

Murakami Haruki's Short Fiction and the Japanese Consumer Society

By

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to describe the Japanese novelist Murakami Haruki's continuing critique of Japan's modern consumer-oriented society in his fiction. The first chapter provides a brief history of Japan's consumer-oriented society, beginning with the Meiji Restoration and continuing to the 21st Century. A literature review of critical works on Murakami's fiction, especially those on themes of identity and consumerism, makes up the second chapter. Finally, the third chapter introduces three of Murakami Haruki's short stories. These short stories, though taken from three different periods of Murakami's career, can be taken together to show a legacy of critiquing Japan's consumer-oriented society.

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Introduction

Murakami Haruki's Short Fiction and the Japanese Consumer Society

Among critics and fans, Murakami Haruki is known for the international appeal of his writings. Though exotic to the Western reader, Murakami possesses a generally laid back and cosmopolitan style that seems less exotic than that of other great Japanese novelists. This style has made his novels and stories successful around the world, whether the reader has any interest in Japan or not. This thesis seeks to discuss one of the reasons for his appeal: the critical view of the materialistic and commercialistic modern Japan that is present in many of his critically-acclaimed novels. Additionally, this thesis argues that such criticism can be found in his short fiction as well, though his short fiction is usually more experimental in nature. By exploring three of his short stories, “*Odoru kobito* (The Dancing Dwarf),” “*Toshokan kitan* (A Tale of the Strange Library),” and “*Dokuritsu Kikan* (An Independent Organ),” one can create a full picture of Murakami’s critical view of Japan and its commercial society.

This thesis begins with a brief history of Japan’s economic rise and the effects that a consumer society has had on succeeding generations of contemporary Japanese and left-wing politics. As Matthew Stetcher points out in his book *Dancing with Sheep*, the Japanese had a series of national goals that they were able to identify with during the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa periods (72). One of the major criticisms of modern society in Murakami’s novels is that the national goal for the Japanese today is consumption of consumer goods to facilitate economic growth. His criticism is that this goal is not satisfactory because it is caught up in a system of control—a complex system of large corporations, mostly conservative political figures, and bureaucrats who enact policy changes that often benefit organizations over everyday people.

The Japanese consumer society that Murakami criticizes in his fiction has roots in

Japan's modern history. During the Meiji and Taisho eras, the consumer society developed as a response to the alienation felt by those who had left their home villages for the first time and moved to rapidly urbanizing cities for better opportunities. After the Pacific war, the consumer society became the nation's way through the reconstruction and the elite's way to assert Japanese control over the Asian mainland. Consumerism allowed the Japanese economy to prosper and gave Japanese businesses the impetus to exploit the mainland under the guise of modernizing the Asian mainland and producing goods for Japanese consumption. To the everyday citizen, the work in the consumer society led to affluence, but consumption of those consumer goods gave them nothing to identify with. In the 1960s, the reaction to this lack of identity was violent, but after the 60s the reaction was one of mere apathy. The collapse of the Bubble economy in the 1990s revealed to the Japanese many of the social problems that are on the horizon for Japanese society, but since then little has been done politically to address these problems.

In response to this consumer society are the works of writers like Murakami Haruki. After a brief history section, this paper moves into a literary review of Murakami Haruki's work, focusing on two of his major themes. First is the exploration of self and individual identity, second is the criticism of Japan's consumer society through the assertion of individual identity. Murakami's great project in his fiction is to explore the mind and show how one can assert an individual identity in Japan. This is an action that Murakami feels is important in the Japanese consumer society. As will be discussed in the second chapter, these ideas are closely intertwined in both Murakami's writing and in critical studies of his work. In asserting their individual identities, Murakami's characters are making an overt political gesture, rejecting the consumer society at-large and embracing the peripheralization and alienation that comes with this rejection.

Central to this reading of Murakami Haruki's fiction is the idea of identity. What is

identity? This thesis argues that in his fiction, Murakami is criticizing the consumer system for replacing and preventing the development of individual identity. However, it is arguable that the consumer system *creates* identity. Consumers identify themselves with all types of consumer products. Sports fans travel far and wide to support the team they identify with, and often purchase goods that represent their identity. Fans of entertainment franchises such as *Harry Potter* and *Marvel* stand in long lines (often while wearing clothing or intricate costumes representing their fandom) to see new films and ride new amusement park rides. Music fans follow their favorite artists or groups obsessively, looking for new music or the latest gossip. Brand loyalty in consumer goods is also an important part of one's identity.

For Murakami, all of this is an artificially constructed identity. An inescapable artificial identity though it might be (Even Murakami, as an avid collector of jazz records, cannot escape it), it is not the authentic identity that his characters attempt to reconnect with. An authentic identity is something that is unique and internal, something that exists in the mind of an individual. It is an internal narrative made up of one's memories, both the good and the bad. It is also constructed from one's individual and cultural experiences. Since it is an internal narrative, it is also based on language; both the language that one uses to communicate with others and the language one uses internally help to create this narrative. (*Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 66-7) As the second chapter will establish and the third chapter will explore in further detail, this internal narrative comes alive in Murakami's fiction and attempts to help his characters cope with their lives in the consumer society.

The final chapter will analyze the stories "The Dancing Dwarf," "A Tale of the Strange Library," and "An Independent Organ." Each will be discussed with a special focus on how each explores the assertion of identity and criticizes aspects of commercialization and materialism.

Finally, the paper will conclude with a reflection on Murakami's global appeal in relation to his writing's critical view of consumer society and will argue that one major part of his international appeal is this criticism. In short, this thesis looks to expand on the extensive work done on Murakami Haruki's long fiction by applying these same ideas to his short fiction.

Chapter One

Japan's Commercial Society: A Brief History

Patrick Smith, in his book *Japan, a Reinterpretation* argues that the “standard accounts of Japan leave out evidence of the enduring desire of ordinary Japanese for individual autonomy” (Smith, 25). He argues that individual autonomy, or individuality, has not been missing from Japanese life, not in the Edo period—when the lack of names for the vast majority of peasants could be read as the lack of the notion of individuality, nor in the modern period—when the Meiji government “bestowed” names on the formerly nameless for the purpose of creating the family-state. Nor is individuality missing today. Rather, the public individual is masked, nameless, and made subordinate to the group identity (Smith, 43). The idea that the Japanese have three selves—a false one presented to the world, another reserved for friends, and a third, personal one for themselves and never shown—that Jesuit priest Joao Rodrigues posited when he lived among the Japanese in the Edo period is less about false selves and personal selves, and more about values. Smith argues, “There is nothing ‘false’ about the faces the Japanese present to the world...nothing about unshared thoughts and feelings that make them truer or more valuable. This is a mistake that only a Westerner could make, for we, like Father Rodrigues, do not share Japan’s notion of the group as the superior value” (Smith, 45). While the superiority of the group value over the individual value is an important ideal, and a point of pride for the Japanese, it is also a source of conflict among them. Group identity allows for the kind of national projects that have been the hallmark of modern Japan such as the Meiji modernization project, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere militaristic project that led to Japan’s defeat in World War II, the reconstruction which brought Japan out of its post-war recession, and the economic growth project that made Japan the second (and now third) largest economy in the world. But behind all

these projects, there are those who are in power and those who are not, and identification with the group allows those without power to be subordinated in the name of tradition (Smith, 55). Today, despite the high points in the Japanese modernization project—the creation of “Cool Japan” and the increasing numbers of young people who find some self-expression in pop culture and their individual interests—assertion of individuality is still not a priority. The assertion of individuality is a centerpiece of modern civil society. Despite this, as Ando Takemasa argues in *Japan’s New Left Movements: Legacies for Civil Society*, even as late as the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, the powerlessness of the Japanese citizen to assert individuality could be seen in the prioritization of nuclear energy by those interested in its use—Tokyo Electric Power Company and its lobbyists, urban dwellers, and politicians—over the people of the region who could not return to their homes or those who raise conscientious objections to Japan’s continued use of nuclear energy (1). The people whose individual lives were most directly impacted by this disaster were peripheralized in order to prioritize consumer-oriented lives. Peripheralization is the default consequence of individual identity assertion, something that can be found even in the early days of the Japanese modern project.

The Meiji Period

The beginning of Japan’s modern period is usually demarcated by Commodore Matthew Perry’s arrival off the coast of Tokyo, then called Edo, in 1853. What followed was the collapse of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the restoration of the Emperor as the head of state, a political change known as the Meiji Restoration. A series of rapid modernization projects through the Meiji, Taisho, and the beginning of the Showa periods followed. Modernization in the Meiji and Taisho Eras brought with it consumerism and consumption, as shown in the Japanese state’s borrowing of Western technology, consumption of Western goods and culture in urban areas, and

an increasingly interdependent and complex modern economy. The consequence of this borrowing and consumption was a sense of dislocation and alienation, despite the increased social mobility, and the rise in standard of living.

Since the beginning of recorded Japanese history, Japan has borrowed from its neighbors. The first capitals and the bureaucracy were patterned after China. Korean priests and nuns helped sow the seeds of Japanese-style Buddhism. It should come as no surprise that when Japan reopened to the world after 1853, the borrowing, especially from its neighbor across the Pacific, would continue. “Japan did not become modern so much a consumer of the modern” (Smith, 56). What does he mean by this statement? Japan, in opening up to the West, borrowed tools and techniques from everywhere, but only the tools and techniques; the “spirit” of these modern implements was not borrowed. An example Smith gives is the adoption of oil painting. An Italian landscape painter was recruited to come to Tokyo to teach Japanese oil painters the skills needed to paint. After teaching them the techniques, the painter sent his students out into the city to create original sketches. They came back empty-handed, because they felt there was nothing appropriate in urban Tokyo to draw. The students had the techniques, but not the spirit of oil painting, which of course could translate to cityscapes as well as landscapes (Smith, 240). In short, everything that the Japanese borrowed from the West: from democracy to the assembly line was “Japanized:” a phenomenon captured in the term *wakon yosai*, or “Japanese spirit, Western things.” This borrowing is consumption on a cultural level. Borrowing allowed Japan to modernize more quickly than any other non-Western nation but led to societal growing pains in the form of disassociation and disillusionment in the Meiji period. As will be discussed below, disassociation developed as Japan rapidly urbanized, and the growing drive to consume new consumer goods caused workers to become disillusioned.

In Japan, as in all modernizing nations, urbanization and modernization went hand in hand. From the beginning to the end of the Meiji period, Tokyo's population grew from less than a million to over 2 million (Smith, 109). Japan's other urban centers followed suit, as the modern project bestowed on these regions most of the factories and universities that were instrumental in improving one's place in the modern world. Therefore, these were the areas that were the most desirable locations for relocation for those looking to improve their quality of life. However, after hundreds of years of a regime that severely limited travel and relocation, the millions who moved from the rural prefectures to these new urban centers became detached from the only identity they knew—their lives in their villages of origin. Modernization made Japanese cities “cities of dislocated souls” (Smith, 109).

A literary trope that developed in the early Meiji period, called “going up to the capital,” highlighted the fact that opportunity existed in relocating to the city. This trope links the spatial movement from the rural to the urban to movement up the social hierarchy which had been impossible in the Edo period. Tokyo, as home to the Emperor, was a particularly popular setting for novels with this trope (Van Compernelle, 8-9). An example of this is seen in Sōseki's novel *Sanshiro*, where the titular character is transported across Japan through space and time in the locomotive, one of the defining inventions of the modern era, to Tokyo in order to move up the social ladder through education, which leads to his coming of age. *Sanshiro* embodies both the expectations of “going up to the capital” and the unmoored identity that is a consequence of this rapid change.

In these cities, the modern economy developed quickly. However, the ideas that came with modernization, such as democracy and social security, were ignored. Instead, an almost feudalistic system of massive single family-owned companies called *zaibatsu* developed.

Concurrently, a system of labor unions organized by company rather than trade embedded themselves in every aspect of the worker's life. In addition, an emperor-centered autocracy supported by a democratic-in-name-only system fed the nation with a sense of uniqueness and superiority that enabled the military to further its imperial mission (Smith, 19, 23). This vertical system was founded on the idea of *risshin shusse*, "rising in the world," argues Timothy Van Compernelle in his book, *Struggling Upward: Worldly Success and the Japanese Novel*. He defines the term as a concern with individual ambitions and worldly success, but in the vertical system that developed, there had to be a top and bottom. Among the novelists Van Compernelle discusses, the pursuit of one's own ambitions was an attainable goal; but for those at the lower ends of the zaibatsu and the employee unions, one's individual ambition was replaced with the goals of those in power over him. Their employers were the ones who benefited the most from their labor and pursued their own ambitions, namely the success of their businesses. Verticality was a metaphor in all levels of society. For example, one went "up" to the capital, rather than over or down to it. In a society of subjects looking up to the Emperor, one moved "up" a social class, often at the same time as one moved "up" to the capital (Van Compernelle, 2).

The urban center, especially Tokyo, was also the first to experience the new inventions and developments of the modern era (Van Compernelle, 12). New fashions, entertainment, and art, all of the earliest forms of consumerism, were found here and many of them were in forms familiar to the West but exotic to the newly modernizing Japanese state. Exotic, modern commodities helped to further the sense of being in a new world, which increased the sense of being dislocated but also made the move up even more exciting. It is through this consumption that the first salarymen tried to deal with this sense of dislocation and of being alienated in a society that seemed to only value one for one's work. In Sōseki's novel *Mon* (Gate), the

protagonist Sosuke is an example of a salaryman combating his alienation in the capital through consumption. His home at the bottom of a cliff at the end of a lane alienates him in space. On Sundays, he ventures into the city, walks the streets and observes advertisements. Though his low salary prevents him from making purchases, his window shopping—a form of mental consumption—becomes a stand-in and draws him back into the city (Van Compernelle, 96).

