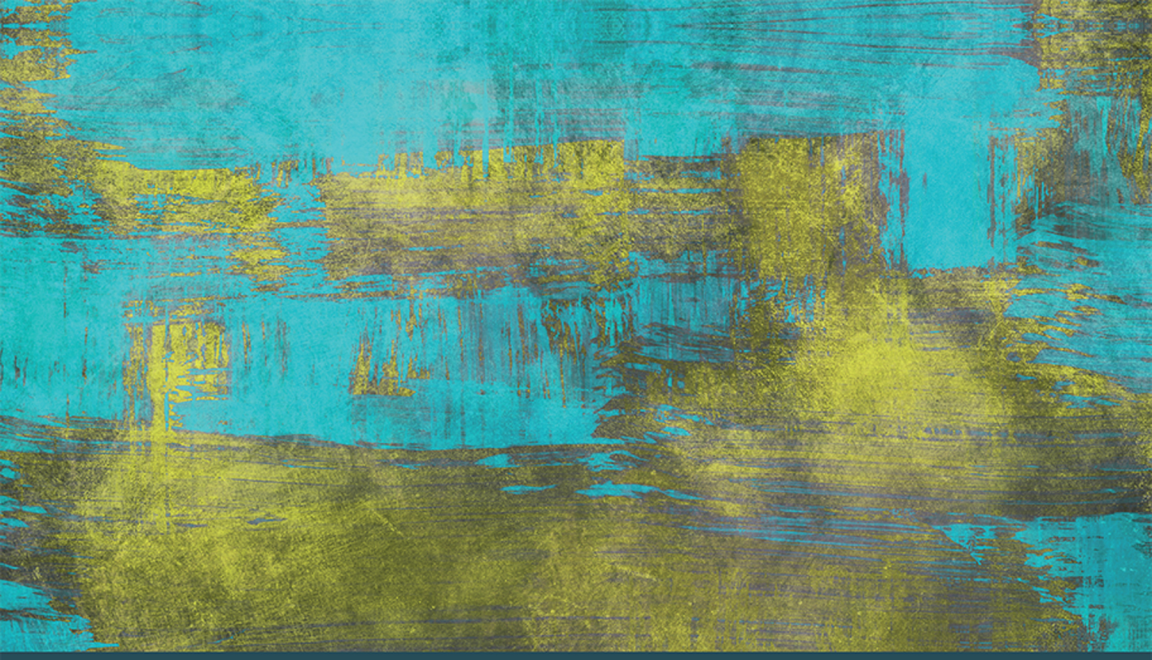

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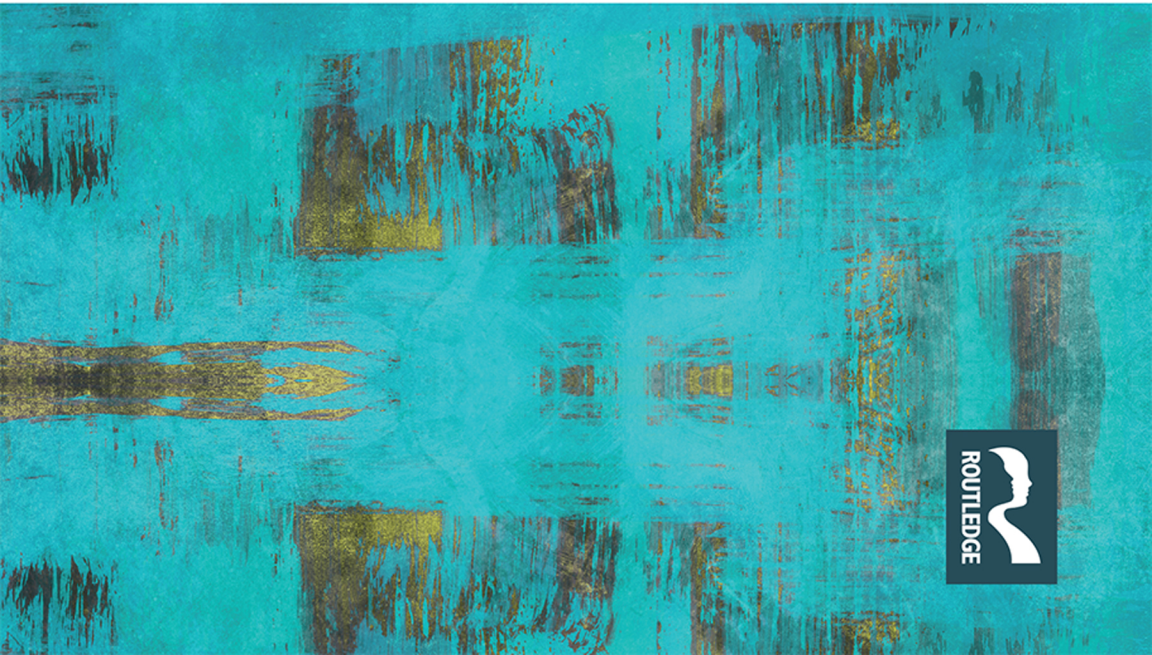
HARUKI MURAKAMI

STORYTELLING AND PRODUCTIVE DISTANCE

Chikako Nihei



Haruki Murakami

Haruki Murakami: Storytelling and Productive Distance studies the evolution of the *monogatari* or narrative and storytelling in the works of Haruki Murakami. Author Chikako Nihei argues that Murakami's power of *monogatari* lies in his use of distancing effects; storytelling allows individuals to "cross" into a different context, through which they can effectively observe themselves and reality. His belief in the importance of *monogatari* is closely linked to his generation's experience of the counterculture movement in the late 1960s and his research on the 1995 Tokyo sarin gas attack caused by the *Aum shinrikyō* cult, and major events in post-war Japan that revealed many people's desire for a stable narrative to interact with and form their identity from.

Chikako Nihei is an assistant professor at Yamaguchi University. She received her PhD in Japanese at the University of Sydney. Her publications include "The Productivity of a Space In-between: Murakami Haruki as a Translator" (2016) and "Resistance and Negotiation: The 'Herbivorous Men' and Murakami Haruki's Gender and Political Ambiguity" (2013).

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Haruki Murakami

Storytelling and Productive Distance

Chikako Nihei

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For my parents

Contents

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1 Introduction

Murakami Haruki is one of the most renowned Japanese authors in the world today. His work has been translated into more than 50 languages. There has been a boom in Murakami Haruki studies and there are entire conferences, both domestic and overseas, devoted to him. "Murakami Haruki" is also a popular subject for university courses both inside and outside Japan.

The purpose of this monograph is to analyse the evolution of what Murakami describes as the power of *monogatari*, which I translate as "storytelling" or "narrative," both in Murakami Haruki's works and in his career. I argue that Murakami's power of *monogatari* lies in his use of distancing effects, whereby individuals cross into a different context, through which they can effectively observe themselves and reality. The distancing effects I examine in this book can be compared to Viktor Shklovsky's theory of defamiliarisation in "Art as Technique." According to Shklovsky, "[i]f we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic. Thus, for example, all of our habits retreat into the area of the unconsciously automatic" (Newton, 1997: 3–4). Shklovsky argues that automated perception can be defamiliarised through art: "[t]he technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar'" (ibid.: 4), which encourages the reader to question their familiar perception and recognise problems that can be obvious from other perspectives. These distancing effects can be demonstrated in a variety of ways through an analysis of Murakami's writing and his career. As will be discussed throughout the book, its effects result in expanding one's perspectives, and this helps deal with his/her mental difficulties and build subjectivity.

Japanese novelist Maruya Saiichi had already described Murakami's emergence as "an event" for Japanese literature (Maruya, 1979: 118) when the author won his first literary prize in 1979 for his first novel *Kaze no uta o kike* (*Hear the Wind Sing*); indeed, in the following years, Murakami turned out to be the most popular and most controversial contemporary writer in Japan. What is often regarded as problematic, especially among Japanese intellectuals, is his wilful distancing from Japan, Japanese culture, Japanese literature, and Japanese language. The lack of apparently

"Japanese" elements in his work, his frequent reference to Euro-American cultural products and literature, his use of what they call "translationese" language projected his image as a "not-very authentically Japanese" author. On the other hand, the act of distancing from Japan constitutes an essential element of his work, considering the author's prolific translation of American novels and its impact on the formation of his language. The theme of distancing is equally seen in his characters, who are often problematically described as detached, passive, and apathetic. Yet, it is this style of personality that supports the popularity of Murakami's novels both inside and outside Japan.

The significant popularity of Murakami's work, for example, takes shape in the emergence of dedicated sections in bookstores for publications by and about Murakami Haruki. Today, large bookstores in Japan usually have a corner dedicated to Murakami's novels, his translation works, and publications of "Murakami Haruki Studies." Many of them are guidebooks of Murakami's stories, which outline the plot of each and briefly explain themes that commonly appear in his work. Critic Yomota Inuhiko aptly summarised the state of Murakami's popularity when he stated, "I was even kindly advised by a publisher to write a book about Haruki because it would definitely sell" (Shibata et al., 2006: 250). Murakami is now also a common topic at universities and postgraduate theses both inside and outside Japan.

With his achievement of international publicity, the so-called "Murakami Haruki phenomenon" is no longer a domestic event but has made its way into an international space. Murakami's novels have been translated into over 50 languages, and he has received a number of international literary prizes. He is now a regular face among novelists who are mentioned as possible recipients of the Nobel Prize in literature.

Following the growth of Murakami's international fame, critical attention has increasingly focused on the reasons for his popularity. Shibata Motoyuki, a translator and scholar who has published books on translation with Murakami, points out that Japanese critics tend to pay less attention to Murakami's texts than to his phenomenal popularity:

> [...] writings about Murakami found in Japan on the whole have been losing their liveliness for quite some time. When Murakami first appeared, people mainly discussed why his stories were interesting or not, based on the critics' personal interpretation. But, probably since the large success of *Norwegian Wood*, "why Murakami Haruki's novels sell so well" has become a common topic, and at times the merits of his works are simply taken for granted. In any case, it seems that individual readers' interpretations [of his texts] have been disregarded.
>
> (Shibata et al., 2006: 231)

Shibata says he rather enjoys reviews written in English-speaking countries in which the pleasure of reading Murakami's novels continues to be expressed.

The "Murakami Haruki phenomenon" is also a popular topic among scholars outside Japan. Similar to Japanese intellectuals, they tend to focus on Murakami's un-Japaneseness, concentrating, for example, on his frequent references to Western culture. They also emphasise the postmodern elements of his work, focusing on the chaotic structure of the world he describes. When it comes to his international success, attention is commonly paid to individual components of his work such as his language, his use of particular cultural elements, and his employment of postmodern frameworks. In other cases, his popularity is taken as an effect of globalisation that homogenises cultures. These focuses are by no means illegitimate. However, as Shibata points out, the more the attention to Murakami's international success grows, the less carefully his texts are treated as stories.

In recent years, Murakami has produced journal essays and given public speeches, where he emphasises his role as a storyteller and the power of *monogatari*. He began to speak about the power of *monogatari* more clearly after the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack, the first terrorist attack that Japan had experienced since the Second World War, resulting in 13 dead and nearly 6,000 injuries. On 20 March 1995, during the morning rush hour, five members of *Aum shinrikyō* released sarin gas on three lines of the Tokyo subway system passing through Kasumigaseki Station, near the Japanese parliament, aiming to "purify" Japanese society. That Asahara's followers were students at and graduates from elite universities was particularly shocking to the public. Murakami interviewed the survivors of the gas attack as well as members of the *Aum*, and published the interviews, respectively, in *Underground* (*Andāguraundo*, 1997) and in *The Place That Was Promised, Underground 2* (*Yakusokusareta basho de: Andāguraundo 2*, 1998). Through his interviews and research on *Aum*, Murakami learned that it was the cult leader Asahara Shōkō's powerful *monogatari* that established his "kingdom" and led to the terrorist attack. No matter how much "junk" Asahara's *monogatari* contained, Asahara's establishment of his kingdom and the cult's eventual turn to terrorism demonstrated the critical lack of a meaningful narrative in contemporary society.

Murakami associates the lack of narrative mainly with the collapse of the Cold War system (Ozawa, 2011), which could also be understood through Jean-Francois Lyotard's discussion about the demise of grand narratives, where society or politics can no longer provide citizens with a clear system of value judgments. In such a society, people struggle to find a stable narrative on which to rely. According to Murakami's illustration,

> People cannot live long without *monogatari*. *Monogatari* helps you transcend the logical system—or the systematic logic—that restricts your life. It is a secret key and a safety belt. *Monogatari* is certainly a story. The story is neither logic nor ethics nor philosophy. It is a dream you are constantly in.
>
> (Murakami, 1999: 750)

In a society that fails to provide a stable narrative, individuals are required to make their own decisions according to their own value system, which is by no means easy. Asahara provided his followers with a comfortable *monogatari*. In this sense, Murakami denies the view that the followers were purely victims who were brainwashed by Asahara, because to some extent "they wanted to be controlled by Asahara" to be released from the burdens of seeking their own *monogatari* (ibid.: 749). In return, Murakami says, they offered their ego to him. Without their ego, they lost the ability to create their own *monogatari* and as a consequence, became dependent on Asahara's narrative. In this way, the case of *Aum* thus demonstrates the dark power of *monogatari*, which lends itself to forming a terrorist group. Murakami emphasises the effects of crossing through *monogatari* first and foremost in the sense that it allows individuals to observe themselves and society from multiple perspectives, which he believes helps them establish autonomy and prevents them from being exploited by what he calls "the System," a power structure that capitalises on individuals.

I choose to focus on Murakami's emphasis on the power of *monogatari* because the consideration of his belief in *monogatari* also provides a better understanding of his international success. While his popularity in the international arena is often associated with his "un-Japanese" stories and his references to Western cultural products, a close analysis shows that when readers, regardless of their background, enjoy his stories, they focus on the *monogatari* rather than his writing style.

On the other hand, Murakami's "un-Japaneseness" and his peculiar representation of cultural elements constitute a salient feature of his stories. He tries to explore the effects caused by the act of crossing cultures and languages, which are different from conventional ways such as postcolonial frameworks, in which one's contact with a different culture is commonly examined based on the idea of cultural hierarchy. This discussion further suggests an important connection between Murakami and modern Japanese writers in terms of their reliance on cross-cultural effects. I propose to situate Murakami within the context of Japanese literature because their similarities and differences more effectively demonstrate the author's skilful employment of his peculiar position between Japan and the cultural Other.

Thus, I investigate the similar, productive effects of crossing both on the individual level and on the cultural level. For this purpose, I consider

the mutual influence on Murakami's stories from his own cross-cultural experience. While his contact with the cultural Other is usually associated with his "un-Japanese" writing style, I instead analyse the impact of his own experience of crossing cultures on the way his characters are exposed to similar effects through *monogatari*.

As I discuss in the second chapter, one of Murakami's aims in his writing is to create readable novels to bring people's attention back to literature in the face of its generalised demise. Interestingly, such readability applies only to the author's language, but not to his stories. His stories are usually complicated by a number of mysterious metaphors, and readers often struggle to grasp their meanings. Arguably the novels' readability creates the illusion that readable writing does not require much effort to understand; at the same time, the stories themselves prove to be complicated. Significantly, when Murakami lectured on Japanese post-war literature at Princeton University and Tufts University in the early 1990s, he advised his students to read a text as many times as possible for analysis (Murakami, 1997: 239). Murakami's advice for reading literature is rather basic, yet it is something we should keep in mind when we reflect on the "Murakami Haruki phenomenon."

I would also like to draw attention to Murakami's prolificacy, not only in his fictional works but also in his interviews and essays. While Murakami often provides the impression that he evades questions from interviewers or makes comments seemingly irrelevant to his works, a close analysis in this book will demonstrate that he is rather willing to share his thoughts about his novels honestly. I by no means intend to say that the author is the one who knows his works best. Murakami refuses to limit the interpretation of his stories to his own but stresses that once the work is released, its interpretation relies on the reader. On the other hand, his frequent visibility in the media and willingness to speak about his work is worth noticing. Nevertheless, despite his willingness to provide readers with his thoughts, intellectuals often attempt to discuss the author's novels by heavily relying on external contexts and theories and end up disconnecting the discussion from the author's original works, which I regard as one of the problems in the existing studies of Murakami Haruki. In order to take account of the author's intention, I aim at conducting a textual analysis of Murakami's fiction by reflecting on as much material of his own as possible. Through this, I try to stress the reciprocity of his fiction and nonfiction. As I propose throughout the book, the primary role of *monogatari* is to help the reader to expand perspectives to observe an object for a deeper understanding. I hope that my study of Murakami Haruki will help the reader understand his work from multiple viewpoints. Furthermore, reviewing a broad range of material in both Japanese and English, my approach seeks to bridge the study of Murakami Haruki in the two languages. Although a number of

studies have been done in other languages, due to my language competency, I focus on the material in Japanese and English.

In this book, I examine the productivity of distancing that appears in Murakami's use of the function of *monogatari*. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 discusses how the author promotes the notion of the "power of *monogatari*" and uses this to illuminate the critical reception of his works, particularly the polarisation of critics' and readers' reactions. In Chapter 3, based on Murakami's early works, I examine how his protagonists' wilful distancing from others is related to the author's long-term struggle to write and his thorough reflection on the function of writing as engagement. In Chapter 4, focusing on *Norwegian Wood* (*Noruwei no mori*, 1987), I discuss the author's peculiar idea of the realist novel in contrast with the Japanese realistic tradition, and demonstrate how the effects of distancing are paradoxically portrayed through the protagonist's failure to rely on the function of narrating. In Chapter 5, using *Kafka on the Shore* (*Umibe no Kafuka*, 2002), I delve into Murakami's emphasis on the use of metaphor as a device to build distance through *monogatari*. In Chapter 6, shifting attention from Murakami's storytelling to his language experiments and his activity as a translator, I discuss how he tries to explore the effects of crossing different cultures and languages.

As I explain in the concluding chapter, Murakami's established belief in the power of *monogatari* is addressed more directly in his magnum opus *1Q84* (2009–10). However, this connection to Murakami's previous works has been little studied. Murakami instead stresses the importance of considering the process of the evolution of his works: "the works I've written so far are all separate and independent texts, but the sequence—or the flow—of one text to another is rather meaningful" (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 17). For this reason, while I do discuss *1Q84* in my concluding remarks, I focus instead on the rest of his corpus of works, in order to trace the history of the author's long-term deliberation on storytelling and productive distancing, and to elucidate the complex and often convoluted process through which these developments took place. The book concludes with a brief discussion about *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* (*Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to kareno junrei no toshi*, 2013) and *Killing Commendatore* (*Kishidanchō goroshi*, 2017), the two novels Murakami published after the 2011 disasters in northeastern Japan.

As a note to readers, names of Japanese writers and scholars are written in the Japanese order – family name followed by given name – unless they have published in English. I have used my own translation for Murakami's works, although many of them have been translated into English. My translations are closer to the originals to the extent that they may sound unnatural in English. I avoided using the published versions because the translators occasionally place priority on the natural flow of

the English rather than the reproduction of meaning from the original. However, I do not mean to challenge the translators' professional work. My intention is to discuss Murakami's attempt to elucidate the power of *monogatari* in the original versions, which may be less clearly reproduced in the translated versions. In Chapter 6, however, I draw attention to his translators' significant contributions to promoting his work on the international market through their clever and creative translations.

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2 Distancing Japanese Literary Tradition

Monogatari and Language

Born in the "baby boomer" generation during Japan's period of rapid economic growth, Murakami lived through the *zenkyōtō* counterculture movement in the late 1960s. The *zenkyōtō* was based on the concepts of a "collective battle" and "collective spirit," and the impact of its failure on Murakami's generation is indicative of the high expectations it had generated. He was a student at the University of Waseda, one of the universities where there was a major student uprising. Compared to the previous generation that lived through the war and contributed to the reconstruction of post-war Japan, affluence was taken for granted by Murakami's generation. For the first generation that received what was promoted as democratic education since primary school, many of them were placed under the intense pressure of competitive examinations to become successful; the student uprisings were the result of the strict regulations imposed on them. Protesting also against broader issues such as the capitalist economy, the continuing presence of the US military forces in Japan, and the Vietnam War, they exploded with anger and frustration at the burdens that were placed on them throughout their lives. Through the uprisings, they ultimately found a means for self-expression (Strecher, 2002; Oguma, 2009). The failure of the movement therefore meant their loss of self-expression and self-realisation.

Murakami's experience of the movement exerted significant influence on his writing. He did not participate in the demonstrations, but he admits that he supported the atmosphere of the era when he was at university (Koyama, 2010: 21). The term *zenkyōtō* never appears in his writing, yet the shadow of the movement is implied throughout the stories, particularly his early works. Unlike their real contemporaries, however, Murakami's protagonists would not loudly claim the pain of the failure of the movement, casting a cynical glance at the battle and its consequences instead. Murakami's stories are unusually quiet on this topic, which surprised Japanese contemporary readers who were used to a type of novel in which the authors' regretful feelings about the past were more clearly portrayed (Kazamaru, 2006: 45).

Those who sympathise with Murakami's treatment of the movement regard him as a spokesman for his generation. As Kawamoto Saburō

(1982: 295) points out, unlike his contemporaries Murakami never employs "reeking-of-blood" words such as "revolution" (*kakumei*) in his stories. Despite the indirectness of his references, his stories strongly remind his generation of the movement. Kawamoto discloses that he shed tears when he learned about the death of Nezumi (translated by Alfred Birnbaum as Rat) in *A Wild Sheep Chase* (*Hitsuji o meguru bōken*, 1982), the character who struggles to give up his attachment to the past fight until he dies, because the scene called to his mind those who disappeared when the movement failed (Kawamoto, 1982: 295).

On the other hand, Murakami's indirect and subtle references to the movement often arouse disapproval on the part of Japanese critics from his generation, who regard the author as irresponsible: as one critic says, "Murakami is of the *zenkyōtō* generation. If he wants to write about that era, he should go further and deal with the movement" (Kawamoto and Miura, 2003: 135). However, such a criticism instead emphasises the critics' own lingering attachment to the past. Refuting the idea that explicit social critique is the main function of literature, Murakami rather attempts to utilise distancing effects for his description of the 1960s. He states:

> For us, the 1970s was a decade for dealing with the "remaining work" of the 1960s. I thought that writing about the "remaining work" would be more effective for discussing the 1960s rather than simply focusing on the 1960s. Somebody had to write about the 1970s responsibly.
>
> (Kawamoto, 1985: 36)

Murakami says that he aimed to conclude the 1960s by dealing with the "remaining work" without recovering the "collective spirit," in open disagreement with his generation's conventional way of handling the issue. Describing the 1970s to discuss the 1960s is echoed in his belief in the role of *monogatari* (storytelling/narrative) in encouraging self-reflection through productive distancing. In this chapter, I will discuss Murakami's interest in *monogatari*, first through Japanese critics' views on the author, because a close analysis of the way they disapprove of Murakami's works paradoxically spells out how he regarded Japanese literary tradition as a counterexample to build his belief in *monogatari*. This also makes clear the author's actual understanding of Japanese literature compared to the common image of him as "un-Japanese." Then, I will explore how he developed the theme of *monogatari*, particularly through his research on *Aum* that provided a considerable impact on his attitude as a storyteller.

The *watakushi* Novel and the *boku* Novel

Murakami's protagonists, particularly in his early works, are often nameless and are only known as *boku*, the Japanese first-person male

pronoun. According to Jay Rubin, since the use of the more polite first-person pronoun *watashi* in the realm of narrative is strongly associated with the *watakushi shōsetsu* (I-novel) or realist novels, a staple traditional genre of Japanese literature since the Meiji era, Murakami's use of *boku*, a casual and unpretentious pronoun, plays a part in distancing his work from the "long-established fixture of serious Japanese fiction" (Rubin, 2005: 37).

The I-novel is a product of Japanese intellectuals' reinterpretation of European literary naturalism, in which Japanese writers emphasised individuals' internal voices by disclosing the embarrassing "truths" about their private lives in order to illustrate the dark side of society. While Japanese Naturalists, or Realists, meant to criticise the self through their confessions, their excessive stress on naturalness in their description tended to produce confessional reports about the self; as Tomi Suzuki (1996: 71) says, the supposed criticism was carried out without self-examination, losing the critical distance between the "'objectifying' author and his 'objectified' self." This group's exceeding focus on "naturalness" requires readers to have the same experience and thought as their own in order to understand their novels. The novel eventually excluded readers; it was read only by people in the Japanese Naturalists' literary circle (*bundan*) and a few readers who supported the style. In this way, Nakamura Mitsuo (1951: 89) claims that Japanese literature lost its connection with its readership. Unlike the protagonists of I-novels, Murakami's protagonists hardly "confess" their inner feelings or disclose embarrassing details about their private lives. They do not cry out to complain about society or people around them. They are rather calm and "conforming." This makes his *boku* novels significantly different from the I-novel tradition.

In the post-war period, the literary ideal of realistic fiction switched from confession to social criticism. Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburō, as a *junbungaku* (pure literature) writer, emphasises the crucial function of literature as criticism of history and its contribution to the formation of national identity. He highly values the literature of postwar writers, who deal with their experience of the Second World War, including A-Bomb victims, the occupation by the Allied Powers, Japan's colonial rule over East and Southeast Asian countries, discrimination against Korean nationals in Japan, the US forces' domination of Okinawa, and the emperor's "Human Proclamation." Ōe regards the focus on these issues as "the highest level of literary achievement since the Meiji restoration" (1989: 206). He, however, thinks that Japanese literature has been declining since the 1980s, thanks to the emergence of writers who have no critical stance towards history and whose works are nothing but products of consumer culture. Ōe particularly disapproves of Murakami's reluctance to treat social issues as a central theme in his novels and laments his growing popularity as a sign of the demise of *junbungaku*, claiming

that "Murakami's target lies outside the sphere of *junbungaku* [...] there is nothing that directly links Murakami with postwar literature of the 1946–1970 period" (ibid.: 200).

Ōe's lament for the demise of the Japanese literary tradition is reminiscent of Karatani Kōjin's declaration of "the end of modern literature" (Karatani, 2005). According to Karatani, literature is no longer primarily an effective and dominant tool to appeal to the masses, compared with the modern era when novels made a distinguished contribution to the formation of the modern nation of Japan.

Karatani's declaration of the end of literature, meaning the change of readers' reception of literary works, however, also indicates that the approach to analysing literature equally requires a shift in thinking. This helps clarify why Murakami is criticised so frequently. A major reason for the criticisms of his works in intellectual circles is his unconventional approach to prose fiction, that is, his distance from traditional Japanese literature, including his way of connecting with Japan, his representation of Japanese language and culture, and his emphasis on the function of narrative.

On the other hand, referring to critics and scholars that emphasise the close connection between literature and politics and disapprove of Murakami's novels, Takeda Seiji complains that they use the opportunity to write critiques of Murakami's novels in order to assert their own ideologies. The consensus among Japanese critics is that literature is a vehicle for social criticism and it must openly discuss political and social issues. He, however, explains that Murakami's description of calm and seemingly passive characters is a sign of his understanding that past radicalism had become ineffective at the time of Murakami's debut. When compared to the era of the *zenkyōtō* movement, it is no longer so simple to identify the best targets of critical or aggressive action. In this sense, Takeda says that such a radical attitude is rather romantic today (Kasai et al., 1991: 118; Takeda, 1995).

Conventional approaches to Japanese literature is also evident in the tendency to idealise difficult writing, which appears in Hasumi Shigehiko and Ōtsuka Eiji's focus on the lack of complexity in the plot of Murakami's stories (Hasumi, 1994; Ōtsuka, 2009). Hasumi and Ōtsuka's belief in novelists' constant attempts to complicate the structure of their stories reminds us of Nakamura's lament for the Japanese realist novel's loss of readers because of the exclusive nature of their writing.

"Low Entry Level" Novels: Communicating with Readers

Thus, Murakami's criticism in Japan is grounded in intellectuals' conventional approaches to the Japanese literary tradition. When they lament the popularity of Murakami's novels as a critical sign of the collapse of Japanese literature, they at the same time demonstrate that literature

is no longer functional in a conventional way rather than that literature has lost its function in general. Murakami's wilful distancing from Japanese literary tradition indicates his search for a different approach to literature, which is exemplified by his process of forming his own style of literary language. He explained his struggles to find his own writing style when he first began to write:

> I just wanted to put my sincere thoughts into words. However, while doing this, I realised that the more honestly I tried to write, the more dishonest the sentences appeared. The more complicated and literary the sentences became, the more uncertain the implications appeared. What happened was that I was writing with secondary vocabulary. I thought this wouldn't work.
>
> (Murakami, 2007: IV–V)

What Murakami describes as "secondary vocabulary" is reminiscent of the I-novel's "realistic" style. When he started writing, he realised that he was not using his own words but relied on conventional vocabulary commonly used in the Japanese realist novel. It was in this phase that he encountered an enlightening passage by Francis Scott Fitzgerald:

> "If you want to narrate a story no one ever wrote," said Scott Fitzgerald in a letter, "write with a language no one ever used." Writing this novel, I often thought of his words. I wanted to write something others have never tried with words nobody has ever said. "How about writing more simply?" I thought. "More simply than anybody's ever written." By connecting simple phrases, I tried to make simple sentences and by connecting simple sentences, to consequently describe reality, which is not simple.
>
> (Ibid.: V)

Murakami chose simple writing for his novel in order to produce "a story no one ever wrote." His decision reflects a break with the realistic tradition of Japanese literature, in which difficult writing was idealised and the novel's ability to communicate with readers was secondary.

Murakami discovered that writing simply was rather difficult and challenging, which reminded him of John Irving's belief that "writing readable sentences is harder than writing complicated sentences" (Murakami, 1982: 201). For a similar reason, he was fascinated by the writing of American writers such as Raymond Carver, Kurt Vonnegut, and Richard Brautigan, who also wrote using simple prose.

Murakami particularly likes Irving's attempts to bridge literary fiction and popular fiction through his readable and entertaining novels. In 1985, Murakami had an opportunity to interview Irving, where he learned Irving's belief that the mission of contemporary writers is to

compose fiction that is amusing enough to compete with other forms of entertainment rather than a type of writing as "art for art's sake" (Murakami, 1991).

Irving's influence on Murakami is evident in his later interviews, where he expresses that he aims at writing what he calls a novel with a "low entry level" (*shikii no hikui*) (Shibata, 2004: 286), which is again an element inspired by the aforementioned American writers who likewise emphasised reading accessibility.

Like popular authors such as Irving, Murakami receives criticism from "pure literature" writers who label him as a commercial writer. However, this is a deliberate choice on Murakami's part. Responding to the criticism of his "translationese" language, he says:

> I don't understand why [my language] is criticised because it is translationese. As long as it makes sense and there is communication between the writer and the reader, it functions as language. I don't understand the idea of a good style or a bad style. […] How about the critics whose complicated writing style doesn't communicate with the reader at all?
>
> (Kawamoto, 1985: 49)

By non-communicative writing, Murakami means a type of writing that relies on the heaviness of words and complicated syntax. As a better alternative, Murakami proposes relying on storytelling and productive distance; this strategy lies at the core not only of his popularity, but also of the innovative quality of his approach to Japanese literature. Murakami's resistance to the norms of Japanese literature should be treated carefully, because the mere affirmation of his opinion might lead to one-sided analysis. Rather than simply supporting his position, I intend to delve into his process of growing disagreement with the Japanese literary tradition because it is closely related to the establishment of his belief in *monogatari*. In order to clarify this point, in the next section I compare scholarly criticism of Murakami with his readers' responses.

Reading a Novel at the Narrative Level

In contrast with Japanese critics, readers regard Murakami's protagonists' lack of social and political engagement as a sign of their independence and mental strength. While the baby boomer generation aimed at overturning the social system through their "collective battle," their failure revealed the ineffectiveness of this kind of absolute resistance in the contemporary era. Rather than fighting against the system, Murakami suggests creating one's own system to trust. Some Japanese readers of Murakami's generation appreciated this approach and saw it as an attempt to negotiate a third way between absolute resistance and

absolute conformity. They respected Murakami's protagonist's attempt to live based on his own principles, which reflects their own struggle to find their place in the post-"collective battle" society (Iguchi, 1983; Murakami and Kawai, 1998: 50–1; Kuroko, 2007).

A similar reaction can be found in East Asian countries, where the impact of political struggle is shared with Murakami's generation. According to Fujii Shōzō, readers in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea associate the author's characters' cynical attitude towards the student movement in the late 1960s with their own struggle in the state of despondency that resulted from democratic movements and the following social and political reformations in the late 1980s (Shibata et al., 2006: 242–4).

For example, Kim Choon-Mie explains that South Korean readers associate the sense of loss in Murakami's novels with the state of apathy caused by the political reformation in 1987 and the nation's acceleration towards capitalism and consumerism. Kim says that while Korean youth find it hard to express their difficulty, Murakami's characters provide them with a vocabulary for it. They are also encouraged by his characters' attempt to negotiate with society rather than turn their back on reality (Kim, 2006: 34). Murakami inspired Korean novelists, particularly those from the so-called "386 Generation" (the generation that were born in the 1960s, experienced the political movement in the 1980s, and were in their 30s when the term was coined in the early 1990s). Due to Murakami's significant influence on these writers, some of them were even suspected of plagiarism (ibid.: 32–3).

Murakami's stories have also influenced Chinese writers such as Wei Hui and Annie Baby, who Fujii categorises as "Murakami Children" (Shibata et al., 2006: 6). The influence of Murakami's novels on their works often clusters around his characters' urban lifestyle. Fujii explains that Murakami's novels function as a manual that shows a cosmopolitan lifestyle, including what to consume, what music to listen to, where to go for a trip, what to talk about in a bar, and how to live or break up with one's boyfriend or girlfriend (ibid.: 244). Similarly, readers in the post-Soviet societies of Russia and Germany sympathise with Murakami's characters. Murakami comments that they identify their political anxiety with the one that his protagonists face (Furukawa, 2009: 49). Thus, readers' reactions to Murakami's novels are closely associated with the demise of the dominant narrative in their society. His protagonists' self-imposed isolation is taken as a guide to develop independence in an unstable society after political reformation.

Jungian psychiatrist Kawai Hayao, who supports Murakami's presentation of the function of *monogatari*, explains that people are "healed" when they find their own story shared by somebody else. Murakami's readers sympathise with his stories because they find their own stories narrated there, whose effects allow the readers to cross cultural borders.

In his conversation with Murakami, Kawai points out that the modern development of science emphasises theories and causality, which encourages people to place increasing importance on what brings visible outcomes. On the other hand, *monogatari*, Kawai says, motivates people to examine reality from a different point of view (Murakami and Kawai, 1994: 265). According to Kawai's example,

> A story that goes something like, "I met a guy named Kawai and I was angry with him" carries little conviction. [...] However, if you say, "old monster Kawai attacked and fell on me from behind," the listener is convinced that you can't help fighting back and killing him. This is *monogatari*. It's more realistic. [The person's] real experience is shared with others.
>
> (Ibid.: 269–70)

The thoroughly descriptive story about an old person named Kawai is not easily imagined by people who do not know Kawai. On the other hand, the image of the violent monster is easily shared even by those who do not know the monster, because they focus on the *monogatari* rather than the fact. In this sense, narrative displaces an individual's story into another context, through which they acquire a different perception of their situation. The operation of displacement creates a distance between individuals and their situation, through which they can observe themselves and their situations from a different point of view. In this sense, Kawai states that the function of narrative is useful for psychotherapy.

Kawai explains that reading the novel has an effect similar to "sandplay therapy," in which a psychiatrist tries to analyse a patient from the way they make a symbolic story in a sand box without asking them for an explanation with words. He supports the therapy, arguing that an analysis of the patient through their words is likely to aggravate their symptoms when they suffer precisely from an inability to explain their problems. According to Kawai's example,

> a patient says, "Something is troubling my mind." [His doctor] says, "you must want to say it to me. Just spit it out." The patient says, "Well, I might want to kill my father." Then he is hurt by his own words.
>
> (Murakami and Kawai, 1998: 36–7)

Kawai says that through voicing his feelings, the patient is made to believe that he always wanted to kill his father. Once it is voiced, the feeling comes to exist and is exposed to analysis, where it is treated as truthful. In this sense, Kawai rejects an utter reliance on language for communication and emphasises the use of images for an effective approach to psychotherapy. The communication through narrative is

carried out through sharing images, as is demonstrated by the readers' reading experience of Murakami's stories.

The function of narrative in psychotherapy is also noted by another Japanese psychiatrist, Iwamiya Keiko (2007), who explains Murakami's novels' contribution to her patients' process of recovering from mental illness. She explains that a number of her patients refer to Murakami's novels during their consultation. Iwamiya once had a depressive patient who could not explain his symptoms because his problem lay in his struggle to put his emotion into words. He could explain himself only through ambiguous ideas such as "I want to disappear," "it's too hard to live," or "things will never get better." However, Iwamiya says, the patient's reading experience of Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* provided a crucial opportunity to find a way of describing his feelings.

In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, there is a mysterious sheep, a ghostly figure with the ability to possess people's minds and endow them with an imaginary utopian world. In return, the sheep sucks up everything in their minds. When the sheep finishes its business with a target, it leaves for another target. The person who is left by the sheep falls into a "sheepless" (*hitsuji nuke*) state, which is described as a "hell" in which "only thoughts exist and expressions are all uprooted" (Murakami, 2005: 239). Once people become "sheepless," they are deprived of any means to put their thoughts into words and eternally suffer from the inability to express themselves. Iwamiya's patient, reading the novel, realised that his symptoms were very similar to this "sheepless" state. Through reading Murakami's novel, he acquired a vocabulary to explain the fact that "he cannot express himself in words." Iwamiya states that his reference to "sheepless"-ness also helped her understand what he meant in such an ambiguous expression as "I want to disappear." This experience, Iwamiya says, became the patient's first step in his recovery (Iwamiya, 2007: 41–6). In this way, he avoided forcing himself to put his emotion into words, which could have worsened the situation, as Kawai noted. Murakami's story provided him with a *monogatari* that helped him express his suffering where language had failed him.

Examining the function of *monogatari* as a way out of the crisis of language provides us with a different perspective on the aforementioned criticism of Murakami by Japanese scholars. For example, Komori Yōichi (2006) is another Japanese academic who is critical of Murakami. His disapproval of Murakami lies mainly in the conflict between his stress on language and Murakami's promotion of narrative. In his book on Murakami's *Kafka On the Shore*, Komori, as an earnest supporter of the Japanese literary tradition, stresses the importance of direct verbalisation against Murakami's employment of images, metaphors, and narratives. His criticism is mainly directed at the novel's reference of works such as the Oedipus myth, Richard Francis Burton's version of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony,"

Natsume Sōseki's *The Poppy* (*Gubijinsō*) and *The Miner* (*Kōfu*), and a book about the trial of Adolf Eichmann.

Interpreting these references as the author's straightforward endorsement of their implied values, Komori claims that the novel promotes the Oedipus taboo, misogyny that allows the execution of women, and escapism through introversion and dreams. He claims that through referring to different texts in an unmediated way, Murakami's novel disturbs readers' rational thinking (Komori, 2006: 160). Komori's interpretation is predicated upon his focus on intertexuality. Rather than delving into Murakami's novel itself, he concentrates exclusively on the analysis of the other texts introduced in the novel. However, when Murakami's readers sympathise with his stories, they focus on the narrative rather than the plot or the other works to which he refers. Komori's argument and Murakami's use of image in *Kafka On the Shore* will be further examined in Chapter 5.

This kind of reliance on details is one of the problematic, common features of Japanese literary criticism. Ōtsuka Eiji denounces the popularity of "guides to reading Murakami" in Japan, in which critics try to decipher puzzling images and overflowing numbers in Murakami's stories (2006: 200). In this sense, Matthew Carl Strecher (2011) questions Japanese critics' dedicated attempt to attach meanings to Murakami's seemingly purposeful references to numbers and proper names. For example, one critic compares Crow's attack on Johnnie Walker by pecking his eyes and the 9/11 attacks in *Kafka On the Shore*, another connects the empty mind of Nakata and his murder of Kafka's father in the same novel with the symbolic death of the Shōwa emperor and the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, and another suggests that the murder of the religious cult in *1Q84* indicates the author's attack on the modern reinterpretation of the emperor system. Strecher questions such an excessive degree of allegorical reading, and notes that while "connecting the dots, reading the tea leaves in search of an image, is almost irresistible when dealing with Murakami's fiction, rich with potential symbols and allegorical associations [...] it is difficult to take some of these readings seriously" (Strecher, 2011, 862). Strecher's concern reminds us of Miyoshi Masao's critical remark that images that appear in Murakami's stories only lead readers to a "symbol-deciphering game," which he advises readers "not to take [...] too far" (Miyoshi, 1991: 234). What Strecher calls into question is, again, the Japanese critics' failure to read Murakami's stories at the narrative level by focusing instead on the surface level of images and signs.

A similar problem is also seen outside Japan. Western scholars' common interest in Murakami's postmodernity leads them to limit their focus to the atmosphere or particular elements in his stories. By collecting the seemingly postmodern features of Murakami's work—a painless solution when one is perplexed by his riddles—they often fail to read

his novels as a whole. Otherwise, they heavily rely on psychoanalytical theories to discuss his characters' internal journies and end up writing a kind of introduction to psychology. Thus, the studies of Murakami Haruki in Japanese and English are similar in distancing their discussion from the author's original texts by relying on external contexts. Rather than rejecting existing studies, I suggest making the most of the texts provided by the author to understand his novels, because contrary to the common view that Murakami's stories are too elusive or complicated to understand, in his non-fiction works he generously provides the reader with information that helps her/him to understand his stories. In this way, I also stress the interconnectedness of his own works, including his fiction, essays, interviews, and translations.

