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Major Research Paper

The Fantastic Path Toward Self: Magical Realism and Identity in Haruki Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Kafka on the Shore*

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

In this Major Research Paper, I am researching the relationship between magical realism and identity search in Haruki Murakami's two novels *A Wild Sheep Chase* (1982) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) to find out how and why Murakami uses magical realism as an effective path to lead his protagonists in their individual identity search in his fictional worlds. I aim to explore the uses of magical realism in these protagonists' search for identity, and how these uses help to develop the characters as well as the story. I also will explore Murakami's own journey of seeking individual identity and how he uses magical realism in these two novels as a means to reach the subconscious, therefore, the core of individual identity. In doing so, I aim to contribute to the study of magical realism by exploring its relationship with the question of identity in the frame of Haruki Murakami's fiction.

1. Magical Realism in Japan

In his article "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki," Matthew Strecher offers a basic and concise explanation of magical realism:

> In a very simple nutshell, magical realism is what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something 'too strange to believe.' (…) And, more to the point, it is the means by which Murakami Haruki shows his readers two "worlds"- one

> conscious, the other unconscious-and permits seamless crossover between them by characters who have become only memories, and by memories that re-emerge from the mind to become new characters again. (Strecher, 267-268)

Magical realism was first coined as a term by Franz Roh, a German art critic, in 1925, to identify a painterly style also known as the New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), which was an alternative to Expressionism, and to point out the downfall of Expressionism. It grew to be a crucial element of the Latin American Boom literature in the 1960s, and in Homi K. Bhabha's words, became 'the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world' by the 1990s.

In his introduction of the book *A Companion to Magical Realism* he wrote in collaboration with Wen-chin Ouyang, Stephen Hart discusses how magical realism has been so successful in migrating to various different cultures, by quoting Elleke Boehmer:

> One of the reasons why it appears to have attracted the attention of a range of writers (…) is its ability to express 'a world fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural displacement' (Boehmer, qtd. in Hart, 6). As Boehmer further suggests: 'Like the Latin American, they [postcolonial writers in English] combine the supernatural with local legend and imagery derived from colonialist cultures to represent cultures which have been repeatedly unsettled by invasion, occupation, and political corruption. Magic effects, therefore, are used to indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath'. (Boehmer, qtd. in Hart, 6-7)

Being a country of local legends, myths, and supernatural beliefs, Japan has evolved its share of magical realism. Starting with Natsume Sōseki's works in the Meiji period (1868-1912), through Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's Taishō period (1912-1926), through Kenzaburo Ōe's postwar Japan, to

Haruki Murakami's modern Japan in the 21st century, magical realism has continued to manifest its influence in Japanese literature in strong and unique ways.

In the chapter named "The Magic of Identity: Magic Realism in Modern Japanese Fiction" in her book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Susan J. Napier states that "the history of fantasy and magic realism in Japan (…) becomes almost a mirror image of Japan's relation with the West" (Napier, 455). When the 1868 Meiji Restoration opened Japan to the West, even though Japan was not colonized by Europe contrary to other non-Western nations, Japan's leaders went on a new and modern identity development, using the motto "Civilization and Enlightenment." This opening to the West brought a rational concern along with it: the fear of Western domination. This led to an inferiority/superiority complex which drove Japan to an obsessive aspiration of becoming a superior capitalist power to surpass the West. In Napier's words, "[t]o many writers and intellectuals, modern Japanese culture is a culture whose identity has been warped and transmogrified, not by outside pressures so much as by its own response to outside pressures" (Napier, 453). Furthermore, this problematic and difficult transformation period also changed the way Japanese writers looked at fantasy literature. Before the opening to the West, fantasy was made light of, considered embarrassing or ignored as a genre by most of the Japanese authors. Yet, during the post-war years, it started to be used often by some of the best Japanese contemporary authors in their own unique forms. In other words, this transformation process took magical realism and fantasy elements from the periphery of Japanese literature and put them in the center.

By adopting magical realist and fantastic modes Japanese writers showed their rejection of the realism and the predominant literary style of naturalism inspired by the West. This rejection led to a conflict between naturalism and the fictional reactions against it, creating a

duality. Napier claims that this duality can initially be described in terms of "modern" vs. "traditional."

According to Hollaman and Young in *Magic Realist Fiction*, "one of magic realism's 'crucial features' is its duality, the provocative and unsettling tension between real and unreal" (Hollaman, 2). Therefore, we can see parallels between magical realism and the history of Japanese fiction, in terms of duality.

The conflict between "modern" and "traditional" in contemporary Japanese literature can be seen in the works of Haruki Murakami. In Murakami's stories and novels, one comes across Western influenced elements more than the elements of Japanese culture. His protagonists listen to the jazz or classical music records by Miles Davis, Sidney Bechet, Beethoven, Mozart; drink foreign whiskeys, like Cutty Sark or Johnnie Walker; read books of world literature, like *Anna Karenina, Macbeth* or *Metamorphosis*; and watch movies by François Truffaut or Steven Spielberg. These protagonists also feel detached and out of place within the frame of their culture and country. This detachment symbolizes the beginning of the identity problems of Murakami's characters; none of them has any sense of belonging, neither toward their cultural nor toward their individual identity. By creating unusual, unreal situations with using magical realist elements, Murakami forces his protagonists to set off on a journey in search for their individual identity, believing one's core identity is centered in one's subconscious. Therefore, the protagonists go on a physical, long journey to reach what they have been carrying in their very own depths.

2. Other Scholars on Magical Realism and Identity in Murakami's Fiction

There are a number of theses and essays on the relationship between magical realism and identity in Haruki Murakami's works. Especially Matthew C. Strecher focuses extensively on Murakami's works in his articles and books, including the relationship between identity and magical realism. In his 1999 article "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki", which was published in *The Journal of Japanese Studies,* Strecher discusses the uses of magical realist techniques in Murakami's books, and how they are a means for the author to explore and challenge the concept of individual identity in Japan. By explaining the causes of detachment from their country, culture, and identity of Murakami's generation, Strecher examines how magical realism is used to refer the author's own problems of identity embedded in Murakami's fiction. This Major Research Paper also examines the uses of magical realism in protagonists' search of individual identity in Murakami's fiction, therefore Strecher's article is an essential source to benefit from. Yet, in addition, this paper explores the idea of Murakami's own journey of identity search through his protagonists and extends the analysis to *Kafka on the Shore*, which was published three years later than Strecher's article.

Another extensive analysis on the questions of identity in the novels of Haruki Murakami is Jason B. Barone's 2008 dissertation "The Search for the Jungian Stranger in the Novels of Haruki Murakami: *A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World,* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*". In this dissertation, Barone analyzes the psychological journeys of Murakami's detached, bemused, and observer protagonists toward the Jungian stranger, which is a term Barone explains as "a nebulous figure that resides within the subconscious mind of the Murakami protagonist" (Barone, 2), in Murakami's three novels. Barone bases his arguments on Jung's observation that "within each one of us there is another whom we do not know" (Jung,

qtd. in Barone, 2), and discusses this Jungian process by laying out four psychological stages that Murakami's protagonists go through: awareness, encouragement, identification, and fulfillment, with the help of other characters. Barone claims that by going through these stages, Murakami's protagonists shake their passivity, faces the Jungian stranger inside, and gain knowledge about their selves. This paper agrees on Barone's Jungian process of facing the stranger inside, reaching one's core identity, yet slightly differs from it by applying Jung's individuation theory on the Rat, rather than the narrator in the analysis of *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

Midori Tanaka Atkins's 2012 PhD thesis "Time and Space Reconsidered: The Literary Landscape of Murakami Haruki" focuses on the transformation of notions of communal and individual identity in the context of Murakami's cosmopolitan writing by offering two perspectives. One of them is "the world of Murakami", where a new type of literary landscape is created, and the other one is "Murakami in the world", in which, through his literature, Murakami is depicted as a cultural provocateur.

To explore "the world of Murakami", Atkins's thesis offers a narrative analysis that focuses on the language of Murakami, the construction of space and the use of time and history in narratives of his protagonists' identity search. Atkins approaches the "Murakami in the world" perspective in two ways: by examining the social criticism of cultural politics through Murakami's position as a new and different Japanese author within the frame of world literature, and by analyzing the cultural politics of three Japanese critics of Murakami's books and comparing them against Murakami's writings, which reflect the spirit of their times.

Atkins's thesis concludes with the claim that in Murakami's works, the mind's negotiation between I and Others and the construction of identity conveys Murakami's own

cosmopolitan understanding of belonging. Atkins also states that Murakami's representation of time and space, besides Japanese cultural history, renders the writer's own imagined space.

Atkins's PhD thesis addresses the issue of how fictional landscapes in Murakami's writing are related both to the identity of individuals and the cultural identity of the nation, while also referring to the effects of magical realism on these landscapes. Because this paper also looks at both individual and cultural identity of Japan, while focusing more on individual identity and how magical realism plays a role in the search of identity, it benefits from Atkins's thesis, in terms of "in-between space/other world where he [the protagonist] would face an unconscious self" (Atkins, 95), especially in the analysis of *Kafka on the Shore*, since there is a magical forest as a fictional landscape in *Kafka*.

Ida Mayer's 2011 thesis "Dreaming in Isolation: Magical Realism in Modern Japanese Literature" focuses on the relationship between the emotional isolation of the protagonists and magical realism in Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto's novels. Mayer offers a detailed characterization of these two authors' emotionally isolated protagonists, examines their barriers between their public and private personae, and how the magical realist elements act as a bridge over these barriers with the help of dreams. Mayer's thesis supports the idea of how the isolation of the protagonists opens the doors to magical realism through one's subconscious in my analyses of Murakami's two novels.