Consumption was tied closely with the cutthroat world of social standing. With everyone attempting to move up the social ladder at the expense of everyone else, the sense that one was alienated was compounded. One was identified more by the things one possessed than the individual that one was. Georg Simmel theorized a “protective organ” that protected the modern individual from the intense inner and outer stimuli in the modern city (Simmel, qtd in Van Compernelle, 105). This organ could be an attitude towards others, society, or the world at large. For example, in *Chijin no Ai (Naomi)*, by Tanizaki Jun’ichiro, the salaryman-protagonist Joji surrounds himself with Western objects and films, even to the extent of grooming a young girl to be his ideal Western-style wife. As the novel progresses, he becomes more consumed by the fantasy Western world he creates, to the point where he leaves his job behind and his existence is subordinated to the demands of his wife Naomi. Joji, in his consumptive fantasy world of Western goods, films, and a pseudo-Western wife, builds up a protective organ similar to that described by Simmel against the stresses of work and modern life. He then becomes wholly enveloped in this fantasy and suffers a breakdown at work, though whether this breakdown has more to do with his career or his wife is up to the reader to decide.

Despite the sense of dislocation and alienation that developed among modernizing subjects in the Meiji period, interconnectedness and interdependence also developed. As more people left the countryside to go up to the capital, the complex modern economy grew larger and

more interdependent. The complexity is seen in Van Compernelle's evaluation of a self-help book published in 1909 by Watanabe Kofu, called *Rishi no Tokyo (Ambition in Tokyo)*. Watanabe writes about the difficulties of finding work in the 1910's, gives advice about finding and succeeding in work once it is found, and provides detailed household budgets for each career available in Tokyo. The importance of this book is the way these budgets are interconnected. In Van Compernelle's example, a government worker has a line item for milk delivery, while one can also find budgets for a dairy delivery business owner and his deliverymen as well. What this shows is that at the same time that the government worker is nominally successful (most of the budgets are geared towards the middle class), his comfort is dependent on the people who produce the goods he needs in his life: milk, rice, soy sauce, meat, etc. Watanabe's advice is also interdependent. The advice to store owners, boarding house owners and those who provide jobs to those looking for work is dependent on those studying to become good workers, and those already working, and vice versa (Van Compernelle, 114-5).

Interdependence, group identity valuation, alienation, dislocation—head-spinning changes in the Meiji era coalesced into the next project: the militaristic push on to the Eurasian continent. While the Russo-Japanese War may have brought capitalism to Asia (Van Compernelle, 15), the wars that followed brought darker policies such as fascism and militarism. There is little to be said about these conflicts in terms of the consumer state. After Japan's defeat, some of those responsible for war crimes committed during the war were convicted and some were executed, but among the convictions were many notable absences, including the bureaucrats and industrialists who had the most to gain financially in the war, and Emperor Hirohito, in whose name the war was fought (E Tipton, 171). However, ties to the war and war criminals did not mean the end of one's story, as will be seen over the coming pages.

Post-War Era

After World War II, a new period of major changes began in Japan. During the Occupation, Japan was reinvented by the United States into both a nation in America's own image and the nation that the U.S. needed to further its own interests in Asia. At first, the U.S. intended to create a new democratic state; Japan's liberally-designed constitution attests to this. A new constitution, written by the Occupation authorities and approved by General MacArthur, created a Japanese nation that renounced war as its sovereign right and guaranteed civil rights to all Japanese people (Seraphim, 15). But Patrick Smith writes that "America's greatest gift...was the prospect that they (the Japanese) would have a chance to find a new path forward...most of all, they were encouraged to think and make decisions (for themselves) for the first time" (12). The establishment and cultivation of an autonomous identity with these democratic principles was believed by liberal intellectuals to be the most important postwar task. Among those intellectuals was Maruyama Masao, a modernist who argued for the cultivation of two kinds of autonomy—private and social—rather than the prewar group-focused identity. Maruyama and thinkers like him argued that only a new type of autonomous Japanese citizen could fully realize the democracy gifted to the Japanese by the Occupation authorities (Smith, 48-9).

The gift of individual autonomy and a healthy democracy lasted only two years. In the interest of combating Communism spreading in Eurasia, the Occupation authorities turned to Japanese prewar elites to grow an economic power in Asia by any means necessary. Japan's constitution began a reformation—universal education, universal suffrage, pacifism, and all of the other rights and reforms promised in the constitution—but such a reformation became a secondary priority with the issuing of National Security Council directive 13.2 in 1947. The directive called for stability and economic recovery through high exports and hard work (Smith,

13). Much of what came to pass in Japan after 1947, especially in terms of economic decision-making, is rooted in this directive and the period known as the “Reverse Course” that came after it. “Democracy became a showpiece again...We (the United States) gave Japan a new constitution full of liberal freedoms and civil rights, but then we brought back the prewar elite, proven masters at manipulating ‘the beautiful customs’” (Smith, 67). These prewar elites were the bureaucrats and politicians populating the Diet prior to the Occupation and the leadership of the zaibatsu. The largest of the zaibatsu were slated for breakup during the early years of the occupation, but the breakup was put off long enough that the idea simply disappeared along with policy changes, allowing these companies to continue their prewar practices in this new system (Tipton, 173). With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the Reverse Course accelerated; instead of the peaceful consumer industry production that had been Japan’s focus at the beginning of the occupation, Japan became a source of war materials for the U.S. and their allies (Tipton, 180).

Politically, Maruyama would insist that Japanese democracy was an unrealized fiction and that defense of the system was a defense of strengthening undemocratic elements (Gordon, qtd. in Smith, 338). Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru compared Japan to their warring neighbor in Korea, saying that Japanese politics was “divided at the 38th parallel” between conservative factions that desired to roll back the Occupation’s reforms, and the liberal opposition that wanted to keep the system, especially the demilitarized aspects of it (Tipton, 182). This gridlock sparked what became known as the “1955 system,” where the Diet became locked into two sides: the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), formed from a merger of two large conservative parties, tied to big business and the bureaucracy, and their liberal opposition, the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP) (Tipton, 183). The LDP’s hegemony over Japanese politics would last until 1993, and the system

ensured the stability and economic might that the United States needed as a buffer against the Chinese Communist Party and the Soviet Union in the Cold War to come.

Success of the 1955 System

The undemocratic nature of Japan's democracy was reinforced during the premiership of Yoshida Shigeru. Supported by Occupation authorities, he became Prime Minister in 1948 and along with other prewar elites, remained in power until 1954. Under Yoshida, Japan retained its pacifism guaranteed under Article IX of the constitution (though slowly rearming through expansion of the Security Forces). However, Japan was also brought under the security umbrella of the United States through the *Nihon-koku to Amerika-gasshūkoku to no Aida no Sōgo Kyōryoku oyobi Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku* (Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan) or "ANPO" for short. Through this position under U.S. protection, Japan could win back its empire through economic means rather than on the battlefield, but in exchange kept U.S. forces on the ground in Japan and brought Japan into the Cold War (Smith, 15-16). Reconciliation with the victims of Japan's wartime aggression was not a priority for Japan, nor was it a part of the original or the renewed security treaty, leaving Japanese leadership to focus only on the economy, not on accounting for the destruction of the war (Seraphim, 190).

The economic success of the 1955 system and Japan's subordination under the U.S. security umbrella cannot be denied. Starting with the "Jimmu Boom of 1955" to 1973, Japan had average GDP growth rates of 10% annually, much higher than other nations, even those also rebuilding after the devastation of World War II (Andō, 7; Tipton, 197). Most of this growth was in industrial sectors as production shifted from goods such as textiles to advanced consumer goods and heavy industry such as motorcycles, steel, ships, machinery and chemicals (Tipton, 197). Employment in these economic sectors nearly doubled in this period and new styles of

production changed these workplaces, focusing on mass-production processes and production quotas (Andō, 7-8). While many of the zaibatsu had been allowed to continue operating, much of the industrial growth came from smaller companies that would grow to become giants in their industries (Tipton, 173). Urbanization and the growth of nuclear family households changed the social fabric of Japan as well (Andō, 7-8). The ideal lifestyle became the salaryman lifestyle and attainment of it was a real possibility for many Japanese men (Tipton, 196).

Attainment of the middle-class lifestyle of a salaryman led to the facilitation of “disciplinisation” in Japan. Sociologist Peter Wagner argued that due to the elite’s concern with managing the many, only the elite can attain freedom and liberation. Instead, the many are “formalized,” and their different practices are coalesced into efficient, orderly, stable and predictable styles, what he called “disciplinisation,” which allows the elite to better manage the many. This formalization appears in the workplace and the economy. Management makes decisions, gives orders, and sets rules and work hours in the workplace. A consumer culture that homogenizes the masses is created through access to consumer goods and disposable wealth. (Wagner, qtd in Andō, 8). In Japan, this meant the growth of leisure and restaurant industries, and the possession of consumer goods such as the washing machine, refrigerator, television, car, and air conditioner (Andō, 8-9). Ownership of these appliances doubled in just three years, from 20.2 percent in 1957 to 40.6% in 1960 (Tipton, 198).

Disciplinisation can also be used to define the development of the 1955 system in politics. It can also be used to define the labor practice known as *shunto*. *Shunto* began as a response to the massive Miike coal strike, which lasted from 1960 to 1962 in Kyushu. The practice helped to establish the enduring traits of the Japanese employment system: large corporations, steady wage increases, job security and humane treatment (Tipton, 186). During

the *shunto*, labor unions negotiate on behalf of their workers for wage raises; in return, managers avoid the damage of a strike, labor unions and the left-wing parties that they support call the *shunto* a victory, and the beneficiaries of the system wait until the next year's *shunto* (Andō, 9). Patrick Smith argues that the history of labor unions in Japan is a microcosm of the failures of the West's usual account of the Japanese employment system. The West often stereotypes the Japanese workplace. Japanese workers are robot-like; they perform their tasks without question or complaint, even if completing a task means long hours. The uniform of a Japanese worker does not change with the company—white shirt, black pants and tie—they are replaceable parts of an economic machine. Smith's argument is that this account is inaccurate and does not account for the individuality of Japanese laborers. It also does not account for the process in which this system developed. Amid a history of communist purges, toothless protests, and the annual *shunto* bargaining tool, labor unions in Japan have become, as Smith calls them, “virtual unions,” an illusion to reinforce the Japanese work system. Western views of the Japanese workplaces' traits leave out the violence, history, and complexity of labor in Japan (Smith, 24), which is now overshadowed by the annual *shunto*. These traits—consensus, harmony, and productivity—are still considered by many to be the enduring traits of the system though in reality they are difficult for Japanese employees to find. In addition, this system leaves little room for civil disobedience or social change, which may have contributed to the violence of the protests in the next decade.

In the wake of the ANPO Treaty renewal protests that will be discussed next, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke was replaced by Ikeda Hayato, who began what was called the “Income-Doubling Plan.” The goal of the plan was to grow the Japanese economy as quickly as possible (Smith, 28). In economic terms, it was as successful as the policies that had led to the

early years of the Jimmu Boom, doubling average salaries in seven years, creating a Japanese “mass society, corporate society, and a management society (Smith, 29), and resulting in the era of “Japan Inc.” led by the pre-war conservative elites (Smith, 68). For the everyday Japanese, Ikeda’s Income Doubling Plan made the mass consumption society and the achievement of the salaryman identity a reality (Tipton, 201). By becoming a reality for the Japanese, it became the expected lifestyle for Japanese men, or Japan’s hegemonic masculinity. This term developed from the work of many sociologists in the 1980’s, but a clear definition is presented by R. W. Connell. Connell defines the idea to be a pattern of masculine behavior that subordinates femininity and other forms of masculinity. This subordination is not necessarily an active process, rather, it is “ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion” (Connell, 832). In Japan, the development of the salaryman hegemonic masculinity was fueled by the reconstruction and the Income-Doubling Plan. Salarymen were not just expected to produce in the workplace; they were also expected to consume Western goods and consumer luxuries in order to live a modern life (Smith, 126). These changes in Japanese society were complex and rooted in economic growth and affluence, further preventing Japan from confronting its wartime memory and making society unrecognizable for many (Seraphim, 165; P Smith, 239).

ANPO Treaty and Vietnam War Protests

In early 1960 to June 1961, the security treaty received its biggest threat—the massive ANPO protests that erupted during Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke’s premiership. With the disciplinisation of politics in the 1955 system, the institutionalized conservative hegemony in the Diet felt able to disregard protesters and the concerns of the socialist opposition to the extent of forcibly clearing out all opposition and forcing the passage of the treaty renewal bill (Seraphim, 162). With Kishi’s disregard of the will of the people, many of the older protesters reconnected

with their war memories, specifically the military dictatorship, causing them to feel revictimized by the state. The protests became massive when the older protesters were joined by young people with concerns over contemporary Japanese society (Seraphim, 22, 172, 175), and the situation became, as Patrick Smith puts it, “a struggle over the failure of democracy in Japan (28).” Rioters surrounded the Diet building, clashed with right-wing counter-protesters, and in one protest, a young Tokyo University student was killed. Eventually, the ferocity of the protests forced the cancellation of President Eisenhower’s visit to Tokyo in 1961 and with that disgrace, Kishi resigned (Tipton, 185).