Monogatari and Distancing

Because of Murakami's employment of enigmatic images that remain unexplained even when his novel ends, he frequently receives questions about how to understand his stories. He refuses to answer these questions, stating that "the meaning of a novel doesn't lie in the solution" (Matsuie, 2010: 47). He states,

> [if I say, regarding my novel,] "this is the puzzle, this is the answer, this is the question, this is the solution," it's no longer a *monogatari* but a statement. Three sheets of paper would be enough for it. I can't do it. I would rather spend three painful years to write a long novel.
> (Ibid.: 46)

He says he writes *monogatari* because statement is not effective enough. Elsewhere, Murakami also says:

> When I'm asked the question, "What is a novelist?" I always answer like this. "A novelist is a person who makes many observations and provides few judgments. […] What a novelist needs to make a good *monogatari* is, briefly speaking, not to offer a conclusion but to carefully accumulate hypotheses." […] The readers take in the accumulated hypotheses—if they like the *monogatari*—and rearrange the order according to their own needs and uses. The readers conduct this operation, in most cases, automatically and unconsciously.
> (Murakami, 2011: 18)

He argues that the significant role of novels is rather to provide readers with alternative contexts (hypothesis), through which they acquire a different way of perceiving and examining their situation, which is demonstrated by the way readers find themselves narrated in Murakami's *monogatari*. For Murakami, relativisation, rather than simplification or

generalisation, creates a different perspective for an object by engaging a medium between the self and the object. The process is implied in the novel *1Q84* (2009–10) through retired anthropologist Ebisuno:

> […] one of the purposes of the study (anthropology) is to relativise personal images that individuals hold, through which they find universal commonality. Then they reflect on themselves through that commonality. Through this process, people possibly find a space to attach themselves to, while staying independent.
>
> (Murakami, 2009: 267)

Here, "anthropology" can be replaced with *monogatari*; relativisation creates a different perception through which one is able to observe oneself differently.[1]

In this regard, Murakami suggests another example, "the theory of croquette." In his conversation with scholar and translator Shibata Motoyuki, he says:

> Shibata-san, let's say you have to write ten pages of an essay about croquette. You write about croquette not about you, but your writing about croquette, to some extent, reveals your personality and the way you observe the world. […] But if you explain to my face who Shibata Motoyuki is or what sort of being he is, I might find it rather difficult to understand you. […] This is the effectiveness of *monogatari*.
>
> (Shibata, 2004: 279–80)

The story about croquette corresponds to the plot of the novel and the way the writer talks about croquette constitutes its *monogatari*, through which people's stories in their minds are revealed. The medium of storytelling provides alternative contexts in which to discuss the object, which Murakami believes is necessary for deeper understanding.

Murakami's emphasis on storytelling is linked to the difficulty of decision-making in an era when society easily fails to offer a stable narrative that defines absolute values. Murakami expresses his belief in facing reality by "swallowing" the situation (*jōkyō o nomikomu*). By "swallowing" a situation—that is, accepting it as it is—Murakami claims that one can defamiliarise reality not in the form of straightforward acceptance, but for a thorough understanding of it (Shibata, 1989: 35). Murakami believes that merely rejecting a situation hardly helps to solve problems; rather, we have to first accept the situation surrounding us in order to confront it, understand it, and then find a better way to cope with it. Murakami is convinced that this is a more realistic and meaningful way to face and deal with reality, and it is *monogatari* that allows individuals to conduct the operation of "swallowing" one's situation.

Narrative to Be Provided

Murakami's view of *monogatari* can be further understood by way of comparison with Asahara Shōkō's use of narrative (cf. Introduction). Murakami's approach to narative is evident in his interviews with *Aum*'s victims and followers collected in the *Underground* series. Murakami first tried to draw attention to the victims, who had been treated as faceless by mainstream media, despite their lifelong, physical and mental trauma (Murakami, 1999: 27). Acting as a devoted listener, he tried to bring the victims' individual *monogatari* forward to the public. When he interviewed Asahara's followers, too, he carefully listened to the individual voices, although he added his critical comments on their commitment to *Aum*. Through these interviews, Murakami found a similarity between the act of writing a novel and that of interviewing people. He says:

> My job is to listen to people and put their stories into words that are easy to understand. The two stories might not precisely agree with each other […]. However, when individuals' narratives are collected, they compose a "collective narrative," which conveys one form of undeniable truth. This is what we novelists strive to carry out.
>
> (Murakami, 1998: 14)

He states that transcribing interviews and writing a novel are to some extent similar in the sense that both seek to convey a "collective narrative" whereby the reader is presented with a greater story. However, the process also made him realise how Asahara provided his followers with a *monogatari* that released them from the difficulty of thinking and looking for their own narrative. Through the interviews with former and current followers of *Aum*, Murakami realised that there are "undeniable similarities between a novelist's act of writing a novel and their deed of seeking a religion" (ibid.: 16–17). He states:

> In terms of the act of going into to the core of one's subconscious, writing a novel and pursuing a religion share a great deal. […] However, the difference is whether one affirms one's own subjective responsibility or not. Frankly speaking, we (novelists) must take responsibility for our works whereas they [cult members] leave that responsibility to the guru and their doctrine.
>
> (Ibid.: 232)[2]

A number of the interviewees say that what made them decide to enter the cult was their fascination with Asahara's and his subordinates' ability to provide an immediate answer to any questions, which offered a space where they did not have to think or make their own decisions. One would say, "there was no question, because answers were given to all questions. They were all solved. [The cult] showed me how everything happens and

ends" (ibid.: 38). Another would say, "I found out how easy life would be [in the cult]. I didn't have to think anything on my own. I could just do what I was told. No need to think about my life" (ibid.: 169). The religious practice in the cult was carried out based on the "profound wisdom" provided by Asahara, who was said to have attained nirvana (*gedatsu*). The followers were encouraged to empty their mind and absorb his wisdom. Questioning Asahara's direction would mean an obstacle to their austerities and therefore their spiritual progress. In this way, Asahara effectively established a closed system in which his followers abandoned their will to think and therefore their will to question. Murakami says, "what is most regrettable is that those who were supposed to be most critical of 'the utilitarian society' ended up capitalising on 'the utility of logics' and ruining a large number of people" (ibid.: 266).

This was the result of the exaggerated language that Asahara and his subordinates relied on to indoctrinate the followers in their cult. It did not allow the followers to reflect on the situation and prevented them from making their own decisions. Coupled also with the cult's elitist structure, such a performance-based manner led the members to grow their strong sense of being part of the elite and differentiated them from the rest of society. Murakami argues that Asahara used the "evil" power of *monogatari*, which is an attempt to confine individuals in a narrative "box." The author instead tries to promote the "good" power of *monogatari*, which encourages people to have a broader perspective and view the world outside of their narrative "box" (Murakami, 1998: 232).

On the other hand, Murakami points out that the closed "box" can be seen also on "our side." In the afterword of *Underground*, Murakami questions the mass media's treatment of the incident based on "a clear binary opposition between justice and evil, sane and insane, and ordinary and freak" (Murakami, 1999: 736). From Asahara's point of view, he was on the side of justice, sanity, and the ordinary. Murakami says that the structure in which a system dominates people's understanding and prevents them from thinking critically about the incident based on the dominant consensus equally exists on "our side." Murakami questions "our" mere refusal to face *Aum* by relying on the simplistic conclusion that "they" are wrong, evil, and insane while "we" are right, innocent, and sane. He says:

> We ridiculed Asahara's nonsense narrative as junk. We ridiculed him who created such a narrative and ridiculed his followers who admired it. […] However, what sort of effective narrative could we on "this side" have offered them; a narrative potent enough to drive out and replace Asahara's nonsense narrative with […]?
>
> (Ibid.: 752–3)

Murakami claims that the problem also lay on "our side," since "we" failed to offer young people a *monogatari* that they could rely on, thus

effectively pushing them towards Asahara's cult. He argues that "our" system and "their" system mirror each other to some extent and therefore we are required to consider both sides to understand one or the other (ibid.: 740–1).

Murakami says that the problem of a closed system, which *Aum* embodied, is a universal problem today:

> In many places, the forces of a closed world have been expanding – fundamentalism, cults, and militarism [continue to grow and thrive around the world]. A closed world cannot be dismantled through arms. Even it is dismantled, the system itself remains. Even if al-Qaeda were destroyed, the closed system itself and its principles would remain. These ideas will re-emerge in a different place and with a different form. The best thing that can be done is to continue to advance a narrative that shows good aspects of an open world. It will take time, but an open world will live longer than that of a closed system.
>
> (Murakami, 2012: 404)

This again suggests Murakami's worldwide popularity. Readers from different cultures and nations acknowledge the power of a good narrative and its growing necessity in society.

Conclusion: *Monogatari* as Cultural Negotiation

Another intriguing dimension of Murakami's use of *monogatari* as a strategy to achieve productive distance and critical reflection emerges when we compare his notion of narrative with that developed by Edward Said in his analysis of Orientalism. Said describes Orientalism as reductionist because it looks at its object, the "Orient," through the "device of a set of reductive categories" (Said, 1994: 239) under the presumption that "the whole Orient can be seen panoptically" (ibid.: 240). As a more viable alternative, he argues for the use of "narrative" as a device that undermines "the stability and unchanging eternality" of the Orient:

> Instability suggests that history, with its disruptive detail, its currents of change, its tendency towards growth, decline, or dramatic movement, is possible in the Orient and for the Orient [...] the domination of reality by vision is no more than a will to power, a will to truth and interpretation, and not an objective condition of history. Narrative, in short, introduces an opposing point of view, perspective, consciousness to the unitary web of vision.
>
> (Ibid.)

What Said means by "narrative" in this sense does not necessarily coincide with what Murakami represents with *monogatari*, but rather has a broader connotation of knowledge about the Orient, through which he

criticises the objectifying, essentialising quality of Orientalist "vision." Said claims that through narrative, rather than vision, the Orientalist can come to a more focused and detailed view of history that better reflects the complexity of human experience. Rather than simply refusing Orientalist thinking, Said rejects a unitary vision of the Orient and encourages a careful study of the object through narratives.

Stories that are created based on the representation of the Other and aim at promoting an imaginary picture of the Self tend to close the circle and prevent the individuals from reflecting critically on established understandings. Without questioning the formation of the story about the Other, the Self would not realise its own reliance on the image of the Other for its own identity. In this sense, Said's suggestion of an observation of the Other from a broader point of view is akin to Murakami's advocacy of the "good" power of narrative which encourages one to examine an object through multiple perspectives. In the following chapters, I will discuss the specific articulation of this use of narrative/*monogatari* in relation to national and cultural identity in connection to Murakami's attitude towards the cultural Other.

In this chapter, focusing on critical reception of Murakami's work on the part of scholars and readers, and on the author's own reflection on his fiction and nonfiction, I discussed how Murakami's stress on *monogatari* is associated with his belief in the ability of novels to communicate effectively to readers and induce critical reflection in them in contrast with Japanese realist novels' difficult, restrictive style, which ultimately excludes readers. While aiming at writing a novel with a "low entry level," Murakami attempts to make the "good" power of *monogatari* more accessible to the reader, which allows individuals to observe themselves in an alternative context to have a better understanding of themselves and the reality that surrounds them.

I then examined the way in which Murakami's belief in the good power of *monogatari* was further refined through his research on *Aum*. While investigating the negative power of narrative on which Asahara capitalised, Murakami simultaneously discovered that a similar mechanism of narrative could be seen on "our" side, which merely tried to eliminate things related to *Aum* from society without recognising the mirror function of the cult that reflects "us." Murakami's consideration of the power of *monogatari* and productive distance is constantly portrayed throughout his stories, as we will see in the following chapters.

Notes

1 Murakami also suggests the operation of relativisation through a "three-way discussion." He says when he writes a novel he imagines the presence of a third person (or an eel, just because he likes eels) between him and the reader. The "eel" is, he says, a sort of alter ego that is shared by both the writer and the reader and through which he keeps some space between himself and the reader, which requires the reader not to rely on the author

for the understanding of his work but to think on his/her own (Shibata, 2004: 278–9).

2 Here, Murakami is not equating a religion and *Aum*. His disapproval of *Aum* as a religion is constantly expressed in his research of *Aum*.

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3 "Departure" from the Distrust of Language

Narration as Engagement

In the earlier chapters, I discussed how research on Asahara's narrative helped consolidate Murakami's will to promote the "good" power of *monogatari*. Reflecting on the emergence of *Aum*, he draws attention to the collapse of the dominant social system after the collapse of the Cold War system. He suggests that young people needed a strong narrative to follow, but the mainstream society failed to provide one. The resulting narrative vacuum played an important role in making Asahara's closed narrative palatable to larger numbers of people. Murakami sees the demise of grand narrative as having already begun in the 1960s, in connection with the *zenkyōtō* student movement. I argue that Murakami's belief in the power of *monogatari* was established by the impact of his past experiences with student uprisings. While aiming to deal with the "remaining work" of the 1960s rather than continually revisit past failures, he attributes the predicament of his generation to the lack of "an exit." This notion of "an exit" is made explicit by the protagonist of *Pinball, 1973* (*1973-nen no Pinbōru*, 1980), when he says of a dead rat in his mousetrap, "things have to have both an entrance and an exit" (Murakami, 1983b: 15).

In his early works, Murakami tries to suggest a solution to get out of the "mousetrap" by employing distancing effects and relativisation, what he presents as the functions of *monogatari*. While the author discusses his generation's past memory more directly in his novels, it is also a regular topic in his short stories, in which the author effectively relies on the form of narrative to describe his reflection on the movement. I discuss Murakami's first three novels and a short story of his, "The Last Lawn of the Afternoon" ("Gogo no saigo no shibafu"). Through analysing the author's illustration of the "lack of an exit," I propose to demonstrate how his understanding reflects his characters' habit of isolating themselves. The root of their isolation is important to understanding how other characters close themselves off in Murakami's later works and the motives for their actions, which I will discuss in the following chapters. Discussing the characters' wilful isolation, I further consider the reciprocal relationship between the characteristics of the stories and the author's own hesitation directed at the interaction with the cultural Other: America.

Uncertainty about Language: Nezumi as a Hopeless Writer

In Murakami's view, as it emerges from both interviews and works of fiction, once the *zenkyōtō* movement was over it became apparent that people's collective spirit had been supported only by shallow hyperbole – their use of exaggerated language in their slogans and their abuse of ideologies. This, in turn, affected Murakami's attitude towards language. Describing the late 1960s as an era of garrulity, he expresses his disapproval of it: "I was fed up with such things as grandiloquence. I was tired of the bombast" (Ozawa, 2011: 17; see also Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 28). He explains that his characters' "silence" about the movement is a reaction to "our excessive use of big words that turned out to lack substance" (Kawamoto, 1985a: 46). His disapproval of grandiloquence or bombast reminds us of his statement that he does not want to rely on "secondary vocabulary" for his writing that I mentioned in Chapter 2. Murakami's frustration with the *zenkyōtō*'s dependence on the heaviness of words influenced his choice to create his own language for writing.

In the author's first novel *Hear the Wind Sing* (*Kaze no uta o kike*, 1979), the impact of the past is exemplified by the narrator's silence and long-term struggle to write. While the novel is a fiction, it could be read as Murakami's autobiography in terms of his attitude towards writing. The 29-year-old narrator explains that he kept his mouth shut since his early 20s. While he does not explain the details, it is easy to speculate that the impact of the end of the collective movement was the main reason for his decision not to talk. Although the novel begins with the narrator's declaration, "I think I'm finally ready to talk," in fact, throughout the novel the character refuses to talk.

The contradiction between the protagonist's declaration that he is ready to talk and his silence is solved when we understand what he means by "talk" (*kataru*). In his words, the verb "to talk" (*kataru*) is similar semantically to *monogatari* (narrative), unlike the equivalent *hanasu* (speak), which is used for explanation. The narrator declares his will to tell his story through narrative rather than to explain it. This is how he finally comes up with the courage to reveal his feelings. His prolonged struggle to narrate a story thus constitutes a significant part of the novel. The story begins as follows:

> "There is no such a thing as a perfect sentence, just as there is no such a thing as perfect despair," said the writer I was reading when I was at university. Although it was a while after that I understood the actual meaning, it already had given me a sort of comfort. There is no perfect sentence.
>
> Yet, I always felt depressed whenever I tried to write. I could only write very limited things. Even if I could write something about an

> elephant, I might not be able to write about an elephant trainer. This is what I mean.
>
> I had this dilemma for eight years—Eight years. A long time. […]
>
> I kept my mouth shut and didn't say anything. It went on until I turned twenty-nine.
>
> Now, I think I'm finally ready to *talk*.
>
> Nothing has been solved. I may not find any salvation in talking. After all, writing is not a means of self-therapy but only a trivial attempt at self-therapy.
>
> But still, speaking honestly is terribly hard. When I try to be honest with myself, the right words slip into the darkness.
>
> I have no intention of making an excuse. What I put here is my best at the moment.
>
> (Murakami, 2008: 7–8, my italics)

Murakami himself stresses the importance of the first chapter of this novel: "I said almost everything important in the first paragraph" (Kawamoto, 1985b: 38). In this passage, the narrator, himself a writer, addresses that he struggled for a long time until he decided to write a novel, an experience which seems to reflect Murakami's own. The narrator, and by extension Murakami, decided to narrate a story, although his uncertainty about writing remained strong. In other words, Murakami could finally start to write when he admitted the imperfection of his writing. Yet, as Ishihara Chiaki (2007: 60) notes, the author's statement that there is no perfect "despair" implies rather his hope that imperfect writing can be an alternative to absolute despair.

Understanding the difficulty of communicating through language provided Murakami with motivation to start his career. When the narrator says, "[e]ven if I could write something about an elephant, I might not be able to write about an elephant trainer," he also admits his underdeveloped writing skills or his lack of confidence in writing. His uncertainty about language is ultimately uncertainty about writing a novel. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the narrator dismisses the idea that the text is a work of literature: "what I am writing here is only a list. Neither a novel, nor literature, nor art" (Murakami, 2008: 12). Yet, the juxtaposition of his remaining hesitation about writing and his will to write indicates that it is rather the uncertainty about language that functioned as his motive for writing. This is further evinced by Murakami's statement that his first work is "a novel I wrote 100% for my own sake, for the purpose of reflecting on myself" (Kawamoto, 1985b: 39). The same argument applies to the idea of writing as "self-therapy" in the novel, when the narrator says, "writing is not a means for self-therapy but only a trivial attempt at self-therapy" (Murakami, 2008: 8). Accepting the fact that perfect writing is unachievable, the narrator tries to take this as a positive means to commit to writing rather than giving in to

despair. In other words, it was crucial for Murakami to digest his uncertainty about language in order to start his career as a writer.

The narrator's eventual decision to compromise with his uncertainty about language is further understood through a close analysis of the character of Nezumi. Murakami's first three novels, *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, also known as the "Nezumi trilogy," feature the same characters, *boku* and his friend Nezumi. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the 29-year-old narrator, writing in 1978, recalls his university life in 1970. *Pinball, 1973* is set in 1973, three years after the story of *Hear the Wind Sing*, and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, set in October 1978, starts when the narrator is 29, again a few months after the first novel.

The first piece of the "Nezumi trilogy" describes *boku*'s return to his hometown for the summer holidays in 1970 and drinking with Nezumi, whom he met three years earlier, at a bar called Jay's bar. *Boku* is a student in Tokyo while Nezumi withdrew from university when the student movement failed. Nezumi is usually regarded as representing another side of the protagonist, which Murakami has confirmed (Murakami and Kawai, 1994: 276). While *boku* rarely shows the impact of the failure of the student movement on him, Nezumi tends to express his feelings of regret towards the past more openly. The protagonist's comment above about a dead rat in a mousetrap, "things have to have both an entrance and an exit," provides an apt image of Nezumi – whose name literally means rat – as suffocating in a closed space without an exit. As the trilogy progresses, he grows more distant from *boku* and the centre of the plot as a sign of his collapse on the way to his eventual death in *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

Throughout the "Nezumi trilogy," Nezumi is associated with storytelling in a complex way. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the narrator first claims: "Nezumi never ever reads books" (Murakami, 2008: 21). However, inspired by the voracious reader *boku*, he starts to read novels. When *boku* last sees Nezumi before leaving for Tokyo, Nezumi finally mentions his reason for withdrawing from university:

> I guess I got sick of it. But I did more than I could ever believe myself. I was thinking of others as much as I was thinking of myself. As a result, I got beaten up by a cop. But you know, when the time comes, everybody returns to where they belong. Only I didn't have a place to return. It was like musical chairs.
>
> (Ibid.: 117)

Afterwards, Nezumi starts to write a novel and sends *boku* a piece of work every year on his birthday.

Pinball, 1973 is set three years after *Hear the Wind Sing*. The plot of Nezumi and that of *boku* run parallel, and the two characters do not

meet in this story. *Boku* now works in a translation office that he has launched with a friend. Nezumi, on the other hand, continues to pass the time by drinking at Jay's bar and brood over his struggle to conform to society's norms. His growing depression is more distinctively portrayed in this novel, as accentuated by the rainy, cold weather, the desolate landscape, his hesitation to develop a relationship with his girlfriend, and his dialogues with bar owner Jay that cluster around death, violence, boredom, and tiredness.

While there is no direct reference to Nezumi's writing activity, it is implied, for example, through his purchase of a second-hand typewriter. He starts to go out with the woman who sold it to him until he leaves his hometown at the end of the novel. Staying with her, Nezumi feels some comfort, yet he remains fundamentally isolated. The more his struggle grows, the more he urges himself to take action against it. He presses himself for an answer:

> "You've got to think," Nezumi said to himself.
>
> Don't turn away; think! You are twenty-five years old. Old enough to be ready to think. You're the age of two twelve-year-old boys. Are you as worthy as the two boys? Never. Not even as one boy. Not even as an anthill crammed in an empty bottle… Enough, enough with silly metaphors. They have no use. Just think. You must have made a mistake in some way.
>
> (Murakami, 1983b: 112)

The description of Nezumi in the novel constantly conveys his internal pain and gives us a sense of what his own novels might be like. His attempt to put his thoughts into words only makes his situation worse.

Nezumi eventually decides to leave his hometown as an act of withdrawing from everything related to his past. Visiting Jay to say goodbye, he tries verbal communication for the final time. He says to Jay, "[w]e can't understand each other without talking face to face. I don't wanna say this, but it seems I've stayed in this world too long" (Murakami, 1983b: 164). Leaving Jay's bar, a great sense of desolation comes over Nezumi, yet it is followed by subtle relief:

> He wanted to sleep.
>
> He thought sleep would get rid of everything.
>
> When he closed his eyes, the sound of waves caught his ears. […]
>
> I don't need to *explain* anymore, he thought, thinking about the warmth and calm of the bottom of the sea. Don't wanna think anything, anymore.
>
> (Ibid.: 168, my italics)

It is important to acknowledge that Nezumi is tired of "explaining" (*setsumei*), which is different from the protagonist's declaration of his

will to "narrate" (*kataru*) in *Hear the Wind Sing*. Nezumi's pain stems from his attempt to explain rather than narrate his past. He leaves the town without telling his girlfriend. His separation from the woman who gave him the typewriter signifies his decision to stop writing. The pain of explaining that Nezumi suffers is further illustrated in the last part of the trilogy.

A Wild Sheep Chase is set in 1978, five years after the story of the previous novel. *Boku*'s business has now expanded into an advertising agency. According to the narrator, in 1977 he heard from Nezumi after a period of silence, where Nezumi sent him a novel he wrote as a last attempt. Nezumi wrote in the letter that he was finished with the novel and asked *boku* to throw it away. The content of the novel is not revealed, however, because *boku* does not read it.

Shortly afterwards, *boku* is approached by a "man in black," the secretary of a right-wing organisation, who urges *boku* to seek a special sheep in Hokkaido for his boss (cf. Chapter 2). His quest for the sheep turns out to be a search for Nezumi, who has secluded himself in a cottage deep in the mountains in Hokkaido. As it eventually turns out, being possessed by the sheep, Nezumi has killed himself to eliminate the sheep before the protagonist identifies his location. When the protagonist finds Nezumi in the cottage, he appears as a ghost.

Nezumi discloses to *boku* that the sheep provides utopia while aiming at constructing his own kingdom by capitalising on the people it possesses. Thanks to the sheep, one of the possessed people carried out a successful business venture while another rose to the top of a major right-wing organisation. The utopia the sheep provides is similar to the "kingdom" that Asahara of *Aum* tried to build. The sheep colonises one's mind and, as Nezumi describes it, "sucks up everything in me" (Murakami, 2005: 354). As in the case of *Aum*, losing the ego, one is released from the pain of thinking and therefore reaches a state of "bliss." This "utopia" is something Nezumi has desperately looked for to be liberated from the past. However, he kills himself to prevent the sheep from colonising his mind. When *boku* asks Nezumi why he refused the utopia provided by the sheep, he says, "I like my weakness. My pains and hardships, too" (ibid.: 356). Nezumi's ultimate choice of his own weakness, pains, and hardships, from which he strived to escape for a long time, signifies his acceptance of himself and his ego, no matter how much it tortures him. Nezumi's last "fight" is glorified in this sense, yet his eventual death implies the failure of his way of "fighting" to find an outlet for his ego. This failure is closely related to Murakami's emphasis on narrative rather than explanation. While Shimizu Yoshinori (2000) regards Nezumi as an alter ego writer that *boku* dismissed in the past in order to deal with his past and prepare for his own writing style, I will build on his discussion by analysing the character of Derek Heartfield, a fictional American author in the "Nezumi trilogy."

Heartfield is introduced in *Hear the Wind Sing* as a writer that inspired *boku* and made him decide to write. He says:

> I learned a lot about writing from Derek Heartfield. Almost everything, I suppose. Unfortunately, he was a hopeless writer in every sense. Read him, and you'll see. It's hard to read. The stories don't make sense. The themes are poor. Nevertheless, he was one of the few writers whose style was powerful enough to be called a weapon. In terms of his fighting spirit, he could compare with his contemporaries such as Hemingway and Fitzgerald. Yet, the problem was he couldn't pin down what he should have fought against. In this sense, I would say he was futile.
>
> After eight years and two months of futile fight, he killed himself.
>
> (Murakami, 2008: 9)

Interestingly, the length of Heartfield's career, eight years and two months, corresponds to that of Nezumi's engagement with writing; Nezumi starts to write novels in August 1970 in the first novel and dies in October 1978 in the last novel of the trilogy. I would hesitate to simply equate Nezumi and Heartfield, as Heartfield's life history is not consistent with Nezumi's; however, their notable similarity is that both are writers that the narrator describes as hopeless.

Eight years is also the length of the period in which the narrator refused to verbalise his thoughts, until he decides to narrate a story in *Hear the Wind Sing*. This is the period when he witnesses Nezumi's hopeless fight. Considering that *boku* finally decides to narrate his story after eight years, his decision seems to be based on an attempt not to follow Nezumi's and Heartfield's paths.

Boku's stress on narrating rather than explaining is also expressed in a childhood episode in which his parents take him to a psychiatrist because of his taciturnity. The psychiatrist encourages the narrator to speak up:

> "Civilization is communication," he said. "If you don't express yourself, people don't bother about you. It's zero, understand? If you were hungry, just say, 'you are hungry.' I would give you cookies. […] You don't want to talk, but you are hungry. You want to explain it without words. Try it by gestures."
>
> I made a drawn face, pressing my hands on my stomach. He laughed and said, "that would mean indigestion."
>
> (2008: 30)

The psychiatrist's assertive advice that people have to express themselves for the sake of communication suggests Murakami's questioning of society's requirement of self-expression. If a person does not express hunger,

he or she will not be provided with cookies. While trying to explain his hunger by gestures, the narrator is unable to convey his meaning without words, and his gesture is only taken as a sign for indigestion.

Here again, Murakami's belief in the power of narrative is advanced as an effective alternative to verbal explanation. Describing the ineffectiveness of the conventional method of explaining the past, the author suggests the function of narrative. Nezumi's failure also reminds us of Murakami's disapproval of the I-novel. As I explained in Chapter 2, the problem with the I-novel was the lack of critical distance between reader and author. Because of the writers' excessive emphasis on self-portrayal, they failed to convey an objective analysis of the self and the I-novel ultimately led authors to neglect communication with readers. Nezumi's death is thus a means to convey the author's argument for the function of *monogatari* in terms of its communicative effects.

Narrating as Engaging

While critics and scholars often disapprove of Murakami's protagonists' reluctance to interact with others, the way they avoid deep commitment is associated with his attitude towards writing. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the young narrator meets a woman who talks to him at Jay's bar and asks him how old he thinks she is. He says a younger age than her actual age. She continues to ask him questions and ends up revealing that she divorced a month before:

> "I got divorced last month. Have you ever talked to a divorced woman?"
>
> "No. But I've seen a nervous cow."
>
> "Where?"
>
> "At a university lab. Five of us worked together to squeeze it into the class."
>
> She laughed cheerfully.
>
> (Murakami, 2008: 50)

Iguchi Tokio explains that the narrator answers the question by equating "a divorced woman" with "a nervous cow" to minimise the significance of the former topic. In this way, he avoids engaging the woman. The narrator does not want to become indebted to others, therefore he does not want others to be indebted to him; and this is taken as his "kindness" (Iguchi, 1997: 64–5). He listens to others but would not ask further questions or allow others to commit to him. Jay Rubin (2005) describes Murakami's character as a good listener who is happy to listen to others without prying into their private lives. He does it in such a way as not to bother others with his secret avoidance.

These mechanisms can be considered through Marcel Mauss's concept of the "gift exchange," in which Mauss argues for the inevitable reciprocity of obligations between the giver and the receiver of a "gift" (Mauss, 1990). A similar operation can be found in verbal communication; when people receive the other's story, they are included in the other's personal space and are obliged to "pay back" by situating them in and commenting on the other's story. When the woman reveals her divorce to *boku*, she engages him in her personal story. In return, he is expected to reply as a subject that shares her story. Switching the conversation topic to a story about a cow is a device that protects him from being exposed to the other.

Thus, the novel illustrates the protagonist's past search for communication without interaction. His obsession with numbers is part of this process. The narrator discloses that when he was going out with his third girlfriend, he was obsessed with counting things such as customers on a train, steps he took, his pulse, his classes, the number of times he had sex, and the number of cigarettes he smoked because "I seriously believed that I could convey something to others by putting a numerical value on everything, and that having something to convey would assure my existence" (Murakami, 2008: 96). He carried out the habit from August 1969 to April 1970. Considering that the period corresponds to the time when the collective movement headed towards failure, it can be said that *boku* tried to cope with the collapse of the movement's values through his obsession with numbers. Even though the protagonist's attempt to convey something to others belies his past willingness to interact with others, as Iguchi points out, communication through numbers does not require a reciprocal obligation (1997: 64). When his girlfriend committed suicide, he stopped the habit, and "I was left alone, losing sight of my raison d'être" (Murakami, 2008: 96). Her death is the culmination of the protagonist's futile attempt to interact with others through numbers.

In this way, the narrator of *Hear the Wind Sing* reflects on a past where he avoided others. He does so to highlight that his decision to narrate his story is an attempt to engage with others. The reciprocity of the act of narrating/writing and commitment is more effectively described in the short story "The Last Lawn of the Afternoon" published in *Slow Boat to China*.[1]

In "The Last Lawn of the Afternoon" like in *Hear the Wind Sing*, the narrator talks about his past, recalling his university life. He has just started his career as a professional writer, which is implied by his uneasiness with the fact that his novels are selling as popular products. This again corresponds to Murakami's own situation, which suggests the connection between the narrator's feelings and the author's own. In the retrospective narrative, the young narrator is working part-time mowing lawns. He is earning money for a trip with his girlfriend, but he

receives a letter from her informing him that she wants to break up. No longer with any reason to earn money, he decides to quit the job. The story takes place at the house he visits for his last job.

The young narrator refuses to reveal to the reader the whole content of the letter, hesitating to face it. The girl's message in the letter is gradually disclosed while the story proceeds. In the beginning, without much consideration of her words, the narrator concludes, "in short, she wants to break up with me. She's got a new boyfriend" (Murakami, 2000: 154). Instead of calling her or writing back, his only reaction to the letter is to smoke and snap pencils. Her true reason for leaving him lies in his unwillingness to open himself up to her, which, however, is not to be disclosed until the end of the story.

In the workplace, the narrator is highly regarded by his boss because of his devoted attitude. He deliberately chooses jobs as far away as he can and spends a very long time mowing because, he says, he simply likes driving and mowing lawns. More importantly, he likes the job because communication with others is hardly required. His wilful isolation is also emphasised when he stresses that he "didn't do such meticulous work to build a reputation" (Murakami, 2000: 157), refusing others' involvement in his decision-making. He equally describes his girlfriend by stressing what he likes; as Sakai Hideyuki (2001) points out, the narrator's description of the relationship clusters around the pleasure he derives from eating out with her, sleeping with her, and talking with her. His common approach to a relationship and his activity of mowing lawns highlights his lack of human communication.

For his last job, the young narrator goes to his client's house and meets a tall alcoholic woman. He finds that the grass of her garden is still short enough that there is no need for mowing, making him suspect that there are hidden motives for her request. Her constant consumption of alcohol is a sign of the woman's possible mental problems, which are probably related to the recent loss of her husband and daughter.

When the narrator finishes his work, the woman invites him to her daughter's room and asks him to speculate and describe what the daughter is or was like:

> "What do you think," she said while looking out in the window, "about *her*?" […]
>
> "I've never met her. I don't know," I said.
>
> "Most women, you can tell what they're like if you look at their clothes," she said.
>
> I thought about my girlfriend. I tried to remember what sort of clothes she wore. Nothing came to mind. Only vague images about her appeared. […] Had I known her at all?
>
> "I don't know," I said again.
>
> "Any impression is fine. Whatever comes to mind […]."

> "She seems to be very nice and smart," I said. "Not pushy but not shy either. Upper mid-grade in her class. She goes to a women's college or junior college. Doesn't have many friends, but she is close to them… am I on target? […]."
>
> I was beginning to get a feel for *her* gradually coming into the room. *She* was like a blurred white shadow. No face, no hands, no legs, nothing. I saw her in the distorted space that the sea of light created.
>
> (Murakami, 2000: 180–2, original emphasis and my underlines)

While the word "*her*" is italicised three times in the dialogue, the "her" in the last sentence is not. Sakai (2001: 23) argues that as the protagonist narrates the story of the missing girl, she is replaced by his own missing girl, the girl who just left him. His difficulty in imagining *her* makes him realise that he cannot remember anything about "her"; the operation reveals to him his ignorance of his girlfriend. His description of *her*/"her" goes on:

> "She has a boyfriend," I continued. "One or two. I'm not sure. But that's not important. The problem is… she hasn't really attached herself to anything. Her body, her thoughts, things she's seeking, things others are seeking in her… the whole lot."
>
> (Murakami, 2000: 182)

As Sakai says, here, "she" begins to overlap with the narrator himself (Sakai, 2001: 24). It is the narrator who "hasn't really attached [himself] to anything." Similarly, when he "saw her in the distorted space that the sea of light created," he saw himself in the "distorted space," unable to identify where and who he should feel attached to. While he tries to create a story about the other, he ends up talking about his own story, through which he is made to face his problem of identifying his location. This demonstrates the function of narrative, in which the narrator acquires an opportunity to put himself into a different context and through which he comes to understand his own problems.

However, he cannot easily digest the effects of narrating a story and refuses to make it clear. He says, "I was confused. I did understand what my words meant. But I wasn't sure who the words described or who they were directed to. I was exhausted, and wanted to sleep" (Murakami, 2000: 183).

The narrator's desire for sleep implies his remaining hesitation to confront his own struggle, because he "didn't think that making everything clear would make anything easier" (Murakami, 2000: 183). Despite his reluctance to face his essential problem, the effects of the operation lead him to finally disclose the crucial part of the letter from his girlfriend: "[y]ou're probably seeking many things in me," my girlfriend wrote, "but I don't feel you actually want anything in me" (ibid.: 186).

In the letter, the girlfriend clearly states that the problem in their relationship lay in his self-imposed isolation, whose rigidity has been demonstrated through his exclusive focus on his own preferences and his unwillingness to engage in other people's judgements. The narrator's reluctance to disclose this line signifies his hesitation to confront this problem and therefore the heavy impact of this line on him. However, he refuses to give her letter further thought, saying, "[a]ll I want is to mow a good lawn, I said to myself" (Murakami, 2000: 186). The narrator's act of recounting the story of the missing girl for the alcoholic woman provides her with passing relief, as demonstrated by the fact that she asks him to come back again and gives him a tip. However, more importantly, the story demonstrates the crucial effects of narrative on the self, through which the narrator is reminded of his own problems.

When the story begins, the current narrator of "The Last Lawn of the Afternoon" hesitates to admit any apparent change in himself: "I don't think I myself have changed much" (Murakami, 2000: 149). However, after reproducing his past through narrating, he concludes his story by saying, "I've never mowed a lawn since" (ibid.: 187), which seems to imply that he has grown out of his tendency to isolate himself. Significantly, he has moved from mowing lawns to writing novels. However, as Yamane Yumie explains, the narrator's attitude towards writing is in conflict with his past confidence towards mowing lawns (2007: 253). At the beginning of the story, before he reveals his past episode, the narrator expresses his uncertainty about writing through the metaphor of kittens:

> However hard you try to put things into shape, the context goes this way and that until it becomes unrecognisable. It's as if I'm piling up dozing kittens. They're warm and unstable. Thinking that these things sell as products—as sellable products—sometimes I feel really embarrassed. It even makes me blush. When I blush, everyone in the world blushes.
>
> (Murakami, 2000: 151)

Unlike grass cutting, writing a novel is beyond one's control. Words spin out of control, so much so that writing feels like piling up kittens. The comparison with kittens presents writing as an act of dealing with living creatures (Yamane, 2007: 253); it is nicely "warm" yet "unstable." The instability indicates the author's lack of confidence in his command of writing. However, it also foregrounds the fact that a story's ability to resonate rests both on the writer and on the reader. The narrator's hesitation thus stems from his understanding of the complexity of the social and individual function of storytelling.

Wolfgang Iser argues that a novel is the joint work of a writer and a reader:

> [t]he convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but

> must always remain virtual, as is it not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader.
> (Iser, 1972: 279)

A novel never works until it has both a writer who means and a reader who understands. It is such interdependency that brings the text into being. In other words, a story works when it engages others, since its interpretation relies on them. Writing a novel is not a self-contained job like mowing lawns.

In the following section, shifting the attention to Murakami's attitude towards the cultural Other in the same period, I discuss how the author's view on the mutual relationship between text and readers, too, is related to his characters' hesitation about writing as a form of engaging others.

"America" as an Empty Sign

Murakami's novels are replete with American cultural products such as music, novels, and food, which often promote an Americanised image of the author. Such an image is further enhanced through his increasing appearance in the Western media since the 1990s, when he made a long-term stay in the US. During this period, Murakami participated in a large number of interviews with American journalists and scholars. He also started to make public speeches outside Japan when he received an international literary prize. Interestingly, despite the prevailing image of Murakami as an enthusiast of the US, the author used to show little interest in visiting America.

In an essay published in 1983, "Kigō to shite no Amerika" ("America as A Sign"), that he wrote before ever travelling to America, Murakami says:

> I wouldn't say that I'm determined not to go to America, but I just don't go because I'm not particularly interested in it. Neither the country nor the people interest me.
> (Murakami, 1983a: 248)

Murakami further notes that his interest lies in "America as a sign." He clarifies what he means by describing a problem he encountered when he was translating an American novel and came across the expression "You're cookin' with Crisco." Not knowing what "Crisco" meant, he asked a friend and discovered that it is a famous American cooking oil brand, and the expression has a similar meaning to "cookin' with gas." He expresses the difficulty of understanding such a vernacular expression without living in the country. However, rather than lamenting his lack of knowledge, he appreciates his unfamiliarity with the culture because it offers him a special feel for the foreign word. He describes his

own picture of "Crisco": it has a solid body and is about the size of a lump of sugar contained in a cube-shaped yellow can, which makes a dry sound when shaken. Even if the image of "Crisco" he describes is far from the original, he emphasises the "sign" that only he pictures, that is, "the America that I perceive and imagine inside me [… and] the America I look at through my small window" (ibid.: 249). In other words, Murakami enjoys his unfamiliarity with the foreign expression because it provides him with a perception of it as a special "sign." He appreciates his cultural distance from the object as a productive device.

Murakami also explains that "America" as a sign helps him disconnect himself from the Japanese cultural context. He explains that "America" plays a role as "defence" against what he calls the "concentric circles" that link him with his "family, community (school and work), and nation":

> I brought into my life a circle called "America" that is located outside my concentric circles and has a different centre. That is, America as an arbitrary centre. […] that's a fixed point, through which a self can relativise itself. I'm sure that everybody conceives such points in their mind. In my case, it just happened to be America.
>
> (Murakami, 1983a: 249–50)

The "arbitrary centre" in Murakami's words can be considered an "empty signifier," through which he tries to move away from the conventional centre of his life and relativise his cultural background. In another interview, he says that he chose American literature because of its accessibility while growing up in Kōbe, but as long as it produces a separation effect, the "arbitrary centre" could be something else: "it could be Polish or Greek" (Kawamoto, 1985b: 40).

Regarding his employment of the estrangement effects through "America," Murakami compares himself with Raymond Chandler:

> [Chandler] grew up as an ordinary English person, and went over to America. He experienced the hard-boiled culture of the West Coast over the course of his life. That means America was fantasy for him. […] He was interested in the act of taking America as an alternative world. […] American novels played a similar function for me. By drawing a different world toward my side, my world is relativised. […] A sort of "foreignness" is a device through which I can relativise the presence of myself.
>
> (Murakami, 1989: 25)

Murakami's comparison between his own cross-cultural experience between Japan and America, and that of Chandler's between England and America, in terms of the separation effects, suggests that cultural

hierarchy is less relevant to him when discussing the act of bridging cultures and languages. Although the author's preference for American culture is undeniable, Murakami's employment of the cultural Other in his stories is a salient factor in his attempt to broaden the representation of distancing effects.

Murakami's effective representation of "America" as a sign also appears in his creation of the fictional American character Derek Heartfield in *Hear the Wind Sing* that I discussed earlier. The narrator introduces Heartfield as the greatest literary influence on his own writing. The meticulous description of the writer easily leads readers to believe he exists in reality. Murakami even devotes a tribute to the writer in the epilogue of the novel under his own name, where he notes how he found Heartfield's novel in a bookstore in his hometown of Kōbe and visited the writer's grave in Ohio. Regarding this, Ōtsuka Eiji argues that Murakami fabricated the American writer in order to stress his own lack of roots (2006: 198), which corresponds to his remark above that he employed "America" to disconnect himself from Japan.

Because of Murakami's frequent comments about being influenced by American writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Truman Capote, Kurt Vonnegut, and Raymond Chandler, there is a case where his reference to Heartfield is seen as an imitation of Vonnegut's description of Kilgore Trout, the hallmark character of Vonnegut's prose. However, despite recurrent references to American cultural products and writers in the novel, Murakami does not feature an existing American writer as the model for his narrator. This is further complicated if we consider Heartfield to be a shadow of Nezumi, as I argued earlier. The dark atmosphere of the past associated with Nezumi, whose writing reminds us of the controversial Japanese literary genre, the I-novel, is dispelled when he is replaced with Heartfield. The narrator's apparently lighthearted introduction of this American writer is revealed to have deeper significance: describing Heartfield as an important influence on his writing, the narrator is able to distance his Japanese cultural and historical background and to effectively conceal his connection with Nezumi and his Japanese past.

