knowledge of this downfall, which is then subconsciously concealed, that influences Murakami's and Kafka's protagonists, causing their distrust of authority, and

their apathetic attitude to work. Their postmodern scepticism leads them to question the systems that surround them, as a result of the journey that they undertake in the novels.

The system that they question is inescapable, it is ever-present, and it is everywhere. For Josef K., in *The Trial*, he comes to realise that the court, which he never knew existed, is everywhere, and everyone is involved in its workings and is aware of his case. The system into which he has been enforced is completely corrupt and nonsensical. During his meeting with the artist Titorelli, the latter tells him that everything 'belongs' to the court, and that nothing should be taken at face value: 'what is written and what happens are two different things', he tells him, as nothing is definite (Kafka 2000, p.118).

Even when he secures the services of the advocate, he is informed that he will be kept in the dark, about the proceedings, the outcome, and the sentencing, as 'the proceedings were in general kept secret not only from the public but from the defendant too' (Kafka 2000, p.91). And while the advocate was always making progress, 'the nature of this progress could never be communicated' (Kafka 2000, p.97). There is nothing certain when it comes to the court, other than uncertainty. K., through his isolated postmodern existence, is totally ill-equipped to deal with the system:

Alienated, arrested by an unknown but powerful authority and fearing punishment,

suffering the intrusion of the faraway court into his private sphere and finding himself expelled into some quasi-foreign territory. (Goebel 2002, p.42)

He becomes swallowed by the system; it follows him to his home, his work and into his family. Everyone he meets is involved, and offers conflicting advice as to how he should proceed. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, there is no difference between being in the system or outside the system, everything is in the system:

In *The Trial*, it is once again a question of a determined machine like the single machine of justice; but its unity is so nebulous, an influence machine, a contamination, that there is no longer any difference between being outside or inside. (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, p.8)

While K. may feel that he is outside the system, the nature of the process is so obscure, that it is impossible to say who is, or is not, part of the whole system. As a defendant, he has become part of the process, yet its labyrinthine quality means that getting to an ending or an exit is almost impossible. In the attic offices, when he is unable to find his way out, much to the disbelief of the usher, K. demands to be shown to the exit: 'I'll make a mistake there are so many ways here' (Kafka 2000, p.52). However, it is not just the buildings that conceal their form, and concluding the case is almost impossible as the painter explains:

You mustn't let the case out of your sight, you have to go to the relevant judge at regular intervals and on special occasions too and try by every means to keep him well disposed. If you don't know this judge personally, then you have to influence exerted through judges you do know but not let this keep you from direct discussions. If you

neglect nothing in this respect you can presume fairly definitely that the case will not progress beyond its first stage. The proceedings don't come to a stop, but the defendant is almost safeguarded against a conviction as he would be if he were free. (Kafka 2000, p.126)

The best option, according to the painter, is 'prolongation' leaving the case in an interminable limbo from which K. can never escape (Kafka 2000, p.125).

The oppressive nature of the court affects Josef K. physically as well; he becomes 'seasick' while trying to manoeuvre around the attic offices of the court house (Kafka 2000, p.57). These offices are claustrophobic, and full of other defendants who cannot even remember why they are there. He cannot find his way around, but is constantly pondering whether the court is corrupt or involved in embezzlement (Kafka 2000, p.42; p.47). The description of the courtroom also adds to the surreal nature of this impenetrable, yet all-inclusive, system. K. is laughed at, and feels if the entire room is covered by a haze, reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's description of the nebulous influence machine:

In *The Trial*, it is once again a question of a determined machine like the single machine of justice; but it's unity is so nebulous, an influence machine, a contamination, that there is no longer any difference between being outside or inside" (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, p.8)

K. is blocked from seeing the real nature of the place, having never realised it existed. He comes to realise that nothing can be taken at face value, as he does not understand the



systems at work. So much of the process is a false display, and cannot be trusted. The supposed law books are in fact covered with dust, and one contains an 'indecent picture' of a naked couple sitting on the sofa 'finding the greatest difficulty in turning towards each other', while the other book is called 'The Torments Grete had to suffer from her husband Hans' (Kafka 2000, p.41), highlighting the difficulty which the character has in communicating successfully with the opposite sex. He is just as lost with women as he is in the corridors and staircases of the courthouse. Even the agents of the court are in the dark about the workings of the system; they just do their job and do not want any additional responsibility or job satisfaction. They tell K. that all they have to do is communicate the arrest, as they know nothing about the case (Kafka 2000, pp. 4-5).