But many of the Japanese protesters who expected democratic change in the wake of the ANPO protests were disappointed. Even on the political right, student groups such as the *Izokukai*, a conservative organization for war orphans that sought to recover the remains of dead soldiers on battlefields around the Pacific, were forced to question whether the country existed for them or they for their country, as their desire for peace above patriotism seemed to be ignored by the Japanese leadership (Seraphim, 180). On the left, while the ratification of the treaty quickly dissolved the protests, some tried to carry this momentum into the university summer breaks. Called the *Kikyo* movement, they attempted to spread protests against ANPO to rural areas, where the treaty had been largely ignored or approved of, showing the growing political gap between urban and rural, and between generations (Andō, 37). These attempts to reach out to rural voters were not always successful but enabled the young organizers to rethink and reevaluate their movements and tactics, leading to changes that developed in the next generation of protests.

Though the United States’ involvement in the Korean War ended in 1953, just two years later, the United States involved itself in another East Asian conflict, this time in Vietnam. By

1965, U.S. ground forces in Vietnam were in the tens of thousands and Allied support was requested. “Few Japanese were convinced that the U.S. was fighting a righteous war against Communism in Vietnam (Seraphim, 207).” Among the Japanese, casting China as a Cold War enemy was not acceptable and the situation of a Western power fighting a poor Asian nation brought to mind colonial legacies (Seraphim, 207). During the conflict, Japanese pacifist movements became more prominent, solidarity was reached with other Asian peoples and movements, and pacifists began to turn many Japanese opinions about Japan’s post-World War II place in the world (Seraphim, 207). Protests came to head in 1968 and 1969, when students of prominent universities around the nation protested the Vietnam War, the upcoming renewal of the U.S./Japan Security Treaty, and what they felt was a mass-production system in Japanese higher education (Tipton, 205). This mass protest movement known as the All-Campus Joint Struggle Council, or *Zenkyoto*. In addition, protesters were concerned with economic issues such as pollution, the loss of humanity due to economic growth, rising prices and increased institutional control over people’s lives (Andō, 11). At Tokyo University, protesters occupied school buildings, leading to an assault on the campus by thousands of police officers. At Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, protesters destroyed the campus’ *Wadatsumi* statue, which represented grief and anger over war (Tipton, 205; Seraphim, 187). This statue’s destruction showed the disconnect between the current group of student protesters and the previous generation. The *Zenkyoto* protesters viewed the previous generation of protesters as failures because they did not include the aggressive nature of the Japanese economy in their activism. Instead they believed that the ANPO generation focused only on war and the security treaty (Seraphim, 187).

When these protests spread from the college campuses to other parts of the country, activists began to connect their everyday lives to politics and protests. Two incidents, the Haneda

airport protests and the visit of the *U.S.S. Enterprise* at Sasebo port were paramount (Andō, 56-7). Both incidents involved people from other walks of life: farmers and other rural residents in the Haneda incident, anti-war activists and members of left-wing parties in the Sasebo one. Student activism springing from the Haneda and Sasebo incidents gave students a connection with everyday life and politics (Andō, 57). Following these incidents, a network of activist groups and New Left movements developed under the umbrella of Zenkyoto, and by 1968, this network had begun to focus on questioning the control the state had over everyday life (Andō, 60). As students went back to their universities and continued the protests on campus, they began to believe that economic rationality was controlling all aspects of society, especially the universities, which had become focused on scientific research to fuel the economic boom and efficient ways to produce research and the next generation of workers (Andō, 60).

In combating this control, students, especially those at the most prominent universities such as Tokyo University who were funneled into positions of leadership after graduation, felt that because they were part of the elite, by enacting change in themselves that would change the system (Andō, 71). They believed that these changes could affect not only their universities, but society and politics as well. They believed their generation of activists would succeed where the ANPO protests of the previous generation had not (Andō, 66). This process of self-transformation was called *nichijōsei* or “everydayness.” The term was coined by leftist intellectual Tosaka Jun in 1934 but was popularized with the development of these protests. Tosaka argued that when one perceived and reflected on areas of one’s life that needed change, and then planned and practiced those changes in one’s life, one would break conventions and create a new cycle. (Tosaka, qtd in Ando, 13). In turn, activists would change the world by changing themselves. By overcoming the problems in their own everyday lives, mainly the

problems with a consumer driven society, activists would inspire others to overcome these same problems (Ando, 72-3). Activists protesting and changing their everyday lives faced strong opposition from family, who were worried about future job prospects, and those doing the hiring at companies, who did not want disruptions in the workplace (Ando, 62). At least for a time, however, the process of self-transformation as activism succeeded in changing activists' lives (Andō, 69-70).

The process of self-transformation made the protests appealing but also contributed to the movement's quick failure. It was not easy to decide when enough was enough when the goal of the movement was self-transformation (Andō, 100). Changing society through everydayness was a slow process, and the lack of concrete change in Japanese society led to apathy and despair among the activists (Andō, 15). Increasingly, activists grew more apathetic about the university system, causing some to leave the universities and lose their connections with the student movement (Andō, 111). Others found it difficult to reject the university system because their actions had resulted in little change (Andō, 52). Those who did not reject the system often found themselves to be valuable to the big corporations they had tried to avoid. Companies had found that many of their workers were passive in their work, only performing the tasks assigned to them, and needed workers that would do their jobs effectively in addition to creating innovations on their own. Employers found this kind of employee among these former activists, and the activists found these types of careers more satisfying than they had expected (Andō, 107). But many more simply found themselves in an identity crisis. They felt replaceable in the education and employment systems, and though they were upset with this situation, they could not find a way out of it (Andō, 54).

The movements also began to dissolve from within, sometimes violently. Groups began

to expect too much from social change, and they began to expect too much from each other's personal changes as well. They became uncompromising with each other, expecting all aspects of each other's lives to be evaluated and transformed. When they failed each other's evaluations, they began to fight amongst each other. This culminated in the United Red Army incident, when a group of extremists connected with the student movement kidnapped an older couple in the mountains of Nagano, where they had been conducting military exercises. As the investigation into their conduct continued in the aftermath of this crime, authorities discovered a series of violent "purges" within their network that had led to the lynchings of fourteen of their members (Andō, 97-9).

Groups began to fight outside the group as well. Violence was always a feature of these protests, but as the student strikes grew longer and clashes with the police and counter-protesters continued, the public, which had largely supported the protests at the beginning, quickly turned against them. Media outlets played a major role in this reversal, often referring to the protesters, even the non-violent ones, as extremists. Eventually, groups of small business owners and other concerned citizens began to create vigilante groups that fought against the demonstrators and reported their actions to the police (Andō, 86). The stigma attached to these protests eventually led to the student and the New Left movements being disconnected from resident's movements during the Vietnam War and during further scandals in the late 70's and 80's (Andō, 177). Resident's movements were rural protesters that focused on environmental issues but whose protests often aligned with issues that the New Left had concerns with, such as the Haneda airport protests in 1966 (Ando, 177).

However, many protesters felt that violence against the police and right-wing groups was an important part of their transformations. In these more violent groups, further in-group friction

developed between men and women, as the men began to have the women perform more menial tasks such as carrying the men's luggage and cooking rice balls rather than joining in the occupation of buildings or giving speeches at rallies (Andō, 83). Later women's liberation movements, despite having similar self-transformation intentions, were also not always welcome by the remnants of the New Left movement (Andō, 159).

Another issue that impacted the demise of Zenkyoto and furthered the LDP's hold on Japanese politics was that the established political left did not embrace the New Left movements. Even with the development of new political parties in the 1990's, a party that connected with the type of self-transformation that the student protesters sought never emerged (Andō, 142). At the beginning of the movement connections were made with the youth wings of Japanese Socialist (JSP) and the Communist parties, but the labor unions that provided most of the support in both parties, urged their parties' leadership to control the movements. When controlling the movements failed, the JSP leadership's criticized the movement, pushed the activists away and vice versa, eventually leading to a purge of those protesters from party youth leadership (Andō, 150-2). Purges may have played a role in the lack of support for the JSP from the Zenkyoto generation; by the late 80's only 5% of the JSP Members of Parliament were under 40, compared to over 20% of the LDP's MPs, showing that the LDP was able to connect with conservative youth to a level that the JSP could not do with liberal youth (Ando, 153). The failure of the JSP to attract young voters led to the creation of the Social Democratic Federation, a Centrist splinter party in 1978, but despite actively courting former student activists, this party also failed to attract youth into its ranks (Andō, 152). In addition to the political left's failure to attract young voters, the LDP's successful economic policies also helped to maintain their political power and made them popular among young voters.

GNPism and Economic Shocks

Japan's commitment to raising the country's Gross National Product (GNP) and the Japanese standard of living had begun as early as the Korean War and intensified under Ikeda's Income Doubling Plan in 1955. While the commitment was largely designed to pacify those upset with the renewal of the ANPO treaty, raising the standard of living won the cooperation of most Japanese workers to advance the national goal of economic growth (Tipton, 191).

Consumer spending was boosted by higher incomes, which in turn boosted consumer spending, and the demand for Japanese goods in both foreign and domestic markets led to full employment and further consumer spending. Spending, high incomes, and consumer demand fueled the high rates of economic growth for almost two decades (Tipton, 194). Companies began to compete with one another to produce the same consumer basics, and in order to overcome market saturation, a strategy known as "Toyotism" was developed. Toyotism drew on the consumer desire for service and specialized products and created a flexible production system instead of creating one product for all consumers (Andō, 92). This system created the illusion of choice for consumers. The consumption of goods was not limited to Japanese products. Western goods and activities were also popular (Tipton, 202). The social contract of full employment for high consumer spending included the evolution of the Japanese style of management that has its roots in the labor conflicts of the 1960s'. In order to foster what became known as an "enterprise society" or a workplace that unified workers' welfare with that of the company, management tied wages and seniority to experience in the company as well as to merit and ability and encouraged group activities, accountability and competition, further boosting production (Tipton, 194-5).

The stability and consistent growth that characterized the postwar period were not without their consequences. Stability was threatened by a series of shocks in the 70's and the

80's. First was the Nixon Shock, when the U.S. recognized the People's Republic of China without notifying Japan, though Japanese businesses had long wanted to reopen the Chinese market. Second, was the OPEC oil embargo of 1973. Third, with the 1985 Plaza Accord, U.S. changed the fixed exchange rate between the yen and the dollar, causing the yen to be devalued. Fourth, the U.S. introduced a new tariff on Japanese goods and placed an embargo on Japanese soybeans. All four shocks pushed the Japanese economy into a recession, and many Japanese began to fear an end to the growth period. Furthermore, the shocks showed how much the Japanese economy relied on the international economy (Tipton, 212).

The shocks caused a lot of companies, especially small and medium ones, to begin to rethink the Japanese employment system. Companies began hiring workers classified as part-time, workers employed on a contract basis and were not eligible for some of the benefits that a full-time employee was eligible for, such as sick leave, vacations or a pension. Despite working similar numbers of hours, part-time workers were also not paid as well in wages and bonuses (Tipton, 221). This trend was particularly noticeable in smaller firms where all workers often worked even longer hours than the workers in large companies (Tipton, 222).

For women workers, the gap was even larger. Women in the workplace already faced disadvantages at all levels and classifications of labor, receiving around 60% of men's salaries (Tipton, 221). The majority of all part-time workers were women, almost 70% by 1990 (Tipton, 221). This is because the expectation was that women would only work after graduating from college until they got married and started a family. They were only expected to reenter the workforce if the family needed an additional income to help pay for the rising costs of education, they were often hired as part-time, temporary, or casual workers. They also tended to make up more of the workforce than men in small firms as well (Tipton, 222).

Even before the shocks, many Japanese began to question the human and ecological costs of the country's focus on consumption (Smith, 130). Of course, this was one of the focuses of the student movements of the late 60's, but it became a larger issue as the shocks exposed the weaknesses in the Japanese economy. Another sign of this shift was the gradual decline of the appeal of the salaryman lifestyle, a decline that began during the student movements (Tipton, 205). Japanese workers were saving a lot of their income, and were often dissatisfied with raises and bonuses, showing that they were not satisfied with the years of economic growth or their level of affluence (Tipton, 204-5). Many began to realize that the growth of the GNP did not mean an improvement of economic justice, equality, in quality of life (Tipton, 189).

From as early as the 60's, ecological problems such as mercury and cadmium poisoning from chemical plants and air pollution led to lawsuits, and media coverage of these incidents led to reports of many environmental problems. (Tipton, 210). The rural areas bore the brunt of most of the high-profile cases. One example is the Minamata disease victims, who were poisoned by mercury from a nearby chemical plant, causing death, deformation, and damaged the village's fishing industry (Andō, 123). These situations caused many urban residents to realize that their affluent lives were built at the expense of the lives of these rural residents and the destruction of the countryside (Andō, 125). A consequence of this was the rise of resident's movements, small groups of protesters focusing on the environmental issues of their regions, trying to bring awareness to ecological destruction, and uniting with other local groups to protest public pollution in all its forms (Andō, 162).