In the subsequent chapters, this paper will benefit from these scholars in the analyses of the two novels and add to them in terms of Murakami's own identity search through his protagonists and the relationship between the magical realism and one's search for individual identity through the subconscious. By combining magical realism theories with psychoanalytical theories, while also focusing on the author's own underlying motives of using magical realist

techniques in identity search, this paper aims to add a new dimension to the interpretation of Murakami's fiction and to be of benefit to other scholars in their future research projects.

3. *Theoretical approach & Methodology*

The theoretical approach of this paper comprises magical realism theory and its applications in Japanese literature, as well as the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, focusing on the Oedipus complex, the sense of identity, and individuation.

To examine the magical realism theory, I will benefit from the books and articles of Susan J. Napier, Maggie Ann Bowers, Stephen M. Hart, and Wen-chin Ouyang. Maggie Ann Bowers' 2004 book, *Magic(al) Realism* provides a definition of magical realism and a description and historical overview of the geographical, cultural and political contexts within which the genre has developed, while Stephen M. Hart and Wen-chin Ouyang's 2005 book examines how Latin American magical realism spread to and affected other cultures and literatures, including Japanese literature. Finally, Susan J. Napier's 1995 article "The Magic of Identity: Magic Realism in Modern Japanese Fiction" in the book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, and her 1996 book *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity*, respectively focus on a general look at magical realism in Japanese literature by examining certain works of Japanese authors, including a sub-chapter titled "Murakami Haruki and the International Identity," examining how identity and history (personal and national) are important themes in Murakami's writing.

To examine the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung I will be mainly looking at Terry Eagleton's chapter "Psychoanalysis" in his 1996 book *Literary Theory:*

An Introduction, and Jason B. Barone's 2008 dissertation "The Search for the Jungian Stranger in the Novels of Haruki Murakami: *A Wild Sheep Chase, Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World,* and *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*" both of which respectively summarize Freud's Oedipus complex theory and Jung's individuation theory effectively.

I will examine magical realism, individuation and psychoanalytic theories and their applications to the literary analyses of Murakami's aforementioned two books, while benefiting from the other scholarly writings which are mentioned in the previous chapter section as well as adding to them in terms of the relationship between magical realism and identity in Murakami's fiction.

4. *Research Scope and Hypothesis*

My preliminary results indicate that there is a strong relationship between the magical realism Murakami writes and his novels' protagonists' search for identity and search for self. Along with the examination of other sources, such as interviews, articles on Murakami's life and works, and Murakami's fiction and non-fiction, an interview Murakami gave to *The Paris Review* shows that Murakami's own identity is closely interwoven with his protagonists' identities and the worlds of magical realism:

> Please think about it this way: I have a twin brother. And when I was two years old, one of us—the other one—was kidnapped. He was brought to a faraway place and we haven't seen each other since. I think my protagonist is him. A part of myself, but not me, and we haven't seen each other for a long time. It's a kind of alternative form of myself. In terms of DNA, we are the same, but our environment has been different. So our way of thinking

> would be different. Every time I write a book I put my feet in different shoes. Because sometimes I am tired of being myself. This way I can escape. It's a fantasy. If you can't have a fantasy, what's the point of writing a book? (Murakami, *The Paris Review*)

From the author's words, it can be clearly seen that there is a strong relationship between the author's own identity and his fiction. I will posit that in his stories, Murakami searches for his own identity through his protagonists' identity search. Growing up during the post-war era in a country which has a history of isolation and alienation at its heart, and having no sense of belonging either to his own culture or to the Western culture he emulates led Murakami to examine the identity phenomenon repeatedly in his works. To obtain freedom to do so, Murakami followed the example of his predecessors, who had used magical realism as a way to state their opinions on various things (especially on politics), and criticize the wrongful, unfair sides of the world and people, indirectly. In Murakami's case, the targets of his criticisms are often World War II, and the sad deaths of the students during the 1968-1970 student riots.

One may think of magical realism as a door, which opens to the very truth of the author's heart. By opening the doors magical realism offers to him, Murakami's every protagonist who sets off on the quest for finding identity represents the author's way of searching for his own identity and place in the world, both as an individual and an author.

This paper will examine the relationship between identity and magical realism by applying concepts of magical realism, individuation, and psychoanalytic theories to Murakami's writing and interviews in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of the author's mind, in order to determine the ways magical realism helps him in his protagonists' – therefore his – search for identity, and to explore the factors that affect and inspire the author's fiction.

CHAPTER II

A Wild Sheep Chase

In this chapter, I will analyse Haruki Murakami's 1982 novel *A Wild Sheep Chase* to explore in what ways magical realism was used to develop the protagonists, along with their journeys of seeking individual identity. The chapter will start with the information and the plot of the novel, and the analysis of the novel in terms of both identity and magical realism will follow.

Haruki Murakami's 1982 novel *A Wild Sheep Chase* (*羊をめぐる冒険 Hitsuji o meguru bōken*) was the third book of the "Tetralogy of the Rat", which includes the author's debut novel *Hear the Wind Sing* (1979) and its sequel *Pinball, 1973* (1980), with the addition of the fourth novel *Dance Dance Dance* (1988). It was also Murakami's first book which was published overseas and brought the author his worldwide fame. The novel can be described as a surreal quasi-detective novel, and in its author's eyes, is also the real beginning of his writing style.

A Wild Sheep Chase tells the story of the twenty-nine-year-old, unnamed narrator, who has just gotten divorced from his cheating wife and is trying to cope with his separation issues. One day, his business partner calls him to tell him that a man in black who works for "the Boss"—a shady and corrupt personality involved in organized crime, politics, and business in Tokyo—has come to their office and ordered them to withdraw an advert poster the narrator designed from a pastoral photograph. The narrator's old friend, nicknamed "the Rat", who disappeared five years ago, had sent this photograph to the narrator in one of his letters, asking him to print the photograph in one of the adverts, which the narrator had indulged.

The man in black wants to meet with the narrator, and when they meet, he orders the narrator to find the mutant sheep with a star on its back in the pastoral photograph for his "Boss," who is in a coma caused by a brain hemorrhage. Either the narrator will find the sheep or he will face dire consequences. Thus, the search for this semi-mythical, magical sheep begins.

1. Questions of Identity

As the story unfolds, along with the narrator, we learn that this magical, all-empowering sheep, like a parasite, inhabits the body of its host, then uses its host to realize its world domination plans. Being able to do that, the sheep gradually erases the contents of its host's mind and replaces them with the contents of its mind instead, which creates a blood cyst in its host's brain. When the blood cyst grows enough, the host becomes totally stripped of their own individual identity, along with their weaknesses and inabilities as a part of this identity. The sheep thinks and acts in place of them, making them very charismatic leaders whom countless people would want to follow. Therefore, the host eventually transforms into a shell which the sheep controls.

By turning the narrator into a sheep detective, Murakami lays down the map of the movements of this magical sheep, one by one. During his search, the narrator comes across the Sheep Professor, the first man who was possessed by the sheep. Before being possessed, the Sheep Professor was a brilliant man who had worked for the military. One day he lost his way among the mountains and took shelter in a cave, thus waking up the magical sheep. The sheep possessed him and used the Sheep Professor as its transportation to Tokyo, then left his body to

possess the Boss, a better candidate for its domination plans, and used the Boss to build his underground network. After many years, the sheep has left the Boss's body to die and vanishes. That is why the right-hand man of the Boss, the man in black, wants to find it; he wants the sheep to possess himself so he can become the next Boss.

By following the clues, the narrator finds his way to a very remote pasture in the mountains of Hokkaido, and to a mountain villa, which, he later discovers, belongs to the Rat's father. Hoping to meet his friend after all these years, the narrator goes to the house but cannot find anybody there – yet, there are enough signs to prove that the Rat has been there until a few days before the narrator reaches the house. The narrator waits for his friend in that house for days and meets with a Sheep Man instead – a WWII escapee who wears a sheepskin all over his body. The narrator realizes that the Sheep Man's mannerisms remind him of his friend the Rat. He shows his anger in front of the Sheep Man, knowing that the Sheep Man is actually the Rat, and calls him out. Finally, the Rat decides to show himself that night. The narrator learns from the Rat that the mysterious sheep has also possessed his friend the Rat, and the Rat hanged himself to capture the sheep in his body eternally.

The questions of identity in the book start with the names of the characters. Other than the nickname *the Rat,* and a Chinese bartender named *J,* the book contains no proper names but only descriptive ones. The narrator refers to himself as *Boku*, which means *I* in Japanese in the masculine form, therefore, in the English translation, he is always the first person. Nobody calls him with his name, everyone always refers to him as *you*. The other people the narrator refers to are his partner, his girlfriend a.k.a. the Girl with the Ears, his ex-wife, the Boss, the Man in Black, the Sheep Professor, the Sheep Man, and so on. All of these unconventional

names derived from the functions of these people are related to their identities. In his article "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki", Matthew Strecher claims that the way Murakami names his characters leads to controversy and mentions that Karatani Kōjin, a Japanese literary critic and philosopher, argued that by naming his characters this way, Murakami aimed to deconstruct the world's realities and meanings:

> To dissolve proper names into fixed signifiers is to dissolve them into bundles of predicative terms, or to put it another way, into bundles of generalized concepts. What Murakami Haruki tries so persistently to do is to eliminate proper names, and thus make the world more random. (Karatani Kōjin, qtd. in Matthew Strecher, p. 275)

Murakami was born among the first generation in the postwar period, and his generation and the previous generation had a deep gulf between them. While the previous generation survived through WWII, and the hunger and deprivation it brought, Murakami's generation was born in the time of prosperity and did not carry any memories of war nor of the hardships of World War II and the immediate postwar years, so they did not see or understand that gaining prosperity was an aim in itself. This prosperity, along with a decline in both internal and external political tensions ironically created a danger of preventing Murakami's generation to develop a sense of identity, individuality or self because they did not understand nor identify themselves with the goal of prosperity and wealth Japan had in its agenda in those days.