However, when it comes to work, K. displays a similar lack of knowledge, despite his high-level position. He also maintains distrust towards authority, concerned about the motives of the Deputy Manager. He describes his work-place as 'the huge bureaucracy of the bank' (Kafka 2000, p.14), while the haze that appeared in the courthouse parallels the way in which he sees the deputy manager appear as 'indistinctly as if behind a veil' (Kafka 2000, p.102). K. is also made aware of how little he knows about the organisation of the bank when he discovers the bank employees getting whipped in a room which he did not

know existed (Kafka 2000, p.70). Despite his role in the bank, he remains detached from the job, and in particular from the management system. He has become apathetic towards work, and instead of tackling the issues related to his case he decides to pass 'many an hour doing the bare minimum necessary to make it appear he was working' (Kafka 2000, p.154).

Nearly 80 years later, with the publication of *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of The World*, Murakami's protagonist(s) Watashi/Boku parallels this scepticism of Josef K. In this text, as we have seen, set in a Tokyo of the future, a system that is control of the dark and the light, of both sides of the structure, also threatens the life of the protagonist, and wins. Watashi has existed in a numb isolated world where he has lived and worked by the rules until his appointment with the Professor, after which his eyes are opened up to an entire world that did he did not know existed. While K. is faced with unknown court proceedings, Watashi uncovers a whole world under Tokyo, and realises that the system, and the factory, are the same thing: there is nothing outside or nothing else, just the system, and everything is a part of it.

Watashi works for the system, which was originally a private conglomerate, but it now has quasi-governmental status. The factory was seen as the Other, as the opposite of the

system with very little known about it; it was referred to as data mafia, but Watashi comes to realise that everything has been monopolised:

It's survival of the sharpest. Survival in a big way. I mean, who's to say we can't cut the pie? Is Japan a total monopoly state or what? The System monopolizes everything under the info sun, the Factory monopolizes everything in the shadows. They don't know the meaning of competition. What ever happened to free enterprise? Is this unfair or what? (Murakami 2003a, p.137)

There is no Other: the system, and the factory, are one, and have commodified everything.

Similar to Josef K., Watashi knows nothing about the senior organisation of the system for which he works; he takes his orders, completes his tasks, but is totally disconnected from the authority that is responsible for his imminent death:

The whole time I worked for the System, I never heard anything about what went on inside System Central. We received directives; we carried them out. We terminal devices never got access to the CPU. (Murakami 2003a, pp.299-300)

The lack of knowledge of the authority he works for, and the system that controls his future, corresponds with Josef K's experience. Both Josef K. and Watashi have not realised the extent of the control of their respective administrations because of their disengagement. Until the system directly interferes with their day to day existence, both were content to continue in their apathetic bubble.

The manner in which work is portrayed in *The End of the World* section of the novel

is also comparable to the actions of those employed by the court in *The Trial*. In the opening chapter, the wardens just want to complete their task, they have no concept of the process of which they are a part, or of its purpose, and nor do they care; they just wish to conclude the business. The warder loses his temper at K. because he keeps asking questions and will not accept what they are telling him: 'Why can't you just accept your position, why do you seem determined to irate us needlessly, we who probably stand closer to you now than any other of your fellow men?' (Kafka 2000, p.4). They cannot convey to K. what his crime is, or why his being arrested, because they do not know. They explain they are but junior officials and not informed of such information (Kafka 2000, p.5). When K. questions their supervisor about the arrest, he reveals that he too knows nothing: 'These gentlemen here and I are of minor importance to your case, indeed we know almost nothing about it [...] I am absolutely unable to tell you that you stand accused, or rather I don't know if you are. You are under arrest that's true, I don't know more than that' (Kafka 2000, p.9). Their actions resemble both the McDonald's Manager in *The Second Bakery Attack*, as well as those of the workers in *The End of The World*, digging a hole for no reason, just to complete a task:

It has no special meaning, does not transport them anywhere. All of us dig at our own

pure holes. We have nothing to achieve by our activities, nowhere to get to. Is there not something marvellous about this? We hurt no one and no one gets hurt. No victory, no defeat. (Murakami 2003a, p.317)

There is no reason to work, no 'bigger picture', and no dynamic of internal growth and development which results from work: there is just a task to complete. They do not engage with the system, they just become a blinkered part of it, unwilling to perceive the authority. Again, despite the gaps in time and location, both Murakami and Kafka have a shared depiction of working life and the authorities that control this life, a perspective which is often related to the government or the law. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, a sheep has been running Japan for the past century, but the control exerted by the System and the Factory in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and The End of the World* is analogous to the nefarious court that is prosecuting Josef K.

#### 5.4 The postmodern female

One of the most interesting parallels between Kafka and Murakami has to be in terms of the role of the female in their novels. Murakami has spoken, as has been noted, about how his female characters act as mediums, as they have an ability to access the subconscious and to aid the protagonist on his journey through the multiple realities of the novels. The

girl with the ears, the Professor's granddaughter, the librarians, Miss Saeki, Oshima, the Kano sisters, and Cinnamon are all catalysts for change in the lives of the protagonists, helping them to negotiate the parallel worlds, and come to an understanding of his situation. For Kafka, the female plays a similar role, offering her assistance to the protagonist, but unlike Murakami's gradual extension of the female role, Kafka's female maintains a stagnant and peripheral presence. He dismisses Leni when she calls him before he leaves for the Cathedral (Kafka 2000, p.158), and the final image of a woman in the novel, Fraulein Burstner, is obscure and blurred, a figure unable to aid K.:

Then Fraulein Burstner appeared in front of them, coming up a short flight of steps into the square from a lower alley. It was not really certain this was she, but the resemblance was strong. But K. was not at all concerned about whether it was Fraulein Burstner or not, he merely knew at once that resistance was futile [...] he followed the course the Fraulein was taking in front of them, not because he wanted to overtake her, not because he wanted to keep her in sight as long as possible, but only because he wanted to keep in mind the reproach she signified for him. (Kafka 2000, p.175)

Analysis of the female in Murakami and Kafka offers many similarities in terms of a secondary female who, while powerful in her own right, is relegated to the role of a second class character through misrepresentation by the male narrative voice. This comparative analysis also displays how slowly the role of the female has changed within the postmodern novel. In his most recently translated work, *1Q84*, as we have seen,

Murakami has developed the female role from that of a postmodern literary subaltern to an even more complex and central character that can become a relevant and central protagonist. This development is a contemporary one, one that evolved during the course of Murakami's writing. His earlier female characters had much more in common with Frau Grubach, Erna and Elsa, echoing an earlier modernist perspective on the female. The transformation undertaken by Murakami conveys a postmodernism that is growing and evolving, and despite the end of high-postmodernism post 9/11, the postmodern mood, as outlined by Lyotard, and embodied by Kafka and Murakami, is still metamorphosing.

Kafka's females are even further subalternated, and much more peripheral than Murakami's, yet they still fulfil the medium-like, nurturing role that exists in Murakami's novels. The male characters seem to expect women to aid and assist them, and to be unable to resist their charms as they are so blinkered to the actuality of the female. Yet their inability to conduct meaningful relationships only adds to their postmodern isolation. Similarly, in *The Trial*, Josef K. has no understanding of the women he meets, and sees their efforts to help as a sexual advance. All of the women are categorised in the traditional madonna/whore binary opposition. He describes the court ushers wife as 'depraved' when she compliments his eyes (Kafka 2000, p.41), while he described Fraulein Burstner as a

