

The Political Poignancy of Magic Realism and Youth Alienation:

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle and Kafka on the Shore



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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



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Dedication

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-Shanjida Nowshin Chowdhury

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Table of Contents

Abstract	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Magic Realism and the “Modernization” of Japan.....	1
1.2 Capitalism and Identity Crisis of the Youth	2
1.3 Research Objectives and Selection of Texts	3
1.4 Methodology	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review	6
2.1 Understanding Japanese Magic Realism.....	6
2.2 The Political Ideology of “Modernized” Japan.....	7
2.3 Investigating Youth Alienation.....	9
Chapter 3: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle	11
3.1 The Well as a Symbol of Generational Trauma	11
3.2 Separation from the Self: A Magic Realist Depiction of Social Alienation	16
Chapter 4: Kafka on the Shore	22
4.1 Evil Personified: The ‘Spirit’ of Japan’s Political Poignancy.....	22
4.2 Confronting the Self: Alienation and Identity in the Lost Decades.....	26
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	32
Works Cited	35

Abstract

Magic Realism in Literature is often exclusively associated with the writings of Hispanic or Latin American authors. Though in recent years there has been more research published on the specificities and nuances of literary magic realism in different cultures, the gravity of their cultural impact is diluted and overshadowed by a generalized understanding of the ways in which magic realism can be utilized. For instance, Japan's use of magic realism in escapist literature following world war-II has resulted in an oversimplified understanding that most Japanese magic realism is purely aesthetic and has little to offer in deliberating matters such as national and political identity. The objective of this thesis is to offer a response to this assumption through a political interpretation of Japanese magic realism employing Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) as the primary texts. In doing so this research shall cross-examine the growth of magic realism in Japanese literature with the volatile nature of Japan's political history while also looking at the impact it had on the Japanese youth of that time.

Keywords: political, modernization, magic realism, youth, alienation, identity

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Magic Realism and the “Modernization” of Japan

Magic realism, since its first conception has always been strongly tied to the idea of true identity. The integration of magic into real life situations allows the wielder of magic realism to present a reality that could not be encompassed through a preconceived idea of reality established by a "majority" (in most cases this means escaping a reality superimposed by the West). Though this aspect of magic realism is identified as a staple of Latin American literature, its prominence in the magic realism of other cultures such as Japan is often overlooked. Due to its strong presentation of aesthetics, metaphor, and allegory, Japanese magic realist literature had been considered as B-grade or children's literature in not just other parts of the world but also in Japan itself. It was not until World War II that fantastical Japanese literature started being taken seriously. It was during this time that magic realist fiction of Japan grew out of its escapist tendencies and became a tool for writers and activists to critique what government officials called the “modernization” of Japan.

The “modernization” of Japan began during the Meiji Restoration (1868) when the country’s governing system had been going through a transitional phase. It was during this time that the scholar, Fukuzawa Yukichi inspired the slogan “Civilization and Enlightenment”. Japan, at this time had grown cautious of its potential western domination because of the Western takeover occurring in China. Yukichi, who had been fascinated by advancements made in medicine, technology and philosophy in Europe, seized this opportunity of restlessness in the country to introduce ideologies from the Western Enlightenment in Japan. He suggested that the

best way to escape Western domination was to “civilize” themselves before anyone else had the chance. As Barbara Celarent states, “Fukuzawa’s analysis of Japan’s economic and political situation is an unsparing portrait of Western colonialism. But the conclusion he draws is that one must imitate the imperialist reality—rather than the idealistic protestations—of the West” (1219). In this way the “modernization” of Japan became synonymous to the “Westernization” of Japan.

This “modernization” of Japan continued for the next century. However, it was only after Japan’s loss in World War II that Japan’s obsession with “modernization” snowballed into an “obsessive desire to beat the West at its own game by transforming Japan into a first rate capitalist power” (Napier, 453). The efforts of the Japanese government did eventually pay off as the country’s economy started seeing rapid growth following the 70’s. Japan had succeeded in becoming a capitalist powerhouse. However, during the process it had also lost its sense of national identity. It was this sense of identity loss among Japanese citizens that eventually led to the growth of magic realist literature being used as a tool by writers to critique Japan’s transformation into “a country where outside harmony hides a variety of interior grotesques” (Napier, 453).

1.2 Capitalism and Identity Crisis of the Youth

The political nature of Japanese magic realism further grew during the late 80’s and early 90’s, also known as “the bubble period”. This decade in Japanese history saw the country’s economy skyrocket to its highest peak. The duality of magic realism (magic and reality) became a way for the creators and consumers of literature to navigate the duality of Japan’s identity; an economically flourishing country on the outside but a nation of depressed and unfulfilled citizens at its core. The generation of youth during the bubble period (Haruki Murakami’s generation), suffocated by the growing consumerist culture became enthralled with questions regarding their

individual identities and purpose in life. The generation before this (their parent's generation) had seen the country fall apart and rebuild itself following World War II thus had little sympathy in their understanding of how excessive materialism could be a bad thing. As Mathew Stretcher points out, "Unlike the previous generation, which understood hunger and deprivation and could define itself in terms of affluence via its own participation in the efforts of the rapid-growth era, Murakami's generation ... did not understand affluence as a goal in itself, and thus could not identify itself in those terms" (264-265). The lack of understanding between generations resulted in the youth who grew up in a highly capitalized Japan suffering various forms of alienation, trauma, depression, and other mental illnesses, all of which are prevalent themes explored in the novels of Haruki Murakami.

1.3 Research Objectives and Selection of Texts

This thesis intends to use Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle (TWUBC)* and *Kafka on the Shore (KOTS)* as primary texts to show how elements of Japanese history (as described above) can be found between the lines of the alienation and trauma the characters in his stories experience. Murakami is not known to be a political writer. His use of magic realism by many is considered light-hearted or textual compared to the heavy hand of writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez. However, traces of what Natsume Soseki has referred to as Japan's "national mental breakdown" (qtd in Napier 452) can be found in Murakami's novels when read with the knowledge of Japan's history. Thus the selection of text for this thesis was done while keeping in mind Murakami's most political novel and his most successful one.

