THE MULTIPLE WORLDS
OF
MURAKAMI HARUKI

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is Murakami's consistent textual evocations of a parallel world-within-a-world motif. By examining works in which these narrative constructs are most prominent, the analysis will delineate and clarify the structures and thematic significance of such constructs within his fictions and their function in the creation and, even, interpretation of Murakami's other realms.

This thesis will also explore the possibilities of links, whether conscious or unconscious, between Murakami's fictions and a modern Japanese literary paradigm for which the term, Mukogawa ('the other-side') fiction, has been coined. It is hoped that the structural and thematic analyses outlined above might aid in the tracing of connections to a Japanese literary tradition with which, according to most critics, Murakami's fictions have nothing in common. By examining similar topoi and textual manifestations of difference, I hope that certain aspects of his fictions will better stand out. At the same time, recognizing the need to keep one eye open to recent critical studies, I will incorporate aspects of theoretical approaches to Magic Realism, a literary phenomenon not unlike mukogawa fiction, that might better enable my analysis of the recurring fantasy-like parallel worlds of Murakami and shed more light on his relation to a literary tradition that developed out of the perceived sense of 'loss' (identity, culture, roots) that occurred during the rapid modernization of Japan from the Meiji period onwards.
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Introduction

基本上，在我创造的虚构世界中总是涉及到两个（不同的）世界。这个世界和那个世界。

- Murakami Haruki

Murakami Haruki (1949 - present), described by critics as everything from a postmodern messiah to a writer whose work "only a few would be silly enough to get interested in deep reading,"¹ is one of the most popular and acclaimed of the new breed of Japanese writers to emerge on the contemporary literary scene. Popular is the key word because even 1995 Nobel Prize winner Oe Kenzaburo himself has relegated Murakami and his fictions to the proverbial literary garbage heap of popular literature saying that though the author "is said to be attracting new readers to junbungaku ('serious' or 'true' literature). It is clear, however, that Murakami's target lies outside the sphere of junbungaku ."² In the same essay, Oe goes on to also suggest the Murakami's writing bears no relation to the "postwar literature of the 1946-1970 period" (a point which this thesis will contend is not entirely the case) during which coincidentally Oe himself began


writing 'serious' literature (200). All of this may soon change though, because, in
February of 1996 something unexpected happened, it was announced that author
Murakami had been selected to receive the Yomiuri Prize for Japanese Literature
for his trilogy of works entitled, *The Nejimakidori Chronicles* (Nejimakidori
kuronikuru, 1994-1995). Whether or not figures of the stature of Miyoshi and Oe
will choose to retract their dismissals of Murakami is something only time will
tell, yet one gets the impression that quite possibly they and other like-minded
critics were a little too quick to reject his early fictions.

Murakami was born in Ashiya in the prefecture of Hyogo in 1949. He spent
much of his adolescence growing up in the port city of Kobe, where he attended
junior high and high school. It was during this time that Murakami came to be
interested in American literature, an interest that would eventually lead him to
Waseda University and his studies in American drama and literature. Entering
the university in 1968, Murakami graduated some seven years later with the
completion of his graduating thesis, “The Journey in American Cinema,” in
1975, a period which saw a number of important developments in the life of the
author, the infamous student rioting of the sixties, the author’s marriage to wife
Yoko in 1971, and his opening of a successful modern jazz bar called “Peter Cat.”
Not thinking to become a writer or novelist by profession, Murakami
maintained his business until finally turning to writing full time in 1982, three
years after the debut of his first novel in 1979.

Murakami, as we mentioned, was influenced to a large degree by the
American fiction he began reading in his youth. He has acknowledged in numerous interviews his interest in and debt to authors such as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Raymond Chandler, John Irving, and Raymond Carver. The author has also translated a number of American authors into Japanese, including the aforementioned Raymond Carver, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. He has also admitted to an aversion for Japanese literature when he was growing up, something that didn’t change until he began to write on his own. Perhaps as a result of this, Murakami has developed a writing style, a narrative language, that is peculiarly his own. He also openly draws upon the growing lexicon of images and icons from a contemporary, worldwide framework of popular and literary cultural references. In fact, the reader of Murakami cannot help but notice the overwhelming number of such ‘foreign’ references, especially when one considers the ‘lack’ of overt references to similar Japanese images and icons. Yet, for all of this, for all of the contention that has surrounded Murakami’s non-Japanese stylings and works, his consistent exploration of certain themes utilizing the topoi of a narrative schema critically considered to be Japanese in its origins seems to suggest that there might exist more of a connection to Japanese literary tradition than Murakami himself might admit or even be aware of. Most significantly, it is Murakami’s doubling of fictional worlds within his narratives that most resembles the ‘world on the other side of reality’ motif that is an essential feature of the fictions of the paradigm identified by the term *mukogawa*. *Mukogawa* fiction has been described as the fantasies of male
authors who portray a strange journey into a world on the other side of reality, a world of myth and the supernatural. However this is not the only facet of Murakami’s writings that seems to have parallels with this paradigm.

The aim of our thesis is then threefold. Given the great variation of critical response in regard to Murakami’s work we intend to investigate and ‘read’ a number of the early works of Murakami in an effort to better understand this period in the career of an author who in recent times has so suddenly become ‘respectable’ and worthy of the Yomiuri prize. Another aspect of our focus will be to analyze several works of Murakami Haruki, premised on the presence of homologous features and topoi, investigating the possible relationship of Murakami and his writings to the fantasy-like literary paradigm of the mukogawa. In so doing we will thoroughly examine the most prominent of these homologous structures, the world-within-a-world motif, not just as it may possibly relate to the mukogawa narrative schema, but also and perhaps more importantly as it functions in relation to the thematic content and construction of Murakami’s own textual worlds. Despite the fact that during the ten year period beginning in 1979 Murakami wrote in many different genres, fiction, both short and long, essays, magazine articles, and travel diaries (compiled during his stay in Greece and Italy and visits to Crete and Turkey from 1986 to 1988), our study will only deal with Murakami’s long fiction, of which we have chosen five fictional works deemed to be representative of this period. The works to be examined in chronological order of their publication are Hear the Wind Sing
Ambury


Since our examination will necessarily make great reference to the literary paradigm of the mukogawa tradition, in chapter one we will attempt to lay the groundwork for our later discussion of Murakami in chapters two and three. We will examine critical conceptions of the nature of mukogawa narratives and their topoi as well as trying to establish a greater understanding of the context out of which this ‘modern’ narrative form arose. In connection to this, we will look at the general trend in the period of modernization in Japan towards discourses constituting a “Japanese identity” based upon an authenticity that was believed to reside in the folk customs, beliefs, and culture of rural Japan, central to which was a dynamic positing center versus periphery, urban (modern) versus rural (pre modern). A basic dynamic I hope to demonstrate the mukogawa fictions share. We will also carefully delineate the topoi of this narrative schema, the journey into the periphery away from the city, the entry into an other realm marked by the passing of clearly demarcated boundaries, and the woman, the spirit of the mukogawa., synchronically and diachronically, making reference to specific works.

In chapter two we will begin by looking at Murakami’s two earliest works, Hear the Wind Sing and Pinball ‘73, paying particular attention to structures
resembling those of the narrative schema of the *mukogawa*. Even in these early fictions, Murakami was beginning to develop strategies that I believe can still be found to some degree in even his most recent fictions, for example, the paralleling of two fictional worlds within a tone greater textual world. Much of this chapter, however, will be devoted to a close reading of Murakami’s third narrative, *A Wild Sheep’s Chase*, comparing and contrasting its structure and themes with that of the *mukogawa* narrative schema. It is my hope that this type of analysis might illuminate the similar nature of the topoi found in Murakami’s fictions and the works of the paradigm as well as the fundamental differences in approach and intent I suspect that underlie their utilization in the respective fictions. Reference will be also be made in this chapter to the possible influence of one *mukogawa* fiction writer, Abe Kobo, who we note not only because of the similarity of protagonists, but also that for both writers it is the gradual transformation of the protagonist in relation to the topoi (the ‘conditions’) of their narratives that form the central focus of their fictions. We will also discuss the significance of ‘history’ for Murakami as it is depicted in his fictions through personal histories, song, landscape, and so forth. Central to all of this is the figure of the Rat, a character who is a twin for the protagonist. We will discuss in detail the function of Murakami’s twinning of worlds and characters as a strategy and as it relates to an overall theme of Murakami’s, the dissolution of false social and ideological boundaries perceived to be restricting human experience.
In chapter three, we will focus upon *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, a work which will see Murakami expand upon similar thematic concerns based around the individual’s search for a sense of meaning that is ultimately not found in the wisdom or rationality of any modern or pre modern discourse, but is discovered in the process of the search itself. We will look at Murakami’s continuing employment of the *mukogawa* topoi in this work and attempt to illustrate the increasing importance of the topos of parallel worlds whose landscapes this time begin to take on gradually more significant relation to the author’s central themes. It is in this work, Murakami most clearly demonstrates the narrative and thematic function of this topos in his fictions, the *mukogawa* (*other realm*) becoming a liminal space resting between his fictional worlds. The nature of this space is of extreme importance if one is to begin to understand the complexities of Murakami’s fiction and his relation to his paradigmatic predecessors, if indeed this relation exists. The remainder of chapter three will discuss this aspect of Murakami’s fiction as it is also seen in *Dance, Dance, Dance*, a work that, as we shall see, is a fitting choice to conclude our study for several reasons.

Murakami’s fictions are undeniably divided, divided into two and sometimes even more fictional worlds that obey dissimilar laws and rationalities. What is the function of such worlds in his fictions? Is Murakami’s *mukogawa* linkable to the chain of *mukogawa* fictions dating back to the beginning of Japan’s modernization? Whatever answers to these questions we may find, I ask the
reader to keep their eye on Murakami's fictional folding of worlds within worlds within worlds. Not simply within one text, but how his fiction seems to echo and open into his future fictions as well as his fictions past. It is a technique that I believe is partially responsible for the popular success and the critical panning of Murakami's fictions. Murakami's individual fictions despite an organic impression of wholeness should be viewed as being complementary in essence. By this I mean that they are works that, although open to interpretation, are by means of their very nature fundamentally open to many different and even contradictory interpretations. In this thesis, it is my humble intention to but offer my own reading based upon the vast textual and contextual evidence I believe supports it. However, by no means is it the only interpretation possible.
CHAPTER 1

**Figuring Other-Worlds**

The novel (shosetsu) to begin with, more than being a genre (narrative mode) that arose from a demand for truth (reality), must possess the originary force of this kind of (Tono monogatari’s) narrative to make ‘real’ the supernatural (that is, the ‘word’) by means of shaking the fabric of contemporary reality.¹ (Mishima zenshu V. 33, 262)

**When Worlds Collide**

*The Legends of Tono* (Tono monogatari), a prose collection of oral folk tales from the Tono region of northeastern Japan published in 1910, is widely recognized as a seminal contribution to the eventual establishment of a nativist ethnology (minzokugaku) in modern Japan. What is perhaps not as well known is the tremendous influence attributed in recent scholarly works to the *Legends* and author/ethnographer, Yanagita Kunio, for their roles in the creation of a cultural signifying system that in terms of its consequences for Japanese society continues to be of great import in contemporary Japan. A list of such studies would have to include H.D. Harootunian’s “Disciplinizing Native Knowledge and Producing Place: Yanagita Kunio, Origuchi Shinobu, Takata Yasuma,” Karatani Kojin’s *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, and Marilyn Ivy’s

¹ Mishima Yukio, in “What is the Novel?”, discussing his discovery of the essential quality that informs the Japanese narrative mode, the *shosetsu*, and is found within the *Legends of Tono*: the fundamental role of the supernatural and its relation to reality in the depiction of an authentic vision of Japan.
Karatani Kojin's *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, and Marilyn Ivy's *Discourses of the Vanishing*, among many, studies that invariably place Yanagita, his work, and the *Legends* at the center of a folk-culture movement that developed amid the storm of chaotic social and cultural upheavals reverberating throughout Japanese life after the 'opening' of the country to the West beginning in 1856.

The establishment of the Meiji oligarchy in 1868 was quickly followed by its decision to implement a policy of rapid modernization (read Westernization). The oligarchy's outline in essence demanded condensing processes of societal and institutional change that required the Western powers over two hundred years to accomplish into a restructuring program spanning little less than forty years from beginning to end (roughly the period from 1868 in which the Meiji "revolution" began to the end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 when Japan can be said to have taken its place as a modern power on the world stage). To accomplish this tremendous undertaking, the government encouraged the development of the necessary infrastructure (railroad, transportation and communication networks) and instituted a national education program designed to create an educated and trainable workforce. The changes to infrastructure and the economy (rapid industrialization) coupled with the introduction of improved agricultural technologies and practices resulted in an ever increasing number of people moving from the countryside to larger, more densely populated centers seeking employment and opportunity. Although as of 1903 almost 60% of households were still involved in farming, an unprecedented
shift in the nature of the population from rural to urban began during this period (Lockwood 462), one in which, for much of the population, constant change came to define daily existence.

The expansion of the rail road, industries, and the other 'essentials' of modernization into once isolated rural regions also brought with them profound and perhaps unforeseen alterations to many aspects of everyday life. Traditional conceptions of "home," "family," and "place," if these ideas did indeed exist as "fixed concepts" per se, were probably not displaced as such, but must surely have become signs of questionable meaning given the sudden alterations and disruptions of, in some cases, age-old patterns of family behaviour. What is "home" in the face of industrialization and the economy's need for the internal geographical mobility of the nation's labour force? The kinds of change that earmark this period is what Harootunian calls the "eventfulness" of Japanese modernity (107). For Harootunian this not only refers to the rapid development of the apparatus of the modern industrial nation-state, but also to the perception-altering influence of the new Western ideas and cultural constructs (ideas regarding self, rationality, and society) considered necessary for the modernizing processes to proceed. These conceptions, he believes, ultimately lead to fundamental questions and concerns being raised over their application as well as applicability in the Japanese context.

Of the many examinations of this traumatic period, perhaps most enlightening for our purposes is that of Karatani. He, too, suggests that the artificially compressed nature of the "eventfulness" of the transition into
modernity severely disrupted the lives of the Japanese. However, Karatani believes that a traumatic and profound inversion of native consciousness, from a transcendental mode of being and perception to one that stressed the existence of a distinct inner-self and an objectively perceivable exterior, was the primary result (20-40). In his study, he paints this “semiotic inversion” and its propagation primarily in terms of the literary construction of landscape as something outside inner experience, something outside the newly-discovered but now inescapable inner-self, something awaiting discovery and depiction in a language (genbun itchi) transparent to all. The disruptive power of the inversionary event can be witnessed, he supposes, in the writings of enigmatic figures like Soseki, individuals caught at the cusp of two competing rationalities, struggling to come to terms with traditional concepts and their relation to the new whilst bound up within the “epistemological constellation” of modernity. Only after the reversal of native “epistemological constellations” Karatani theorizes were Japanese writers able to take rural inhabitants and regions as subjects and settings worthy of study and rendering. Prior to this, that depicted was not ‘reality’, were not the people, was not landscape as presently conceived but instead was a

2 The genbun itchi movement was the state sponsored attempt to bring written language closer to actual spoken language in an effort to standardize language usage. For an excellent discussion of the social and political motivations and ramifications of this movement please see James A. Fujii’s Complicit Fictions (1992) as well.

3 Karatani’s “epistemological constellations” are roughly equatable to Michel Foucault’s ‘épistémē’— systems of discourse and knowledge that determine how a given people of a given era know and realize their surroundings.
transcendental construction of the above.