His Japanese background is neutralised also by the juxtaposition of Japanese and American events. In his analysis of the same novel, Imai Kiyoto (1990) points out that the Japanese memories of the 1960s in Murakami's work are always associated with American culture and events. When the protagonist says that his only picture of his "third girlfriend" has a notation of the year 1963 on its back, he immediately comments, "that's the year when Kennedy was shot in the head." When the woman he meets at Jay's bar mentions that she was a university student in 1960—the year when the first nationwide student protest against the renewal of the US-Japan security treaty occurred—the narrator is reluctant to develop their conversation and immediately leaves the bar.

The scene is followed by his whistling the "Mickey Mouse Club March," a song from the American animation "Disneyland" popularly broadcast in Japan in the 1960s. Imai explains that the narrator replaces his memories of home with American memories, and this is how Murakami removes himself from the "concentric circles" of Japan.

Murakami's wilful distancing from America is also comparable with his protagonists' wilful distancing from others for the sake of protecting themselves. Yet, as Susan Napier (1996) aptly notes, in Murakami's description of America the Japanese self that is threatened by the cultural Other, a common scenario portrayed in Japanese literature from the Meiji period to the post-war period, rarely exists. Therefore, it is not productive to discuss his way of employing "America" within the conventional framework of international relations. His focus is rather on the effects caused by the act of crossing different cultures and languages. Murakami deliberately tries to maintain a blank canvas on which to imagine foreign signs without acquired knowledge. The distancing effects that Murakami tries to promote through *monogatari* thus appear also in his own way of relating to the cultural Other. I will examine the implications of his exploration of cross-cultural effects in greater depth in Chapter 6.

Murakami's employment of "America" is revolutionary also because he disconnects his description of America from any allusion to the idea of the "father." In his analysis of the reception of Murakami's works in Japan, Ichikawa Makoto (2010) argues that the negative reaction to his works at the time of their debut was due to his description of America. His first two novels were nominated for the Akutagawa prize, arguably the most prestigious literary prize in Japan, yet he failed on both occasions. Based on research on the judges' comments and the works that won the prize instead of Murakami's novels, Ichikawa claims that his works were rejected because he did not portray America as the "father."

At the time of Murakami's debut, conventional post-war literature in which novels commonly dealt with the theme of the "Japanese father" beat by the "American father" were still the standard. In contrast, Murakami's works did not feature a father or family; instead, they generally portrayed a single man or a married man without children. In 1980, the year when Murakami's *Pinball, 1973* was rejected by the judges, the prize was awarded to Otsuji Katsuhiko's novel titled *Chichi ga kieta* (*My Father Vanished*). The judges' unfamiliarity with Murakami's way of treating America is evident in the comment on Otsuji's work by one of the judges, Yasuoka Shōtarō: "[i]t was the most reasonable [among the all nominated works], and it was comfortable to read" (Ichikawa, 2010: 96–7). Yasuoka's use of words like "reasonable" and "comfortable" is indicative of the type of novel that was expected when Murakami started to write, implying by contrast the groundbreaking nature of his departure from those conventions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, focusing on Murakami's early works, I examined his protagonists' long-term struggle to write a novel and his process of overcoming the difficulty through storytelling as a form of engagement. The author's focus on the communicative dimension of narrative is also an indication of his disagreement with mainstream modern Japanese literature's exclusive nature.

Murakami's novels and short story demonstrate the effective use of narrative in order to reckon with the past failures of his generation. This can be further extended to the author's disapproval of the Japanese I-novel. Nezumi's novels that portray the collective members' internal agony share a critical problem with the closed nature of the I-novel. The author thus declares his will to write as a form of opening himself to others while his hesitation remains strong.

Murakami's protagonists' hesitation to interact with others also appears in the author's own attitude towards the American Other. While he employs "America" as an arbitrary point that disconnects him from Japan, this approach also implies his desire for a comfortable distance from it. Yet, his wilful exploration of distancing effects through the cultural Other contributes to developing his understanding of *monogatari*. In the next chapter, I will examine the function of *monogatari* as operating paradoxically through the characters' failure to acknowledge these narrating effects.

Note

1 The story was first released in the magazine *Takarajima* in 1982.

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4 Narrativising Memories

Murakami's Attempt at a Realist Novel in *Norwegian Wood*

Norwegian Wood (*Noruwei no mori*, 1987) presents a watershed moment in terms of Murakami's relationship with the cultural Other. He left Japan for Europe with his wife in 1986 when he was 37. They stayed in Italy, Greece, and England for a total of three years, where he wrote *Norwegian Wood* and *Dance Dance Dance* (*Dansu Danssu Dansu*, 1988). This caused a drastic change in Murakami's attitude towards foreign cultures. As explained in Chapter 3, he had previously expressed that he was not interested in going to the West, preferring rather to "peep" at it safely from a small window.

What ultimately encouraged the author to leave Japan was his growing popularity, which started to affect his private life. In *Distant Drums* (*Tōi taiko*, 1990), a collection of essays based on his travels in Europe, Murakami recalls how he was annoyed by numerous phone calls from publishers and universities requesting interviews, essays, and lectures when he was living in Japan: "[i]n my mind, the phone is still ringing, which is like the buzzing of bees. It's a phone. The phone is ringing. Ring ring ring ring ring ring" (Murakami, 2001: 39). He says the "bees" in Japan also include critics' reviews of his works. He did not want to be distracted by the increasing number of reviews of his novels, which he was constantly exposed to while he was in Japan.

Murakami says he does not mean to blame anyone for his loss of privacy because he himself is "taking part in it" (Murakami, 2001: 40); he knows that, through his pursuit of his career as a writer, he invites a situation where he puts his privacy at risk. This dilemma "irritates [him] and makes [him] feel helpless" (ibid.: 40).

Arriving at his first destination, Rome, Murakami's exhaustion from life in Tokyo remained unhealed. The "bees" were constantly buzzing in his mind. Murakami gave up driving these "bees" out of his mind, and instead named them "Giorgio" and "Carlo" to add some Italian flavour. These "bees" spoke to him in his mind:

> Buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz. We always catch up with you wherever you go. You can't leave us at all. […] Nobody likes you, and the situation will only get worse. I say, "That's not true. I'll do my job

> properly and write a novel. You're the ones that have to vanish." Even if you do, Giorgio or Carlo says, we'll come back to you. That's our job. "I'll take my time. I still have a long way to go," I say. Again, nobody likes you. Everyone'll hate you eventually. Writing a novel is only a useless act. Buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz buzz.
>
> (Murakami, 2001: 41)

The author's exhaustion and hesitation about his growing popularity also affected his confidence as a writer, as the "bees" agitated him.

After escaping from his hectic life in Japan, Murakami was interested in experiencing an unfamiliar place, where he believed that his experience of alienation would take him deeper into his mind: "[i]n a life of isolation, surrounded by a different culture, I wanted to dig the earth where I stood as deeply as possible" (Murakami, 2001: 21). Murakami describes his and his wife's uncategorised status neither as tourists nor residents, but as "resident tourists" (*jōchū-teki ryokō-sha*) (ibid.: 20). In this way, he aimed to take advantage of his floating position detached from his country. He admits the contribution of his sojourn abroad to the works he wrote there: "[in Japan] I would not have 'gone into' [my stories] this immediately and deeply. […] the only thing I can surely say about *Norwegian Wood* is that the shadows of foreign countries are fatefully soaked in it" (ibid.: 21). The act of distancing himself from Japan ultimately turned out to be productive by contributing to essential elements of the works he wrote following his time overseas.

The act of distancing also made for an isolating experience. Murakami underwent a period of great solitude in these foreign countries, where he had no friends and little command of the local languages. Furthermore, because of his unfamiliarity with these foreign environments, his travel was often troublesome, noisy, inconvenient, cold, or disorderly. Having given up his position as a distant cultural observer, he was then driven to be involved with the Other directly. The Other had become tangible and real, and intruded upon the author's mind.

The author's isolation and the alien environment also affected his writing. While writing *Norwegian Wood* in Palermo, wherein Murakami found it particularly difficult to settle because of the city's exceeding noise and disorder, he had a strange dream "in which dead kittens were stuffed in a wine bottle. The kittens drowned with their eyes wide open in surprise" (Murakami, 2001: 211). Compared to the kittens that are warm with life, which I described in the previous chapter, the "kittens" at this stage drown, which might reflect the difficulty of his life in an unfamiliar environment as well as his growing uncertainty about writing.

Murakami states that this encouraged him to reconnect with the Japanese language: "Drifting around Europe, I tried to connect my mind with Japan through the act of writing in Japanese" (ibid.: 23). He decided to write some sketches based on his travel for the purpose of

"keeping my mind, which easily goes off course in a foreign country, close to the stability of writing" (ibid.: 22).

The significant impact of Murakami's experience overseas and his decision to distance himself from his home country are evident in *Norwegian Wood*. When the novel starts, the 37-year-old narrator Watanabe Tōru is on a plane landing in Germany in 1987, the year when the novel was written and released. Arriving in Germany, he grumbles: "[w]ell (*yareyare*), Germany again" (Murakami, 2007b: 7). While Murakami's travel in Europe did not include Germany, the character's tiredness reflects the author's own fatigue from his travel from one place to another.

Murakami's flight from Japan to escape from the "bees" in his mind is also reminiscent of the protagonist of the novel, Watanabe, who, wanting to escape from the memory of his old friend's death, starts a new life in Tokyo where nobody knows him. The narrator on the plane is the same age as Murakami was when he first left Japan for his long sojourn overseas. More importantly, the way the cultural Other is now "real" for Murakami is reflected in his character's deeper relationship with others. Much in the same way that Murakami's absolute distance from the cultural Other is not retrievable, the narrator is required to face the Other.

One of Murakami's American translators, Philip Gabriel (2002: 153) says that reading the author's *Distant Drums*, "one often learns more about Murakami's thought processes than about Greece or Italy." This reflects the function of writing, which inevitably includes the writer's self. In *Distant Drums*, Murakami states that he tried to "write what I saw as I saw it" (Murakami, 2001: 23). Considering that he is self-conscious about his own perspective as an observer of foreign cultures, *Distant Drums* is Murakami's own travel book rather than *any* travel book.

Examining the author's other travel essays, Gabriel (2002: 152) also points out that Murakami's writing begins as "an ostensible attempt to confront the exotic and the unfamiliar that ends up obsessed with the familiar." Particularly, by focusing on another travel book of Murakami's, *Remote Region, Close Region* (*Henkyō kinkyō*, 1998), Gabriel explains that Murakami experiences a sense of nostalgia throughout his travels; the rural scenes in Mexico where Indians gather around a TV set or enjoy Indian festivals remind him of Japan in the 1950s when he saw a similar landscape; in Nomonhan, the pointless slaughter instigated by the Japanese during the Second World War evokes for Murakami the similar closed social system in Japan today. Thus, through his experience of foreign cultures, Murakami learns more about his own culture. As Gabriel says, "one travels [...] only to return to the familiar" (Gabriel, 2002: 155). On the other hand, travel also causes a reverse effect on the familiar; "one returns to the familiar only to find it has become now the defamiliarized, the *un*familiar" (ibid., original emphasis). The familiar looks unfamiliar not only because the place itself changes during one's absence, but also because one sees it differently after the experience of

travelling. In this sense, Murakami makes a similar comment on the relationship between travelling and writing fiction:

> You ultimately want to return to the starting point safely. Writing fiction is the same; no matter how far you go, or how deep a place you go to, in the end when you finish writing, you have to return to the place where you started. That is the final destination. However, the starting point to which you return is never the starting point where you actually started.
>
> (Kelts, 2009: unpaged)

Norwegian Wood deals with themes of travelling and writing. When the novel starts, the current narrator hears the Beatles' song "Norwegian Wood" on the plane to Germany. The song gives him a flashback of Naoko, his old friend/girlfriend who killed herself at the age of 20. She was also the ex-girlfriend of his best friend Kizuki who committed suicide at the age of 17. "Norwegian Wood" is a song he often listened to with Naoko. The flashback makes the narrator feel overwhelmed (*konran*), and he tightly holds his head in his arms until a flight attendant comes to offer help. In a flashback, he sees Naoko talking about a "well" in a meadow, a metaphor for the depth of her mental illness, and recalls his promise to Naoko that he will always remember her. Then, he starts to narrate Naoko's story as a way to fulfil his promise to her. The scene returns back to 1968, and the then 18-year-old protagonist takes over the narrating role.

The narrator's traumatic reaction to the memory of Naoko implies that the aim of the novel is to confront her and his past. In terms of the act of recalling the past, Murakami makes an important remark about the close relationship between memory and *monogatari* in *Underground*:

> A psychologist says, "people's memory is only their 'personal interpretation' of an event." Through the device of memory, we sometimes revise an experience to clarify it; eliminate unsuitable parts; modify the chronology; add some explanation to unclear parts; mix one's own memory and somebody's, and replace one with the other when necessary. We often carry out these operations unconsciously. In short, we might be able to say, "to some extent, we narrativise (*monogatari-ka*) the memory of our experiences."
>
> (Murakami, 1999: 755)

The author means that even if the descriptions of the sarin gas attack vary depending on the interviewees, each story is a true *monogatari* for the individual victims. Memory functions like *monogatari*; the way a memory is narrated reflects how the memory is situated in the person. Similarly, in *Norwegian Wood*, the narrator's recollection of his past

turns out to be his reflection on himself. Therefore, the act of narrating the past is the act of narrating the current self. While the novel ends when Watanabe expresses his sense of loss, asking himself: "*where am I now*?" (Murakami, 2007b: 419, original emphasis), I argue that his trouble identifying his location lies in his failure to understand the function of narrating, as we will see.

In earlier chapters, I discussed the way writing and narrating are related to the act of broadening one's perspective and engaging others; they are a way of reflecting on oneself through an understanding of others. On the other hand, writing could also be a form of escape. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, reflecting on his past struggle with writing, the protagonist states:

> [...] writing is a fun activity. Compared to the hardness of life, writing by putting meanings on texts is far easier. In my teens, I was shocked by this fact and couldn't say anything for a week. If I were sensible enough, the world would be at my mercy; I could overturn all the existing values and change the flow of time... so I thought. Unfortunately, it was a while after that I realised it had been a pitfall.
> (Murakami, 2008: 12)

He explains that writing can be complicit with value making. However, he notes that writing for the purpose of manipulating others will end in failure. In *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami demonstrates this function of narrative paradoxically through the narrator's failure to recall his past. While the author's early works tend to be about the characters' recollection of the past as a preparation for opening themselves up through writing, *Norwegian Wood* more specifically illustrates the structure of memory as *monogatari* reflecting one's current state of mind.

Another important aspect of *Norwegian Wood* is Murakami's attempt at a realist work. With the growing popularity of his works, Murakami decided to write a realist novel, a new genre for him, as his next step: "I wanted to prove my skills to write novels in a realist style, and push the boundaries of my writing skills" (Matsuie, 2010: 23). In order to emphasise that the work is a realist novel, the label of "a 100% romance" was attached to the cover of the hardcover edition, which ended up calling greater attention from the readers and critics to the characters' love relationship, although Murakami later protested the exceeding allocation of meaning to this expression (Murakami, 2007a: VIII). The realist novel Murakami meant to produce is different from the Japanese traditional I-novel, from which he constantly tries to distance his works. According to his own definition, "a realist novel is something in which realistic events are portrayed in a realistic way. They don't have to be true" (Murakami, 1989: 174). This marks a meaningful contrast with the I-novel writers who aimed at limiting their writing to events that

happened in reality even though the events sounded unrealistic. By distancing his writing from the I-novels, Murakami tries to emphasise the importance of the effects of realistic depictions rather than that of the technique. He tried to challenge the Japanese realist tradition through his own form of realist novel, although ultimately his work was roundly criticised for his new realist style (ibid.).

In terms of narrative technique, almost all of the dialogues in the novel are written in the form of direct speech and there are only a few described dialogues. This is a common feature of Murakami's work, yet it carries nuanced meanings in this novel in particular. The narrator constantly reproduces what he hears and what he says, instead of explaining the conversation in a descriptive form. As scholars of narratology have pointed out, direct discourse generally "tries to create the illusion that it is not [the narrator] who speaks" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 106). Watanabe's narration easily gives the readers a sense of truthfulness, leading them to forget that the story is restated by the narrator. Murakami's frequent use of direct dialogue also allows the story to avoid emotional descriptions. While Watanabe hears a number of sensitive stories about other characters, he rarely shows any emotional reaction to them.

In terms of narrative technique, Murakami says he tried to write a realist novel in which "sentences are simple [...] and flow quickly [... And] emotions are not described as distinguished but as subtle so that something seemingly unimportant to the main plot rather draws the reader's attention" (Murakami, 2007a: XI). This sense of detachedness is exemplified by the limited use of emotive vocabulary in *Norwegian Wood*. There is not much variation in the emotional words in the novel, which mainly cluster around *sabishii* (lonely, isolated), *kanashii* (sad, sorrowful), and *tsurai* (hard, painful). Almost all the conversations and illustrations related to the characters' feelings are categorised in these terms.[1] In the first chapter of the novel, the narrator on the plane feels unwell and a German flight attendant asks him in English if he is sick. In response, he says, "*daijōbu desu. Arigatou. Chotto kanashikunatta dakedakara*" (Murakami, 2007b: 8), meaning "I'm okay, thank you. I just got a little sad there for a moment." Murakami also puts his own English translation in the original text next to the Japanese sentence: "It's all right now, thank you. I only felt lonely, you know," although it seems to be a mistranslation. The fact that the author translates *kanashii* (of *kanashikunatta*) as "lonely," which is rather closer to *sabishii* in Japanese, implies the interchangeability of the two words in the author's interpretation.

In the novel, the word used to describe the character's most common psychological reaction is *konran* (confusion, disorder). When the novel starts, the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood" being played on the plane overwhelms the narrator.[2] It is interesting to note that Murakami uses *konran* to describe a certain nuance of mental suffering, considering that

it is not necessarily a psychological term and lacks the connotation of mental pain. The term's less psychological tone encapsulates the narrator and other characters' trouble expressing their feelings and their hesitation to deal with their problems. Particularly, the narrator, even 18 years after Naoko's death, only draws on *konran* to express himself.

The narrator, while avoiding emotive vocabulary, tends to focus on giving detailed information such as descriptions of the characters' gestures, the tone of their voices, or facial expressions. For example, instead of saying that "she became extremely sad," the narrator recalls that "she suddenly burst into tears, shuddering. Folding her body forward and burying her face in her hands, she sobbed" (ibid.: 166). Such a descriptive form often contributes to increasing the dramatic atmosphere in the story by leaving the characters' feelings to be inferred by the reader (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 108). The detailed explanation of the characters' actions arouses the reader's imagination more effectively and dramatically than the use of emotive vocabulary that easily frames the reader's perception. In this sense, the limited use of vocabulary paradoxically functions to increase the sentimental atmosphere in the novel by engaging the reader's own interpretation. This reflects the common reception of the story as replete with emotional tone.[3]

Without relying on emotive vocabulary, he tries to create a "realistic" portrayal of the characters' minds. Considering this aspect along with the author's above argument that memory is constructed like *monogatari*, in this chapter I discuss how the narrator's process of recollecting his past functions as a reflection on his current state of mind and I clarify the "realistic" description Murakami intends to achieve. This discussion further provides a nuanced understanding of the narrator's final failure to identify his psychological location, asking himself "*where am I now?*"

Urgency of Narrating the Past: Naoko's Symptoms

In the first chapter of *Norwegian Wood*, suffering from his flashback on the plane, the 37-year-old narrator reveals his past failure to organise his memories of Naoko because of their rawness and declares his will to try again. From the second chapter onwards, the narrative shifts to 1968, and the events follow a chronological order. This first chapter requires significant attention because it illustrates how the narrator comes to recall his past relationship with Naoko. In his flashback, he is walking with her in the meadow. He writes:

> Of course, I can remember her face if there is enough time. […] However, it takes me a while to put the pieces of her picture together. And the more years pass, the more time I need for it. […] The distance from Naoko has been increasing in my memory, in the same way that I have been moving away from where I once was. Then the

> scenery of the meadow in October comes into my mind repeatedly like a symbolic scene in a movie. It constantly kicks some part of my mind. Wake up, I'm still here, it says. Wake up and think about why I'm still here. This is the reason that I'm writing this. I'm the sort of person who can't help but put everything in writing to deal with it.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 9–11)

The passage explains that even after 18 years, the remaining impact of the past distresses the protagonist, urging him to take action, as exemplified by the "kicks" he feels in his mind. He believes that his successful recollection and the reconstruction of Naoko's memory will help him overcome the negative impact of the past.

Back in 1968, when he was a university student, Watanabe runs into Naoko in Tokyo a year after Kizuki's death. They become close to each other and eventually build a romantic relationship. However, shortly after their first sexual encounter on her 20th birthday, Watanabe discovers that she has left for a sanatorium to cure her mental illness. Reiko, Naoko's roommate in the sanatorium, later explains to the protagonist that Naoko's problem started when Kizuki committed suicide during their high school years. According to Naoko, she and Kizuki grew up together like an inseparable pair, and were heavily dependent on each other. Such dependency allowed them to escape from "the oppressiveness of sex and the swelling of the ego that children usually experience in puberty" (Murakami, 2007b: 188). Like the characters in Murakami's early works, their closed nature usually supports their ability to deal with their internal conflict with others. Yet, as is exemplified by this couple, their closed nature ultimately causes them to a collapse. With Kizuki's death, she has lost her means of relating to people. Naoko's crucial problem is embodied by her difficulty expressing herself in language. She explains to Watanabe:

> I can never say what I want to say [...] It's been like this for a while. When I try to say something, I only come up with wrong words or the opposite words from what I mean. If I try to correct myself, it only makes it worse and I lose track of what I was first going to say. It's like I'm split in two and chasing the other part. [...] The other part of me always has the right words, which this part of me can't catch.
>
> (Ibid.: 34)

Naoko cannot stop wondering if the words she has uttered are proper; as Fuminobu Murakami (2005: 33) says, her problem lies in the "signifying chain snap." In the sanatorium, Naoko further confronts her problem with language. As a sign of her critical condition, she eventually finds difficulty in writing a letter, which is followed by her suicide. Her difficulty in writing recalls Nezumi's failure to express himself (cf. Chapter 3) because of his heavy reliance on language rather than storytelling.

While Naoko struggles to explain her essential problem throughout the novel, in the narrator's flashback in the first chapter she effectively describes the criticality of her condition with the use of the metaphor of a deep "well." Walking in the meadow, she explains that the well is "really, really deep" and people that fall into it cannot come back, and despite its danger, "nobody knows where it is" (Murakami, 2007b: 11). The worst case, she continues, is that of people who survive at the bottom of the well and "die in there, little by little, alone" (ibid.: 12). Here, she successfully expresses the gravity of her suffering by using the metaphor of a well; her condition is embodied by the unfortunate survivors at the bottom of the well, who wait alone for their gradual death without any hope. She continues to say, "as long as I'm at your side, I won't fall into the well" (ibid.). In response, Watanabe declares, "then you can be always with me" (ibid.). She appreciates his offer, but she claims that it would not be possible because "being always with her" means, for her, looking after her every day, 24 hours a day, and she is afraid that sooner or later he would become sick of "babysitting" her. In return, Watanabe says, "but your problem won't continue for the rest of your life […] you take your troubles too seriously" (ibid.: 14). He even advises her to stop thinking and relax. Naoko's response expresses strong disappointment:

> "How can you say that?" Naoko said in a dry voice. Her voice made me realise that I had said something I shouldn't have. "[…] I know that I would feel better if I relax, but it wouldn't be any help. Listen, if I relaxed I would fall to pieces. […] If I relaxed I wouldn't be able to get back. I would break apart and would be blown away. […] Not knowing anything, how can you say that you will look after me? […] I'm more confused than you've ever imagined."
>
> (Ibid.: 14–15)

Naoko further blames him for having had sex with her: "why did you sleep with me that time? Why didn't you leave me alone?" (ibid.: 15). This is the only scene where Naoko clearly blames Watanabe in the novel. When she becomes emotional in the following part of the novel, she usually cries and is unable to explain the reason for her tears. Here, in the flashback, she distinctly criticises Watanabe's carelessness and lack of understanding. Watanabe's regret, implied in his remark that "I had said something I shouldn't have," shows that he realises his own culpability.

In this conversation, while Naoko implicitly expresses her desire to stay with him if possible, she simultaneously acknowledges the impropriety of her dependency on him. She is aware of the potential failure of his "babysitting," something she and Kizuki experienced and that "suffocated" them throughout their relationship. Naoko does not want to repeat the same mistake, but she also notices that she does need somebody

like Kizuki. Moreover, pointing out his careless expression of his will to support her, she blames him for his undetermined resolution to relate to her, which further stresses his ignorance about her and himself.

Naoko's disappointment comes from Watanabe's failure to understand the depth of her illness and his careless offer of support. This sudden flashback illustrates that the current narrator is finally acquiring some of the clues for his past fault in his treatment of Naoko, which constantly gives his mind "kicks." The scene in the meadow is reproduced in Chapter 6 of the novel, when Watanabe visits Naoko in the sanatorium and suggests to Naoko that they live together. However, Naoko, unlike in the flashback, only answers that "it would be nice, if I could" without revealing her emotions (Murakami, 2007b: 214). In the first chapter, the narrator adds:

> However, memories surely fade, and I've already forgotten a large part of them. Writing down my memories like this, I often feel terribly anxious because I'm afraid I might not remember the most important part of my memories. […] Anyway, this is all I can get so far. Clinging to these imperfect memories that are fading every single second, I'm writing this. Being so desperate, I would even suck bones. […] I think the more the memories of Naoko in me fade, the more deeply I'm able to understand her.
>
> (Ibid.: 17)

The narrator's psychological distance from Naoko makes it easier for him to face his memories of her, and this indicates the effect of distancing from the past. Understanding the motivation behind his attempt to narrate her story is important because it implies his complicity with recollection for the purpose of self-therapy (Endō, 1999: 60). While Watanabe's strong desire to deal with the past is clearly expressed, his gradual understanding of Naoko is predicated upon his memory fading.

As quoted earlier, Murakami explains that memory is a narrativised past experience. Recollection is not necessarily the act of re-experiencing one's past but rather that of reconstructing the memories according to the present need. When recollecting the past, the nature of that memory reflects the impact of the remembered events on one's current state. This suggests that Naoko's unusually explicit expression of her frustration in the narrator's flashback shows the weight of the current narrator's trouble handling his memory of her. The inconsistency between the two scenes in the meadow in the flashback and Chapter 6 results in a gap between the effect of the flashback and that of the reconstructed memory. Of importance is that 18 years after her death the narrator confronts "this" Naoko, who clearly accuses him. The narrator realises his past failure to understand Naoko; however, on the plane to Germany he can only react to it by being "confused."

Nevertheless, after exploring his misunderstanding of Naoko in his flashback and expressing his love for her and the long-term gravity of her presence (and absence) in his mind, the narrator concludes the chapter with the announcement of her indifference towards him: "I am very sad, because Naoko didn't even love me" (Murakami, 2007b: 18). The reader would find the conjunction disconnected, but the impact of this shocking remark is so strong that the reader is easily persuaded. A possible view is that, as Katō Kōichi (1999) says, he describes Naoko as indifferent to him for the purpose of diluting his guilt for not having saved her.

Contrary to the narrator's declaration of Naoko's indifference to him, in the story she does show her affection towards him in a number of ways. After their reunion, Watanabe often goes out with Naoko and realises that she is closing the distance between them. Naoko once asks him about his past relationship with his girlfriend. He tells her that he used to have a girlfriend in his hometown but he was not very in love with her:

> I said, I think I have a thing like a hard shell in my heart and not much can penetrate and come into it, and this is the reason that I can't love anybody seriously.
>
> "Haven't you ever loved anybody?" Naoko asked.
>
> "No one," I said.
>
> She did not ask further questions.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 44)

Naoko's silence in reply implies her negative reaction to his answer. This dialogue is carried out along the descriptions of their frequent dates, and is followed by Naoko's attempt to become intimate with him by pressing against his arm and putting her hand in his pocket. However, he refutes her attempts to approach him by saying that "these behaviours of hers had no meaning (but to ward off the cold) […] She was looking for *someone*'s arm, not mine, and she was looking for *someone*'s warmth, not mine. I almost felt guilty for being me" (ibid.: 44, original emphasis). Without this comment, Naoko's behaviour would be interpreted as an expression of affection for Watanabe. It is Murakami's narrative technique that brings to the fore the image of Naoko as not seriously in need of him.

Naoko also shows her interest in Watanabe elsewhere. Leaving for the sanatorium, she writes to him to explain her current situation. She apologises to him for having hurt him and begs him not to dislike her because that would make her "break into parts" (Murakami, 2007b: 127). In her next letter, she reports to Watanabe that her doctor has suggested that she make contact with people from the outside world. She says that Watanabe is the only person who comes to mind that she could make contact with, as her parents, who have trouble accepting the idea that she is receiving psychiatric treatment, would not be of much help. She declares that at the moment she is much in need

of his kindness and affection towards her (ibid.: 131). As soon as he receives the letter, Watanabe leaves for the sanatorium, where he and Naoko further develop their romantic relationship. Acknowledging her current trouble having a physical relationship, she asks him if he can wait for her recovery. She even says, "I'd like to become a suitable person for you." He answers, "Of course, I will wait for you until then" (ibid.: 207). In her last letter before she becomes unable to write, she tells him that while she has increasing difficulty in composing letters, she cannot resist writing because she still has a lot of things she wants to tell him (ibid.: 338). Thus, Naoko's affection for Watanabe can be perceived here and there; however, the narrator's frequent emphasis that she just needs someone, not necessarily him, confounds a straightforward interpretation of her words.

The narrator's narrative manipulation coheres with Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's discussion about the trope of unreliable narrators in fiction. According to her, the sources of narrative unreliability are "the narrator's limited knowledge, his personal involvement, and his problematic value-scheme" (1983: 100), and all three elements apply to Watanabe. This narrative manipulation is brought out in his description of Naoko, where he tries to overcome this dilemma. This argument also explains why scholars often criticise the narrator as an aggressor for hurting Naoko. Yet, remembering his long-term trouble with his past and his urgent need to deal with it, I would question the straightforward view of the narrator as an aggressor. I would rather focus on how he tries to deal with his past by making use of the effects of narrating his memories of Naoko.

The narrator's recollection for his own purposes further raises the issue of the disappearance of the current narrator. While the story is told in the form of retrospection, narrated by the current narrator, his voice seems to disappear shortly after the second chapter starts. While he reappears a couple of times, commenting on the old days, his presence is almost silent and his younger self instead takes over the narrating role until the end of the novel.

Reflecting on the shift in narration, Virginia Yeung argues that the disappearance of the older narrator leads to a narrowing of the distance between the narrator and the reader. While with the older narrator the reader "observes" the protagonist's life in the 1960s, with the younger narrator the reader "experiences" the story with the protagonist. This approach contributes to increasing a sense of realness, immediacy, and transparency in the story, and the emotional link between the readers and the protagonist is reinforced (Yeung, 2011: 6). In this way, the audience sympathises with the young narrator, which possibly dilutes his past "mistake" in his relationship with Naoko. The apparent prominence of the younger narrator paradoxically signifies the weight of the current narrator.

The weight of the current narrator in the story is more importantly demonstrated by the context of the 1980s in the novel. Murakami himself admits that while it is set in the late 1960s, the novel is narrated from the point of view of the 1980s when the piece was written (Murakami, 1989: 169). This is exemplified through another heroine, Midori, who Watanabe meets at his university. Midori's personality contrasts clearly with Naoko's. As Strecher observes, "Midori is everything that Naoko is not: she is talkative, outgoing, cheerful, and [...] sexually available" (2002: 50). Naoko is usually associated with death, while Midori is described as lively and fun. On the other hand, considering that from a young age Midori looked after her family in hospital and never felt enough affection from her parents, she is also close to the realm of death and mental suffering where Naoko resides. Yet, such a view is easily overlooked because of her representation as the opposite to Naoko, who is always associated with the image of a psychiatric patient.

Shibata Katsuji points out Midori's close association with issues of the 1980s. He explains that considering Midori's criticism of those who pretend to understand Marx as fakes, her remark that she used to play folksongs, and the availability of discos, porn movies, and magazines, it is more probable if we situate Midori in the 1980s than the 1960s. Similarly, the downturn of the private bookstore her family runs as well as the shopping arcade of her town due to the establishment of large-scale shopping centres is a major issue that was brought up in the 1980s. Shibata interprets Midori as Naoko's reincarnation that the protagonist meets in the 1980s (Shibata, 2009: 281–2). However, I would suggest a way of reading the novel in which the narrator in the 1980s is in a relationship with Midori while narrating the story of the 1960s. This is supported by Murakami's statement that while a triangular relationship is a key element of the novel, it does not apply to the link among Watanabe, Naoko, and Midori. He says, "*boku* and Midori, and *boku* and Naoko are parallel [...] There are two lines, but because any one-to-one relationship ends up with a deadlock, a subsidiary character joins them" (Murakami, 1989: 171). Murakami states that Watanabe and Naoko, and Watanabe and Midori are two independent couples, and the third person appears for the purpose of retrieving them from a deadlock rather than causing a rivalry.

The hypothesis that the narrator is currently in a relationship with Midori is instrumental in understanding the interaction between memory and *monogatari*. Again, the act of recollecting the past is influenced by a person's current situation. While remembering Naoko, the narrator is interrupted by his present relationship with Midori. His interaction with the two girls provides him with a hint to understanding his relationship with each partner; he acquires a better understanding of Naoko through the reflection on Midori, and through this he is able to approach a relationship with Midori. His attempt to recall Naoko

therefore includes his intention to deal with the past in order to improve his current relationship. This is suggested by the novel's structure that starts with the narrator's remark about Naoko's indifference to him and ends with his declaration of love for Midori. I now trace the operation of the narrator's recollection of his memories about Naoko and examine how the process and consequence elucidate Murakami's comparison between memory and *monogatari*.

Watanabe's Closure, the Importance of a Mediator, and a 100% Perfect Relationship

When *Norwegian Wood* was released, Shibata Motoyuki (1989: 19) noted that the piece was unique among the author's works, in the sense that the protagonist starts to show a willingness to open up to others. While his tendency to close himself off still remains, it is this subtle "improvement" of his closed nature that leads him to the final deadlock, as we will see.

Watanabe's wilful distancing began with the loss of his best friend Kizuki, who killed himself when he was 17. Losing his friend, Watanabe recalls, "for about ten months, since Kizuki died until my graduation, I could not identify my place in the world around me" (Murakami, 2007b: 39). Graduating from high school, he was desperate to leave his hometown to start a new life in a place where nobody knew him. Moving to Tokyo and entering university, he decided to forget everything related to Kizuki, "not to take things seriously and to keep a proper distance from everything" (ibid.: 39). In a similar way to the protagonists in Murakami's earlier works, Watanabe believes that keeping others at a distance and avoiding deep commitment will make his life easier. After his reunion with Naoko in Tokyo, and coming to terms with her mental illness, he encourages even her to forget about the past and about Kizuki: "what you have to do is to forget about it, and then you will be recovered." Yet, Naoko replies in a tone of disagreement, "only if that's possible" (ibid.: 214). Thus, Watanabe's strategy for dealing with his difficulties in life clusters around "forgetting" and "avoiding" while Naoko is sceptical of this approach.

Living in a university dormitory, Watanabe refuses to make close friends, associating only with acquaintances he can talk to briefly and make jokes with. His nerdy roommate, dubbed Storm Trooper (*Totsugekitai*), makes a favourable impression on Watanabe, but it is only because he, unlike other students, is not nosy about Watanabe's private life.

Nagasawa is the only friend Watanabe gets along with in the dormitory. Nagasawa, an upperclassman living in the same dormitory as Watanabe, is an elite student at the University of Tokyo and ultimately becomes a diplomat. He rarely lusts after money or status, and mocks

those who strive for them. He criticises other people for their lack of autonomy and their efforts to make their lives better, saying "looking at the world, I'm always sick of those who don't make any effort but only complain about everything in their life" (Murakami, 2007b: 293). Nagasawa states that he and Watanabe are similar because "like me, Watanabe is by nature interested only in himself" (ibid.: 301) and "he doesn't expect to be understood by others" (ibid.: 302). While Watanabe hesitates to agree with Nagasawa, it is true that he feels comfortable in Nagasawa's company because he has little interest in building a close relationship with others. Nagasawa also says about Watanabe, "in the case of this man, he hasn't come to understand himself yet and gets lost or hurt" (ibid.: 301). He explains that Watanabe's insufficient understanding of his own closure is the reason for his feeling lost or hurt.

Watanabe also likes Midori's father for his silence. When he starts to go out with Midori, she takes him to her father in the hospital, who hardly reacts to others because of his critical condition. When Watanabe is alone with him, he succeeds in feeding him a whole cucumber wrapped with seaweed, which later surprises Midori, as she usually struggles with his reluctance to eat. Watanabe becomes unusually talkative in front of her father, although the father gives no reply. He eventually realises, "now I hold a kind of favourable impression of this small, dying man" (Murakami, 2007b: 279).

Watanabe's wilful distancing is also acknowledged by Naoko. In her letter from the sanatorium, while apologising to Watanabe that her selfish behaviour in Tokyo might have hurt him, she says:

> I can't manage my life staying in a shell like you do. I don't know if you agree with me, but you give me that impression. This is the reason that I envy you, and that I ended up leading you on.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 127)

Putting a touch of irony in her words, Naoko acknowledges Watanabe's mental "shell" and the hardness of which does not easily allow him to be affected by others.

According to Reiko, on the last night she spent with Naoko, Naoko disclosed her inability to have sex excepting the time when she slept with Watanabe and said that she was unable to let anyone in or allow them to have an impact on her mind: "I don't want anyone to enter my mind again. I don't want anyone to ruin my mind again" (Murakami, 2007b: 405). A few hours after this, Naoko hanged herself. These circumstances illustrate that Naoko's crucial problem was the tenuous "block" in her mind against others' impact on her. She wanted to have a similar "shell" as a protection against the outside, and in this sense she envied the one Watanabe had.

Despite his friends' numerous indications of Watanabe's closed nature, he hardly reflects on their comments about him and is unaware of his important role in his friends' relationships. Despite the appearance of a romance, in *Norwegian Wood* the triangular relationships introduced are far from love triangles. Watanabe often plays the role of the third presence in the couples in the novel, yet not to form a love triangle but to support them as a mediator. When Murakami denies the triangular relationship among Watanabe, Naoko, and Midori in an early interview, he adds an explanation, "real triangles are the three of *boku*, Naoko and Kizuki, the three of *boku*, Naoko and Reiko, and the three of *boku*, Hatsumi and Nagasawa" (Murakami, 1989: 171). The author's weight on triangular relationships is highlighted by his comment that since this novel, he began giving his characters proper names for the purpose of describing three-way conversations (Furukawa, 2009: 32).

Reiko plays the role of adviser to Watanabe in terms of people's relationships. She most clearly points out Watanabe's inclination to close himself and tries to guide him to open up. When Watanabe first visits the sanatorium, Reiko explains to him the rules of the place. She says that in the sanatorium, they do not differentiate between doctors and patients but teach and help each other. She equally advises him: "you help Naoko, and she helps you" (Murakami, 2007b: 143). She encourages him not just to try to help Naoko but to understand that he is also the one who needs somebody's help. The roles in the sanatorium paradoxically remind us of the narrator's judgmental description of Naoko as a patient, one who needs help and support.

Reiko further explains to Watanabe that in the sanatorium visitors are not allowed to stay with the patients alone but have to include a third person, which in the case of Watanabe and Naoko is Reiko herself. She encourages Watanabe to keep his relationship with Naoko open and suggests cooperating as a group of three: "I think the three of us, you, Naoko and I, can help each other, if we try to be honest and really want to help each other. Working with three people can be greatly effective" (Murakami, 2007b: 146). In this way, Reiko implicitly warns Watanabe not to close his relationship with Naoko.

Naoko also expresses the importance of having a third person present for a couple. During Kizuki's lifetime, he and Naoko always appreciated Watanabe's company. Naoko tells Watanabe that Kizuki tried to keep his weakness hidden in front of Watanabe despite his moody personality. She says, "you were so important to us. You were like a link connecting us with the outside world. We tried to fit into the world through your mediation" (Murakami, 2007b: 188). However, as Naoko recognises, such a relationship cannot be sustained in the long term: "[s]uch closed little circles can't be maintained. Kizuki knew it, I knew it, and you knew it" (ibid.: 186–7). Once the third person becomes close enough to

the couple, their relationship becomes a closed circle. They have to look for another Other to keep their relationship open and to prevent them from suffocating in their closeness.

While Watanabe supported Naoko and Kizuki, it was Kizuki who mediated between the other two. The three seemed to be getting along together, but Watanabe recalls that whenever Kizuki left his seat, Watanabe and Naoko could not continue their conversation. After their reunion following Kizuki's death, Watanabe and Naoko spend a lot of time together, but their meetings are always accompanied by an awkward silence. Instead of sitting face to face, they tend to walk without talking much. As Yomota Inuhiko (2010: 157–8) says, the frequent description of Naoko's face in profile in the novel implies Watanabe's scarce opportunities to look into her face. Without Kizuki, their communication breaks down, the process of which is accelerated by their refusal to talk about their dead friend. Their sexual experience on Naoko's birthday is another awkward encounter without mental interaction. It is after Naoko leaves for the sanatorium that she finally starts to disclose her thoughts about Kizuki.

Similarly, Watanabe's role as a mediator is required by another couple, Nagasawa and Hatsumi. Like Naoko and Kizuki, Nagasawa and Hatsumi feel more at ease in Watanabe's company, as Nagasawa says to him, "both of us feel better and more comfortable when you are with us" (Murakami, 2007b: 291).

Love triangles are constructed based on one's longing for the Other's object of desire. This, Fukuda Kazuya (2003: 73–4) says, exemplifies the formation of modern individuality, in which the self identifies itself through competition with others. On the other hand, in the triangular relationships in *Norwegian Wood*, the third person is instrumental in supporting the couples rather than breaking them. Watanabe serves as a convenient mediator for the couples. However, while other characters well understand the importance of the mediator, Watanabe is not aware of his significant role. In Watanabe's flashback at the beginning of the novel, too, Naoko declines his offer of being beside her as a solution for her mental illness. Yet, he encourages her to forget the past and to start a new life with him. While observing Naoko's declining condition, he further develops a sense of greater responsibility for looking after her and eventually rents a room where they could live together, although Naoko ultimately has no chance to join him there.