TWUBC is considered one of Murakami's most ambitious novels in terms of politics. The political reputé of this text stems from Murakami's depiction of the sufferings of Japanese soldiers in World War II. While this is undeniably an important area of focus when providing a

political analysis of *TWUBC*, this thesis shall be providing equal priority in breaking down the inherited trauma of present-day characters such as Toru Okada who despite not having lived through World War II himself, must still suffer the consequences because of what the war had forced Japan to become.

On the other hand, *KOTS* tells the story of two characters' parallel quests in search of their identities. Most academic papers dissecting this novel tackle this issue with a psychoanalytic approach to analyze the psychological journeys of the characters trying to come to terms with who they actually are. This thesis shall be attempting to look at the same issue through a political lens and provide a critical understanding of how much of the characters' struggles with identity are indebted to Japan's political turbulence and socio-political “modernization”. To do this, the researcher will be contrasting the characters of Kafka Tamura and Satoru Nakata to show the generational divide regarding alienation and identity crisis following the post-occupation era of Japan.

The objective of this paper, therefore is to show through the examination of Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) how magic realism in Murakami's novels is reflective of Japan's self-inflicted colonization and the consequences it had on several generations of youth following Japan's economic growth in the 1970's. Additionally, the main critical concerns of this paper shall focus on answering the following-

1. What elements of the post-World War-II Japanese political climate can be found in Haruki Murakami's writing?
2. How does the use of magic realism in Haruki Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1994) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) reflect Japan's political past and its impact on the youth of Murakami's generation?

1.4 Methodology

This research shall be conducted using a qualitative method. As primary theorists, this thesis will use Louis Althusser's theory of state Ideology and interpellation to discuss Japan's political climate, and Wendy B. Farris's theory of defocalization and remystification to analyze Murakami's use of magic realism. The concept of youth alienation will be dealt with differently for each novel. Analysis of alienation in *TWUBC* will use C.W Mills' *White Collar* and the concept of "marketing mentality" (182) as the basis for its analysis. On the other hand, KOTS will offer a psychoanalytic perspective on alienation using Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage theory". Aside from this, the research of Susan J. Napier and Mathew C. Stretcher shall be closely consulted with to verify historical details regarding the magic realism in Japan. In addition to this, the researcher will also use references from a variety of peer reviewed articles and research papers to validate the arguments made throughout this thesis.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The aim of this thesis is to investigate Murakami's use of magic realism to depict the political poignancy and youth alienation in post-War Japan. To fulfil this aim, this paper closely interacted with theories and existing research that revolved around the following themes; magic realism in contemporary and Japanese literature, the political atmosphere of Japan's "modernization" agenda, and youth alienation and nationalism in post-War Japan.

2.1 Understanding Japanese Magic Realism

Though most of the secondary research consulted with in this paper discussed magic realism, their purpose for this research served more useful in discussing Murakami's depiction of alienation than establishing a well-rounded understanding of magic realism in Japanese literature. The research of Wendy B. Faris and Susan J. Napier were fundamental in establishing a foundational understanding of magic realism before diving into a more nuanced comprehension of the genre, specific to Murakami's narrative style.

Wendy B. Faris approaches her analysis of magic realism in global contemporary literature by combining theories from postcolonial studies with a broad understanding of different narrative techniques. She proposes that the growth of magic realism in contemporary literature rises from an urge to decolonize, and that the inclusion of cultural nuances in elements of fantasy blended with reality in contemporary literature allows for the organic growth of distinctive narrative techniques which are specific to that particular culture. Faris's theories of "remystification" and a "defocalized narrative" were the primary framework through which the magic realism in this text was analyzed.

While Faris provided the theoretical framework for magic realism in this paper, Susan J. Napier's research provided the historical context regarding the relevance of magic realism in

Japan's Post-War gentrification. Napier directs her research towards exploring the use of magic realism in Japanese literature as an attempt at cultivating a "modern" identity. She identifies the desire for a new identity in the Japanese fantastical genre to have resulted from an inferiority complex and innate fear of being dominated by the West. The core distinction that Napier makes in Japan's utilization of magic realism as a tool for crafting a new identity is that unlike other non-western nations, the desire to do so had not occurred as a result of "outside pressures so much as by its own response to outside pressures" (453).

2.2 The Political Ideology of "Modernized" Japan

Along with magic realism, understanding the forced ideology of "modernization" that influenced much of Murakami's writing was important in establishing the political backdrop of this study's analysis. Several sociological and historical papers were consulted to verify the historical claims made throughout the analysis in this research. Additionally, Louis Althusser was used as the primary theorist to discuss the nature of Japan's political agendas.

Louis Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" was used in this paper to discuss how the Japanese government forced Japanese people to westernize themselves as part of the state ideology promoting Japan's modernization. Althusser's idea of interpellation was also used to show how Japanese citizens internalized the government's political agendas, which ultimately led to their loss of national identity and feeling of alienation.

Japan's modernization is more directly dealt with in Barbara Celarent's study on Japan's early escapades of "civilization" and the "enlightenment" (1215) during the Meiji Restoration period (1868-1889). Celarent's study discusses the early roots of westernization in Japan, focusing on the influences of Fukuzawa Yukichi. Celarent's study allowed this thesis to

look at the origins of westernization in Japan before diving into the Post-War modernization which is more directly relevant to Murakami's novels.

Though never directly discussed in his novels, Murakami's discontent towards Japan's westernization was found through his comments about the Meiji restoration in the introduction to the Penguin Classic's edition of Akutagawa's *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*.

Murakami's introduction to the novel discusses Akutagawa's accomplishments as a writer and the influence Akutagawa has had on Murakami and almost other contemporary Japanese writers.

Moving on from the Meiji Restoration, Mathew C. Stretcher provides historical context for the post-occupation and Bubble period of Japan in his article where analyses the theme of "searching for one's identity" in a multitude of Murakami's novels. Using the Zenkyōtō movement as an angle, Stretcher points at the shift of ideals occurring during Japan's economic growth during the 1970's and 80's and how this had lead a new generation of youth (Murakami's generation) to set aside the desire for financial stability (unlike that of their previous generation) and instead fixate on finding their own individual identities.

Following the Bubble period, this thesis also discussed the lost decades and the bubble burst with the help of Zeying Wu's paper on youth nationalism during the lost decades of Japan (1991-2001). Wu's research discusses the turbulence in Japan's economy following the Bubble period. By cross examining the country's economic growth with various social and cultural conditions that dictated the lifestyle of the average Japanese citizens. Wu's research concluded that the bubble burst resulted in a decline of Japanese nationalism as well as a sense of despair and confusion among the Japanese youth.

