

TECHNIQUES AS DISCOVERY OF IDENTITY IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF HARUKI MURAKAMI

THESIS SUBMITTED TO BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

BY
RAJI NARASIMHAN

Under the Guidance of

Dr. SUSHIL MARY MATHEWS Ph.D.



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

PSGR KRISHNAMMAL COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

College with Potential for Excellence
(An Autonomous Institution, Affiliated to Bharathiar University)
(Reaccredited with 'A' Grade by NAAC, An ISO 9001: 2008 Certified Institution)
Peelamedu, Coimbatore – 641 004

TAMILNADU, INDIA.

JUNE – 2016

Chapter V

Summation

The preceding chapters have focused on the techniques that have been used by Haruki Murakami, in the novels *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, *Kafka on the Shore*, *Wild Sheep Chase* and *Dance Dance Dance*. The chapters analyzed how techniques bring out the predicament and conflict in the protagonist, defense mechanism used by the characters and their journey to the resolution and acceptance of their identity.

The psychological approach of Dr. Vaillant has been applied to the selected novel along with Mark Schorer's theory of techniques to show how techniques can be instrumental in elevating the aesthetic quality of art along with rendering depth of meaning in the portrayed characters. Techniques also allow the readers to see that Murakami is skilled in shaping his characters, who are round and complex characters. The defense mechanisms that are used to preserve the balance of the individual is identified and discovered by the use of techniques.

The techniques that were identified include symbols, interior monologue, monologues and dialogues, narrative viewpoint, juxtaposition, defamiliarization, simulacra, magical realism and dreams. These techniques discover the predicament of the protagonists, defenses mechanisms such as: dissociation, idealization, Acting Out, Narcissism, Fantasy, Projective Identification, Passive Aggression, Sublimation, Rationalization, Intellectualization and Humour, and these techniques also serve to recognize the choice of an identity that the protagonist assumes.

The novels have been analysed in five chapters. The first chapter traces Japanese literature from its birth to the present day and situates Haruki Murakami on the global literary map to show his importance and popularity as a writer. Chapter II entitled ‘The Conflict’ analyses the select novels to bring out the predicament of the protagonist along with the internal conflict that each protagonist has, and to reveal the techniques of symbols, interior monologues, monologues and dialogues as they discover the predicament of the protagonists. The third chapter entitled ‘The Psyche’ deals with the defense mechanism that each of the protagonists use as a temporary solution to help them cope with their environment, and shows how techniques like narrative modes, juxtaposition, defamiliarization, simulacra and technoculture reveal the subtle play of defense mechanisms. The fourth chapter entitled ‘The Identity’ addresses the identity crises in the protagonist due to his conflict and traces his realization and search for identity and its exposition to the readers through literary techniques like magical realism and dreams.

The **major findings** of the research are that the characters in the novel struggle to find a balance between their social identity and their personal identity and most often, the characters that are able to find a balance between these two identities are the ones that are able to live in harmony. In order to arrive at these findings the novels have been analyzed by focusing on them on three layers of meaning. The first layer treats each character as different entities that interact with each other. The symbolism of each character along with other symbolic ideas and events that bring out the conflict of the protagonist are delineated. The Calcutec, the Dreamreader in HBEW, Kafka Tamura and Nakata Sutoru in KS and the narrator in WSC and DDD are the protagonists that are under scrutiny. All other characters are seen to interact

with the protagonist. Dialogues between characters, interior monologues and monologues are used by the author to bring out the inner conflict of the protagonists.

The narrative mode of each novel is investigated along with juxtaposition, defamiliarization, simulacra and technoculture to show the psyche of the protagonists. The second layer of analysis looks into the psychological aspect of the characters and identifies defense mechanisms that the characters use on an unconscious level. Dissociation is a major defense mechanism that was identified in characters, where two or more characters appear to be the protagonist. Apart from dissociation other defense mechanisms like idealization, acting out, narcissism, fantasy, projective identification, passive aggression, suppression, repression, isolation, sublimation, rationalization, intellectualization, withdrawal, distortion, courage, respect and humour are identified in the select novels.