Furthermore, as Patrick Smith argues, increased consumption did not create a sense of independence or individuality. "It was merely a retreat into privacy, which is a different thing...far from keeping the corporation out of the home, the new consumption was the

corporation's way of reentering it (128).” He argues that the tendency for people in the 1960's and 70's to remove the front parlor of their homes to make room for a garage is a metaphor for the tendency of consumption to allow the corporation into the Japanese home. Especially for the salaryman, the need to work harder and longer for the latest trendy gadgets gave the employer a lot of power over his life. New Left activist, Yoshioka Shinobu, said “In a controlled society, a large number of goods, homes, leisure activities, and restricted freedom are inserted as a lubricant between rulers and the ruled. We are now living in a society in which people are invisibly controlled (qtd in Andō, 61). *Maihomu*, or myhomeism—the salaryman's emphasis on family life through single family homes, cars, and family vacations, showed dissatisfaction with the pace of work and a desire to find an escape from work. However, this attempt to escape was itself fueled by the need to consume (Tipton, 205).

The 1980s

After surviving the shocks of the 1970's, in the 1980s Japan began to double-down on its involvement in the international economy. This is shown in the increased discourse on *kokusaika*, or internationalization. It was a transition from the old, Japan Inc. system to a new one, where Japanese workers would begin to look more like the rest of the world, while at the same time consuming and exporting more of their own products (Smith, 32). In internationalization, Japan was looking to promote a form of soft nationalism that came with its arrival on the world's economic stage and their potential to supplant the U.S. as the largest economy in the world (Smith, 33). The new national economic power “encouraged neo-nationalists and conservative politicians to promote an ideology of Japanese uniqueness (Tipton, 211).” Promotion of Japan's economic power led to the scholarly and popular interest in what had caused Japanese economic success. Among the theories posited were social structures, hierarchy and group orientation, or

social values such as hard work, loyalty and education, resilience or some indefinable or unique Japanese cultural value or tradition (Tipton, 213-4, 226). The rise and fall of the Japanese economic superpower would create new problems and cause new changes in society.

In another effort to combat the effects of the shocks in the 70's, the Japanese government implemented austerity measures and fewer tax increases in the 1980's. At the same time, the economy began to grow again, though not as quickly as during the miracle economies of the 50's and 60's, through a shift to more nimble industries such as automobiles, electronics, and service industries. Large trade surpluses developed and the 1980s was the decade when Japan became an economic superpower (Tipton, 217). Japanese companies began expanding and investing in infrastructure, fueling a labor shortage as unemployment dropped to just 2%. Labor shortages increased the foreign labor force, but also meant higher incomes for Japanese workers. Japanese families began to spend even more on consumer designer goods, expensive hobbies and overseas trips, among forms of consumer spending (Tipton, 218). Economics was a prominent issue in international relations, as the United States worried about being replaced as the largest economy in the world, and around the world Japanese investors purchased premium real estate, particularly in locations with lots of Japanese tourists such as New York, Hawaii, and Australia.

In Japan, real estate prices rose as well, tripling in just two years in Tokyo, and stock prices rose on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, creating what became known as the bubble economy. Instead of public investment, the Japanese government began to pay back the deficit and cut back on bond-issuing, which led large corporations to stockpile cash reserves in banks. The banks' large cash reserves fueled the practice of risky bank loans to small businesses and real-estate ventures (Tipton, 219). The previous decades' resurgence of nationalism through Japan's economic prowess continued in the 80's reaching new heights with the publication and success

of books such as *Japan Can Say 'No'*, by Ishihara Shintaro, the future governor of Tokyo (Tipton, 220).

The 80's also became a time when Japan was not only catching up to the West economically but socially as well. Women began to gain a more equal status in the workplace and in politics. Particularly for women, who were expected to live at their parents' home before marriage but were seeing more equality in terms of full-time employment, access to large disposable incomes came for the first time. This created whole industries catering to women consumers, such as "cute" culture, designer goods, and sexually-explicit graphic novels geared towards women (Tipton, 226-8). The variety of these new industries shows the new disposable income that women had in the 80's. However, these women also began to consider the overall impact that Japanese industry in general had on Southeast Asian and rural economies, especially on the women in Southeast Asia, with whom those involved in feminist movements had begun to form solidarity (Andō, 130).

The 1990s

The bubble economy collapsed in 1991, and Japan is still feeling the effects of the collapse today. The collapse ushered in weak economic growth and a sense of social and political malaise in Japan. Their social contract was badly damaged, economic prosperity was hard to come by, jobs were no longer guaranteed or even easy to find. Due to low birth rates, the issue of an aging society began to be understood, and the aging society continues to strain succeeding generations of Japanese. Many government scandals and misguided reactions to issues, along with the mass media, popular culture, and consumer industries' encouragement of material decadence furthered the Japanese' sense of unease (Tipton, 233).

Politically, the long LDP reign in the Diet ended in 1989 through a party split amidst

massive corruption scandals, though a coalition kept the party in power until 2009. However, the JSP could not gain power for the same reasons (Tipton, 234). The police forces fared little better as corruption and negligence eroded the force's reputation (Tipton, 235). Nuclear power plant safety, food safety, and a host of other issues caused the Japanese people to question the efficiency of their government (Tipton, 236). These concerns rarely resulted in demonstrations or strikes. Because of the violence of protests of the 60's and 70's, the use of direct action in civil protests was looked down on by Japanese and, in particular, the Japanese media and power structures (Andō, 178).

In 1995, two of the largest disasters in Japan's post-war history showed a "society in flux, struggling with the demands of political reorganization (and) economic recession (Seraphim, 27)." The Great Hanshin Earthquake struck outside of Kobe in January, killing over 6,000 people and causing hundreds of billions of dollars in damage. Then, in March the Aum Shinrikyo cult, led by Asahara Shoko, released sarin gas on Tokyo subways, killing 12 people and sickening over a thousand others. The cult was later connected to a similar attack in 1994 that killed 8 people in Matsumoto. Slow responses to these disasters further weakened the approval of the Japanese government and police forces (Tipton, 235). Furthermore, the Aum attack was perpetrated by a cult not of "impressionable" members of the lower classes, political extremists or some other alienated group. Aum was made up of graduates of prestigious universities and high-ranking members of some of Japan's best companies, who could not find social, spiritual, or psychological satisfaction in Japan's consumer-first society. That even those in the higher echelons of Japanese society showed the Japanese how deep their social problems lay (Tipton, 247).

The government had promoted policies that kept consumer prices high and social welfare

programs inadequate to meet the needs of those most affected by the recession (Tipton, 234). Employers could not help keep up with these needs. By the 1990s, even in large companies, the promise of lifetime employment had faded, and the numbers of part-time and temporary workers reached new heights, especially among new college graduates. The middle-aged salarymen who still had “lifetime employment” were often laid off or were forced to work excessive hours, a reversal of the bubble economy’s situation. These conditions increased stress levels and *karoshi*, or death due to overworking, became hot button issues. The salaryman lifestyle had become associated with drudgery, stress, and servility to the company, causing even more young people to shy away from the lifestyle (Tipton, 249). The shock of the recession was particularly hard on the children of the 1980s, who grew up in affluence and then were faced with unexpected difficulties in their young adult years. Some reacted by committing violent crimes, rejecting school and college, and by becoming *hikikomori*, shut-ins who never leave home and live a life focused only on the internet, manga, anime and video games.

Recent Developments

According to Patrick Smith, despite mass protests in the 60’s, economic growth in the 70’s and 80’s, and years of political and economic difficulties in the 90’s, modern Japan as a whole has changed little since the Occupation years. “The Japan before us today is the same one America created after the war: extravagantly corrupt, obsessed with market dominance, ecologically reckless, stifling of the individual, politically dysfunctional, leaderless, incapable of decisions (15).” He argues that Japan should be recognized as something different than the other industrial nations of the world, agreeing with Chalmers Johnson in calling Japan a “capitalist developmental state,” not a democracy (Smith, 35). In his interviews and research, he concluded that the young were the ones who could enact the necessary change in Japanese society, but

when he asked high schoolers what they wanted to change about the education system in Japan, he was told that “to alter one part of the system means you must alter them all (Smith, 96).”

Smith believes that these children see the bigger picture; even if one wants to reform only one system, like the education system, the nature of the larger Japanese system is so complex and interrelated that in order to enact real change in one system, all of them must be altered. Though it remains to be seen whether these generations can enact change, some scholars are finding signs of change even in the worst of disasters.

One area of change is through the institutional reforms from populist leaders such as Koizumi Jun’ichiro, who became Prime Minister in 2001. Criticized as a man of style over substance, he reformed the premiership and the cabinet, allowing for the Prime Minister to directly present legislation to the Diet, potentially reducing the slowness of reactions that characterized the mismanagement of disasters. The economy did begin to recover during his tenure, but Koizumi’s economic policies continued the trends that made Japan’s banks among the weakest in advanced nations (Tipton, 251).

Another area of change is the growth of non-profit organizations and volunteerism, including government watchdog groups and other forms of government criticism (Kingston, qtd in Tipton, 252). Poverty, for many years seen as an individual issue, is now becoming a social issue that is fueling a political movement. Due in part to young people’s difficulties in finding employment, a variety of social groups, from labor unions to women’s groups, worked together to form the Anti-Poverty Network in 2007. These movements sought to support, draw attention to, and enact change on behalf of the impoverished. They have even begun to organize protests, though these are quite different in style from those of the 60’s and 70’s, such as street parties and cultural activism (Andō, 179-80).

In 2009, the LDP was defeated by the recently formed Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Though they only kept power for four years, and the LDP returned with a vengeance and the same leadership, the defeat indicated the growth of choice and individualism in contemporary Japan (Tipton, 256). The DPJ's downfall coincided with the 2008 global banking collapse and the modest economic growth that resulted from it (Tipton 257). It also coincided with the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Striking off the coast of Fukushima, the earthquake and the ensuing tsunami killed almost 20,000 people and displaced almost 600,000 due to damage to homes and livelihoods, and the dangerous levels of radiation from the meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Though long used to rebuilding after disasters, this time the Japanese were not willing to simply rebuild after the disaster. Blame was quickly put on the Tokyo Electric Power Corporation for its failure to keep the plant, and the people living near it, from harm. Further blame was put on the government for its cozy relationship with nuclear power advocates, and large protests against nuclear power and its expansion have occurred since (Tipton, 258-60).

However, some positive things came out of the disaster. Among these positives was a new sense of international solidarity in the recovery effort, and the increased positive reputation of NGOs, volunteer groups and the Self-Defense Force, all of which reacted quickly to assist in damage control and disaster recovery. Local governments worked together closely in the aftermath, assisting the devastated Fukushima local government in long-term recovery efforts. And in the short term, many plant workers sacrificed their lives to help save thousands of others, showing the power of individual action (Tipton, 260). In addition, many in Japan, especially in the urban areas, began to radically rethink their energy-consumptive lives and the way they are vulnerable to disaster. Many of these urban residents began to think about how their lifestyle may

victimize others, including those in rural regions of Japan and on the Asia mainland (Andō, 2, 125, 128).

An exhaustive history of the modern Japanese economy is beyond the scope of this thesis, and the scope of this writer's skills. In the preceding pages, I sought to establish a pattern of behavior in the Japanese economy—that it is largely directed from the top-down. This chapter skewed negative; this also had a purpose. In the next two chapters, I seek to show how Murakami Haruki, one of the leading Japanese literary voices, has criticized this top-down system in his fiction. One reason for this criticism, argues Matthew Stretcher in his first book on Murakami, is that the Left in Japan has largely failed to overcome the establishment (the LDP) because the establishment offered Japan “a comfortable life through participation in the great consumerist machine that is the Japanese domestic economy” (*Dances With Sheep*, 74). He cites the prominent Japanese sociologist Hidaka Rokuro, who argued that the need to purchase consumer necessities leads to “economism,” a form of behavior where priority is given to economic values, affecting the individual consciousness and daily lifestyle (qtd in *Dances with Sheep*, 75). Citizens are drawn into the system, which Hidaka terms as “induced integration,” willingly by measuring their financial growth against the economic system. But allegiance to this system also comes with a lost sense of purpose, there is no room for self-expression in a ready-made consumer-oriented identity (*Dances with Sheep*, 75). At least since the 1970's, there has been a definite shift towards a social identity devoted to economic concerns and to the extent and nature of one's participation in consumer culture (*Dances with Sheep*, 68).

What kind of society does this lead to? It leads to a society where the young, meaning, to Murakami and those writing about him, the generations born after the war and Occupation, are of special concern because they have never had a chance to define themselves in any terms but

consumerism. The Meiji generations had the swift modernization of Japan as a national goal to identify with, the Taisho generation had democratization, and the early Showa generations had the militaristic project. Not all of these goals were positive, but as we shall see in the next chapter, there is a concern among Murakami and those like him that the aimless generations born after the war may be even more dangerous in their own fashion than the generation that participated in Japan's destructive conflict on the continent.

It cannot be denied that the Japanese system has made Japan prosperous. It arguable that without the decisions made by those who came to power after the Occupation, Japan would never have reached the level of affluence that it has. I am not qualified to make such assertions, as I am not an economist nor am I a historian. Judging from the way that the rest of East Asia has emulated the Japanese model, with similar levels of success, it seems that any effort to make a claim to the contrary would be futile. However, as the following chapters will show, the questions of the impact on Japanese society that Murakami explores in his fiction are not irrelevant, even in the face of these facts.