Not straying from the topic of economic growth, Thomas Velazquez Herring's research looks at globalization in Murakami's novels. Using *Kafka on the Shore* and *The Wind-Up Bird*

Chronicle as primary texts, Herring looks at western iconography in Murakami's novels. By analyzing big name brands such as "McDonald's" (2) and "Coca Cola" (3), Herring discusses the hybridity of Japanese culture as a result of capitalism. Furthermore, he also presents the idea of capitalism as a necessary evil which while tarnished Japanese nationalism, also offered the country scopes for growth that would have been unattainable with any other economic scheme.

2.3 Investigating Youth Alienation

Youth alienation in this paper was discussed using two theorists for the two novels. Since the type of alienation depicted in *TWUBC* and *KOTS* were different from one another, using a single theorist to analyze the alienation in both novels deemed insufficient in highlighting the shift in mental state that occurred between the Bubble Period to the Lost Decades.

C.W Mills's *The White Collar* was used to analyze the social alienation in *TWUBC*. Mills had written his book to investigate the social estrangement and rise of a new middle class in 1950's America. This research borrows Mill's idea of "marketing mentality" (182) which shows that people in a capitalist world people carefully cultivate their public personalities the same way a salesman would brush up an item to finest form to make it more desirable and easier to sell. Mills argues that the selling of one's personality keeps people from being truthful with one another which ultimately results in social alienation.

Ida Mayer uses a similar reasoning in her paper where she explains that due to the tightly structured culture of Japan, people are forced into experiencing a growing separation between their personal and public personae. Using the novels of Haruki Murakami and Banana Yoshimoto as primary texts, Mayer shows how magic realism can be the bridge between a person's public and private personalities. This research paper uses Mayer's research as a way to

expand on Mill's idea of social alienation and show how Murakami uses magic realism to depict social alienation in *TWUBC*.

To analyze the alienation in KOTS, this research paper employs Jacques Lacan's "The Mirror Stage" theory. Since the nature of youth alienation had changed from being alienation from others to an alienation from the self during the Lost Decades, this thesis uses a psychoanalytic approach to alienation for KOTS rather than a sociological one. Lacan's theory describes overcoming alienation as an integral step in forming one's identity. This thesis uses Lacan's conception of alienation to discuss the themes of youth alienation and self-confrontation in KOTS as the only way to overcome the negative impacts of Western capitalism and develop a sense of national identity.

Lastly, Susan Fisher's research is consulted multiple times throughout this thesis to discuss the "historical karma" (163) of Japan's exploits in World War II. Fisher's analysis of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* provides insight of how the past contributes to youth alienation in the present. Furthermore, Fisher's article also provides insight into Murakami's role as a westernized writer and the impact Japan's modernization had on his growth and success as the biggest contemporary writer to come out of Japan.

Chapter Three

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

Haruki Murakami's novel *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* follows the story of 30 year old Toru Okada as he navigates through life after quitting his job as a Lawyer at a big Tokyo law firm. As the story unfolds, Toru's cat and wife both go missing. In an attempt to find them, the protagonist is forced to dive into the grotesque underbelly of his polished suburban lifestyle where he encounters various people with strange mystical powers and a deep dried-up well that defies the logic of time and space.

TWUBC is one of the first novels by Haruki Murakami that explicitly deals with the political and cultural history of Japan. By comparing experiences from post-war (1940s and 50s) and present day (1980s) Japan, Murakami brings to the forefront the grim and bleak nature of the country's unresolved trauma that has always loomed in the background of Japan's socio-economic modernization. As Fisher states with regards to *TWUBC*, "Murakami seems deliberately intent on making his young readership re-discover the truth (or truths) about Japan's war - to understand how this "historical karma" still affects them" (163). This aspect of *TWUBC* shall be the central focus of this chapter's analysis. In order to do this, the researcher shall be analyzing Murakami's use of magic realism to talk about Japan's generational trauma as well as the social alienation of the Japanese youth as a consequence of exploitation in the Japanese government.

3.1 The Well as a Symbol of Generational Trauma

The well in *TWUBC* acts as a bridge that connects the past to the present. After a family friend, Lieutenant Mamiya relays to Toru the story of a time during World War II when he and a fellow Japanese soldier had been sent to spy on the Mongolian soldiers based in Manchukuo. The

investigation led to a violent face off with the Mongolian soldiers during which Lieutenant Mamiya had been forced to see his partner get skinned alive. After being tortured for a few more days, Lieutenant Mamiya gets thrown into a dried up well in the middle of the desert by the Mongolian soldiers. Lieutenant Mamiya spends several days in the well, starved and dehydrated yet somehow unable to die, before being rescued by a fellow Japanese Soldier, Mr. Honda (Toru's family fortune teller). Lieutenant Mamiya's story inspires Toru to go into a dried up well in an abandoned property in his neighborhood to reflect on his life so far with his wife Kumiko, who had recently disappeared. The differing experiences Lieutenant Mamiya and Toru have in the well reflect the fundamental differences between the older (1930s-1950s) and the younger (1980s-2000s) generations when it comes to using trauma to cultivate a sense of national identity.

Lieutenant Mamiya's experience of being thrown into the well reflects the way in which Japanese citizens of the 1930's and 40's had been forced into the war by the government regardless of whether or not they actually wanted to be in a war. As Lieutenant Mamiya himself states, "I never once thought I wanted to be a soldier. I wanted to be a teacher. As soon as I left college, though, they sent me my draft notice, stuck me in officers training, and I ended up on the continent for twelve years. My life went by like a dream." (Murakami, 151-152). The war, just like Lieutenant Mamiya's time in the well, became a traumatizing event that ended up being a defining factor of that generation's entire existence. This is vastly different from the way in which Toru Okada comes by his experience in the well. First and foremost, rather than being tossed into the well like Lieutenant Mamiya had been, Toru seeks out and goes into a well out of his own free will. This resembles the ways in which the youth of Japan following the post-occupation era (late 1960s and onwards) sought out tragedy and trauma as a way of finding

purpose in life. The most well-known attempt at self-discovery through political movements among the youth of post-occupation Japan occurred through the Zenkyōtō movement. The westernization (euphemised as “modernization”) of Japan had developed rapidly following Japan’s defeat in World War II. In a country undergoing a cultural transformation where the youth in particular were smothered by consumerist culture, the Zenkyōtō movement became the youth’s last attempt at a meaningful way of finding purpose in life. As Stretcher puts it, “the Zenkyoto movement provided a means of self-expression not necessarily offered by the easy comfort of home life and possessions. It is little wonder, then, that the end of the movement should have generated so severe an identity crisis among Japanese of Murakami's age and younger, particularly when the highly charged political movement was replaced simply with more consumer capitalism” (265-266).