The risk of an unmediated couple is also exemplified by Reiko's past relationship with her partner. Reiko grew up dreaming of becoming a pianist, but her sudden trouble with her fingers during university ruined her dream. The shock was strong enough that she needed to seek out professional mental care. Fortunately, she met a kind person to marry and had a daughter. She also started giving private piano lessons to a high school student, the daughter of her neighbour. However, the student,

a lesbian, tried to molest her during a lesson. Being refused by Reiko, the student spread a rumour to the neighbours so that Reiko ended up being labelled as a sexual deviant.

Before the incident, Reiko's relationship with her husband was supported by absolute trust. In her words,

> a sense of trust is the most important thing for our sickness. I thought I would be okay with him. If my condition got worse even slightly, if a screw got loose, he would quickly notice it and fix it with great care and patience, tightening the screw and unknotting tangled threads.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 176)

However, he could not meet her request to move out of their place as soon as possible to escape the rumour. She lost her mental stability to a considerable degree, and ultimately left her family for the sanatorium. She says of her husband that he "did the job ninety-nine per cent perfectly, but the other one per cent, just one per cent, went wrong" (ibid.: 234). Her heavy dependence on her husband did not allow him to look away from her for even one moment.

As is seen in the case of Reiko, the term "a hundred per cent" is recurrently employed in the novel as well as in the label attached to the cover sheet, "100% romance."[4] As will be explained, Midori similarly looks for a partner who will love her "100 per cent." Alongside "100 per cent," Murakami uses the word "imperfect" (*fukanzen*) commonly throughout the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator says he tries to commit his "imperfect memories" to "imperfect writing" (Murakami, 2007b: 17). The term "imperfect" is frequently employed, particularly in the context of the sanatorium. Naoko, for example, describes herself as "imperfect. More imperfect than you can imagine" (ibid.: 127).

There are also cases where the word "deformity" (*yugami*) is used in lieu of "imperfect." While Naoko describes herself and people in the sanatorium as "deformed," Naoko comes to see patients and staff in the sanatorium as equally "deformed." She describes her doctor's response to such thoughts:

> […] what I'm feeling is right in a sense, he says, and we (the patients) are here not to correct the deformities but to get used to them. One of our problems is our inability to recognise and accept these deformities. […] We surely can't adapt to our own deformities. We can't deal with the real pain and suffering they cause, and we end up here to escape from such things. As long as we're here we can get along without hurting others or being hurt by them because we know that we're all "deformed." This is the difference between this place and the outside world.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 129–30)

According to Naoko's doctor, the "deformity" is something akin to a habit or inclination rather than a literal deformity. Her ability to see the deformities marks her difference from people outside the sanatorium. This conforms to Žižek's discussion of mental patients: "[a] psychotic is precisely a subject who is *not duped by the symbolic order*" (1991: 79, original emphasis). The "deformities" Naoko perceives are usually not recognised by those who fit in the symbolic order of the society. The doctor's advice that Naoko as well as other patients have to accustom themselves to such deformities indicates their necessity to fit into the symbolic order, not to "correct" their deformity but to reduce the pain and suffering of living in society. This is repeated by Reiko who says to Watanabe, "the best thing in this sanatorium is that everyone helps each other. Because we all know that we are imperfect, we try to support each other" (Murakami, 2007b: 143). In this way, she tries to advise Watanabe to recognise his own imperfection as well as the patients'. Thus, in this novel, "100 per cent" perfect things are regarded as a cause of trouble, and Watanabe is encouraged to learn the importance of accepting the "imperfection" of people and reality.

Midori and Naoko

Unlike the other characters, Midori is attracted to Watanabe's self-imposed isolation. When she first talks to him, she asks him, "[d]o you like isolation? […] do you like travelling alone, eating alone, and sitting apart from others in classroom?" He answers, "[t]here are no such people who like isolation. I just don't make friends deliberately, because that only makes me disappointed" (Murakami, 2007b: 79–80). She finds his solitude attractive and starts to approach him. She tells him that she feels comfortable with him because "you don't push anything on me" (ibid.: 247). For Midori, who is swamped with her family concerns, his detachment appears as a form of kindness and open-mindedness.

Midori also looks for a relationship based on "100 per cent" intimacy. Having lost her mother in her childhood, and with her father now in hospital, Midori grew up striving to be mature as fast as possible. Her situation led her to seek strong affection from men, and she made up her mind to find someone who would love her "a hundred per cent seriously" (Murakami, 2007b: 114). She says she looks for a man who would run out to buy strawberry shortcake when she feels like it, and when she changed her mind and threw the cake out the window, would apologise to her for his lack of consideration and go buy another cake. There is certainly a kind of extremeness in her expectations of a romantic relationship. Meeting Watanabe, she comes to like him and eventually confesses to him: "I decided to trust you a hundred per cent" (ibid.: 358). The type of relationship Midori expects to have with Watanabe is what other characters try to avoid and advise him not to become involved in.

When Watanabe's troublesome isolation is made clear, his relationships with Naoko and Midori start to interact; his past and present relationships begin to relate to each other in the process of narrativising memories. Recognising the presence of each other, Naoko and Midori start to ask him about the other girl. Reading Watanabe's letters in which he mentions Midori, Naoko starts to ask him about her. In a letter, she writes:

> [y]our friend, Midori-san, sounds like a fun person. Reading your letter, I had the impression that she might be in love with you. When I told Reiko-san this, she said, "of course she is. I'm in love with him, too."
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 339)

Naoko evades the seriousness of the issue that Midori might love him by inserting Reiko's jokes, which implies her concern about Watanabe's relationship with another girl and her determination not to annoy him with her concern.

Watanabe then receives a letter from Reiko, in which she reports Naoko's critical condition and her preparation to move from the sanatorium to a specialised hospital. Reading the letter, he is shocked, and finally realises his long-term misunderstanding of Naoko. He says:

> […] my optimistic belief that Naoko had been on the way to recovery was suddenly overturned. Naoko herself had told me that her illness had deep roots, and Reiko-san also said nobody knew what sort of terrible situation might happen. But, having visited Naoko twice, I had the impression that she was on the mend. I thought it was only a matter of whether she could retrieve her courage to return to society, and that once she did it, the two of us could join hands to manage her problem.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 355–6)

Watanabe had believed that Naoko's problem was her lack of will to return to society. Recognising the seriousness of Naoko's condition, he resolves to help her, believing it to be his "responsibility." Speaking to Kizuki in his mind, he states:

> [h]ey Kizuki, I said. Unlike you, I decided to live. […] I'll never give up on her. Because I love her, and because I'm stronger than her. I'll try to get stronger and grow up to be a man. […] I feel a sense of responsibility. […] And I have to pay the price to go on living with her.
>
> (Ibid.: 356)

While Naoko's condition becomes worse, Watanabe's relationship with Midori also deteriorates rapidly. What she initially appreciated as his

tolerance and kindness comes to appear as a sign of his indifference towards her. While worrying about Naoko's condition, Watanabe forgets to contact Midori for a while. Being angry with him, she stops talking to him. Even after he manages to make up with her, she decides to turn her back on him again because of his continuing careless treatment of her. In the note she leaves him, Midori states:

> I just feel lonely (*sabishii*), because you were so nice to me but it seems there is nothing I can do for you. You are always locked up in your own room, and even when I knock on the door, calling you, "Watanabe-kun," you just lift your head up a bit and put it back down.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 362)

Here, Midori clearly points out Watanabe's reluctance to close the distance between them.

With the double shock of Naoko's condition and the loss of Midori's trust, Watanabe becomes very lonely, which is implied by the rapid increase of his use of the words, to describe himself, *sabishii* (lonely, isolated) and *kanashii* (sad, sorrowful) towards the end of the novel. As a result of his frequent meetings with Midori, he is now unable to enjoy reading novels or listening to music in solitude (Mihalo, 2009: 18). Watanabe, who attempted to save Naoko from her own solitude, now realises that he is in the same situation (Takeda, 1999: 25). In order to escape from his loneliness, he incessantly writes to Naoko, Reiko, and Midori, trying to comfort himself through writing letters. As he reflects, "it was as if I wrote letters to prevent my life from going to pieces" (Murakami, 2007b: 370). Here, writing letters keeps the protagonist away from his own isolation, which reminds us of Murakami's attempt to connect himself with Japan through writing to deal with his isolation overseas while working on this novel. Compared to Naoko's awareness of her problem, Watanabe's delayed realisation of his troublesome isolation enhances the irony of his ignorance.

After a long silence, Midori finally forgives Watanabe. She tells him that she broke up with her boyfriend and confesses her love for him. He is also aware of his love for her, but he cannot act upon his feelings because of his concerns about Naoko's worsening condition: "I too love you from the bottom of my heart. I don't want to let you go any more. But I can't help it. I can't make a move at the moment" (Murakami, 2007b: 375–6). After being asked about his relationship with Naoko, Watanabe says:

> [i]t's really complicated. So many things are mixed up. It's been going on for a long time, and I've lost the track of what is what. So has she. All I know is that I have a kind of responsibility in this as a human being. I can't turn my back on it.
>
> (Ibid.: 376)

Suffering from this dilemma, Watanabe writes to Reiko:

> I always loved Naoko and I still do love her. But there is something decisive between Midori and me. It has an irresistible power [...] The affection I have toward Naoko is terribly quiet, gentle and unclouded, whereas I have a very different type of affection toward Midori. It stands and moves on its own, breathes, and beats with life. And it stirs me. I'm confused and don't know what to do. I don't mean to make excuses, but I believe that I've lived as sincerely as I could, and I've never lied to anyone. I've always taken great care not to hurt anyone. I don't know how I ended up being thrown into this maze.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 383–4)

The contrast between Watanabe's "terribly quiet" affection towards Naoko and his lively feelings towards Midori signifies Naoko's relation with the past and Midori's association with the present. While attracted to Midori, he is constantly interrupted by his past relationship with Naoko because the latter importantly defines himself. While he kept pressing Naoko to forget about her past, he finally realises his mistake; he cannot leave his own past behind. He further becomes aware that his past mistakes are about to ruin his current relationship with Midori, who expects a "100 per cent" perfect relationship. He always carefully distanced himself from others based on the belief that no commitment causes no trouble. However, being involved with two girls, he comes to understand that he possibly hurts them.

In her reply to the letter, Reiko says that becoming Naoko's boyfriend is not the only way to support her; there are still a lot of things he can do for her; and therefore he does not have to feel guilty for being in love with somebody else. She once again encourages him to understand the imperfections of people: "[w]e are all imperfect human beings living in an imperfect world. We cannot live with the mechanical precision of a bank account, measuring things with rulers or protractors" (Murakami, 2007b: 385).

Two months after this, Watanabe learns that Naoko hanged herself in the sanatorium. Feeling desperate, he leaves for a solo trip soon after her funeral, without telling anybody about it. He only "wanted to sleep in towns [he] didn't know" (Murakami, 2007b: 388). Once again, Watanabe looks for a place where nobody knows him and avoids facing a friend's death.

The Fisherman: Watanabe's First Contact with the "Other"

While travelling in Western Japan, Watanabe takes long walks along the coast every day. One day, a fisherman finds him crying behind a derelict ship on the shore and offers him a cigarette. Asked why he is crying,

Watanabe lies and says that he has lost his mother and he is travelling to forget his sadness. The fisherman, trying to comfort him, tells him his past story about losing his mother to overwork. Listening to him, Watanabe feels a strong hostility towards the man who compares the death of his mother and the death of Naoko. He says in mind:

> His story sounded to me like something happening in a far-off world. So what? All of a sudden I felt a great rage toward him and wanted to choke him. Who cares about your mother? I lost Naoko! Such a beautiful person has vanished from the world! How dare you tell me about your mother?
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 391)

Among the characters Watanabe meets in the novel, this fisherman is the only person who breaks the "ice" of Watanabe's mind. He is the only person to whom Watanabe, though only in his mind, expresses his emotions about Naoko. As Obara Makiko (2000: 142) says, the conversation with the fisherman is the only contact the narrator establishes with the Other where reciprocal communication is involved. Watanabe's hostile reaction is driven by his unfamiliarity with a situation in which his personal concern is passed onto others. He cannot stand that the loss of his precious one is equated to somebody else's death, although the fisherman's attempt to comfort him by sharing his personal story is nothing unusual. Avoiding talking about Naoko to anybody, he had never experienced having his own concern reflected on and reacted to by others. Having exposed his grief, he feels that his own concern has been treated carelessly. In other words, this is his first experience of unsuccessful communication, which reminds us of Naoko's trouble expressing her feelings because of her fear that her words may be interpreted in the wrong way. Watanabe here finally learns the effects and impacts of reciprocal communication. His antipathy against the fisherman evokes the scene in which Naoko criticises him for his ignorance of the gravity of her suffering in the flashback he saw on a plane.

The fisherman kindly offers Watanabe *sake* and *sushi*. He even invites the young man to spend the night at his house, but Watanabe declines and says that he would rather be alone. The man then pushes some money into Watanabe's pocket and leaves. Watanabe's contact with the Other, the fisherman, reminds him of his ex-girlfriend he left behind when coming to Tokyo. Being treated nicely by the fisherman, Watanabe remembers how she was kind to him and how he was rude to her. Shortly after, he suddenly feels sick and vomits what he ate. Reflecting on his behaviour, Watanabe comes to despise himself, which ultimately causes him nausea.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, in the early works of Murakami, the protagonists' wilful distancing worked positively, being taken as a sign of respect and kindness. Each protagonist's

successful communication with others stemmed from their distancing from the Other, refusing their reciprocal influence. However, as Miura (1981: 217) says, "only a moderate degree of indifference works as kindness." After committing to Naoko, the protagonist in *Norwegian Wood* loses the safety that distance provides. He has lost the authority granted to him by controlling the distance between himself and the Other. As we saw, his limited desire for openness and remaining attempt to close himself off considerably affects the Other.

Memory and Responsibility

Returning from his trip, Watanabe receives a letter from Reiko informing him of her decision to leave the sanatorium and meet him in Tokyo. Reiko comes to Tokyo in Naoko's clothes. Inviting Reiko to his house, he discloses his guilty conscience about Naoko. Reiko comforts him by saying that her suicide was nobody's fault and nobody could help it. He, however, cannot stop blaming himself:

> Even if I hadn't given up on her, things would have worked in the same way; she would have chosen death after all. But besides that, I can't forgive myself. You tell me that there's nothing I can do about a natural change of heart, but my relationship with Naoko wasn't that simple.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 410)

In the case of Kizuki, Watanabe could at least take action to deal with his friend's death by distancing things related to the past. However, Watanabe cannot treat Naoko's death in the same way because he realises that he was involved in her drive for life and death. In reply, Reiko says:

> If you feel the pain of Naoko's death, keep feeling the pain for the rest of your life. If you can, learn something from it. But besides that, be together with Midori and build a better future with her. The pain of Naoko's death is nothing to do with Midori. […] Be tough, however hard it may be. Grow up to be a man.
>
> (Ibid.: 410–1)

Reiko disagrees with Watanabe's attempt to fulfil his responsibilities for Naoko and advises him just to remember her, a request Naoko makes in his flashback. Remembering means, again, interacting with the memory as a *monogatari*.

Reiko suggests carrying out a second fun "funeral" for Naoko unlike the official one that depressed them. She plays the guitar and sings songs Naoko liked, including "Norwegian Wood," and then the two of them eventually have sex. Jay Rubin says their "love-making […] and the music they make are intended to 'memorialize' Naoko" (2005: 154–5).

Inviting Reiko in Naoko's clothes into his house, which he initially rented to live with Naoko, is a simulation of what could have happened with Naoko, which Murakami (1989: 180) describes as "catharsis" for both Watanabe and Reiko.

After sending Reiko off, Watanabe calls Midori after a month of silence. He has not talked to her since he left for the trip, which upset her. He tells her that he wants to start from the beginning with her. After a prolonged silence, she replies:

> "Where are you now?" she said in a quiet voice.
>
> Where am I now?
>
> Holding the receiver, I raised my head and looked around the telephone booth. *Where am I now?* But I didn't know where it was. No idea at all. Where is this place? All that came into my sight were countless people passing by but going nowhere. I was calling out for Midori from the middle of nowhere.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 418–19, original emphasis)

This is the end of the novel. "Quiet" (*shizukana*) is the only explanation of the tone of Midori's voice. In a similar way to the ambiguous note about "confused" (*konran*), the quiet tone prevents the reader from identifying her feelings towards Watanabe. It is not clear whether she is angry, sad, disappointed, nervous, or secretly excited. We can hardly gauge whether she eventually accepted him or not. Since, in the first chapter, the current narrator is alone on the plane, many critics conclude that he failed in his relationship with Midori, yet this ambiguity paradoxically opens a broader interpretation of the ending.[5]

As Endō (1999: 71) says, Watanabe's inability to identify his location explains that the story is about the current narrator, as one cannot objectively understand one's own situation without distance. This is why I translate the scene with the inconsistent tenses, following the Japanese original text. The past narrator asks a question of the current narrator, "where am I [are you] now?" This explains the current narrator's failure to come back to conclude the story.

Watanabe's recollection of his past time with Naoko is interrupted by his current relationship with Midori, which further affects his understanding of himself and Midori. His hesitation about his current situation is brought to the fore by Midori's ambiguous answer to his confession of love.

Conclusion: Murakami's Return to the Unfamiliar and Bestseller *Norwegian Wood*

As I explained in the beginning of the chapter, *Norwegian Wood* marks a watershed for Murakami's career in terms of his closing distance with

the cultural Other. Additionally, the upsurge in the novel's popularity has also changed his position as a writer in Japan.

Having spent three years in Europe, the experience of isolation and cultural boundaries became tiring and drove the author and his wife to return home to Japan. Murakami says:

> We visited many places, met many people, and had many interesting experiences. There were a lot of things I was impressed by and learned from. Yet, to be honest, we were getting tired of such an unstable life. Having no connection and belonging nowhere, living isolated in foreign countries was far tougher than we had imagined. [...] It was time for us to go home.
>
> (Murakami, 2001: 558)

While the author left Japan to escape from a tiring life, he decided to return to the country to heal the weariness he felt in Europe.

However, the drastic social changes in Japan during the late 1980s bewildered Murakami. He was shocked by the impact of rapid economic development and the establishment of a consumerist society. It reminded him of "a gigantic suction machine, which gulps everything including the organic and the inorganic, the known and the unknown, the physical and the metaphysical" (Murakami, 2001: 560). Just as Watanabe cannot return to where he began, Murakami found that he returned to someplace different from where he left. Despite Murakami's early longing for his homeland, after his return he felt further removed from Japan and ultimately left for America in 1991. He stopped appearing in the Japanese media and instead accepted more interviews with the Western media, especially in America. His relationship with Japan grew more complicated.

During the author's sojourn in Europe, *Norwegian Wood* was published in Japan and eventually becomes a million-copy seller, which made Murakami's life in Japan even more difficult. In *Distant Drums*, Murakami claims that 1988, the year following the publication of the novel, was a particularly hard year for him. He writes:

> It is strange but when my novels sold about a hundred thousand copies, I could feel people's love, care and support for me. However, since *Norwegian Wood* sold over a million copies, it seemed that I became isolated. It was like a number of people came to dislike me. I don't know why. Everything was going well on the surface, but I was seriously having a tough time.
>
> (Murakami, 2001: 402)

The exhaustion ultimately deprived the author of the will to write fiction, and he mainly focused on translation until he recovered. He says, "during this period, I was exhausted and *confused* (*konran*). My wife

became sick. I was never inspired to write" (ibid.: 402, my emphases; see also Murakami, 1989: 166). In a similar way to Watanabe in *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami refers to his indescribable difficulty with the term *konran*. He also regrets that the upsurge in his publicity as a million-selling writer ruined his reputation: "[w]ithout that novel, I'd be in a more comfortable critical position in this country (Japan). But, fortunately or unfortunately, it sold like hot cakes here. That's my problem in Japan. [...] That book destroyed my reputation" (Kelts, 2002: unpaged); "Intelligent people don't read bestsellers. Neither do I! If I'm not [sic] Haruki Murakami, I might not read Haruki Murakami books" (Braunias, 2004: unpaged). He feared that the high sales of *Norwegian Wood* present the work as a commercial product (Murakami, 1991: 58).

When Murakami reduced the distance between himself and the Western Other, the West was no longer a simple idea but became "real." It required of him a reciprocal commitment in the same way that Watanabe could no longer keep his mental wall intact. On the other hand, Japan also turns out to be the Other, having changed significantly and requiring further commitment from him as well. The author's need for escape from buzzing bees continues.

In this chapter, having considered Murakami's comparison between memory and *monogatari*, I have discussed the narrator's habit of recollecting his past and its effects on his understanding of his relationships with others in *Norwegian Wood*. Watanabe's attempt to narrate his past initially aims at overcoming his difficulty in dealing with the past by relying on the effects of temporal distance. However, as Murakami argues that people narrativise their memories, the act of narrating the past is the act of narrating the current self. Distance from the past does not help him to deal with his trauma, but ultimately reveals his past "mistake" in his relationship with Naoko and his remaining problem with his identity. While narrating Naoko, he is made to realise his own narrative.

The protagonist's "mistake" lies in his attempt to develop a closed relationship with Naoko without reflecting on other characters' comments about the important role of a mediator for couples. His attempt to recollect his past eventually leads him to understand that his self-imposed isolation can affect others. His re-examination of the past thus does not help him recover from the past but demands further self-reflection.

In this way, in *Norwegian Wood*, Murakami demonstrates the function of *monogatari* as deepening self-understanding. This is what Murakami proposes as a role of a "realist novel." Unlike authors of the I-novel, he does not rely on emotive vocabulary or events that happened in reality. Murakami challenges the Japanese literary tradition and proposes his own conception of a realist novel. The function of remembering as interacting is further explored in the next chapter.

Notes

1 The variation is limited even within the *kanji* choice. The kanji 哀しい is used for *kanashii* instead of the counterpart 悲しい. 哀しい has an implication of the inability to express one's sadness and pain when verbalising feelings. As for *sabishii*, 淋しい is used instead of 寂しい, which has a connotation of loneliness epitomised in a scene where water quietly and constantly drops from the leaves of trees; this also corresponds to the rainy weather often associated with Naoko.

2 Similarly, Naoko describes her feeling as *konran* (Murakami, 2007b: 15, 34, 339) and her parents feel *konran* about her ending up in the sanatorium (ibid.: 131). Midori complains about those who are "confused" about her verbal and behavioural deviations from what people think is normal and about the fact that they blame her for her behaviour (ibid.: 258). Midori eventually falls in love with Watanabe, although she has a boyfriend, and expresses her feeling as "confusion" (ibid.: 374). Watanabe employs *konran* to describe his trouble fitting back into his daily life in Tokyo after staying a couple of days in the peaceful and quiet environment of the sanatorium (ibid.: 241). He writes to Reiko about his being in love with Midori and uses the word *konran* to describe his sense of guilt about his change of heart towards Naoko. In Jay Rubin's English translation, on the other hand, the language use is more varied. *Tsurai* in the original text is translated as "in pain," "painful," "to hurt," "hard," "horrible," and "bad"; *Kanashii* by comparison is translated as "sad," "sorrow," and "blue"; *sabishii* as "sad," "lonely," and "to miss"; and *konran* as "shudder," "to hit," "upset," "mixed up," and "confused" (Murakami, 2000).

3 Contrary to the author's deliberate avoidance of psychological vocabulary, the novel is usually read sentimentally by its readers. The recent movie adaption by Tran Anh Hung, *Norwegian Wood* (2010), too, strongly encourages the audience to be touched by the subject of the heroine's mental suffering.

4 Other examples of the use of "100%" include Watanabe's roommate called Storm Trooper, who is 100% indifferent to politics, Reiko lets her students play the piano 100% freely, and Kizuki plays a 100% good shot of billiards before he kills himself (Katō, 1997: 115).

5 In terms of the ending, Midori in the movie *Norwegian Wood* receives Watanabe's phone call and has an obvious smile on her face. This facilitates the audience's interpretation that she is happy to accept him. In this sense, the movie disregards the productive ambiguity of the original novel.

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5 Distance Within, Will to Imagine, and Power of Metaphor in *Kafka on the Shore*

After his trip to Europe, Murakami returned to Japan where he discovered that his popularity had grown significantly since the publication of *Norwegian Wood*. In 1991, he decided to leave Japan again and moved to the US, a country which, despite his recurrent references to American culture, he had previously appeared indifferent. In an interview from 1994, Murakami notes that while he believed that he knew America well enough through reading and translating American literature, his life in the US was not even close to what he had imagined (Murakami, 1994: 42). "America" was no longer a figment of his imagination but a real place. He was made to face the growing tension between the US and Japan in the early 1990s, which was stirred by the outbreak of the Gulf War, the 50-year anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, the prolonged national recession that was attributed to the rapid growth of the Japanese economy, and the dominance of the Japanese automotive industry.

Murakami lived in America for longer than his time in Europe, and describes his life in America as giving him a sense of "belonging" to the society (Murakami, 2000: 276) in contrast with his status as a "resident tourist" in Europe. Invited as a visiting scholar, Murakami taught Japanese literature at Princeton University and Tufts University. At Princeton, he lectured on Kojima Nobuo and Shōno Junzō, writers from a group called the Third Generation of Postwar Writers (*daisan no shinjin*). They are known as writers of the "I-novel," a category towards which Murakami consistently expressed his disapproval. These authors were winners of the Akutagawa Prize, which Murakami also criticised. However, through the experience of teaching Japanese literature, he spent a significant amount of time reading Japanese novels and discussing them with university students. In the collection of essays, *Yagate kanashiki gaikokugo* (*The Ultimately Sorrowful Foreign Language*, 2000), he states:

> During my time in America, I came to face Japan as a country and the Japanese language more seriously. To be honest, when I was young and started to write, I wanted to go as far from Japan as possible. I wanted to be distanced from things related to the Japanese

> language. In this way, I thought I would be able to write about myself in a more "realistic" way. […] Getting older, after a long-term struggle, I gradually acquired my own "negotiated" style of writing in Japanese. Now I spend more time overseas. These elements helped me to come to like writing novels in Japanese.
>
> (Ibid.: 281–2)

Murakami's experience in America provided him with an opportunity to reflect on his relationship with the Japanese language, in the face of his prolonged struggle to negotiate with language.

Murakami's ultimate decision to return to Japan in 1995 was, in part, motivated by two disasters in the same year, namely the sarin gas attack by *Aum* and the calamitous earthquake in the Hanshin area. In his interviews, he says that his stay in America inspired a greater sense of commitment and responsibility towards Japan (Murakami and Kawai, 1998: 18). His consciousness of himself as a Japanese writer is reflected in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (*Nejimaki dori kuronikuru*, 1995). Descriptions of Japan's war history in the novel, based on a detailed research of the Nomonhan Incident, marked a significant change in the reception of Murakami, especially overseas.[1] The novel started a broader scholarly discussion on the author's conversion from "detachment" to "commitment," which was accelerated by his research on *Aum* in *Underground*.

However, Murakami's indirect reference to the earthquake in the Hanshin area in his *All God's Children Can Dance* (*Kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru*, 2000), a collection of six short stories, provoked new criticism. In the collection, none of the stories feature those who experienced the earthquake or were affected by it directly. Rather, Murakami focused on one of many who saw the news report of the disaster in Japan and was emotionally impacted by the disaster without either living through it or knowing how to deal with it. His treatment of the disaster through indirect reference and the medium of fantasy rekindled criticism of his detachment. While Western scholars often highly regard Murakami's use of the fantastical mode—where the protagonist experiences an alternate world in which he seeks his identity—as a form of commitment to society more generally, Japanese intellectuals instead tend to criticise this style as a sign of the author's escapist attitude. Referring to Matthew Carl Strecher's words, "one was constantly in doubts as to whether Murakami's characters lived in a magical world or were simply out of their minds" (Strecher, 2014: 5).

In *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, the protagonist goes down to the bottom of a dried well, where he experiences trips into his unconscious mind, in which he penetrates walls as a way of crossing some important psychological and ontological barriers. Through these trips, he is able to face his problems in his relationship with his wife. His trips into his unconscious mind are portrayed as a process of finding a better way to

connect with people and society. In conversation with Kawai Hayao, Murakami says:

> Thinking about commitment, which I suppose is people's relationships, I was fascinated by—rather than the conventional scenario such as "I understand what you are saying, so let's hold hands with each other"—the way commitment is possible through the operation in which, by digging the "well" deeper and deeper, the unmediated walls can be crossed and linked. However, I don't know yet what this view will bring to me in the real world. Coming back to Japan, I'm still in the process of looking for the answer.
>
> (Murakami and Kawai, 1998: 84–5)

Murakami stresses the process of "digging" to commit to others rather than the operation of looking for similarities between the self and others. He means that meaningful commitment among people requires the individual's own process of going deeply into their unconscious mind to develop self-understanding. This reflects his realisation of a better way to connect with Japanese language and literature through his travel in America. On the other hand, in this conversation, Murakami also suggests that he is still on the way to developing the idea of digging the well and penetrating walls. Here lies the reason that I focus on *Kafka on the Shore* in this chapter rather than *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, which is often regarded as a masterpiece of Murakami's. In *Kafka on the Shore*, the effects of "digging" and "penetrating," which the author tried to portray in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, are also evident, but the author is more certain in the latter novel. In *Kafka on the Shore*, the effects of "digging" and "penetrating" are developed in such a way that the author's focus is more specifically directed to the act of crossing borders, which is closely related to the operation of distancing. For this purpose, I aim to focus particularly on the use of metaphor in the novel.

In *Kafka on the Shore*, the protagonist, not revealing his actual name, calls himself Tamura Kafka (from now on, Kafka). Born and raised in Nogata, Tokyo, he was abandoned by his mother at age four and subsequently neglected by his father. Without affection from his parents, Kafka struggles to establish decent relationships and fit into society. On his 15th birthday, Kafka runs away from his father's house for Takamatsu on Shikoku Island, where he ends up staying in a library with the help of the librarian Ōshima and the library manager Saeki.

As I have shown, Murakami frequently creates protagonists who willingly maintain a certain distance from others that is far enough for him to escape deep commitment to people and close enough to avoid hurting them. In *Kafka on the Shore*, the protagonist's avoidance of others goes further and even creates an Other for his exclusive use in his mind, an

alter ego described as the "Boy named Crow" (from now on, Crow). Kafka heavily depends on Crow and regards him as the only Other he is willing to interact with. As an advisor, Crow encourages Kafka to become "the world's toughest fifteen-year-old boy."

Murakami's choice of the age of 15 for the protagonist Kafka is novel in that he usually creates male characters in their late 20s and 30s. Among Murakami's protagonists, Kafka is unusually young. The author comments on this choice, explaining that his growing confidence in writing encouraged him to include a new type of character (Furukawa, 2009: 39).

In another interview, Murakami emphasises a 15-year-old's ambiguous location between childhood and youth (Shibata, 2004: 269), and argues that because of his strong sensibility and remarkable capacity to absorb knowledge, he needs to experience various events (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 31). Kawai Hayao, appreciating Murakami's skill in describing a younger boy, stresses the importance for adolescents to experience a return trip to the other world (*ikai*) for the process of growing up (Kawai, 2002: 242). However, Murakami does not allow the novel to be categorised simply as a *Bildungsroman*. He states:

> although it features a fifteen-year-old boy, I tried specifically not to make the novel too enlightening, or to do something like guide him. What I wanted to do was to let [Kafka] think, to let him decide on his own.
>
> (Murakami, 2002: 55)

Consequently, the novel places weight on Kafka's thought process in the face of his own problems rather than his growth itself.

In another interview, Murakami, referring to the evolution of his stories, explains that an essential theme of the novel is the character's confrontation with his internal, uncontrollable power:

> What is often said about my novels is that my protagonist is always an ordinary, passive person. It's all about a man seeing events happening and going through them. He doesn't make any active decisions. To be honest, I meant to write such a story. That is, a story about a person who is made to act by events rather than by his own will. However, that's changed, and now I'm more interested in something that exists in the protagonist, who reacts to outside forces coming over him; a sort of "unconscious compulsion to act" (*ugokasareru chikara*). This drive is not an ego. It can't be explained as easily and clearly as a matter of conflict between the ego and the outer forces. But it is something unspecified within the self, as unspecified as the forces coming from outside.
>
> (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 19)

The "unconscious compulsion to act" is, in other words, the character's inherent capacity in the subconscious or the unconscious that reacts to an event and urges the self to take action. As Murakami explains and as I discussed in previous chapters, his protagonists are made to face their problematic isolation through the events in the stories. In *Kafka on the Shore*, too, one might expect Murakami to challenge Kafka's closure. However, in this novel, his isolation is taken for granted and remains unchallenged. Rather than focusing on how his isolation started or how it is problematic, the author's attention is directed to the act of dealing with the situation in which the protagonist has to isolate himself. What is important is no longer the act of avoiding others, but how to deal with the self that is already affected by external forces. This can be seen through the young character, whose strong sensibility, naivety, and curiosity allow the author to focus more effectively on descriptions of his mind. This also clarifies Murakami's decision to include Nakata, the second protagonist of *Kafka on the Shore*, whose storyline runs parallel to Kafka's own.[2] Now in his mid-60s, Nakata has become illiterate because of an accident during the Second World War, but has acquired the ability to talk to cats instead. His disabled state and unusual skills help Murakami further delve into the "unconscious compulsion to act."

It is important to consider that *Kafka on the Shore* was written after the author had conducted his research on *Aum* and the publication of *Underground* and *Underground 2*. In this sense, Murakami's interest in the movement of one's unconscious mind and the way the characters confront their unconscious mind reflects his attempt to explore the question of what brought Asahara's followers to *Aum* and how they deal with their lives after leaving Asahara. This is not to say that Kafka and Nakata are equivalent to Asahara's followers. However, in terms of their traumatic experiences in the past and subsequent isolation, their experiences are similar to that of former *Aum* members who had difficulty fitting into society and sought shelter in Asahara's *monogatari*. In this novel, Murakami writes about how to take action after critical events happen. Again, the characters' isolation itself is no longer the central theme. The situations that drive them to isolate themselves are taken for granted. The characters are constantly affected by their relationships with others. They are required to accept hardships caused by others and consider how to deal with it, which ultimately has to do not with others but with themselves. This reflects Murakami's own experience abroad. Compared to his past reluctance to be impacted by his interaction with the cultural Other, Murakami now accepts the influence that the cultural Other has on his writing. Indeed, he tries to capitalise on the unique perspective he acquires through this approach.

The importance of these uncontrollable forces Kafka is facing is predicated by his alter ego Crow, when he suggests that he is expected to go into a metaphorical "sandstorm." Crow says:

> Occasionally, destiny is similar to a growing sandstorm that constantly changes course. You try to change direction to avoid it. Then the sandstorm also changes its path as if to follow you. […] It is because the storm is not something unrelated to you and coming from the middle of nowhere. It's you. It's something resting in you. What you can do is stop resisting it, go into the storm, cover your eyes and ears against the sand, and go through it step by step.
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 10)

As Crow says, it is himself that Kafka has to first confront and understand. Self-understanding is crucial to recover one's relationships with others and with society. This is how Murakami tries to fulfil his sense of responsibility as a writer, which has grown since his sojourn in America and his research on *Aum*. As Murakami says in the above interview, he aims to let Kafka undergo various events, and Kafka has a number of different experiences through his travel. However, a significant event occurs through metaphor alone: it is through metaphor that Kafka and Nakata each go through their "sandstorm." I aim to probe the author's use of fantasy, because his presentation of metaphor clarifies his emphasis on *monogatari*. In this chapter, considering the way the characters are encouraged to face their problematic isolation, I will examine how metaphor effectively functions to broaden their perspective and to deal with their difficulties, and how this demonstrates the author's belief in *monogatari*.

Loss and Lack

Kafka's problematic isolation stems from the loss of his mother. She left her own son when he was four, only taking his elder sister, the mother's adopted daughter. Kafka was raised by his father, a well-known sculptor. While his artistic talent was highly valued, the man failed to undertake his responsibilities as a father and, as Kafka puts it, he "ruined" (*sokonau*) his child. Kafka explains:

> I was just like one of his art works. Like his sculptures. It's up to him if he breaks them or ruins them. […] I grew up where everything was deformed […] He violated and ruined all the people around him.
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 428–9)

Kafka's father also tormented his son by making an Oedipus myth-like prediction that he would murder his father and have a physical relationship with his mother and sister. In Kafka's words, "[i]t might be closer to a curse than a prediction. He told me again and again as if he was carving each character into my mind with a chisel" (Murakami, 2007a: 426). This "curse" terrifies him, and this is the first reason why he decides to leave his father.

As the story proceeds, we discover that Kafka's journey is also motivated by his desire to be reunited with his missing mother. Kafka's past intimacy with his mother enhances the impact of her absence. As Tanaka Masashi notes, with her sudden disappearance, Kafka missed an important stage in which he would distance himself from his mother by growing independent, which crucially led him to continue to hold the illusion of having had a perfect relationship with his mother (Tanaka, 2006: 63). Tanaka associates Kafka's behaviour, such as drinking warm milk to calm down and constantly carrying his rucksack with him, with a state of regression. Ōshima similarly recognises Kafka's regressive behaviour by equating Kafka's rucksack with Linus' blanket in the American comic *Peanuts* (Murakami, 2007b: 198).

As embodied by Kafka, the experience of loss constitutes an essential part of the novel. Nakata also lost his ability to read and write as well as his memory of childhood; Saeki lost her boyfriend at age 20 and her child later on; and Ōshima, as an androgynous person, also has experienced loss. In the novel, Nakata and his school mates experienced a strange event during the Second World War, in which they suddenly lost consciousness in the middle of a mushroom hunting trip, and when they woke up they did not remember having fainted. According to a comment made by the teacher who observed the incident,

> There is a large difference between "loss" and "lack." To explain it simply, well, imagine a series of freight trains running on a track. One of the trains has lost its load. The empty wagon without the content means a "loss." "Lack" is a situation in which not only the content but also the train itself disappears.
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 128)

The state of "lack" does not cause pain as long as people do not remember their experience of the "lack." Therefore, the school children did not have mental after-effects from their temporary amnesia, except for Nakata, who woke up a while after, finding himself deprived of his memory.

On the other hand, it is "loss" that Kafka suffers from. Left with an "empty wagon," one experiences the sense of loss as hurtful. Kafka feels pain because he retains memory of his loss. Kafka's "wagon" has been left empty since the age of four and the emptiness keeps reminding him of the absence of his mother. He says:

> Why didn't she love me.
>
> *Didn't I deserve her love?*
>
> The question has been hideously burning my mind and undermining my soul for a long time. Did I have a serious problem so that she didn't love me? Was I born wearing something filthy? Was I born to be ignored by people?
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 373–4, original emphasis)

The idea of "loss" here is similar to Jacques Lacan's concept of structuring absence, in which he explains that absence functions as a sign that signifies a previous existence (Lacan, 1993: 167). Kafka suffers from the fact that his mother once existed. This constantly presses on him questions of why she left *him* rather than why she is missing. The question often leads him to conclude that the fault lay with him. Struggling to find the answer, the criticality of the question grows in his mind to the extent that he suffers from self-abnegation. The confinement in silence ultimately drives Kafka to create an imaginary Other who can answer his questions, that is, Crow.

The novel never clearly explains what Crow is, although he is commonly understood to be a projection of Kafka's own mind. At the beginning of the novel, Crow stays next to Kafka, and advises him on his preparations for his journey. Crow often repeats Kafka's words, expresses Kafka's feelings on his behalf, and helps him find the right words when he becomes stuck in the face of difficult questions. Crow helps Kafka verbalise his feelings, or as Kafka puts it: "[Crow] goes to look for words for me" (Murakami, 2007a: 220). Crow's role of helping Kafka put his thoughts into words is reminiscent of Ōshima's reference to the function of the chorus in Greek theatre. According to Ōshima: "standing behind the stage, the [chorus] *explain* the story in one voice, *speaking about* characters' deep consciousness on their behalf, and even persuade them passionately. They are pretty useful. I sometimes wish I had one set behind me" (ibid.: 327, my emphasis). The chorus' function of helping "explain" and "speak about" the characters is similar to Crow's role for Kafka. Crow's strong association with language reminds us of characters such as Nezumi (cf. Chapter 3) and Naoko (cf. Chapter 4), whose reliance on language led them to a dead end. Similarly, Crow's advice for Kafka prior to the beginning of the novel drives him to incur further hardship. He encourages Kafka to become "the world's toughest fifteen-year-old" two years in advance of his plan to leave. Since then, Kafka began exercising to build up his muscles in order to look older, which he thought would reduce the likelihood that he would be identified as a runaway boy and caught by the police. Not making any friends at school, "I built tall walls around me and would not let anyone in or let myself out" (ibid.: 19). Crow also encouraged Kafka to study hard in case it might help his life on his own in the future, even though Kafka never liked school. Consequently, Kafka says:

> I always had top marks on exams without studying at home. My muscles were built up as though they were blended with metal. I became quieter. I trained myself to hide emotions so that teachers and classmates wouldn't recognise what I was thinking about. […] When I saw a mirror, I found my eyes had taken on a cold light like a lizard's. I lost facial expressions. This reminded me that I had not smiled for a time too long to remember.
>
> (Ibid.: 20)

Crow further encourages Kafka's closure and for this purpose Kafka has to make himself strong enough to be able to bear prolonged social isolation. Kafka ultimately isolates himself to the extent that his inner world is occupied only by himself and his projection, Crow. Ōsawa Masachi comments that it is only Crow's way of calling Kafka *kimi*, the second person pronoun that presents the otherness in Crow (Ōsawa, 2005: 227). The use of *kimi* produces a sense of distance between the addressee and the addresser, which projects Crow as an Other separated from Kafka. This is how Kafka construes Crow's otherness. The effective use of *kimi* in this novel is discussed in Chapter 6.

Among Murakami's protagonists, Kafka is the most unwilling to relate to others. Murakami had constantly described his protagonists as reluctant to commit to people in his previous work. The most prominent example before Kafka was arguably the protagonist's decision to remain in the fantasy world, refusing its own shadow's encouragement to return to reality, in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (*Sekai no owari to hādoboirudo wandārando*, 1985). In *Kafka on the Shore*, however, it goes even further, and the question is no longer a matter of the character's willingness to interact with others, but who he regards as the Other.