Chapter Two

Murakami Haruki's Depiction of the Self and Critique of Commercial Society

The irony of reading Murakami Haruki as a critic of Japan's consumer society is that Murakami's popularity around the world is a product of consumerism. It is likely that Murakami could only have emerged as a global phenomenon at the end of the Cold War, in the postmodern era, and during Japan's cultural and economic peak in the 1980's (*Dances with Sheep*, 2). Though talented and important writers in Japan's modern period such as Sōseki, Oe, and Mishima all discussed problems that Japan had in common with the West, none attained the global popularity of Murakami. He benefited not only from an international concern about who we are in the modern world, but also from the active attempts to make Japan "cool" through popular culture.

Murakami also benefited from members of his own generation, who were among the first to take to his writing. His first novels dealt with a lack of satisfaction amidst a life of affluence, a sense of loss due to the failure of the Zenkyoto movement, and the growing acceptance of American popular culture. All of these factors contributed to the swift rise of his popularity among his generation (*Dances with Sheep*, 10). His novels' protagonists are different and dissident. They also seek solidarity with others through the act of being "isolated together," all of which struck a chord with his readers since many in his generation shared those same feelings (*Dances with Sheep*, 19).

Finally, Murakami himself is a manufactured product. As Jay Rubin recollects in *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words*, Alfred Birnbaum's first translation of *The Wild Sheep Chase* was heavily commodified both by the translator and the New York editors for Kodansha. Both parties added chapter titles, changed references to dates, and added links to the 1970s for an

American audience in the 1980s amid the hopes and fears of the Reagan presidency. Murakami's next works chosen for publication in the U.S. were selected not based on chronology, but by the various editing staffs' opinions about their marketability (*The Music of Words*, 190-1). This seems to be an extension of the "cultural colonization" that has been part of Japan's modern project. Western culture has been diffused from Japan to the rest of East Asia since the Meiji era, and since Japan's popular culture boom Japanese culture has spread in the same manner (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 34). Murakami's immense popularity in Asia is rooted at least in part in this culture boom. But Murakami is aware of how he has become a commodity and has remarked on his need to not just be one, but to "pass something on" as well (*The Music of Words*, 292). Something that he may seek to pass on is his imagining of one's identity, and the need to identify with and protect it.

Murakami's Postmodernism

According to Rebecca Suter, the unique difference between the old guard modernists of Japanese literature and Murakami Haruki is his stance on self-identity and self-expression (*Japan of Modernity*, 26). The issue of the individual began in the Meiji Era with Japan's first encounter with Western technology and thought, especially the separation of a knowing subject and a known object (Karatani, qtd in *The Japan of Modernity*, 26). In the Meiji Era, Susan Napier argues, intellectuals were uncomfortable with the idea of the individual subject and the nature of the individual was dealt with in the realm of fantasy and science fiction (Napier, qtd in *The Japan of Modernity*, 164). Modernists, however, participated in the diffusion of the individual in Japan through the popularity of the *watakushi shosetsu*, the "I" novel. The I-novel is a form of novel that is confessional in nature and allows the reader to interact with the interiority of a fictional or semi-fictional being. Murakami is not a modernist. Though identified as a

postmodernist, he makes use of elements of the modern and the postmodern from an ironic distance (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 26). In the manner of postmodernists, Murakami's narratives are fragmented and discontinuous. Similar to modernists, Murakami is interested in the individual self (Murakami F, 9-10). However, he approaches the intellectual problem of the individual in a very different manner from Meiji Era and modernist writers. Murakami tries to access the "Self," or one's individual identity, in his writing with the intent of more deeply understanding the self as a whole (Napier, qtd. in *The Japanization of Modernity*, 164). His use of the fantastic is not a critique or an assertion of the idea of an individual subject, argues Suter; it is a reflection of subjectivity (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 13). Nor does he use the fantastic to show the contemporary Japanese person rebelling against the loss of an identity, but as means of representing the culturally constructed nature of identity (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 169). An example of this, she argues, is in the short story "Kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru" (All God's Children Dance, 2002).

In this story, Yoshiya, the protagonist with a sort of Oedipal-complex, is raised by his mother and the cult of which she is a member to believe that he is the son of their god. This parentage he always doubted and denied, especially after his mother tells him the story of his conception. She slept with the doctor who had performed her two previous abortions, both of which she claims should have been avoided through the use of contraceptives, and she became pregnant with the doctor's child. This pregnancy also should not have happened because they used contraceptives. She took this as a sign that the god of her newly discovered cult conceived a child in her, but Yoshiya took it as a misuse of condoms. From his seventeenth birthday, when she told him this story, to the timeline of this story, he sought a meeting with this doctor in what can only be defined as a divinely ordained way. Yoshiya wanted to find him in the city of Tokyo

spontaneously, and did not actively seek him. When he does run across a man whom he believes to be his father (identified by a deformed ear), Yoshiya follows him throughout the city to an unused baseball field, where the man disappears.

Yoshiya simultaneously holds two origin stories, which are his divine birth and his ordinary birth. Neither can be proven, given the protagonist's desire to come across this man without actively seeking him. Even if he were to find the doctor, there is no way to be sure that his answer would be truthful. His mother likely will never admit that her misuse of contraceptives led to his birth. He can only choose to accept one or both of these conception stories. Both identities are culturally constructed. The divine one is constructed through his upbringing in the culture of his mother's cult, and the natural one through modern society's denial of miracles (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 169).

“The Other Side” and the “Self”

Matthew Stetcher, in his book *Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, cites an interview Murakami gave after the publication of *Umibe no Kafuka (Kafka on the Shore)*, in which Murakami offers an analogy of the mind in the form of a two-story house. In this analogy, there is the first floor, which is a public space that others are able to see and are invited into. Then there is the second floor, the private space where people conduct their private business. These two floors are the consciousness. Actions take place on both floors, such as meals, conversations, silent reading or enjoying music. Below these floors is the basement, which is a place to store memories. One goes here when one needs something but doesn't spend a lot of time here. It can be consciously entered—when one is actively looking for a memory, and it can be entered unconsciously—through one silently musing on a memory. Within this room is another room, which is the core of one's being, where one makes sense of the world (*The Forbidden Worlds of*

Haruki Murakami, 21). Stretcher believes that Murakami leaves out an important part of the analogy. This innermost space of the house is also connected to the outside world through plumbing, cables, and wires. These implements bring input in from the outside world, and the drainage system that takes the occupant's output out into the world. In terms of the mind and consciousness, these inputs and outputs are psychic or metaphysical, which in Murakami's works are both intangible and tangible at the same time. Tangible and intangible metaphysical elements in Murakami's fiction allow the protagonist to interact with the Self and others in his trademark magical realist metaphysical and unconscious world (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 22).

Murakami's analogy might leave out the outside world because in his writing it isn't quite in his character's world. Murakami's metaphysical world, often referred to as the "other side" is outside of reality. This "other side" can usually only be reached unconsciously and usually not the same way twice. The borders are not fixed and within those borders, time is unpredictable (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 71). It is usually dark and twinned with the conscious world of light (*Dances with Sheep*, 82). And it is often the realm where a physical manifestation of the Self can be interacted with. Though the physical manifestation of the Self is usually a nostalgic image, something that I will cover in detail in the coming pages, Murakami also chooses to use the metaphor of a "black box" to represent the Self. This is the central issue in *Sekai no owari to Hādo-boirudo Wandārando* (*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*). In the hard-boiled fiction style depiction of Tokyo that lends itself to the first half of the English title and the second half of the Japanese title, a crude drawing of a box with circuits coming out of it showed the doom of the Protagonist in this portion of the novel. Murakami often uses the black box as a metaphor representing something unknown or unknowable to him. For

example, he uses the metaphor in his interviews with Aum cultists in *Yakusoku sareta basho de: Underground 2 (Underground 2: The Place That Was Promised)*, and in his short essays in *Absolutely on Music*, where he talks about his surprise at Ozawa Seiji's ability to mold a group of young musicians into a powerful musical force in just a few short days (253). In his stories, this "unknown" thing is usually the self, as will be discussed later.

Though it is true that in Murakami's writing access to the "other side" is often not gained in the same way twice; there are some similarities in how it is accessed. A fictional American novelist David Hatfield in *Kaze no Uta o Kike (Hear the Wind Sing)* writes a novel that describes a boy entering passages on Mars that take to the end of the universe, which could be a representation of the boy entering his own mind. In *1973-nen no Pinbaru (Pinball, 1973)*, *Hitsuji o meguru bōken (A Wild Sheep Chase)*, and *Noruei no mori (Norwegian Wood)*, a cold, dark journey by car or bus takes the protagonist to this other world. All three journeys are a modern take on the *michiyuki*: instead of walking they are driving or riding in a bus, instead of talking they are having an internal dialogue, instead of going to their death, they are visiting the dead (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 82). The passage to the "other side" is a well in *Nejimakidori Kuronikuru (The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle)* and becomes one of the only times that characters are able to recreate the passage. Wells are a recurring image in Murakami's writing, also appearing in *Norwegian Wood*, but the subterranean itself is often an important image: holes, subways, and caverns all play important roles in Murakami's novels.

Exploring the subterranean depths of the mind is an action that Murakami feels is a universal desire, expressed in both writing and music. It is the desire that he believes is the reason for Gustav Mahler's universal appeal (*Absolutely on Music*, 190). But it is also a dangerous and uncomfortable desire. Mahler's exploration of the mind's depths makes his music

uncomfortable as well (*Absolutely on Music*, 190). And Murakami, when discussing his two-story house analogy, warns his interviewer that one who spends too much time in the sub-basement can lose touch with reality (Stretcher, 21). Losing touch with reality occurs to many of his characters: the townspeople in *End of the World*, Naoko in *Norwegian Wood*, and the Rat in *The Wild Sheep Chase* to name just a few. One of the best examples is Okada Kumiko in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, who is trapped on the "other side" by her brother. He removed Okada's "black box," and she is slowly losing her ability to remember anything about her life prior to her imprisonment.

The Self and "Narratives"

Matthew Stretcher contends that in exploring the "other side" and in trying to understand the "black box," Murakami's protagonists are on a quest to connect with their selves. He reads the Murakami protagonist's search for the Self through the lens of Lacan's Unconscious Other that the self uses as a linguistic sounding board to understand itself. Stretcher argues that the Murakami protagonist is seeking the Self through an object of desire that exists only as a product of linguistics from within the character's memory made external through chains of linguistic signifiers (*Dances with Sheep*, 84, 124). Stretcher's example of this is in *Pinball, 1973*, where the Protagonist searches for a long-lost girlfriend through chains of signifiers. The novel opens with him recollecting a story about her hometown, where a dog was constantly waiting on the train station platform and a man with a knack for finding the best locations for wells had drowned. He tells the reader that he visited the town after her suicide in order to see this dog, in hopes, one assumes, to try and reconnect with his memory of her. After seeing the dog, therefore confirming that the place his girlfriend told him about existed, and making a connection with her through this confirmation, he leaves, his recollection of the memory ends and the main plot of

the book opens up with two unnamed twins coming to his apartment and living with him for a time. During this period the landlord's handyman comes to replace the switchboard for the apartment building's phone lines, which he explains to the twins is like a "mother dog," thus connecting the dog of the Protagonist's departed girlfriend to something electronic, a switchboard. After holding a funeral for the "mother dog," in which they toss the panel into the water below a dam, creating a second connection to the town and death through water, the Protagonist becomes obsessed with locating something electronic—an old pinball machine that he used to play. His search leads him to a collector's warehouse, a cold, dark, former chicken processing plant (another connection to death and the afterlife), and he proceeds to have an intimate conversation with the pinball machine, which has now become a stand-in for both his deceased girlfriend and his sense of self, made external through this series of linguistic connections that have become magically real (*Dances with Sheep*, 85, 87-92).

This is a clear distinction from the point made by Rebecca Suter, who argues that the sense of self is constructed through exposure to an individual culture, as discussed above. Stretcher contends that the character's sense of self is not constructed but reconnected with when brought out of the character in the form of a nostalgic image out of the character's past or a "black box" that can be brought out of the individual in a tangible form. I tend to agree with this reading, for the simple fact that most of Murakami's protagonists are searching for something from their pasts. There are exceptions of course, and as Stretcher himself points out, Murakami's treatment of the Self has evolved over the years. Early on in his career, particularly with the novel *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Murakami's characters were seeking to protect their inner selves from external threats: such as the Sheep in that novel, who sought to replace the Rat's Self with its own narrative. This will be discussed in detail in the coming pages. In later works his

characters are protecting their external selves from other external threats, such as *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*'s Okada Toru's physical conflict with his brother-in-law Wataya Noboru (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 92). But even in his later works the protagonists are usually seeking something from their pasts. In *Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* (*South of the Border, West of the Sun*) and *Ichi-kyū-hachi-yon* (*1Q84*) the protagonists are seeking childhood friends. Tamaru in *Kafka on the Shore* is looking for a lost mother and sister. Finally, in *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, kare no junrei no toshi* (*The Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*), Tazaki desires closure from a distressing incident from his past.

Stretcher goes on to argue that one of the goals of Murakami's fiction is to show the importance of looking within ourselves and engaging with our inner voices, or to put it in other terms, our inner narratives or selves, in order to deal with the world (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 192). He notes that this idea comes from Murakami's collection of interviews with Aum Shinrikyo cultists, *Underground 2: The Place That Was Promised*, most of whom Murakami interviewed without engaging in debates because many of them were simply seeking what he himself was looking for, a place in modern Japan outside of the consumer society (Citation Needed). The danger, according to Stretcher's reading, is that in searching for a place for one's Self in society, one tends to latch on to totalizing systems, which Murakami calls narratives, to take the place of the Self. This is the danger of Japan's militaristic project, of the modern consumer society, and of cults such as Aum Shinrikyo (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 193).