The extreme dislocative nature of the incredible energies of change unleashed within the society caused many Japanese, such as Karatani's Soseki, to suffer what can only be described as an 'identity-crisis' of sorts. Such a crisis took the form of deep concerns that the clusters of structured meaning that were perceived the essence of their culture -- tradition -- were either receding or absent from the strange, new society springing up around them. Whether one fully agrees with Karatani's views on epistemic upheaval or not, the native world view (discourse) was perceivably falling in the face of the force of logocentric Western discourse. As a result, an emerging sense of discontinuity with the past, with tradition, a kind of cultural vacuum came to exist. However just as surely as nature abhors a vacuum so, too, did a significant segment of the Japanese populace come to abhor the lacking of the cultural "stuff" that once provided their lives with stability and meaning. Carol Gluck in her study Japan's Modern Myths (1985) notes:

Although the late Meiji ideologues did not regard cities, enterprise, education, and reading as social ills in themselves, they were nonetheless unprepared for the consequences of their diffusion, especially when these were associated with the breakdown of the agrarian order in the countryside and the emergence of new forms of social conflict in the cities and factories. Confronted with a modernity that threatened to shake the social foundations of the nation, the ideologues turned to the verities of the past—the village and the family, social harmony and communal custom—to cure civilization of its fevers so that society as they envisioned
might yet survive. (177)
From out of this inevitable nativist backlash arose Yanagita and his modern inscription of a pre modern vision of reality.

Revealing Other realms

Yanagita's *Legends* took the form of tales, supposedly recorded faithfully without the addition of "a word or a phrase" from their orator, Sasaki Kyoseki, that tell of encounters of ordinary townsfolk, farmers and the like with what in contemporary terms can only be described as the supernatural (5). These meetings of the 'folk' of the Tono region with returning spirits of the dead, *kami* (spirits/gods), mountain-dwelling witches, *kappa* (water-imps) and so forth are recounted as though an almost everyday-like occurrence. Yanagita managed to capture in the *Legends* a sense of immediacy and sensitivity to place. And it is this immediacy, this increased sensitivity to one's surroundings, that becomes an idealization through his discourse. For although the tales obviously have special significance for the communities and social groups involved (often offering explanations for the significance or origins of local place names or the connection of certain family histories to specific events or phenomenon), the manner of their telling seems to reveal a world view within which a boundary between the every day and the supernatural, if such distinctions were drawn, is nonexistent.

Yanagita then, perhaps perceiving the precarious nature of his nation's headlong plunge into modernity and seeking to remedy the "fevers" of said
symbolically re-plant the roots of Japanese identity. He was concerned with preserving the concept of the natural village as site of cultural significance, valorizing the desired elements of national/cultural similitude (unique from Western conceptions) and the important relationship of native identity and “native place” (郷土 kyodo). His then was a discourse,

constituting Japan as a signified aimed to “forget” the eventfulness that had transported Japanese society into an industrial order since the Meiji era by constructing a new narrative. But that narrative centered a vanished place (in actuality a no-place, neither here nor there, past nor present, true nor false) ...(Harootunian 107)

Even as such natural villages were disappearing from concrete existence, Yanagita turned to depicting rural folk-customs, rituals, stories in an effort to recover and record the values of a people and a region (“place”) he envisioned held the essence of an authentic Japan.

As mentioned above in the brief discussion of Karatani, the folk and their tales only became subjectable to observation and measurement after formerly held transcendental notions had been overturned by new conceptions. Ironically then the very same conceptions and conditions responsible for the waning significance of folk-culture and tradition as ‘real’ practices were also integral to the rediscovery and re-investing of meaning in these same sites. In this manner, folk and urban culture are linked on a fundamental level, one only existing as seen from the vantage point of the other. A rural/urban dynamic was coming to
seen from the vantage point of the other. A rural/urban dynamic was coming to be formed during this period, one that echoed the dynamics of the Japan/West relationship, a kind of symbiotic dependency that in many regards still possesses much cultural and ideological currency. For although the city and modern life unquestionably posed a very real threat to the continuity of traditional folk practices, that same city was in many ways a pre-condition for the emergence of a re-imagined folk culture, a folk-imaginary that in turn would come to provide the emerging modern Japanese subject with an 'authentic' voice and a unifying sense of cultural identity.

In his work, we can see Yanagita struggling to situate a native narrative of historic 'place' and 'memory'. Not, of course, historic in the sense it is typically imagined (histories of the larger-than-life, battles, emperors' reigns, and so forth), but rather in the sense of the everyday, or life as it was 'meant' to be lived and experienced, including the supernatural. His was a discourse constructed to reappropriate and preserve a cultural heritage of traditions, rituals, and beliefs associated with the 'folk', and thus nature and a transcendental subjectivity. In Yanagita's discourse, the marginalized 'folk' come to dwell in a sacred space, an other realm, the model of which Yanagita presents in his retelling of the Tono lore. And while a complete exploration of Yanagita's work would itself be worthy of countless studies, suffice it to say, his works contain patterns and constructs that attempt to express with some authority native conceptions of history and reality. He weaves a narrative schema that evokes a worldview that stands in opposition to the dualizing scientific and rationalistic discourses of the West.
And, as we shall see, Yanagita was not alone in the evoking of such a schema in the quest for a home-brewed ‘remedy’ for the pains and anguish of modernity.

Mukogawa

Having to some degree situated the dynamics of the historic moment in which the Japanese found themselves imbedded, we can now turn to a brief discussion of a stream of fiction that in many respects paralleled Yanagita’s folklore studies, nowhere more so than in the depiction of an idealized other realm not unlike the ‘vanished place’ of Yanagita. Works of this paradigm, for which the term mukogawa has been coined, tend to present fictional other-worlds nesting within or next to a larger fictional world recognizable as that of the mimetic representation of extra-textual reality. This schema, with its strong dream-like portrayal of strange journeys to the underside of everyday existence, is surprisingly stable given that its individual narrative instances do not seem to otherwise conform to any particular genre or conventions.  

This figure, I believe, accurately illustrates the typical construction of the mukogawa topoi. Axis (x) delineates the oppositional

4 I again refer the reader to Kinya Tsuruta’s and Rebecca L. Copeland’s enlightening individual studies which reveal the incredible diversity of works of this paradigm.
positioning of the two topographies (contemporary reality and the other realm) present within the text. The horizontal axis (y) represents the border that separates the two respective worlds. The journey portion, the michiyuki, of these tales is often an arduous and treacherous endeavour, wherein the protagonist crosses this boundary that is usually distinctly demarcated by natural features such as mountains, rivers, or sand dunes. As well, this axis if viewed from left to right forms a time line, one conforming to the textual representation of the progression of linear or 'real' time as conceived in extra-textual reality. The line (a) traces the path of the typical mukogawa protagonist (urban, educated male): implicit is the birth of the protagonist from the nurturing mukogawa, whereupon the protagonist matures and follows the course set by family and society until such a time he finds that he must seek solace or retreat from alienating, spirituality-numbing modern existence. Inevitably the protagonist sets off on a journey that results in his descent into the mukogawa. (it is at this point, point (b) in the figure above, that most narratives employing the mukogawa schema begin). There he will often meet and interact with a character who embodies the spirit of this mytho-mystical space—a mysterious and beautiful woman. All of this is in anticipation of the protagonist's eventual, successful re-emergence into modern society.

Much like Harootunian's conclusions regarding the 'affective' intent of Yanagita's Legends, Tsuruta suggests:

... that the novels of the mukogawa have given an eloquent expression to the side of the modern Japanese who feels uncomfortable with
individuation. *Mukogawa* is perhaps a brief moratorium, an evening at the lukewarm onsen (hot springs), away from the steady and inevitable push for modernization, ... a gentle *amae* time of night after the bright, industrious day, ...a hidden, affective place for dreaming, returning, dissolving, and, above all, recuperating ...("Woman on the Other Side", 8)

It is interesting that Tsuruta’s reasoning for the appearance and significance of the mukogawa phenomenon is itself couched in terms that not only suggest but support a reading of these narratives as symbolic returns to Japan. The comparisons to a relaxing onsen, a gentle *amae* time of night hidden away from troubling, modern existence. Tsuruta’s study reveals *mukogawa* fiction to be the narrative of a regressionary return of the protagonist to a complementary state in an imaginary world, a journey that appears to allow protagonist and reader to return for a time to the healing waters of psychological and narrative symbiosis. The *mukogawa* environment is one in which the societally-instilled reflexes of the city-dweller are of little use. Rather, it calls into question that which before was perhaps unquestioned or even unquestionable. This journey from the known to the ultimately unknowable momentarily severs the bonds of

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Note the usage of the word *amae*, a term made famous within and without Japan by Doi Takeo in *The Anatomy of Dependence* (Amae no kozo, 1971; tr. 1973). The concept of *amae*, loosely translated as dependence or dependency, is the key Doi suggests to understanding the unique psychological makeup of the Japanese people, specifically the unusual importance of dependence and dependency wishes (fulfilled and unfulfilled) in maintaining the ‘mental’ balance of individual and on a much larger scale, society, itself. The best concrete example of which is the dyadic *amae*/amaayakasu (dependent/nurturer) relationship of mother and child, wherein the child benefits from the care and protection of the mother who herself gains something in feelings of self-worth and prestige. While Doi’s research is not without its critics, it and its invocation by Tsuruta, reveals something of the power of the *amae* concept to place in clearer context the character and power of this narrative schema to affect the Japanese reader and society.
protagonist and reader to 'this-realm', and, albeit unbeknownst to both, frees them up to new(renewed) experience through immediate contact with the 'womb-world' of the other realm.

Witness this literally in a scene taken from Soseki's *The Three-Cornered World* (Kusamakura, 1906; tr., 1965) where the protagonist slips into a dream-world induced by the womb-like warmth of the onsen:

> The cold mists of Autumn; the tranquil haze which hangs over the world in spring; the blue smoke rising from cooking fires at evening; all these are capable of drawing my ephemeral form up with them into the limitless expanse of the heavens. Yes, there are many things which can charm me, and whose cry finds an answering echo within me; but only on a spring evening, with my body softly enveloped in clouds of steam from a hot bath, can I feel that I belong to a bygone age....I felt my soul to be floating like a jelly-fish. The world is an easy place to live in when you feel like this. You throw off the shackles of common sense, and break through the bars of desire and physical attachment. Lying in the hot water, you allow it to do with you as it likes, and become absorbed into it. (TCW 101-102)

Ensconced in the onsen deep within the labyrinthine confines of the traditional inn, itself nestled away from cold modern reality surrounded as it is by mountains, the 'third eye' of the male protagonist opens to new (old) and heightened perceptions. Another such example is the well-known scene from Kawabata's *Snow Country* where the protagonist, Shimamura, seemingly beholds the unearthly conjunction of the face, more specifically an eye, of young
Yoko and the passing landscape in the mirror-like window of his train bound for the other realm, "snow country." The protagonist stares in wonderment "as the eye and the light were superimposed on the other, (and) the eye became a weirdly beautiful bit of phosphorescence on the sea of evening mountains." (YG 14; SC 10)

Seen in this light the similar narrative imperatives of this schema and Yanagita's are striking. Both seek to situate their discourses in sites perceived as originary, re-imagining and relocating the rejected and marginalized aspects of native culture (as seen in folk existence and/or mythology) in direct relation and opposition to individualized urban (Western) existence. In the case of mukogawa fictions, characteristically, such other realms are governed by axioms that stress an experiential sense of space and existence semantically evocative of an autochonous transcendentalism associated with traditional cultural patterns and constructs. In other words, these literary other realms provide a unique space and function, offering both writer and reader an opportunity to recoup or reconstruct experience on a differentiated (Western resistant) plane corresponding to the Japanese pre-modern and transcendental.

Barbara Goddard, on the state of women's writing in Canada, believes that "contemporary women's writing especially is characterized by strategies of textual (and political) subversion, strategies of decentering and deflective irony which are the classic strategies of the colonized." 6 Although it may be difficult for some

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6 Barbara Godard, "Ex-centriques, Eccentric, Avante-Garde." Room of One's Own, 8, No. 4. 1984, 57.
to see an affinity between contemporary women's writing and this literature of the other realm, what this quotation hopefully illustrates is that certain narrative strategies characterize the fictions of peoples (and genders) who view themselves as marginalized or victims of oppression. While we cannot say Japan was a colony in the usual sense of the word, the extreme nature of social and cultural transformations might suggest that the experience of the Japanese does in some way resemble that of nations whose people suffered more directly the colonizing process. So, perhaps it is not too much to say Japan, adopting and adapting Western discourses and cultural constructs as quickly as it did, became for a time a quasi-colony of the West. And if this the case, is it surprising then that there should arise a narrative paradigm in which are to be found the "classic" mechanisms and strategies of an essentializing and decentering textuality.

It would appear that one of the chief weapons of the mukogawa narrative is its textual hybridity, its weaving via the journey of the protagonist, the figurative needle pulling the thread, of two antithetical realities into direct contact, creating the impression of, if not, experience of, a greater and numinous reality. Textual hybridity, it is worth noting, is a quality commonly associated with texts characterized as belonging to the cross-cultural phenomenon of magic realism, a narrative mode also closely associated with the experience of marginalization. Stephen Slemon writes:

In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a
different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the "other," a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences.7

In the same manner, the literary space that is the mukogawa narrative unfolds, revealing the co-presence of antimonous topographies and rationalities. And while critics like Slemon would suggest there can be no true winner in the Bakhtinian dialogic struggle of two such "opposing discursive systems", we should reiterate that the mukogawa narrative, like the magic realist one, is a narrative mode that seeks to map an uncharted space (11-12). Its supernatural and authenticating aspects, made up as it is of equal (sometimes unequal) parts of mimetic realism, romantic irony, fantasy, history and mythology, opens ruptures in modernity's representations of reality, exposing the falsehood of Western concepts of universality.

These narratives, configured within this particular discursive schema, reinvent the relationship of subject to object, subject and environment, and thus seem capable of feeding the modern Japanese individual's craving for a sense of meaning and identity. Again, this schema is: 1) its configuring of marginalized and authentic topographies, 2) the trope of the journey to the other realm and all the associated cultural-laden imagery it conjures up—visions of wandering

monk-poets, isolated hermitages, and so on, and 3) the presence of a woman
who, along with the environment of the other realm itself, becomes the nexus
through which the male protagonist gains access to another 'reality'.

The Shifting Paradigm

One point that needs be raised is that while the narrative schema of this
paradigm has been relatively stable in its individual instances, it has not been
completely without its changes. Whether 'changes' is the appropriate term or not
is open to some debate, for the word 'changes' might imply that this paradigm
developed in a gradual, intentional, and linear fashion (evolved?) and that is an
assertion I do not intend to make. In the after word to his full-length study
Tsuruta remarked that perhaps the element that has seen the most 'change' is
that of the character of the female inhabitant of the mukogawa, the lessening
importance of her beauty and maternal (care giver-like) attributes as seen in an
early work such as Izumi Kyoka's The Monk of Mount Koya and the increasing
vitality, or life-like quality, of her depictions in later fictions such as Abe Kobo's
Woman in the Dunes (Suna no on'na, 1962; tr., 1964) (301).

Another of the significant differences between prewar and postwar mukogawa
fictions is the decreasing valorization of overtly traditional tropes and imagery.
Although the narrative schema has seemed to maintain its 'affectivity' as remedy, the realities of societal, cultural, and generational change have meant
that the schema has, consciously or unconsciously, been taken up in response to
concerns and symptoms that differ vastly in many ways from those that sparked
earlier incarnations. The result is a *mukogawa* fiction that is less recognizable as 'Japanese' in content and substance, where the traditional is unusually, even markedly so, absent. Yet, still a fiction that mirrors that of earlier works of the paradigm.