Kafka's absolute closure is expressed through his search for strength in isolation. In the library in Takamatsu, he explains to Saeki:

> The strength I'm looking for is not strength for victory. I'm not seeking protection to push aside outside forces. What I want is a type of strength that complies with the force of the outside and endures it, the strength to endure patiently things like unfairness, misfortune, sorrow, misunderstanding, and incomprehension.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 193)

Kafka wants to quietly endure pain rather than repel it. He wants to let pain pass without his suffering being recognised by others, because the act of pushing back the force invites their recognition of his reaction. He tries to behave as invisibly as possible, and in this way he can avoid being involved with others in any form. As Saeki comments, "it seems to be the most difficult type of strength to achieve" (ibid.).

Kafka's plan to build up strength through closure turned out to be unsuccessful. As Kafka recalls, there were cases where he used violence against his classmates when he failed to control himself. As Murakami stresses in explaining his choice of a teenage protagonist, Kafka's conventional way of defending himself by building a "protective wall" around himself begins losing its efficacy during puberty. Kafka's collapsing "wall" signifies the weakening protection of his isolation and growing dependence on Crow, which ultimately drives him to take action by leaving for Shikoku.

Metaphor and Imagination

Saeki appears to Kafka as a model of his mother. Her neat and smart appearance and gentle manner provide Kafka with a feeling of nostalgia, and he wishes Saeki to be his mother. Saeki was born in Takamatsu and had a boyfriend with whom she had built a deep relationship. They lived separately when he left for Tokyo for university and in the meantime, Saeki wrote and performed a jazz song, which became a bestselling record. However, when her boyfriend in Tokyo was killed after being mistaken for someone from a radical group involved with the student movement in the 1960s, she stopped singing and left her hometown. She eventually returned to Takamatsu after 25 years of silence, and would not explain her life during that period. A rumour spread that she had married in Tokyo and had children.

Kafka also hears from Saeki that she once published a book in which she interviewed people who had the experience of being hit by lightning. Piecing the information together, Kafka starts to link Saeki with his mother. They are about the same age, and Kafka's father was once hit by lightning. Kafka speculates that Saeki might have met his father for an interview, married him, and had children in Tokyo. When Kafka reveals his theory to Saeki, she neither denies nor confirms it. Based on the fact that his theory has not been disproved, Kafka tries to believe that it is functional. What matters in the story is not so much who is Kafka's mother, but rather the effect of Kafka's theory. While the novel ultimately provides Kafka with clues that help Kafka recover from the loss of his mother, this is promoted by his metaphorical reunion with his mother.

Crow discusses the significance of metaphor explicitly at the beginning of the novel. Crow predicts Kafka's experience of metaphor during his journey:

> It's a metaphysical and symbolic sandstorm, but at the same time it slashes your flesh like thousands of razors. Many people will bleed for it and so will you. Warm and red blood. It bleeds into your hands. It's your blood as well as their blood. […] When you get through the storm, you will find yourself different from how you were before stepping into it.
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 12)

Crow's explanation that the metaphysical and symbolic sandstorm is powerful enough to slash flesh implies that metaphor has a real impact on life. Murakami comments that he deliberately chose a 15-year-old protagonist because of his supposed immaturity in his understanding of metaphor (Murakami, 2002: 55). Kafka's growing comfort with metaphor is therefore an integral component of the novel.

The librarian Ōshima teaches Kafka about the function and role of metaphor. Ōshima is biologically[3] and socially female, but loves men as a male gay person. Suffering from haemophilia, he has to restrict his daily activities. His complicated identity made his life troublesome, and he did not attend school regularly when he was Kafka's age. He shows great understanding of Kafka, who is in a similar situation, refusing to go to school and struggling to situate himself in society. Since Kafka is running out of money by staying in a hotel, Ōshima organises for him a room to live in the library where he works. He also offers Kafka the opportunity to stay in a hut he and his brother have out in the forest. Ōshima often shares with Kafka insightful thoughts and shows him several examples of metaphor. He emphasises the importance of metaphor, particularly when he is concerned about Kafka's self-imposed isolation:

> "People usually attach themselves to something," Ōshima says.
>
> "You can't help it. You just unconsciously do it. As Goethe says, all things in the world are metaphors."
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 222)

The essential function of metaphor is to emphasise a relation between things that are supposed to be in different domains, in other words, to create "cross-domain mappings" (Lakoff, 1993: 203). This is very similar to Murakami's discussion of *monogatari*, which maps one idea onto an alternative context to provide different perspectives to observe the object.

The dynamics of metaphor are exemplified through the recurrent image of the bridge in the novel. Ōshima states that he dreams of joining the Spanish Civil War like Hemingway. His reference to Hemingway reminds us of the image of blowing up a bridge. The blast of a bridge signifies a metaphorical "jump" between two things. The symbolic use of bridges is evident throughout the novel. Both Kafka and Nakata come to the Shikoku district by crossing large bridges, the former via Kurashiki city and the latter via Kōbe city. Nakata is awake when he crosses the bridge on the bus. During his journey in Takamatsu, he constantly stresses that "it was important to cross a bridge" (Murakami, 2007a: 446) rather than the specificity of the bridge or the place where he ends up.[4] Kafka, on the other hand, sleeps throughout the crossing, which signifies that he does not yet understand the significance of "bridging." In order to learn about "bridging," Kafka must first understand the operation of imagination, through which he can recognise metaphor itself.[5]

In the novel, Kafka is made to think about imagination in a number of episodes. On the bus from Tokyo to Takamatsu, Kafka meets a woman in her early 20s, Sakura, who is going to replace a friend working at a hair salon. When the bus arrives in Takamatsu, noticing that he is a runaway boy, she gives him her number in case he needs her help.

On the fifth day of his journey in Takamatsu, Kafka is involved in a strange case in which he faints in the bush and comes to his senses to find his shirt drenched with somebody's blood. Unable to remember how he ended up in the bush and whose blood it is, he becomes upset and calls Sakura to ask for help. She kindly invites him to her house and lets him stay there. Kafka is afraid that he might have been unconsciously involved in a crime that he might be liable for: "if I really committed a crime, even if I don't remember, I must take responsibility in front of the law" (Murakami, 2007a: 182). To comfort him, Sakura lets him in her bed and cuddles him. Sleeping next to her, Kafka cannot help feeling sexual excitement and gets an erection. Sakura ends up masturbating him to help him sleep. Kafka asks her if she does not mind him imagining her naked body. Sakura finds his question strange and says: "Whether you get my permission or not, I won't see what you are imagining." Kafka replies, "[b]ut I do mind. I assume that imagining is important, and I should let you know it just in case. It's not a matter of whether you can see it or not" (ibid.: 191).

When Kafka wakes up the next morning, he finds out that Sakura has gone to work and finds her note in which she offers to let him continue staying at her place. He appreciates her kindness, but he is afraid: "as long as I'm here, I'll definitely keep having erections and imagining" (Murakami, 2007a: 195). He leaves Sakura's house to avoid the trouble caused by his imagination.

On the same morning, Kafka cancels his stay in the hostel, in case he has been involved in a crime and will become a suspect because he registered in the hostel with a false identity. Going to the library, he asks Ōshima if he knows a place where he could stay. Ōshima offers him a guestroom in the library, where Saeki and her boyfriend used to spend time together. While he prepares the guestroom for Kafka, Ōshima takes Kafka to his and his brother's hut in the forest to stay for a couple of days. In the hut, without electricity or water supply, he spends most of the time reading books from Ōshima's shelves. Kafka picks up a book about the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. During the Second World War, commissioned to remove the Jewish people as quickly as possible, Eichmann was primarily involved in organising the Holocaust. After the war, charged with war crimes, "he never felt guilty. Sitting on the bar protected by bulletproof glass in the court in Jerusalem, he looks puzzled, not understanding why he was brought in for such a dramatic trial" (Murakami, 2007a: 277). In the book, Kafka finds Ōshima's note that quotes W.B.Yeats and comments: "'In dreams begin responsibilities'—that's so true. In other words, it might be possible to say that where there is no imagination, there is no responsibility, as is seen in the example of Eichmann" (ibid.: 277–8).

Ōshima's note reminds Kafka of the night when he had blood on his shirt. He imagines himself on trial, where people accuse him of a crime

on account of the anonymous blood. While he claims that he cannot take responsibility for what he does not remember, they insist that as long as he shares the "dream" he is accountable for it because the "dream" is part of him, part of his unconscious mind (Murakami, 2007a: 278). Returning to the library, Kafka is notified by Ōshima, who read the news, that his father had been killed in Tokyo on the day when he found himself lying on the ground of a shrine covered in blood. Although Kafka has an alibi, he is not absolutely sure that he did not kill his father, remembering his father's prediction that he would kill him. These events terrify him and he becomes scared of the power of his unconscious.

The uncontrollability of the imagination suggests the "unconscious compulsion to act," in Murakami's words. Kafka is required to confront the operation of his unconscious and accept it as part of himself. As Crow advises in the beginning, Kafka has to go through his own "sandstorm," which is created through such things as his imagination, dreams, and unconscious. The novel suggests that understanding the metaphor of the sandstorm relies on imagination.

The relationship between imagination and responsibility is further exemplified by a reference to the story of Lady Rokujō in *The Tale of Genji*, a Japanese tale written in the eleventh century. Since Kafka has been living in the room of the library, he sees the spirit of Saeki every night, first 15-year-old Saeki and then Saeki at her current age. Without revealing what he sees at night, Kafka asks Ōshima if it is possible for a living person to appear in the form of a spirit. Ōshima then answers by referring to the case of Lady Rokujō. As a mistress of Emperor Genji, she becomes furiously jealous of his lawful wife and possesses her in the form of a vengeful spirit, attacking her every night. Exorcists try to drive the spirit out, but Lady Rokujō's grudge is too deep to be eliminated. When Lady Rokujō wakes from her nightmares, she finds her hair smells of the sesame oil used for the exorcism, which makes her realise she has possessed his lawful wife. Shocked by her unconscious evil deeds, she eventually shaves her hair and becomes a nun in atonement. Ōshima comments, "one of the most interesting elements in this story is that Lady Rokujō is not aware of her turning into a wraith at all" (Murakami, 2007a: 475). It is the power of her unconscious that frightens Lady Rokujō, to the extent that it makes her decide to recede from the world.

One of the most effective ways of explaining metaphor appears in Ōshima's argument with two feminists visiting the library to inspect whether its facilities and services correspond to their ideals. Pointing out the library's facilities, such as a unisex toilet and the sex-segregated order of the books in the shelves, they accuse the library of being "against the principle of gender equality" and "lacking fairness" (Murakami, 2007a: 373). Ōshima tries to discredit their judgement, referring to a number of examples: "When teachers took the roll at school, Soga must have been called before Tanaka and after Sekine. Did you complain about that? Did you ever claim that they should have called them backward?"

In reply, one of the women argues that Ōshima is evading their question. Correcting their misunderstanding, he says, "to be precise, it's the replacement of analogies [...] Aristotle regarded it as one of the most effective methods in rhetoric. Such an intellectual trick was popularly used among the citizens in ancient Athens in their everyday conversations" (ibid.: 373–4). "The replacement of analogies" is another way of explaining the process of metaphor, through which something can be understood more effectively when it is examined in a different context. Ōshima, using the examples, tries to make the visitors realise their one-sided view in which they equate the sex-segregated order of the books in the shelves with gender inequality. Being embarrassed, the women end up criticising Ōshima for discriminating against women:

> Using socially constructed ideas and the shield of poor logic to support men, you lower the gender of all women, limit their rights, and deprive women of rights that they should definitely receive. *You do it not intentionally but unconsciously, which rather proves the depth of your sin. By being ignorant of others' pains*, you men protect vested rights and interests. However, you wouldn't try to understand how such ignorance exerts a negative influence on women and society. The problem with the bathroom and the reference cards are just small examples, but such small details essentially constitute the whole.
>
> (Ibid.: 376–7, my italics)

The women's claim about Ōshima's lack of awareness of his act of discrimination demonstrated through his "ignorance of others' pains," in return, proves their "ignorance of others' pains." Equating everything that disagrees with their feminist point of view with a form of discrimination, they are less aware that they can also hurt others with their intolerance and prejudice. Ōshima finally declares his sexuality to them and asks whom he is discriminating against, which marks the end of their argument. Rather than criticising the feminists' point of view, Ōshima disapproves of their unwillingness to acknowledge that while accusing others of lacking imagination they can be guilty of the same lack of imagination. In this sense, he calls the feminists, referring to T.S. Eliot's work, "the hollow men" (Murakami, 2007a: 384). As long as they remain ignorant, they do not feel responsible for their ignorance, as seen in the case of Eichmann.[6]

The incident with the feminists in the library further encourages Kafka to think about imagination. His interest in imagination helps him understand the effects of metaphor, which is elaborated in his search for his mother.

Kafka's Metaphorical Experience of the Mother

In his room in the library, Kafka sees 15-year-old Saeki in the form of a spirit visiting the room every night to look at a painting called "Kafka on

the Shore" hung on the wall depicting her boyfriend sitting on a shore. The first couple of nights, Kafka pretends to be sleeping and tries not to let her recognise him. While watching the girl, he eventually realises that he is now in love with her. One night, as a slip of the tongue, he calls her name in her presence. She notices him and quickly disappears in the air. The next night, instead of the young Saeki, the current Saeki comes to his room, again in the form of a spirit. Saeki misidentifies Kafka sleeping in the room with her boyfriend at age 15 and tries to have sex with him. Kafka, unable to talk or move, is at her mercy. Saeki in reality, however, never realises that her spirit visits her boyfriend's room every night. Kafka ultimately falls in love with the current Saeki through the young Saeki.

Next morning, Kafka goes to Saeki's office and tells her about the Oedipus myth-like prediction his father made for him. He also discloses to her his theory that she is his mother. In reply, Saeki says:

> "At any rate, your theory is aiming at a far object. Do you notice that?"
>
> I nod. "I know that, but distance can easily be shortened through metaphor. […] Through metaphor we can remove a lot of things between you and me."
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 142)

Saeki tells him that she once acquired "something too perfect," that is, her relationship with her boyfriend, and after she lost him she felt that her life began to lose meaning since she no longer had a goal to achieve. She continues to say that she came back to her hometown Takamatsu only to wait for her natural death. Kafka confesses his love for her and his desire to sleep with her even if she is his mother, because in his words, "to me, everything is in a state of flux and has double meanings" (ibid.: 144). These "double meanings" are at this stage ambiguous but anticipate Kafka's following engagement with metaphorical interpretations.

Saeki, in reality, eventually sleeps with Kafka in his room in the library. Shortly after Kafka and Saeki begin to sleep together, Ōshima takes Kafka to his hut in the mountains for the second time, this time for two reasons: first to protect him from the police investigation related to the case of Kafka's father, and second to separate him from Saeki, who Ōshima thinks is seriously weakening.

While staying in the hut, Kafka has a dream in which he rapes Sakura. While Sakura resists him and tells him to stop, he forces her to sleep with him. In the dream, Crow speaks to him:

> You don't want to be under the control of anything and you don't want to be confused. You've already killed the father, and raped the mother. And you are now inside the sister. You think you would

> rather accept it, if the curse is waiting for you. You try to go through all the steps in the curse as quickly as possible. You want to be released from the burdens of the curse and live on your own, not being caught up in somebody else's plan.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 311)

Kafka's struggle against his father's "curse" eventually drives him to complete his prediction by imaginarily raping Sakura, his metaphorical sister, in order to finish it and to be liberated. This spurs him to engage in self-destructive behaviour, for example, by going deep into the forest surrounding the hut without protective equipment.

Walking into the forest, Kafka hears Crow blaming him for having "raped" Sakura the night before. He continues to claim that Kafka's completion of his father's curse will turn out badly: "in your expectation, the curse your father gave you should have been completed. But nothing is over. You haven't overcome it. The curse has been burned into your mind more badly than ever" (Murakami, 2007b: 348). Crow criticises Kafka's strategy in which he tries to "fight against a fight" by fulfilling the curse in order to overcome it. Crow continues:

> What you have to do is to overcome fear and anger in yourself [… and] to break the icy part in your mind by getting some light in. This is how you will become tough […] Even now, it's not too late. You'll still be able to retrieve yourself. Use your brain. You have to find a solution on your own.
>
> (ibid.: 349)

Crow encourages Kafka to face his problems to overcome them. For this purpose, Crow persuades him to think on his own. After that, Crow stops answering Kafka's questions:

> "Did I really kill my father?" I ask.
>
> No reply. I turn back. The boy called Crow is no longer there. My question is being sucked into silence.
>
> In the deep forest, I'm alone and feel terribly empty.
>
> (ibid.: 349)

In his mind, Kafka repeats Crow's encouragement to think on his own. He wants to disappear from the world because he believes he will be liberated from the curse.

Kafka feels something in him "being decomposed" and "clinked" (Murakami, 2007b: 351). He decides to leave his bag behind, something he has never been apart from throughout his journey. He leaves behind his spray paint, hatchet, and compass, which had helped him not to lose his way.[7] The only thing he keeps with him is a clasp knife in order to

"destroy the device in [himself]" (ibid.: 352) when it is necessary. This is followed by a line in boldface, "**then I go into the core of the forest**." While the boldface always denotes Crow's words, this is the only boldface line that is spoken by Kafka in the first person. The boundary between the voice of Crow and his own voice is becoming ambiguous.

Without any protective equipment, Kafka continues to walk deeply into the forest. The act of going into the forest becomes a journey into his unconscious mind; as he says,

> What I see here is the inside of me, and what looks threatening is the reflection of the fear in my mind. The spider web woven here is the one I wove, and the birds squawking above me are those I brought up and nursed.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 372–3)

While Kafka goes deeply into his mind, he is once again reminded of the moment when his mother left him and confronts the question: "why didn't she love me." His reflection on his mother reminds him of Saeki. The pictures of the two women begin to overlap:

> I imagine Saeki as my mother, leaving me as I just turned four. I shake my head in spite of myself. It seems too unnatural and unlikely. *Why does Saeki have to do such a thing*? Why does she have to hurt me and ruin my life? There must be crucial reasons and deep meanings underneath.
>
> (Ibid.: 375, original emphasis)

When Kafka repeats the questions about his mother in the context of Saeki, an idea strikes him: "There must be crucial reasons and deep meanings [behind her leaving him]." Kafka tries to put himself in Saeki's shoes in order to understand her reason for abandoning her child, although it is difficult for him, the abandoned, to imagine the situation of the abandoner. Crow later comes back to Kafka and says:

> You suffered seriously and it ruined you. You may continue to suffer from the same scar. I feel sorry about that. But you should think this way. You are still able to recover from it. You are young and tough. And flexible, too. You can get your scar healed, face forward, and move on. But she can no longer do such things. She is only left with her feelings of loss. […] Listen. Your mother, too, suffered from serious fear and anger. […] Even though she loved you, she had no choice but to abandon you. What you have to do is understand and accept her, not repeat her act. You have to forgive her. Of course, it's never easy, but you have to do it. That's the only way for you to be liberated.
>
> (Ibid.: 377–8)

In this way, Crow persuades Kafka to believe that his mother loved him but there was a crucial reason for her to leave him.

When Kafka goes further in the forest, he is guided by two ghosts into the "entrance" of a metaphysical town, in which Kafka sees 15-year-old Saeki. According to young Saeki, in the "town" the concept of time does not exist and "in the place where time doesn't matter, neither does memory" (Murakami, 2007b: 462). She also says that people's memories are stored in a "library." In the town where there is no sense of time, Kafka's attachment to his past, his loss of his mother, does not mean much.

After a while in the "town," Saeki in her current form visits Kafka. She advises him to leave the town as soon as possible and return to his life. While Kafka claims that he has no place to return to as nobody loves or needs him, Saeki tells him to return for her: "I want you to remember me. As long as you remember me, I don't mind being forgotten by everyone else" (Murakami, 2007b: 467). While Kafka asks her if she is his mother once again, she only says, "you must know the answer." Kafka tells himself: "yes, I know the answer. Neither she nor I can put it into words. Putting it into words will deprive the answer of its meaning" (ibid.: 470). His reluctance to clarify his understanding in words reflects Murakami's emphasis on thinking through images rather than explanations. Finally, Saeki discloses her past:

> A long time ago, I gave up something I shouldn't have. [...] Something I really loved. Because I was scared of losing it one day, I had no choice but to give it away with my hands. I thought it would be better to give it up rather than being deprived of it or see it disappear somehow. Of course, anger remained in me that never thinned away. I was wrong. I should never have given it up.
>
> I stay silent.
>
> "Then you were abandoned by someone that shouldn't have abandoned you." Saeki says, "[Kafka], can you forgive me?" [...]
>
> "Saeki-san, if I'm allowed to say this, I forgive you," I say (ibid.: 470–1).

Saeki takes a hairpin out of her hair, sticks it into her arm, and lets Kafka suck the blood that begins to ooze as a ritual of sharing part of her body with him. Kafka says in his mind: "I accept her blood deeply into my throat. It slowly soaks into the dry surface of my mind. I finally realise how much I desired the blood" (ibid.: 472). Kafka finally receives "warm blood necessary to grow up, not the one shed by violence" (Iwamiya, 2007: 198). The act of sharing her body fluids with him also implies her attempt to offer him her breast milk as a ritual to accept him as a son. Saeki also tells him to take with him the picture of "Kafka on the Shore" in her library and watch it when he wants to remember the purpose of living. While leaving the "town," he feels a sense

of achievement at being liberated and the affection from his "mother": "I'm liberated from the restraint. I've become one again. Warm blood is coming back into my body. The blood I received from her" (Murakami, 2007b: 477).

Back in the library, Kafka is informed that Saeki passed away during his absence. Remembering the promise to live his life and keep remembering her, he decides to return to Tokyo to finish his compulsory education in junior high school. He also decides to go to the police to prove his innocence in an attempt to face reality. Ōshima appreciates his decision, saying "you seem to have grown up" (Murakami, 2007b: 519). He tells Kafka to come back to the library to work as his assistant once everything settles down. A smile finally shows on Kafka's face. On the way to Tokyo, tears run down Kafka's cheeks. Crow appreciates his endeavour: "you did the right thing. Nobody could have done as well as you. You are indeed the world's toughest fifteen-year-old boy" (ibid.: 528). The strength Kafka has been expected to achieve is not the type of strength that is supported by his self-imposed isolation. It is the strength that helps him to face his environment through the use of his imagination in service to both himself and others. This is supported by the shift of Crow's role from a provider of answers that prevent Kafka from making his own decision to an advisor that encourages him to develop his own will. The novel ends on a note of approval, as Crow says: "you will fall into sleep. When you wake up, you'll find yourself part of the world" (ibid.).

The dialogue between Kafka and Saeki seems to operate with the mutual understanding that she is his actual mother. However, the uncertainty of the question remains, as stressed by Ōshima's comment after her death that "she disappeared from the world with a lot of secrets in her," which is rephrased by Kafka as "*with a lot of theories in her*" (Murakami, 2007b: 522, original emphasis). Kafka's theory is important for its metaphorical function regardless of its literal truth.

Kafka recovers his time with his mother through the metaphorical mother, Saeki, and acquires an opportunity to reconcile with the mother in his memory. As Iwamiya Keiko, a psychologist, explains, "even in the case where people cannot moderate their relationship with their mother in reality, it is possible for them to recover their relationship within the self's internal reality" (Iwamiya, 2007: 188). Kafka attempts to overcome his past in his internal reality, which is achievable through a metaphorical relationship with his mother. In this sense, the question of whether Saeki is Kafka's mother should remain unanswered.

In an interview about *Kafka on the Shore*, Murakami recalls an episode in the life of Franz Kafka, in which Kafka saw a little girl crying in a park because she had lost her favourite doll and started to send letters to her, pretending they were from the lost doll. In his letters, he made up a story that the doll had left for a trip and that she was having a new adventure in a new place. Kafka continued to write letters to the girl

for a while and sent a last letter in which the doll said she was married to somebody she met during her trip and would not be able to write to the girl again. In this way, the girl could accept the absence of the doll. Murakami explains that thanks to the letters from Kafka, the girl "made a shift from the state of chaos in which the doll disappeared to a new order in which the doll is not here anymore" (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 33).

Similarly, in *Kafka on the Shore*, Tamura Kafka, through the use of metaphor, makes a shift from the state of chaos in which his mother left him to a new order in which his mother is simply not there. He does not retrieve her, but prepares to move into a new world where he no longer suffers from the loss of the mother. As Ōshima once advised Kafka that "people usually attach themselves to something," Kafka finds a way to attach himself to his mother, through which he prepares to recover a connection with reality.

Saeki's Metaphorical Experience of Her Child

Kafka and Saeki are interdependent in terms of their experience of metaphor. While he achieves metaphorical reconciliation with his mother through Saeki, their encounter is also fruitful to Saeki's relationship with her child. Although she never clearly admits or denies that Kafka is her son, the fact that Saeki once had a child is explicit in the novel. As quoted earlier, she left her child because she was terribly scared of losing him just as she lost her boyfriend. Her traumatic experience of her boyfriend's sudden death led her to leave the child as a form of defence.

Saeki, however, has regretted her abandonment of the child throughout her life. Acknowledging the coincidence that Kafka was an abandoned child, Saeki expresses her remorse to her metaphorical son, Kafka, and asks him to forgive her. Receiving Kafka's forgiveness, she shares her blood with him. In this way, Saeki recovers a relationship with her child, which could not have been achieved otherwise.

Kafka equally functions as Saeki's boyfriend in a metaphorical way. She and her boyfriend were an inseparable pair since they were little, like Naoko and Kizuki in *Norwegian Wood*. Saeki's sorrow for the loss of her boyfriend is never alleviated even decades later. She metaphorically re-experiences her lost time with her boyfriend through Kafka. Saeki, in the form of a ghost, identifies Kafka sleeping in her boyfriend's room with her former lover and has sex with him as if she is trying to reproduce her past.

Watching the ghost, Kafka comments that she is the "real Saeki" (Murakami, 2007b: 111). What Kafka finds real about the ghostly Saeki is her silence. In this sense, the story of Lady Rokujō, which is referred to soon after Kafka sees the ghost of Saeki, is important to consider once again. Komori Yōichi explains that tales about ghosts written by

Heian female writers played an important role in protesting the oppression of women, who were silenced by the male-dominated society. Appearing in the form of a living ghost became a way to assert their politically repressed voices (Komori, 2006: 142). Komori associates Saeki's silence and the image of the repressed woman with Murakami's misogyny; however, I would contend that this ghost imagery indicates Murakami's opinion that language fails these women as a means to voice their feelings, while taking the form of a ghost is a more effective way to express their struggles. In a similar way to Lady Rokujō, Saeki's wandering in the form of a spirit powerfully conveys her pain about the loss of her boyfriend and her inability to verbalise her sorrow. In this sense, ghost Saeki embodies her "realness," and her pain is thus elucidated in her silence.

After Kafka confesses his love for Saeki in reality, she visits Kafka in her boyfriend's room at night. They take a walk around the nearby beach, the same depicted in the picture of "Kafka on the Shore." She tells Kafka about the time when the picture was painted. They sit on the sand next to each other like she and her boyfriend used to and reproduce the dialogue between Saeki and her boyfriend:

> "What are you thinking about?" Saeki asks me.
> "Going to Spain," I say.
> "What will you do in Spain?" […]
> "I'll join the Civil War. […] I'll blow up bridges." […]
> I put my arm around her shoulders.
> […]
> "You know? I was doing exactly the same thing in the same place a long time ago."
> "I know […] Because I was there at that time."
> "You were blowing up bridges […] metaphorically."
> […]
> "Why did you have to die?"
> "I had to die," you say.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 153–4)

Here, Kafka takes the role of Saeki's old boyfriend. Through the image of "blowing up bridges," which implies a metaphorical "jump" between the 15-year-old boy she was in love with and *a* 15-year-old boy now sitting next to her, Saeki re-experiences her time with her old lover. Like Kafka, Saeki also suffers from the pain of not understanding why her loved one had to disappear. Kafka's reply to her question, in the role of her boyfriend, helps liberate her from the chains of her past.

Murakami himself stresses the importance of understanding the novel metaphorically. In an interview, he says:

> Responsibility begins in memory. For example, whether Saeki is Kafka's actual mother or not is not important to me. Maybe she is, maybe she isn't. The question of whether they actually have a sexual relationship is equally not an essential theme. The thing is, in their associated memories, the hypothetical, mother-child relationship has already been built up.
>
> (Shibata, 2004: 277)

Therefore, in the novel, factual or physical matters yield to factors drawn out of metaphorical effects. As Murakami admits, through their metaphysical exchange, Kafka saves Saeki (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 35).

Nevertheless, the novel does not simply admire the relativisation and the removal of boundaries, it also emphasises singularity. After Kafka's metaphorical experience and metaphorical recovery from his past trauma, Ōshima differentiates their library from metaphorical existences: "[t]his library is not a metaphor at all for you and me. […] It is a very solid, individual, and special library. It can't be replaced by anything" (Murakami, 2007b: 523). Having a place to which he can return helps with Kafka's anxiety about going back to his life in Tokyo. In this way, while the novel suggests a metaphorical treatment of problems that otherwise cannot be overcome, it also stresses the importance of appreciating the singularity of particular things.

In the novel, the function of metaphor is demonstrated by its contrast with language's inefficacy to handle past trauma. In the same way that Kafka's search for explanation in words through Crow leads him to further isolation and despair, Saeki's association with language is portrayed as troublesome. After coming back to Takamatsu, Saeki writes down every single event she experienced in her life. As she explains, "it was a terribly painful task" (Murakami, 2007b: 362). When Nakata visits her, she tells him that it was important for her to write it down and she has now completed the notes. As she does not want anybody to read them, she asks him to burn them because she is afraid that her writing might "ruin somebody again" (ibid.).

Saeki's reluctance to share her writing with others is indicative of Murakami's disapproval of a type of writing that does not take readers anywhere, as exemplified by Nezumi (cf. Chapter 3). Instead, Saeki asks Kafka to remember her. This reflects Murakami's argument that memory stays in one's mind as a *monogatari*, as explained in Chapter 4. The "town" in the forest in which neither time nor memory makes sense symbolises the mechanisms of narrativised memory. Even though the remembered event happened in the past, the way individuals interact with the memory reflects how they are in the present. In memory, the impact of the past events on the current self takes precedence over the chronology of those events. Murakami says good *monogatari* remains in

people's minds for a long time (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 35). Saeki and Kafka can thus keep relating to each other in their memory.[8]

While Kafka achieves a metaphysical reconciliation with his mother, his relationship with his father remains unresolved. This could stand for Murakami's regular theme of battling the system represented by the father. However, in this novel, his focus is rather on Kafka's process of recognising the mother as a subject that can make mistakes and needs to be forgiven like other individuals. Kafka's experience of losing his mother leads him to idealise her. However, learning that the "mother" is not perfect and can make mistakes helps him alleviate his obsession with the fact that he was abandoned by the ideal mother. Furthermore, the other's imperfection mirrors the self's own imperfection; through forgiving the other, individuals can reflect on their own imperfection. Relativisation functions to broaden his understanding of both the other and the self. Murakami chooses a mother rather than a father for Kafka's parent in order to promote this relativisation, since the father more easily provokes an image of paternal authority.

In the following section, through a close analysis of Nakata, I will examine a different type of isolation and another function of metaphor.

Nakata's Complicity with His Unusualness

Nakata became illiterate and lost his memory because of an accident in his childhood during the Second World War, and acquired the skill to talk to cats instead. He makes his living by financial support from the government for disabled people, and extra income he receives by finding missing cats. While Nakata's way of speaking and choice of words are unusual, his clean and neat appearance and polite manner usually give people a positive impression, which often encourages them to offer him help.

Besides his harmless character, Nakata's life is supported by its simplicity. He does not rely on time and lives without a watch. Never leaving his suburb, Nogata, and leading a thrifty life, he manages his daily existence without much help from others. The simplicity of Nakata's life also appears in his vocabulary. Since becoming illiterate, he "lives with a quite limited vocabulary" (Murakami, 2007a: 454), understanding only words related to his life. He has no command of writing and reading, which is represented by the unusually frequent use of *katakana*, written phonetic syllables, in place of *kanji*, semiotic Chinese characters, in his speech. While his name is written in *kanji* (中田) in the description of his childhood before the accident, it appears in *katakana* in the current narrative, implying the shift from the literate to the illiterate. He uniquely refers to himself as Nakata, his family name, in the third person.

Words that take a difficult *kanji* or that Nakata does not quite know the meaning are also written in *katakana*. For example, when he explains his family to a cat he names Ōtsuka:

> My father […] used to be a great professor at university, specialising in something called *theory of finance* (キンユウロン). I also have two younger brothers who are very smart. One is working as a *department chief* (ブチョウ) in a company called *Itōchu* (イトウチュウ), the other works somewhere called *MITI* (ツウサンショウ). Both live in big houses and eat *eel* (ウナギ).
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 96–7)[9]

Nakata's unfamiliarity with these words and *kanji* are expressed through the use of *katakana*. In this way, finance, department chief, trade concerns, MITI, and eel are listed on the same level. Being equated with fish and because of the plainness of *katakana*, the supposed prestige presented by the first four words is easily eliminated. The supposed different registers of words are relativised when they are voiced by Nakata.

Nakata's limited vocabulary often brings him positive consequences. He lost his savings because of his cousin, who invested them in the construction of a resort hotel, causing financial loss. However, Nakata was not disappointed as much as other relatives, who were equally involved, because of his lack of understanding of difficult words such as "invest" or "resort hotel." His illiteracy and limited vocabulary prevent him from acknowledging the criticality of a problem and protects him from the resulting suffering.

The accident also affected Nakata's recognition system and "his skills to understand abstract ideas significantly declined" (Murakami, 2007a: 447). This is demonstrated by his inability to comprehend metaphor. When a truck driver tells him that "almost all the governors are like capitalists' dogs," he pictures governors as literal dogs (ibid.: 402). Nakata's inability to grasp metaphor means he is at risk of conflating two distinct things. This, however, provides him with a more straightforward understanding of metaphorical expression.

While Nakata constantly emphasises his illiteracy and describes himself as unintelligent, the question remains as to whether his disability necessarily "disables" him in life. Considering that his limited vocabulary helps him to avoid problematic situations, it seems that his disability is often not troublesome to him. Despite his supposed lack of intelligence, he has a good vocabulary and speaks good *keigo* (polite and honorific language), which is rarely spoken by Hoshino, a young truck driver who gives Nakata a lift to Kobe and ends up accompanying him until the end of his journey in Takamatsu.

More importantly, "Nakata knows that his way of being is different from that of others" (Murakami, 2007a: 450–1). He is acutely aware of how his disability is perceived by others. For example, Nakata keeps secret his ability to talk to cats because, "if he tells people about it, they will think he is crazy. He understands that, even though he is seen as being unintelligent, being unintelligent and being crazy should not be mixed up" (ibid.: 247). Elsewhere, when Nakata orders in a restaurant,

he asks people to read the menu for him, saying that he has weak eyesight instead of revealing his illiteracy. In this way, he knows that this disability would not surprise them and things would go more easily. In public, Nakata prefers to hide his disability because it makes his interactions with people run more smoothly. Similarly, when Nakata gets lost in Shinjuku, wanting to find a bus stop to go to Takamatsu, he does not go to a police station to ask for directions because he acknowledges that they may regard him as a demented old man and send him back home.

While Nakata is able to communicate with cats, he does not have a perfect command of his ability, and there are only a limited number of cats that he can communicate with. Like he is in human society, Nakata is aware that he is "a stranger in the cats' society after all" (Murakami, 2007a: 252). He is capable of observing himself through the operation of double mirroring, imagining how he is perceived by others. Considering Nakata's understanding of his own situation and his way of managing his disability, his belief that he is unintelligent is questionable. Rather, through the operation of self-differentiation, he skilfully negotiates with the stigma of disability to avoid difficult situations.

Nakata's management of his disability through maintaining distance from others also appears in the description of his childhood. While he was abused at school and in his family due to his disability, there were cases where he was accepted because "nobody was bothered by him" (Murakami, 2007a: 448). During his childhood, thanks to his quiet character, his schoolteachers did not treat this "disabled" boy as a "burden" but only as a "guest." Because of his obedience, his grandparents liked him and decided to adopt him. Nakata has continued managing this way of life by maintaining distance from people, based on the idea that less commitment causes less trouble, similar to Kafka.

Nakata's self-imposed isolation is represented by his pale shadow, a symbol of the smaller degree of his attachment to the earth. Ōtsuka, the first cat Nakata talks to and names in the novel, valuing Nakata's ability to communicate with cats, disagrees with Nakata's self-labelling as weak-headed: "as far as I can see, you don't seem weak-headed" (Murakami, 2007a: 104). In reply, Nakata expresses his preference to stay weak-headed:

> hitting my sixties, Nakata has become used to being stupid and to being ignored by people. If you say Nakata isn't brainless, I might get confused. If Nakata stops being stupid, I might lose the subsidy from the governor and the special concession for buses. […] It seems Nakata should stay stupid.
>
> (Ibid.: 105)

Ōtsuka warns that Nakata's pale shadow reflected on the ground is a more important problem than being brainless: "you better look for the

rest of your shadow" (ibid.: 106). As mentioned later in the novel, Saeki also has a pale shadow. The paleness of their shadows indicates that they both lost the ability to relate themselves to people and society after their traumatic experiences.

Thus, Nakata's isolation was a solution for him to compromise with his disability. His operation of double mirroring, imagining how he is reflected in the eyes of others, questions the simple conclusion that he is suffering from being disabled and suggests his complicity with his disability. Compared to Kafka's, Nakata's isolation has a more complicated structure and its subtleness enhances its problematic nature, which comes to be exposed and challenged by Johnnie Walker.

When Nakata looks for a missing cat, a horrifying-looking dog approaches him and takes him to the house of a man who introduces himself as Johnnie Walker. Johnnie Walker tells Nakata that he is a metaphysical entity and temporally uses the name and takes the form of Johnnie Walker, the man on the label of a whisky brand. Johnnie Walker explains that he captures cats and eats their hearts to make a special flute. He tells Nakata to kill him if Nakata wishes to save cats. His request does not make sense to Nakata and he refuses Johnnie Walker's request. As a demonstration of this idea, Johnnie Walker takes out one cat after the other from a bag, slits its stomach, takes out the heart, and puts it into his mouth. While Nakata is stunned at the sight, Johnnie Walker tells him to kill him before he slaughters the rest of the cats. After two unfamiliar cats, Nakata sees one of his cat friends removed from the bag and treated in the same way.

Nakata tells Johnnie Walker that he does not understand Walker's point because of his disability. However, Johnnie Walker only continues to press Nakata to kill him, saying:

> You have to think this way, *this is a war*. Then you are a soldier. Now you have to make a decision, whether I kill the cats or you kill me. You're required to make a choice here. It's surely an unreasonable choice for you. But think about it; almost all the choices in the world are unreasonable.
>
> (Murakami, 2007a: 301, original emphasis)

Nakata cannot stand the violent sight and ends up closing his eyes, but Johnnie Walker tells him not to look away:

> You can't close your eyes. Closing your eyes won't make anything better. Nothing will disappear even if you close your eyes. Actually, when you next open your eyes, you'll find things having gotten worse. We are living in such a world.
>
> (Ibid.: 310)

Nakata begs him to stop, saying "please, please stop it. If it goes on, Nakata will go crazy. It seems Nakata is no longer Nakata" (ibid.: 313). Johnnie Walker is pleased about Nakata's struggle and further urges him to go out of his mind.

Nakata's announcement of his disability usually prevents people from asking him complicated questions and leads them to maintain distance from him. In this way, Nakata avoids trouble or avoids understanding the seriousness of trouble. Johnnie Walker, however, does not treat Nakata as different from others and presses him to confront reality as others do. Johnnie Walker makes Nakata realise his self-differentiation, through which he has escaped from problems he was supposed to face. Nakata is now forced to stop depending on his disability to allow him to look away from reality.

When Johnnie Walker kills his cat friend and moves on to Mimi, another cat Nakata has befriended, Nakata finally stabs him. Johnnie Walker raves about Nakata's action and breathes his last. The next moment, Nakata wakes up to find himself lying on the ground outside, where he finds that Johnnie Walker and the blood on his shirt have disappeared. After this incident, Nakata finds out that he has lost the ability to talk to cats.

Nakata goes to a police station and explains that he has killed a man named Johnnie Walker. Noticing his unusual speech and his illiteracy, the policeman would not take the case seriously and only encourages him to go home. As it will turn out, the man Nakata has stabbed is Kafka's father, Tamura Kōichi, which is explained by Nakata towards the end of the novel: "[b]eing led on by Johnnie Walker, I killed a man on behalf of a fifteen-year-old boy who was supposed to be there" (Murakami, 2007b: 356).

Nakata's encounter with Johnnie Walker leads him to awakening. Deciding to give up his life in Nogata, he leaves Tokyo for the western part of Japan alone. He gets lifts from truck drivers going in the same direction. Hoshino is one of them, and ultimately follows Nakata until the end of his journey. On the way, Nakata comes to realise that his mission is to find the "entrance stone" to open the entrance to a metaphysical space, into which Saeki escaped from the anxieties of her youth in the past and within which Kafka experiences metaphorical reunion with his mother.

Nakata's quest for the stone turns out to be his search for himself and his own will. Comparing "ishi石" (stone) and "ishi意志/意思" (will/thought), Nagashima Kiyoshi (2008: 233) explains that Nakata's quest for the stone provides him with an opportunity to develop his will and thought. Developing his will to think, Nakata recalls his confrontation with Johnnie Walker and says, "Johnnie Walker came into Nakata. He made me do what Nakata didn't want to. Johnnie Walker used Nakata. Nakata could not resist it. Nakata didn't have enough power to go

against it. Because Nakata was empty" (Murakami, 2007b: 174). He explains that his emptiness allowed Johnnie Walker to use him as a container and made Nakata exercise violence on him.

In light of the aforementioned comparison between "loss" and "lack," Nakata's case belongs to "lack," whereby "not only the content but also the train itself disappear." He does not remember how he lost his literacy or memory. In this state of "lack," he does not remember what having literacy was like, and therefore he does not have to suffer from the experience of the loss, unlike Kafka.

According to Nakata's schoolteacher's report, Nakata suffered constant violence from his parents during his childhood. On a mushroom hunting trip, she found her period had suddenly started. She saw the boy Nakata watching her cleaning the blood from her underwear and beat him seriously because of her embarrassment. When she hit him, she saw a sense of resignation on his face, meaning that he lost the remaining hope for his teacher, who could have treated him well. Considering that this event caused him to lose his memory and literacy, he chose the state of "lack" rather than "loss," and now he no longer has to feel disappointed with the experience of losing. It was a self-defence mechanism to disconnect him from his past as a child in a difficult environment and to isolate himself as a newly disabled man. However, the distance from people and society now comes to appear as emptiness, which ends up inviting an evil entity that capitalises on him.