Another term for the Self that Murakami uses is the soul. In his acceptance speech for the Jerusalem Prize in 2009, Murakami gave his now famous "Wall and Egg" speech. As noted in *Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, Murakami spent much of the speech talking about his

purpose for writing:

Think of it this way. Each of us is, more or less, an egg. Each of us is a unique, irreplaceable soul enclosed in a fragile shell.... And each of us, to a greater or lesser degree, is confronting a high, solid wall. The wall has a name: It is The System. The System is supposed to protect us, but sometimes it takes on a life of its own, and then it begins to kill us and cause us to kill others - coldly, efficiently, systematically.

I have only one reason to write novels, and that is to bring the dignity of the individual soul to the surface and shine a light upon it. The purpose of a story is to sound an alarm, to keep a light trained on The System in order to prevent it from tangling our souls in its web and demeaning them (Haaretz).

The System that Murakami speaks of here takes on many names in Murakami's essays and in critical works on his fiction. One that is common is the "group narrative." This is an ideology that seeks to replace the individual Self with a narrative that is ready-made for the world and can be easily controlled (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 6). This is separate from the collective Narrative, a Murakami term that corresponds to the Jungian collective unconsciousness, which are structures of the unconscious mind that are an integral part of being human. These "group narratives," no matter how inflexible, narrow-minded, or intolerant, have the ability to replace the Narrative and the individual's Self and to gain power over both (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 19, 65). Missing or lost characters in Murakami's stories, for example the Rat (*The Wild Sheep Chase*), Naoko (*Norwegian Wood*), and Kumiko (*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*), are all seeking (though not always willingly) one of these ready-made "group narratives" (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 146).

What are "group narratives" in reality? They have been around since the beginning of

Japanese written history, argues Nathan Clerici in his article, “History, ‘Subcultural Imagination,’ and the Enduring Appeal of Murakami Haruki.” They find their origin in *gishi*, or the false histories that created the mythology of the Japanese Imperial line. Prior to writing stories in Chinese script all stories, including those about the Imperial family, were passed down orally and evolved with each telling and therefore cannot be factually true. False history and mythology are not unique to Japan of course, but it is relevant in this discussion because it shows an early attempt to justify authority by replacing individual stories with a created “group narrative.” This tradition continued with State Shinto during wartime Japan. A set of scrolls “discovered” in 1927 revealed the unbroken line of emperors connecting the throne to Amaterasu, providing evidence for deifying Emperor Hirohito (Clerici, 251). Group narrative was used in new religions such as in Omoto-Kyo, a new religion that sought to write a grand narrative of history, and by Aum Shinrikyo to deify Asahara Shoko and connect him to various real religious figures (Clerici, 252).

Aum is an excellent example of the dangers of “group narratives.” It is one of the narratives that captured the imagination of Murakami himself, prompting one of his first non-fictional works, *Andāguraundo (Underground)* and *Underground 2: The Place That Was Promised*. In the former he interviewed victims to tell their stories, and in the latter, he interviewed cult members in order to understand the perpetrators and their followers. He concluded that, like himself, the Aum members sought their own internal Selves and instead were caught up in Asahara’s charismatic, ready-made, and one-size-fits-all narrative. So ensnared, the cultists were convinced to help support or even carry out Asahara’s evil, including the gas attacks. Murakami then connected this to the wartime narrative of Emperor-worship, which had those same traits and was even more devastating. This nationalistic “group narrative”

ensnared the entire nation, in particular the structures that already existed to control the people—companies, education, media—all to a violent and destructive end (*Forbidden Worlds of Murakami*, 175).

Even today, the nature of the Japanese press club system leads the Japanese media to accept and reinforce “group narratives,” particularly those passed from the government in the form of press releases. As the major media outlets all receive the same releases from government ministries, they all write and publish the same kinds of articles. This reinforces the government’s release as truth, superior to any other versions of “truth” (*The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 169). The collusion between the press clubs and the state helps to reinforce the state in its control over the ruled classes, in the terms of Louis Althusser’s theory that the State and the ruled are defined by class struggle and the ruled classes seek to explore, probe, question and ultimately undermine state ideology (qtd. in *Dances with Sheep*, 176). However, as mentioned in the first chapter, Japanese politics has a crisis in that there is no real difference between the mainstream State ideology, represented by the LDP, and the “opposition,” variously represented by the JSP or the DPJ, which increases the power of the System over the ruled (*Dances with Sheep*, 69). The Japanese, always a culture that values the group over the individual, are in a precarious balance, as they give up the Self for the group that is lacking a meaningful sense of self, especially in the modern era (*Dances with Sheep*, 122).

Group Narratives and the Japanese Consumer Society

Without an individual identity or a meaningful sense of self, an individual is reduced to an object. This is noticeable in Murakami’s early novels and stories, where his characters often lacked names. His protagonists were simply known by the masculine first-person pronoun *boku*, and the casts of characters were identified only by symbols. For example, The Rat is a character

frequently heard but almost never seen in the Rat Trilogy (*Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *The Wild Sheep Chase*). The Girl with the Missing Finger helps the protagonist deal with the collapse of the student movement in *Hear the Wind Sing*. The Girl with the Beautiful Ears helps the protagonist locate the Rat and the Sheep in *The Wild Sheep Chase*. Carl Cassegard identifies Murakami's early worlds as "inhabited by such dehumanized emblems...in which the reification of roles has become natural and humans submit to system-imperatives as casually as if the latter were forces of nature (83-4)." In other words, characters in Murakami's early works lose their humanity and their identity by being identified through their attributes and especially through their jobs. The Black-Suited Secretary in *Wild Sheep Chase* and the "Calcutec" in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*, are examples of this, as both are identified only by their roles in society. This directly relates to the Japanese economic project. Projects, such as the Income Doubling Plan and GNPism, were top-down projects, allowing the public to be transformed into objects to be administered to and controlled by the state in the pursuit of affluence (*Dances with Sheep*, 68). The lack of names and the characters identified by seemingly arbitrary signs, as in the examples above, show the emptiness of these projects (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 50).

Althusser also theorizes that as the modern subject is brought into the System, or the institutions of control in society, his or her production is maximized both as a consumer and as a worker. In exchange for his or her production, he or she is given assurance that he or she exists, a phenomenon that he identifies as an ideology. Only by submitting to the System and its ideologies as a consumer, not as an individual, can one find a place in modern society (*Dances with Sheep*, 175). Other ideologies exist in this system: religion, democracy, science, and capitalism, all of which are criticized in Murakami's novels as "group narratives" that try to replace his characters' individual identities. None of these ideologies are bad in themselves, but

in Murakami's stories they combine into one "group narrative" which he calls "rapid capitalism." This group narrative seeks only to create more consumption (*Dances with Sheep*, 177). One of the most significant issues in modernity is the development of the modern individualized subject, but this subject's development is threatened by "Rapid Capitalist System. Murakami's fiction asks how one can fit in the system, and the answers his characters receive lead to conflict (*The Japanization of Modernity*, 2, 42-3)

The creation of a state ideology is accomplished through the manipulation of the population using these ideologies. Althusser's theory is further supported by the formation of the consumer society in Japan. As discussed in Chapter 1, there were repeated attempts to enact change in Japan's postwar history: the ANPO protests and the Zenkyoto movements among them. It is the Zenkyoto movement that impacted Murakami the most. He grew up in this increasingly affluent time, participated in the movement while attending Waseda University, then watched as it fell apart as quickly as it had begun. Murakami also watched as the former protesters simply disappeared into the consumer system; and his writing attempts to comprehend these facts for himself (*Dances with Sheep*, 10-11; 30). He suggests that the "rapid capitalism" is no longer fought against in the modern era, an era that Baudrillard calls one of mediocrity. However, it is also still no more satisfying in identity formation than it was in the 1960s; in Murakami's eyes, "rapid capitalism" has destroyed the soul of the Japanese and is preventing them from interacting outside the System (*Dances with Sheep*, 18). Having destroyed the soul, and stripped away one's unique identity, the System bestows on the individual consumer an artificial, ready-made identity (*Dances with Sheep*, 41, 68). Murakami begin to question whether competition—for better jobs, goods, and housing—is a suitable replacement for the activism through which his generation found identity during the 1960s (*Dances with Sheep*, 156)? It will

become clear that through his depiction of the System and his characters' internal and external conflicts with it, the answer to this question is no.

The System in Murakami's works is characterized by an abuse of technology and the commodification of everything. Information, culture, social interactions, family, friendship, body; anything and everything can be and usually is a commodity in modernity (*Dances with Sheep*, 42-3, 144; Rubin, 170). *The Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* describes a System in which technology, information, and the body are commodified. The Professor abuses technology to create the program that allows him to use the Protagonist and his colleagues' brains to create human computers, enabling them to sell their brains to protect data from thieves. In *The Wild Sheep Chase*, the culture of modern Japan is reduced to a pawn in the hands of the enigmatic Sheep that possesses the right-wing Boss. And in *Dansu dansu dansu (Dance, Dance, Dance)*, the same protagonist from *The Wild Sheep Chase* is caught up in a world where high-end prostitutes can be purchased from half a world away, wealthy parents purchase the Protagonist as a kind of all-in-one friend/parent/brother for their daughter, and no one faces the consequences of any of these actions. These situations become critiques of "rapid capitalism" as everything and everyone is reduced to a commodity. The essence of the "rapid capitalist system" is that it intrudes on everything from friendship to family roles, and an individual's role in the system is conspicuous consumption (*The Music of Words*, 170; *Dances with Sheep*, 137-9).

Murakami's critique of "rapid capitalism" is also a critique of the political forces that promote it as the dominant social ideology. The Rat Trilogy begins this criticism. The Rat is an affluent young man, but his wealth is not earned, it is inherited from his father. His father made his money through a chemical factory that produced, using the same ingredients, an insect repellent during the war, a health tonic during the lean years of the Occupation, and a household

cleaner after the Korean War. This functions as a parody of the capitalist taking his wealth through exploitation. His projects exploit the Japanese war effort, the Asian continent, and the reconstruction in a scaled down version of what elite Japanese families were able to do in real life. His growing disillusionment with his family's wealth is akin to the disillusionment felt by Murakami's generation, but it is different because while the majority of his peers and their families were devastated by the war, his thrived. This makes him a perfect target for the Sheep in *The Wild Sheep Chase*. The Sheep possesses characters who represent three of the influential groups that made names for themselves on the continent in World War II and in Japan's reconstruction. It first possesses the ambitious intellectual represented by the Sheep Professor, then the right-wing power broker represented by the Boss, and finally the capitalist who made a fortune on Japan's involvement in wars, represented by the Rat (Murakami, F, 22-3).

These characters' fates are interesting when one considers what they represent. While studying sheep in Manchuria, the Sheep Professor, a rising star as an intellectual, is possessed by the Sheep. His bright career as someone who could help solidify Japan's place as an imperial power is dashed when he returns to his station and the Sheep abandons him. For the rest of his life, he is consumed by the desire to find the Sheep again, which could be read as similar to the fate of many who colonized Manchuria or whose military careers brought them to the puppet state of Manchukuo. The next to be possessed by the Sheep is the Boss, who is able to use the cunning given to him by the Sheep to gain control over the most influential structures in the modern Japanese state—the media, the bureaucracy, and industry—to create a power-base that can influence anything or anyone that he, or the Sheep, likes. He becomes a representative of this state. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Japanese modern state is opaque, elusive and not accountable to the people (*Dances with Sheep*, 35). Finally, the Sheep possesses the Rat, it would

seem as an attempt to enforce a capitalist system as a means of control. The Rat is the nostalgic image that the Protagonist seeks as a stand-in for his Self in the novel, so it stands to reason that the Rat can also function as the Protagonist's alter-ego, which makes the Protagonist as much of a consumer as the Rat. By locking in on the modern capitalist society, the Sheep can achieve its ultimate goal, which is the spread of a perfectly controllable identity. This identity can be a metaphor for the Japanese modernization project, which can be summarized as the military conquest of Asia and then the economic conquest of the same (Rubin, 91-2). And in creating a plot that sets up individuals against the state, Murakami makes an overt political gesture, that the System is not always on the side of the individual, which is the point he makes in his Jerusalem Prize speech (*Dances with Sheep*, 53).

In all these works, the System is a violent intrusion into the protagonists' lives (*Dances with Sheep*, 104). Violence is almost never-ending in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland*. First, the Protagonist has to travel a wet, but strangely quiet cavern with a foreboding sense that he is being watched, then his apartment is trashed by toughs hired by either his employers or the information thieves he works against, after that he discovers that his mind was violently intruded on by the Professor to install the program that allows him to encrypt data, only to find that this very program will kill him by the end of the novel. Smaller signs abound as well, such as finding a salaryman's one shoe deep in the subway tunnels under Tokyo, a sign of the monstrous INKlings, a subterranean carnivorous race living under Tokyo in the novel's world. All of this seems normal to the Protagonist, who doesn't question the existence of a previously unheard of entity called the INKlings, and passively accepts his fate at the hands of the Professor's program. The city becomes, as Stretcher quotes from John Cawelti's book on formulaic literature, a place of "empty modernity, corruption, and death. A gleaming and deceptive facade hides a world of

exploitation and criminality (qtd in *Dances with Sheep*, 41). Not immune from the violence are the alternating *End of the World* chapters of the novel. Here, the Protagonist has his shadow removed from him upon entering the walled Town at the end of the world; his job is to read dreams from the polished skulls of unicorns that he sees being gathered and cremated by the Gatekeeper and the Protagonist's shadow; the Gatekeeper himself has a wide selection of intimidating knives in his house: all are signs of violence. Violent intrusions come in other novels as well: The Rat's suicide in *The Wild Sheep Chase*; the murder of Kiki by Gotunda, the actor who is an agent of the "rapid capitalist system" in *Dance, Dance, Dance*; and the molestation of his two sisters and the prostitute Kano Creta by Okada Toru's brother-in-law and enemy, Wataya Noboru in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, just to name a few.