'mere typist who could not resist him for long', he is also quite dismissive of the opinions of Frau Grubach and Fraulein Montag in favour of his own (Kafka 2000, p.64). The barely mentioned Elsa is as close to a relationship as he has in the book, visiting her once a week where she receives her visitors in bed (Kafka 2000, p.14). His attitude corresponds to that of Boku in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, who has no understanding of the women he meets as he is so wrapped up in his own isolated existence. Dagmar C. G. Lorscheid, in her discussion of Kafka and gender, highlights the failure of the male protagonists to develop successful relationships due to their own narcissism:

Generally the characters are caught up in their own perceptions and desires. They fail at communication and intimacy. The very existence of the other, be it the outside world or a second individual, is never quite certain. (Lorscheid 2002, p.177)

This narcissism, as a result of postmodernism is something which Anthony Elliot believes has affected the self, and the ability to forge relationships:

Lacking any personal, moral or political autonomy, narcissistic personalities are emotionally unable to form caring and open relationships; fragile and brittle, the narcissistic self instead seeks out consumer substitutes to fill a profound emotional gap. (Elliot 2011, p.78)

Josef K. is unable to forge a real relationship, and even familial bonds are frayed and fragile. The manner in which the protagonists act ends up destroying any bonds or ties:



While Rossmann, Josef K. and K. turn to women to advance their cause, the women turn out to be less powerful and less interested in the protagonist's concerns than he imagines. Almost invariably the male characters mishandles the relationship by betraying the woman's trust. (Lorsenz 2002, p.178)

The treatment of the female characters in this manner, namely the modernist categorisation of the female into the madonna or whore grouping, causes a problem in the relationship, preventing it from developing. The postmodern protagonist relies on the modernist grand narrative of madonna/whore, which within the postmodern paradigm, has lost its power and stability. The male is, therefore, depending on an unstable re-representation of a binary opposition that is no longer dependable. The fragmented remains of this binary opposition remove the familiarity which the post-modern male associates with the female, and mirrors his own search for identity, as without a stable Other, he too is fragmented.

As a result, 'existing marriages are portrayed as problematic and seem to be beyond the narrators grasp' (Lorsenz 2002, p.177), for both Boku and Josef K. Any relationship on which they embark is unsuccessful, and also refuses categorisation under modernist conventions, like husband/wife. Gillian Howie and Ashley Tauchert question 'whether or not feminism can claim to be postmodern if the actual conditions of modernity remain', and this is where the dilemma lies for the female within the early postmodern

novel (Howie & Tauchert 2007, p.54).

For Josef K., his relationship with Elsa is not really open to classification. We are told that 'once a week K. went to a girl called Elsa who worked all night until late morning in a wine tavern and during the day received her visitors only in bed' (Kafka 2000, p.14). The suggestion is that Elsa may be a prostitute, as she only receives her visitors in bed, and works late nights. Contrasted with her is Josef K.'s attitude to Frau Grubach the landlady, with whom he interacts without any sexual undertone. K. tends to see Frau Grubach as a maternal figure who will offer him advice and comfort in the wake of his proceedings. Her calm nature and openness, as well as her physical presence means that 'for him she was always available' (Kafka 2000, p.14). K. describes her massive body, and her gentle responses to his questions, she is a great listener, and plays the role of a simpler woman, who does not reveal how much she really knows about the proceedings. Clearly he is working within Freud's madonna/whore paradigm in his dealings with these women.

Despite seeking her approval and nurturing, he dismisses her for not responding exactly as he wished, commenting on the 'the worthlessness of this woman's approval' (Kafka 2000, p.16). K. feels that as a man, Frau Grubach respects him, and will listen to

his opinion, unaware that she is much more knowledgeable than he is: 'Frau Grubach practically worships me and believes without question anything I say [...] and she's under an obligation to me too: she has borrowed a lot from me' (Kafka 2000, p.22).