After stabbing Johnnie Walker, Nakata acquires the new "skills" of dropping fish and leeches from the sky as a way to let out his anxiety and anger. Having no control over them, he never knows what he will drop next. He is afraid he may let fall something dangerous enough to kill people. He notices that his lack of control over this peculiar ability comes from his emptiness and that his emptiness possibly causes trouble or violence for others.

Although the state of lack to some extent supported Nakata's life, his emptiness eventually contributed to the murder of Johnnie Walker. Nakata's murder of Johnnie Walker is what Crow criticises earlier as the "fight against a fight."

Nakata comes to the understanding that he needs to confront the world:

> Nakata is now different. Nakata earnestly wishes to be back to how Nakata used to be. Nakata wants to become a person who has his own thoughts and meanings. […] Nakata also has to take back the rest of the shadow.
>
> (Murakami, 2007b: 170–1)

While he used to have no significant desires in his life, he starts to express his wish to read books. Desire causes frustration, another new

experience for Nakata. His frustration with his illiteracy is illustrated in a dream, in which, while he is reading a book in a library, the light is suddenly turned off and he is left in darkness (ibid.: 285). His desire also causes him to recover his memory and talk about his experience of the war.

Thus, the novel describes another type of problematic isolation through Nakata, which is different from Kafka's and more complicated because of his apparently victimised image. Nakata's polite and humble manner often promotes an image of him being naive, which is further supported by his distance from urban life due to his illiteracy. However, it is also his own intention that locates him in society as an outsider so that he can avoid thinking or making decisions. In the novel, ignorance is rephrased as emptiness. Johnnie Walker criticises Nakata's willingness to stay ignorant and empty in order to avoid being involved in society. Differentiating ignorance from naivety, he exposes how Nakata's ignorance causes crucial problems by inviting immoral entities to manipulate him and cause serious troubles for others. This is another instance of an "unconscious compulsion to act." Much in the same way as Lady Rokujō's realisation of her unconscious attacks on Genji's wife shocks her terribly enough to take Buddhist vows, Nakata's realisation of his unconscious but operative commitment to immoral behaviours warns him to give up depending on his outsider position. As Crow encourages Kafka to think on his own, Nakata is also required to build up his own imagination to avoid being exploited by evil powers.

With the help of Hoshino, who is fascinated by Nakata's peculiar trip and follows him, Nakata eventually finds the "entrance stone" and opens the "entrance" of the metaphysical space for Kafka and Saeki by turning over the stone. When Nakata dies before completing his mission of closing the "entrance," the task is handed down to Hoshino. He also inherits the ability to talk to cats and is informed by a cat that his mission is to "kill the thing" (Murakami, 2007b: 484), something very dangerous that appears at night and tries to get into the "entrance."

At night, the dangerous creature emerges from Nakata's mouth. Once again, Nakata is used as a "tunnel" against his will. The creature is about one metre long and is covered by glistening white slime. Without legs, eyes, mouth, or nose, its salamander-like tail barely tells which end is its front or its back. Hoshino comments that "this is a will itself" (Murakami, 2007b: 496), the same will that possessed Kafka's father and appeared in the form of Johnnie Walker. Hoshino closes the "entrance" by turning over the "entrance stone," which is now tremendously heavy, before the creature reaches the stone. When the "will" faces the dead end, Hoshino quickly chops it into pieces and burns them.

Conclusion

The problematic isolation in the novel is thus demonstrated by Kafka and Nakata. While the two characters isolate themselves for different reasons and in different ways, their unwillingness to commit to society and people is equally questioned. Their realisation of the necessity to think on their own also constitutes an essential part of the novel, as a defensive power against the uncontrollability of mind and imagination. Here again appears Murakami's suggestion of negotiation with reality as a better alternative to the attachment to the "fighting spirit" embodied by his "collective generation." The characters' will to think on their own prevents them from being subject to immoral entities that try to exploit individuals and helps them to become independent while committing to others.

In *Kafka on the Shore*, travelling constitutes an important element of the novel. Both protagonists, Kafka and Nakata, travel from Tokyo to Shikoku. Even more than their physical travel, their psychological travel creates important effects. In *Remote Region, Close Region* (Henkyō, kinkyō, c1998), a collection of travel essays based on his trips to the US, Japan, Mexico, and Nomonhan in Mongolia, Murakami notes that because of the growing accessibility to foreign countries, borders between nations and cultures are on the verge of disappearing:

> In this era when anybody can travel easily, the idea of remote regions no longer exists and the nature of adventure has completely changed. Words such as "bōken" (exploration) and "hikyō" (unexplored region) are becoming worn out and no longer functional.
>
> (Murakami, 2008: 251)

He continues to say, "[i]n the era when remote regions are no longer perceived as such, what is important is to believe in a space in one's mind that produces a remote region" (ibid.: 252). It depends on how individuals use travel to bring about change in their consciousness. In other words, it is rather psychological distance than physical distance that creates the effects of travelling and crossing borders today.

In *Kafka on the Shore*, while both Kafka and Nakata travel to Southwest Japan, their physical distance is not particularly large compared to the character's travel to Hawaii in *Dance Dance Dance* and to Greece in *Sputnik Sweetheart* (*Supūtoniku no koibido*, 1999). However, in *Kafka on the Shore*, the act of travelling has a more important function, in terms of the travel's psychological impact on the protagonists.

Here, characters are required to cross the borders in their minds, which is effectively demonstrated through metaphor. Kafka and Saeki both have the opportunity to come to terms with their past experience

of losing important people through the bridging effects of metaphor. In this way, in *Kafka on the Shore*, Murakami demonstrates the function of *monogatari*. The *monogatari* of the other provides the self with an opportunity to observe his or her *monogatari* from different perspectives. In order to make the most of the effect of metaphor, one needs to develop imagination, because the lack of imagination can cause dangerous "emptiness," as is exemplified by Nakata. The act of crossing borders, however, has to follow one's return to where it left. As Saeki advises Kafka not to stay long in the forest, he crosses bridges in order to find a better way to return and relate himself to where he should belong.

In the next chapter, I will delve into Murakami's growing interest in the operation of psychological distance in the face of different cultures, which further complicates our understanding of his peculiar relationship with the cultural Other.

Notes

1 Tokō Kōji (2007: 131) explains that Japanese critics' reaction was not much as it was expected because of their concentrated interest in colonial history of Japan.
2 Murakami explains that the novel is not about a parallel world like *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, in which two stories embody reality and fantasy, respectively. Rather, in *Kafka on the Shore*, the two plots happen independently on the same level of reality (Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 12).
3 Ōshima is socially recognised as female. However, without breast development or menstruation, she describes her body as neither male nor female (Murakami, 2007a: 382).
4 Saitō Tamaki, appreciating Murakami's use of metaphor as a characteristic that differentiates him from other Japanese writers, explains that despite his characters' apathetic attitude in a world where communication has failed and reluctance to relate to others has become pervasive, he is not an escapist because he "constantly attempts to bridge disconnected worlds through metaphor and stakes his creativity on the desperate attempt" (Saitō, 2000: 66).
5 Murakami explains the effective use of metaphor in novels by referring to Raymond Chandler's novels:

> There is a sentence in a novel by Chandler: "the room was suddenly full of heavy silence, like a fallen cake." It's a simple metaphor, but readers straightaway grasp, almost visually, what sort of silence it is. If you try to explain this without a metaphor, it would be tedious, and readers wouldn't be patient with such an operation. In this sense, metaphors should work visually, and therefore descriptions have to be short and function visually. More importantly, metaphors should come from the author's kindness for readers; they should help liberate readers from the state of endurance. And readers' patience should be reserved for more important descriptions.
>
> (Ozawa, 2011: 16)

Murakami explains that metaphor is an effective device to direct readers' attention to important scenes and to make the novel more enjoyable. This reflects his concern about his works' accessibility to readers, as I explained in Chapter 2.

6 Murakami's reference to feminists needs a careful treatment as his description of women, who are passive, often disappear, get killed, or made silent, has been seen as problematic. In this scene, although the author's intention seems to criticise a lack of imagination, his choice of feminists for this purpose leaves a question to the reader.
7 Interestingly, Murakami describes a similar scene while explaining the act of writing a novel a decade earlier in *Distant Drums*:

> writing a long novel is a special action for me. […] It is like going into forests completely alone, without a map, a compass, or any food. Overgrown bushes tower like a wall, and enormous branches that lie on top of each other cover up the sky.
>
> (Murakami, 2001: 242)

8 Similarly, Murakami argues for the power of memory in dealing with history. Through his research on the Nomonhan incident during World War Two and visiting the site of the incident in Mongolia, Murakami is shocked by the meaningless battle fought by the Japanese army. He says that all he can do as a Japanese person is "not to forget. There is probably nothing I could do besides that" (Murakami, 2008: 190).
9 In the published English version, Philip Gabriel, in order to carry over Nakata's peculiar use of *katakana*, translates "theory of finance" as "theery of fine ants," "Department chief" as "depart mint chief," and "Ministry of trade and industry" (MITI) as "minis tree of trade and indus tree" (Murakami, 2006: 48).

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6 Writing in the Space In-Between

Murakami's Exploration of Cross-Cultural Effects

In the last three chapters, I discussed how the act of distancing functions in Murakami's stories, and how the evolution of his distancing himself from Japan and the cultural Other is reflected in his description of the protagonists. Starting from an initial interest in the alienating effects of which the cultural Other reminds him, Murakami eventually decided to make direct contact with the cultural Other through a three-year sojourn in Europe in the late 1980s. He further moved towards commitment to the Western Other through a five-year period in America. There, he was invited to universities as a well-known Japanese writer and lectured on Japanese post-war literature, which signified a drastic change in his attitude towards Japanese literature. As discussed in Chapter 4, after numerous journeys overseas, Murakami came to the conclusion that psychological distance is more effective than physical distance in the contemporary era, when one can easily access foreign cultures in the flesh or through technology. Yet, he stresses that it depends on individuals' efforts whether they take in the distancing experiences effectively.

Murakami is often labelled as an outsider writer and an un-Japanese writer. Such an image is constructed by his constant rejection of traditional Japanese literature and his recurrent reference to Western cultural products in his work. However, I will argue that it is rather his Japanese background and his association with cultural Others that promotes him as deviating from Japanese contexts. His image-making is possible because of both his proximity to and his distance from Japan and the West.

Furthermore, through analysing Murakami's employment of cultural elements, either Japanese or un-Japanese, I will suggest that Murakami has certain similarities with Japanese writers of the Meiji period to the post-war period, whose themes were closely related to their confrontation with the Western Other. Such an understanding casts doubt on Ōe's lament that Murakami committed a "misdeed" by allegedly disconnecting Japanese literature from pre-1970 post-war literature (Ōe, 1989: 200; cf. Chapter 1).

I discuss Murakami's similarities with Japanese writers, however, not to deny his uniqueness, but to draw attention to his new type of representation of cross-cultural effects and the complicatedness of the

operation. Murakami's appreciation of cross-cultural effects is closely related to his proposal of the function of *monogatari*, in which relativisation helps individuals broaden their understanding of themselves and their surroundings. This chapter examines Murakami's complicity with the act of distancing from both Japan and the cultural Other through three perspectives: the author's negotiation between "cultural odourlessness" and "Japaneseness"; his language experiments through a defamiliarisation of the Japanese language; and his attempt to explore cross-cultural effects through his translation activity. I will also look at British authors David Mitchell and Kazuo Ishiguro because a similar creative use of cross-cultural effects can be seen in their works, and through comparison with them Murakami's complicity with a space in-between is better understood.

Negotiating with Un-Japaneseness

Since the mid-nineteenth century, in Euro-American countries, Japanese culture has been represented through an exoticisation and aestheticisation of its traditional elements; mainly a hypermasculine aspect exemplified by samurai and swords or a feminine and elegant aspect typified by geisha and cherry blossoms, two images encapsulated by Ruth Benedict in the metaphor of "the chrysanthemum and the sword" in her book by the same title. The mechanisms of Orientalism in which the West emphasised its modernised self through the projection of the unmodernised ethnic Other was reproduced in its encounter with Japan (Minear, 1980). The West's projection of the image of Japan as heavily traditional and therefore backward was also intended to disempower the Other (Suter, 2008: 37).

Since Japan's economic growth and modernisation, however, Japan has been associated in the Western imagination with what David Morley and Kevin Robins (1992) define as "techno-Orientalism," in which Japan's technological and economic success is portrayed as exceeding and almost abnormal as is seen in science fiction works such as *Neuromancer* and *Blade Runner*. "Techno-Orientalism" contributes to projecting another disempowered image of Japan. However, it is also commonly discussed that such promotion of a particular image of Japan paradoxically implies Western anxiety over the threat that Japan poses to America as an economic competitor, as claimed by Iwabuchi (1994) that they attempt to relegate Japan once again to a subaltern position.

Western audiences' reliance on traditional Orientalist views has been supported also by Japanese intellectuals' own self-Orientalising. Japanese intellectuals, realising the unique image of Japan "exist[ed] more clearly in the eyes of the West" seen in the works of *Nihonjinron* (the theory of the Japanese), tried to highlight their own "uniqueness" in order to construct their collective identity (Revell, 1997). Writers such

as Mishima Yukio and Kawabata Yasunari exemplify this trend. Their description of "traditional" Japan as well as the creation of their own images as traditional Japanese men were partially defining of the Japan perceived by Western audiences; the writers acted in accordance with the authenticity they promoted.

Western readers were surprised by Murakami's unusual description of Japan, which is characterised by an absence of Japanese cultural elements and a corresponding overflow of Western cultural products. As noted by Elizabeth Devereaux: "Forget about cherry blossom time, the crags of Fujiyama, tea ceremonies; most especially forget about exquisitely penned haiku. Today Haruki Murakami is Japan's premier novelist, and he's earned that rank by breaking all the rules" (1991: unpaged).

More importantly, the lack of Japaneseness in Murakami's stories is often regarded as "culturally odourless," a term coined by Kōichi Iwabuchi (2002) to describe the Japanese cultural industry's deliberate removal of cultural references from its products in order to sell more easily to an international audience. Matthew Chozick (2008: 68) points out that Murakami's description of characters is hardly associated with skin colour. McInerney (1992) similarly says that while the author's stories are almost always set in Japan with Japanese characters, they can be replaced with other urban cities in the world (see also Shibata et al., 2006: 216).

Murakami's growing popularity in the international scene has furthered the perception of his writing as cultureless and stateless. *Bunkateki mushūsei* (culturelessness) was one of the main topics discussed at the symposia in 2006 held for Murakami's translators and critics. These proceedings were collected in *Sekai wa Murakami Haruki o dō yomuka* (*How is the World Reading Murakami Haruki*, 2006). Through the symposia, one of the chairs, Yomota Inuhiko, reconfirmed his belief that "Murakami Haruki's novels marvellously transcend conventional stereotypes about Japan, eliminate the so-called 'reek of Japan' perfectly, and therefore become cultural products that jump out of the local literature market and ride the trend toward globalisation" (Shibata et al., 2006: 251).

Murakami is now commonly regarded as a "global writer" or "international writer" both inside and outside Japan. Suter (2008: 36) states that in the US, Murakami is read as "a writer" rather than as "a Japanese writer," which is exemplified by Shibata Motoyuki's statement that in America today, Murakami's works sell on the same bookshelf as other American novelists rather than foreign writers, and his short stories are often issued in *The New Yorker*, which is taken as a sign of the author's achievement of an international reputation (Shibata, 2004). It is also reported that in bookstores overseas Murakami's novels are arranged next to the books of internationally popular authors such as Milan Kundera, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Vladimir Nabokov

(Shibata et al., 2006: 4). Katō Norihiro (2008: 119) argues that even in Japan "Murakami Haruki" should no longer be cited as Murakami Haruki 村上春樹 in Japanese characters but as "Haruki Murakami," Romanised and with an anglicised name order. In the Japanese media, his name is increasingly often spelled in *katakana*, the syllabary for foreign words, and in the anglicised order as ハルキ・ムラカミ, emphasising his publicity at the international level (see Rubin, 2005; Yoshikawa: 2010). Thus, Murakami's publicity is considerably supported by his distance from Japan and Japanese culture; the consensus is that his works are un-Japanese and therefore culturally odourless. I will question the commonly held view that the elimination of a traditional sense of Japan leads to the production of international works.

Despite the obvious lack of Japanese elements in Murakami's stories, Western readers' and critics' willingness to seek Japanese cultural elements in Japanese novels remains strong. When Murakami was first introduced in Russia through the translation of *Hear the Wind Sing*, the reviewer refers to *mononoaware*, literarily meaning "pathos of things," which is often referred to by Western critics to introduce Japanese traditional aesthetics (Shibata et al., 2006: 5). Similarly, John Updike (2005) in his review of *Kafka on the Shore* associates the story with the principles of Shinto and Celeste Loughman (1997) tries to explain Zen Buddhism through Murakami's short stories. Readers tend to attribute the elements and devices that are difficult to understand in Murakami's fiction to Japanese vernacular cultural practice. Ōtsuka Eiji (2006: 5–9), pointing out that translations of the author's works almost always have pictures of *kabuki*, *geisha* girls, or Orientalised images of women on the book covers, notes that such tendencies are a sign of international readers' remaining expectation of Murakami to be a "Japanese" novelist (see also Chozick, 2008: 66). Murakami's acquisition of international audience is, thus, essentially associated with his title as a Japanese writer.

Murakami's pervasive image as Americanised is also questioned considering what makes him appear Americanised. His novels, his early works in particular, are replete with American cultural products and proper nouns. Readers can hardly imagine Murakami's protagonists drinking *sake* or eating *sushi*. However, the stories almost always feature Japanese characters and are set in Japan, with a few exceptions. While his stories are said to be Americanised, "Americanness" is produced only through the characters' consumption of American cultural products. When American history, culture, and people are referred to, it clusters around familiar names to Japanese audience, and besides American music, which Murakami introduces in bulk, Japanese readers rarely learn about America's history or politics from his stories. They only find foreign names that they commonly see in their daily life; like Murakami's hero, Japanese readers do eat McDonald's hamburgers, donuts, and sandwiches, and drink beer and whisky.

Readers' associations between Murakami and his Japaneseness are also seen in the fact that Western journalists almost always start their interviews with the author with a question about his "exile" or "exodus" from Japan and his consciousness as a Japanese writer. In reply, as if trying to meet their expectations, Murakami expresses how uncomfortable his life in Japan is and how different he is from other Japanese people and writers. He complains about the difficulty in acting as an individual in Japan because of the society's collectivism. Citing the negative example of the salarymen who have to be absolutely obedient to their company, he claims that he is an exception and rejects these systems in an attempt to be individualistic and independent (Devereaux, 1991; McInerney, 1992; Miller, 1997).

However, Murakami would not give up his connection with his Japanese background. His expression of his not-quite-Japanese identity usually follows his strong consciousness of himself as a Japanese writer. For example, he remarks that "after all, I am a Japanese author writing fiction in Japanese [...] I would like to write about Japanese society from the outside. I think that is what will increasingly define my identity as a writer" (McInerney, 1992: unpaged; see also Gregory et al., 2002). He claims his vocation as a Japanese writer speaking both to a Japanese audience and to an international readership. Yet, he would not lend himself to be seen as one of many Japanese writers; rather, he presents himself as *the* Japanese writer, by stressing that he hardly reads Japanese novels and has no contact with Japanese writers (Wray, 2004) and differentiating himself from other internationally acknowledged Japanese novelists such as Mishima and Kawabata (McInerney, 1992; Tokō, 2007: 123).

Murakami's attempt to act as an international Japanese writer is revealed also through the gap between his active appearance in the Western media and avoidance of the Japanese media. While Murakami's dislike of the media is commonly understood in Japan, such a reclusive image of him hardly exists in America. His availability to Western interviewers can be part of his wilful image making as a writer disconnected from Japan. Murakami started to accept interviews in Japanese magazines more actively since the late 2000s, after his global fame became indubitable.

Thus, when Murakami's lack of Japaneseness is celebrated by international readers, it is his Japanese background that crucially invites their attention. His recurrent expression of distance from other Japanese writers stems from his will to be complicit with his un-Japanese label. In other words, Japanese culture *does* exist in the image of Murakami as a structuring absence.

In this sense, Japanese critic Uchida Tatsuru's discussion of American-born Japanese writer Rībi Hideo (Hideo Levy) is worth noting. Uchida, known as a dedicated defender of Murakami, compares the international popularity of Murakami's works and Japanese readers' acceptance of Rībi's novels in order to emphasise the former. He points

out that, while Rībi's novels are well accepted by the Japanese audience, Japanese critics tend to look for Rībi's American identity in his works and discuss his stories' proximity to Japanese literature rather than treating them as Japanese novels; his reputation is supported by the fact that "he tries to become like a Japanese yet cannot quite be one" (Uchida, 2007: 170). Uchida differentiates Murakami's successful crossing into the international scene from Japanese readers' acceptance of Rībi, arguing that Murakami's cultureless stories have acquired "universality" against Rībi's reliance on his cultural background. However, I aim to demonstrate that it is rather Murakami's self-positioning between Japan and the West that significantly supports his acquisition of audiences both inside and outside Japan. In this case, Murakami shares a number of similarities with Rībi in terms of their success in foreign countries. Yet, Murakami's negotiation with his cultural distance from both his own country and the West is more complicated than Rībi's.

Masao Miyoshi compares Murakami and Mishima Yukio in terms of their dependency on Japaneseness for the purpose of attracting an international audience: Mishima in his aestheticisation of traditional Japanese elements and Murakami in his deliberate description of a Westernised Japan (Miyoshi, 1991: 234). Mishima tried to promote himself as an embodiment of Japanese traditional aesthetics, while Murakami, through his description of unfamiliarly un-Japanese Japan, has gained a reputation as a unique Japanese writer. In this sense, Miyoshi's argument seems to be valid, although what differentiates Murakami from Mishima, as well as other traditional Japanese authors, is his indifference to idealising Japanese culture and language. Murakami rather tries to destabilise the act of valuing a culture over another culture. In Murakami's words, "[m]any Japanese think their language is so unique that foreigners cannot grip its essence, its beauty or its subtlety. […] we have to do something to break through the isolation the Japanese have cherished for so long" (McInerney, 1992: unpaged). The aestheticisation of the language prevents the language from being examined through a comparison with other languages. Yet, Murakami by no means aims to ignore the characteristic properties of individual languages or cultures. In this sense, he disagrees with the equation of relativisation and the removal of locality. In an interview, when asked whether he intends to write a novel in English in the future, he expresses that he is only interested in writing in Japanese. He continues to say:

> Recently there are a number of American translators who understand the Japanese language well. I can leave the translation of my works to them. I just think it's time to read literature without relying on the categorisations like Japanese literature or American literature or Russian literature. But it doesn't mean literature is becoming

> cultureless (*mukokuseki*). My novels have to be written for us living in Japan in the first place.
>
> (Murakami, 1989: 29)

Murakami denies the supposed celebration of "cultureless" literature as the reason for his popularity and argues for locality in literature. This is better understood through his belief in the function of *monogatari*. While he promotes the observation of self and reality from multiple perspectives through *monogatari*'s effects of relativisation, such relativisation is carried out based on individuals' own *monogatari*. Through relativisation, readers acquire a deeper understanding of themselves; the relativisation is performed to return to the individual *monogatari*. In *Underground* and *Underground 2*, Murakami first collected individual *monogatari* of the victims and Asahara's followers, and then projected a collective *monogatari* for the purpose of further analysis. Murakami's focus lies in the act of crossing different *monogatari* rather than proving similarities among individuals. Similarly, he primarily writes about Japan for a Japanese audience. People outside Japan can relate to his stories because they read them as their own *monogatari*, understanding the relativising effects of *monogatari* and reading it in their own context. It is the power of *monogatari* rather than the lack of cultural elements that enables Murakami's stories to cross cultural boundaries. The close relationship between the function of *monogatari* and cross-cultural effects is further elaborated through the author's operation of distancing from Japanese literature and language and of complicating his translation activity.

Murakami's Proximity to Japanese Literature

As discussed in Chapter 1, Murakami attempted to form his writing style and advanced his idea of *monogatari* based on his understanding of the predicament of Japanese literature. Murakami's insights into Japanese literature were recognised by Japanese critics at the time of his debut. When he received his first literary award from the literary magazine *Gunzō*, one of the judges of the prize, Maruya Saiichi (1979), praised his deep understanding of American literature as a revolutionary attempt to overcome Japanese realism. Maruya's juxtaposition of Murakami's familiarity with American literature and his effort to reform the Japanese literary tradition implies his accumulated knowledge of Japanese literature.

Despite his recurrent remarks about his ignorance of Japanese literature, Murakami used to reveal his knowledge of Japanese novels and his thoughts about them in his interviews and essays in the early stages of his career, ranging from classic works such as *Heike monogatari*, *Ugetsu monogatari*, and *Hōjōki* (Murakami, 1981) to modern and contemporary

authors such as Izumi Kyōka, Miyazawa Kenji, Yahagi Toshihiko, and Ōe Kenzaburō (Kawamoto, 1979). When Murakami criticises Ōe's stories because they do not offer readers guidance about how to live in the present day, he reveals his reading experience and deliberation about the writer's works (ibid.: 201).

Murakami also shares a number of salient elements with traditional Japanese writers, particularly Meiji period writers. Karatani (1980) once referred to Meiji writer Kunikida Doppo's description of a transcendental self in the short story "Wasureenu hitobito" ("Unforgettable People"), which relativises values and focuses on what people usually fail to recognise, and names this epistemological revolution the "discovery of landscape." In another essay, "Murakami Haruki no 'fūkei'" ("The Landscape of Murakami Haruki", 1995), Karatani argues that a similar transcendental self is described by Murakami, alluding to his characters' rejection of conventional values and emphasis on their own value judgement, and concludes that he belongs to the category of modern writers.[1] Another, more important similarity between Kunikida and Murakami is, Karatani continues, the fact that they "discovered landscape" through their confrontation with the Western Other: British romantic poetry for Kunikida, and modern and contemporary American literature for Murakami.

Rebecca Suter (2008), developing Karatani's theory, explains that despite Murakami's use of the cultural Other, he is different from modern intellectuals in the sense that cultural hierarchy is not involved in his relationship with the Western Other. Rather, it is the alienating effects caused by crossing cultures that Murakami employs in his writing. In this sense, Suter (ibid.: 86) defines the author as "para-modernist," referring to his commonality with modern writers yet differentiating him from them.

On the other hand, Murakami is also complicit in the Other's perspective towards him, yet not for the purpose of justifying one's superiority or uniqueness as is exemplified by the case of Orientalists and Self-Orientalists. While Orientalists and Self-Orientalists believe in their familiarity with the other to observe or with the self to be observed, Murakami rather tries to conceal his familiarity with Japanese literature. His manipulation of the knowing self and the known self is possible because of his proximity to both the cultural self and cultural Other.

More similarities between Murakami and Meiji writers can be found in regard to his appreciation of cross-cultural effects. For example, that Murakami shaped his own language through writing a story into English and translated it into Japanese is a famous anecdote that explains the origin of his peculiar language. This is also very similar to Futabatei Shimei's establishment of his writing style in the late nineteenth century through his translations of Ivan Turgenev's *Svidanie* (*The Rendezvous*) and *Tri vstrechi* (*Three Encounters*) under the titles

Aibiki and *Meguriai*. Futabatei's attempt for literal, faithful translations of Turgenev's stories were revolutionary at the time, when large-scale modification of the original text as a form of *hon'an*/*hon'anmono* (adaptation) was generously accepted. In his translation, Futabatei carried out a literary reformation called *genbun-itchi*, which mainly meant to bring writing styles closer to the colloquial form in order to establish a standard Japanese language as part of the process of forming a sense of national identity in the face of the threat posed by modernised Western countries. Futabatei's experiments in language through his translation of Russian literature contributed to shaping his own writing, as exemplified by his novel *Ukigumo* (*Floating Cloud*). Similar to Murakami, Futabatei first wrote some parts of the novel in Russian, and then translated it into Japanese (Cockerill, 2006: 28). Futabatei's translation, rather than his novel, also exerted significant influence on young contemporary writers such as Shimazaki Tōson, Kunikida Doppo, Tayama Katai, and Tokutomi Roka (Nakamura, 1977: 51).[2]

Considering Futabatei's reformation, as Tokō (2007) says, Murakami's exposure to Western literature and creation of his own literary style through translation can be regarded as a second literary reformation. The origin of Murakami's writing, in which he attempted to develop a literary style through translation, is very similar to Futabatei's process 100 years ago. Murakami's commonality with Futabatei is further demonstrated through their contemporaries' reactions to their writing style. While Futabatei's colloquial form in his translations of Russian texts would be eventually valued as a foundational moment in modern Japanese literature, the unfamiliar sound of the language was not well received when it was first introduced. Tayama Katai, one of those who would be influenced by Futabatei's translations, stated that the language in *Aibiki* sounded "strange yet marvellous" to him and it was surprising that "such a style could work if you try" (Tayama, *Kindai no shōsetsu*, 1953: 13, cited in Mizuno, 2007: 14). A similar comment is repeated by Kawamoto Saburō in his interview with Murakami, where he expresses the shocking moment when he first read Murakami's novel because of the freshness of the language and the atmosphere. He says, "many novelists unconsciously wished to write this kind of novel" (Kawamoto, 1985: 39). The initial negative reaction followed by gradual recognition is shared by Futabatei and Murakami's language. Such commonalities diminish the alleged uniqueness that is commonly ascribed to Murakami's style.

Murakami's attempt to distance himself from the Japanese literary circle through promoting his proximity to Western literature is important. When Murakami received the *Gunzō* award for his first novel, he referred to F. Scott Fitzgerald, one of the American writers Murakami admires and translates. In expressing his philosophy of writing, he said "[while writing the novel] I was strongly encouraged by Fitzgerald's

words, 'If you want to narrate a story no one ever wrote, write with a language no one ever used'" (Murakami, 1979: 114; cf. Chapter 2). This is the first public comment Murakami made as a writer. He started his career with a clear expression of the close connection between his position as a writer and American literature.[3] He would continue to articulate this connection, as seen in an interview where he makes a similar remark: "I didn't know how to write in Japanese [...] so I borrowed the style, structure, everything, from the books I had read – American books or Western books" (Wray, 2004: 122).

Murakami also stresses a connection with John Irving, another American writer Murakami respects and whose work he has translated. Expressing that he is particularly inspired by Irving's negotiation between pure literature and popular literature (cf. Chapter 1), he notes:

> [Irving's] weapons are readable sentences, humour, striking plots, and uncanny metaphors. They appealed to the masses, and simultaneously aroused criticisms among critics who were associated with serious literature.
>
> (Murakami, 1982: 202)

It is as if, while explaining Irving's writing style, Murakami were talking about his own.[4] As a consequence of the fact that Irving receives criticisms for his distance from the traditional form of pure literature implies that Murakami is subject to the same criticisms and that he believes he is criticised for the same reason, namely his position in between high and low art. This, again, can be read as Murakami's statement of his own belief, as he often expresses in interviews his will to write novels that are approachable to readers yet are also of high literary quality.

Such conflict between pure literature and popular literature is not uncommon in Japanese literary tradition. Since the literary naturalist movement in the Meiji period, realistic depictions of society or individuals, usually uncovering their dark side, were dominant in Japanese literature. However, towards the end of the Taishō period, the idealism that had supported pure literature began to be questioned, which encouraged the rise of *tsūzoku shōsetsu* (popular novels). The increasing demand for light stories in newspapers and women's magazines also promoted the need for popular novels (Nakamura, 1970: 80). Yokomitsu Riichi was one of the earliest writers who announced his support for *tsūzoku shōsetsu*. In the mid-1930s, he published a famous critique "*Junsui shōsetsu ron*" ("On Pure Literature") where he declared his will to undertake a "hard course" to write a novel that belongs both to *tsūzoku shōsetsu* and to *junbungaku* (pure literature) (ibid.: 81). Such tendency to value "pure literature" still remains today. Reflecting on this historical background, Murakami is not as unique in Japanese literary history as he is often made out to be. However, Murakami's proximity to

American writers allows him to be disconnected from the mainstream Japanese literature and appear unique.

In an essay written shortly after his debut, Murakami discloses that his rejection of Japanese literature was initially driven by his father's persistent encouragement to read Japanese classics. As a form of resistance to his father, Murakami stopped reading Japanese novels and immersed himself in novels written in English. He reflects on the past and says that by avoiding Japanese literature and the Japanese language, he was looking for a "disconnected space" (*kakuzetsu sareta basho*) (Murakami, 1981: 49). When he wrote his first novel, Murakami found it funny that somebody who had refused Japanese literature wrote a novel in Japanese. He describes his situation: "I felt as if I only came back to where I used to be after taking a detour" (ibid.: 50). His recurrent remarks about his distance from Japanese novels made in the following years are a sign of his acknowledgment of his actual proximity to Japanese literature and of the necessity of deliberate denials.

Murakami tries to differentiate himself from other Japanese writers also in terms of his "return to Japan." As I explained in the last chapter, his experience of staying in America as a visiting fellow at Princeton University and Tufts University, where he lectured on Japanese novels in the post-war period, provided the author with a salient turning point in his relationship with Japanese literature and language. He writes, "through my stay in America, I came to face the country of Japan and the Japanese language more seriously. [...] after a long-term struggle, I gradually acquired my own 'negotiated' (*oriatta*) style of writing in Japanese" (Murakami, 2000b: 281–2).

Such acquisition to the consciousness of being a "Japanese writer" after an experience in a foreign country is not uncommon in Japanese literary history. The prominent counterpart to Murakami would be literary critic Etō Jun. Like Murakami, Etō was invited by Princeton University as a visiting fellow three decades earlier. Although his initial purpose at the university was to do research on F. Scott Fitzgerald, he eventually changed his focus to Japanese novels and also taught university students Japanese literature.

In his famous essay "America to watashi" ("America and I"), Etō writes that his busy life in Tokyo was characterised by ceaseless phone calls from publishers; going to a place where he would become a stranger was a great comfort for him (Etō, 1998). Murakami repeats the same sentiment in *Tōi taiko* (*Distant Drums*), as we have seen in Chapter 4. Like Etō, Murakami developed a clear consciousness as a Japanese after a long experience of isolation in America where he was inevitably treated as Japanese. Etō and Murakami also share the experience of being inspired to write about Japanese war history through research in American libraries: Etō conducted a study on the Allied Forces' censorship operations in occupied Japan and Murakami has conducted research on the

Nomonhan Incident. Other elements such as Etō's ultimate realisation of his responsibility as a Japanese writer and his shock at seeing how much Japan had modernised during his absence equally appear in Murakami's accounts of his experience in Europe and America.

Such a sequence of overseas experiences and eventual return to the mother country is reminiscent of the so-called "return to Japan" (*Nihon kaiki*) phenomenon, which refers to Japanese intellectuals' initial rejection of Japanese culture and society and their subsequent conversion to appreciating and even idealising them. Murakami, however, rather than reaching a reductive view such as "Japanese people need *tatami* and *umeboshi* (salt plums) after all," highlights the "heterogeneity" (*ishitsusei*) that he became aware of through his experience overseas as a useful device to carefully observe and examine and deepen his own perspective (Murakami, 1997: 16). His attempt to immerse himself in the space of the Other, for reflecting on and constructing layered understandings of the self, again exemplifies the function of *monogatari* that is evident through his novels.

Murakami's stress on his difference from modern Japanese writers in terms of his way of employing the effects of crossing cultures is further elucidated through his discussion of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. He contributed an introduction to Jay Rubin's collection of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's short stories in English translation, *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories* (2006b). In the introduction, Murakami unusually admits his significant commonality with the traditional Japanese writer, Akutagawa. In this piece, Murakami, giving a brief note about "the most important 'Japanese national writers'" such as Natsume Sōseki, Shiga Naoya, Kawabata Yasunari, Mori Ōgai, and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, introduces Akutagawa as one of the best Japanese writers (Murakami, 2006b: xix). Murakami regards Akutagawa as a "special" writer (ibid.: xxii) and praises "the flow of his language" (ibid.) and "his finished, fluent, elegant, and spontaneous style" (ibid.: xxiii). He goes on to say that he "learn[s] a great deal from his works and from the vivid traces of his life" (ibid.: xxxv).

Akutagawa was born and grew up in a period when Japan was heading through a process of modernisation and Westernisation after the end of national seclusion policies. His experience of a Westernised lifestyle and of reading Western novels reminds us of Murakami's own. Akutagawa's hesitation to adopt the mainstream realistic style, the I-novel, is also shared by Murakami. Murakami stresses his similarities with Akutagawa in terms of their attitude and style as Japanese writers:

> Like [Akutagawa], I leaned heavily in the direction of modernism at first, and I half-intentionally wrote from a standpoint of direct confrontation with the mainstream I-novel style. I, too, sought to create my own fictional world with a style that provisionally

> rejected realism [...] I also learned most of my technique from foreign literature.
>
> (Ibid.: xxxv)

Murakami is particularly eloquent when it comes to Akutagawa's interaction with Western culture. Murakami's claim that Akutagawa was "by no means simply a modernist with Western affectations" (ibid.: xxviii) is again reminiscent of his own approach to writing based on the creative use of Western Others.

The notable difference between Murakami and Akutagawa is their attitude towards Japan's cultural interaction with the West. Like other traditional Japanese writers, Akutagawa's conflict with Westernised Japan affected his psychology. The cultural Other appeared as threatening to his Japanese self, as is epitomised by the image of the protagonist terrified by a doppelganger in "Haguruma" ("Spinning Gears"). In Murakami's stories, the Western Other no longer appears as threatening because it is simply "a part of the characters' everyday life" (Ellis, 1995: 148). This evolution of the cultural relationship allows Murakami to explore new ways of portraying the Western Other in Japanese literature.

While Murakami rarely expresses his admiration for a Japanese author in public, it can also be said that Murakami's growing international reputation has pressed him to be a spokesman for Japanese literature. Murakami is now happy to play this role since his reputation as a "global" writer is well established.

Defamiliarising the Japanese Language: Murakami's Language Experiments

Murakami does not mind being compared to other Japanese writers when it comes to his active interaction with the cross-cultural space. This concern allows him to be compared to Akutagawa but not with those who aestheticised the Japanese language in their writing. As mentioned earlier, Murakami intends to deconstruct and examine the Japanese language as a relativised medium. Murakami's relativisation of the Japanese language is, however, not aimed at devaluing the language but at breaking the impasse caused by its extensive idealisation. For this purpose, he employs cultural Otherness; he defamiliarises the language by making it pass through another language. I derive the term "defamiliarisation" from Victor Shklovsky, who described it as an operation that aims "to set the mind in a state of radical unpreparedness; to cultivate the willing suspension of disbelief" so that "the conventionality of our perceptions is put into question" (Wall, 2009: 20). Murakami similarly questions the conventional perception of the Japanese language and tries to re-examine it.

The first way in which Murakami defamiliarises the Japanese language is by writing in Japanese through translation. He accepted the translation-like Japanese as unique. However, it is less productive to discuss Murakami's language in the dualism of being natural or unnatural, authentic or inauthentic, and respectful or disrespectful. Murakami's approach is rather in demonstrating new ways of representing language. "[D]efamiliarizing language," Judy Wakabayashi says (2009: 8), "share[s] similarities with that of foreignization." The following section will show examples of Murakami's foreignisation of the language through his language experiments.

As noted earlier, Murakami's frequent use of *katakana* words is one of the most characteristic features of his language. His recurrent use of *katakana* words has a special effect on the novel. This is a passage from *1Q84* (2009–10), in which the female protagonist Aomame goes to a French restaurant for dinner with her friend Ayumi. I will compare the original version and the published English version.

> 青豆はブルーグレーの半袖のワンピースに、白い小さなカーディガンを羽織り、フェラガモのヒールを履いた。イヤリングと細い金のブレスレットをつけた。いつものショルダーバッグは家に置いて(もちろんアイスピックも)、小さなバガジェリのパースを持った。あゆみはコムデギャルソンのシンプルな黒いジャケットに、襟ぐりの大きな茶色のTシャツ、花柄のフレアスカート、前と同じグッチのバッグ、小さな真珠のピアス、茶色のローヒールというかっこうだった。[…]　二人はバーで待ち合わせ、軽くミモザ・カクテルを飲み、それからテーブルに案内された。悪くないテーブルだった。シェフが顔を出し、青豆と話をした。そしてワインは店からのサービスだと言った。
>
> (Murakami, 2009b: 334, my underlines)

> Aomame wore a small white cardigan over a blue-gray short-sleeve dress, and she had on her Ferragamo heels. She added earrings and a narrow gold bracelet. Leaving her usual shoulder bag at home (along with the ice pick), she carried a small Bagagerie purse. Ayumi wore a simple black jacket by Comme des Garçons over a scoop-necked brown T-shirt, a flower-patterned flared skirt, the Gucci bag she carried before, small pearl pierced earrings, and brown low-heeled shoes […] They met at the bar, sipped mimosas, and then were shown to their table, which turned out to be a rather good one. The chef stepped out of the kitchen for a chat with Aomame and noted that the wine would be on the house.
>
> (Murakami, 2011: 187)

The words underlined are written in *katakana*. Not only foreign words such as "one-piece (dress)," "cardigan," and "earrings" and foreign proper nouns such as "Ferragamo" and "Comme de Garçons," but also words that are commonly written in Japanese such as "purse," "table,"

and "chef" are written in *katakana*. It includes even some *katakana* words that are not very regularly used and the average Japanese reader may not understand, such as "La Bagagerie" and "mimosa cocktail."

While it is often said that *katakana* words account for 2% of contemporary Japanese writing, about 40% are *katakana* words in this passage. The recurrence of *katakana* words leaves the readers with an awkward feeling. It provides the novel with a visual effect; not only does the language sound unnatural, but also the page look unusual to Japanese readers. Not all the pages of his novels have a similar abundance of *katakana* words, yet it is commonly identified as a characteristic of the author's style. This peculiar characteristic stands out when it is compared with the English version, in which the alienating effects of *katakana* are hardly maintained.

Rebecca Suter, analysing Murakami's language experiments through a peculiar use of *katakana* words, raises a number of examples of his defamiliarisation of the Japanese language. Murakami tends to use the non-abbreviated form of *katakana* words that are usually shortened, such as *rimōto kontorōrā* (remote controller) instead of *rimokon*, *aisukurīmu* (ice cream) instead of *aisu*, and *wādopurosessā* (word processor) rather than *wāpuro*. Referring to Murakami's comment that his use of non-abbreviated words is a matter of his personal preference, Suter explains that it is his way of expressing individual taste and affirming individuality (2008: 68–9). The display of familiar words in an unfamiliar manner causes alienating effects in a similar way to the frequent appearance of *katakana* words.