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle's Wataya can clearly represent right-wing evil, authoritarianism, and nepotism. He is a graduate of a prestigious university and the eldest son of a family that earned its wealth through questionable means, thus taking on characteristics of both the Rat and Gotunda, who will be discussed later. Wataya makes a name for himself through his chameleon-like performances on political talk shows and his convoluted and ultimately meaningless book that somehow catches the eye of many on the political right. A rising political star, he is named heir apparent to his uncle's Diet seat and runs for the position over the course of the novel. His power over the rest of society is tied closely to his performance of these roles. In the climatic hotel scene, Okada sees on the hotel lobby TV that a person who looks a lot like him has just attacked Wataya during a political rally. This cannot be, as this hotel is the "*other side*," where Okada is trying to reconnect with his wife and restore her identity and also find his own. However, the violence in this scene is real, as he is pursued by the others in the lobby, all of whom are convinced that he attacked this political star and media darling. Jay Rubin argues that

this is an example of the media's power over superficial people (*The Music of Words*, 216). In addition to this it seems that this is emblematic of the power that the state has over the media in Japan. Power of all kinds becomes an important part of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*; after all, it is in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* that the philosophy of the modern is condensed into a simple idea: Strong is Good (Murakami, F, 52).

Murakami's protagonists are usually able to engage with their selves and are able to combat the ready-made identity that the System tries to bestow on them. But for other characters, those who have meaning for the Protagonist, often those whom he is fighting for, are often unable to do the same. For these characters, connecting with their individual selves, the Lacanian Other that was discussed earlier, is impossible because one of those ready-made narratives replaces it. Because the modern consumer society is creating more consumers for further economic growth, consumer identity usually replaces their individual identity (*Dances with Sheep*, 125).

An excellent example of individuality replaced by consumer identity is the film star Gotanda in *Dance, Dance, Dance*. A model student when the Protagonist knew him in junior high school, Gotanda attends a prestigious university and is discovered as a future film star after graduating. Beginning with advertising spots, he develops a film career that eventually awards him with the lead role in a film that haunts the Protagonist and his young friend Yuki, who through her clairvoyant abilities begins to believe (rightly as it turns out) that Gotanda is a murderer. Gotanda's entire life is structured around the studio that he works for. His relationship with his former wife (another film star) is created by the studio, and when he wants a more natural family life, she divorces him. When he goes out on his own, his studio takes care of everything: car, meals, apartment, prostitutes, anything for its star, but this also saddles him with

an impossible debt. He and his ex-wife begin to sleep with each other after their divorce, not in either's apartment, where the studio could discover their affair and put a stop to it, but in love hotels any chance they can get. Completely suppressed by the studio, which becomes a stand-in for the System, is his desire for a normal family life (*Dances with Sheep*, 151).

At the end of the novel, he describes a violent need to discover what was inside Kiki, the Protagonist's former girlfriend, whom Gotanda often slept with while she was a call girl. His desire for her is the same desire that the Protagonist has, a need to reconnect with his past and assert his individual identity. The Protagonist is able to find his identity and establish a life with another character, a hotel concierge named Yumiyaki. He does this through his adventure on the "other side," represented through the mysterious hotel he and Kiki stayed at in *The Wild Sheep Chase* and through a death chamber he finds in Hawaii. On the other hand, Gotanda is unable to assert his identity and violently lashes out, murdering Kiki, admitting the crime to the Protagonist, and finally committing suicide by driving his sports car off a cliff, leaving his life in the same way he lived it—through consuming, this time consuming an expensive sports car in his spectacular suicide. What links this novel to those previously mentioned is this dominant social ideology of control, materialism, desire and easy gratification (*Dances with Sheep*, 61).

Asserting Identity in the Consumer Society

The desire to have an individual identity apart from materialism and desire is often what motivates the Protagonist in Murakami's work (Clerici, 257). The young in the 1960s found Japanese affluence unsatisfying. They desired a connection to something positive and dynamic, and this is what fueled the counterculture Zenkyoto movement (*Dances with Sheep*, 67). It is also part of what gives the Protagonist Murakami's trademark cool, detached style. An example is the Protagonist's easy-going attitude towards work, which allows him to pursue the pinball machine

in *Pinball, 1973* and to leave his job to pursue the Rat in *The Wild Sheep Chase*. But this desire did not last. Zenkyoto protesters was replaced by consumerism and an identity crisis developed in Murakami's generation (*Dances with Sheep*, 78). Instead of external conflict—political protests, riots, activism—the conflict turned inward (*Dances with Sheep*, 19). The everydayness movement was a part of the Zenkyoto protests from the beginning, as discussed in Chapter One. However, Stretcher argues that when one looks at the way Murakami treats the post-Zenkyoto period, his concern is less about the failed movement and more about the loss of identity and subjectivity that came with its failure. Everydayness actually created a crisis within the Self and maybe even helped to accelerate the movement's downfall.

The Zenkyoto movement is often parodied in Murakami's novels. In *Norwegian Wood*, Toru's class is interrupted by a couple of masked activists promoting the "smashing of the Imperial universities," which he and Midori make fun of and ignore. Midori criticizes her experience with the movement, asking about the purpose of a movement that had her in the kitchen making rice balls. Toru comments that the whole thing was a phony revolution for people to be a part of something that they did not understand (177-8). Murakami's narrator calls Zenkyoto a "slapstick of a movement," in his short story "Folklore of My Generation (*Elephant Vanishes*, 61)."

Clearly, Murakami was dissatisfied with Zenkyoto and its aims, but the sense of loss participants suffered in the aftermath is palpable. Rat's anger at the rich and the Protagonist's aimless search for the girl that he borrowed a Beach Boys' record from in *Hear the Wind Sing* show the sense of displacement that came with the summer after the movements. Japanese journalist Kawamoto Saburo is quoted in *Dances with Sheep* for connecting the death of the Rat in *The Wild Sheep Chase* to the death of the student movement because so many of their

(Kawamoto and Murakami) contemporaries disappeared in the same way the Rat did in the novel (11). The activists are as good as dead to each other because they are no longer connected through their activism. For those in Murakami's generation and younger, their goal for the 70s was to escape "the System, and (they) just wanted to get through the 1970s without anyone bothering them" (Kazamaru, qtd in *Dances with Sheep*, 12).

In Murakami's writing, those who emerged from the 70s faced two choices: participation in the consumer society or peripheralization from it. This is represented in *the Wild Sheep Chase*, where the Protagonist must play the Boss' secretary's game or have his entire livelihood and everything he loves torn from him. It can also be found in *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and End of the World*. In order to be a member in the walled Town that makes up the world in this half of the novel, the Protagonist had to choose to separate from his Self, represented by his shadow, or take his shadow into the woods that are set apart from the Town and become a pariah (*Dances with Sheep*, 45). The choice here is really no choice at all. In the *End of the World* section of the novel, the Protagonist's role in the Town is to read dreams from the skulls of deceased unicorns that lived in the walled town, a task that asks him only to consume the dreams, not interpret them (*Dances with Sheep*, 46). He slowly figures out that these dreams are fragments of memory from the townspeople, but they are fleeting and not enough to recreate the sense of self that they lost in the process of losing their shadows. In the end, this discovery leads to his redemption, as he does not escape the Town along with his shadow because of his attachment to it. He feels responsible for the town (rightfully so, though he has no way of knowing this, as in the *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* portion of the novel, the town is a creation of his own mind), and in particular the town Librarian, whom he hopes to try to rescue by helping her rebuild herself. He replaces his consumption of these memories with activism, trying to help his love interest to

recover her identity. Unlike the rest of the Town, who sacrifice their shadows and become content with work for work's sake, the Protagonist helps his shadow escape from the Town, letting it survive on the other end of a whirlpool, and resigns himself to helping others recover their own identity, just as he did. The meaningless consumption and work that the townspeople perform, and that the Protagonist is expected to perform, is replaced with action.

What are the long-term effects of an identity molded by consumption? When will contemporary Japanese crack under the pressure? Which is more dangerous, nuclear arms or an aimlessly floating society? Stretcher poses these questions at the beginning of *Dances with Sheep* and finds his answer in Murakami's treatment of the proliferation of new religions in *Underground 2: The Place that Was Promised* and in *1Q84*. Recall that, earlier in this chapter religion was identified as a structure in Althusser's theory on modern systems. Also recall that Murakami concluded in *The Place That Was Promised* that giving into a "group narrative," as he argues that the Aum Shinrikyo cultists did, is a dangerous prospect. *1Q84* explores a cult modeled on Aum: secretive, wholly subordinated by a guru, violent sexually, physically, and emotionally. The twist in this cult is that it is directly connected to the Zenkyoto movement. When Aomame, one of the two protagonists in the novel, discovers that she has left what she knew as 1984 for an alternate reality that she calls *1Q84*, she notices that the police are wielding a much more powerful weapon than she remembered. No one else in her circle notices a recent change. To solve the problem, she looks into newspaper archives, where she discovers a raid on a mountain commune called Takashima during the Zenkyoto movement, similar to the raid on the United Red Army. However, in this raid the student activists were well armed and killed several police officers before they were overpowered. The scandal forced the police to take up new arms for their protection.

This helps connect the other main character of the novel, Tengo, to the world of 1Q84. Tengo ghostwrites a novel for the young runaway cultist named Fuka-Eri. In the process of getting approval to ghostwrite the novel, he meets her guardian Professor Ebisuno, who worked with Fuka-Eri's father, the leader of the cult. It is Ebisuno who connects the thread from the Takashima to the cult, called Sakigake. Sakigake formed as a splinter cell of the commune. They were left alone by the government because they were not a part of the violent, Soviet Union-inspired commune. The members of the cult are wholly caught up in the narrative created by the cult's guru, allowing their daughters to be raped by him and ignoring the violent killings that are hinted at throughout the novel.

Murakami also connects this absorption into a "group narrative" with absorption into other narratives: more established religions such as Christianity, and the work-first ethos that established Japan for a time as the second largest economy in the world. Aomame was forced by her mother to go door-to-door with her on Sundays to proselytize for their Christian sect, on the assumption that a young mother and her daughter would be more likely to gain entrance into a home than just the mother. This same logic leads Tengo's father to force Tengo to accompany him along the most difficult part of his NHK subscription fees route. The neglect that the two children felt at the hands of their parents' submission to a "group narrative" brings the two of them together for a brief moment in an empty classroom. This moment keeps them connected spiritually, even when they are apart from each other and isolated in their individual rejection of consumer society during their adolescence and young adulthood.

It is in isolation that Tengo and Aomame are able to keep a weak hold on their identities, a pattern that develops throughout Murakami's novels. His characters are often loners, single men, stay-at-home husbands, recently divorced men, or runaway children. These characters have

help along the way, almost always a woman to whom the male is attracted but cannot fully connect with. But in the end, he is back on his own when it comes time to interact with his Self. His characters are isolated, but Murakami is not celebrating isolation; he is illustrating a reality of modern Japan (*Dances with Sheep*, 116). To be an individual in modern Japan is to be isolated and peripheralized, because the modern Japanese youth is disillusioned. He or she believes that the salaryman is too decadent, the counterculture toothless, and modern life is too dull (Rubin, 24-29; Clerici, 258). In response, the Murakami character, such as the protagonist in *Dance Dance Dance*, gives up his ambitions and seeks comfort in doing so (Murakami, F, 25). He becomes at home in his obscurity (Cassegard, 85). He works as a freelance copywriter, taking any job no matter how pointless or small, “shoveling cultural snow” as he puts it, the same as his life in *The Wild Sheep Chase*. Tengo works as a math teacher at a *yobiko*, writing on the side but having no success in it. Tazaki Tsukuru designs and builds train stations in *The Colorless Tazaki Tsukuru and His Years of Pilgrimage*. All these men are comfortable with and build or locate their male identities through low expectations.

The idea behind this philosophy is presented by the Protagonist in *Pinball, 1973*: “each time something new comes into my hands, I trample something else...So I decided, not to want anything anymore (79, qtd in Murakami, F, 26).” This is the opposite of Modernists, Murakami Fuminobu argues; it is also opposite of the consumerist society that Murakami Haruki is criticizing. Worth noting is that this conversation is with the secretary of the translation firm the Protagonist started. After he shares this, she tells him he ought to “live in a shoe box (80).” She never appears again in the novel, but she is the Protagonist’s ex-wife in *The Wild Sheep Chase*. It seems that in between novels, the Protagonist tried to conform to the consumer society and its systems, and along the way lost his identity. The work that his small translation firm does in *The*

Wild Sheep Chase confirms this. They began creating advertisements and copy for products they never used or believed in, and his partner in the firm began over-consuming alcohol. Only when he leaves the firm and advises his partner to return to the translation they did formerly, does the Protagonist begin his “chase” to reassert his identity through low expectations, as stated above. The two novels show the continued isolation and peripheralization of those seeking an individual identity over the course of two novels (*Pinball, 1973* and *The Wild Sheep Chase*) and two of the same character’s life stages.