In the case of Fraulein Burstner, K. wants her to be both madonna and whore, emphasising her virtue to Frau Grubach, while at the same time trying to overpower her, and discount her virtue. He cannot understand why she will not kiss him, and forces himself on her, while jeopardising her reputation as a respectable women. After making a scene, out in the hall, in full view of other residents, he kisses her again, asserting his masculinity over her:

'I'm coming,' said K., who now dashed forward seized her, and kissed her on the mouth and then all over her face like a thirsty animal who scours with his tongue the surface of a spring he has found at last. Finally he kissed her on the neck, on her throat, and lingered there with his lips. (Kafka 2000, p.23)

The binary opposition of madonna/whore confuses him as it is no longer stable, Fraulien Burstner cannot be both, however, his desire is that she be a whore for him, yet be seen as a madonna by others. The language used to describe the event is also very animalistic, and controlling, as he kisses her all over her face 'like a thirsty animal'. K. attacks her madonna-like visage with a carnal ferocity, after uttering the words 'I'm coming'. Even in

translation, the suggestion here is reminiscent of the deflowering of a virgin as he 'scours' her with his tongue. The insinuation of the surfacing of a spring, coupled with the phrase 'I'm coming', adds to the ejaculation image, strengthening the implications of some kind of sexual violation. K. has, through his masculinity and also as a result of his blinkered view of the female, moved Fraulien Burstner from the madonna category into that of the whore, without her consent. After the incident in the hall he does not fully realise what damage his actions could have done:

[B]efore falling asleep he thought about his behaviour. He was satisfied with it, but surprised he was not even more satisfied. Because of the captain he was gravely concerned about Fraulien Brustner. (Kafka 2000, p.24)

He has made her a whore through his actions, and should be more pleased, but the destruction of her public madonna reputation concerns him. He is torn between Elsa his whore, Frau Grubach the madonna, and Frualien Burstner who lies somewhere in the middle. However, he decides that she will not resist him for long, and that she will soon switch from madonna to whore (Kafka 2000, p.64). At the court, he wants to rescue the woman, and is also fearful of the power of Fraulien Montag. He asserts a concern over the subconscious power of the female, as she watches his lips 'to assume control of whatever he might say' (Kafka 2000, p.63). With Leni, K. again turns to the whore narrative to define

her, commenting on her sexuality around the advocate, and in her dealings with him (Kafka 2000, p.150). However, her 'whore'-like behaviour angers him, as he wants his female to be a whore for him and a madonna for the world.

Where *The Trial* further resembles Murakami's depiction of the female is obvious in the trope of the medium or helper role of the female protagonists. Each of the women that K. meets offers him assistance and advice, but K.'s attitude means that he does not realise the power which these women hold:

Women have great power. If I could persuade some of the women I know to work together to help me, I would be bound to succeed. (Kafka 2000, p.165)

The notion of the power of the female is a shared attribute of both Kafka and Murakami.

Deleuze and Guattari believe the power of the female is something Kafka uses to aid his isolated protagonists. The female becomes a harbinger of change and action:

The women have a multiple function. The women mark the start of a series or the opening of a segment that they belong to; they also mark its end, whether K. abandons them or whether they abandon K, since he has gone elsewhere without their even knowing it. But, above all else, each has precipitated her own series, her segment in a castle or a trial, by eroticizing it; and the following segment will only begin or end, will only be precipitated, through the action of another young woman. (Deleuze and Guattari 1997, pp.67-68)

When we compare this to Murakami's description of his female characters in 2005, the

resemblance is uncanny:

[I]n a sense the function of the medium is to make something happen through herself. It's always a kind of system to be experienced. The protagonist is always led somewhere by the medium and the visions that he sees are shown to him by her [...] women are mediums – harbingers of the coming world. That's why they always come to my protagonist; he doesn't go to them. (Wray 2009, p.353)

Neither K.'s nor Murakami's earlier protagonists are able to see the power of these females that facilitate their journey until they have gone. This is because the female is diminished as a person through the male protagonist's use of a modernist binary opposition to define her, a binary which is no longer binding in postmodern hyperreality. By the time the protagonist realises that the female is a medium, it is usually too late; for example in the case of Boku, in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the girl with the ears has left, while in *The Trial*, K. has damaged most of the relationships with the female characters. The male protagonists through the use of this patriarchal trope, and their own narcissism, fail to recognise the female character's capacity to negotiate the postmodern plurality. As a result, they do not see the potential of the guidance and knowledge which the female could provide. It is not until Murakami's later novels that the male characters emerge from this apathetic narcissistic coma to see the female clearly, but in the earlier novels, similar to Franz Kafka's work, this insight is not available.