Murakami's generation also took a hit on the front of their sense of identity when the well-known student riots against the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty, which was signed in 1960 and contained a Status of Forces Agreement enabling the U.S. troops to use military facilities and forces deployed in Japan for combat and other uses than the defense of Japan. This caused the

most important political struggle in Japan for the next ten years, but resistance to the treaty broke down with defeat in 1970. The student uprisings started in 1968 were a means of self-expression for the students for the next two years. The defeat in 1970 was followed by alienation and disillusionment, causing Murakami's generation to feel more detached, more distant from their country. As a result, starting with his first book *Hear the Wind Sing*, Murakami's first three novels refer to the desperation caused by the collapse of the student movement, which speaks to Murakami's generation. However, by creating a faceless and nameless narrator (as well as side characters) throughout his tetralogy, Murakami also continues to speak to his present-day readers, who experience similar struggles of their own; thus, the readers can identify with the narrator and the other characters on a much deeper level. Therefore, one can argue that "Murakami has shown contemporary readers their own anonymous faces in the mirror" (Strecher, 266) in his novels.

Because the readers are more inclined to identify themselves with these nameless and faceless characters – especially with the narrator – an intimacy starts to shape between the narrator and the reader. The more the reader identifies him/herself with the narrator, the more he/she trusts the narrator. Thus, when the reliable narrator starts to talk about magical events, the reader believes the narrator relatively easily and follows the narrator through the doors of magical realism.

This is also true in *A Wild Sheep Chase*'s case. We start on the journey with a detached, anti-authoritarian narrator, whom we can easily identify with. Even the readers who have not read the two prequels of *A Wild Sheep Chase* are easily inclined to empathise with the narrator they are just meeting: He just got divorced because his wife cheated on him, he is the one who

keeps his business with his alcoholic partner together so that the alcoholic partner can take care of his family, he stands up against the man in black when he tries to bully the narrator, he takes good care of his cat, and he has his own cautious approach to mysterious events. So, when he believes that his girlfriend, the Girl with the Ears, has magical ears that give her some kind of clairvoyance power, we believe it along with him. When he meets the Sheep Professor who claims that he was possessed by a mysterious sheep, we believe him along with the narrator. As the events get gradually more magical and unbelievable, we become more ready to believe in them and even think up a few theories ourselves too. So, the readers' intensified identification with the narrator enables them to walk on the path of magical realism.

The search for identity/self also progresses with the help of magical events. We see the Sheep Professor, who was a brilliant and a very successful man before the sheep possessed him, now lives in a hotel room he never leaves, obsessed with the sheep because the sheep stole a part of his identity when it left the Sheep Professor. So now the Sheep Professor calls himself *sheepless*:

> "The sheep that enters a body is thought to be immortal. And so too the person who hosts the sheep is thought to become immortal. However, should the sheep escape, the immortality goes. It's all up to the sheep. If the sheep likes its host, it'll stay for decades. If not—zip!—it's gone. People abandoned by sheep are called the 'sheepless.' In other words, people like me." (*Wild Sheep*, 222)

If we continue using the term *sheepless*, being sheepless is what makes the Sheep Professor live as an asocial, bitter shut-in; the sense of being "someone" (a brilliant, well-respected professor and army man) leaves the Sheep Professor along with the sheep. That is why the professor

becomes a sheep professor; doing research and accumulating knowledge on sheep for long years and becoming an expert on every kind of sheep is also the Sheep Professor's way of searching for his lost identity since the Sheep Professor thinks gaining knowledge will lead him to find the mythical sheep and the part of his identity it has stolen.

Another sheepless character in the book is the Boss. Right before being possessed by the sheep, the Boss was "imprisoned on charges of complicity in a plot to assassinate a key figure" (Wild Sheep, 137). Because the heavy interrogation methods of the police involved depriving the prisoners of sleep to force confessions out of them, the Boss started to suffer from severe insomnia. His insomnia was healed by itself, around the same time a blood cyst appeared in his brain. Moreover, he transformed from being a poor farmer's son, an always angry, mediocre right-winger who could barely read, to a brand-new man who had a solid ideology, charisma, decisiveness, political savvy and the ability to steer the crowds toward the way he wishes by using their weaknesses. There is no doubt that the sheep is responsible for this transformation of the Boss, preying on him because of his weaknesses and then turning him into someone whom he could not even dream of. So, even though the sheep's magical power transformed the Boss into a much smarter and influential person than he could ever be, we see the Boss has lost his original identity too. And because the sheep possessed him the longest, when it leaves his body, the Boss suffers from brain hemorrhage, goes into a coma, and dies at the end. After the sheep leaves, he becomes nothing but a mere empty shell of flesh.

Even after possessing the Boss, the sheep uses other people's weaknesses against them to manipulate them – that is how it builds its organized crime network. So, the sheep not only possesses people by infiltrating through their weaknesses, taking over their bodies by erasing

their original identities, and imposing new identities on them that are more suitable for its purposes, but it also manipulates people other than its hosts by using their weaknesses against them. Because our weaknesses are also an important part of our identities, which make us what we are besides many other traits, we again see an identity problem surfacing here.

The Rat is also a man of weaknesses. In their last conversation, the Rat admits to the narrator that he left town and disappeared for years because he was ashamed of his weaknesses, which dragged him into the darkness constantly, and did not want anyone to see him going lower than he was. Yet, his escape from his old life did not mean escaping the sheep's specter too; through his weaknesses, the sheep possessed him, wanting everything that composes one's identity:

> "Everything. (…) My body, my memory, my weakness, my contradictions … That's the sort of stuff the sheep really goes for." (*Wild Sheep,* 334)

And in order to gain access to one's identity, the sheep shows its hosts a tiny piece of their glamorous future they will acquire with the help of the sheep, "Things far too good for the likes of me" (*Wild Sheep,* 334) as the Rat likes to put it. The Rat also confesses that what the sheep showed to him was so beautiful, it drove him out of his mind, yet he also felt this evil feeling along with it. He felt that giving access to the sheep would mean losing everything that made him what he was:

> "Give your body over to it and everything goes. Consciousness, values, emotions, pain, everything. Gone." (*Wild Sheep,* 334)

Therefore, to be able to reject the sheep and the future it previewed for him, the Rat killed himself before the sheep could take over his body by forming a blood cyst in his brain, which would act as a whip on the host. When the narrator asks why the Rat rejected to become the new Boss of "[a] realm of total conceptual anarchy. A scheme in which all opposites would be resolved into unity" (*Wild Sheep*, 335) with him and the sheep at the center, the Rat thinks about his answer for a long time, finally giving an honest one:

> "I guess I felt attached to my weakness. My pain and suffering too. Summer light, the smell of a breeze, the songs of the cicadas – if I like these things, why should I apologize." (*Wild Sheep*, 336)

This answer of the Rat is the most important part of the book which supports the backbone of the whole story. The Rat does what his predecessors could not do before: he rebels against a big power, a great authority, in order to defend his identity, no matter how tempting and easy it would have been to give in.

In the introduction of his 2008 dissertation "The Search for the Jungian Stranger in the Novels of Haruki Murakami," Jason Barone describes the protagonists' way of achieving balance and a sense of order in Murakami's novels:

> In order to achieve a sense of order and balance in his life, the protagonist must not only find their hidden connection, but he must also travel down that path into his core identity—the "centre" of the totality of his being as well as the home of the Jungian stranger—and make the elusive contents he discovers there more "real." (Barone, 8)

Barone also connects his description to one of Carl Gustav Jung's theories:

> Jung calls this procedure "individuation," defining it as "embrac[ing] our innermost, last and incomparable uniqueness … and becoming one's own self." (Jung, qtd. in Barone, 8)

Even though in his dissertation Barone uses Jung's individuation theory to describe the mindsets achieved by the narrators after they reach the end of their quests, in the case of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, I find the individuation theory more suitable for the Rat, rather than the narrator. Despite the fact that he describes himself as a truly weak person, the Rat is strong enough to make the choice of killing himself rather than becoming the sheep's host. Even though he had run away from home and disappeared for years to hide his weaknesses from other people and pitied himself all this time, he comes to embrace, in Jung's terms, his innermost, last and incomparable uniqueness, and cannot allow his identity to be erased. He wants to be himself. Thus, on the verge of losing his very own being, he accepts his identity, his own unique form of being as it is, and prefers to die as himself rather than living someone else's successful and rich life.

2. Magical Realism

There are many magical realist elements throughout *A Wild Sheep Chase*, and all of them, brick by brick, build the fantastic path toward the novel's *crescendo*, revealing questions of identity and the conclusions of characters' identity searches. Murakami weaves the magical realist elements deep into the story, making them crucial for the story development.

a. Criticism Through the Magical: "The Sheep Man"

Just like his predecessors who used magical realism as an indirect way to criticize the politics and the problems of their country, being from the post-war generation and a witness of the 1968-1970 student uprisings in his teens, Murakami also uses magical realism to voice his criticism against World War II and the student riots often and effectively in his novels. In the first novel *Hear the Wind Sing* of the Tetralogy of the Rat, Murakami discusses the student uprisings and criticizes the government and the bloodshed through the Rat. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, we see another criticism of the meaningless bloodshed of World War II through one of the magical characters: The Sheep Man.