Suter also draws attention to cases where Murakami complicates the use of all three alphabets of *hiragana, katakana*, and *kanji*. A good example is the short story "Shidonī no gurīn sutorīto" ("Sydney's Green Street") issued in *Slow Boat to China*. The protagonist is a private detective and his office is on Green Street, Sydney. However, he does not aim to make money from his work but does it as a hobby. He accepts only "interesting" cases from his clients, which is noted by a sign attached on his office door. It says:

> "Private Detective. Competitive prices. However, I only accept interesting cases." The sign is all in *hiragana*. Of course, there's a reason for that. The fact is that not many people in Sydney are able to read *kanji*.
> (Cited in Suter, 2008: 82)

The humour in this passage is that "not many people in Sydney are able to read" Japanese, not to mention *kanji*. The common understanding that *hiragana* words are easy to read compared to *kanji* words applies only to Japanese-speaking people, not to general residents in Sydney.

Despite the recurrent references to Japanese letters, the story does not have connotations of the characters' nationality or cultural background.

The protagonist's girlfriend Chālī is the only character whose national background, Chinese, is mentioned. Yet, her foreign name is unusually written in *hiragana*, which plays a part in fostering the complicated presentation of language in the story.

A more challenging and creative use of language is presented in *1Q84* by a teenage female character dubbed "Fuka-Eri." In addition to her dyslexia, her spiritual contact with the other world has changed her way of speaking; she tends to use short sentences that lack accent or intonation. People who talk to Fuka-Eri often find it difficult to grasp whether she is asking a question or making a statement.

This is a passage from a scene where the male protagonist Tengo meets Fuka-Eri for the first time. I have added the information removed from the English version in square brackets to reproduce Fuka-Eri's speech fully.

> 「センセイでショウセツを書いている」とふかえりは言った。どうやら天吾に向かって質問をしているようだった。疑問符をつけずに質問をするのが、彼女の語法の特徴のひとつであるらしい。
>
> 「今のところは」と天吾は言った。[…]
>
> 「スウガクがすき」天吾は彼女の発言の末尾に疑問符を付け加えてから、あらためてその質問に返事をした。「好きだよ。昔から好きだったし、今でも好きだ」
>
> 「どんなところ」
>
> 「数学のどんなところが好きなのか?」と天吾は言葉を補った。
>
> (Murakami, 2009b: 86, my underlines)

> "You're a teacher and a [fiction] writer," Fuka-Eri said. She seemed to be asking Tengo a question. Apparently, asking questions without question marks was another characteristic of her speech.
>
> "For now," Tengo said. […]
>
> "You like math." Tengo mentally added a question mark to her comment and answered this new question: "I do like math. I've always liked it, and I still like it."
>
> "What about it."
>
> "What do I like about math?"
>
> (Murakami, 2011: 44–5)

Fuka-Eri's speech without question marks encourages Tengo to repeat it to make sure what she means.[5] Her lack of accent is emphasised by her use of *katakana*. In this example, "teacher" (sensei), "fiction" (shōsetsu), and "math" (sūgaku) are unusually spelled in *katakana* letters instead of *kanji*. The unusual representation of *katakana* words and the avoidance of *kanji* effectively demonstrate Fuka-Eri's lack of command of the language and unfamiliarity to written form in a similar way Nakata in *Kafka on the Shore* hardly uses *kanji* in his speech as a sign of his illiteracy (cf. Chapter 5).

A more complicated case appears when Fuka-Eri says a long sentence. The following is from a scene where she calls Tengo to arrange a meeting for the next day. I underline her speech according to *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*.

> 「こんどのニチヨウのこと」と彼女は前置きもなしに言った。[…]
> 「あさの九じ・シンジュクえき・タチカワいきのいちばんまえ」と彼女は言った。三つの事実がそこには並べられている。
> 「つまり中央線下りホーム、いちばん前の車両で待ち合わせる、ということだね」
> 「そう」
>
> (Murakami, 2009b: 138)

> "About [this] Sunday," she said, without saying hello […]
> "Nine o'clock [in the morning]. Shinjuku Station. Front end of the train to Tachikawa," she said, setting forth three facts in a row.
> "In other words, you want to meet on the outward-bound platform of the Chuo Line where the first car stops, right?"
> "Right."
>
> (Murakami, 2011: 73)

The words spelled in *hiragana* and *katakana* are, again, supposed to be written in *kanji* in common speech. The differential use of *hiragana* and *katakana* here does not make sense. Such unusual choice of characters not only provides the text with an alienating effect on the reader, but also makes the sentences difficult to read. Readers have to be patient with the "hazy" illustration in order to decode the meaning and reconstruct the text in the common writing style with *kanji*. In this way, readers experience Tengo's difficulty in grasping Fuka-Eri's speech in his conversation with her.[6]

Tengo's experience of Fuka-Eri's peculiar speech is a projection of the readers' unfamiliar experience in reading Murakami's stories. Murakami's presentation of alienating effects is better understood in comparison with Bertolt Brecht's notion of "estrangement effect." In his discussion about traditional Chinese acting, which engages spectators in the performance as perceivers of the estrangement effect, Brecht says:

> […] the Chinese artist never acts as if there were a fourth wall beside the three surrounding him. He expresses his awareness of being watched. This immediately removes one of the European stage's characteristic illusions. The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place. […] The actors openly choose those positions which will best show them off to the audience, just as if they were acrobats. A further means is that the artist observes himself.
>
> (Brecht, 1964: 91–2)

The Chinese artist's way of making use of the audience's observation can be applied to Murakami's peculiar performance and linguistic experiments by crossing cultures and languages. Murakami is aware of the way his peculiar presentation of Japanese culture and language is perceived by readers, and he tries to capitalise on their unfamiliarity. The readers' reaction to his peculiarity contributes to an effective reading of his stories. Furthermore, the estrangement effect is operative both inside and outside Japan in different ways; Murakami tries to engage Japanese-speaking readers' unfamiliarity with his complicated use of Japanese writing systems and foreign readers' unfamiliarity with his representation of Japan without ostensible Japanese elements. In either case, as Numano Mitsuyoshi (1989: 155) says, Murakami's stories have to be set in Japan to achieve their estrangement effects.

In terms of Murakami's language experiments, his translators' considerable efforts to translate his estrangement effect into their languages are worth discussing. Translation initially aimed for domestication of a foreign text, referring to Lawrence Venuti's terminology, where the foreign culture is made recognisable and familiar to the target culture. This tendency has been criticised by the recent rise of translation studies in light of postcolonial perspectives, where foreignisation of the text is valued as an ethics of translation that resists the dichotomy of the coloniser and the colonised (Venuti, 1995).

This shows a revolutionary case in which English translation stresses literary, linguistic, and cultural effects caused by the process of translating. However, the foreignness and unnaturalness in Murakami's language turns out only natural when it is translated into English. Rubin states:

> the *closeness* of Murakami's style to English can itself pose problems for a translator trying to translate it "back" into English: the single most important quality that makes his style fresh and enjoyable in Japanese is what is lost in translation.
>
> (Rubin, 2005: 356, original italics)

Shibata and Sugano (2009: 23) also point out that banal expressions such as clichés can turn out to be refreshing in Murakami's Japanese because of Japanese readers' unfamiliarity with these words – another type of expressions that is "lost in translation" in English. Although Rubin's effort is an outstanding case that subverts the conventional domestication of foreign texts, *direct* translation of Murakami's works is unachievable.

Murakami's translators make significant efforts to reproduce the peculiarities and the alienating effects in his text by making the most of their own languages' characteristics. For example, in their translation quoted above, Jay Rubin and Philip Gabriel try to keep Fuka-Eri's blunt way

of speaking by using fragmented sentences. Murakami's Polish translator Anna Zielinska-Elliott and Danish translator Mette Holm (2013) explain that European translators are more willing than the American ones to meet Murakami's challenges and make efforts to translate the alienating effects produced by his language experiments. In the case of Fuka-Eri's speech, Zielinska-Elliott and Holm say that European translators try to keep her unusual way of speaking by avoiding capital letters or punctuation or connecting the words with hyphens to make the tone flat. Thus, through translating Murakami's language experiments, the translators are encouraged to carry out their own language experiments.[7] In this sense, it is when the Japanese language is defamiliarised in this way that the characteristics of the language turn out to be more visible.

Murakami's tolerance towards variations in translations of his works is also worth noting. Jay Rubin discloses that whenever he comes across grammar or sentence structure he struggles to translate and asks Murakami for advice, the author almost always answers, "Do whatever works in English" (Sehgal, 2011: unpaged). This attitude stems not only from his trust in Rubin's translation skills, but also from his appreciation of the gap between the original work and the translation. Murakami believes that a translation is disconnected from the original and is therefore an autonomous text rather than a secondary version of the original (Murakami and Shibata, 2000: 27). He says he can enjoy reading translations of his novels as original works because of the distance between the two. While he feels too embarrassed to reread his own works once they are released, he is happy to read the English versions because in translation "[his] subjectivity appears diluted to some extent" (ibid.: 28). In other words, translation functions as a cushion between the author and his work, and it helps the author perceive his own work indirectly. This, again, explains Murakami's appreciation of the function of Otherness as a mediator between himself and his creation and as a device that allows him to observe another layer of the object.

Murakami's approval of the varied forms of his works in translations appears in his attempt to retranslate his works from English into Japanese. Murakami translated English translations of his short story "Rēdāhōsen" ("Lederhosen") issued in *The Elephant Vanishes* back into Japanese. Treating it as an original story, he translated it carefully and faithfully, even rendering a mistranslation on the part of the English language translator faithfully back into Japanese.[8]

Murakami's Complicity with Translation: Translation as a Mentor

Murakami's interest in the alienating effects caused by translation is further deepened by his own translation activity. The translated text

is traditionally disregarded as a secondary creation because of the primacy of the original text. Similarly, the translator's secondary position often brings up a discussion about translators' invisibility, as is seen in the works of postcolonial scholars such as Susan Bassnett (2002) and Lawrence Venuti (1995). The stigmatised image of translators' (and interpreters') invisibility is, for example, portrayed in a work by novelist Yōko Tawada, in which the protagonist's job as an interpreter affects her sense of subjectivity. Her weak sense of identity is presented in a scene where her photographer complains about her failure to appear in photos. She also compares an interpreter and a prostitute and claims, "[i]nterpreters are like prostitutes that serve the occupying forces" (Tawada, 2002: 14–15).

In Japan, the formation of national literature is closely associated with translation literature. In the Meiji period, due to the perceived necessity of "civilising" the nation, translators were highly valued. Meiji intellectuals' translation of European texts first cluster around ones related to Christianity, geography, economy, law, politics, history, and science in order to modernise the country. It is a while later that Japanese writers started to import and translate Western literature, mainly European and Russian, into Japanese. Thanks to their prolificacy, Meiji writers mainly read translations rather than the original texts in foreign languages (Maruyama and Katō, 2000: 59). Translation was more dominant than original creative writing until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the literary Naturalist movement emerged. The translations significantly influenced Meiji writers' creative writing, as demonstrated earlier.

Indra Levy (2006) questions the direct adaptation of postcolonial frameworks to discuss Meiji intellectuals' active translation. She says that Meiji translators naturalised the foreignness of the text in the process of translation and adapted the other culture into Japanese, which destabilises conventional notions of the imitation and the original. She emphasises rather the translators' contribution to the reformation of modern Japanese literature. Maruyama and Katō (2000: 187) similarly state that in the case of Japan, translation is not merely a process of exposing the self to a foreign culture for the purpose of absorbing its concepts and philosophies, but it is also the other culture that is modified and adapted to the context of Japan.

In recent years, new translations of European, Russian, American, and Chinese classics have been published, as is exemplified by the series of *Koten shin'yaku* (*New Translation Classics*) by publisher Kōbunsha. As Numano Mitsuyoshi states, the project is "a huge hit" (Numano, 2012: 189), and it has contributed to promoting Russian novels, particularly Fyodor Dostoevsky's, about which Numano says, "the two most widely read authors in Japan are Murakami Haruki and Fyodor Dostoevsky" (ibid.: 188). *Koten shin'yaku* series aim for "reader-friendliness," using contemporary idioms. In this sense, Numano states, "the recent

transition in translation methodology in the English-speaking world can be characterized as a move from *domestication* to *foreignization*, while Japan has seen a move from *foreignization* to *domestication*" (ibid.: 190, original italics).

Murakami has actively translated American modern and contemporary novels since his debut, including the works of Raymond Chandler, Truman Capote, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Irving, and Raymond Carver. His prolific translation has led to the foundation of his own translation series at publisher Kōdansha under the title *Murakami Haruki hon'yaku raiburarī* (*Murakami Haruki Translation Library*). The author's popularity has bolstered the success of his translations. Miura Masashi (2003) states that today Japanese readers buy translations according to the translator, and that the two most popular translators of English-language literature are Murakami Haruki and Shibata Motoyuki. Particularly, Murakami's contribution to promoting the works of Raymond Carver, who was hardly known in Japan before Murakami's translations, is significant. There used to be even a concern that his enormous popularity threatened Carver's authority as the original author. When Murakami's first translation of Carver's stories was published, the translator's name printed on the cover was bigger than the original writer's name, which leads to some controversy. In an interview, Murakami (1989: 28) recalls that he had no choice but to accept his publisher's suggestion because it was the only way to persuade the publisher to release the translation of the unknown American writer, although Murakami would be criticised by critics. In this sense, Yoshida Haruo comments that Murakami destabilises the relationship between "the original author as the primary entity" and "the translator as the shadow" (Yoshida, 2001: 99–100), a situation which subverts the conventional view of a translator's invisibility.

A more recent case is when Murakami issued new translations of two widely acknowledged American novels, J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. A label with the translator's name was attached to both books and more attention was paid to him than the original writers. One might wonder whether readers look for the voice of the original writers or that of the translator.

As if following the tendency for reader-friendly translation, Murakami's translation works are also very readable. More importantly, the language in his translations easily reminds readers of his novels. In this regard, Fujimoto Yukiko (2006: 316) states that the smooth flow of the language in Murakami's translation of *The Catcher in the Rye* almost makes readers forget the fact that it is a translation; they can read the book as if it were Murakami's own. In this sense, Hayashi Keisuke (2012: 5) explains that the readability of Murakami's translations exemplifies not only the increasing tendency for domestication of a foreign text, but that more attention has been paid to the translator's presentation of the text. It is

rather Murakamisation of the text as a forwarded form of domestication that helps bring the text closer to the reader.

Murakami himself expresses the close connection between his fiction writing and translation activity. He says that "the act of translation has been always an important mentor of writing for me, and also a friendly literary colleague" (Murakami and Shibata, 2008: 5; see also Murakami, 2006a). While Murakami is reluctant to admit influence from Japanese writers, he is happy to express his appreciation of Japanese translators from which he learned (Niimoto, 2004: 10).

Murakami holds the view that the act of translating is a form of deep commitment. He is, therefore, strongly conscious of his own voice embedded in his translations, and in this sense he feels responsible for his role as a mediator between the original work and his readers. This encourages him to constantly examine the quality of his translations and revise his published translations of Carver's stories and reissue them.

Murakami appreciates translation activity also, in the sense that it provides a distance between him and his novels. He says that translation activity helps him get out of his mind after a long-term internal journey while writing his own fictional works. According to him, writing a novel is a process of exploring one's internal world, and engaging in the process for a long term may lead the self to lose its own way and its contact with the external world. On the other hand, he says, "translation is different. The text is always outside [of yourself]. As long as you maintain a distance, from a certain point outside the text, you won't get lost or lose your balance" (Murakami and Shibata, 2000: 16). This is how Murakami neutralises his closeness to his ego and prepares for fictional writing. In this sense, Murakami also describes translation activity as "healing" (ibid.: 38). When he was terribly overwhelmed by the rapid change in Japan after returning from Europe, he struggled to write novels and focused on translation work, regarding it as a "treatment" to recover from post-success depression (Murakami, 2001: 402).

Yet, translating is also a commitment. Murakami explains that through translating, one can go into another's mind and listen to his or her voice; it is an act of crossing into the Other (Murakami and Shibata, 2000: 38). The act of crossing between two spaces is, he says, analogous to the act of writing a novel in which the author similarly travels through different phases of reality. The author further deepens his complicity with his translation activity by making stronger connections between his novel and translation.

"You" and *kimi*: The Reciprocal Influence of Fictional Writing and Translating

Murakami's relationship with translation is further elaborated through his translation of J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. While Murakami

presents his attempt for faithful translation as a sign of respect for the original work, he includes his individuality in his translation. In 2003, Murakami released his translation of *The Catcher in the Rye*, aiming to replace the outdated language in the earlier versions. He also took translating such a masterpiece as a new challenge (Murakami and Shibata, 2003). While *The Catcher in the Rye* had been read by Japanese readers mainly through Nozaki Takashi's 1964 translation, *Mugibatake de tsukamaete* (*Catch Me in the Rye Field*), Murakami changed the title to the direct English reading spelled in *katakana* as *Kyacchā in za rai* (キャッチャー・イン・ザ・ライ). Although this modification partially stems from Murakami's belief in contemporary Japanese readers' familiarity with English, it also reminds readers of the author's frequent use of *katakana* words, a defining characteristic of his own writing as another case where he uses his own language in his translation.

Along with the release of *Kyacchā in za rai*, Murakami published *Hon'yaku yawa 2: Sarinjā senki* (*A Night Conversation on Translation 2: Commentaries on Salinger*, 2003), a collection of dialogues with his editor Shibata Motoyuki, discussing Murakami's translation. Here, Murakami explains that the release of a new translation of *The Catcher in the Rye* is not only for updating the language used in the older version, but also for proposing a new perspective on the novel in light of social changes, claiming that such a widely read novel should have multiple versions of translation to provide readers with a broad range of interpretations (Murakami and Shibata, 2003: 23). While the old translation published in the 1960s, and influenced by the counterculture movement, focuses on the teenage protagonist's resistance to society (Koshikawa et al., 2003: 296), Murakami's new version emphasises Holden's personal struggle to find his identity (Shibata and Murakami, 2003: 26, 68; see also Yukawa and Koyama, 2003). In this regard, Murakami pays special attention to the translation of Holden's frequent use of "you" in the novel. While Holden often complains about people around him and fails to communicate with them, he is unusually verbose to "you." Murakami interprets the "you" as Holden's own projection, his alter ego, and compares the way Holden relies on "you" with a form of psychotherapy in which a therapist lets patients talk as they like (Shibata and Murakami, 2003: 26, 46). Holden uses his imaginary conversation with "you" to compensate for his lack of communication with people in reality. Holden's recurrent appeal to "you," Murakami and Shibata discuss, paradoxically emphasises his isolation (ibid.: 116).

Regarding the "you" as an essential element of the novel, Murakami pays careful attention to translating it. How "you" is translated in Japanese is a controversial issue because the second person pronoun is usually avoided in Japanese and the direct translation of "you" only makes the language sound unnatural. In the early translation of *The Catcher in the Rye* by Nozaki Takashi, the "you" is partially eliminated

and otherwise translated as inconspicuously as possible. On the other hand, in his *Hon'yaku kyōshitsu* (*Translation Class*), a collection of his lectures on translation at the University of Tokyo, Shibata (2006: 16) constantly advocates careful consideration to treat the English "you," and calls into question the recent tendency of mechanical elimination of "you" in Japanese translation.

In *Kyacchā in za rai*, Murakami unusually translates "you" as *kimi*, the Japanese second person pronoun, as much as possible unless it appears too interrupting. Although the second person pronoun is usually omitted in Japanese sentences, Murakami believes it necessary in order to bring to light Holden's essential problem, his dependence on the imaginary Other (Murakami and Shibata, 2003: 46). In this regard, American Japanologist Mark Petersen, disregarding the author's intentions, strongly disapproves of the unnaturalness of *kimi* in Murakami's translation. He claims, "who is this 'kimi' at all? [...] This 'you' is *nobody*. If anything, it indicates 'readers' in general, and it's only a pronoun necessary in the English structure" ("Nihongo hanasemasuka?" *Shōsetsu shinchō* July 2003, cited in Tsubouchi, 2007: 87, original emphasis). On the other hand, Tsubouchi Yūzō (2007: 93), appreciating Murakami's emphasis on the description of Holden's internal struggle by translating "you," disagrees with Petersen's criticism and comments on Murakami's treatment of "you" as "creative mistranslation," not as a result of careless reading of the text but of meticulous reading.

Similarly, Murakami carefully translates the "you" that Holden's younger sister Phoebe uses to refer to her brother. Instead of calling his brother *onī-san* or *onī-chan*, common appellations for older brothers used by younger siblings, Phoebe in Murakami's translation calls Holden *anata*, another second person pronoun, which sounds softer than *kimi* and is often used by women. With this approach, their relationship appears equal, which further reveals Phoebe's role as Holden's mirror image rather than as a younger sister (Murakami and Shibata, 2003: 48). While almost all the characters in the novel are seen as hostile or irritating to Holden, Phoebe is the only character that does not seem to aggravate to him. In this sense, Murakami views both Phoebe and "you" as Holden's own projections, and this is described effectively through his careful treatment of "you."

Catcher in the Rye's plot is reminiscent of Murakami's own novel *Kafka on the Shore*, released a year before Murakami's translation of Salinger's novel. The 15-year-old Kafka's isolation and secret desire for a place where he belongs reminds us of Holden's. A more important connection appears when "you" in Holden's speech is translated as *kimi*, the same way that "Crow," Kafka's imaginary creation in his mind, calls Kafka. As discussed in Chapter 5, although Crow is only Kafka's own projection, Crow's addressing Kafka in the second person separates the two characters as independent beings, which prevents Kafka from

leaving his isolated space. The function of Crow in *Kafka on the Shore* is not identical with "you" in *Catcher in the Rye*, since Crow has a distinctive voice while Holden's "you" does not take on any autonomy. Yet, they share an important function as the protagonists' inner projection; both support their identity and confine them in their inner space. The two texts have mutual function; the understanding of one text helps foster the understanding of the other.

In terms of the similarities between the two works, Murakami admits the influence of his own fictional writing on his translation: "While I was concentrating on writing *Kafka on the Shore* for about a year, I immersed myself into the hypothesis that I was the protagonist, the fifteen-year-old boy. It helped me get into Holden's mind" (Murakami and Shibata, 2003: 27). Here, it is Murakami's own novel that influenced his translation rather than the text he translates influencing his own creative writing. Considering the significant public attention to Murakami's *Kyacchā in za rai*, his translation contributes to promoting his own novels. Such complicity Murakami makes with his translation activity might provide a nuanced perspective for postcolonial discussion about a translator's invisibility and a translation as a secondary creation.

Murakami's unhesitant assertion of his subjective interpretation of the primary text is, however, not unproblematic. As another example, Murakami employs language from his novels such as *yareyare*, one of the unique expressions that Murakami commonly uses, in his translation work (Koshikawa et al., 2003: 292–3). Similarly, he puts his interpretation into a footnote in *Kyacchā in za rai*, in which he points out Phoebe's spelling mistake of "canning," and comments, "[d]oes it mean Holden thinks too highly of Phoebe?" (cited in Koshikawa et al., 2003: 296). Numano explains that the note disturbs the conventional view commonly held by Japanese readers that Phoebe is ideal, innocent, and smart (ibid.: 297). Remembering Murakami's above remark that masterpieces such as Salinger's should have space for multiple interpretations, translators' commentary like Murakami's can effectively destabilise the conventional image of the work and the characters and open new perspectives. However, as seen in Mark Petersen's criticism, there are cases where a translator's visibility is taken as intrusive (see also Nihei, 2016).

The discussion further leads to a question: what if a similar operation happened in Japanese novels by English-speaking translators? It is likely that readers and critics would not be as approving as in Murakami's case. It can be argued that Murakami in some sense makes use of his position as a speaker of the Japanese language, the subaltern language against the dominant English. As a Japanese writer, his "creative" translation would invite less criticism compared to English-speaking writers, as exemplified by the positive reaction to Rubin's meticulous translation of Murakami's novels. This suggests that the productivity of the in-between space Murakami presents becomes even more operative

due to his Japanese background, another case that reveals his complicity with his Japaneseness.

In the following section, I will discuss the use of cross-cultural effects in the writings of David Mitchell and Kazuo Ishiguro, British authors who constitute interesting counterparts to Murakami.

David Mitchell: Exploring Cultural "Cat Flap"

More recently, Murakami has influenced young writers not only inside Japan, but also outside Japan. In East Asian countries, those who are influenced by Murakami's work are called "Murakami Children" (Fujii, 2005). Murakami's influence has also spread to European and American literary spaces. Writers such as David Mitchell, Richard Powers, and Steven Millhauser express their admiration for Murakami's stories and his influence on their own works (Rubin, 2005: 298). For a Japanese author to have such international influence is epoch-making, considering the conventional subaltern position of Japanese literature against Western literature. The conceptualisation of Japanese literature in the Meiji period was predicated on the dominant position of European literature, but this hierarchical relationship has been destabilised by Murakami's enormous popularity. The operation is further complicated, considering that the novels that have influenced international writers are translations of his works, mainly English versions translated by his American translators.

The British author David Mitchell is an example of a younger author who appreciates Murakami's works. Born and raised in the UK, Mitchell moved to Japan in 1994, married a Japanese woman, and lived in Hiroshima for eight years. Making use of his experiences living in Japan and reading Japanese literature, Mitchell devotes two chapters of *Ghostwritten* (1999) and the entire novels of *number9dream* (2001) and *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010) to descriptions of Japan. Mitchell particularly expresses his admiration for Murakami as a source of his decision to become a writer and consciously imitates his style. The most important influence Mitchell receives from the Japanese author's works is his attempt to broaden the use of cultural signifiers.

Mitchell's homages to Murakami are evident throughout his stories. Inspired by Murakami's use of a song by *The Beatles* for the title of his novel *Norwegian Wood*, Mitchell uses a song by John Lennon, "#9 Dream," for the title of his work *number9dream*. The connection between the two texts is made stronger when in the novel the protagonist Eiji, who is a fan of John Lennon, meets Lennon in a daydream, where the singer reveals to him, "'#9Dream' is a son of 'Norwegian Wood'" (Mitchell, 2001: 379). In the same novel, the protagonist also refers to Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Mitchell's favourite among the Japanese author's novels (Bradford, 2008). Mitchell's references to

Murakami's works is also seen in the creation of a female character that has a "perfect neck" in the same novel, which reminds us of the girl with the "perfect ears" in *A Wild Sheep Chase*; a character in *Ghostwritten*, Goatwriter, is reminiscent of Murakami's regular characters related to sheep such as Sheep Man and Sheep Professor. Like most of Murakami's characters, in *number9dream* the protagonist is driven to leave for a trip to find missing figures. The intertextual devices in Mitchell's novel are also similar to Murakami's characteristic approach. The inseparable twins in *number9dream* are very similar to the dependent couple of Naoko and Kizuki in *Norwegian Wood*. *Ghostwritten*'s references to a member of the *Aum shinrikyō* sarin attack reminds us of Murakami's interviews with victims of the event in *Underground*. The most prominent lesson Mitchell learned from Murakami is his defamiliarisation of Japanese culture in order to break conventional approaches to describing Japan. Mitchell says:

> I have a problem with the way Japan is usually portrayed in the West, as the land of cherry blossoms, geishas, Mt. Fuji, and kamikaze pilots. I wanted to do what Haruki Murakami does, depicting Japan as it is, and finding the beauty in the ugliness. Using Japanese protagonists seems to be a more convicing [sic.] way to go about that.
> (Hogan, 2002: unpaged)

Mitchell also notes that his intention is "to write a bicultural novel, where Japanese perspectives are given an equal weight to Dutch/European perspectives" (Finbow, 2007: unpaged). When his interviewer mentions the variety of stereotypes about Japan that have become commonplace in the Western collective imagination such as "geisha," "salaryman," "Nintendo," "Aum Shinrikyo," and manga, Mitchell replies:

> This plurality of lenses is no bad thing: One view is never enough [...] these "oven-ready perspectives" are what we fall back on, and they are probably better than nothing, provided that we don't forget that they only scratch the surface. We mustn't tell ourselves, "OK, I've got Japanese/UK/Any country culture sussed: I can stop trying to understand it now." Opinions based on the perspectives you mention should be pending and conditional, in pencil and not ink.
> (Ibid.: unpaged)

What Mitchell rejects is not stereotypes but people's heavy reliance on stereotypes, "oven-ready perspectives" in his words. He emphasises the importance of trying to be conscious about one's subjective point of view and taking multiple perspectives to observe other cultures. As a foreigner living in Japan, he realised his permanent foreign status in the exclusiveness of Japanese society, saying, "I kiss my sense of social

belonging goodbye" (Mitchell, 2000: unpaged). Instead, he decided to make use of his isolated position and his perspective as an alien, regarding the diminished accessibility to the society, as a chance to approach it in a different way, adopting the stance that "I would understand less if I understood more" (ibid.).

Mitchell also attempts to overturn Orientalist views. In an interview, he states, "I wanted the book to travel East to West because it reverses the usual direction of Orientalism, and challenges the Eurocentric view of the world map" (McWeeney, 2000: unpaged). This attitude is particularly evident in *Ghostwritten*. The novel consists of ten chapters each with a different narrative voice from various regions and countries, beginning in Okinawa and moving on to Tokyo, to other Asian countries, and to Europe. Each chapter has a different narrator, but all the stories intersect each other. The movement of the narrative from the East to the West, however, does not describe a subject from a subaltern country going for a "journey to the West" to learn modernity or civilisation. Rather, the ten narrators from different cultures are all relativised by the novel's emphasis on their essential commonality, which is their reliance on and attachment to spiritual energy such as one's imagination, memory, dreams, ghosts, and religions; what Mitchell calls "one remove from reality" which provides individuals with a chance to have "ontological distance" from reality and to travel to another layer of reality (Mitchell, 2008: 431).

While criticising Western writers' conventional use of Japanese stereotypes, Mitchell's works are replete with Japanese traditional elements. For example, in *Number9dream*, the main element that illustrates Japaneseness is the "samurai spirit." The novel contains several images of violence and war, mainly centring on stories of *yakuza* and on the diary of a *kamikaze* soldier. Despite the apparent controversy of his recurrent use of Japanese stereotypes, his excessive use of stereotypes has a similar effect to Murakami's use of Western cultural products; the unusual presentation of cultural signs makes readers aware of the authors' intentional stereotyping (see Nihei, 2009; Posadas, 2011).

Mitchell further deepens his interest in destabilising Eurocentric views and complicating the representation of cultures in *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*. The novel is set on Dejima, an artificial island built in the bay of Nagasaki as a Dutch trading post, the only port that connected Japan and Europe during the national seclusion of the Edo period. The protagonist, Jacob de Zoet, a bookkeeper employed by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), is stationed in Dejima from 1799 until he is notified of the collapse of the VOC. While Dejima is connected to the mainland by a bridge, the contact between the two is strictly limited; the Dutch need special permission to cross the bridge to the mainland and courtesans, merchants, and translators are the only Japanese that are allowed to be on the island. Mitchell's starting point

for the novel is to explore the gap between the conventional understanding that Japan completely closed itself during the Edo period and Japan's limited official contact with Europe. He is interested in the fact that it was Europeans that were aliens in Japan and that they were observed by Japanese through the peephole called Dejima. Mitchell states:

> We think of Japan at the time as a closed-off country, but it wasn't—Japan possessed the keyhole of Dejima to peer through, to keep abreast of international events and observe the fates of countries and races that tried to ignore the rise of Europe and its new technologies. Moreover, Dejima inverts the common Orientalist terms—on this tiny man-made island, it was the whites who were corralled, fleeced, and exoticized.
>
> (Begley, 2010: unpaged)

Mitchell focuses on the function of what he calls the "cat flap" that bridges two worlds: "It was a cultural 'cat flap' through which everything people knew about Japan exited and everything Japan knew about the Western world entered" (Graham-Dixon, 2010: unpaged).

As Mitchell's "multiperspectivism," in de Waard's word, destabilises the hierarchical cultural relationship between Japan and the West by introducing spaces between the two, the novel is replete with signifiers of in-betweenness (de Waard, 2012: 114). Orito Aibagawa, a midwife, is given special permission to cross to Dejima, where she studies European medicine at a time when women are not encouraged to study in general. She is beautiful and de Zoet falls in love with her, but her scarred face disconnects her from other women who are expected to marry. De Zoet reads both Adam Smith and secretly the Bible, immersing himself in-between modernity and spirituality. He is not only a stranger in Japan, but also an outsider among his Dutch colleagues because of his struggle to bring order to his company's untidy accounts (ibid.: 115). Dejima is a partly exclusive yet intercultural space where culture, language, knowledge, and technology pass back and forth between the Japanese and the Dutch. While Orito and de Zoet are infatuated with each other, Dejima is both "their home and their prison, the place that keeps them apart" (Wood, 2010: 29). Imprisonment is not only experienced by the Dutch on Dejima, but also by Orito, who is eventually kidnapped by an abbot and confined in a shrine. Sarah Dillon (2011: 12) compares the episode with the way all Japanese are imprisoned within their Empire during the period of the national seclusion, forbidden to access the outside world.

In terms of the genre, too, the story itself is difficult to pigeonhole in a historical novel. It deals with history but, through subverting dominant views of Japan and opening interpretations of Japanese history and culture, it is a postmodern novel rather than a traditional or realist work. A number of reviewers opt not to affix to the novel the label of any one

genre (Tayler, 2010; Tonkin, 2010) and appreciate Mitchell's exploration of new perspectives on the historical novel (*The International IMPAC Dublin*, 2012).

The reviewers also point out Murakami's shadow in *The Thousand Autumns* in terms of the whimsical touch of the novel (Tonkin, 2010) and the horrors that the characters confront (Tayler, 2010). Yet, the most prominent element that shows Murakami's influence is Mitchell's play with the idea of translation and cross-cultural effects. Mitchell explains that he tries to describe the power of the command of language. In his words, "language is power [...] translators are the bridge" (Lopate, 2010: unpaged). On Dejima, Dutch officers are not allowed to learn Japanese, and the communication between the Dutch and Japanese people is conducted by Japanese translators. This is the way in which the Japanese people try to control information available to the Dutch and maintain authority over their relationship. When De Zoet begins to understand some Japanese words by talking to Orito, Japanese officers are apprehensive about his acquisition of the language. Mitchell's view that "language is power" appears clearer when Leonard Lopate points out that the Japanese interpreters are the most powerful and the most corrupt on Dejima. Here, a translator/interpreter is no longer the object that is subjected to the state of invisibility and feels like a "prostitute" as is in Tawada's work, but it is the subject that is able to control others. In the novel, the idea of "bridge" exemplified by the bridge of Dejima and a translator/interpreter is not so much for connecting two different cultures, but rather for restricting their communication and even causing miscommunication.

While de Zoet and his Dutch colleagues keep waiting for Dutch ships to come to pick them up, a British warship eventually arrives to notify them that the VOC has collapsed and has been taken over by England as a result of the war between the two countries. The English people now possess authority over the Netherlands, arriving in Dejima, yet they perceive themselves as "the aliens in the diplomatic triangle" (Linklater, 2010: unpaged). Not understanding Japanese, the English officers have to depend on Dutch and Japanese translators for their negotiation on Dejima.

Mitchell's "self-Othering" (de Waard, 2012: 115) through destabilising the universality of English reminds us of Murakami's defamiliarisation of the Japanese language. While English and Japanese are often regarded as singular and incomparable to other languages because of, respectively, their pervasiveness and isolation, Mitchell and Murakami try to relativise them in order to question conventional frameworks for the consideration of these languages and to explore new perspectives towards them. Mitchell's description of a translator/interpreter's complicity with authority indicates that it is the accessibility to the language that shapes the location of power. The close relationship between the

translator's subjective concern and his or her way of translating a text is again reminiscent of Murakami's association between his interpretation and his translation.

Mitchell's aim is not merely to subvert Orientalist view but to complicate and displace the East/West binary. While Japanese people as well as Orito try to learn Dutch and European science and medicine, European medicine is not necessarily portrayed as admirable. For example, the captain of the English ship arriving on Dejima suffers from gout in his toes. The condition is getting serious and the ship's doctor has treated his toes. The treatment is to put mouse droppings in the open wound in order to produce pus and eliminate it. Although the treatment is based on Mitchell's thorough research, such a gruesome description makes readers doubt the efficacy of the supposedly preferable European medicine. This undermines the notion that Eastern traditional medicine is outdated and ineffective and new Western medicine is advanced and practical.

Thus, Mitchell not only tries to subvert Orientalist views, but also complicate the East/West binary by playing on our understanding and expectations of an English writer's description of Japan. Like Murakami does, Mitchell focuses on the space in-between, between cultures, between languages, and between powers. This is what he learns from Murakami's principle of "depicting Japan as it is" by using his distance from Japan.

Kazuo Ishiguro: More English than the English

Another interesting writer to compare with Murakami is Japanese-born British author Kazuo Ishiguro. Ishiguro and Murakami respect each other's works and they are particularly interested in their counterpart's employment of cross-cultural effects (Tokō, 2007: 126; Murakami, 2009a). Ishiguro and his family moved to England when he was five due to his father's job as an oceanographer. Planning to return to Japan in a couple of years, his parents kept him in touch with Japanese culture and values. However, they continued to extend their stay in England, and it was not until Ishiguro turned 35 that he next visited Japan in 1989. By then, he had forfeited his Japanese nationality according to Japanese law. Only after publishing his first two novels was he invited to Japan as a popular English writer.

Ishiguro's relationship with Japan shows interesting complexity. Raised by Japanese parents, he maintained "a strong emotional tie" (Ishiguro and Ōe, 1991: 110) with Japan despite his limited time there. He tried to supplement his knowledge of Japan through Japanese novels and films. Based on his memories, he described Japanese characters in his first two novels *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986). When he returned to Japan, he found that it had

changed greatly and was now an "absolutely foreign country" to him (Ōno, 2006: 146). He, therefore, admits that Japan in his work is "my own personal, imaginary Japan," which "may have a lot to do with my personal history" (Ishiguro and Ōe, 1991: 110). This imaginary Japan motivated Ishiguro to write novels. He says:

> I think one of the real reasons why I turned to writing novels was because I wished to recreate this Japan – put together all these memories, and all these imaginary ideas I had about this landscape which I called Japan.
>
> (Ibid.)

Ishiguro explains that his "Japan" is therefore created by both his memory and imagination. This parallel act of remembering and imagining is, he says, very similar to the act of writing fiction (Ōno, 2006: 138). In this sense, Suter compares Ishiguro's perspective on Japan with Orientalists' views in terms of their imaginary proximity to and actual distance from the object they speak about: "Japan is for Ishiguro what the Orient has long been for Europe: an imaginary place, and a basis for self-definition" (Suter, 1999: 241). Ishiguro's connection with his imaginary Japan is stronger when we consider that novels and films through which Ishiguro tried to supplement his knowledge of Japan were the works of Ozu Yasujirō, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, and Kawabata Yasunari, who tend to describe the traditional and possibly aestheticised Japan that foreign audiences like to imagine (Mason, 1989: 336).

Ishiguro identifies neither as purely Japanese nor as English. Growing up in England, he remained an outsider of English society. He describes the isolation he felt in his childhood as "sitting in a corner of the room and looking at everyone else although you're part of the room" (Chira, 1989: unpaged). He feels more comfortable speaking English than Japanese (Ōno, 2006: 145), yet he does not regard England as his homeland. Rather, he maintains irreducible distance from England and regards it as the cultural Other. He says, "[t]here are certain things that are very exotic to me about Englishness" (Swift, 1989: unpaged). Thus, Ishiguro sees himself neither as an insider nor an outsider in either Japan or England but situated between the two cultures.

Despite his distance from Japan, because of his Japanese background, Ishiguro often receives exoticising attention from the media and his readers. When he has an interview, the interviewer often starts with questions related to his Japanese background and his familiarity with traditional Japanese writers, similar to the case of Murakami. In the early stages of his career, Ishiguro was shocked by the English media labelling him as a "Japanese writer." In his words, "publicity for me has to a large extent been fighting the urge to be stereotyped by people" (Chira, 1989: unpaged). However, Ishiguro also describes his background as

giving him "a very easy ride" to receive public attention, associating his fortune with the global tendency to appreciate literature written in foreign languages and based on the writer's ethnic background, which started around the time of his debut in the 1980s (Vorda and Herzinger, 1991: 135).

Acknowledging people's expectations of his Japaneseness, Ishiguro decides to make use of their Orientalist perspective towards him and his orientation in-between Japan and England; he tries to play on Western stereotypes about him. Ishiguro's complicity with his image in Western imagination can be seen, for example, in his short story "A Family Supper" (1990). It is a story about a Japanese family where the mother has died of food poisoning from eating blowfish. In the text, the rest of the family – the father, daughter, and son – have a family gathering after a period of silence. The children hear that the father's firm has collapsed and his colleague killed his family along with himself by *seppuku*, a way of committing suicide by cutting his stomach with a knife. They have supper in a quiet and gloomy atmosphere, in which their conversation centres on the father's isolation after the mother's death and his son's lack of expectations for the future. The daughter's reference to a story about ghosts she heard from her mother in childhood alludes to the shadow of the dead mother. The story about the suicide is constantly brought back by the family members. The father cooks fish for his children without revealing what kind of fish it is, which reminds readers of the blowfish that killed the mother. The story ends when their dinner finishes and the father and son are waiting for the daughter to bring some tea. Although there is no clear description, readers are likely to imagine that the entire family will die poisoned by the fish – that the father is killing his family and himself like his colleague did.

In an interview, Ishiguro explains that the story is

> just a big trick, playing on Western readers' expectations about Japanese who kill themselves. It's never stated, but Western readers are supposed to think that these people are going to commit mass suicide, and of course they do nothing of the sort.
>
> (Mason, 1989: 343)

The story is replete with references to stereotypical elements of Japan that Western audiences are familiar with such as blowfish, samurai codes including, "principle," "honour," and "disgrace," battleships, kamikaze, kimono, and Japanese veranda. Ishiguro continues to say, "[*seppuku* is] as alien to me as it is to you. And it's as alien to most modern Japanese as it is to Western people" (ibid.). Ishiguro is aware of the space that only exists in the Western imagination and tries to capture it in his story. He also acknowledges that, although Japanese people feel uncomfortable with Western representations of traditional Japan in an Orientalist view,

they are "in love with these melodramatic stories where heroes commit suicide" if they are portrayed by Japanese people (ibid.). Such images of traditional Japan remain embedded in the Japanese imagination. Therefore, Ishiguro makes use of his familiarity with stereotypes about Japan in both Western and Japanese imaginations. His Japanese background is also useful in this sense to "trick" his readers who would expect the author to write something authentically Japanese. His location between the two cultures allows him to be close enough to interpret them and detached enough to objectify them.[9]

Appreciating Ishiguro's proximity to and distance from both Japan and the West, Sean Matthews and Sebastian Groes argue that the author tries to open the "closed" perspective of postcolonial scholars and critics who tend to limit their concern to "challeng[ing] the Eurocentric Humanist values" and "[reaching] beyond national and linguistic boundaries" (Matthews and Groes, 2009: 2). Like Mitchell, Ishiguro's concern is not merely to subvert the Eurocentric views but rather to destabilise the binary distinction between the West and the rest of the world.