The sexualisation of the female characters, who are dismissed into the madonna/whore category, removes the importance of any other characteristics they may have, such as intellect or access to the subconscious. K. dismisses the female as a carer or as a sex object, and refuses to take into account how the offers of help may actually assist him. Murakami's characters similarly take information from their female helper, using her as a disaffiliated sexual companion who can assist them.

Chronologically, this makes for a slow evolution in terms of the role of postmodern female: she develops from a very distinct miss-categorisation of madonna or whore, to madonna-whore medium helper, to a complete complex postmodern individual, offered an equitable role in the story. It is interesting that the female develops within postmodern literature, yet the male character is subject to a somewhat more stagnant treatment. The female characters, as seen through Kafka, are very much subalternated and peripheral; it as if the female did not have access to a similar postmodern mood, experienced by the male. K. dismisses the opinions of any female companion, forgetting about them, such as his cousin Erna, and believing that they all are attracted to him, like the court usher's wife and Fraulein Burstner. When we introduce Kafka's approach to the female, and compare it to Murakami's development, we see a clear evolution of the female, but a consistency of

mood in the male identity crisis, attitude to work and layered realities.

The construction of the female, by the male protagonist under modernist grand narratives, seems to have prevented her from developing a stronger position in the novel. As the translated postmodern novel develops, however, the female becomes less and less subalternated, as the male comes to realise that the female has the power, not only to aid him, but also to navigate the multiple realities of the present. She rises from her subalternated state to one equal to that of the male, and eventually, Aomame, demonstrates the capacity of the power and strength of the postmodern female, as she carries out her avenger role with 'unwavering conviction and ruthlessness' (Murakami 2011 p.44).

In *The Trial*, K. has categorised his females according to a meta-narrative that is no longer relevant to his postmodern situation. As a result, the potential and ability of the female characters that surround him is not registered, until too late. When he goes to the Cathedral, he comes to appreciate their great power. At that point, despite all of the offers of assistance from female acquaintances, he relies on male-dominated intervention, which is completely unsuccessful.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Murakami's female has managed to grow and develop



further, as, while the power of the female is still present from Kafka's postmodern treatment, it has become stronger, as Murakami places more significance on the female as medium, in addition to her roles as helper and nurturer. The gradual change shows the slow permutation of the female, from that of the secondary sex to becoming more equal member of the community.

The evolution of the female role mirrors the changes in feminism, from first wave feminism, mainly focused on issues of suffrage and legal rights, and embodied in the dismissed independent women in Kafka's world, Fraulein Bursnter, to second wave feminism, with Murakami's early liberated, but peripheral female, as instantiated by the girl with the ears, to the third wave, which incorporates postmodernism and a much more diverse idea of feminism with the character of Aomame. Howie and Tauchert's description of the chronological order of each wave shows how they coincide with the writings of Kafka and Murakami:

It has become commonplace to refer to 'first', 'second', and, more recently, 'third' attitudes or generations as if they were waves in the feminist critical tradition, denoting historically bracketed phases of thought – from the suffragist movement of the late nineteenth century, through the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and into the newest recognisable phase of feminist thought commonly understood as poststructuralist and/or postmodernist. (Howie & Tauchert 2007, p.46)

The first wave had begun before Kafka began writing, but happened during his lifetime.