We first meet the Sheep Man in the Rat's mountain villa when he comes to visit the narrator:

> The Sheep Man wore a full sheepskin pulled over his head. The arms and legs were fake and patched on, but his stocky body fit the costume perfectly. The hood was also fake, but the two horns that curled from his crown were absolutely real. Two flat ears, probably wire-reinforced, stuck out level from either side of the hood. The leather mask that covered the upper half of his face, his matching gloves, and socks, all were black. There was a zipper from neck to crotch. (*Wild Sheep*, 295)

From this description, it is clear that another surreal, magical event is about to occur and disturb the narrator's normal, uneventful pace. Toward the end of the novel, in a conversation between the narrator and the Rat's ghost, we learn that the Sheep Man was actually the Rat in disguise, but there really is a Sheep Man the Rat uses as a model for his disguise. Therefore, when the Rat talks about himself as the Sheep Man, he tells the story of the real Sheep Man – who ran away from his village to the mountains during WWII, and lived there for long years, eating whatever

he could find in nature, drinking water from a river, collecting wood from the nearby forest, learning to make a fire in a way its smoke would not be seen from afar, and wearing a sheepskin. The Sheep Man has lived in these difficult conditions and isolation for years because he did not want to go to the war:

> "Why'd you take to hiding out up here?"
>
> (…) "Youwon'ttellanyone?"
>
> "I won't tell anyone."
>
> "Ididn'twanttogoofftowar." (…)
>
> "Anywaythat'swhyI'masheep. Asheepwhostayswherehebelongsup here." [sic] (*Wild Sheep*, 312)

By writing a character who is willing to live in isolation in the mountains as a sheep, an animal, for nearly forty years, who still fears the war and being dragged to its lap in 1982 (the year *A Wild Sheep Chase* was written), Murakami deeply criticizes the war and what it had done to the people as individuals. War deserters were seen as traitors to their country during WWII, yet, Murakami conveys the war deserter's perspective, someone who chose to rebel against the war to protect their own individual identity and acted on their own survival instinct rather than to die for the greater good. Hearing the echo of this criticism in the background of the words of a surreal and somewhat naïve character like the Sheep Man, instead of a normal character, who would be stripped from all the magical elements, is what makes Murakami's criticism so deeply effective.

b. Guidance Toward the Magical: "The Girl with the Ears"

The first magical thing the narrator comes across in the novel is a pair of magical ears, belonging to an ear model. He sees these ears in an advert shot he uses for a job and becomes mesmerized by their beauty. After a few days, the narrator tracks down the ear model, takes her out to dinner, and is disappointed to see that she is nothing special while she covers her ears with her hair. During an honest conversation between the two, the narrator learns that the last time the girl showed her ears, she was twelve, and after that age, she has never shown her real ears to other people; that she is more accustomed to the self who does not show her ears. Even when she needs to show her ears in modeling jobs, she somehow does not show her "real" ears by blocking off the passageway between her consciousness and her ears.

Toward the end of their conversation, the girl shows her real ears to the narrator by his request. Even though he is skeptical about the girl's ears possessing some kind of magical power, because of his boring life, a part of him wants to take a step toward the magical; and seeing those ears enchants the narrator to the level that he starts to believe in their magic. That is why, when he learns the girl's ears are granting her the power of clairvoyance in addition to enchanting people, the narrator is ready to be guided by the power of the magical ears.

With her ears' clairvoyance, the Girl with the Ears foresees that the narrator will get a phone call about a sheep; and after only looking at a list of hotels, she leads the narrator specifically to the Dolphin Hotel in Hokkaido where the narrator meets the Sheep Professor and comes closer to solve the sheep mystery thanks to his conversation with him. In a way, the Girl with the Ears becomes the narrator's guide, as if she leads a blind man through labyrinthical

roads. In the introduction of his dissertation, Barone also mentions the importance of the women characters in Murakami books:

> Without these peripheral characters (with women taking on increasingly stronger, more important roles as the novels progress), he can neither break into his subconscious nor take action in the physical world to bring about the necessary change. His dilemma is caused by the rift between these opposing sides of reality, and in order to make his Self complete, he must link them. (Barone, 5)

Therefore, with her magical ears, the Girl with the Ears emerges as the link between the magical and real. Because of his close relationship with the Girl with the Ears, and witnessing her predictions turn out right, the narrator puts his skepticism aside and believes in the magical. When he and the girl reach the Rat's empty mountain villa, he even asks for her ears' guidance to learn what to do next. However, the Girl with the Ears seems to be having problems with her ears. She nonchalantly tells the narrator to take a nap while she is cooking, and when the narrator wakes up, he finds himself alone in the house. As his sleepiness wears off, he also realizes that he is all alone in the world. From now on, he has to face what will come his way by himself. It is time for the narrator to take action and follow the fantastic path toward the end. By quoting Jung, Barone also touches upon the issue of the protagonists finally taking action in Murakami:

> Guided by other characters, the protagonist realizes that, as Jung discovered, "he need no longer be a passive observer of his unconscious but that he could actively step into fantasy." (Jung, qtd. in Barone, 8)

Taking action and stepping into fantasy opens the doors for the narrator who will now face the moment of truth and have an epiphany.

c. Isolation, Darkness, and the Subconscious

In the summer of 1999, when Murakami first met Roland Kelts, one of the interviewers who interviews Murakami often on different stages, he described his creative process to him:

> "When I write novels, I have to go down into a very deep, dark, and lonely place," (…) "And then I have to come back, back to the surface. It's very dangerous. And you have to be strong, physically and mentally strong, in order to do that every day." (Murakami, qtd. in Kelts)

In analogy to his creative process, Murakami uses dark places to go deeper into the subconscious of his protagonists to bring out the magical in his novels. *A Wild Sheep Chase* also has these dark places where the magic happens. For example, the Sheep Professor tells the narrator and his girlfriend with the magical ears how the sheep entered into his body during a night he spent in a cave:

> "It was the summer of 1935 when the sheep entered me. 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. At the time, I didn't think much of it. It was a dream, after all." (*Wild Sheep*, 221)

By sleeping in a dark cave at night time, the Sheep Professor wakes the sheep up. No one, probably not even Murakami himself, knows whether the Sheep Professor is really responsible for waking the sheep up or whether it had already been awake, getting ready to leave the cave as soon as it found transport. But the sheep waited until it was dark both outside and inside of the cave to spring into action and possess the Sheep Professor.

Another dark place where the magic happens is the mountain villa at night where the Rat shows himself to the narrator. Initially, the Rat is not willing to show himself to the narrator, so he disguises himself as the Sheep Man. The narrator meets the Sheep Man three times, all during the daytime. In a way, the Rat leaves the narrator who seeks the Rat and some answers in the dark with his disguise too. Then, the last time the Sheep Man comes to the villa, the narrator notices that the Sheep Man does not have a reflection in the mirror. This causes the narrator, who is normally detached and does not reveal his feelings, to get angry and throw a fit in front of the Sheep Man. After his fit, the narrator demands from the startled Sheep Man to make the Rat come that night and meet him. This fit forces the Rat to leave his disguise and go and meet with the narrator in the villa that night.

Yet, the Rat has one condition: full darkness. During their long conversation in the pitch black, freezing darkness, he does not allow the narrator to turn on any lights or the heater. As the story unfolds, we learn that the Rat is already dead, and it is his ghost who is talking to the narrator. Because he cannot see the Sheep Man's reflection in the mirror, the narrator finally connects the pieces in his mind after a long isolation period and figures out that the Sheep Man is the Rat and he is already dead. So, why does the ghost of the Rat choose to come in the dark or why does magic in Murakami's novels usually emerge in the darkest places?

The answer is because one's subconscious symbolizes the unknown, and it is defined by its darkness. Matthew Strecher touches upon the subject in his article "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki":

> [T]he one unbreakable rule in Murakami's literature: no protagonist is ever permitted to illuminate fully the interior of his mind and see his memories as they once appeared. (…) In *Hitsuji o meguru bōken*, (…) the same protagonist actually does meet Rat as Rat, in the confines of his inner consciousness. The location, Rat's secluded villa in the mountains of Hokkaido, remains cloaked in darkness, because Rat insists that it be dark. (…) What will Murakami's hero find should he ever break this injunction? There can be no way of knowing, for the unconscious mind is as much defined by its darkness as the darkness is required by the unconscious. To illuminate the unconscious in the Murakami universe, then, would be merely to transform it into consciousness, the realm of the light, and so the exercise would be pointless. (Strecher, 278)

Isolation and the darkness allow the narrator to establish a link to his subconscious, so he opens the blocked parts of his mind and takes the Rat, who lives as a memory in the narrator's subconscious, out to the conscious world, in order to confront the Rat. His confrontation with the ghost leads to a comprehension of the events and a conclusion of the sheep search. The narrator is left empty and all alone in the end, but with the knowledge that the sheep is dead and will not be coming back because of the Rat's fight for individuality, and the narrator's help in this fight.

In this chapter, after analyzing the novel, we see that in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, like in his other novels, Murakami uses magical realism as a means to search for one's unique, individual, personal identity. He gives the lost protagonist a guide to steer him toward the magical, then

leaves the protagonist all alone in a dark, isolated place for a certain time. During this time, the protagonist finds more time to think, to listen to himself, and therefore he starts to turn his gaze to his inner self. Slowly, step by step, he opens the doors to his subconscious, which allows the magic to rush in, allows the ghost of the Rat to come and answer the narrator's questions and end his sheep search. Without the use of magical realism, the message of the story, which is loving and accepting one's own identity after searching for and confronting Self in the darkest places, would not be conveyed to the reader as it does in the most powerful way. It is the magic that makes us follow the nameless narrator down the rabbit hole in search for a sheep, for something we may not make sense of, yet, still wish to find because like the narrator, we somehow know we will also find another thing along with it: ourselves.

CHAPTER III

Kafka on the Shore

In this chapter, I will analyze Haruki Murakami's 2002 novel *Kafka on the Shore* to explore in what ways magical realism was used to develop the protagonists along with their journey of seeking their individual identity. The chapter will start with information about the novel and its plot, and the analysis of the novel in terms of both identity and magical realism will follow.

Murakami's 2002 novel *Kafka on the Shore* (*海辺のカフカ Umibe no Kafuka*) was translated into English in 2005 and received the World Fantasy Award for Best Novel among other awards. The story opens with a boy named Kafka Tamura, who decides to be the toughest fifteen-year-old in the world. In order to get away from his sinister father Koichi Tamura, who is a famous sculptor, Kafka runs away from his home. While growing up, his father curses Kafka with a gruesome, oedipal prophecy: that one day, Kafka will kill his own father, and will have sex with his mother and adopted sister. As Kafka has no recollection of his mother and sister since they already escaped from his father when Kafka was four years old, leaving Kafka behind, he carries the weight of this curse throughout the novel. By escaping his father, Kafka also sets off on a journey to search for his mother.