In his third novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), Ishiguro further deepens his interest in in-betweenness by featuring an English butler as the narrator who serves a loyal family in early twentieth-century England. In an interview, Ishiguro explains that he tried to exoticise English culture and also play on the gap between the very English story and the author's Japanese background:

> With *The Remains of the Day* it's like a pastiche where I've tried to create a mythical England. Sometimes it looks like or has the tone of a very English book, but actually I'm using that as a kind of shock tactic of this relatively young person with a Japanese name and a Japanese face who produces this extra-English novel or, perhaps I should say, a super-English novel. *It's more English than the English* [...] there is an ironical distance.
>
> (Vorda and Herzinger, 1991: 138–9; see also Swift, 1989)

While playing on English stereotypes, Ishiguro also acknowledges that people in England still like the myth about "an England where people lived in the not so distant past, that conformed to various stereotypical images [...] an England with sleepy, beautiful villages with very polite people and butlers and people taking tea on the lawn" (Vorda and Herzinger, 1991: 139). English people who idealise the traditional image of England are comparable to Japanese audiences still in love with traditional stories of Japan. In a similar way that traditional elements such as samurai and *seppuku* are fascinating aliens to contemporary Japanese, the butler culture is the cultural Other yet remains appealing to English people. Ishiguro relativises Japan and England in terms of their self-stereotyping. Such an insight is achievable because of his unique location.

Ishiguro's characters tend to be passive and in some sense outsiders. The butler Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* typifies their personality. Ishiguro particularly focuses on the in-between space that a butler inhabits. He explains:

> Many of my characters tend to go with the flow, and even an outsider like Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* to some extent isn't an outsider… to some extent we are all in some sense butlers; at an ethical and political level […] We don't stand outside of our milieu and evaluate it […] We take our orders, we do our jobs, we accept our place in the hierarchy, and hope that our loyalty is used well, just like this butler guy […] I suppose I personally don't feel that I'm a kind of an outsider either, for that matter.
>
> (Matthews, 2009: 115)

A butler seems to be alienated by his surroundings as an outsider, which reminds us of the author's estranged experience of "sitting in a corner of the room and looking at everyone else" in English society. However, it can also be said that Stevens, as well as Ishiguro, is given special access to a space in-between. Stevens, as a responsible, qualified butler, is relied upon by those he serves. They often disclose to him their personal or confidential issues. Although Stevens, focusing on his own role as a butler, would not be involved in concerns unrelated to his official work, he often plays a salient part as a mediator and a negotiator between characters and cultures – between other butlers and his employers, and between traditional English culture and contemporary England.

Ishiguro explains that the butler's inconspicuous yet involved place creates an "illusion of absence," which can be a "powerful metaphor" (Vorda and Herzinger, 1991: 153). As a mediator between two spaces, Stevens' accessible area is broader than those who belong to one or the other. Ishiguro expresses that all people are like butlers to some extent in that they too must necessarily negotiate with society. Yet, a butler is a particularly effective device to demonstrate Ishiguro's own cultural locus, where he has access to both Japan and England, as both an insider and outsider. The butler's access to an in-between space is analogous to Mitchell's description of a translator/interpreter and de Zoet and Orito's location between different cultures and languages.

The metaphor of a butler shares an important element also with Mitchell's portrayal of Dejima's double function as a place of imprisonment and a source of protection. Similarly, a butler seems to have restricted freedom. Yet, Stevens is trusted as long as he is faithful in his job. He is sometimes asked to express his personal opinions by his employers and colleagues, but he can always excuse himself from revealing his mind by emphasising his role as a butler. His dependence on his role functions as a fence for his own protection. Stevens' inner thoughts

are, however, sometimes discovered by other characters, who witness him in tears and offer him help. Stevens cannot establish any personally intimate relationship with others. His continued hesitation towards personal commitment keeps the metaphor of a butler open to both imprisonment and protection.

Translating "Back" into Japanese: "Father" and "You"

Ishiguro's connection with Murakami in regard to the function of cross-cultural effects is seen also in the translations of Ishiguro's works. While Ishiguro's novels have been acclaimed both by academics and readers in England, the reception of his novels is uninspiring in Japan. Shibata and Sugano suggest that the quiet reaction among Japanese audiences is due to the process of Ishiguro's works' "translation 'back' into an original context and language" (2009: 23), because they "stumble onto difficulties in appreciating [Ishiguro's description of Japan]" (ibid.: 26).

The title of Ishiguro's second novel *An Artist of the Floating World* was literally translated in Japanese as *Ukiyo no gaka* by Tobita Shigeo. According to Shibata and Sugano, the word *ukiyo* (Floating World), which refers to an established Japanese cultural concept, is controversial because of the multiple connotations of the word in the Japanese context, meaning both suffering and worldliness, and more importantly because

> [...] the title does have the effect of arousing the Japanese interest in what could be perceived to be a mock-Orientalist novel written by an author with a Japanese-sounding name to whom *ukiyo-e* represents the imaginative potential of exotic arts produced by the Other [...] translating Japanese subject matter into Japanese affects the representation of that which the translation renders.
>
> (Shibata and Sugano, 2009: 26–7)

Words that have cultural connotation such as "floating world," once they are translated back into Japanese, suddenly take on what the author does not mean in the first place. They only appear "excessively Japanese and thus 'inauthentic'" to Japanese readers (ibid.: 27). There are cases where Ishiguro asks his Japanese translators to modify their translation in order to dilute the excessive Japaneseness that tends to characterise translations of his work.[10] The exceeding Japaneseness caused by translating Ishiguro's English text into Japanese is a paradoxical case with respect to the dilution of the foreignness of Murakami's text in his translation. Both Ishiguro and Murakami are conscious of the effects of translation; while Murakami enjoys the variation in translations of his work, Ishiguro has to concern himself with the function of particular cultural signifiers in his Japanese translations because of readers' sensitivity to them.

An interesting effect of translation can be seen in the Japanese translation of *The Remains of the Day*. This is a scene that Shibata and Sugano point out as a difficult case to translate into Japanese, where the butler Stevens talks to his father who was once a butler but who is now senile and stays in bed:

> "I hope Father is feeling better now," I said.
>
> He went on gazing at me for a moment, then asked: "Everything in hand downstairs?"
>
> "The situation is rather volatile. It is just after six o'clock, so Father can well imagine the atmosphere in the kitchen at this moment."
>
> An impatient look crossed my father's face. "But is everything in hand?" he said again.
>
> "Yes, I dare say you can rest assured on that. I'm very glad Father is feeling better."
>
> […]
>
> He went on looking at his hands for a moment. Then he said slowly: "I hope I've been a good father to you."
>
> I laughed a little and said: "I'm so glad you're feeling better now."
>
> (Ishiguro, 1989: 97, my underlines)

Shibata and Sugano (2009: 22) explain that Stevens' emotional distance from his father is effectively described by his recurrent use of the third person, capitalised "Father," and his father calling himself "father" in the lowercase and Stevens' switching from "Father" to "you" in the final line touchingly conveys the character's failure to approach his father. This operation of language is difficult to translate into Japanese, in which people commonly address others in the third person and their father as "father" face to face, and the use of the third person in Japanese has an equivalent usage to "you" in English. On the other hand, as explained earlier, the second person pronoun is usually avoided in Japanese, and therefore the direct translation of "you" only adds an awkward tone to the text.

Ishiguro's creative use of the effect in the choice of appellation is reminiscent of Murakami's treatment of "you" in his translation of *Catcher in the Rye*. Like Murakami's unusual translation of "you" into *kimi* functions to make readers realise Holden's isolation, Ishiguro's employment of the third person pronoun effectively illustrates Stevens' struggle with his distance from his father.

The Japanese translator of *The Remains of the Day*, Tsuchiya Masao, focusing on the natural flow of the language, translates "Father" as Father and leaves "you" out to avoid the awkwardness of the language. In this way, Ishiguro's effective choice of appellation is not translated into the Japanese version, and therefore "[t]he son's inability to display emotional closeness to his father is to a great extent *lost in translation*"

(Shibata and Sugano, 2009: 22, original italics). On the other hand, Tsuchiya reproduces the narrator's struggle by highlighting the polite tone of the Japanese, a characteristic feature of the language; "the multiple sense of distance is," Shibata and Sugano say, thus "even more conspicuously rendered in the Japanese translations" (ibid.). The untranslatability of the cross-cultural effects in Ishiguro's text has an interesting similarity with that of Murakami's Japanese, which Jay Rubin pointed out earlier. The essential element of both writers' language, that is, "lost in translation," turns visible when it crosses languages; the operation broadens the range of interpretation of their text.

Conclusion: Destabilising the Primacy of English

Ishiguro questions the apparent priority of permeability of English. As an English writer, he is strongly conscious about his novels' broad accessibility to the international market, because today more international readers are able to read English and English writing is easily translated into other languages. Ishiguro is aware that his novels easily gain larger readerships than novels in other languages. Such a situation also makes him anxious about how his works would be translated into other languages and whether his "cultural references [...] survive [for example in] the Norwegian translation" (Matthews, 2009: 115). He also explains that the English language's growing status of universality urges English-speaking writers to write "international" literature based on a story that people from different cultural background could share. He is afraid that such a situation may only drive writers to disregard cultural diversity and create superficial stories (Ishiguro and Ōe, 1991; Ōno, 2006). Ishiguro is further apprehensive that such a situation may lead the author to fail to keep connection with its own culture, as he says: "unless you're careful, you lose all sense of your own identity. You might actually even lose contact with your own language" (Matthews, 2009: 115). Putting it in other words, as the author says, "[t]his is how globalization touches the author" (ibid.).

The pervasiveness of English-language novels makes the English language and English-language writers vulnerable. As Mitchell suggests in *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*, it is the speakers of the Japanese language – a regional language – that have conspicuous power over the Europeans thanks to their mastery of the Other's language.

Ishiguro states that Murakami's international success as a Japanese writer, as a writer of a regional language, is encouraging as a case that demonstrates the remaining impact of literature in foreign languages. Ishiguro also says that Murakami's success implies the growing influence of translation literature, which allows foreign literature to compete with novels in English (Ōno, 2006: 141).

Ishiguro shows a different form of complicity with his Japanese background from Murakami. By playing on the Western imagination, Ishiguro tries to explore new ways of representing cultural signifiers. His understanding of the productivity of a space in-between is also reminiscent of Murakami's locus as neither an insider nor merely an outsider. Like Murakami, Ishiguro's simultaneous proximity to and distance from two cultures encourages him to relativise cultures and languages and to destabilise the recognition of English as a superior language because of its pervasiveness. His elusive position was re-emphasised when he won the 2017 Nobel Prize for Literature. While Ishiguro's Japanese background used to draw little attention from the Japanese reader, once he won the prize, the Japanese media started to portray him as "a Japanese writer" and celebrated his award as a success of Japanese literature.

David Mitchell and Kazuo Ishiguro are interesting counterparts to Murakami in terms of their attempt to subvert the conventional treatment of cultural Otherness and to explore the creative use of it in their works. Murakami's attempt to explore the representation of cross-cultural effects is thus better understood when we compare him to Mitchell and Ishiguro. As Ishiguro comments, the popularity of Murakami's novels is a hope for world literature, literature of both regional languages and English, in the sense that it would help maintain cultural diversity in literature.

Murakami's wilful negotiation with his distance from Japan and the cultural Other corresponds to his belief in the function of *monogatari*. If *monogatari* provides individuals with an opportunity to observe them in a different context, Murakami practices a similar act of crossing through his own cross-cultural self-positioning. The relativisation is carried out for the purpose of expanding one's own understanding; it is a process of returning to oneself rather than escaping.

Notes

1 Karatani's discussion of Murakami's attempt to subvert conventional values is rather negative, equating Murakami's characters' focus on their own values with their absolute refusal to concede to the social system, and calls such an attitude "romantic irony" (1995: 106). This can be subverted by Murakami's actual negotiation with distancing rather than mere avoidance, as is discussed throughout the chapter.

2 The influence of Japanese translations of European and English sentences on Japanese sentence structure includes the increase in the use of personal/impersonal pronouns, inanimate subjects, plural forms of nouns, anastrophe, and relative clauses. For example, the frequent appearance of relative clauses in European and English languages makes Japanese sentences longer. This tendency is also instrumental in increasing the use of the case particle "wa," which subverts the conventional frequency of "ga" over "wa" (Mizuno, 2007: 32). Futabatei's use of the copula *de aru* ("to be"), borrowed

from Russian syntax, has also become a common feature of written style today (Levy, 2006: 39).

3 The title of Murakami's first novel *Hear the Wind Sing* derives from "Think of nothing things. Think of wind," a passage from "Shut a Final Door," a short story of Truman Capote, another favourite author of Murakami (Inoue, 1999: 210; Yukawa and Koyama, 2003: 40).

4 Murakami also compares himself with Raymond Carver in terms of their experience of working as blue-collar workers and its salient contribution to their literary works (Murakami, 2004: 194–5).

5 In the Japanese language, traditionally the interrogative form is not marked with a question mark but with an end of sentence particle such as *ka* or *no*. However, in recent years, a question mark is commonly used in informal speech where the question is given by intonation without an ending particle, as is seen in Tengo's speech. Fuka-Eri's speech that does not take the ending particle does not make sense without a question mark. On the other hand, considering that the question mark is a foreign import, the informal question form without a particle is constituted by the foreign element. The peculiar yet salient role of the question mark is thus implied through its absence, in a similar way that the absence of Japanese cultural elements in Murakami's works provides the stories with a strong shadow of the missing objects.

6 Murakami makes use of the special effects in the Japanese language also by putting meaningful connotations on the choice of the first person pronouns and appellation. While Murakami's protagonist almost always addresses himself with the first-person male pronoun *boku*, in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* one of the narrators of the parallel stories calls himself *watashi*, a more formal first-person than *boku*. The two narrators eventually turn out to be the same character; *watashi* represents his voice in reality and *boku* in his mind. Yet, the use of *watashi* and *boku* effectively differentiates their voices and characters and the atmosphere of the two narrating spaces. In his English translation of the novel, Alfred Birnbaum employs different tenses for the two narrators in order to tell them apart, as a sign of his acknowledgement of the salient effect in the original text.

Asimilar case in which the choice of appellation has an effective function can be seen in "Kaerukun, Tōkyō o sukuu" ("Superfrog Saves Tokyo"), a short story issued in *Kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru* (*All God's Children Can Dance*, 2000a). The protagonist Katagiri meets a gigantic frog and the frog asks to be called "kaeru-kun," but Katagiri would not reduce his politeness to the frog and keeps calling him "kaeru-san." They both would not give up their attitude and repeat the same words. The frog's rejection of Katagiri's politeness and Katagiri's hesitation to reduce his distance from his interlocutor are effectively explained by the choice of *kun* and *san*, which is again another difficult nuance to translate into other languages (see Suter, 2008).

7 While translators into English and European languages have trouble keeping the foreignness of Murakami's texts in their translations, translators into Asian languages have a different type of problem. Taiwanese translator Lai Ming Zhu explains that the Western cultural products that appear in Murakami's novels are difficult to translate when the country is not as Westernised as Japan and the readers are not familiar with these products, yet. A harder situation is that those *katakana* words are spelled out in Japanese pronunciation, and therefore the translator has to first identify the original English or European words and then look up their meanings. Lai includes some notes for words that are supposed to be unfamiliar to her readers in her

translations. For example, for the translation of "Cafe au lait" that a character drinks in *Norwegian Wood*, as "珈琲欧蕾 (Cafe au lait 鮮奶和珈琲各半的大杯法式早餐珈琲)" (Shibata et al., 2006: 9). This example is indicative of further variation in the presentation of Murakami's *katakana* words.

8 In his translation of "Rēdāhōsen," Alfred Birnbaum misreads "komi" (including) as "gomi" (garbage), and translates the part that originally means "Mother abandoned Father including me without telling us anything" as "And yet here was Mother throwing me out with Father, like so much garbage." In his retranslated version of the same story, Murakami translates it as in Birnbaum's translation by rendering "garbage" as "(nama) gomi" (Engetsu, 2010: 610).

9 The theme of suicide also appears in *A Pale View of Hills*, in which the Japanese female protagonist, after getting divorced from her Japanese husband, goes to England with her daughter to live with her (second) British husband. She is traumatised by her daughter's suicide. In the novel, Ishiguro satirises Western readers' easy association between Japanese and suicide by describing the narrator questioning English journalists, who conclude that her daughter's suicide was driven by her Japanese nature. In the same novel, the protagonist becomes frustrated also by her British husband's attempt to pigeonhole her dead daughter's personality into Western stereotypes of Japan (Nosaki, 2008: 100).

10 For example, for the Japanese translation of *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro requested his translator to spell his Japanese characters' names in *katakana* rather than *kanji*. In this way, Ishiguro tries to avoid the symbolic resonance of *kanji*, which is "inherently allusive," since "each carr[ies] particular symbolic or historical tones" (Shibata and Sugano, 2009: 25–6). Ishiguro also tries to maintain foreignness in the novel to disconnect his work from other novels set in Japan. Another example appears in the translation of *An Artist of the Floating World*. The novel is history-based, dealing with Japan's war memory and responsibility for the militarism of the 1930s and early 1940s. In order to reduce historical connotations that would anger some Japanese readers, Ishiguro asked his Japanese translator to change the parts that allude to the Emperor to a mayor and to make some revisions to suppress the militarist implications (ibid.: 29–30).

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7 Conclusion

Monogatari as Antibody, *1Q84*, and Stories after "Fukushima"

As explained in Chapter 2, when Murakami criticises Asahara's narrative, he also questions the treatment of the issues related to *Aum* on "this side," that is, mainstream society's desire to separate "us" from "them," to eliminate the insane "others." Murakami argues for a consideration of "our" involvement in the establishment of Asahara's kingdom by calling attention to "our" failure to provide young people in particular with a stable narrative that could compete with Asahara's. Murakami further developed this idea in a speech titled "Walls and Eggs" ("Kabe to tamago"), delivered at the ceremony for the award of the Jerusalem Prize in February 2009.

In the speech, his criticisms of the "system" and his comparison between individuals and "fragile eggs faced with a solid wall called The System" (Murakami, 2009a: 169) was interpreted by the media as a straightforward condemnation of Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip, although Murakami claims that the meaning of the speech was more complex. In the same speech, he claimed that "We must not allow The System to exploit us. We must not allow The System to take on a life of its own. The System did not make us: we made The System" (ibid.: 169). While criticising the system, Murakami warned members of the audience by stressing "our" possible complicity with the system. His warning can be applied to "our" treatment of the evil other in the face of *Aum*'s cases, through which "we" ended up creating another system by consenting to the elimination of everything that related to *Aum*.

Throughout his career as a novelist, Murakami argues that in order to protect themselves from the forces of the system, individuals have to develop their own *monogatari*, rather than accepting uncritically the one provided by the system. As Murakami expresses, his long-term deliberation and research on *monogatari* takes shape more clearly in his 2009 novel *1Q84* (Murakami, 2009b).

1Q84 takes place in an alternative world that the protagonists have slipped into from the world of 1984. One of the protagonists, Aomame, names the new world "1Q84," replacing nine with Q as both words are pronounced identically in Japanese. The title of *1Q84* is a clear allusion to George Orwell's *1984*. While Orwell described the near future in 1948, Murakami wrote about the recent past in 2009.

Described by some as a condensation of the major themes of Murakami Haruki's literature, *1Q84* covers a number of the regular subjects and features the author has developed since his debut (Fukuda et al., 2010; Uchida et al., 2010). The novel's protagonists are Aomame and Tengo, both 29 years old and in the same age range as many of Murakami's other characters since his debut. As with *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami published a third volume of *1Q84* a year after the release of the first two volumes, adding a third narrator.

Intertextuality, another device that Murakami often employs, also adds layers to the narrative voices. While Murakami often refers to Euro-American and Russian novels in his works, since *Kafka on the Shore* he started to refer to traditional Japanese novels such as *The Tale of Genji* and Natsume Soseki's works. In *1Q84*, the author devotes several pages to long quotes from different texts, including *The Tale of Heike* and Anton Chekhov's *A Journey to Sakhalin*.

The *zenkyōtō* student movement, another common theme of the author's, is portrayed in the form of its lingering forces in the 1980s. In the novel, the forces of the movement are divided into two communities: a radical, armed commune that pursues a revolutionary ideology and a group of ecological farmers that have become a religious organisation. Murakami admits that the former group is an allusion to *rengōsekigun* (United Red Army) and the latter group named *Sakigake* to a prototype of *Aum*.

Murakami has often created symbolic characters that embodied the darkness of society and the people who make it up such as the *yamikuro* (translated as "Infra-Nocturnal Kappa" or "INKling" by Alfred Birnbaum) in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Wataya Noboru in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, Johnnie Walker in *Kafka on the Shore*, and Shirakawa in *Afterdark*. While these characters were described as discernibly evil, lurking underground in society, in *1Q84* the symbol of evil is replaced with Little People (*ritoru pīpuru*), creatures whose being is not explained clearly. This makes a meaningful contrast with Orwell's *1984*. Unlike "Big Brother," Little People refuse to receive a clear-cut judgement of whether they are bad or not, although their influential power on society is undeniable. The leader of *Sakigake*, Fukada Tamotsu says:

> There is no absolute good or absolute evil in this world. […] Good and evil are not fixed or steady but constantly interchanging places. What's important is to maintain the balance between the good and the evil that always move around. If either of them outgrows, it makes it difficult to maintain actual morals. This means, *balance itself is the good*.
>
> (2009c: 244–5, original emphasis)

The world is constructed by both the good and the evil, and their balance supports the stability of the world. The judgement depends on

where "you" stand in the relationship with "them." This theme will be clarified through a close reading of the novel.

Aomame is a professional killer, employed by a "dowager" who shelters and supports women victims of domestic violence. Aomame agrees with the dowager's philosophy and follows her orders to kill the women's violent husbands, regarding this as righteous behaviour. As a final mission, she is ordered to kill Fukada, for he raped young girls in his religious group. However, in her meeting with Fukada, Aomame comes to suspend her initial belief that he is absolutely evil.

According to Fukada, he was chosen as a Little People's agent, or Receiver (*reshiva*),[1] through who Little People send their voice to the world. The Receiver needs a Perceiver (*pashiva*), who perceives the voice of Little People and passes it on to the Receiver. It is the voice of Little People that assisted the growth of *Sakigake* to form an enormous system. Although Little People are never clearly defined in the novel, it is gradually disclosed that their purpose is to protect the system of *Sakigake*, and for this reason they harm those who try to disturb them. They do so through hurting their intimates. In the case of Aomame, in order to prevent her from killing Fukada, Little People cause the death of her friend Ayumi by making her go to a hotel with a violent man. Fukada explains, "[Little People] are not murderers. They wouldn't harm people in person. What killed your friend was probably what had existed in her. Sooner or later, a similar kind of tragedy would have happened to her" (Murakami, 2009c: 247). Ayumi was attracted to men who were aggressive towards women during sex. Rather than killing Ayumi, Little People arranged a situation where her weakness led her to be killed.

It is my contention that Little People represent the power exerted by the system rather than the system itself. Little People did not create *Sakigake*, but they approached the group when it started to develop into a large system. As Fukada says, "once the system is formed, it starts to take on a life of its own" (Murakami, 2009c: 245). In a system, the power itself grows like a living creature. Even though Fukada is the leader of *Sakigake*, the control is not in his hands. It is the power of the system embodied by Little People that holds the control. In the novel, what is described as problematic is both the force that a closed system creates and the weakness of people who become involved in the system. Little People are not the embodiment of absolute evil; rather, they react to people's acts of building a system and supporting it, which ultimately has harmful results. Little People's indirect exertion of power on people represents the mechanisms of individuals' involvement in the formation of the system. They simply capitalise on people's weakness, as is remarked by Fukada, "weak existence is always the first to be targeted" (ibid.: 246). Ayumi's weakness that draws Little People's interest is akin to *Aum* followers' struggle to find their own narrative, which eventually led them to believe in Asahara.

While *Sakigake* was first founded as an organic commune, it ended up building up a system that appealed to violence for the maintenance of the system. Similarly, as Murakami says in his interview with Kawai Hayao, it is doubtful that Asahara necessarily schemed to carry out terrorist attacks when he first founded his group and that his followers entered it to commit crimes. However, the problem was that Asahara closed the circle for the purpose of building a "good" system. In response, Kawai explains the need for the visibility of evil in society:

> If the Cold War System had continued, *Aum* or the like wouldn't have emerged. If there is a visible object to be blamed as evil, people can easily straighten their thinking and figure out what to fight against. But when such an operation is difficult, this kind of strange thing pops up.
>
> (Murakami, 1998: 223)

In this closed system, in order to develop a sense of their own righteous consciousness, people need something evil outside their system. When there is no obvious evil, they create one in their imagination. As Murakami says, "the more [the righteous consciousness] grows, the more the internal pressure builds up, and it has to be expelled before it explodes" (Murakami, 1998: 243). With the increase in membership, Asahara started to struggle to control his own cult. As Murakami says, "Asahara ended up being defeated by the narrative he created" (ibid.: 225). Therefore, Asahara took action to remove external evil to keep justifying his cult. Murakami's concern lies in the way a community formed based on a "good" purpose came to rely on violence for the purpose of keeping evil outside their community.

The same is true of people on "this side," who concluded that those on the side of Asahara were merely insane and wished to have them eliminated from society without attempting to understand why they had ended up committing these crimes. In this sense, the two processes mirror each other. Both sides created a closed system to oppose the other and appeal to aggressive behaviour to justify their own righteousness. This is exemplified by another system in the novel, which is established by the dowager Aomame works for. Although the dowager initially aimed to provide women with a shelter to protect them from their violent husbands, she eventually built an underground organisation to murder those who violate women. This is, again, what Murakami means when he stresses the interdependency between individuals and the system; "this side" and "that side" mirror each other, and the examination of one side is necessary to understand the other.

Aomame, meeting Fukada and understanding that he is one of those who are utilised by the Little People, hesitates to conduct her mission because she is not sure whether he is as evil as she expected and deserves

her "punishment." Fukada, wishing to be killed to be liberated from his long-term physical pains, offers to save Tengo, who Aomame is in love with and who is under threat from the Little People. She eventually kills Fukuda, yet she does so for the purpose of protecting Tengo rather than of eliminating evil. Her decision to kill Fukada was made based on her subjective purpose rather than a sense of justice.

Little People first approached Fukada's daughter, nicknamed Fuka-Eri, before reaching the father. She was chosen as a Perceiver to pass their voice to the Receiver. Without knowing what they were doing, she helped them make the Air Chrysalis (*kūki sanagi*), through which another Perceiver could be created. Fuka-Eri eventually ran away from the *Sakigake* because she came to be afraid of Little People's scheming, thinking, "there was something wrong, something not right. Something greatly distorted. Something against nature" (Murakami, 2009c: 413).

Fuka-Eri tries to stand against Little People by spreading the story about them in public. Her story is sent to a publisher under the title of *Air Chrysalis* and eventually wins the Akutagawa Prize, one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Japan. The novel acquires a large number of readers, which constructs "antibodies" against the "virus" of Little People. The antibodies prevent Little People from sending their voice to *Sakigake*. In this way, the balance between evil and good is maintained.

1Q84 demonstrates not only the power of *monogatari*, but also the complicated background of the creation of a novel. Suffering from dyslexia, Fuka-Eri is unable to write or read. While staying at the house of Fukada's old friend, Ebisuno, she tells her story to Ebisuno's daughter Azami, and Azami writes it down for her. The text is eventually sent by Ebisuno to a publisher. Editor Komatsu is intrigued by the novel but, noticing the unprofessional writing, asks Tengo privately to revise it, something that is not allowed in publishing industries. Based on Tengo's revisions, the novel wins the prize and is released as a work of Fuka-Eri's own. The complicated process of the construction of *Air Chrysalis* questions the very notion of authorship. Narrated by Fuka-Eri, reported by Azami, sent by Ebisuno, picked up by Komatsu, and revised by Tengo, the original author of the novel is not easily identifiable. The novel is also created for different purposes. Fuka-Eri narrates her story to build up the antibodies against the Little People; Ebisuno sends it to a publisher, intending to bring the media's attention to *Sakigake*; Komatsu aims at winning the Akutagawa Prize through an illegitimately revised novel in order to mock the Japanese literary circles; and Tengo revises it, under Komatsu's supervision, as a way of honing his own writing skills.

While in *Underground* Murakami argues for *monogatari* as a defence against the system, in *1Q84* the characters try to face the power of the system through the *monogatari* of *Air Chrysalis*. In *Sakigake*, on the other hand, the "voice" of the Little People filtered by Receiver Fukada supports the base of the commune. Without him, the commune cannot

keep receiving the narrative of Little People. When she kills Fukuda, Aomame becomes pregnant with a new Receiver. The cult members are therefore desperate to find Aomame's child, to replace the Receiver so that they can continue to communicate with the Little People. Similarly, in the case of *Aum*, the followers looked for Asahara's narrative to fill in the empty vessel of their egos. The relationship between the Perceiver and the Receiver is similar to the function of narrative: an author creates a narrative and passes it on to readers, and the function of the narrative relies on the readers. When it is passed to Fukada, it is employed to develop the closed system. When it is passed to Tengo, it helps create antibodies against the power of the system.

In the end, Aomame, looking for a shelter from *Sakigake*, escapes from the world of "1Q84" with Tengo. While border crossing is a common motif in Murakami's fiction, for example, the elevator in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, the pond in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, the well in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, and the forest in *Kafka on the Shore*, in *1Q84* the border that the characters cross is not perceivable. It is somewhere on the highway's emergency stairs, and there is no sensible change between the two worlds. The characters only realise their shift a while after it has happened, when they find two moons in the sky, the only visible element that differentiates the two worlds. The lack of the apparent difference between the two worlds and the effortlessness of crossing the border in *1Q84* shows how thin the wall between two different worlds is, which reflects Murakami's observation of *Aum*'s followers, who entered the cult only wishing to make their lives better and finding themselves involved in acts of violence and terrorism. It also portrays the situation of the victims of the *Aum* incident, who were suddenly involved in the sarin gas attack while commuting to work as usual.

In the novel, Aomame and Tengo, attempting to escape from the world of "1Q84," find that they had only moved to a third world – neither the world of "1984" nor that of "1Q84." As mentioned in Chapter 4, in Murakami's novels, when people leave for a trip, they cannot come back because they changed as a result of the trip. Both the followers of Asahara and their victims cannot return to where they used to be before the incident. They have to live in a new reality, bearing the burdens of their past. Similarly, Aomame and Tengo's escape from the world where they are chased by *Sakigake* and the Little People does not necessarily mean they are now safe. In the new world, there will be another form of system that threatens the characters. Their defences are Tengo's *monogatari* and Aomame's child.

In July 2018, 23 years after the sarin gas attack, Asahara and 12 other members of *Aum* were executed. The executions were covered extensively by the Japanese media, and the 1995 incident and other related cases committed by *Aum* were repeatedly reported in the following months. Many reports attempted to re-examine the cult's past evil acts

and focused attention on Asahara's pathological behaviour in the courtroom and detention facilities and the remaining mystery about Asahara's foundation of the cult and the purpose of his murders. Murakami's concern about the media's uncritical division of "us" and "them" and exclusive blame on "them," which he expressed in *Underground*, was reproduced once again in the media. However, the readership of his essays about *Aum* had increased over the intervening two decades that encouraged journalists and intellectuals to discuss the incident from different points of view, and some started to argue for the necessity of examining the society that had produced *Aum* (Ichihashi, 2018). Murakami himself contributed an article to the *Mainichi Newspaper* a week after the execution, in which he wrote "the AUM-related cases did not come to a close with the latest executions" (2018: unpaged), emphasising that the removal of the members does not bring an immediate solution and the need for continuous discussion to find what should be learned from these cases.

After "Fukushima"

When the enormous earthquakes and tsunami struck the east coast of Japan, followed by the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in March 2011, Murakami was not silent. In the speech he made in Catalonia three months after the disasters, he once again emphasised the force of the system and individuals' potential complicity with the system. Referring to the Fukushima incident, Murakami criticised the post-war Japan that, aiming to create "a system efficient for increasing profits" and emphasising "skin-deep 'convenience,'" allowed electric companies to "[buy] up the media and [plant] the illusion in the minds of people that nuclear power is safe in every respect" (Murakami, 2011: 5). Claiming that we are both the victims and the perpetrators of the disaster, Murakami criticised the media's creation of the myth of nuclear technology and "our" complicity with the system; he repeated a similar logic he presented when he talked about the *Aum* incidents. Then, he noted that his role as a novelist is to supply stories or *monogatari* for people: "We should plant vibrant new stories and make them sprout and flourish. Those stories will become our shared story [… and] should have rhythms that encourage the people as they carry out their work" (ibid.: 6).

Readers and members of the media expected Murakami's future novels to allude to the disasters. In the new novels, however, Murakami did not clearly refer to the disasters or an apparent criticism of the system that had led to them. Rather, he focused on portraying individuals affected by their own experience of loss and trauma. His indirect reference to the disasters here is akin to implicit reference to the 1995 earthquake in *All God's Children Can Dance* (cf. Chapter 5).

Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage (*Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to kareno junrei no toshi*, 2013), which Murakami published two years after the disasters, is about a protagonist, who at the age of 20 suddenly lost his four closest friends from high school when they announced that they never wanted to see him again without giving any reasons. He managed to survive the heartbreak while building his career as a designer of railway stations. Being encouraged by his girlfriend, he ultimately decided to make a journey to visit his old friends who left him behind 16 years ago, aiming to learn the true reasons for their abrupt rupture. This "pilgrimage" helps him deal with his past trauma and find a way to think positively about his future, including his relationship with his girlfriend.

Rebecca Suter argues that the sense of alienation and isolation that the protagonist experiences through his sudden loss of friendship with his close friends is what was erased through the "unified collective response" to the 2011 national tragedy, in which the discourse of Japanese collective spirit to endure the hardship was constantly repeated by the media (2016: 304–5). The media's exclusive attention to "Kizuna – the bonds of friendship" (ibid.; 305), a kind of slogan popularised by mainstream media and repeated by international media, emphasised the Japanese people's self-sacrifice and solidarity in the face of the disaster, and ultimately swept the voices of those who experienced a sudden loss of family and home. The story once again reminds us of the media's treatment of individual survivors of the 1995 sarin gas attack as faceless. Murakami's attempt to give a voice to individuals that are easily erased by the media continues to appear in this novel, and this is what Murakami meant when he addressed his attempt to write stories that "encourage the people" at the speech in Catalonia.

The theme of loss and isolation and the indirect reference to the 2011 disasters are also seen in his latest novel *Killing Commendatore* (*Kishidanchō goroshi*, 2017), in which a 36-year-old portrait artist goes on a road trip to the northern part of Japan, passing the areas that would be affected by the earthquakes and tsunami in a couple of years. The purpose of the trip includes coping with the grief of losing his wife, who suddenly announced that she wanted a divorce because she was seeing somebody else. The novel describes the nine strange months that the protagonist experienced in a house borrowed from his friend on the top of a mountain, to which he moves in for the purpose of concentrating on painting for himself rather than for work. The house owner is the friend's father, Amada Tomohiko, a renowned painter who is now in a coma in hospital.

While the protagonist, aiming to paint for his own sake, quits his regular job of painting portraits, he is eventually approached by his neighbour Menshiki to paint his portrait for an enormous fee. Menshiki then enlists the protagonist to paint a portrait of Marie, a female student

in his art class and the girl who Menshiki believes to be his daughter with his ex-lover. Through the process of painting the two figures, the protagonist is inspired to paint the middle-aged man in a Subaru Forester, who he saw running after a girl during his previous journey to the northern part of Japan. All the portraits go unfinished. The protagonist stops working when he thinks what he tries to express is reproduced well enough to satisfy him.

When the protagonist starts to paint Menshiki, supernatural events begin to happen. At midnight, he starts to hear the noise of bells coming from the ancient shrine in his garden. The Commendatore, a little old man, who looks like a man from Amada's painting titled "Killing Commendatore," appears to the protagonist and says he has been woken by the protagonist, who found the hole under the shrine. The protagonist eventually takes a long metaphysical journey underground.

When the protagonist finds Amada's painting "Killing Commendatore" in the attic, he is strongly attracted by the panting and starts to research Amada. He learns about the artist's commitment to a Nazi assassination attempt when he studied European painting in Vienna during the Second World War and his romance with a woman who was later killed by the Nazis. Noticing that "Killing Commendatore" was stored in the artist's house without being revealed to the public, the protagonist acknowledges that the artist created the work for his own sake to deal with his pains and sorrows from the past. Like Amada, the protagonist has struggled to face his experience of losing loved ones: his younger sister, who died of a heart problem when she was 12, and his wife, who had a relationship with somebody else and left him. When the protagonist finds the voice of the artist in "Killing Commendatore," he realises that painting helps him face his past pains, and this was the goal he had aimed to achieve when he attempted to paint for himself. The act of painting also provides the protagonist with a journey of self-discovery. While painting the portrait of somebody else, he goes deeply into his mind to reflect on his own perception. In other words, while painting the others, he finds his own voice. Through painting the man in a Subaru Forester, he is made to face his own violent tendencies he had never recognised.

In *Killing Commendatore*, *monogatari* is replaced by painting. When the protagonist teaches children, he advises them to improve perception rather than drawing technique, emphasising the importance of observing the object from multiple directions and understanding the different vantage each angle reveals (Murakami, 2017a: 67). Drawing and painting help individuals to observe reality from different perspectives just as *monogatari* does. In other words, drawing and painting demonstrates that reality is multifaceted. This is also rephrased by the Commendatore, who says that "the truth is a representation and a representation is the truth" (ibid.: 451), meaning that what is presented as reality to us is

the result of a representation; another representation provides a different form of reality.

The construction of reality is also suggested by the way the Commendatore appears in the novel. He describes himself as an "Idea," and says "an 'Idea' appears only by being recognised by others" as "the recognition by others is the source of energy for an 'Idea'" (Murakami, 2017b: 119). An object comes into being when an object is recognised by others to be understood and interpreted. Once it is recognised, it becomes an object of representation and is placed as a part of reality. This explains the main theme of the novel. The construction of reality predominantly relies on individuals' perception, and it depends on how individuals recognise and interpret reality that shapes the reality they live in. During the journey into the "underground," the protagonist is constantly made to face his past trauma and pains. When he is overwhelmed by negative thoughts, his journey becomes rough – the tunnels he is walking and crawling through get narrower and the air gets thinner. He eventually realises that his negative thoughts put him into a more difficult situation and he has to remove them from his mind in order to find a way out. This long journey demonstrates how inner reality and external reality are mutually dependent. One's will to change inner reality therefore can help improve external reality. This also suggests that one's isolation is potentially created by oneself and therefore it can be alleviated through their will.

Although the protagonist sets out to save Marie, who has been reported missing for a few days, it ultimately becomes a journey into his own mind and trauma. This is also indicated by the journey Marie took while the protagonist is in the underground. Marie, who finds out that Menshiki was spying on her, breaks into his house to learn about his purpose in watching her. The episode about Marie's journey seemingly has little connection with the protagonist's own; Marie seems to have found her own way out of Menshiki's house by herself. The apparent disconnection of the two journeys suggests the importance of having one's own journey and the multifaceted influence of one's journey on others. The story emphasises the power of each individual's ability to create *monogatari*, which is so powerful that it can even affect the physical space. In this way, Murakami suggests that trauma and isolation can be alleviated through controlling one's way of thinking and viewing reality, which is the way one weaves *monogatari*.

In this book, I discussed how Murakami's emphasis on the power of *monogatari* is closely related to his appreciation of distance. The effective use of *monogatari*, as suggested in his work, allows individuals to separate themselves from the dominant narrative they are involved in, suspend their common sense, acquire different perspectives, realise their connection with others, and find a deeper understanding of the self and others.

Murakami proposes the power of *monogatari* as an "antibody" against closed systems. While this belief emerged from his research on *Aum*, his experience of the student movement in the 1960s previously influenced his concern about people's desire for a narrative in contemporary society. Japanese critics' disapproval of Murakami is predicated upon their view that literature should be a direct expression of social and political ideas. In contrast with this conventional approach, as discussed in Chapter 2, Murakami proposes that the function of literature is to help individuals to observe themselves from different perspectives in order to find a better way to connect to reality. The function of narrative as engaging others is elucidated through Murakami's protagonist's initial hesitation to write a novel in the aftermath of the failed student movement, as I wrote in Chapter 3.

On the other hand, the act of narrating can also be a form of escape. Chapter 4 examined the ways in which the protagonist's strong desire to be released from his past trauma is paradoxically demonstrated through his failure to narrate his past without facing it. The function of *monogatari* is further understood through the effects of metaphor, through which individuals acquire an opportunity to consider themselves in a different context, as we saw in Chapter 5. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 6, Murakami also proposes the act of distancing through his own interaction with the cultural Other, which suggests a new way of exploring cross-cultural effects.

As a taxi driver warns Aomame at the beginning of *1Q84* that she should not "be tricked by appearance," Murakami advises us to consider reality carefully. The good power of *monogatari* lies in the productivity of distancing, through which we can observe ourselves and our surroundings from multiple perspectives. This helps us position ourselves in a society where "[g]ood and evil are not fixed or steady but constantly interchanging place," and therefore careful observation is required.

In Japan, a variety of tragedies were created by the result of a post-war high economic growth and material affluence. The aftermaths of natural disasters are also said to be human disasters. Tragedies leave long-term trauma to those who are affected, and it is a good *monogatari* that helps them find a way to overcome it. A good *monogatari* is not a mere happy story. It is a story that encourages individuals to think on their own and negotiate with the systems they are involved in.

Note

1 In this novel, Murakami's playful employment of *katakana* is outstanding. He spells words such as *reshiva*, *pashiva*, and *douta* based on the English pronunciation, yet they are modified from the way they are usually pronounced in Japanese; "receiver," "perceiver," and "daughter" are commonly spelled, respectively, as "reshīvā," "pashivā" and "dōtā." Considering the significant role of the estrangement effects in the novel, I use the Japanese spelling of these terms in this chapter.

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