A brief examination of the work of writer Abe Kobo might serve to illustrate this point. Of all Japanese authors, one would think that one could presume with some degree of certainty that Abe, a writer so associated with modernism and existentialist angst that it seems his name cannot be mentioned without reference to the modernist master Franz Kafka, would be among the least likely to employ a narrative schema associated with strategically recentering notions of an authentic Japan, especially one employed by writers such as Kawabata, Tanizaki, and their like. However, that is exactly what one finds in Abe's *Woman in the Dunes*; it is a work which features all of the characteristic topoi of *mukogawa* fiction: the journey, the isolating womb-like environment of the dune home in a rural village, and the female character. Unlike his authorial predecessors, the journey of Abe's protagonist, Niki Jumpei, traces a journey back into a primordial village that rests not within mountains or beneath the seas but among the shifting sands of a desert region. One would be hard pressed to locate in Abe's narrative any of the conservative nostalgia-driven aesthetic trappings of

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a story such as Kawabata’s *Snow Country*. In fact, quite the opposite seems to be the case. Abe’s choice of setting and the absence of traditional imagery clearly reflects less the desire to re-capture a wholly nostalgia-inspired vision or aesthetic than it does an effort to explore modern conditions and conceptions of existence against the backdrop of the unique space that is the other realm.

Surrounded by the sands that represent the very ‘stuff’ of Abe’s mukogawa, Niki Jumpei sheds modern scientific and objective conceptions of reality as he gradually awakens “to the heavens governed by an extremely simple elliptical cycle, and the sand dunes ruled by the 1/8 mm. wavelengths” (SO 129, WD 215). In the midst of the all-consuming nature of this force that had “swallowed up and destroyed flourishing cities, . . . the cities of antiquity, whose immobility no one doubted,” but that were ultimately, ironically, just like Japanese tradition and culture, unable to resist the law of the metaphoric sands, the protagonist discovers/recovers an awareness of what it means ‘to live’ (SO 29, WD 41).

**Summary**

Abe’s is an example of creative (re-)myth-making in the sense that his work on the surface appears to employ none of the traditional imagery or figures that are explicitly ‘Japanese’ or ‘traditional’ in substance or meaning, yet employs a narrative schema fundamentally bound up with conceptions of Japanese identity. We must remember, despite the many protests to the contrary, that culture and tradition is not a static, stable object existing outside history and society but is something that is constantly being re-defined or re inscribed.
according to the prevailing ideologies and discourses of a given era. The overt nostalgia and evocation of traditional motifs in the other realms of earlier examples of this paradigm are understandable given the traumatic “eventfulness” of modernizing Japan. If this is the case, then it also stands to reason that writers of the generations following Kyoka, Tanizaki and Kawabata might choose to redefine their existence and other worlds in a manner and language that speaks to the worries and anxieties of those of their own generation. What does the elegiac imagery of Kawabata, of Tanizaki, speak to a generation of TV watching, french-fries eating, Sartre-reading college-age Japanese? And if this can be said of Abe’s readers, what about that new race of Japanese known as shinjinrui, the very audience that makes up the majority of Murakami’s readership?

Shinjinrui is a term applied to the generations born after World War II. It implies that these generations are not Japanese in the truest sense of the word. They have been culturally ‘corrupted.’
Chapter 2
Visions of Other-worlds—Murakami Haruki

A gaping chasm separates what we try to be aware of and what we are actually aware of. And I don’t care how long your yardstick is, there’s no measuring that drop. What I can set down here in writing only amounts to a catalog. Not a novel, not literature, not even art. Just a notebook with a line ruled down the center. 1

Focusing on the story, A Wild Sheep’s Chase, this chapter will examine aspects of Murakami’s narrative style and themes from the perspective of the schema of the mukogawa narrative mode discussed in Chapter One. It is hoped that a close reading of the text vis-a-vis the topoi of this paradigm might grant a deeper appreciation and understanding of Murakami’s development as author. Another aim of this analysis is to gain greater insight into the role played by the other realm schema within his fictions and their significance in the discursive field of contemporary culture. Does its function still resemble that of early works of the paradigm? Do Murakami’s mukogawa fictions blur and bridge the gap

1Murakami Haruki, “Kaze no uta wo kike,” Murakami Haruki zensakuhin, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1990) 11; hereafter, abbreviation KU is used to refer to this work.

Murakami Haruki, “Hear the Wind Sing,” Trans. Alfred Birnbaum, 1987 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1987) 10; hereafter, abbreviation HWS is used to refer to this work.
between the West’s hegemonic discourses grounded in a universal realism and the specific ‘reality’ of a marginalized Japan contesting conceptions of self and identity? Just what is the specific ‘reality’ of a postwar Japanese? These are just some questions with which this chapter will seek to contend.

The Early Works (1979-1980)

*A Wild Sheep’s Chase* does not mark the first appearance of its protagonist but the third. Consequently, a brief discussion of Murakami’s first works, *Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball 1973*, is in order. It is after all within these works that the characters are introduced around which much of the ‘action’ (and inaction) of the tetralogy of works, henceforth called the “Boku-series,” revolves, chief amongst whom is the protagonist, Boku. Other characters central to the series include: his best friend and spiritual doppelganger, the Rat, the Chinese bartender, Jay, of Jay’s Bar, and the ghostly figure(s) of a woman(women) from the protagonist’s past. It is also possible to identify in embryonic form certain structural and thematic elements that would lead one to conclude that Murakami was indeed testing the narrative waters of the *other realm*, a schema

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3 Boku (僕) is the first person, masculine pronoun Murakami uses to refer to his protagonist. Since this character has no apparent proper name, it seems somehow fitting that Boku is used in place of the generic English equivalent “I” to identify him.
that, as we shall see, the author would choose to consistently return to and elaborate upon during the ten-year period following the publication of *Hear the Wind Sing* in 1979.

The narratives of *Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball 1973*, written while Murakami was still operating a jazz bar in Kobe, appear at first glance relatively simple and straightforward, especially when compared with his later, and much lengthier, narrative efforts. The text of *Hear the Wind Sing* consists of forty sections, many no longer than two to three pages in length. The “story begins on August 8, 1970, and ends eighteen days later, on August 26 of the same year” (KU 12; HWS 11). Simple enough, however, as is often the case, appearances can be and are deceiving, for when read closely, Murakami’s text reveals an intricate weaving of stories within stories, fictions within fictions. In the words of one Murakami critic, Kato Norihiro,

This novel does not clearly present (the reader with) the tale of this nineteen day period. Within this story, we have largely two stories that are told as the writer-protagonist circulates through them: the tale of the protagonist and his friend, the Rat, and the tale of the young woman with the missing finger whom the protagonist has just met. These two storylines do not intersect at all. However, when we read this novel we get the feeling that we have read one (whole) story that occurred in the summer of 1970.4

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Correctly assessing the multi-layered nature of even Murakami's earliest effort, Kato has struck upon one of the author's greatest strengths: the ability to create the impression of narrative wholeness within his fiction by the complex layering of story upon story. His texts are thus possessed of many voices and many angles, the most important of which for our purposes are those represented by the protagonist and the character of the Rat. For much of both *Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball 1973* is dedicated to the exploration and delineation of the disparate nature of the stories of these two characters.

In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the protagonist, returning from university and Tokyo to his small, seaside home town near Kobe for a brief vacation, writes to readers of his experiences and involvements with a small circle of acquaintances, among whom is the Rat. The story, as Kato notes, is one that manages to maintain a fragile balance between two worlds, two fictions, as seen through the eyes of the protagonist and through him the reader. One world is that in which dwells the protagonist. This is a world associated with the present: Tokyo, university, contemporary values of the middle class, and the protagonist's new relationship with the pinky-less woman. The other is the world of the Rat and the mysterious shadow-like figures of women past. It is a dark and brooding world, another realm connected overwhelmingly with the past, values of the past, past emotions, past loves, and death.

In *Pinball 1973*, published some nine months after *Hear the Wind Sing*, Murakami would make it textually clear just how disparate the 'worlds' of his two characters were. For, as if to underline their Janus-like nature, Murakami
goes so far as to have the Rat share the narrative spotlight with the protagonist, alternating chapter to chapter from the story of the protagonist to that of the Rat. Two stories, it should be clarified, that do not otherwise intersect or interact. The Rat’s tale ends with him, sitting alone in his car in an isolated graveyard, preparing to depart his, and Boku’s, home town for good:

Diverse streams of consciousness he’d barely managed to assemble into one self seemed to have suddenly gone their separate ways. The Rat had no idea how long it would take before these streams merged again. They all seemed like dark rivulets destined to flow into a vast ocean. They might not even merge again. Twenty-five years just to come to this and for what?... He wanted to sleep. He felt as if sleep would wipe everything clean. He had only to sleep. ... Nothing to explain any more, thought the Rat. No doubt the bottom of the sea is warmer, more peaceful and quiet than any town. No, why think of anything now? Enough already. ...  

The beginning of a journey, the emotional tone of this passage and others, his longing for rest, all signal the Rat’s kinship with a long line of Japanese protagonists who have sought refuge from the pressures of modernity in the submergence of their self, their being in nature, “the bottom of the sea.” If this is the Rat’s world, what then of his ‘other,’ Murakami’s protagonist?

5 Murakami Haruki, “Pinboru,” Murakami Haruki zensakuhin, Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1990) 248-249; hereafter, abbreviation '73 PnB is used to refer to this work.

This question is touched upon in the opening passages of *Hear the Wind Sing* when the protagonist discusses his understanding of the art of writing. Bordering on making the piece a kind of meta-fiction, Boku briefly shares with the reader his struggle to find a written voice. As well, the reader is presented with his personal ‘manifesto’ (see chapter heading) to strike a line through his textual world, thus, enabling him, he says, to “put down all the things I’d recently gained on the left, and on the right everything gone by the wayside—things I’d lost, things I’d crushed, things I was glad to have lost track of, things I’d sacrificed, things I’d betrayed” (KU 11; HWS 10). Essential to this process, writes the protagonist, was his discovery of the science fiction writer Derek Heartfield.6 Thanks much to Heartfield’s influence, Boku adopted a new and ‘measured’ approach to life, opting to take a ruler to his surroundings trying to recognize “the distance between” himself “and those things around” him (KU 9; HWS 8). Boku is portrayed as thus having lost his “sensitivity,” his empathy for his environment and others.

Murakami underscores the dilemma of his heroes in the recounting of one Heartfield story, “The Wells of Mars” (a story that also happens to be the most explicit textual illustration of the world-within-a-world paradigm witnessed in his early works). The tale traces the journey of a young, discontented male protagonist down into a series of mysterious shafts (the “wells”) that honeycomb

6That this writer who so motivates the writing of the protagonist is a fictional creation of the author Murakami is revealing not only in its irony but also in that it immediately calls into question perceptions regarding the relationship of writing and what is real.
beneath the planet Mar's crust. Travelling deep below the planet surface, the man follows the wells carved by unknown hands untold ages ago until suddenly his body is enveloped by a mysterious field of energy. Losing any discernable sense of time or direction, the protagonist wanders along until at last reaching the surface. Staring at a glowing mass floating in the sky, he hears as if from nowhere a voice whispering on the winds that one day, two hundred and fifty thousand years from now, "the sun will explode" (KU 97; HWS 103). When the protagonist asks, "Why so suddenly?", the winds, who reveal themselves as the voice of Mars, respond:

"Not sudden at all. It took you a good fifteen billion years to make your way through the wells. Your kind has a saying, I believe: Time flies like an arrow. The well passages you came through were dug to curve along the warp of time. You see, we are wanderers through time—from the birth of the universe to its death. The winds we are." (KU 97; HWS 103)

His pleas for the winds to share the knowledge he assumes they must possess are met with the sounds of their laughter fading away into the silence of eternity. Heartfield's protagonist, unable to cope with the dawning realization this is all there might be, commits suicide.

This story within a story reveals the fate of a man who must continue to submit his surroundings to continuous probing and questioning in the hopes of gaining knowledge and thus control over fate. The winds, nature's primal song, however, do not sing of answers to questions, do not sing of objective and
applicable knowledge but rather are seen to surround, to bind, to be in and of existence itself. The similarity to Abe’s *Woman in the Dunes* is uncanny. All one need do is replace the metaphoric winds of Mars with the metaphoric sands of the dune village of Abe’s story. Yet, unlike Abe’s protagonist who experiences an epiphanic discovery of “Hope” in the mytho-ritualistic space of the dune home, the protagonist of the fictitious American author Heartfield is not so lucky. What does this mean for the contemporary individual as envisioned by Murakami? Can solace still be found in the fictional *other realm*?

Murakami’s first two texts are more than somewhat ambiguous on these points. Yet, it does seem clear that Murakami’s heroes are found perched on the cusp of two different worlds. Unable to communicate their concerns, their alienation, both are depicted attempting to deal with the realities they perceive in what can be only described as mutually-exclusive terms. Neither the protagonist nor Rat seems capable of fully understanding the ‘position’ and perceptions of the other, and as a result their own respective ‘positions’ (in culture, society, family) are unstable and uncertain. He also reveals, albeit in a condensed and somewhat camouflaged form, the path that his fiction would take in years to follow as he and his protagonists walk the long, thin tightrope Murakami stretches between two, and sometimes more, worlds.

**A Wild Premise**

In an interview about Raymond Chandler with Kawamoto Saburo in *Eureka* (Yuriika, Vol. 14-7, 1982), Murakami talks of the recurring theme “*seek and find*”
he sees as a prominent feature of Chandler’s hard boiled narratives. To his way of thinking, he tells the interviewer, this is a theme also fundamental to his own fictions (112-113). Murakami is not speaking of the deductive “crime-solving” of more traditional detective narratives that go on toward a neat and tidy resolution of a given crime through logic and reason, but the more complicated, cynical, and often philosophical searches of the kind of Chandler’s. He is speaking of the kind of search where the nature of the object or person being sought after is ever changing, becoming, in the end, something completely different by the time it is found. It is interesting to note that Abe’s Niki Jumpei’s search for a bug, too, is reminiscent of that of a Chandlerian detective, only in his case his search “turns out to be none other than for himself” (Pollack 123). Let us then examine the third instalment in the “Boku-series” keeping this theme in mind. After all, Murakami himself has told his audience A Wild Sheep’s Chase is loosely premised on Chandler’s novel The Big Sleep (Kawamoto 135).

A Wild Sheep’s Chase is set in 1983. Some ten years removed from Pinball 1973, the protagonist, a recent divorcee and successful if unfulfilled advertising copywriter, one day receives a strange visitor to his office, “the man in the black suit.” Purporting to represent the terminally-ill figure known only as the “Boss,” a former war criminal who now silently heads a powerful economic and political cartel, this man demands the protagonist locate the whereabouts of a mysterious sheep identifiable by the single star-shaped birthmark upon its back. The lone clue being a photograph of an idyllic pasture somewhere in Hokkaido, a photograph, as fate would have it, taken by the Rat.
The Protagonist

Before proceeding with the analysis we should again examine the figure of Boku. Chapters one through seven are given over to the fleshing out the socio-political skeleton of a character, we find, trapped in the daze of the political and ideological ambiguity of the early eighties. He is seen to long spiritually for the days of the “Doors, the Stones, the Byrds, Deep Purple, and the Moody Blues. The air was alive (then), even as everything seemed poised on the verge of collapse.” Nostalgic for the objects, the “air” of the sixties, Boku is caught up like many of his generation in the failure of the social movements of that era. A failure that Murakami himself has said was due to “the utter lack of substance” in “the extremely beautiful (and powerful) language” of the discourses of utopian revolution and societal change that swept the period (Kawamoto 128-129). Incited to such beautiful, but ‘empty’ hopes and dreams, is it a surprise that Boku’s generation traded in its ideals for the practical and unexciting life of the Japanese salary-man: blue suit, briefcase, family and all? Unfortunately, Boku is even unsuccessful at this.