The female characters in his writing are dealing with these issues, and the attitude of Josef K. shows the patriarchal prejudices that faced these feminists. Josef K.'s subjection of the female to the madonna/whore dichotomy, and his dismissal of their power, is exactly what the first wave was trying to fight against. With Murakami's earlier novels, there is still an element of this modernist conflict, though the women take on a stronger role, as mediums with more power. The evolution to the third wave is complete as the postmodern ideas are incorporated to create a much more multi-layered female, no longer reliant on traditional meta-narratives for identity.

Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake posit that contemporary postmodernism, or what

I would call high postmodernism, has given women greater authority and viability:

[T]hird wave feminism must negotiate the profound contradiction that the collapse of central authority in postmodern global capitalism, which has given women greater authority, visibility and cultural importance. (Heywood & Drake 2007, p.120)

They position this change in the 1990's, as Murakami's female characters began to evolve and expand into more visible and important positions in the novels. The third wave depends on the postmodern multi-layered reality, and on death of the meta-narrative and fixed binary opposition in order to allow diverse females to emerge as successful feminist

role models:

As such, third wave feminism is a movement committed to local action and characterised by dispersal and diversity, as opposed to a single leader and single-issue movement, a strategy that resists co-optation and supports survival in global technoculture. Committed to cultural production as activism, and cognizant that is impossible for most Americans to wholly exit consumer culture, third wave feminists both use and resist the mainstream media and create their own media sites and networks, both of which are key components of successful activism in technoculture. (Heywood & Drake 2007, p.122)

The female who emerges from the postmodern tradition of Kafka, and then Murakami, is a female that can negotiate the multiple narratives of postmodernity, and find within it a solid footing, thereby deconstructing the traditional hierarchical, patriarchal dominating structures. The postmodern mood, evident in Kafka, and continued by Murakami, is one that has taken account of the feminist movement, represented by the evolving female characters.

Celeste Loughman described Murakami's protagonists as 'universal stock figures of contemporary literature', and despite their location and original language, Murakami's anti-heroes have become a distinctive model for the postmodern protagonist (Loughman 1997, p.88). However, it seems that Murakami is not alone in this construction of a postmodern protagonist, or in the postmodern mood exhibited in his novels; indeed, the influence and similarities go back much further than his contemporaries in the first world. When

Murakami's work is compared and contrasted with that of Franz Kafka, a writer whom he respected highly, the universal stock figures of the postmodern can be found making their appearance long before the 1960's era of high postmodernism. The mood emulated by Kafka, is similar to that of Murakami, as it embodies a distrust of an omnipresent authority, a multi-layered hyperreality, and an isolated and detached protagonist. The foundation for the evolution of the female into a postmodern complex feminine character, emerging from such a subaltern state, is also to be found within Kafka's novels. As Lyotard has said, postmodernism is constant, it has always been in existence. When we see the similarities between Kafka and Murakami, we can see that this hypothesis holds true, despite the geographical and temporal differences. In this argument, Kafka can be seen as a postmodern writer, with similar ideas to someone writing 80 years later, as postmodernism is continual: '[p]ostmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant' (Lyotard 1992, p.79). Reading Kafka, alongside Murakami offers a new perspective on the postmodern mood, the translated novel, and what it means to be a postmodern female.

## Conclusion

In his novels, Haruki Murakami has created a new postmodern space. These translated novels challenge hegemonic views on postmodernity, and offer a more eclectic perspective on what it means to be postmodern in our media-saturated, multi-layered world. Using his work, we have a fresh approach to postmodernism that is compatible with both Eastern and Western first world experiences. Using theory to interrogate his writing in turn will help us reconceptualise this very theory to take account for an east/west experience.

His work emulates a postmodern condition that has resonances with Lyotard, Jameson and Harvey. The mood of his novels is one of postmodern *ennui*, of isolated detached protagonists, of misrepresented females, of disconnection from work and the novels embody an atmosphere that is distinctly postmodern regardless of time, location and language.