After his escape, Kafka arrives at a town on the outskirts of Takamatsu and finds refuge in a small private library. There, he meets a transgender man named Oshima, who works at the library and helps Kafka to find a place to stay for free; a smart and graceful woman in her fifties called Miss Saeki, who is in charge of the library; and a young female hairdresser named Sakura, who helps Kafka when he is in need, and starts to see him as her little brother. As the story

unfolds, Kafka grows sexual feelings for both Sakura and Miss Saeki, but he is also torn by the thought that these women may be his long-lost mother and sister.

The second protagonist of the book is Satoru Nakata, whose story runs parallel in alternating chapters with Kafka's. Nakata is a kind, old man in his sixties, who has been a victim of a strange incident that happened during World War II when Nakata was in the fourth grade. The incident in question is called the "Rice Bowl Hill incident," in which a group of sixteen children lost their consciousness during a school outing in the hills. After losing consciousness collectively, Nakata is the only child who does not recover quickly like the others. Instead, Nakata stays in a coma for a while and wakes up as a simpleton who has lost his mental prowess. His memory is also wiped out, he does not remember his own name, his family, how to read or write or even that he lives on earth. However, he develops the ability to speak with cats. Besides getting a subsidy from the government, Nakata uses his ability to earn money in his old age, by finding lost cats and returning them to their owners, as a cat detective.

One day, while searching for a lost cat, Nakata meets Johnnie Walker, an evil person who kidnaps cats, cuts off their heads, and takes their souls to create a gorgeous flute by eating their hearts. Johnnie Walker kills three cats in front of Nakata, so to save the remaining two, the cat he searches for and one which has helped him a lot, he kills Johnnie Walker with a knife. After killing Johnnie Walker, Nakata loses his consciousness and when he wakes up, he realizes that he cannot talk to the cats anymore.

Facing a great evil like that convinces Nakata that his next life mission is to restore the balance of the world. For this, he needs to find the “entrance stone”, open the entrance of an alternate world (where Kafka also will be visiting toward the end of the novel) by turning the stone, then when the time comes, close the entrance again by turning the stone once more. So, he

sets off on a journey to also reach Takamatsu, where Kafka has taken refuge. During his journey, a young truck driver named Hoshino joins Nakata and becomes his helper in opening and closing the entrance.

As the novel goes on, the man Nakata murders turns out to be Kafka's father. Meanwhile, the ghost, the memory of Miss Saeki's beautiful fifteen-year-old vision, comes to Kafka's room at the library every night. As a result, Kafka falls in love with Miss Saeki, both her fifteen-year-old and fifty-year-old versions. He also suspects that Miss Saeki may be his mother due to some clues he finds that might tie Miss Saeki to his father. Yet, Kafka's doubts cannot stand in the way of having sex with Miss Saeki.

When the police look for the fifteen-year-old runaway to interrogate him about his father's murder, Oshima helps Kafka to hide in a cabin he owns in a forest, two hours away from the library. Kafka has a dream there, in which he rapes Sakura. Feeling so bad about himself, the next day, Kafka goes deeper into the forest where he comes across two soldiers from World War II, who are known to have disappeared in the same forest during their military training. The soldiers accompany him to a parallel world's entrance, which is open at the time thanks to Nakata's and Hoshino's efforts, and in that world, Kafka finally meets his mother.

In the meantime, Nakata and Hoshino find their way to the library where Miss Saeki is in charge. There, Nakata talks with Miss Saeki and tells her it is time for them to return where they visited in their youths once, while the entrance is open. Miss Saeki seems to understand and when after a few hours Nakata and Hoshino leave the library, Oshima finds Miss Saeki dead on her desk. The next day, Nakata also passes away in his sleep, leaving Hoshino behind in sorrow. Hoshino knows he needs to close the entrance by turning the stone again when the times comes, but he is clueless when that would be. While he is in deep thoughts, he sees a cat through the

window and calls for it out of boredom. The cat answers him; now Hoshino also can talk with the cats. The cat tells him what to do.

At the same time, Kafka meets with his mother in the alternate world. As he suspects, it is Miss Saeki. Miss Saeki explains why she left him when he was a boy and apologizes. She also asks him to go back to the real world. Right after Kafka steps into the real world, Hoshino closes the entrance.

1. Questions of Identity

Just like in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, questions of identity in *Kafka on the Shore* begin with the names of the characters. One of the main protagonists tells everyone he meets that his first name is Kafka. Because Murakami also introduces his protagonist in the novel with the same name, we never learn Kafka's real first name. Although it seems like Kafka uses the name of his favourite author as his first name as a precaution against the police so they would not find him and take him back to his father, right from the first pages we witness how Kafka hates his own identity because he hates his father and resents his mother:

> Genes I'd gotten from my father and mother—not that I have any recollection of what she looked like—created this face. I can do my best to not let any emotions show, keep my eyes from revealing anything, bulk up my muscles, but there's not much I can do about my looks. I'm stuck with my father's long, thick eyebrows and the deep lines between them. I could probably kill him if I wanted to—I'm sure strong enough—and I can erase my mother from my memory. But there's no way to erase the DNA they passed down to me. If I wanted to drive that away I'd have to get rid of *me*. (Kafka, 11)

For years, Kafka prepares himself for this escape; he goes to the gym regularly and builds his muscles and body, so he can look older than he really is, he reads lots of books and pays attention to his classes since his escape also means an end to his education, he learns to take care of himself to become the toughest fifteen-year-old of the world. As a result, he becomes a smart, healthy, and strong boy, yet he hates everything about himself. He cannot stand the thought he carries his father's genes and some of his physical features. By escaping his father, Kafka also tries to escape himself in a way; and by setting off on a journey to find his mother, he also goes on the quest of finding the lost part of his identity. If he can find his mother and be reminded of her features within him, he also can find a way to stand himself. Therefore, changing his first name is not only a precaution for Kafka but also a chance for him to screen his real, unloved identity – a son of a horrible father and a mother who could leave him when he was nearly a toddler – and pretend like he is somebody else.

Oshima, who works at the library and helps Kafka in time of his need, also never reveals his first name. The suggestive reason for this is because he is a man trapped in a woman's body, which is not a fact he acknowledges to everyone. Being called by one's surname is not something peculiar in Japan; Japanese generally call other people with their surnames by adding the suffix *-san* (which is translated as *Mr.*, *Mrs.* or *Miss* into English) at the end to show their respect toward each other. Using the first names of each other usually comes after long periods of familiarity. Hence, we see Oshima exploiting this custom in a way, probably to avoid awkward confrontations and judgements.

The cats' points of view on names also underline how names are related to one's identity. While humans hide behind the certain names or think they can act like another person if they change their names, it is striking that most cats in the novel are happy to live without having

names and the limitations that come with them. They are confident and strong; we do not see any cat in the book – with or without a name – which doubts its identity or raises existential questions – unlike all the human characters of the novel.

For instance, Nakata gives a name to each cat he talks to if they do not already have one, so he would not get confused afterwards. Therefore, he asks the name of the first cat he talks to, but the cat has forgotten his name during the last years of his life because he has not needed it. When Nakata tries to give him the name "Otsuka", the cat objects at first:

> "Otsuka?" the cat said, looking at him in surprise. "What are you talking about? Why do I have to be Otsuka?"
>
> "No special reason. (…) It makes things a lot easier for me if you have a name. That way somebody like me, who isn't very bright, can organize things better. (…) It helps me remember."
>
> "Interesting," the cat said. "Not that I totally follow you. Cats can get by without names. We go by smell, shape, things of this nature. As long as we know these things, there're no worries for us." (*Kafka*, 47)

Here, Murakami seems to hint at the notion that though they are complex creatures, cats are not as complex as humans in their existence and do not need names to identify themselves – which is a nice change of pace for the reader, especially after seeing Kafka's existential crisis. Otsuka's words make us ponder on the uses of names in a different view; that is, though our names, even our titles today are a big part of our identities, the human characters in *Kafka on the Shore* seem to assign meanings to the names more than they should. A nice example of this is given by

Murakami with the cat Mimi in the novel, to show what can happen if this human trait would rub off on a cat.

Nakata meets with a female Siamese cat called Mimi during his search for the lost cat of a family. Mimi is portrayed as a very smart cat whose owner's human features rubbed off on her. She is Miss Know-it-all, and nearly smarter than Nakata though she is a cat. She knows about everything her owner knows; she uses a remarkably sophisticated language when she talks to Nakata. She also explains the meaning of her name to Nakata:

> "Please call me Mimi. The Mimi from *La Bohème*. There's a song about it, too: 'Si, Mi Chiamano Mimi.'"
>
> "I see," Nakata said, not really following.
>
> "An opera by Puccini, you know. My owner happens to be a great fan of opera," Mimi said, and smiled amiably. "I'd sing it for you, but unfortunately I'm not much of a singer." (*Kafka*, 78)

Here, it can be seen that Mimi is proud of her name and talks like a noble lady who comes straight out of a ball from Jane Austen novels. It is evident that living very close with a human in the case of Mimi and being a stray cat for the last years of his life in the case of Otsuka, suggests the naming concept belongs to humans as a need to identify themselves.

Throughout the novel, we see almost every character questioning their own identity and admitting they do not know who they really are, what their purpose in the world is. Being left behind by his mother and sister causes the loss of a big part of Kafka's identity. Because there is no one around him other than his father, Kafka only can identify himself with the father he hates while growing up. He cannot forgive his mother because she left him, her biological son, behind

but took his adopted sister with her; he cannot forgive his father since he drove his mother and sister away and cast a curse on Kafka saying he will kill his father one day and have sex with his mother and sister, just like Oedipus did in Greek mythology.