Through the narrative modes and dissociation, the Calcutec and the Dreamreader were seen to be two identities of the same protagonists in HBEW, Kafka Tamura and Nakata Sutoru are identities of the same protagonist in KS, the Rat, the Sheep Man, and the Sheep Professor are part of the narrator in WSC and the characters in the bizarre room: Ame, Mei, Gotanda, Dick North, Kiki and the Rat were seen as parts of the same narrator.

The third and most crucial layer of analysis is on the nature of identity related to the conflict. The idea of social identity and individual identity is discovered with the techniques of magical realism and dreams. Characters that represent each of the identity in the novel is identified and the resolution of the conflict, where one identity survives over the other in the novels, as the novels end, is also explored. In HBEW the Dreamreader was identified as the social identity, while the Calcutec was seen to be the individual identity. In KS, Kafka appeared to be the individual identity, while

Nakata was the social identity. In WSC the Sheep Professor represented the social identity, while the Rat was identified as the individual identity. The Sheep Man was seen as an identity that fluctuated between the two identities trying to strike a balance and in DDD, Mei was the social identity and Gotanda was the individual identity of the narrator. The Sheep Man once again was the one to survive while balancing both the identities. The chapter revealed how magical realism and dreams brought out the realization of identity and the dominance of a single identity towards the conclusion in each of the novels. The chapter also brought out the role of nameless characters in portraying the complex ideas of identity. The conflict in HBEW resolved with the social identity gaining prominence, while in KS the novel concluded with the individual identity being dominant. Similarly in WSC the individual identity in balance with the social identity appeared to have won over and it is established in the sequel that it was the social identity in balance with the individual identity that was able to overcome the conflict to provide a lasting solution. The search for identity and its metaphysical nature has been well explained with magical realism and dreams. Thereby the **aims and objectives** of the thesis have been addressed.

The **limitations** of this thesis are that it has focused on only nine techniques rather than all the techniques used by the author. Murakami has used other post modern techniques like pastiche, intertextuality and temporal distortion, which are seen in the novels but have not been dealt with in the research since they were not found in all four selected novels and do not play a direct role in revealing the identity of the protagonists. Only four novels have been chosen in order to narrow down the focus of the study, which may be considered a limitation of the study. The theme of inner conflict, play of defense mechanisms and determining social and individual identities in the protagonist were most prominently seen in the four chosen novels.

Avoiding the other novels helped to narrow down the area of focus to the conflict of identities and allowed for deeper analysis of the search for identity in the chosen characters. The chosen novels have been studied in their translation, which may pose as another limitation. This was seen when the use of narrative modes were studied. The translations did not distinctly bring out *Boku* and *Watashi*. This limitation was overcome by the use of reviews and research done on these narrative modes.

Techniques that have not been investigated in this research present a great **scope for further research**. For instance, Intertextuality is a technique that is used extensively in KS. The plot of the novel surrounds an Oedipal prophecy that is a close resemblance of Greek literature. The name of the protagonist is that of his favourite author, whom he quotes liberally. In *The Penal Colony*, the short story of Kafka is discussed at length by Oshima and Kafka Tamura. The library where Kafka works is a great place for the novel to unfold since it allows for the elaborate use of this technique.

Kafka reads about the trial of Adolf Eichmann, and the discussion that follows is pivotal in the choices that Kafka makes in the course of the novel. It plays a great role in enforcing the role of “imagination” and “responsibility” both of which are connected to Kafka’s life. *The Brothers Karamazov* is a novel that is often referred to in the novels to show the importance of existence: “Was I any closer to appreciating Alyosha's insights? Some limited happiness had been granted this limited life.” (HBEW 395), and yet again he mentions the novel along with *Lord Jim* when he knows that his time is running out: “I closed my eyes and tried to remember the names of the Karamazov brothers. Mitya, Ivan, and Alyosha—and then there was the bastard Smerdyakov. How many people in Tokyo knew the names of all these guys?” (HBEW 390). Intertextuality acts as a way of invoking authority. Murakami does not

flaunt his intelligence with this technique. He does quite the opposite by giving a detailed explanation of every reference that he uses to substantiate or illuminate an idea.