Murakami goes on to essentially provide the reader with a list of passages that reveal the ambivalence and insularity symptomatic of Boku’s contemporary

7 Murakami Haruki, “Hitsuji wo meguru boken,” Murakami Haruki zensaku hin, Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1990)15; hereafter, abbreviation HMB is used to refer to this work.

predicament. One such example is the unemotional and distanced manner in which the protagonist deals with his wife’s decision to leave him,

“A month had passed since I agreed to the divorce and she moved out. A non-month. Unfocused and unfelt, a lukewarm proto-plasm of a month (nama atatakai zerii no you na ikagetsu datta). . . . I passed through a month the way people X out days on a calender” (HMB 37; AWSC 20).

The protagonist, as in earlier works as well, is emotionally detached from the world around him. He moves about as though covered in some kind of non-stick teflon-coating, preventing emotional or physical sensation from sticking with him. That is until the protagonist encounters a creature capable of opening a small crack in that armour, the woman with “remarkable ears.”

The **Mukogawa Woman**

We discussed in chapter one the central role of the woman of the **mukogawa** in early examples of the paradigm and how over time there was seen to be a gradual change in the essence of this character, from that of being a mystery-shrouded creature of beauty evocative of authentic “Mother” Japan to that of a more vital, more realistic character. What perhaps was not made clear is that this character, no matter her attributes, invariably resides in, and only in, the other realm. What of Murakami’s version who intrudes into the fictional space recognizable as extra-textual reality? She, like earlier paradigmatic incarnations, is endowed with magic and a supernatural allure, powers manifested in several
ways. "Sex with her," Boku tells the reader, "was an experience I'd never known. When it was raining, the smell of the rain came through crystal clear. When birds were singing, their song was a thing of sheer clarity" (HMB 62; AWSC 39).

She also possesses a sixth sense, clairvoyancy, which allows her to act as guide leading the protagonist by premonition and empathy where reason could not or would not go. Much like Murakami's earlier fictions, the weave of this-world and the other-world in A Wild Sheep's Chase is complex and extensive.

Murakami, in a manner of speaking, blurs the reader's ability to fully distinguish borders or distinctions between the fictional realms depicted and contained within his narrative by extending aspects of each world into the other, including the figure of the woman.

There are of course other implications that can be drawn from Murakami's 'freeing' of the woman from the narrative prison of the mukogawa. By depicting the woman outside a 'marginalized' space, by having her express her nature and energies in the world equatable with our lived reality, Murakami hints that his woman is of reality and not solely the 'othered' object of a symbolic search for (m)other. The woman, although possessing characteristics linking her to the earlier archetypal mukogawa woman, functions more as guide and friend, assisting the protagonist on his journey. A search beginning with a sheep but ending in the protagonist's finding, in the words of the woman, "the other half (of himself that) is still untapped somewhere," out there (HMB 63; AWSC 40).
The Journey

“One month. We cannot wait any longer. If after one month you have not found that sheep, you are finished. You will have no place to go back to,” is the ominous warning delivered to the protagonist by “the man in the black suit” (HMB 169; AWSC 131). With nowhere else to turn and urged on by the words of the woman, Boku, in her company, leaves the familiar world of Tokyo for the unknown territory that is Hokkaido. Thus, begins the journey or *michiyuki* portion of the tale.

The temporal and spatial displacements typical of the *michiyuki* are established in several passages that reflect the stressful nature of the protagonist’s immersion into the *other realm*. In one such scene, “When south became opposite east,” Boku buys a compass to compensate for his failing sense of direction only to find it “made the city less and less real” (HMB 220; AWSC 172). Murakami depicts the wearing away of the last bits and pieces of the protagonist’s psyche still clinging to ‘this-realm. It should be reiterated at this point that the investigation does not succeed because of the abilities of Boku to deductively reason his way into the *mukogawa*, in fact, quite the opposite. Only when the protagonist opens his mind to the clairvoyant flashes of his female companion do the twosome make any progress in their quest. For example, it is the woman who suggests they must stay in the Dolphin Hotel, a site that holds the key to the lock that bars his entry into the *other-realm*, saying, “I can’t see us staying at any other hotel” (demo soreigai ni tomarubeki hoteru wa nai you na ki ga suru no) (HMB 209 AWSC 163).
Upon their arrival at the Dolphin Hotel the protagonist remarks, "its undistinguishedness was metaphysical" (HMB 209; AWSC 163). Little does he suspect that the building and its "undistinguished" walls once went by the name of "The Hokkaido Ovine Hall," or that its director, "the Sheep Professor," still lives on the premises hidden among stacks of reference materials all dealing with, what else, sheep. Once the three are finally brought together through further coincidence, the Sheep Professor recounts for the protagonist a tale that takes Boku’s story and enfolds it within another, enlarging the size and scale of this fiction a hundred fold. No longer simply the narrative of one man's regressive but cathartic resolution to a modernity-induced identity crisis, the story is now of a protagonist who finds himself caught up within the larger, sweeping historical moment of modernizing Japan itself. This technique of enfolding the protagonist's journey within another fictional world, a narrative mytho-ritualistic space evocative of other tales and other narratives, as we noted in Chapter one, is a strategy common to all works of the paradigm. Such textual spaces exemplify a "stereographic" narrative, Roland Barthes' term for narratives or texts that are, whether consciously or unconsciously, documents of an intertextual nature, recalling pieces or essences of previous texts and stories (15, 21). Yet, what makes Murakami's use of the mukogawa space different from other mukogawa efforts is that the narrative that enfolds his protagonist is the story of modern Japan itself, not of a folkloric encounter with a beautiful demon/lover of Kyoka, not of a profundity the likes of which seen in Kawabata's Tanabata-inspired milky way inversion, not even of a Buddha like blossoming of
'awareness' such as Abe’s protagonist undergoes after endless and mindless days of clearing away the sands.

The Sheep Professor, we find, played a small role during the Japanese colonization of its Asian neighbours after being recruited into the “Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry,” who were impressed with his grand and “idealistic” senior University thesis proposing the unification and development of a “large-scale agricultural program for Japan, Korea, and Taiwan” (HMB 230; AWSC 180). In 1934, we are told, the Sheep Professor was given the task of establishing a “self-sufficiency program based on sheep” to support the forthcoming “North China campaign” (HMB 231; AWSC 180). Closely tied to the imperialistic mission, the Professor made his way with an army team to the continent where he says he first encountered and was possessed by the object of Boku’s search, the sheep:

I had lost my way during a survey of open-pasture grazing near the Manchuria-Mongolia border, when I happened across a cave. I decided to spend the night there. That night I dreamed about a sheep that asked, could it go inside me? Why not? I said. . . . Among the locals, it’s believed that a sheep entering the body is a blessing for the gods. . . . It’s written that a ‘star-bearing white sheep’ entered the body of Genghis Khan (HMB 240-241; AWSC 187-188).

Suddenly, the mad search of the cartel “Boss” is seen in a new light as the protagonist realizes those around him, the “Boss,” his secretary, the man in the “black suit,” and the Sheep Professor, all believe in the power of this sheep spirit. The “Boss” is trying to reclaim the sheep, a potent ‘force’ he believes responsible
for his rise to power and a spirit intrinsically linked with the continent of Asia and visions of Genghis Khan. The sheep and its inherent power to 'transform humanity, seems the perfect cure-all for the aging right-wing leader. It is at once signifier and signified, a creature of cosmic consequence, assuring universal constancy and certainty in a society where modern meta-narratives have fallen upon disbelieving times, supplying meaning and legitimization in an otherwise godless, leaderless post modern state. Without the spirit of the sheep, the "Boss," his empire, and his will to reality are destined to suffer the same fate that awaits us all.

The Mukogawa—Hokkaido, the Sheep Man, and the Rat

Entangled in the web of a conspiracy of cosmic proportions, Boku, aboard a train, slowly makes his way northeastward from the capital of Sapporo bound for the city of Asahikawa in the center of Hokkaido. From there he boards a train that will take him to his destination, the isolated homestead of the Sheep Professor near the town of Junitaki. During the trip, the protagonist just happens to while away his time with a copy of "The Authoritative History of Junitaki Township." Again, Murakami invokes the history of modernizing Japan as it is reflected and implicated in the colonization of Hokkaido and the oppression of a marginalized people, the Ainu. He foregrounds this often denied

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8 I choose to give only the place name of the community and do not add the suffix "-cho" that simply means 'town' in Japanese. However, in A. Birnbaum's translation please note that he chooses to keep this suffix.
or repressed aspect of Japan’s modernizing project by setting his tale in Hokkaido, a signifier which, as Paul Anderer observes for a writer like Arishima Takeo, was once a site of “a cultural vacancy,” lacking any kind of “groundedness” (historicity) (30-31). It was this perceived absence of history that so keenly attracted Arishima, a writer who produced most of his fictions in a period, roughly the Taisho era (1912-1926), when many of his contemporaries were according to Anderer writing rhapsodies to “the soil of the homeland” (26-28). However, for Murakami, Japan’s modern history proves all but inescapable, extending even into the furthest reaches of the other realm of Hokkaido, the landscape and its inhabitants wrapped up within the protagonist’s and his countrymen’s collective past’s. This is highlighted when the protagonist, in an attempt to gain a little perspective on matters, constructs his own,

. . . . simplified time line based on the summary at the back of the Authoritative History. On the left side of the page, I listed the date and developments in the history of Junitaki-cho and on the right the major events in the history of Japan in the same period . . . For example, in 1905 Port Arthur fell and the Ainu youth’s son was killed in the war. And if memory served me correctly, that was the year the Sheep Professor was born. Incrementally, history lined up. (HMB 263; AWSC 210)

After arriving and spending the night in Junitaki where, “on every rooftop stood an unimaginably tall television antennae,” the presence of which emphasizes the ability of the ‘center’ to disperse its message throughout Japan,
the protagonist and his companion finally manage to wind their way to the Sheep Professor's homestead, a location that Boku realizes only too late also happens to be the Hokkaido villa of the Rat's father (HMB 270; AWSC 214). Finding the key to the "old American-style two-story wood-frame house" in the mailbox, the protagonist opens the door, "The room was large. Large, quiet, and smelling like an old barn. A smell I remembered from childhood. . . . For a brief instant, I felt a sense of vertigo. There in the darkness, time turned on its head. Moments overlapped. Memories crumbled. Then it was over. I opened my eyes and everything fell back into place." (HMB 299; AWSC 238) This instant signifies the moment of Boku's complete ensconce in the other realm. The house, enveloped by thriving trees, becomes for Boku a symbolic and primordial site psychologically akin to an originary state or to Doi's amae/amayakasu dynamic. The other realm becomes, at least temporarily, the (m)other-realm. Supporting this assertion is Boku's own description of the house:

I switched on the vacuum-tube amplifier, picked a record at random, and lowered the needle. Nat King Cole's South of the Border. All at once the room felt transported back to the 1950s. . . . A door, set inconspicuously into the wall, opened into a fair-sized trunk room. It was stacked high and tight with surplus furniture, carpets, dishes, a set of golf clubs, a guitar, a mattress, overcoats, mountaineering boots, old magazines. Even junior high school exam reference books and a radio-controlled airplane. (HMB 303; AWSC 241)

Into this house so obviously associated with 'beginnings,' amongst the objects of
his childhood, the protagonist retreats, waiting for the return appearance of his
"missing half," with whose aid he will sort out his 'realities' and attempt to come
to some kind of terms with the burdens of his and Japan's respective histories.

The climax of the search draws closer as the interlacing of the Rat's world
and Boku's weaves tighter and tighter until the two separate threads of their tales
at last become indistinguishable from the other. Symbolic of the unique nature
of this newly created hybrid world, a crack of interstitial 'space' that exists
between the oppositional but adjoined rationalities of this-world and the other,
is the enigmatic and childlike figure of the Sheep Man—a man costumed in a
sheep suit who is somehow connected to the spirit of the original Ainu guide
responsible for leading the Japanese to this particular region. The Sheep Man is a
creature who fled into the mountains of Hokkaido because as he tells the
protagonist, "I didn't want to got to war" (HMB 331; AWSC 263). This character
represents the rejecting of war, the rejecting of discourses of 'national purity' and
superiority implicated in modern imperialism and militarism, man's most
violent project. He is also emblematic of the essence of the mukogawa space as
the Murakami chooses to shape it, for like the Sheep Man who dwells half-in
and half-out of reality, the other realm seems by its nature a liminal space, a
gateway between life and death. This is expressed in the following passage where
Boku recollects:

... the memory of the ocean swim meets I used to participate in
when I was a kid came to me. On distance swims between two
islands, I would sometimes stop mid-course to look around. To find myself equidistant between two points gave me the funniest feeling. (HMB 311; AWSC 248)

So, the protagonist of Murakami's pilgrimage to the other realm gains temporary refuge in a liminal space between the two equally persuasive and pervasive discourses seen to be dominating his reality. Something that becomes much clearer once the enigmatic Sheep Man makes his exit and way for the entrance and story of the Rat.

The much anticipated meeting between the two 'halves' is surprisingly short and anticlimactic, limited to only two brief chapters. The Rat confirms Boku's suspicions that the house belonged to his father: "we came up here every summer. My folks, my sister and me" (HMB 348; AWSC 278). He also acknowledges that he himself was the motivating force behind much of the search after which, at the behest of the protagonist, he goes on to explain how he, too, was drawn back to this place by the tale of the mysterious sheep. That was a move, he confesses, that inadvertently led to his spiritual 'possession,' and, in the end, to his own death. Boku, at last confronted with the death of his best friend that he and reader alike must have suspected from the start, listens in wonder and bewilderment as the Rat begins his story of 'possession' and death.

It's not something I can explain in words. It's like, well, like a blast furnace that smelts down everything it touches. A thing of such beauty it drives you out of your mind. But it's hair-raising evil. Give your body over to it and
everything goes. Consciousness, values, emotions, pain, everything. Gone. What it comes closest to is a dynamo manifesting the vital force at the root of all life in one solitary point of the universe. . . A realm of total conceptual anarchy. A scheme in which all the opposites would be resolved into unity. With me and the sheep at the center (Kanzen ni anaakii na kannel no ookoku dayo. Soko dewa arayuru tairitsu ga ittaika surunda. Sono chuushin ni ore to hitsiji ga iru.). (HMB 356; AWSC. 283-284)

The power of the sheep represents and offers security, an undeniable beauty, and a sense of wholeness through chaos that dissipates "consciousness, values, emotions, pain, everything." In other words, everything that makes us flawed but human. He professes, "I felt attached to my weakness. My pain and suffering . . . summer light, the smell of the breeze, the sound of cicadas...If I like these things why should I apologize"(HMB 356; AWSC. 284). To fully renounce these things, to give them over to the 'other' in return for the 'bliss' of existence with the sheep is unthinkable. To save himself, the protagonist, and everyone else from this fate, the Rat chooses to commit suicide, trapping the spirit of the sheep forever within the realm of death. The sheep, its ability to annihilate human feelings and emotions, the beauty of its vision, reminds me of a passage written by Makoto Ueda,

the artist's task is not to express his living nature but to merge it with "lifeless" nature—nature which, if it has a life, lives a life incomprehensible to men. In medieval artists' view, a work of art is beautiful not because it is invigorated by the artist's self but because it is devoid of human life, because it
is suggestive of superhuman or cosmic life lying beyond man’s understanding. (Ueda 47)

To some, the placing of this passage on Japanese poetic aesthetics (which others have traced back to the Buddhist conceptions of *ku* and *mujo* ⁹) in conjunction with our discussion of the Murakami’s text may seem idiosyncratic, but I have chosen to do so feeling it reveals an important aspect of the function of the sheep’s existence within the narrative. The sheep signifies a discourse of the East, a philosophy like that suggested by Okakura Tenshin (1862-1913), an art critic who espoused his vociferous belief in Pan-Asianism and the buddhistic concept of Advaita. “The Sanskrit term “Advaita” signified the oneness of that which is manifold and contradictory,” writes Karatani of, “Okakura (who) sought to transcend the universality of the West in a universality of the East” (*Origins*, 43).