This prophetic curse of his father haunts Kafka and controls him to the extreme of thinking of every middle-aged woman as his mother and every young woman as his sister. When he likes Sakura, he tries to stop himself in case she is his sister. When he falls in love with the fifteen-year-old ghost of Miss Saeki, and through the ghost, with the real Miss Saeki, Kafka is confused with emotions because he also believes there is a big probability of Miss Saeki being his mother. After waking up with a big amount of blood on his shirt and losing four hours he cannot remember or vouch for himself, and learning his father is murdered, Kafka starts to live with the suspicion he is the one who killed his father – though he could not be in two places at the same time. Afterwards, by sleeping with Miss Saeki, the anguish, the weight of the curse increases and causes Kafka's subconscious to create a particular, realistic wet dream which makes Kafka despise himself when he wakes up. In this dream, Kafka loses his control and rapes Sakura, who sees him as his little brother and begs him to not go ahead with it. It is as if with this horrible dream added to the shirt with his father's blood on it, and the sex with Miss Saeki, the Oedipal prophecy completes its circle and comes true.

In Terry Eagleton's article "Psychoanalysis", Eagleton explains how the boy-child represses his Oedipus complex:

> What persuades the boy-child to abandon his incestuous desire for the mother is the father's threat of castration. He thus represses his incestuous desire in anxious resignation, adjusts himself to the 'reality principle', submits to the father, detaches himself from the mother, and comforts himself with the unconscious consolation that

> though he cannot now hope to oust his father and possess his mother, his father symbolizes a place, a possibility, which he himself will be able to take up and realize in the future. If he is not a patriarch now, he will be later. The boy makes peace with his father, identifies with him, and is thus introduced into the symbolic role of manhood. (Eagleton, 134)

It is this identification with his father that causes Kafka to escape: his father once possessed his mother and had her more than Kafka did. His father has memories with his mother and remembers his mother's face while Kafka cannot remember anything about her. Therefore, setting off on a quest to find his mother, the lost part of his identity, is also fueled by Kafka's Oedipus complex.

Nakata's identity loss is also one of the biggest problems of identity in the novel. Before the collective loss of consciousness of the sixteen students, Nakata, just like his professor father and his two brothers, was an awfully smart and bright student who was very quick to understand and learn every subject from math to science. However, after losing consciousness collectively with other students and not recovering as fast as them, it appears that Nakata wakes up as a *tabula rasa*. He does not have a kind of amnesia doctors come across often; he wakes up with no basic knowledge about the world, about himself. And even though his mind is a *tabula rasa*, nothing can be written on it again: he cannot re-learn to read and write, his way of talking becomes weird and childish, he does not know how to survive in the world. As a result, he is treated as a mentally disabled person, a simpleton. While growing up, his professor father beats him for being stupid because he cannot learn even the most trivial things, and other people, even his successful brothers, look down on him.

Yet, contrary to Kafka, Nakata likes being himself. He is at peace with his condition, no matter how hard his life has gotten after the weird incident. Being sent to his grandparents as a child, Nakata learns to work with his hands and becomes a carpenter. He works in a factory building furniture for forty years of his life; he only stops when the factory gets shut down. He gains the ability to talk to cats. He can cook a good meal. Sometimes, he can even foresee things. Therefore, Nakata is content with being himself for the most part of the novel. The only regret he has toward the end of the novel is not being able to read, which he longs for when he sees all those books in Komura Library, where Miss Saeki is in charge.

Seeing Nakata happy to be himself, despite the successful, alternative life he could have led if it was not for the incident in his childhood, gives the reader a sort of relief among all these characters who lose themselves in the whirlpool of not knowing who they really are. It is as if Murakami plays a joke on his characters; the one who has lost more than any other characters – his intelligence, his sexual feelings, his desires, his greed, his ego, his future, his previous identity, any companionship he would have his whole life – is the one who has the most peace of mind, who is the most comfortable one in his own skin, who knows his limitations and flaws and accepts himself as he is. On the other hand, the other smarter, sophisticated, and well-educated characters in the book are in constant confusion and suffering. In light of this, and the statement Murakami gave in one of his interviews that Nakata was the one character he loved unconditionally while writing *Kafka on the Shore*, we can say that Murakami hints that being purified from the ego and greed, ambition, and the search for a meaning in every single thing is what would make a person happy to be themselves in the end.

Another character who seems to have been struggling with the problems of identity is Oshima. Initially, Oshima is described to the reader as a handsome young man who is friendly,

helpful, smart, and has a great knowledge of books. However, when two women come to the library and accuse Oshima of being a "typical sexist, patriarchic male" (*Kafka*, 179), and though we are given some clues by Murakami prior to this scene, we suddenly learn about a very surprising, hidden aspect of Oshima. Upon hearing the accusations of the two women, Oshima begs to differ by showing them his driver's licence and reveals that he is biologically and legally a female:

> "My body is physically female, but my mind's completely male," Oshima goes on. "Emotionally I live as a man. So I suppose your notion of being a historical example may be correct. And maybe I am sexist—who knows. But I'm not a lesbian, even though I dress this way. My sexual preference is for men. In other words, I'm a female but I'm gay. I do anal sex, and have never used my vagina for sex. My clitoris is sensitive but my breasts aren't. I don't have a period. So, what am I discriminating against? Could somebody tell me?" (*Kafka*, 179)

Throughout the novel, Oshima is implied to have problems with his identity in the past. He tells Kafka that he stayed in his cabin in the woods for days to escape from the real world when he was young, too – probably to think about his identity, and find solutions for his problems, come to peace with himself. When he shows up unannounced and catches Kafka sunbathing naked, Oshima mentions he used to sunbathe naked too, which seems like a reference to the times when Adam and Eve were naked and were not ashamed of it until they ate the forbidden apple; when they were happy with their existence. Therefore, by sunbathing in the middle of the forest in solitude, it seems that Oshima has stopped being ashamed of himself and his complicated emotions, and come to accept his female body, which is a part of his identity. In a way, he discovers not being ashamed, going in the contrary direction of Adam and Eve.

2. Magical Realism

As we see in Chapter 2 with the case of *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Murakami once more leads his characters to the path of magical realism with guidance, isolation, darkness, and the subconscious in *Kafka on the Shore*. However, with its more complicated plot, *Kafka on the Shore* depends on magical realism more than *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

a. Criticism Through the Magical: "The Two World War II Soldiers"

Just like with the Sheep Man in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Murakami again criticizes World War II and its repercussions in *Kafka on the Shore* through another two war deserters. This time, the deserters are two soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army, who disappeared during a military training which took place in the forest near Oshima's cabin in WWII. Neither they nor their bodies were found to Kafka's day, and no one knew if they got lost and died in the woods or escaped from the army.

When Kafka comes across these two soldiers at the heart of the forest, after nearly sixty years, the soldiers still wear their military uniforms and carry their bayonets as well as their muskets, and they do not look a day older than the day they disappeared. In a conversation between the soldiers and Kafka, one of the soldiers says:

> "I don't care who the enemy is—Chinese soldiers, Russians, Americans. I never wanted to rip open their guts. But that's the kind of world we lived in, and that's why we ran away. Don't get me wrong, the two of us weren't cowards. We were actually pretty good soldiers. We just couldn't put up with that rush to violence." (*Kafka*, 415)

So, this time, Murakami gives voice to his anti-war criticism through the young World War II soldiers, the ghosts from the past, emphasizing the simplest thought: that they did not want to take any lives and add to the bloodshed. The soldiers were pacifists and they did not understand the need for the bloodshed, for killing people from other nations, though they were at the center of the heat of the war, hearing and seeing many of their comrades fall. Hearing these remarks from the ghosts of the past again conveys Murakami's criticism to the reader effectively since the reader is left to think about the futility of war and killing.

b. Guidance Toward the Magical: "The Old Man Who Can Talk to Cats"

The first step toward the fantastic path of the novel is the scene when Nakata talks to the stray cat Otsuka and gets a reply. Before we know it, a perfectly rational dialogue between an old man and a cat unfolds, and the readers try to adjust themselves to the fact that Nakata has a superpower beside all of his drawbacks.

Since Nakata acts like a cat detective and asks other cats about a lost cat he is commissioned to find, the cats he talks to lead him to a very dangerous and vicious man who cuts off the cats' heads and eats their little hearts raw to collect their souls, which he uses in creating his magical flute. By just looking at these traits of him, it is obvious this man is some kind of monster out of reality – but another striking feature of this man is that he wears long boots and a long silk hat with a red outfit – a look exactly like the illustration on the label of the whiskey bottle – and calls himself Johnnie Walker, which magnifies the unreality of the character. Nakata does not know who Johnnie Walker is, nor is he used to the horrible emotions this man stirs up inside Nakata. Thus, seeing Johnnie Walker murdering innocent cats viciously

– one of them being the mentally challenged cat Kawamura, which tries to help Nakata in his search for the lost cat Goma – Nakata gets possessed by a dark side inside him and completely acts out of character by killing Johnnie Walker.

Therefore, the guides of Nakata which lead him to the doors of magical realism are cats. However, after killing Johnnie Walker and saving Mimi and Goma from him, Nakata loses his ability to talk to cats. Initially, it seems to the reader that Nakata is being punished because he loses his innocence by killing a man. Yet, as the novel goes on, we see that Nakata gains another ability: premonition regarding weird, magical events.