The generational differences with regards to internalizing national trauma is further explored by Lieutenant Mamiya and Toru’s thoughts while inside the well. To quote Murakami directly, Lieutenant Mamiya’s immediate thoughts after falling into the well are as follows:

I thought about my hometown, so far away. I thought about the girl I slept with just once before they shipped me out. I thought about my parents. I recall feeling grateful that I had a younger sister and not a brother: even if I was killed, they would still have her and not have to worry about her being taken by the army. I thought about rice cakes wrapped in oak leaves. Then I slammed into dry ground and lost consciousness for a moment. It felt as if all the air inside me had burst through the walls of my body. I thudded against the well bottom like a sandbag. (188)

This is vastly different from Toru’s experience in the well, and his general lifestyle and thoughts as seen in the novel so far. Firstly, whereas Lieutenant Mamiya thinks about how much he

misses the girl he loves and his family, Toru's thoughts revolve around the lifeless marriage he has shared with his wife Kumiko for the past six years. There are rarely any mentions of his own family, and any mention of Kumiko's family is cloaked in either disapproval or disregard. The next thing Lieutenant Mamiya thinks about is "rice cakes", a type of food that holds strong cultural significance with regards to Japanese cuisine. This is strikingly different from Toru's own food profile throughout the entire novel, which mainly consists of western food items such as spaghetti, cookies, salad, sandwiches etc. Even on their wedding, as Toru recalls in the well, he and his wife decide to forego traditional Japanese values of celebrating with one's family and instead opt for saving the money for themselves and going to a "French restaurant that neither of us (them) could usually afford" (Murakami, 267).

Murakami's portrayal of Japanese society through the characters of Lieutenant Mamiya and Toru Okada reveal the country's use of ideology to control its citizens. The stark difference between Lieutenant Mamiya and Toru's experiences in the well shows how Japanese citizens interpellate government ideology as well as how this ideology has changed before and after Japan's post-War socio economic modernization. These circumstances can be interpreted and further dissected by using Louis Althusser's ideas of state apparatus and ideology. Louis Althusser mentions with regards to state institutions that, "All the agents of production, exploitation and repression, not to speak of the 'professionals of ideology' (Marx), must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'" (88). By this logic, any individual who does not wholeheartedly believe in the beliefs fed to them by the government, are incapable of doing their jobs properly. This ties in with how both Lieutenant Mamiya and Toru, individuals who stand opposed to the Japanese government's ideology, find themselves brutally punished by their circumstances.

For instance, Lieutenant Mamiya during his time in Manchukuo in 1939 is seen adamant in his belief that the war they were fighting was completely pointless. As Mamiya tells Toru while recounting his war experience, “Most Japanese realized that the war with China would turn into a muddy swamp from which we could never extricate ourselves, I believe-or at least any Japanese with a brain in his head realized this. It didn’t matter how many local battles we won: there was no way Japan could continue to occupy and rule over such a huge country.” (Murakami, 155). Lieutenant Mamiya’s reluctance to participate in or understand the war he was fighting in, is ultimately punished by the plot when he is captured and thrown into a well where despite being famished and dehydrated, he is somehow physically incapable of dying and being put out of his own misery.

On the other hand, Toru Okada, despite not having any direct resolutions against the Japanese government’s forced ideology, is seen having a strong disliking towards his brother-in-law, Noboru Wataya, a famous Japanese politician. Toru, aside from being a regular everyman, is the antithesis of an ideal Japanese citizen; lazy, unemployed and unambitious. His recent unemployment also has him in a position that strictly goes against the typical gender roles in a Japanese society; cooking and cleaning at home while his wife goes out to earn money. Similar to Lieutenant Mamiya, Toru is also seen punished by life as he finds out that his missing wife had been cheating on him with another man. As the plot goes on, Toru slowly descends into madness as he travels through multiple realities through the well in which he commits horrendous crimes ranging from physically assaulting people to murdering a man with a knife.

3.2 Separation from the Self: A Magic Realist Depiction of Social Alienation

The narrative of *TWUBC* takes place in 1984, Japan. The mid 1980’s in Japan, also known as the bubble period, was the peak of Japan’s post-war economic modernization. On the surface, the

country looked like some form of a utopia where poverty had ceased to exist. However, this is not the Japan that Murakami depicts in his writing. The characters in *TWUBC* are rarely ever seen basking in financial glory or reaping the benefits of a new capitalist society. Instead, what Murakami draws attention to is the shared but individual alienation that haunts each character.

Almost every character in *TWUBC* is depicted as isolated or mentally unhappy in one way or another. The main character, Toru Okada lives in a constant state of indifference and has little to no ambitions in life. Toru's wife, Kumiko is often described as detached, as though she were always "somewhere else, thinking about something else" (Murakami, 263). Creta Kano, a victim of rape, appears as though she is part of multiple different realities all at once, and describes herself as a "prostitute of the mind" (Murakami, 244). The only character who does not appear to display any signs of emotional exhaustion, and actually benefits from the world in *TWUBC* is Kumiko's brother Noboru Wataya. Noboru Wataya is a famous politician who Toru describes as an "intellectual chameleon, changing his color in accordance with his opponent's" (Murakami, 84). Noboru's strategy of mimicking his opponent as a way of copying their success mirrors the Japanese government's plans to modernize Japan by mimicking Western capitalist systems. Thus, in this analysis, Noboru Wataya is to be considered as a symbol of the post-War Japanese political system. Interestingly, he is also the root cause for the mental distress faced by all three of the characters mentioned above.