It offers freedom from the imperializing discourses of the West that shape the present in a ‘native’ Asian alternative that, as Murakami shows us, is itself guilty by its association with Japanese fascism and its aggressions against its neighbours.

In *A Wild Sheep’s Chase* Boku’s search culminates in his sensing something of the titanic nature of the dialectical struggle of these two incompatible, conflictory, yet all-defining universalities and the terrible implications for individuals unaware, without some inkling of the troubling histories of which

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⁹ For an excellent analysis of the role of Buddhist philosophy and thought in the development of artistic practices, aesthetics, and forms please see William R. Lafleur’s *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary arts in Medieval Japan* (Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983)
neither rationality is free. Murakami, it seems, is not suggesting that one form of universality should be chosen over the other. In fact, both views of reality are seen as fundamentally flawed as has been demonstrated by the process of the character’s gradual break from his spiritual stupor that began with the search for the sheep leading the protagonist to this particular point in space and time. Here, in the mukogawa, a site of return, of origins, but also, ultimately, of death as well, the protagonist, his eyes opened to the numerous realities awash around him, must choose. But choose what? If he cannot choose one or the other, East or West, right or wrong, what are the protagonist, and the generation he represents, to do? Murakami, in the actions and death of the Rat may have just shown the protagonist the way out of his dilemma. He must choose to feel ‘human’ once again, to learn to live with his weaknesses, feelings of loss, guilt, and inadequacy, as well as his strengths.

Further proof of this is found in the scene in which the protagonist, having gained some conception that he and Rat had “created two completely different entities out of the same ingredients,” hears the “sound of a distant explosion” just as his train begins to pull him slowly but relentlessly towards “the land of the living” (HMB 356; AWSC 284; 293-294). The explosion, triggered by an explosive device meant to insure the spirit of the sheep and its Pan-Asiatic would never again fall into the ‘wrong hands,’ and its fiery spiritual sacrifice of the Rat signals the ritualistic assuaging of the protagonist’s, ergo his generation’s, feelings of repressed guilt and sins for the past and his reemergence into the present. Yet, is this the end of the mukogawa for Boku, the reader, and
Murakami? Witness the final scene of the novel where Boku sits crying near the mouth of a river, "I sat down on the last fifty yards of beach, and I cried. I never cried so much in my life... The day had all but ended. I could hear the sound of the waves as I started to walk." (HMB 376; AWSC 299) What the exposure to the 'raw stuff' of the mukogawa has meant in regard to the protagonist's, and his generation's, future is perhaps uncertain, but surely the cyclical rhythm of the Earth's pulse, the ebb and flow of the sea, suggests the affirmation of life in all its many forms.

Summary

We began this chapter asking several questions about the mukogawa narrative schema as seen in Murakami's fictions. Is its 'affective' function the same as earlier other realm texts? Does Murakami ground his protagonist in a marginalized site representing an authentic Japanese identity? Just what is the reality of a postwar Japanese? Our analysis, I believe, has answered, at least in part, these questions. It seems almost incontestable to say that Murakami's intricate weaving of narrative worlds and spaces of this, that, and the other realm, does employ the dreamlike illogic of the narrative schema of the mukogawa paradigm. However, the mukogawa in Murakami's hands seems more a narrative attempt to reconstruct some sense of an as of this text unclear morality based upon the opening of new and possible future paths than an authenticity-seeking pilgrimage of a 'return to Japanese roots' typical of other, more 'classic' examples of the paradigm. Instead, Murakami's choice of metaphor
and allusion reflects less a desire to capture a nostalgia-inspired traditional literary aesthetic than it does an effort to explore the conditions of contemporary existence. From whither and whence the whispers of this new morality comes is for the moment unimportant for us, the reader, and Murakami, the author, it is enough to know that it may be found caught in the fictional cusp of two 'real' worlds, Japan, old and present.
Anyhow, as long as the music plays, you have to keep dancing. Don't you get what we're saying? Dance. You have to keep dancing. Don't think about why. Don't even think about its meaning. Because in the end, there is no meaning. Once you begin to worry about stuff like that your feet'll stop moving... Doesn't matter how stupid it may seem, you can't worry about that. Step regularly, and keep dancing.

In this chapter, we will analyze in some detail the work entitled *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, for which Murakami was awarded the Tanizaki Prize in 1985. It is the lone work examined in this study not belonging to the "Boku-series" discussed in the previous chapter. It is a long and complexly constructed text that is greater in narrative scale and ambition than his previous works might have led one to believe possible of Murakami. That is not to belittle the achievements of his earlier efforts, it is just that this work comparatively, in the words of Murakami critic and translator, Jay Rubin, seems an "imaginative tour de force" (Rubin 500). Nor is this meant to suggest that this work does not bear any narrative similarity to these same early works. For, although the scope

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1 Murakami Haruki, *Dansu, Dansu, Dansu*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988), vol 1, 151. Hereafter, abbreviation DDD is used to refer to this work.
bear any narrative similarity to these same early works. For, although the scope and specifics of the fiction might be different, many of the same textual strategies and devices Murakami was seen to employ and experiment with in his early works are also to be found in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Most fundamentally, that of the world-within-a-world motif, which is the primary focus of our study, underpins much of the author's fiction, as I had to have already illustrated in chapter two. After the textual analysis of this work is complete, we will conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of the novel, *Dance, Dance, Dance*, the narrative detailing the end of the beginning for the nameless protagonist of the Boku-series of works. My view is that this fiction represents Murakami's narrative summation of many of the themes that were central to the first ten years of Murakami's writing career.

*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*

This text, reminiscent of the convoluted pattern employed in *Pinball '73*, is structurally composed of two parallel narratives that are recounted in alternating chapters by their respective narrator protagonists. At first, each narrative bears little if any resemblance or relation to the other. However, as the twin stories of the twin heroes progress the reader gradually begins to see aspects of the two worlds leaking or spilling out into the other in the forms and figures of recurring objects and characters, paper clips, unicorn skulls, librarians and so on, arousing suspicions of a much deeper connection between the narratives than these commonalities alone might indicate. Suspicions that are eventually confirmed
as the bridging of these two oscillating narratives continues until the worlds are finally seen to intersect in the figures of the protagonists who the reader learns are, like the Rat and Boku of *A Wild Sheep's Chase*, two sides of the coin of a single individual. This technique of doubling objects and figures, doubling protagonists, doubling fictional worlds and not only intertwining them but bridging the 'gap', the 'interstices' depicted between them is, as I stated, something we have seen before in the fictions of Murakami. Let us examine this aspect of this text as it, I will suggest, reveals the author's apparent fascination with the exploration of the figure of the individual, man or woman, situated in contemporary existence, a 'reality' played out within systems of discourse and rationalities that shape a society's truths and falsehoods, its values, and cultural beliefs.

**Hard-Boiled Wonderland**

One narrative, entitled *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, is set in a space unmistakably that of contemporary (or the very near future version of) Tokyo. Mention is made of the Tokyo subway system, the dramas of baseball games being played out in Jingu Stadium, their scores found in the sports daily “Sports Nippon,” and Hibiya Park, to name just a few of the numerous topographical and cultural references given. A thirty-something male, nameless, of course, the protagonist is a “Calcutec” in the employ of an economic and political conglomerate known as “The System.” The job of a calcutec is that of processing and encoding ‘information,’ the most valued commodity in this world, by means
of a procedure known as "laundering" ("araidashi") for safe transport and delivery. The System in this way maintains its power and profits by controlling all access to and the flow of information throughout society. Opposing the System is the cosa nostra-like organization of the "Factory," an organization whose agents, the "Semiotecs," actively seek to undermine and disrupt the System's ability to traffic in information by 'breaking' and stealing the encoded data of the calcutecs by whatever means necessary. In his job as a calcute, the protagonist is given an assignment that eventually draws him into the heart of this technological and ideological struggle for the control of 'information,' setting in motion forces that once started cannot be stopped.

This is a pattern that was also seen in A Wild Sheep's Chase, the passive protagonist caught up within a web of intrigue and conspiracy that slowly but surely propels the character along a trajectory (a journey) that brings him face to face with the forces and discourses shaping and constituting his 'reality.' Written some twelve years ago, in Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World Murakami tapped presciently into the contemporary reader's burgeoning distrust of government and large faceless corporations. That is, if the recent and unprecedented cross-cultural explosion of a sub-genre of literature, cinema and television dealing with subjects of conspiracy-theory, government cover-ups, plots to deny the existence of UFO's, paranormal activities and so forth, can be accounted to such feelings. Indeed, the ability of a T.V. program such as "The X-Files" with its twin mottos, "Trust No One" and "The Truth is Out There," to garner a large following worldwide, including a tremendous response in Japan,
perhaps indicates just how deeply such feelings of distrust and unease run in the postwar generation and its progeny, Generations X and Y. Come to think of it, these could be the mottos of Murakami’s fictions as well.

Returning to the Wonderland narrative, we can see in the protagonist (identified by the first person informal pronoun, ‘Boku’) many qualities that connect him to previous Murakami protagonists. The most telling is his tendency to maintain a distance between himself and his surroundings by which means he confirms not only his existence but exerts a kind of authorial dominance over that which he encounters. He epitomizes the rationalizing modern objective observer, viewing and cataloguing objects passively from his safe inner shell. Over the course of A Wild Sheep’s Chase Murakami symbolically split open this shell encasing his protagonist, exposing his protagonist to other more ‘receptive’ and ‘affective’ modes of perception and gathering knowledge. In the case of the Wonderland the author wastes precious little space or time in once more cracking the shell of objectivity protecting his protagonist. In the opening sequence of this narrative the hero is found riding in a strangely silent elevator unsure of whether it was travelling up or down. Waiting for the elevator to arrive at its destination, the protagonist begins simultaneously counting the change he has in his left and right pockets just as he has done countless times before. Finding some “three-thousand eight-hundred-ten yen” he remarks to himself that ‘calculations like this are no
trouble at all.”\(^2\) When the elevator still does not stop the protagonist once again begins counting to kill time, only this time he finds “three-thousand seven-hundred-fifty yen” a discrepancy that reveals, “something was wrong. . . In three years of counting I had never screwed up. This is a bad sign” (SOHB V. 1, 18-19; HBW 6). Just how bad would become apparent as the protagonist once out of the odd elevator finds himself being led along a long corridor with a series of erratically numbered doors lining either side, “Nobody numbers rooms like that,” and down through a dark shaft into the hellish underworld lying beneath the city of Tokyo(SOHB V. 1, 21; HBW 7). Barely seven pages into the novel and clearly the ability of the protagonist to continue to seek self-reassurance in his ability to rationally measure and predict outcomes in reality is called into question.

There in a realm inhabited by strange man-eating creatures known only as INKlings (a.k.a. Infra-Nocturnal Kappa) and the spirits of their long dead gods, the protagonist is delivered into the presence of a strange, old scientist by the self-same scientist’s plump, but enticing figure of a seventeen year-old granddaughter. Coming under the pretences of a simple laundering assignment, this meeting of scientist and the narrator begins to set in motion a series of events and forces that will have unforeseeable and, ultimately, tragic

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\(^2\) Murakami Haruki, *Sekai no owari to Haadoboirudo wandaarando*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Shincho bunko, 1985), vol 1, 16. Hereafter, abbreviation SOHB will be used to refer to this work.

consequences for the hero of this tale. This tragedy owes its circumstances not only to the protagonist’s willing but ‘unknowing’ participation as a cog enmeshed in the greater machinery of the System but even more so to the covert machinations of the scientist who in the name of scientific objectivity and investigation has tampered with the mind of the protagonist itself, programming it for eventual ‘self’-annihilation.

Murakami’s “Professor” states a true scientist is a man who:

isn’t one for controlling his curiosity. Of course, I deplore how those scientists cooperated with the Nazi’s conducting’ vivisection in the concentration camps. That was wrong. At the same time, I find myself thinkin’, if you’re goin’ t’do live experiments, you might as well do something a little spiffier and more productive. Given the opportunity, scientists all feel the same way at the bottom of their heart. (SOHB V. 2, 93; HBW 264)

He wonders aloud of the possible harm that could be done by “only adding a third widget where there was already two, slightly alterin’ the current of circuits already in the brain” (SOHB V.2, 93; HBW 264). Yet, the results yielded by his research to reconfigure the brain in order to create an unbreakable human coding machine at the behest of the System, a total of twenty-five dead calcutecs and the terrible possibilities for misuse of his new technology, would seem to indicate exactly the kind of harm that can be done. The Professor is Murakami’s ‘shining’ example of the worst aspects of the ‘religion’ of modern science and its logical,
distanced examination of reality premised on the belief of a fundamental separation of subject and object. The limitations of which are exposed to scrutiny in the revelation of the plight of the protagonist and the Professor's protests that the end results of his research gone awry are not his responsibility. This text calls into question the validity of this discourse as Murakami depicts it underlying the very fabric of the System of Hard-Boiled Wonderland. Luce Irigaray, in her article "Is the Subject of Science Sexed?" writes:

He (the scientist) manipulates nature, utilizes it exploits it, but forgets that he is also in nature, that he is still physical and not only in front of the phenomena whose physical nature he fails to recognize. Advancing according to an objective method that would shelter him from all instability, from all moods, from all emotions and affective fluctuations, from all intuitions that are not programmed in science's name, from all interference by his desires, especially those that are sexed, he settles himself down, in his discoveries, in the systematic. (64)

While Irigaray's discussion is intent upon implicating the discourse of science in the maintenance of the patriarchal nature of modern society and the rejection of feminine alternatives, it would seem her opinion does not fall far from that of Murakami's, at least as evidenced in his texts. In both, the discourses of scientific-based objective realism are incriminated and even indicted for their undeniable roles in the creation and sustenance of a modern subject that is overly dependent upon rational objectivity and reason while suffering from a perceived lacking of the 'stuff' of emotion and feeling. We can begin to see here that it is the very
nature of this artificially (in discourse) constructed split between conscious
rational thought and unconscious 'emotional' thought that Murakami explores
in his fictions.