Murakami's work could be situated anywhere. The world that he creates is reminiscent of Lyotard's 'degree zero' of eclecticism, as he draws on an extensive range of

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universal references (Lyotard 1993, p.8). His characters eat pasta, listen to the Beach Boys and classical music and wear Levi jeans. Because of his almost globalised setting, locating them becomes difficult in their plural worlds. Some critics, such as Rebecca Suter, have situated him between America and Japan, while Mathew Chizock believes that Murakami is 'universally foreign' and at the same time 'universally accessible':

To suggest that Murakami could even be Japanese or could even be American is to conceptualize identity based on a nationalistic paradigm that may no longer hold much value. After all, in Murakami's world, Colonel Sanders is a pimp and a Chunichi Dragon fan. (Chozick 2008, pp.72-73)

The postmodernity that Murakami emulates is analysed in Chapter 1, detailing how his work is neither Western nor Eastern, but is, as Choizick has said, 'universally accessible'. Orientalist approaches could disenfranchise Murakami unfairly from what has been described as a 'primarily Western' paradigm by theorists such as Linda Hutcheon (Hutcheon 1988, p.4). I have demonstrated that Haruki Murakami is not just relevant to Japanese or Eastern audiences, but that his stories, and the manner in which he tells them, are applicable to first world locations across the globe. I propose that Murakami's novels act as a postmodern bridge between the East and the West, breaking down traditional barriers of cultural experience. I have established a conversation between

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current postmodern theory and Murakami's situated postmodernity which results in a transformed and more nuanced view of postmodernism, one that will be more relevant to contemporary society. This dialogue between current theory and these texts offers another perspective on the relevance of postmodern theory, defining and redefining the postmodern lens to encapsulate this first world East/West exchange.

Due to the over-influx of images and representations of what it is to be an individual, the self remains lost in Baudrillard's world of simulacra. These elements of failed identity are played out by the laodicean characters of Murakami's worlds, who are unfulfilled due to their lack of self-knowledge, and lost without metanarratives to aid self-definition. As Hoshino says in *Kafka on the Shore*, '[w]e're all pretty much empty, don't you think, you eat, take a dump, do your crummy job to get your lousy pay and get laid occasionally if you're lucky. What else is there?' (Murakami 2005). This chapter demonstrates the universal aspects of experience with a surreal linking into the unconscious and the unrepresentable postmodern condition.

Karl Marx believed that the working class was the agent of human liberation and emancipation, but with the collapse of modernist ideals, the postmodern working class do not feel liberated or emancipated, but bored, and detached. This is an idea shared by

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David Harvey, who notes that ‘the search for identity through work, individual initiative, or social solidarity,’ is no longer relevant to the postmodern individual, as the modernist metanarratives of work and social solidarity are broken down (Harvey 1992, p.123). For the protagonists of Murakami’s novels, work does not set them free, nor does it offer them a sense of social freedom, but their distrust of the unknown authority in control of their employment, and their attendant postmodern inertia, has left them apathetic towards their careers.

The function and representation of woman within the postmodern novel was also examined in Chapter 4, showing how, despite modernity, the role of the woman remains within the realm of the subaltern: ‘[w]ithin the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced’ (Spivak 2009). Using comparative analysis between *A Wild Sheep Chase*, where the female character remains unnamed, and his latest novel *1Q84*, where Aomame is the lead protagonist, I have demonstrated how the role of the postmodern female has evolved in his work.

In Chapter 5, I probed the connections between Murakami and Franz Kafka, exhibiting how the close relationships of their texts demonstrate that postmodernity cannot be dated, but rather reinforces Lyotard’s view that postmodernity is an enduring concept.



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This chapter consolidates Murakami's postmodernism, as a mood that is homogenous with something that was written in a temporally and spatially distanced area. It ties the threads of the previous chapters together, as the similarities between Kafka and Murakami are explored through postmodern theory.

Murakami's contribution to literature offers us a new approach to postmodernism on a number of levels: it instantiates Lyotard's view of postmodernity; it extends the scope of postmodernism to the translated novel; it provides us with a vision of the postmodern female; and it analyses the search for identity within the simulacra and how postmodern literature represents working life. Analysis of his work is important in learning more about the representation of universal experience within the postmodern condition.

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