Murakami uses music and technology extensively, to bring a sense of reality to his fiction. Having been an owner of a Jazz Club, his love for music finds a place in his writing too. There is constant mention of Bob Dylan, The Beatles, Otis Reading, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Led Zeppelin and others. Murakami does not stop with naming the songs and giving the lyrics. He allows the characters to experience their world along with a particular song, which causes the readers to do the same. Most of his books take their titles from popular songs.

The last few moments of the Calcutec are spent listening to Bob Dylan's *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*. The final scene is of the author reclined in his car seat with his feet up, watching the beach, listening to Dylan on auto-repeat. The same *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* plays when the narrator is with Mei in DDD and he makes a mental list of Paul McCartney's songs. Murakami has a strong attachment to the Beatles, who are present in most of his novels. Beethoven's Sonatas are very close to Murakami as well. The Sheep Professor is merited with the ability to play the Beethoven's sonata in middle school. B.B. King, Kenny Burrell, Larry Coryell and Jim Hall are mentioned in WSC. DDD has Yuki, who is interested in Talking Heads, David Bowie, Phil Collins, Jefferson Star-ship, Thomas Dolby, Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, Hall & Oates, Thompson Twins, Iggy Pop, Bananarama, The Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney and Michael Jackson. The list of songs and artists mentioned is exhaustive and begs to be the focus of a whole different research. Murakami explains why these techniques are important to him:

I'm a writer of contemporary literature, which is very different. At the time that Kafka was writing, you had only music, books, and theater; now we have the Internet, movies, rental videos, and so much else. We have so much competition now. The main problem is time: in the nineteenth century, people—I'm talking about the leisure class—had so much time to spend, so they read big books. They went to the opera and sat for three or four hours. But now everyone is so busy, and there is no real leisure class. It's good to read *Moby-Dick* or Dostoevsky, but people are too busy for that now. So fiction itself has changed drastically—we have to grab people by the neck and pull them in. Contemporary fiction writers are using the techniques of other fields—jazz, video games, everything. I think video games are closer to fiction than anything else these days. (Murakami TPR)

The titles of his novels originate from songs like *South of the Border West of the Sun* and *Norwegian Wood*. The novel KS also has a song “Kafka on the Shore” of the same title, which is an important part of combining the two worlds of the novel. Murakami also lays stress on the unusual chords that appear in the refrain of the song. A lot of emphasis is placed on these two chords that suggest that they are deliberately placed for aesthetic appeal.

The importance given to the two unusual chords in the novel, hints at the importance given to the absurd in art. The presence of just two misplaced chords attracts the listener much more than all the other chords that resonate well with the song. Murakami directs the attention of the reader towards the compelling nature of the absurd and the unusual, which is much more of an attention grabber than the well-placed events. This gives more insight into the reason why Murakami's novels have a

strong element of the absurd. Many instances in the novel evade logic and explanation. They give room to metaphysical and psychological explanations to a large extent, but to define or explain them only on the basis of reality is nearly impossible. Similarly, the novels include other themes like ennui, historical significance and the effects of war, which could be topics for further research.

Murakami's novels defy categorization into Japanese or American. Murakami claims that his fiction is the reflection of the postmodern Japanese society "I'm trying to write about the Japanese. I want to write about what we are, where we are going, why we are here. That's my theme" (Murakami TPR), but his fiction is often considered to be more Americanized. The frequent references to American consumer products like KFC or Captain Sanders as seen in *HBEW* is a reason for critics to believe that there is a "lack of "Japaneseness"," in his works. (Taichibana).

Taichibana states:

"Murakami's references to American and European culture in his works—from capitalistic icons (e.g., Johnny Walker) and music (classic, jazz, and pop) to high-brow thinkers (Nietzsche, Proust, Kafka, etc.)—are a deliberate attempt to defamiliarize himself by distancing himself and his work from conventional reality" (99).