Right after he confesses his murder and the police officer he talks to does not believe what he says (he struggles to believe an old man who does not have a speck of blood on his clothes and claims he has killed Johnnie Walker in his boots and silk hat because he was killing cats to collect their souls), Nakata has a premonition. He tells the police officer he should bring an umbrella the next day because there will be a fish rain. The police officer only believes him the next day when thousands of fresh fish rain from the sky. Another time, when he tries to stop a gang beating a member of theirs to death, Nakata mysteriously stands under his umbrella and makes it rain leeches, causing the gang members to run away. Nakata also hitchhikes his way toward Takamatsu, the place where Kafka has taken shelter, without knowing where he is going or what he should do there. He only knows he needs to go on this journey and do something so he can restore the balance of the world. When the young truck driver Hoshino decides to drive Nakata wherever he wants to see how Nakata's journey would end, the chapters telling Nakata's story shift the point of view from Nakata to Hoshino; this signifies that now Nakata has become the guide toward the magical and Hoshino is being guided by him, believing more that Nakata's eccentricities have a real reason behind them with every step. Hoshino also meets with another

guide, a man who looks and dresses like Kentucky Fried Chicken's founder Colonel Sanders – it is no surprise that he calls himself with the same name. Colonel Sanders helps Hoshino to find the entrance stone which Nakata currently seeks to open. When Nakata opens the entrance stone with Hoshino's help, he also opens the door of a parallel world, where Miss Saeki and Nakata had visited once. Nakata visited this place when he was in a coma and came out of there stripped of his previous identity and leaving it behind. The details of Miss Saeki's visit are vague, but when Nakata finally faces Miss Saeki, they both know they need to pass the entrance and return to that place. They both have half of their shadows, implying the other halves are waiting for them in that place. Nakata and Miss Saeki both die within a day of each other, and they both seem to find peace at last. So, in a way, Nakata also guides Miss Saeki to the other side of the entrance.

Knowing he needs to close the entrance stone, Hoshino does not know what to do now that he has lost his guide, Nakata. He tries to talk to the stone just like Nakata has in his last days, but he does not get any answers from the stone. Desperate to find guidance, Hoshino tries to talk to a cat who spies on him outside of the window. He gets shocked when the cat answers him. By inheriting Nakata's superpower to talk to cats, Hoshino finds guidance again; the cat tells him to kill a very dangerous and sinister creature who would appear that night and try to pass through the open entrance to the real world. This creature proves to be the cat soul collector Johnnie Walker again, in other words, Kafka's father Koichi Tamura. Hoshino kills it in its abstract form and closes the entrance stone.

As for Kafka, he is guided toward magical realism initially by the visits to his bedroom at the library by the ghost, the apparition of the fifteen-year-old Miss Saeki. We see that the fifty-year-old Miss Saeki in the real world always seems to write something at her desk, which is later

revealed as her autobiography. Miss Saeki is stuck with the past because her lover was killed during the 1968-1970 student riots in Japan due to a misunderstanding when they were both in their twenties. Miss Saeki writes to re-live her past; she is bound by her memories of her dead boyfriend. Therefore, it is not surprising that the knowledge of another fifteen-year-old boy (Kafka) staying in her late lover's room draws the ghost, the memory of the fifteen-year-old Miss Saeki, to that same room every night, because Kafka's presence in her late lover's room awakens the *rememory* of Miss Saeki.

Toni Morrison, who also employs magical realist techniques in her novels, uses the concept of "rememory" in her masterpiece novel *Beloved*. In a dialogue between the protagonists Sethe and her daughter Denver, the concept of rememory is simply explained by Sethe:

> "Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. (…) Some things you forget. Other things you never do. (…) What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened."
>
> "Can other people see it?" asked Denver.
>
> "Oh, yes. (…) It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. (…) The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there--you who never was there--if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you." (Morrison, 43-44)

If we bear Morrison's concept of rememory in mind, Miss Saeki's fifteen-year-old ghost, who visits Kafka's room every night, sits on the desk and watches an oil painting hung on the wall

which illustrates her late lover resting on the shore, can be seen as a rememory. Yet, because Kafka falls in love with Miss Saeki's ghost at first sight, we can claim that Kafka not only bumps into the rememory that belongs to the fifty-year-old Miss Saeki, but also bumps into the rememory of Miss Saeki's late boyfriend.

That would explain why the real Miss Saeki comes to Kafka's room instead of her ghost one night, looking like she is under some sort of hypnosis and has sex with him in her fugue state. In the fourth chapter titled "not only the footprints but the water too and what is down there" of his book *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Avery F. Gordon writes about bumping into somebody else's rememory:

> Yet in this moment of enchantment when you are remembering something in the world, or something in the world is remembering you, you are not alone or hallucinating or making something out of nothing but your own unconscious thoughts. You have bumped into somebody else's memory; you have encountered haunting and the picture of it the ghost imprints. (Gordon, 166)

So, Kafka unknowingly steps into Miss Saeki's late boyfriend's rememory and remembers something in the world – Miss Saeki's fifteen-year-old version, when the late boyfriend fell in love with her – and something in the world – Miss Saeki – remembers him too. That is why Miss Saeki unconsciously is driven toward Kafka, and has sex with him, thinking Kafka is her late lover; because he is both wrapped in the late boyfriend's rememory and Miss Saeki's rememory. Hence, though Kafka has his suspicions about Miss Saeki being his mother, he does not wake her up from her fugue state, accepts his Oedipal fate and sleeps with Miss Saeki; because the love in him – the rememory of the late boyfriend's love for Saeki – is stronger than Kafka's fear of his father's curse.

When he returns to Oshima's cabin in the forest to lie low since the police are looking for him as a person of interest in his father's murder, Kafka experiences a wet dream where he rapes Sakura. Believing the curse his father cast has completed its circle, and that he was unsuccessful to escape that fate no matter how hard he has tried, Kafka decides to go into the forest where Oshima repeatedly warns him to stay out of. When Kafka goes into the deepest parts of the woods, he meets the two Japanese army soldiers who disappeared in these woods during an army training in World War II. These soldiers become Kafka's new guides, leading him toward the open entrance stone where the stone marks the entrance of an Other world. Thus, Kafka is guided by these soldiers toward a magical place, where he completes his quest for identity.

c. Isolation, Darkness, and the Subconscious

Like *A Wild Sheep Chase* and many other novels of Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore* also harbors the themes of isolation, darkness and the games of the subconscious leading the reader to magical realistic events.

Along with isolation, darkness plays a big role in magical events to occur in the novel. Kafka wakes up in the dark forest with his father's magically transferred blood on him; the ghost of young Miss Saeki visits Kafka's room only at nights; Kafka has his wet dream at night in the isolation of Oshima's cabin; Nakata loses his ability to talk to cats right after he gains his consciousness in the dark; and Hoshino meets with Colonel Sanders at night time and secures the entrance stone for Nakata. From these examples, we can clearly see that, just like in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Murakami uses darkness to symbolize the unknowns of the subconscious, which leads his protagonists toward the magical.

Starting with Kafka Tamura, every character in this novel is isolated from the rest of the society. Being abandoned by his mother and sister, and not getting along with his father, Kafka grows up in a total isolation. He does not speak much, nor has he any friends. Right from the first page, we see how isolated he is: the novel starts with Kafka talking to the Boy Named Crow, going through his escape plan one last time. Though at first one may think that Crow is a friend of Kafka, it is soon revealed that he is the alter ego of Kafka (Kafka means "crow" in Czech)– another wiser and braver personality emerged from Kafka's need to talk to someone, created by his isolation.

Satoru Nakata also lives his whole life in isolation because he loses his intelligence after he wakes up from his coma. Just like Kafka talks to the Boy Named Crow to ward off the loneliness, Nakata talks to cats for the rest of his life.

As for Oshima, Miss Saeki and Hoshino, they all are isolated characters. Oshima has often stayed in his cabin in the woods while growing up and now works in a library at a remote location all day; other than talking to Oshima, Miss Saeki only engages with other people when she gives library tours every Tuesday and spends most of her time alone in her office; Hoshino works as a long-distance truck driver and likes being on his own when he is not with a girl he likes.

In her 2011 thesis "Dreaming in Isolation: Magical Realism in Modern Japanese Literature," Ida Mayer discusses the role of isolation in Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto's books and how the course to the unconscious is led by isolation: "Isolation is an untenable state; our brains rely on being in a social context in order to learn and grow. We are, at our core, built to be social creatures and if that state cannot be reached in our waking moments, it will bubble up out of our unconscious" (Mayer, 10).

In *Kafka on the Shore*, starting with his isolation, Kafka's dreams are the medium where Murakami asserts magical realism with the subconscious. Kafka carries the weight of his father's prophecy; he tries to repress his feelings and desires toward Miss Saeki and Sakura, fearing they may be his mother and sister, and his loathing against his father, knowing he is strong enough to kill his father. Because of this repression, all this burden falls on Kafka's subconscious. Thus, when he wakes up in the night of his father's murder in a forest, with a big amount of blood on his t-shirt and a four-hour gap in his memory, Kafka thinks he somehow killed his father through his dreams. His fugue state also reminds us of the Greek myth of Oedipus since Oedipus also kills his father without knowing he is Oedipus's real father. In Kafka's case, he does not know if he really kills his father.

Then, Miss Saeki appears in his room and has sex with Kafka while she is in a hypnotic state. Once more, the events get out of Kafka's control. Just like Oedipus, because Kafka is in love with Miss Saeki and does not really know if she is his mother, Kafka sleeps with her. Yet, he also has the intuition that Miss Saeki is his mother, so having sex with her becomes another impact on his conscience. That is why, when he goes into hiding in Oshima's cabin in the woods, Kafka's subconscious starts to work against him, as if it wants to complete the circle of the prophecy so Kafka would have nothing to fear anymore. In the dark, isolated cabin, his subconscious creates the dream in which Kafka rapes Sakura, while Sakura begs him not to since she thinks of herself as a big sister to Kafka. Though there is nothing in the novel to indicate that Sakura is Kafka's real, adopted sister, because she undertakes the role of the big sister – and she is the only sister model around Kafka – Kafka's subconscious sees her as his sister.