In the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* narrative this theme is underlined in the
distinct contrast drawn between the encoding process of laundering and that of
"shuffling," the new technology developed by the Professor requiring the
reconfiguring of neural pathways within the brain. Laundering is described as
the cold manipulation and encoding of data by inputting it "into my right brain,
then after converting it via a totally unrelated sign-pattern, I transfer it to my
left-brain, which I then output as completely recoded numbers. . ." (SOHB V.1,
59; HBW 32). Shuffling, on the other hand, is a process that involves the
complete dissolution of the self as the calcutec opens a conduit into the "pit of
condensed chaos" theorized to be the core of an individual's inner
consciousness. The information is transferred via the conduit into this core
consciousness and there converted into a form that is given shape and form by
the unique contents and design of the individual calcutec's inner-mind. Since no
individual's core consciousness is identical to another's, the result of the process
is an undecipherable human receptacle for the safe storage and transport of
priceless information. The protagonist summarizes the difference as follows,

Laundering is a pain, but I myself can take pride in doing it. All sorts of
abilities are brought into the equation. Whereas shuffling is nothing I can
pride myself on. I am merely a vessel to be used. My consciousness is
borrowed and something is processed while I’m unaware. (SOHB V.1, 194; HBW 115)

“I am merely a vessel to be used,” says the protagonist. Does this process requiring the surrender of the individual’s being to a self-transcendant chaos not resemble that of the Rat’s experience with the mysterious sheep? Unfortunately, for the protagonist it is similar in more ways than one. For it seems that once entered into, it is possible that the conduit bridging consciousness and the core consciousness might break down, forever trapping the cognizant portion of the shuffler within the contents of his own inner mind.

The protagonist eventually learns that the shuffled data of the Professor is functioning like a mental time bomb and that he has but a few short days of conscious life left him before he is closed up for eternity within his own mind. However, not to worry, says the Professor, because cognitive tracings taken months earlier of the protagonist’s inner mind revealed a most remarkable discovery.

“I went back and replayed all twenty-six visualizations. And something struck me. Yours was the least random, most coherent. Well-plotted, even perfect. . . I thought and thought, now why should that be? And I came to one conclusion: this was somethin’ you yourself made. You gave structure to your images. . . I can think of many possible causes. . .Whatever it was made you extremely self-protective, made you harden your shell.” (SOHB V.2, 99-100; HBW 268)
The code name given this perfectly plotted and coherent world found in the midst of the protagonist's "pit of condensed chaos" is *The End of the World*, which not by unforeseen coincidence is the title of the second parallel narrative. Thus, the reader discovers that the site of convergence of the two narratives are in fact the two narrators whose loneliness and longing are made much more tragic by the realization that the two are in fact the fragmented halves of a seemingly irreparable whole.

*The End of the World*

The protagonist of *The End of the World* narrative is not surprisingly also nameless. This time, instead of the informal 'Boku', Murakami uses the more polite first-person personal pronoun, 'Watakushi' (私), no doubt emphasizing that the protagonists are but two renderings, two aspects of one individual's being. Upon his arrival in this Town at the End of the World, the narrator had his "Shadow" physically cut away by a character called the "Gatekeeper," because, "Shadows are useless anyway. Deadweight," he is told (SOHB V.2, 109; HBW 62-63). Separated from the narrator, the Shadow, a character that represents aspects, both positive and negative, of the cognizant mind of the narrator of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, is sentenced to death, locked away under the watchful eye of the Gatekeeper until at last he perishes from the 'lack' of his shadow-casting other half, the narrator at the Town called the End of the World. The protagonist, as are all newcomers, was given the duty of dreamreading, a task that entails the
reading away of the splinters and fragments of memory locked away in the skulls of thousands upon thousands of unicorns stored in the Town Library. The unicorns, it seems, while alive perform the function of absorbing “old dreams,” the last bits of the conscious selves and minds of the town’s inhabitants that might have interfered with the perfect peace found at the End of the World. The Dreamreader reads until they can read no longer, meaning the new resident reads until the point at which the last remnants of their mind (and shadow) have finally been read away along with the dreams found embedded in the unicorns’ skulls.3

This walled community at the world’s end is ‘perfect’ at its core in that all its inhabitants are memory-less, self-less examples of Buddhistic self-denial or self-transcendence. They do not inflict themselves upon their environment, their surroundings, or others; the inhabitants, simply put, just are. There is no strife, no discontent, only paradisiacal peace and harmony.

The town is now devoid of beasts. The clocktower and the wall that surrounds the Town, the buildings along the riverbank, and the sawtooth mountains to the north are all tinged with the blue-grey gloom of dusk.

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3 It is interesting to note that Alfred Birnbaum translates the Japanese word ‘kokoro’ (心) as ‘mind’ in this work. Jay Rubin, in “The Other World of Murakami Haruki,” points to the unfortunate nature of this choice but does not explain fully why he feels so(497). In a listing that goes on several pages Kojien gives the first and primary definition of ‘kokoro’ in the following fashion: “it is that which is the origin of a human’s mental processes” (“ningen no seishin sayou no moto ni naru mono”). A spiritual “whole” including aspects of the “mind” (chishiki), “emotions” (kanjou), and “will” (ishi).
have taken leave. (SOHB V.1, 75; HBW 43)

The reader is drawn to the unnatural quiet, the unnatural peace harboured within the ominous and inescapable walls of the Town. Is the town an allegory for the island nation of Japan walled off by the sea? Is Murakami suggesting that his nation in its attempt to recreate a national community based upon reconstructed concepts of tradition and communal harmony has sealed itself off from not only the outside world, but also from its own historical past, present, and possible future? The absence of self and history in this world may possibly be a reflection this, of modern Japan’s unwillingness or inability to accept responsibility, political, social, moral or whatever form, outside its own walls. The Town of self-transcendency is a representation not unlike the mukogawa realms and experiences of other Japanese authors, but Murakami’s treatment hints that the regressionary path of transcending modernity through idealized nostalgisms is perhaps not the sole solution to the predicament. And as the narrative of *The End of the World* progresses Murakami begins to let loose more than a few symbolic birds to fly back and forth over the great barrier, perhaps harbingers heralding changes or the realization of alternatives to come.

**The Librarian**

The narrator is assisted in his dreamreading by the custodian of the library, a woman who he feels he has met before. His intuition is correct, only the location is wrong. The two did not meet in the town at the End of the World, but in the
narrative of the *Hard-boiled Wonderland*. The librarian, like the protagonist, is a character divided in two, participating as she must within each of the 'realities' in which she is imbedded. In the Wonderland narrative, she and the protagonist begin and consummate sexually, if not emotionally, a relationship began because of the protagonist's attempts to sort out the meaning of a replica unicorn skull he received in the mail. In one scene she tells him that she suffers from "Gastric dilations, it doesn't matter how much I eat. I don't gain weight" (SOHB V.1, 155; HBW 91) This condition is possibly symptomatic of the tendency of her generation towards consumption and the ever increasing strength of its appetite for new goods and services. Marilyn Ivy, in her study "The Consumption of Knowledge" summed up the views of Japanese scholar Asada Akira that for the contemporary individual living in the meta-mass age, "Reading, eating, and consuming became conflated—it's all a matter of incorporating something, but *incorporating it lightly, without due investment*" (Ivy 31).4 The librarian, whose appetite is insatiable but gains no weight or substance, regardless of what she consumes, seems a perfect symbol of her generation and a scathing condemnation of the consumer hyper-systems of contemporary capitalist societies.

The librarian of *The End of the World* is just as trapped in the tradition-bound Buddhist paradise as is her counterpart in the consuming nightmare of the other reality of contemporary Tokyo. She has no recollection or even echo of a

4 The emphasis in italics is mine.
recollection of a previous meeting with the protagonist(s) because she has given her memories and her 'heart' over to the walled community completely. The few memories she does have are of her mother, who left her when she was seven because like the narrator, her "Mother had mind" (SOHB V.1, 108; HBW 62). This narrative then is not only about the protagonist and his search for spiritual recuperation but also becomes the search for a common means by which mutual recuperation of both woman and man is possible. This female character is not simply a guide, although she does partially fulfill this role in her position as librarian. Neither is she the archetypal mukogawa female of either the seductive kind or the maternal kind, although she does possess these qualities to some degree as well. She shares in the dilemma of the protagonist, each part of her being caught up within two oppositional but fundamentally connected worlds whose axioms and space conform in many respects to the discourses of the West and the East taken to their (il)logical extremes.

This is illustrated in the unusual interest the narrator begins to take in the librarian and the increased role she plays in his efforts to map the town in order to help his Shadow escape death. While doing so, the protagonist discovers that her Mother may have disappeared into a region of the walled community called the "Woods." The Woods are a region on the periphery of the Town, its inhabitants providing raw materials like coal and firewood for the town dwellers. Its inhabitants are different from the Town-folk, they have somehow managed to retain elements of their shadows. The protagonist's mapping of the town also takes him and the librarian to a region called the "Pool" found along
the edge of the great wall. The Pool it turns out is the sole means of physical escape from this world:

"...The pool only grows deeper and deeper. The whirlpool is a drill boring away at the bottom. There was a time when they threw heretics and criminals into it."

"What happened to them?"

"They never came back. Did you hear about the caverns? Beneath the Pool, there are great halls where the lost wander forever in darkness."

(SOHB V. 1, 204-205; HBW 122)

Great halls and caverns? Beings lost and wandering forever in the darkness? This description resembles that of the INKlings of the Hard-BoiledWonderland narrative, "They live underground. They hole up in the subways and sewers, eat the city’s garbage, and drink grey water" (SOHB V.1, 235; HBW 137-138). Does Murakami mean to suggest that the kappas dwelling in his Alice-like Wonderland beneath Tokyo are in fact escapees, heretics, cast out from the End of the World? The leetch-filled holes, the sudden and explosive spewing of torrents of water, the whirlpool lurking beneath the surface of these same waters waiting to drag the protagonist to who knows where, all point towards this space being connected to the dark Pool in the other fictional world. Compare the sound made by the Pool and that heard just before the flood of water began in the Tokyo underworld:

It is unearthly, resembling nothing that I know. Different from the thundering of a waterfall, different from the howl of the wind, different
from the rumble of a tremor. It may be described as the gasping of a gigantic throat. At times it groans, at times it whines. It breaks off, choking. (SOHB V.1, 205; HBW 122)

The rumble grew louder the farther we got. We seemed to be heading directly into its source. What started as an underground rumble was now a grating, hissing, bubbling, rasping—I don’t know what else. (SOHB V.2, 26; HBW 230-231)

Given the many intricate parallels, the many linkages the author has carefully laid about the twin fictional worlds of this text we should not be surprised at this one more. It does though augur questions regarding the significance of this little nest of mythic malevolence and mayhem found on the underside (the ultimate periphery?) of contemporary society.

The kappas of Murakami’s world, unlike its folkloric cousins who would lurk beneath the surface of a pool or stream of water waiting for a hapless victim or horse to pass by, wait in the recesses of the subway tunnels preying upon subway workers or wayward passengers. They live in tunnels carved by unknown hands (remember Derek Heartfield?) or gods, or so it seems. In several passages, Murakami hints at another connection between this world and that of Japanese

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5 Kappa legends are common to most regions of Japan. Yanagita’s *The Legends of Tono* itself contains several stories dealing with the misadventures of human encounters with this creature, see in particular tale number 58. See also Akutagawa Ryunosuke’s *Kappa* (1927), his tale of a mad man and his kappa spirit who flees into the interior of the Earth.
folklore, in particular the legend of the underground "Namazu" ('catfish'). In the first such passage we see:

On either side of the sanctuary entrance was an intricate relief. Two fishes in a circle, each with the other's tale in its mouth. Their heads swelled into aeroplane cowlings, and where there eyes should have been, two long tendril-like feelers sprouted out. Their mouths were much too large for the rest of their bodies, slit back almost to the gills, beneath which were fleshy organs resembling severed animal limbs. (SOHB, V.1, 370-371; HBW 212)

Anthropologist Cornelis Ouwehand in his study, *Namazu-e and their Themes* (1964), examines the various representations and legends of 'namazu' as depicted in paintings and prints. One of the many legends associated with this creature is that of a "monster-namazu under the earth (Japan) . . . who causes earthquakes by the movements of his body. . ." (51). That this legend itself is further connected to stone worship and legends of sacred stone pillars extending into the bowels of the earth linking "the upper and lower worlds" is significant (69). The protagonist in fact climbs such a pillar, "a smooth, featureless cylinder that loomed like a lighthouse, seeming to narrow from base to top," to get to protective sanctuary above (SOHB V.2, 43; HBW 236). In the second passage the reference is a little more vague, but still seems to support my supposition of this further connection to Japanese legend. At the same time, it speaks directly of the state of affairs in this underworld of Murakami's. Fleeing with the Professor's
granddaughter from the INKlings along one of the many convoluted passages beneath the subway tunnels, the protagonist tells us:

> We proceeded sideways, one step at a time, light at our feet. Cool air licked our faces, leaving the rank odor of dead fish. I wanted to puke. It was like we were in the worm-ridden guts of a giant fish carcass. (SOHB V.2, 161; HBW 304)

Murakami's underworld is the last refuge of the spirits and remnants of Japanese native mythology and folklore, and clearly its occupants are either dead or dying. Nothing is left 'living' in this underworld save the INKlings and their hostile screams of anger and anguish at their abandonment and the inevitability of their fate.

That the narrator's Shadow of the End of the World narrative makes his eventual escape from the Town by means of the Pool is not very comforting, especially given the fate that appears to await him. The INKlings are actually creatures created within the protagonist's own inner consciousness (and on a larger scale, society's unconscious) that have finally been rejected by the same source that first generated them. They represent aspects of humanity and human belief in nature that it would appear are no longer fit for either 'consumption' or 'self-subsumption.' This is symbolized by the manner in which Murakami depicts their extreme marginalization in both fictional worlds, dying shadow-heretics in one and the last reminders of the "carcass" of a dead religion in the other. The realm under Tokyo is a seepage space, a place where elements
unsuited and/or unexplainable within the closed systems of either narrative world ooze through to by means of the many small interstices existing between the them.

**The Music of the Soul - The Woods**

As we have seen with almost all of the other aspects of this work, if there is an action, then there is an equal and opposite reaction, if there is a certainty, then it is met with a contradiction, and if such a marginalized space exists in one narrative, then it most likely has its parallel in the other. And in this case as well the symmetry remains unbroken, for the equivalent of the Tokyo underworld Wonderland is found in the midst of the Woods that skirt the Town. Only, instead of the bleak darkness and stench of death characteristic of its twin, in the Woods, Murakami's protagonist and the Librarian are to find the keys to the recapturing of something of the human spirit that seems to be otherwise absent in the centers of both realms.

As to exactly what these keys are, it is hinted at in the conversation the protagonist has with the librarian about the few recollections she has of her mother. She remembers her speech "had a ...an accent to it. Mother would draw words out or make them short. Her voice would sound high and low, like the wind" (SOHB V.2, 19; HBW 226). Recognizing that she is speaking of singing, the protagonist tries his best to recall a song, any song, only to find his mind empty of any memory of music. Frustrated, he sets off in search of a musical instrument with the small hope that such an object might breathe new fire into the dying
embers of his memory. Soon afterwards, protagonist and the librarian wind their way through the mysterious Woods to an isolated power station that coincidentally channels the incredible energies of the planet's winds that exit through "a gaping mouth of a hole in the earth" ("jimen niwa ookina ana ga pokkari to kuchi wo aketeite") into the End of the World at this very site (SOHB V.2, 119). Once again, the metaphor of the winds and its association with song is conjured up by Murakami. Only this time, it does not look as if suicide is the sole option of the protagonist. Not only an acceptance of the winds on their own terms is necessary, but also a return to 'lived' experience through the active rediscovery of what it is to live and feel, a process that is represented in the search for the magic conjunction of soul and mind that is kokoro in Japanese. As if it were necessary, Murakami further stresses the kinship of music and the winds by having the Power Station coincidentally serve as the collecting place for a vast array of musical instruments. Selecting quite appropriately an accordion, an instrument that produces sound by forcing air (read wind) past a series of small reeds and a keyboard, the protagonist returns to the Town still perplexed as to how to produce the music that will satisfy his and the librarian’s desires and needs.