Nevertheless, like his fiction, Murakami's popularity is also not restricted to Japan but has spread across the globe. Murakami agrees that there was a certain period in his life where he tried to distance himself from Japan. He left the country to travel around Europe and America. It was much later in 2001 that he moved back to Japan. Western writers like Dostoevsky and Raymond Chandler mostly influenced Murakami's works. He admits "I didn't read many Japanese writers when I was a child or even in my teens. I wanted to escape from this culture; I felt it was boring.

Too sticky.” (Murakami TPR). Murakami returned to his homeland after the events of 1995, which brought about a great shift in his attitude towards Japan and his writing. *Underground* and *After the Quake*, were two works that were influenced by the calamities of 1995: The Sarin gas attack, and the earthquake. In January 1995, an earthquake shook Kobe, killing more than 5000 people and later that same year in March, a cult called the ‘Aum Shinrikyu’ release Sarin gas into the subway that killed many people. These events brought out an unexpected side of Japan to the forefront (Boulter 125). His works reflect these influences.

For Murakami, who had been living abroad almost nine years . . . decided to return to Japan permanently and face the ghosts of Japan’s past through a variety of works that considered the contemporary cultural vacuum. Significant among them are *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche (1997–98)*, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle (1997)*, and even *After the Quake*. (Welch Patricia 58)

Murakami’s works border between Japanese and American writing. In Japan, his work is considered to be Americanized and in America it is considered Japanese. Yet his novels and their content are understood by both cultures without much difficulty. There are instances when Murakami gives explicit American references without regard for the Japanese association with such American terms. Chozick points out that “This degree of accessibility for Americans, sometimes at the expense of Japanese, is a tendency throughout Murakami’s books” (65).

Along with the search for identity, alienation, escapism and gender identity are recurring themes in the novels of Murakami. Quite often the reader feels the disconnection or the cultural vacuum of the protagonist to his surroundings. The novels have a deep sense of alienation in the characters. In KS, the fifteen-year-old

boy does not seem to enjoy the school culture and is seen to be an outsider in his own home. At the same time Nakata, the old man, is also seen as a misfit in normal society where he feels that his world has moved on without him. His inability to read or write and his low intelligence has caused him to become an outcaste or a stranger of his society. Similarly, the Calcutec is extremely disconnected from all social and cultural contact. He lives an isolated life and is buried in his work and material possession of his home. His social life is almost non-existent. The Dreamreader too is an outsider in his own Utopia. He makes great effort to study the place, yet he has this distinct feeling of being an outsider in the walled town. In WSC the Rat has isolated himself but does not tell the readers why. And in DDD, Yuki is a teenager who lives alone and away from her parents. A sense of alienation is seen in each of the characters.

Escapism is a recurring theme in his novels. In KS, when the young protagonist leaves home and returns once he realizes who he really is. He believes that he can run away from his problems by running away from home. But by the end of the novel, Kafka realizes, that his problems are not in the world, but it is his perception of the world that creates his problems. He returns as soon as he realizes that he can free himself by facing his fears rather than running away from them. In HBEW, the Dreamreader is constantly searching for a way to escape the town, which is his own mind. He draws a map and finally finds an exit but he decides to remain in the town when he realizes that the town is a part of his unconscious. He takes responsibility for all the people and creatures in that town and decides to stay. In a way, the protagonist realizes his true identity and that his allegiance is to himself and decides to do the right thing in the given circumstance. In WSC the narrator is forced to leave to escape the threat of the Strange man and the Rat escapes the world and lives on the mountains. In DDD the hotel is a place where the narrator escapes to.

Although he searches for Kiki, he feels a sense of belonging being away from his regular life.