After the dream in which he rapes Sakura, Kafka loathes his own existence since he could not control himself and has therefore proved his father right. That is why he goes deep into the

forest near the cabin, leaving his bag, compass, food, and water behind. Kafka just wants to disappear, he cannot live with himself anymore, not after the things he has done. With the guidance of the two World War II soldiers, he passes through the entrance Nakata has opened with Hoshino's help and finds himself in another forest and another cabin, where the time stands still, and there are no memories. Miss Saeki's fifteen-year-old version again visits Kafka in this new world. Being able to talk to her now, Kafka learns that this timeless forest will eventually erase his memories, that adjusting to this world will change him:

> "How long will it take for me to get used to this place?"
>
> (…) "I have no idea. It's not a question of time. When that time comes, you'll already be used to it." (…)
>
> "That time?" I say.
>
> "It isn't like you'll cut something out of yourself and throw it away," she says. "We don't throw it away—we accept it, inside us."
>
> "And I'll accept this inside of me?"
>
> "That's right."
>
> "And then?" I ask. "After I accept it, then what happens?"
>
> (…) "Then you'll become completely yourself," she says. (*Kafka*, 437)

The hope of being able to live with himself without hating himself and his father, and resenting his mother, strengthens Kafka's decision to stay. Only when the fifty-year-old Miss Saeki comes to visit him and asks him to turn back to the real world, Kafka decides to go back. At this point,

Kafka knows Miss Saeki is dead and will not be there when he returns to the real world, so he asks her again whether she is his mother and if she is, why she has abandoned Kafka.

Though Miss Saeki does not say openly that Kafka is her son, she implies that she abandoned someone very important to her a long time ago because she was so afraid to lose him if she were to stay, and asks for his forgiveness, which are the words Kafka has longed to hear:

> **Mother, you say. I forgive you. And with those words, audibly, the frozen part of your heart crumbles.** [sic] (*Kafka*, 442)

Upon hearing she is forgiven, Miss Saeki stabs her inner arm with her hairpin and makes Kafka drink her blood from the wound. This ritual reassures Kafka that now they are carrying the same blood, and finding his blood, the other half of his identity, serves as a catharsis for Kafka at the end; now, knowing who he really is, he can move on with his own life.

Analyzing *Kafka on the Shore* shows that Murakami applied the same magical realist techniques he used in A *Wild Sheep Chase* twenty years ago. He first gives his confused protagonists guides that would lead them toward the magical: in Kafka's case, it is initially the Boy Named Crow, his alter ego, then the ghosts, the rememories of the past, and finally the soldiers between the real world and the alternate world. In Nakata's case, it is cats, the stone, and the premonitions. Then, once again, Murakami leaves his characters alone, isolated and in the dark: Kafka stays at the remote cabin where there is no electricity, so the nights are dark as much as they can be, all alone, isolated from the rest of the world; without his intelligence Nakata grows up isolated from others and is always left in the dark when it comes to the workings of the world; Hoshino is all alone and somehow isolated from the world after seeing too much with Nakata after Nakata's death and he does not know how to proceed –he, too, is left in the dark.

Then, the characters discover something they have been carrying all along in themselves, the lost parts of their identities: Kafka's mother, Nakata's intelligence, Hoshino's ability to talk to cats. After that, just like the calmness after a storm, we see all the characters who struggle with their notion of identity through the book find some resolve in their lives – which symbolizes the end of their journey of seeking their selves. Therefore, we can say that magical realism in *Kafka on the Shore* acts as a boat in a storm; every character, even Murakami himself, has their own boat to survive through their storms and reach their lost islands of identity. During their quests, Murakami does not forget to voice the ghosts from the past to convey his criticism too. It is those voices, that magic which make *Kafka on the Shore* the success it is today through the world; without magical realism, the stories of these remarkable characters, who have been in a constant need of finding their selves, could not be told.

CHAPTER IV: Conclusion

Analyzing Haruki Murakami's 1982 novel *A Wild Sheep Chase* and 2002 novel *Kafka on the Shore*, which were written with a twenty-year-interval, in terms of aspects of magical realism and questions of identity and the relationship between these two demonstrated that the way Murakami asserts the magical realism in these novels in order to enable his protagonists to complete their quest for finding their identities, the themes he uses, and even the events he criticizes show great similarities.

As a person who experienced the post-war years and the 1968-1970 student uprisings, we see Murakami repeatedly criticize the deaths of the students who were a part of the uprisings and the meaningless bloodshed of World War II in his novels, including *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Kafka on the Shore*. He writes about the characters who were witnesses of the uprisings, like Miss Saeki, whose lover was beaten to death during the student riots, to reflect the sorrow those deaths brought, or characters who themselves are the ghosts from the past, like the Sheep Man, who escaped the war because he was afraid to be killed, and the soldiers from WWII, who escaped the army because they did not want to kill other people. In other words, Murakami gives these characters their own individual voices, adds the human factor in the frame of the notion of war, winning, losing, the glory, and the loss, which makes these low, individual voices and opinions as striking and strong as they can be.

The magical realist elements Murakami uses in both novels also shows many parallels with small differences. First of all, magical realism is used as a means, a propellent power for the continuation of the protagonists' quest for seeking identity. Without the guides who lead them toward the magical, without the elements of isolation and darkness, the protagonist would be long lost before they could reach their core identities. Only after these factors are realized do the

protagonists turn their gaze to their inner self to find what has been lost for them. In both novels, the protagonists set out on physical journeys to reach what they have been carrying all along, their inner self and core identities in their subconscious. Many analyses written on both novels unite on the notion that the isolated protagonists who are exposed to the darkness do not really go on physical journeys. Instead, they go on journeys through their subconscious; walking toward the timeless forest is actually a journey through Kafka's subconscious, and staying in the mountain villa all alone is a journey through *Boku*'s subconscious. And the darker the journey through the subconscious gets, the closer the protagonist gets to the truth. In the nameless narrator *Boku*'s case, for example, he becomes ready to talk to the Rat's ghost in pitch black darkness, after a fortnight of total isolation. In Kafka's case, along with the real darkness emphasized in many scenes, the darkness inside Kafka is what drowns him and helps him in his journey through the subconscious. The only difference between these two protagonists is that *Boku*, who is passive and detached from life, reaches his subconscious by staying isolated in the villa, while Kafka, who is an active person, determinedly searching for what he has lost, goes on one last physical journey toward the heart of the forest to reach his inner self. While *Boku* brings out the memory of his long-lost friend, the Rat, Kafka brings out the memory of his long-lost mother from the depths of their subconscious. Upon having conversations with these people (who, in a way, symbolize the core identities of the protagonists) they have kept searching for, both protagonists reach the end of their search with a cathartic sensation. Whether these confrontations are made in the real world with dead people or in the protagonists' subconscious, they are the culmination of their quests, marking the finish line.

As Matthew Strecher explains the relationship between identity search and the subconscious in his article "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki":

> Identity in Murakami is therefore a matter of will. The question in Murakami, as for many writers before him, is often one of action versus passivity. Most Murakami characters are passive, and thus they are frustratingly devoid of real identity. Yet all of them seek that identity by rooting about in their internal minds, recognizing that the inner mind is the ultimate source of Self and identity. (Strecher, 281)

So, the search for one's identity in Murakami's novels happens both physically and mentally, both consciously and unconsciously, and ends in the inner mind. The physical search only occurs to open the way for the inner search. Therefore, because a journey through the subconscious would not follow a normal course – our dreams, repressed emotions and fears are never rational – magical realism is essential for Murakami in telling the story of a character seeking for his/her identity.

With every quest his protagonists set out on to seek their identity, Murakami also sets off on a journey to find his own identity. That is why his protagonists are usually detached, passive people who have an interest in Western music, books, and movies, besides their exceptional observation and listening skills: they carry some autobiographic traits of the author himself. Murakami starts writing a story only with a vague idea in his mind and allows the story to take him through his own journey. As he said in an interview, "Writing lets me enter my own subconscious" (Murakami qtd. in Barone); along with his protagonists, Murakami also delves into the darkness of the subconscious, trying to make sense of the world: "In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it" (Leal, qtd. in Strecher). That is the reason we

read Murakami; all quests for identity in his novels are real attempts of the author to reach some kind of illumination about his own identity. He sets out on his own identity search as a faceless, nameless narrator, as a ghost of an old friend, as a fifteen-year-old, cursed, and confused boy, as a sixty-year-old, unintelligent man who talks to cats. And it is no easy task to submerge through one's inner layers; one needs to find a delicate way to succeed. Therefore, Murakami writes to reach his subconscious, and what is more, he uses magical realism, since magic gives him freedom, allows him to walk whatever path he wants to walk on and bend the rules of reality. Because his nameless characters as his aliases, they also become the aliases of his readers; as a reader, once you identify with any of the characters, there is no end to what you can achieve: You can talk to cats, listen to the remarks and the criticisms of the ghosts, share cigarettes with a sheep man and get a vague idea of how it is like to live as an animal instead of dying in a war. You can kill evil selves and make it rain fish, and even restore the balance of the world from your bedroom, by turning a very heavy stone. But what is more appealing for the reader is the human factor that Murakami always works on in his stories. In a world which turns faster and becomes crueller, more confusing, and more apathetic every day, it is not surprising to see more people out there, trying to find out who they are. They may be a woman or a man or a transgender, old or young, gay or straight, cheating their spouses or lovers or being cheated by them, smart or unintelligent, and detached or holding on to the life every day, but there is a place for everyone in Murakami's novels. By writing characters which are easy to identify with and giving voices to those characters without any judgements or limitations, portraying humans as they really are rather than how they should be, and using magic in the meanwhile allows Murakami's readers to feel that they are not alone in this world, no matter how lost they feel themselves. And the endings of the novels also give a sense of hope, a resolve which suggests to

the reader that they are also able to go on a journey to reach their inner selves; after all, Murakami himself has done it in every story he has ever written.

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