This social alienation among characters can be interpreted as the result of them having multifaceted personalities where they must hide away their true selves and put on an image of someone who is more presentable to society. The forming of new cultural practices in a westernized Japan led to the cultivation of a youth that was smothered with consumerism and riddled with various mental struggles. However, the vision of a modernized Japan had no place

for people who were not taking full advantage of the country's new capitalist society. To fit in, people had to resort to hiding away their personal struggles and put on a strong front. C. Wright Mills describes this phenomenon as "marketing mentality" (182). In his book *White Collar*, Mills analyzes the growth of a new middle-class in 1950s America. He argues that in order to survive in a capitalist culture, men and women are required to sell parts of their personality in order to secure jobs and fit into society. Mills explains how this practice can lead to alienation, stating "Men are estranged from one another as each secretly tries to make an instrument of the other, and in time a full circle is made: one makes an instrument of himself, and is estranged from It also" (188). Japan's endeavors with capitalism are no different. This phenomenon is most closely observed in *TWUBC* through the marriage of Toru and Kumiko. By trying to be acceptable towards one another, they only continue to grow further apart as neither of them truly know who the other person is. Mayer reintroduces this concept in her thesis as the characters in Murakami's fiction having public and private personae. She states, "The characters' isolation is caused by a perceived barrier between their private and public personae, with the magical events eventually acting as a bridging mechanism between those two spheres" (2). According to Mayer's argument, the isolation suffered by the characters in Murakami's novels occurs due to the growing distance between their public and private personalities. The only way the narrative is able bridge this gap and show an authentic portrayal of the characters' mental turmoil is through the use of magic realism.

It is not that the alienation and mental restlessness of the characters in *TWUBC* is never mentioned without hints of the supernatural. However, it is only through the remystification of the characters' experience with mental struggles that the true intensity of their suffering can be understood. Remystification is a process in magic realism where the use of magic mystifies an

object or experience that is otherwise ordinary. Murakami uses what Faris dubs as “defocalization” to depict the mental turmoil of the characters in *TWUBC*. Defocalization is the presentation of a narrative that does not present a clear sense of space or time. In Faris’ own words, she describes defocalization to be a narrative technique where “the perspective from which events are presented—is indeterminate; the kinds of perceptions it presents are indefinable and the origins of those perceptions are unlocatable” (43). She continues by stating that in a defocalized narrative, the narration comes from “two radically different perspectives at once” (43). This is certainly the case regarding the mystical experiences Toru has in the well. Murakami uses magic realism as a way of taking the reader on a journey in which they witness the unraveling of Toru’s private personae which had manifested itself inside his psyche in the form of violent urges.

During Toru’s first night in the well, he experiences a dream-like occurrence in which he passes through the walls of the well and comes face to face with Noboru Wataya. As though a manifestation of his greatest insecurities, Toru sees Noboru Wataya give a speech in front of hundreds of people which Toru interprets as a personal attack; “They grope through the darkness, searching for the exit, and die before they are able to comprehend a single thing about the way of the world. They have lost all sense of direction. They might as well be deep in a forest or down in a well” (Murakami, 279). Wanting to get away from Noboru Wataya, Toru makes his way through a corridor and finds himself inside a dark hotel room where a woman is waiting for him. As the woman speaks, Toru recognizes her voice to be the mysterious caller who had called him at the beginning of the novel. The mysterious woman keeps her identity a secret and tells Toru that in order to find out who she is he must find Kumiko, his missing wife before pushing him through the walls of the well. The exploration of Toru’s psyche through the well, hints at the

idea that the characters of the novel have to repress their insecurities in exchange for societal acceptance.

The next strange occurrence relating to the well occurs when Creta Kano enters the well and then magically disappears for a few days. The next time she appears, she is beside Toru in his bed, with him having no knowledge of how she had gotten there. As Toru sits confused, Creta Kano begins telling him about the night she was raped by Noboru Wataya. She describes this night as the first time she had felt pain in a long time and recalls a moment in which she felt her soul leave her body; “Strange as it may sound, this was like a dead person watching her own autopsy. Do you see what I mean? I felt as if I were watching from some vantage point as my body was being cut open and one slimy organ after another was being pulled out of me” (Murakami, 348). Creta kano’s separation from her body upon being defiled by Noboru Wataya represents the way many young people during Japan’s bubble period felt alienated from themselves, and society after being mentally tormented by Japan’s capitalist culture.

Toru’s final trip in the well is the final pull in unveiling his private persona. Frustrated with everything going on in his life, Toru takes up a job as a hitman, who by the orders of a character named Nutmeg, goes around following people and beating them up with a bat. Things go on like this for a while until Toru has a frightening dream one night in which he was assaulting someone with a bat, when suddenly the man gets up and picks up a knife. Instead of attacking Toru with the knife, the man instead “took all his clothes off and started to peel his own skin as if it were the skin of an apple” (Murakami, 390). This horrid dream bears close resemblance to the terrifying events of the Manchukuo described to Toru earlier in the novel by Lieutenant Mamiya. Toru is motivated by this dream to look for Kumiko in the well, believing that she is in an alternate reality. As Toru passes through the walls, he enters the same hotel room

as he had during his first trip in the well. The woman on the telephone is there just like she was before. However, this time Toru recognizes her as his wife Kumiko. The masks that separated the public and private personas of these characters are finally gone as Toru realizes that Kumiko in the well had been trying to send him a message, “a secret that the real Kumiko in the real world couldn’t bring herself to tell me (him)” (Murakami, 675). Toru confronts Kumiko about her disappearance and hypothesizes that her reason for this has to be something more than just infidelity; “There must be some other reason that is more basic-more real. And it almost certainly involves Noboru Wataya” (Murakami, 677). It is revealed that Noboru Wataya had defiled Kumiko’s sister when they were younger, just as he had defiled Creta Kano. Toru states that Noboru Wataya had a special power that he used to defile women and Kumiko had a growing anxiety that she may be targeted next:

You didn’t know exactly what had happened to your sister, only that she had given you some kind of warning before she died. You were too small at the time to understand what it was about. But you did understand, in a vague sort of way. You knew that Noboru Wataya had somehow defiled and injured your sister. And you sensed the presence in your blood of some kind of dark secret, something from which you could not remain aloof. And so, in that house, you were always alone, always tense, struggling by yourself to live with your dormant, undefinable anxiety. (Murakami, 679).