The intricate patterns of Murakami’s narrative weave pull ever tighter until at last in the chapter entitled "Accordion" we can begin to see the clear signs of the culminations of his thematic designs. Standing together in the library surrounded by the skulls of the mystical unicorns, both contemplate how to proceed. The protagonist, perplexed and frustrated at his inability to think of a
way to regain the woman's soul from the Wall, listens as the woman asks,

"Do you have your accordion?"
"The accordion?"
"Yes, it may be the key. The accordion is connected to song, song is connected to my mother, my mother is connected to my mind. Could that be right?" (SOHB V.2, 283; HBW 367)

Taking up her suggestion the protagonist begins to press out air-shaped chords that "'are wind'"; he tells her, "'I create wind that makes sounds, then put them together'" (SOHB V.2, 284; HBW 367). His consciousness begins to drift along with the random jumbling of notes he is able to produce, yet this is enough. Somewhere deep down within what remains of his spirit he finds, at last, a spark of a memory, the first four notes of a melody which in turns leads to his rediscovery of song. He describes his elation,

When have I last heard a song? My body has craved music. I have been so long without...I have not even known my own hunger. The resonance permeates; the strain eases within me. Music brings a warm glow to my vision, thawing mind and muscle from their endless wintering. (SOHB V.2, 286-287; HBW 368-369)

It is not only the protagonist which the song has reawakened but also the scattered fragments of the librarian's soul which now glimmer and sparkle anew with indications of resurgent life awaiting to be drawn and returned to her from
the unicorn skulls that surround the pair in the library. Song prepares the way, is that which maintains the linkages between fragile memory and self. Music here is an expression of an oral tradition and an "human solidarity" that most likely is as old as humankind itself, symbolizing a spiritual nexus through which we connect or join with, at least momentarily our past, ourselves, and our loves. There is in this act something akin to Erich Fromm’s belief that, “To love one person productively means to be related to his human core, to him as representing mankind.” 6 In this world, Murakami’s world, as long as music and song survive so too does our humanity and our ability to care and feel for one another. If man and woman had more music, more song in their ‘hearts’ he seems to suggest the world could, and most likely would, be a very different place, an other world.

*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* is a text of such complexity that this examination has hardly begun to do it justice. The ending of the work, in which the protagonist of one world falls into an eternal slumber while the hero of the other chooses to remain trapped within a self-transcendent ‘utopia,’ could possibly be interpreted as yet another in a long list of Japanese works that feature a protagonist who passively retreats from the real world into an other realm containing elements associated with a return to Japanese roots. But is that what Murakami is really doing here? A hint is to be found in the section of the text where the Librarian and protagonist of the *Hard-Boiled*

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Wonderland narrative are found discussing the history of mythical unicorns according to Jorge Luis Borges's Book of Imaginary Creatures. It becomes clear that there are two kinds of unicorns, those of the myths of the East originating in China and those of the West originating in Greece.

The difference was not simply one of appearance. East and West could not agree on character and symbolism either. The West saw the unicorn as fierce and aggressive. . .Moreover, according to Leonardo Da Vinci, the only way to catch a unicorn was to snare its passions. . .

The Chinese unicorn, on the other hand, is a sacred animal of portent. . .Extremely gentle in temperament, it treads with such care that even the smallest living thing is unharmed, and eats no growing herbs but only withered grass. It lives a thousand years, and the visitation of a unicorn heralds the birth of a great sage. So we read that the mother of Confucius came upon a unicorn when she bore the philosopher in her womb.(SOHB V.1, 166-167; HBW 96)

While this passage might simply be seen as an attempt on the part of the author to fill out his fictional world, to make it appear all inclusive or encyclopedic, it also succinctly expresses the kernel of the dilemma confronting the protagonist and his generation. Is it coincidence that Murakami just happens to mention Leonardo Da Vinci, an artist, a man of science, one of the most influential thinkers of the renaissance and who in the words of Jan Hendrick Van den Berg, a Dutch psychiatrist, depicted in the Mona Lisa, "the first human person to be alienated from the landscape. . . A 'nature' unknown to the medieval mind, an external nature sufficient unto itself, and from which human elements have
been excluded”? Or what about Confucius, has his role been any less influential on the course of the discourse and the history of the East?

This text then depicts a protagonist who through his journey (the search) comes to temporarily rest at a rather peculiar point in space and time, an ‘in-between’ space, between two clear but conflictory paradigmatic alternatives depicted as parallel worlds. The circular dynamic of this movement within the rather elaborate structure of the text, alternating chapters between worlds and protagonists functions to expose and emphasize the existence of just such ‘in-between spaces’ and ‘interstices’ between them. Yet rather than choose one fatally flawed dehumanizing kind of universality over the other the character is seen to make a third choice, one that stems from a hunch or a feeling rather than reason or a fear of heterogeneity. This hunch emerges from the protagonist’s gradual realization or awakening to the illusionary nature of self as figured within the dual discourses, “In the East, peace and tranquility; in the West, aggression and lust. Nonetheless, the Unicorn remains an imaginary animal, an invention (‘kakuu’) that can embody any value one wishes to project” (SOHB V.1 168, HBW 96). In this simple comment the author reveals not only the problem but the solution as well. Murakami’s script configures a space where it is possible for characters to tap into the well of imagination. Not only for the purpose of retreat from the imaginary realities that are the epistemes of East and West, but as a means to participate in the writing of their own new stories, their own new realities. Stories begun in the liminal space of the mukogawa, where the process of rediscovering what it means to experience life on its own terms, its own
rhythms can occur.

In Conclusion - *Dance, Dance, Dance*

*Dance, Dance, Dance,* published in 1988, ten years after *Hear the Wind Sing,* is the final instalment in the continuing saga of the nameless protagonist. As such, one would expect the tying up of several loose narrative threads, and that is exactly what Murakami delivers after a fashion. Our discussion to this point has indicated something of the intricate nature of Murakami's plotting and narrative style, and while this work is just as convoluted and complex in its structure it seems overlong and lacking the focus of his earlier works. It is questionable, in my mind, as to whether it will continue to hold up to his other works. Which is unfortunate because this work does contain signs of the taking of the 'the next step' in Murakami's development of the other realm schema within his fiction. That is, he brings the *mukogawa* one step closer to 'reality.'

The narrative is once more loosely patterned after a Raymond Chandler style search for a missing person, only this time the protagonist begins the search of his own free will and not at the behest of some shadow organization or corporation. Despite this, the protagonist's ever present distrust of such organizations and the greater system of postmodern capitalism is readily apparent in the numerous commentaries and asides littered about the text. Missing is Kiki, the woman with the "remarkable ears" of *A Wild Sheep's Chase,* whom he last saw in Hokkaido. The protagonist returns to the Dolphin Hotel in search of clues only to find instead of the old, "undistinguished" hotel, a new
"gleaming twenty-six story Bauhaus Modern-Art Deco symphony of glass and steel" called also called the l’Hôtel Dauphin\(^7\) (DDD V.1, 50).\(^8\) Yet, not to worry, dwelling deep within the ‘womb’ of the building is the mysterious figure of the Sheep Man, the emissary, the embodiment of the other-realm. It seems as though if the protagonist can not or will not go to the mukogawa, Murakami is willing to bring the mukogawa to the protagonist. There is little of the mystery or wonder of their last encounter. In fact, this meeting gives the reader the impression of a counselling session. The protagonist comes to the Sheep Man, having once more lost his way, his sense of connection to the world, in search of Kiki. What he finds is that the other realm and everything in it is of his own making, the problem seems to be that he has once again forgotten this, and along with it, “lost lots of things. Lost lots of precious things. Not anybody’s fault. But each time you lost something, you dropped a whole string of things with it” (DDD V.1, 150; D/B 85). Once again, Murakami evokes memory and the process of recovering memory as a symbolic means to recover and construct a semblance of self, a self able to participate this time in ‘real’ space and ‘real’ time. Such participation requires the protagonist to begin to accept responsibility for not only

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\(^7\)In Japanese the name of the Dolphin Hotel in Dance is given in katakana, the script used to designate words of foreign origin, as the “doruphin hoteru.” In Sheep’s Chase, the hotel is called the “iruka hoteru”, using the Japanese word for dolphin. Birnbaum cleverly indicates the distinction in his translation by giving the hotel name in Dance a distinct foreign (French) flavor, “l’hôtel dauphin.”

\(^8\)Murakami Haruki, Dance, Dance, Dance , trans. Alfred Birnbaum (Tokyo: Kodansha International 1994) 21. Hereafter, the abbreviation D/B is used to refer to this work.
himself but others, figures past and present, much as we saw the protagonist beginning to do in a *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*.

The question is how does Murakami symbolize the reemergence of the protagonist as an individual who is ready to begin to accept responsibility for more than just himself? He accomplishes this in two ways. The first is, as unlikely as it sounds, saddling the protagonist with the huge responsibility of caring for a child. The child is not his own, of course, but is the adolescent daughter, named Yuki, of a divorced couple, her mother, Ame, and the father, Hiraku Makimura (a play on Haruki Murakami?) who together lack the parenting skills of a dodo. The text meanders back and forth interweaving this sub-plot and that of the main story, the investigation into the disappearance of Kiki, the second means by which the protagonist’s new lease on living is revealed to the reader.

It is the narrator’s developing parenting skills and his role as guide/mentor with the young Yuki that is perhaps the most authentic feeling relationship depicted in this text. The two develop a rapport as Boku helps the understandably hostile young girl to overcome many of the emotional hurdles placed in her way because of the failure of her family to be just that, a family. Murakami, most likely sensing that this period in contemporary history must be seen as a transitional one for the family unit as well as the individual, in *Dance, Dance, Dance* takes up this subject for the first time in a full-length work (with the exception of *Norwegian Wood* (Noruwei no mori, 1987, tr. 1989) in which a lesbian character recounts the dissolution of her marriage). While never coming
right out and advocating a remedy for the 'contemporary family' wilting under the pressures of new realities (such as: the increasing intrusion of the outer-world-T.V., the computer, multi-media, the willingness and ability to ‘give up’ on marriages and parental responsibilities), it seems that the advice of the mukogawa figure, the Sheep Man, that each of us must find that place where “it all ties together” is not off the mark(DDD V. 1, 148; D/B 84). Just as in Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World where the protagonist and librarian were seen to begin anew by means of a similar process, the shattered family of Dance, Dance, Dance, at least mother and daughter anyway, finally begins to behave in a family-like manner, sharing, caring, and taking responsibility for the other, after the protagonist has demonstrated to them through his own journey, that the family, like life, is a fiction that is of our own making.

The Kiki storyline becomes more and more complicated, as prostitutes, cops, and the protagonist's old high school chum turned actor, Gotanda, all turn up in one way or another, implicating the protagonist in the disappearance of the woman. This storyline represents Murakami's attempt at a narrative closure of the Boku-series, which apparently to the author means that by the conclusion of the text the protagonist must have encountered the ghost or ghostly echo of almost every significant character to have appeared in the tetralogy, the Rat, Kiki, the Sheep Man, Gotanda, whose character is more than a little suggestive of the Rat's, and even the Shadow of the End of the World narrative. At the climax of this ambitious but flawed project, the protagonist learns Gotanda has committed
suicide after finally admitting that he, in fact, was responsible for the murder of Kiki. Yet, in the next to last chapter, Murakami’s protagonist is visited by the ‘ghost’ of Kiki who tells him that it is she in fact who chose to disappear. She was not murdered, but is a spirit capable of moving through realities, earthly and other earthly. She is his “phantom dance partner . . . Crying for all the things you can’t cry for” and with this pronouncement she departs the protagonist once more (DDD V.2 300; D/B 371). This final twist is ironic in that Murakami, who up until this point had seemed to hesitate to portray an objectified fantasy of a ‘woman’ in the tradition of other paradigmatic efforts, should leave us so strong an image of a woman as sacrificial lamb for the protagonist’s unconscious fears and desires. Do note however that she seems far from powerless in the protagonist’s living space and is now the one capable of movement through worlds. Still, once more we see the pattern forming, we have one character symbolically sacrificing themselves to the void of the other realm while the other, the protagonist, remains ‘living’ in this world. This dynamic is emphasized in the final scene when, after having literally made reacquaintance with all of the ghosts of creatures and friends past, the protagonist travels back to Hokkaido to renew his relationship with a beautiful woman named Yumiyoshi. At last, it seems, he is able to ‘live’ and experience life in the ‘real’ world with a ‘real’ woman, but one wonders at what cost and to whom?
Conclusion

Once other cultures are fenced off as culture gardens or, in the terminology of sociological jargon, as boundary maintaining systems based on shared values; once each culture is perceived as living its Time, it becomes possible and indeed necessary to elevate the interstices between cultures to a methodological status.

Tradition and modernity are not “opposed.” Nor are they in “conflict.” What are opposed, in conflict, in fact locked in antagonistic struggle, are not the same societies at different stages of development, but different societies facing each other at the same Time. ¹

In the introduction we premised our investigation of the early fictions of Murakami Haruki on the belief of the presence of certain strategies and topoi homologous to those of a recognized literary schema, that of the mukogawa paradigm. Our examination was intent upon analyzing these features and structures in Murakami’s fictions with regard to three specific points: The first is to see if we could determine the functions of these topoi within the works to be considered themselves—asking ourselves how these motifs and themes relate to the overall structure of a given work and to the expression of Murakami’s thematic concerns? The second is to investigate these topoi and Murakami’s fictions in the context of the diachronic development of the mukogawa paradigm—how does it ‘fit’ in relation to other works or does it ‘fit’ at all? And finally, the third is the need to examine and evaluate Murakami’s fictions seen

employing these topoi in the context of not diachronic, but synchronic terms, that meaning—to whom and of what do Murakami’s fictions speak in the contexts of contemporary Japanese and an increasingly global audience?

In the first chapter we set out to critically address the conceptions of the nature of *mukogawa* narratives and their topoi, observing the incredible diversity, the works conforming to no one genre or set of conventions, of the paradigm. We began by observing the tendency in modern Japan for issues of national-cultural identity to be grounded and constructed within certain ‘fields’ of discursive configurations. Examining the discourse of Yanagita Kunio, we saw that these ‘fields’ were primarily associated with the customs, beliefs, and culture of the rural realm of the folk. Yanagita, it was shown, sought to reify in the folk and the experience of the folk the substance of a unique and autochthonous Japanese identity. Central to this discourse was its dynamic built upon an oppositional structuring of center versus periphery, urban (modern) versus rural (pre modern), in which the folk represent a ‘living’ continuity with a ‘reality’ of the past.

We then turned to an examination of the many ways the narratives and topoi of the *mukogawa* paradigm were similarly interwoven within an ‘identity-confirming’ oppositional dynamic positing marginalized images of traditional Japan against the perceptions of the center, modernizing urban Japan and the West. The topoi of the *mukogawa* were then discussed, the process of the journey into the periphery away from the city and the modern, the presence of a
woman with whom is invested mythic qualities, mother or lover, and an other world that is demarcated or sectioned off from the fictional space painted as 'reality.' Several possible explanations for the development of this narrative schema were given. There was Kinya Tsuruta's conception of the onsen-like function of such fictions, offering the angst ridden and isolated male victim of modern individuation a brief respite from his pressures and troubles by letting him enter into the emotionally 'soothing' waters of the mukogawa. This conception of mukogawa fiction as the fantasies of the modern Japanese male emphasizes the 'affective' nature of this schema which we noted in chapter one. One of its purpose to aestheticize a regressionary return to a culturally specific emotional state associated with origins, dependency, a non-bifurcated state of being. Primarily, this was accomplished by the idealization of the figure of the woman of the other world with maternal or supernatural qualities, she then becoming 'worthy' of the focus of the passive and somewhat child-like gaze of the male protagonist.