Gender identity can be looked at as a possible topic for further research in Murakami's novels. Women characters have gradually gained prominence in Murakami's novels with time. Although his recent novels are more centered around women, they have always played pivotal roles in each of his novels. In HBEW the librarian is seen as an aid to the Dreamreader. She brings comfort to him in his time of need and offers help. She plays the role of his assistant in the process of dream reading. The librarian of HB is also a great help to the Calcutec as he tries to trace the meaning of the unicorn skull. His friendship with the librarian is his only social contact that he has. The grand daughter is a bridge between the professor and the Calcutec. She is the Calcutec's sole companion during his final moments of consciousness. Murakami gives a great deal of purpose for his women characters. "In my books and stories, women are mediums, in a sense; the function of the medium is to make something happen through herself" (Murakami TPR).

The role of Miss Seiki is crucial to the novel to allow Kafka to face his worst fears. Kafka is faced with the conflict of following his will or submitting to destiny. His choices are greatly influenced by Miss Seiki. Her attraction for Kafka is gradually expressed in a spontaneous way and Kafka's reaction to Miss Seiki is also delivered in a subdued manner without any startled reaction from Kafka. "In the realistic world, as you say, the women are very active, comic, positive. They have a sense of humor." (Murakami TPR).

The role of Sakura is also one that allows Kafka to examine himself. She too is a true "medium" that Murakami speaks about. Sakura's willingness allow Kafka to take charge of situations by being a passive companion, allows the plot to move

forward as well as the Character of Kafka to grow. She offers comfort to Kafka when he is frightened and has nowhere to go. At the same time, the Oedipal prophecy that Kafka's father predicts, is realized by Sakura's passive nature. In each of these novels "the protagonist is supported by two women; without either of them, he could not go on." (Murakami TPR). The girlfriend in WSC is clairvoyant, who helps the narrator to make his choice. She decides that they should stay at the Dolphin hotel, which brings the narrator to the end of his search. Similarly Yuki, in DDD, acts like a medium to the narrator and tells him about Kiki's death and about the Sheep Man and Gotanda's secret.

The women in these novels are free spirited, independent and have a willingness to help the protagonist, who is in search of something. It is with the help of these women that the protagonist finds his destination and identity. The women characters that appear in the selected novel have similar purpose. KS portrays Miss. Seiki, Sakura and Oshima (who is a hermaphrodite) and the girl who helps him cook in the post-World War II parallel world into which he enters. Women characters in HBEW include the Granddaughter, the Librarian in HB and the Librarian in EW. Each of these women is instrumental in allowing the protagonist to move forward in his life or to aid him with his decisions. WSC has the girlfriend, the absent ex-wife and the girl who dies at the beginning of the novel. DDD portrays Kiki, Mei, Yuki and Ame as the women characters.

Murakami's novels cannot be confined in a single interpretation. The author leaves many things unsaid and to the imagination of the reader. The works of Murakami read like poetry in many instances, with the same spirit of poetry that allows for multiple interpretations. Each of the novels may be subject to contradictory interpretations. The name that Murakami chooses for his protagonist in *Kafka on the*

Shore is a classic example of the contradictory interpretation to what one may find in the novel. “Kafka” is interpreted as “as an attempt to combine opposite etymons” (Chozick 65). “Ka” means “possible, good” and “fuka” means “not possible, not good”. So by combining the word Ka-fuka “superimposes consciousness and unconsciousness, success and failure, the possible and the impossible” (65) the ying and the yang. This contradictory combination is a sample of what is presented in the novel itself. As Murakami himself puts it in *Underground* “Reality is created out of confusion and contradiction, and if you exclude those elements, you're no longer talking about reality” (363).

Murakami is one of the most popular writers of today. Murakami’s work is considered to be postmodern and contemporary literature. He is one of the most popular and widely read authors of Japanese literature. His work is categorized as serious literature (*jun-bungaku*). He is recognized as the champion of the *shin-jinrui* or the “new human beings”, which is a reference to the post World War II generation. The *shin-jinrui* are in favour of the American pop culture and have a strong disregard for the Japanese traditional values (Murakami CLC). This is a result of the affluence that influenced the generation after the world war. The “new human beings” were born into the affluence that the previous generation tried hard to acquire. They took the luxuries that surrounded them for granted. This is reflected in the novels. Murakami’s style is a mixture of American “motifs and diction” and the themes of serious Japanese literature that includes “love, death and the self” (Murakami CLC).