Once this secret is revealed, Toru is finally able to understand Kumiko’s anxieties and reasons for alienation. The story continues with the revelation that the man that Toru had beaten up earlier was actually Noboru Wataya. Upon returning to reality, Toru finds out that Noboru Wataya is in a coma and receives a message from Kumiko stating that she intended on killing her brother. The novel ends with Kumiko in Jail and Toru waiting for her release; a reality that is the

very antithesis of their polished lifestyle at the beginning of the novel. Though their lives are no longer the ideal picture of a modern Japanese home, they are finally able to put the masks away and understand one another for who they really are. The novel's conclusion, which shows Toru and Kumiko only being able to understand one another following the defeat of Noboru Wataya, hints at the idea that the government's forced ideology of "modernization" is the root of the social alienation among the Japanese youth.

The use of magic realism by Murakami in *TWUBC* allows Murakami to explore the mental restlessness of characters who are expected to live perfect lives in a utopian Japan. Social alienation and inertia are natural by-products of capitalism. By describing the characters' mental turmoil through a defocalized narrative, Murakami allows the reader to look beyond what is now so ordinary and understand the true intensity of the alienation that comes with living in a capitalist society.

Chapter Four

Kafka on the Shore

Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* depicts the parallel journeys of two characters- Kafka, a fifteen year old boy who is trying to escape an oedipal curse, and Nakata, a handicapped old man who "is not very bright" (Murakami, 72) but possesses the ability to talk to cats. Though these two main characters never cross paths, their journeys are connected through a shared enemy, Johnnie Walker. Johnnie Walker in popular global culture, is the name and icon of a famous brand of scotch. In *KOTS* however, the character of Johnnie Walker is "a man who is the literal embodiment of the globalized capitalist system of control." (Herring, 38). Furthermore, aside from being a symbol for western capitalism in post-war Japanese society, Johnnie Walker is also used by Murakami as an obstacle both of the main characters must defeat in order to find closure and happiness in their lives.

These two aspects- the capitalist monster, and the main characters' attempt to overcome this monster, are the pillars that support the use of magic realism in this novel. Thus, this portion of the thesis will discuss the use of magic realism, first in the depiction of western capitalist icons (Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders), and then through the analysis of the generational differences in dealing with alienation and identity, through the characters of Kafka and Nakata.

4.1 Evil Personified: The 'Spirit' of Japan's Political Poignancy

Unlike *TWUBC* which was set during the peak of Japan's bubble period, *KOTS* takes place sometime within Japan's Lost Decade (1991-2001). The lost decade of Japan was a time of economic decline following the infamous bubble burst in 1992. The value of the Japanese currency declined and the standard of living in most Japanese households took a rapid fall from what it was like during the 1980's. The sudden rise and fall of the economy within a span of a

couple of decades, had an effect on Japanese citizens and their perspective on national identity. As Wu puts it, “If economic achievement before the early 1990s was intrinsic to the ascendance of Japanese national pride and the construction of a Japanese national identity after WWII, economic downturn after the early 1990s must be the key to the perceived decline and destruction of the established national pride and national identity over the Lost Decades” (44). This destruction of national identity and general skepticism regarding the future of Japan’s economic prospects is reflected in Murakami’s narrative in *KOTS*. Where *TWUBC* used magic realism as a way of helping characters recognize and overcome social alienation, the use of magic realism in *KOTS* is more nonsensical, comedic, and instinctive of mocking rather than critiquing. The use of magic realism to bring western capitalist icons such as Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders to life is reflective of precisely such sentiments.

Both Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders are described as abstract beings. Neither of these characters are the actual people behind the famous brand logos, rather they are described as spirits who “don’t have a name or a shape” (Murakami, 262). As such, the depiction of Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders in *KOTS* can be interpreted as the physical embodiment of a concept in Japanese culture known as “wakon-yōsai”, which translates to “Japanese spirit-Western things”. This concept of “Japanese spirit-Western things” is a slogan from the early days of Japan’s modernization during the Meiji Restoration, used to describe the hybridity in the Japanese government’s plans to incorporate western governing systems while expecting citizens to keep the polite and obedient demeanor of Japanese social customs. Murakami has directly critiqued this double standard of the Japanese government’s hybrid state system in his introduction to the Penguin Classic’s edition of Akutagawa’s *Rashōmon and Seventeen Other Stories*, where he writes, “the Meiji government openly promoted a policy supporting precisely

such a bifurcation, as represented by the slogan “Japanese spirit, Western technology.” They wanted to incorporate the technological progressiveness and efficiency of Western systems, but they also wanted the people to remain good, submissive Confucianists. That made it easier for them to run the country.” (xxvii). As such, the characterization of Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders in *KOTS* as Japanese spirits who take on the looks of famous Western capitalist icons, can be interpreted as Murakami’s criticism of the interpellation of western capitalism in post-War Japan.

According to Althusser, “Ideology is a ‘representation’ of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” (100). As such, it is suggested that ideology is the government’s way of exploiting or manipulating their citizens into obeying state orders. Althusser further states that “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject.” (105). Thus according to this theory, it can be concluded that interpellation is the process by which individuals internalize state ideology and become faithful citizens. To put this into the context of the subject matter of this thesis, Murakami’s use of magic realism in *KOTS*, through Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders is his way of criticizing the Japanese government’s ideology in promoting Western capitalism and the concept of “Japanese spirit-Western things” as a means of modernizing the nation. By making Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders obstacles that hinder the growth of the main characters, Murakami suggests that the Japanese youth must undo the process of interpellation set by the government’s ideology of modernization, in order to grow as individuals and find closure. This process of interpellation, particularly for those of the older generation who had readily accepted Japan’s modernization ideology (due to the promise of economic fulfilment following World War II), is shown through the character of Nakata, an old man who was happy

with his life until he is directly confronted by Johnnie Walker and forced to realise his own emptiness; “Johnnie Walker went inside Nakata. He made me do things I didn't want to. Johnnie Walker used me, but I didn't have the strength to fight it. Because I don't have anything inside me” (Murakami, 286).