I then suggested that the topoi of this narrative schema, the journey known as the michyuki, the woman, and the other realm could also be viewed as the basic elements of a ideological textual strategy seeking to reclaim the 'stuff' of native culture in an effort to define the nature of the difference of Japanese and Western realities. The mukogawa narrative is a socio-cultural fantasy subverting the modern in its configuration of an imagined other world and an other woman who embodies a 'timeless moment' before and forever 'outside' modern
reality. These narratives operated within, and eventually without (all one need do is look at the list of works to be read of any modern Japanese literature course offered in universities across Canada or America to see what I mean), the cultural context of Japan to 'center' marginalized aspects of native cultural beliefs and traditions as a means to construct and situate a sense of identity seen to be 'not' of the West. This method of reconstructing native experience as 'other' to the West and its stand-in, urban Japan, was, we suggested, an important development in the figuring of conceptions of Japanese identity and the nation-state. So much so that it is perhaps possible to suggest that 'Japan' can not be conceived outside perceptions of its existence as a site of 'otherness' and 'difference,' an essentialism maintained in some regards as much by the West in its desire to continue to see in Japan a marginalized 'other' to its Center as by the desire of the Japanese to retain their 'otherness' in the face of Western cultural oppression.

The process of the gradual centering of this 'periphery' as a kind of cultural safety net within the literary and cultural mainstream meant that as successive generations turned to this schema, consciously or unconsciously, their approach to the depiction of the topoi of the paradigm was to turn or write 'against' the very cultural center of which the earlier paradigmatic efforts had become so much a part. Just as earlier works strove to operate on the peripheries, subverting the center (then seen as modernization and the West), so, too, I believe, do more contemporary works of the paradigm seek to accomplish a
similar type of narrative function and objective. Only now, the center they may be reacting to or subverting is that of the essentializing discourses of not just the West but also Japan itself. One such example, we noted, is Abe Kobo's *Woman in the Dunes*, a text that utilizes almost no overtly traditional Japanese images or settings. And while its structure mirrors that of other works of the paradigm, the journey, the woman, the other world all present to one degree or another, its aesthetic seems less nostalgia driven and more concerned with the exploration of man’s existential dilemma and the positive process of rediscovering “Hope” than it is a narrative attempt to capture a ‘timeless moment’ of authentic Japanese experience from amongst the sands that inevitably wear away the fabric and discourses of reality.

Beginning with Abe, I supposed, the *mukogawa* paradigm takes a fundamental turn away from the ‘a priori’ cultural imperatives and prerogatives of perhaps earlier fictions. The depiction of the fantasy realm and its mysterious woman dwelling within no longer a justifiable or satisfying end in and of itself, in Abe’s able hands the *mukogawa* and its topoi are recast and revitalized as the narrative becomes an allegory for man’s search for himself and his place in contemporary society. The element of the ‘return’ remains but is now associated with the active process of a search, and whether its objective is met or not, true or false, it leads the protagonist to meet existence on a new and liberating level. Abe’s text differs from its predecessors in that his character interacts with representatives of the forces and voices at work within his reality. In Abe’s world
the rural Japanese village, implicated by its selling of sands high in salt content to urban construction companies and its imprisoning of the protagonist as labour, is as guilty for the sad state of human affairs as are the modern institutions of society and science.

Milan Kundera once wrote of his characters,

Each one has crossed a border that I myself have circumvented. It is that crossed border (the border beyond which my own "I" ends) which attracts me most. For beyond that border begins the secret the novel asks about. The novel is not the author's confession; it is an investigation of human life in the trap the world has become.2

This quotation captures something of the essence of Abe's re-working of the schema, his protagonist crosses the "border" into the other realm and finds himself literally in a "trap." This space is not one designated only for passive retreat though, it is a site from which the individual is able to begin to grapple with the question of what it means to be human in direct relation to the notions of reality dominating his and society's existence. The protagonist is helped on in his search by his growing awareness or intuition of phenomena at work in the world for which the above mentioned discourses cannot or will not fully account. A spiritual realization born of the exposure to a fictional other realm that is not simply a fantastic idealization of a non-Western 'before' forever

2 Milan Kundera, The Incredible Lightness of Being, 221.
outside the present but a realm that is fundamentally imbedded within the historical ‘now.’

The above quote could also describe the characters and fictions of author Murakami Haruki, whose works have been the focus of chapters two and three. We examined Murakami’s works as they, like Abe’s work before him, employ the narrative schema of the *mukogawa* that we have seen is historically caught up within the literary production of traditional conceptions of self and identity. Murakami, too, re-invents and re-situates its topoi in the spirit of the “investigation of human life in the trap” of contemporary Japanese life. We looked at five of Murakami’s major works in chronological order of their publication beginning with *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball ‘73*, *A Wild Sheep’s Chase*, *A Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, and finally ending with *Dance, Dance, Dance*. Commenting that this ten year span would most assuredly come to be seen as the formative portion of Murakami’s writing career, we began our analysis of the topoi of the *mukogawa* narrative mode as seen in his fictions.

Examining the earliest works, *Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball ‘73*, we stressed that although these works individually contained structures reminiscent of the narrative schema of the *mukogawa*, we could not, even if we wanted to, classify them as such according to traditional critical criteria and conceptions of the paradigm. Most notably for our purposes, these fictions were structured in a manner that was evocative of two distinct fictional realities existing within the
same text. In these early examples, perceptions and glimpses of these worlds were revealed in the moods, language, and behaviours of the twinned protagonists of Boku and the Rat. While the fictional reality within which the two were imbedded was modern and urban, representative of contemporary Japan, each character was depicted as being one step removed from this reality, emotionally and spiritually, thus creating alternate territories within which they moved. As both stories progressed, the characters' unique spatial and temporal perceptions of their world(s) begin to overlap and unfold one upon the other, the overall narrative effect being, as Kato was shown to point out, the blurring of the borders separating the fictional worlds, creating a space that is seen representing "one (whole) story."

The nature of the dilemmas of Boku and the Rat were compared and contrasted to the typical hero of the mukogawa narrative. It was plain to see that if we were to typify the two characters, the protagonist Boku would differ in many ways from Abe's protagonist Niki Jumpei, while the Rat shares a number of traits with the brooding and terribly alienated male protagonist of more traditional fictions. However, whatever his characters particular situations, Murakami paints them into mutually exclusive fictional corners, unable to fathom or communicate to others the nature of their predicaments.

One noteworthy passage, especially as it relates to the mukogawa topoi and themes Murakami would later develop in some length, was that of the Heartfield passage, "The Wells of Mars" in Hear the Wind Sing. We saw how
similar the basic structure of this tale is to the narrative schema of the *other realm*, and suggested that its similarity to Abe's tale was uncanny. Unlike Abe whose setting though exotic was still to be found in Japan, Murakami's fiction is set on Mars and is written by an American no less. Just why Murakami may have once revealed to an interviewer:

> . . . What I wanted was first to depict Japanese society through that aspect of it that could just as well take place in New York or San Francisco, You might call it the Japanese nature that remains only after you have thrown out, one after another, all those parts that are altogether too "Japanese."

Well, the planet Mars seems to be about as far removed from Japan as one can get, so, in my opinion, Murakami certainly seems to have achieved his goal in this respect.

With *A Wild Sheep's Chase*, the third instalment of the Boku-series, we analyzed its structure concluding that it was a work that in many ways comes closest in its narrative structure and plot to the traditional schema of a *mukogawa* narrative. Again, we noted the similarity of Murakami's protagonist and Abe's, both detectives of a sort on a search that would lead them in the end to find themselves, or at least aspects of themselves that had long since vanished. We noted that it was the transformation of the protagonist of the work in relation to the topoi of the narrative that was the foundation of the tale, it was

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through these features that the protagonist would meet or find his “missing” half.

There was the presence of the woman with the “remarkable ears”, a liminal figure of sorts in that she possessed qualities of both worlds, she was clairvoyant and was thus able to transgress normal barriers and conceptions, leading the protagonist into the other realm. Also clearly recognizable was the portion of the text given over to the process of the journey, during which Murakami’s Boku experienced all of the mental and physical discomfiture and distress typical of the michiyuki including the characteristic loss of the senses of direction and time. It was a journey that led the character to the ultimate non-Japanese frontier within Japan, the island of Hokkaido. We noted that Murakami’s placement of the mukogawa in Hokkaido was not motivated by his desire to simply extract his fiction from the historically rich and already established traditional rural regions of Japan, although I am sure this played a significant part in his choice. Rather, in the site of Hokkaido, Murakami was able to invest his fiction, his mukogawa, with a sense of not pre modern but of the modern history of his nation. His mukogawa is thus implicated in Japan’s own imperialistic agenda as seen in his protagonist’s scribbling of parallel time lines of the history of Japan and that of the island of Hokkaido on his trip into the interior of Hokkaido.

Murakami’s tale, his journey to the mukogawa, is then in one sense about his generation’s coming to terms with aspects of its own culture and history that have either been down played, hidden away, or just plain ignored. The sense of
pathos, of ambivalence characteristic of the protagonist as well as the ironic tone of his language seems to stem however not only from this but also from the failure of the discourses of the nineteen-sixties to promote any real or significant social change. He depicts a generation lost, just as surely as were previous generations in the face of abrupt and intensified modernization, only this time the stakes in question, the problems they are facing are of a vastly different nature.

We noted that Murakami’s ‘space’ was metonymic for childhood and mother: ‘50s atmosphere of the family cabin, junior high school text books, a guitar, and radio controlled airplane. Such spaces are a ‘constant’ in the mukogawa paradigm, the journey into the mukogawa psychologically representing the engulfment of the protagonist’s self within a space archetyped as maternal nature. But in Murakami’s tale it is not a further confrontation with the physical female embodiment of this realm that is his focus, rather it is the encounter with the Rat, a character who represents not only the ‘spiritual something’ that the protagonist has lost somewhere along the way in his life but also one aspect of a discourse seen to be forming and constricting their realities.

The mukogawa in A Wild Sheep’s Chase is a liminal space, an in-between territory, a space “between two equidistant islands” that represent symbolically the kind of encounter that Fabian’s quote heading this chapter speaks of, “two societies facing each other at the same Time.” This confrontation is realized in the encounter of the Rat and the protagonist, both of whom have become
victims of 'self'-devouring aspects of the societally distilled and imposed discourses Murakami depicts operating within his fictions. Boku, the victim of his over-dependence upon distancing and dehumanizing objective observation, and the Rat, a character whose response to the realities of contemporary Japan was equally as negative, surrendering himself and his being to something other than life, non-being or spiritual death. The static and oppositional positioning of these aspects are undermined in the liminal *mukogawa* as these two figures find in this realm the 'stuff' to reject their inherited and dominant rationalities and with which to begin to establish new markers and bearing points by which to navigate through the troubled waters of contemporary modernity lying as it does not just between two such symbolic islands, but countless other islands, some small, some large, awaiting their moment and discovery in "Time."

In chapter three, as we examined the next work, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, we saw Murakami once again take up these same thematic concerns, the individual's search for a sense of meaning, of place, that does not owe its existence wholly to any of the discourses he envisions dominating reality. This text, like *A Wild Sheep's Chase*, employs the recognized topoi of the paradigm, particularly significant once more is the depiction of two parallel worlds whose landscapes this time begin to take on aspects associated with these discourses and philosophies. One recognizable as representing a nightmarish vision of advanced capitalism in contemporary Japan, and the other, a symbolic representation of the worst aspects of the nation's tendencies towards social and
spiritual isolationism in its evocation of cultural uniqueness. Murakami, in the interview with McInerney, speaking of such tendencies, said:

Many Japanese think that their language is so unique that foreigners cannot grip its essence, its beauty or its subtlety. . . . One reason they think that way is because Japan is a very homogenous country that has not been occupied by other countries except for a brief period after World War II. Its culture was not threatened by other cultures. So the Japanese language has been isolated. It has been isolated for maybe 2,000 years. That's why the Japanese are so certain about its uniqueness, its nature, its structure its functions. . . I think that what some writers are doing is trying to break, to destroy, that stubborn-ness, to rebel against that certainty. . . . Young Japanese writers. . . . As contemporary writers (are) trying to break through the barrier of isolation so that we can talk to the rest of the world in our own words.4

Murakami's vision of an unbroken and unthreatened 2,000 year old chain of cultural and linguistic traditions seems to fly in the face of our discussion of the plight of Japan during modernization in chapter one, yet the fact that he perceives Japan in this way underlines, I believe, the tremendous success of the discourses of Yanagita, the works of the early mukogawa paradigm, and others of that period to configure a cultural signified and a signifying system able to support and foster such perceptions and beliefs. It is this 'world' from which

Murakami wishes to depict an escape, but it is not an escape that would simply lead him and his reader back into a contemporary reality that itself is as dehumanizing and as segregating as its ‘paradisiacal’ counterpart. It is an escape that can only occur in the margins, the periphery, the interstices between these worlds that, at least in Murakami’s fictions, seem to represent a space lying beyond the either/or and in/out distinctions of the two centers of the dominant domains, a space wherein a sense of new meaning, symbolic and real, can be discovered.

The discovery of this space in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* draws nearer as the protagonist(s), and through him the reader, becomes caught in a state of flux as Murakami intertwines his two parallel worlds and narratives, moving towards the inevitable fusion of the narratives ironically within the figure of the protagonist-narrator himself. As the protagonist’s assumptions and beliefs are gradually battered and worn away by the constant transgressing of the once unbreachable borders that separate self from inner self, these borders themselves come to be seen as permeable and non-static. And it is this realization that awakens the protagonist to the possibility of alternate choices, alternate experiences, alternate ‘lifestyles’ apart from the constricting nature of the forces governing his two worlds. This is made clear in the text as the protagonist bids farewell to the Shadow representing aspects of contemporary reality and sets off to meet the figure of the librarian, memory partially restored, with whom he will venture into the marginalized and uncharted space of the
Woods on the periphery of the Town he has also clearly rejected. There, the two, we assume, will begin the process of pursuing and re-building shared memory (community) anew towards a future trajectory, not a past "Time" or present "Time."

We chose to then examine *Dance, Dance, Dance*, in the conclusion of chapter three because as the final instalment of the Boku-series, we supposed it could be seen as Murakami’s capping narrative statement tying up many of the loose thematic ends that had run throughout the series, and, as we saw, in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, too. The topoi of the mukogawa schema are plain to see: the *michiyuki*, the protagonist’s journeys to Hokkaido and Hawaii; the spirit of the *other realm* in the forms of the Sheep Man and the ghost of Kiki (a more traditional figure); and the *mukogawa* itself, a space that for Murakami it seems is a liminal territory or corridor connecting being and non-being, consciousness and the unconscious, a conjunction box connecting body and mind. Projections of liminal space with their ghosts and spirit guides that in *Dance, Dance, Dance* are increasingly seen to intrude upon the space mimetically presented as contemporary reality until they eventually, as fantastic as they are, become through Murakami’s skilful narrative an accepted part of the protagonist’s lived reality. The effect of this exposure to the ‘stuff’ of the *mukogawa* allows the protagonist to begin the process of looking forward, to begin to construct his own future reality that might better fit his and his generation’s ‘personal’ experience of present and past, not that of a past
"Time" and present "Time" externally imposed and constructed as unassailable.
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