On analyzing the style of Murakami’s writing, it is common to find references to American brand names and “cultural icons” that have incited a mixed response among his critics. Some claim that his works are more tailored to suit the commercial demand while others grant him recognition alongside literary stalwarts like Ōe

Kenzaburō and Kōbō Abé. Despite such extremes of criticism Murakami's efforts have played a role in the evolution of the Japanese language and he has been compared with novelists like Jay McInerney or Bret Easton Ellis (Murakami CLC).

Murakami's writing style has a casual tone that focuses on the present. All the select novels begin in the present and in the mind of the protagonist. The present tense is used to introduce the protagonist. The second chapter takes the readers into a different world without warning in KS, HBEW and WSC. The tense change reveals that the reader has been transported to a different time and perhaps a different location. Murakami does not allow the reader to remain passive but forces them to be active participants in the unfolding of the plot.

The use of figurative language allows him to paint a picture with his words on the imagination of his readers. Most comparisons that he uses are unique and original. For instance the "Boy named Crow" says "Money isn't like mushrooms in a forest--it doesn't just pop up on its own, you know" (KS 3) or "Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions" (KS 5). Unconventional comparisons such as these are constantly used throughout the novels. Murakami is popular with young readers and his use of language is in tune with that of the young readers.

Murakami's novels have an informal tone that allow the readers to warm up to him immediately and Murakami has the uncanny ability to make his readers relax with melodious and calming description in one moment and contrasts it with a jarring and conflicting description in another. In HBEW the chapters that describe the life of the Calcutec in HB have words that are jarring and hint on chaotic undertones while those that describe EW have a pleasing and calm sound to it. Taking the titles he assigns to each of his chapters, this same contrasting and alternating effect may be felt. Murakami's choice of names for his characters has a great deal of value in

judging the character. Similarly, the names of his books have been often connected to American jazz music. Murakami's works often baffle the readers, keeps them hanging to his every word, and wins their trust in spite of his bizarre references and loose ends that keep them awake, pondering over what other interpretation his work may carry.

The beauty of Murakami's novels lie both in the description and easy use of language as well as in the essence they convey, of the possibility of other worlds and the beauty and knowledge beheld in them. In his own words: "A real story requires a kind of magical baptism to link the world on this side with the world on the *other* side" (*Sputnik Sweethearts* 16). Murakami's novels include the other worlds to give a surreal and metaphysical quality to his novels.

Identifying the various techniques used, allows the readers to interpret the deeper meanings embedded in his novels. As the reader journeys along with the protagonist in the novel, it is with the help of techniques that the reader is able to discover the mind of the protagonist and witness the struggle for his choice of identity to help him function in his social surroundings.

The paradox of this search for identity is that, no matter how many radicals like the Rat push the margins of society and the society expands to include all that is within the margin, soon a new struggle begins. The individual identity soon becomes the social identity and the individual identity needs to keep changing – that is its nature, it is dynamic and the social identity is more stagnant than dynamic. So the struggle between the individual and society can never stop. Identity is not a constant and defies definition. Murakami does not try to find *the* identity, instead he tries to show what individuality is. The individual identity succumbs to change; it is also an ideal just as the social identity, like the sheep with the star is an illusion, or an ideal

that cannot be reached. So both identities, and the notion of an identity is an illusion that we all continue to aspire for.

Haruki Murakami detests any form of allegorical interpretation of his work. He states that all his works are results of automatic writing and he intends them to be read that way. At the same time, Jung, in his essay *Psychology and Literature* states, “that what a poet has to say about his work is often far from being the most illuminating word on the subject. What is required of us, then, is nothing less than to defend the importance of the visionary experience against the poet himself” (513), thereby giving the scholar the licence to analyze the work of art from many angles and to “rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world and allow a glimpse into the unfathomed abyss ... a vision of other worlds” (Jung 510).