Unlike Nakata who didn't have the strength to fight Johnnie Walker, Kafka, who Murakami uses to represent the younger generation, is shown running away from Johnnie Walker in the opening scenes of the novel. Though it is never stated directly, it is hinted at throughout the novel that the man who Nakata recognizes as Johnnie Walker is also Kafka's father. Kafka's father had been a neglectful presence in Kafka's life, and is also the person who had bestowed upon Kafka his oedipal curse; “My father told me there was nothing I could do to escape this fate. That prophecy is like a timing device buried inside my genes, and nothing can ever change it. I will kill my father and be with my mother and sister” (Murakami, 187). The Oedipal curse here can be interpreted as Murakami viewing the fate of the Japanese youth born in following the post-occupation era; cursed to be confused and unhappy in a Japan that was riddled with Western capitalism. The killing of one's father suggests that the only way to put an end to the curse is by tearing down the government's enforcement of Western capitalism in Japanese culture, which in the novel is represented by Johnnie Walker. Kafka does end up killing his father (Johnnie Walker), and it is from that point onward that both he and Nakata are able to move forward with their lives and eventually find some form of closure. Furthermore, the suggestion of incest here can be viewed as the Japanese youth suffering due to their exploitation at the hands of their own country.

Murakami's use of magic realism to depict Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders can also be seen as his attempt to use magic realism as a decolonizing agent. Faris states that an author's

ability to use magic realism to overthrow “the dominant mode of realism in the West, challenging its basis of representation from within” is what makes magic realism an effective “decolonizing agent” (1). Faris continues her argument by stating that the “combination of realistic and fantastical narrative, together with the inclusion of different cultural traditions, means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society.” (1) Though Faris’s theory concerns itself with replenishing the realism in the west, it is still applicable here (seeing as how Japan is its own colonizer) with regards to how Murakami attempts to replenish the realism of capitalism in Japan. For most of the bubble period, despite the struggles of the youth, Japan was viewed by the outside world as an economically prosperous country where everyone was happy. Following the bubble burst, Murakami attempts in *KOTS* to rewrite the truth behind Japan’s exploitation via Western capitalism through the characters of Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders.

4.2 Confronting the Self: Alienation and Identity in the Lost Decades

KOTS is regarded as one of Murakami’s most masterful portrayals of magic realism. Aside from highlighting the characters’ mental struggles through various realities, Murakami also uses magic realism in *KOTS* to return to the core question Japanese magic realism set out to answer; the question of identity. Due to the continuous political turbulence in the country, magic realism in Japan became one of the main ways for Japanese authors and readers to navigate their way through various social, economic, and cultural shifts and form some sense of national and individual identity. Napier, in her study regarding the correlation of Japanese magic realism and identity states that, “To trace the history of magic realism in Japan is... to comment both on the development of Japanese fiction in general and on the changing notions of the Japanese identity

over the last century.” (453). Murakami depicts this struggle of identity in *KOTS* by showing the characters confronting the roots of their alienation as a way of finding themselves.

Every character in *KOTS* is seen struggling with their sense of identity in one way or another. The character Oshima struggles with fine-tuning their outer appearance with who they are on the inside, Miss Saeki’s current identity is overshadowed by her past identity, and Hoshino’s lack of identity comes from him being unable to hold down a job or find anything he is passionate about. However, the biggest identity conflict in the novel is shown through the two main characters, Kafka and Nakata. The narrative of *KOTS* shows the development of one’s identity as being the product of them confronting the cause of their alienation; Kafka is able to finally accept himself and his fate (the oedipal curse) once he confronts the root of his alienation (his mother). On the other hand, Nakata is only able to identify the gaps in his identity after a traumatic event makes him aware of his social alienation. The characters’ development in finding their identities through alienation follows a similar pattern to a stage in a person’s mental development which Jacques Lacan refers to as the “mirror stage”.

Lacan defines the mirror stage as “an identification... namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [assume] an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, "imago.”” (76). According to this theory, a child first becomes aware of their own physical existence within the external world at six to eighteen months old when they look into a mirror and see their own reflection. The child’s identification of themselves as an “I” results in a form of self-alienation that develops the child’s perception of themselves from an abstract entity in their own metaphysical headspace to a physical being that exists as part of the material world. Put simply, rather than thinking of themselves as an “I”, the child becomes

alienated from themselves by thinking of themselves as an “other”. Lacan states that it is only through overcoming this alienation that a child is able to establish an ego and develop an identity; “It establishes a genetic order in ego defenses, ...hysterical repression and its returns at a more archaic stage than obsessive inversion and its isolating processes, situating the latter as prior to the paranoid alienation that dates back to the time at which the specular *I* turns into the social *I*.” (Lacan, 79). Lacan’s theory of the “mirror stage” is reflected in Murakami’s use of magic realism to allow Kafka and Nakata to develop their personal and social identities. Though neither, Kafka or Nakata are toddlers, their realizations of their social identities create a rift between the true essence of how they feel, and their perceptions of themselves. These abstract contradictions in their identities are given physical forms in the novel through magic realism. The characters’ experiences with magical objects, locations, and people allows Murakami to use magic realism to remystify the process through which the Japanese youth of the Lost Decades were able to form new identities by overcoming their self-alienation.

The rift between Kafka’s emotional existence vs his presence in the real world starts taking form after his mother and his sister abandon him as a child, and his father bestows to him the oedipal curse that he will kill his father and have sex with his mother and sister. The realization of his fate starts Kafka’s self-alienation process. This is observed most prevalently in the first half of the novel where Kafka states his hatred towards everything within himself that connects him to his parents; “I’m stuck with my father’s long, thick eyebrows and the deep lines between them. I could probably kill him if I wanted to-I’m sure strong enough-and I can erase my mother from my memory. But there’s no way to erase the DNA they passed down to me. If I wanted to drive that away I’d have to get rid of me” (Murakami, 16). This hatred of himself and his fate continues to haunt Kafka until the climax of the novel where he travels to a different

dimension through a magic forest and confronts the root cause of his alienation; his mother (Miss Saeki). In his conversation with his mother, Kafka asks her why she had abandoned him as a child. Though his mother offers a somewhat vague explanation in response, it is enough to relieve Kafka from the grief and burden of his oedipal curse. Their conversation ends with Kafka telling his mother he forgives her and returning to the real world. Even at the end of the novel, Kafka never has any profound moment of clarity, with the last thing he says to his mother being, “I don't know what it means to live.” (Murakami, 412). However, some form of self-assurance can be noticed within Kafka’s character when his alter-ego, Crow reassures him of his actions; “You did what was best. No one else could have done as well as you did. After all, you're the genuine article: the toughest fifteen-year-old in the world.” (Murakami, 435). This a huge difference from all of the prior interactions between Kafka and Crow throughout the novel, where Crow is typically seen belittling or mocking everything Kafka does. Though no direct resolution is presented for Kafka’s identity, his ability to not look down on himself as he had prior to confronting his mother, suggests that dismantling the reason behind his self-alienation is what led to him being more self-assured and comfortable in his own skin.

In contrast to Kafka’s awareness of his alienation at a young age, Nakata is unaware that he is alienated until he is nearly at the end of his life. Nakata is not any typical Japanese man in his sixties or seventies. Due to an accident that occurred in 1944, Nakata lost all of his mental prowess but gained the ability to speak to cats. Though it is not revealed until the latter half of the novel, the incident of 1944 also takes away part of Nakata’s spirit. It is suggested that during the accident in 1944, Nakata left his body and travelled to a different dimension. Following the accident, only part of Nakata’s spirit was able to return to his body. This is symbolized in the novel through Nakata’s shadow which is only half as dark as regular people’s shadows. Unlike

Kafka who was greatly disturbed by what his fate had in store for him, Nakata was not bothered by his lack of intellect or the mistreatment he received from others due to his dim-wittedness.

In a conversation with a Siamese cat called Mimi, Nakata remarks that despite not being intelligent he is satisfied with how his life turned out; “It is a pretty good life. Nakata can keep out of the wind and rain, and I have everything I need” (Murakami, 45). It is not until Nakata is forced to kill Johnnie Walker in order to save some cats that he begins to question his fate and identity. Nakata tries to report his crime of murdering Johnnie Walker to the police but gets turned away when the police officers believe him to be crazy and making things up. Following the police’s rejection, Nakata decides to take matters into his own hands by finding the other half of his shadow (Miss Saeki) and the entrance stone (a magical stone that allows people to travel between two different dimensions). On his journey, Nakata befriends a truck driver named Hoshino, and it is then that Nakata reveals his conflict regarding his identity; “It's not just that I'm dumb. Nakata's empty inside. I finally understand that. Nakata's like a library without a single book. It wasn't always like that. I used to have books inside me. For a long time I couldn't remember, but now I can. I used to be normal, just like everybody else. But something happened and I ended up like a container with nothing inside” (Murakami, 284). Nakata does eventually find the other half of his shadow and the entrance stone. However, he is revealed to be dead, as soon as the entrance stone is flipped and the gate to an alternate dimension (where Nakata had travelled to in the 1944 accident) is opened. Murakami leaves the ending to Nakata’s tale up to interpretation. Though the characters in the novel believe him to be dead, it is suggested by hints given throughout the novel that Nakata’s spirit had once again left his body, as it had in 1944, and reunited with the remaining part of Nakata’s spirit in the alternate dimension. The reunion of Nakata’s spirit in the other dimension fulfills his desire of being a “normal Nakata” (Murakami,

285). Nakata's journey in finding identity just like Kafka's follows the rules of Lacan's "mirror stage". Nakata is made aware of himself through his interaction with Johnnie Walker. After this, he goes through a period of self-alienation where how he feels inside does not align with his original perception of himself. Once he confronts this alienation, by meeting up with Miss Saeki and turning the entrance stone, he is finally able to find a sense of identity (by reuniting with the other half of his soul in the alternate dimension).

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Elements of the political poignancy in the Post Occupation Era had an impact not just on what Murakami wrote, but also how he wrote it. Haruki Murakami is by far the most globally recognized writer to come out of Japan. His popularity across the globe can be accredited to the universal themes of isolation, identity and detachment found in his characters. Additionally, to the disapproval of many Japanese literary critics, the popularity of Murakami's work might also stem from the fact that his characters, settings, and language have been altered to represent a Japan that adheres to western taste. Though much of Murakami's writing shows disapproval of the westernization of Japan and the impacts it had on Japanese youth, this thesis would be incomplete without briefly problematizing the westernization of Murakami as a writer.

Murakami is known in the Japanese literary community to be a westernized writer who loves western (mostly American) culture, music, brands etc. Murakami's fascination with the West exceeds to the point where he even "claims to have developed his distinctive style writing first in English, and then translating into Japanese" (Fisher, 155). However, the concluding argument of this thesis is not to criticize Murakami's infatuation with the West, but to understand it through a globalized perspective in which "western things" are not the West's alone. Unlike his predecessors, for Murakami, the west was not a mystical land that represented modernity and progressiveness. Western culture was just as much his culture as Japanese culture was. Thus, "In order to understand Murakami's relationship to the West, it is necessary to consider him a writer of the postmodern world, of a world in which the "the West" and "Japan" are problematic entities, and in which the objects and cultural practices that once defined the West can also be found in Japan." (Fisher, 156).

This understanding of Murakami's relationship to the West provides further insight into the themes of alienation and identity struggle in his novels. His criticism of the west isn't the typical narrative of the colonized blaming the colonizer. Rather the criticism of western capitalism in Murakami's novels are a criticism of Japan itself. This sentiment is seen clearly in both *TWUBC* and *KOTS* where characters such as Toru Okada and Kafka Tamura, despite suffering at the hands of western capitalism, are both perpetrators of western culture in Japan. Murakami himself, despite being a victim of Japan's modernization, is also through his career, a perpetuator and active participant of Japan's capitalist culture. With this insight, it is easier to understand why identity was such a big struggle for the Japanese youth of the Post Occupation Era. Though it was clear to them that their troubles stemmed from Japan's attempts at modernization, they simultaneously had to face the fact that this westernized version of Japan had become a fundamental part of their existence. Thus for the Japanese youth, to eliminate western capitalism in Japan was to destroy a fundamental part of whatever sense of identity they held on to. With this understanding of the Japanese youth's relationship to the West, it would be a big generalization to pass off Murakami simply as a Japanese writer catering to the Western market. Rather than labelling him as a westernized Japanese writer, Murakami may be more authentically described as a writer who had grown up under the influence of a westernized Japan.

Despite the criticism from many Japanese literary critics, Murakami's popularity among the Japanese youth is a testament to the authenticity his writing holds in presenting the dilemma surrounding Japanese national identity. Murakami's Japan is one that defies all sense of boundaries. It is an amalgamation of blurred lines in which the past and present, East and West, and colonized and colonizer coexist in the same entity. With so many sides to account for, it is

no wonder that Murakami's perception of Japan's political poignancy and youth alienation could only be encapsulated by something as dynamic and multidimensional as magic realism.

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