Matthew Stetcher, in his *Dances with Sheep* response to Japanese journalist Kawamoto Saburo’s criticism of *The Wild Sheep Chase*, argues that instead of saying that the Murakami hero does not have the scent of life about him, it would be more accurate to say that it is contemporary Japan that does not have the scent of life around it (*Dances with Sheep*, 20). The Murakami hero is emblematic of individuals in 20th century Japan, especially the young that Murakami tends to write about. In Murakami’s works, exploring the “other side”, engaging with the Self there, bringing it to life through linguistic connections, all fictionalizes what is missing in the consumer-focused lives of the contemporary Japanese. What follows this exploration is a choice; conformity or peripheralization and isolation. Through Murakami’s fiction, the reader sees the results of both, usually a violent and permanent end to one’s individuality when one conforms to the consumer society or another “group narrative,” or eventual contentment with being obscure and isolated.

Chapter Three

Criticism of Japan's Consumer Society in Murakami Haruki's Short Fiction

In the previous chapter, I discussed two areas of critical work on Murakami Haruki: his depiction of the Self and the assertion of the Self in the face of Japan's contemporary consumer society. Murakami uses several analogies to describe the Self; among the most frequent is the "black box," a mysterious, unknowable something that makes up what he often refers to as the "core consciousness" or "soul." This black box, which in his two-story house analogy is the innermost room of the basement, is sought after by his characters because it represents their suppressed Selves or individual identities, which in Japan are neglected in favor of the group. The typical Murakami story has a relatively predictable structure; first, the character has some kind of conflict that forces him to reflect back on someone from his past. Usually this someone is a woman, often a former or desired lover, but sometimes an old friend. The protagonist becomes fixated on this person, and through his memories of him or her can bring him or her back to his life. Early on in Murakami's career, this individual is brought back in only a linguistic way; for example, the girlfriend in *Pinball, 1973*, with whom he communicates through a pinball machine. In later Murakami novels, his characters find the actual embodiment of their lost desire, such as Hajime in *South of the Border, West of the Sun (1999)*, who follows his lost lover, Shimamoto, down a busy Tokyo street, only to lose her in a crowd and have her return to his bar years later. In Murakami's most recent works, the connections to his protagonists' lost desires have become more metaphysical. For instance, Kafka in *Kafka on the Shore (2002)* is seeking to avoid an Oedipal curse placed on him by his father, where he will sleep with his mother and sister and murder his father. At the same time, by seeking to avoid this fate, he also seems to desire it. Having never known his mother or sister, he feels that the only way he will ever know

them is by fulfilling the curse. Kafka does fulfill the curse in his mind. He sleeps with his mother stand-in Saeki in a semi-dream state in the library he comes to live in, but only after he rapes his sister stand-in Sakura in an actual dream. Then, he passes out near a shrine and wakes covered in blood, only to learn that hundreds of miles away his father was murdered.

In reconnecting with these internal selves, Murakami's characters are also rejecting the consumer society that forces one to choose between peripheralization when one accepts one's individual identity, or adherence to the consumer system. The Protagonist in *Pinball, 1973* becomes further detached from the city's hustle and bustle by the end of the novel; Hajime begins an emotional affair with Shimamoto after his father-in-law reveals to him his plan to use Hajime's name to funnel political bribes in *South of the Border, West of the Sun*; in *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka flees his father, a famous sculptor who also takes on consumer personas, such as the cat-killer Johnny Walker, who is murdered by Kafka through another character Nakata. All these characters end up isolated when they interact with their Selves. A chicken processing plant, a cabin deep in the mountains outside of Tokyo, and a distant forest off the coast in a distant (from Tokyo) part of Japan—all of these locations function as the “other side,” the innermost room of the house of the mind where one can interact with one's Self, and with others' Selves as well.

The purpose of this thesis is to apply these ideas—connection to the Self and rejection of the consumer society—to three of Murakami Haruki's short stories. There are several reasons for choosing these stories over others. First, in addition to being easier for an inexperienced reader of Japanese to read in the original Japanese, there is a lack of criticism on Murakami's short fiction. This is to be expected, Murakami has written hundreds of short stories and the scholarship on him is relatively small compared to other Japanese greats. In Murakami's short

stories, connection to the Self and resistance to the consumer narrative or other “group narratives” that try to replace it can be more dangerous than in his novels. This is probably because Murakami’s short stories tend to be more experimental in nature. On several occasions, his experimental short stories become important moments in a longer novel. For example, “*Nejimaki-dori to kayōbi no onnatachi* (The Wind-up Bird and Tuesday’s Women)” becomes the opening scene of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*.

In only one of the following three stories does the character successfully interact with his self and come through the "other side" unscathed. I believe this is a consequence of Murakami’s more experimental attitude towards short fiction, but it also serves to make a point. In Murakami’s longer fiction, not all of his characters are able to interact with the self and return. Many of them disappear, and many more die, if they were truly alive to begin with. In his short fiction, Murakami can highlight these disappearing acts, where a long novel on a character like this would leave his reader even more bewildered than he or she often is.

The first story to be analyzed is “The Strange Library.” “Fushigi na toshokan” (“The Strange Library”) is a short story first published as “Toshokan kitan” (“A Strange Story from the Library”) in *Kangaru biyori* (The Kangaroo Communique) in 1983, then revised and published in its current form, a children’s book, in 2005. The children’s book was translated by Ted Goossen for publication in the U.S. in 2014. A children’s book may be a strange selection when set next to the other two stories in this paper, but this story is an excellent example of the dangers of an identity based on consumption and the consumer society’s desire to consume one’s information. The story begins with a young protagonist, referred to as just “the boy,” returning books to his local library. This is unique in Murakami’s fiction since nearly all of his protagonists are young adults. Why choose a young boy for this role? Potentially to show the broad reach of

the consumer system. When the boy arrives at the library, he finds a host of strange figures and places that he had never seen at the library. First, there is a new female librarian, then a new basement that hosts a new old man who leads the boy deep into the library, where he is imprisoned and meets the Sheep Man and a young girl. The boy is forced to read thick books on taxation while he is imprisoned. With the help of the Sheep Man and the young girl, he is able to escape from the prison, though it costs him his connection with these characters and the life of his pet starling.

The second story is “The Dancing Dwarf.” First published in *Hotaru naya o yaku sonohoka no tanpen (Barn Burning and Other Stories)* in 1987, “The Dancing Dwarf” was translated into English by Jay Rubin for the collection *The Elephant Vanishes* in 1993. This story creates a parody of contemporary society’s focus on consumption and shows the dangers of allowing a “group narrative” to replace the individual Self. The story begins in a dream, where the Protagonist meets a dancing dwarf, who warns him that he will live in the forest with the dwarf forever. The Protagonist then wakes up and goes about his day: breakfast, easy work at a factory where live elephants are constructed, an afternoon listening to music, then a visit to the local bar. While listening to music, he shares the story of his dream with his work partner, who remembers an old man who would talk about a similar dwarf when he would get drunk at the local bar. Curious about the dwarf and his warning, the Protagonist finds the old man, who tells him the history of the dwarf, how he came from the north and danced for that very bar’s patrons until word of his dancing ability reached the Emperor, who hired him to dance at the palace. Soon after a revolution started, and the Emperor and all of the lords were imprisoned or killed by the revolutionaries. The Protagonist ponders all of this and the next day meets a beautiful girl whom he decides he must sleep with. However, she refuses everyone’s advances. That night the

dwarf returns to the Protagonist's dream, and they strike a deal that the dwarf says will make the girl fall for the Protagonist. The bargain works, but it comes at the cost of the Protagonist's freedom.

The last story, "Dokuritsu kitan" ("An Independent Organ"), is the most recent of these three stories, published in 2013 in the collection *Onna no inai otokotachi (Men without Women)*. It was translated by Philip Gabriel in 2017 for the English publication of the collection. This is the second-hand story of a cosmetic surgeon named Tokai. The story fills the reader in on Tokai's history, establishing him as a long-term bachelor lacking the ability or desire to connect with a life partner on an emotional level. He lives for himself and his work, until he meets and falls in love with a woman. This development turns his life upside down, and he begins to question his entire existence and its meaning. In the end, his love for this woman proves to be his undoing, and he dies a broken and lonely man.

These stories in particular were chosen because they represent three different eras of Murakami's career. They represent three different narratives that are a part of the consumer system. And in representing these different narratives, they can show the full range of Murakami's criticism of the consumer system. As will be seen in the coming pages, Murakami's short stories help to offer a complete picture of his criticism of the consumer society and its effects on the establishment of an individual identity.

"The Strange Library"

Unlike many of Murakami's stories and novels, where the "other side" is slowly introduced, in "The Strange Library," the story begins on the "other side". The curious boy-protagonist opens his narration by observing that the library was more "hushed" than usual. He continues to describe just how silent the library is: his shoes "clack" unlike his normal footsteps,

he descends a flight of stairs he never knew existed to knock on a door as “if someone had knocked on the gates of hell with a baseball bat.” All of this points to a journey beyond. A passage on the other side of the door hides a labyrinth that could not exist in his small neighborhood library, suggesting labyrinthine depths of the mind that Murakami’s characters explore on the "other side".

The connection to his Self is found in the Protagonist’s reading habits. He returns two books, *How to Build a Submarine* and *Memoirs of a Shepherd*. These analogies are obvious: a submarine exists to explore what is under the surface of the water. Water is often a symbol of the passage to the "other side" and of Murakami’s characters’ explorations of their minds. The shepherd becomes the linguistic connection that draws the Protagonist to this Self when the Protagonist remarks that he is “always on time, and I never hand things in late. That’s the way my mother taught me. Shepherds are the same.” This becomes the linguistic link; he is the shepherd that he read about. The Protagonist’s ability to link himself to the books he reads plays a role later in the story as well. On the way to the library to return these books, he begins to wonder how the Ottoman Empire collected taxes. As will be discussed later, his thirst for knowledge only for the sake of knowing things is what makes him a prime candidate for the dangers on the "other side". He later is imprisoned in the library and forced to read a book on the life of an Ottoman Empire tax collector, and while he reads he actually *becomes* the tax collector—tasting what he tastes, smelling what he smells, feeling the emotions that he feels.

Before all of this, the Protagonist returns the books on submarines and shepherds to a woman he has never seen before. This woman is sitting at the circulation desk reading an “extraordinarily” thick and wide book “as if she were reading the right-hand page with her right eye and the left-hand page with her left.” Similar to the Protagonist’s need to find information on

the Ottoman Empire, this is another example of consumption. She does not appear to be reading this text, she appears to only consume the words and information in them, which is foreshadowing the dilemma the Protagonist himself will face. When he asks her for help finding new books, she brushes him off completely. “Turn right at the bottom of the stairs,’ she replied without looking up. ‘Go straight down the corridor to Room 107.’” All she can do is consume the information that is in front of her; she cannot be bothered to help the boy or have any real interaction with him.

On the other side of Room 107 is an old man who sits behind a desk. His eyes glitter at the mention of “taxes.” With brusque manners, he convinces the Protagonist that he must go deep into the labyrinth on the other side of the room with him to the “reading room” so that he can read the books the Old Man found on Ottoman Empire taxation. Despite the late hour, the Old Man tells the Protagonist that the rest of the library “does what he tells them,” and soon reveals the library’s secret: the Protagonist is now the Old Man’s captive and he must read the books and pass a test to leave. The Old Man is representative of a system: elusive, mysterious, and controlling everyone in his domain. But he is not just any system; the way he reacts to the boy’s interest in taxes makes him representative of the state and the dominant state ideology of consumerism. To the state, taxes are a symbol of one’s consumptive ability. In theory, the more one pays in taxes, the more one can pay for consumer goods. In his cell, the boy reads these books, consuming, living them in the same way that the librarian at the front desk was, but when he shuts the book none of the information is recalled, and he does nothing with it. He reads without applying his knowledge. The Protagonist’s interest in taxes and his ability to consume information without using it means that the consumer society has ensnared another victim, a young one who will provide a lifetime of consumption.

There is more to the boy's captivity than just his ability to consume. He is consuming a certain product: information. And the information that he consumes makes him more desirable. The boy's jailer is the Sheep Man, described in much the same way as the Sheep Man in *The Wild Sheep Chase* and *Dance Dance Dance*. It is he who reveals to the boy the Old Man's true goal: to consume his brains: "Mr. Sheep Man," I asked, "why would that Old Man want to eat my brains?" "Because brains packed with knowledge are yummy, that's why. They're nice and creamy. And sort of grainy at the same time." His information-loaded brain becomes desirable to the Old Man. One of the most important parts of the overall economy in contemporary society is the information economy. Even in the '80s, when this story was first written, data on people's buying habits and future needs, and contact information were valuable to marketers and companies. Now, this information has exploded: internet browsing history, GPS location history, anything that can be used to target a specific product to a consumer is worth a lot of money. And then there are identity thieves, capable of using all kinds of methods to steal one's proof of existence in the modern economy and wreak havoc.

Furthermore, the boy is a consumer of information. Since the very earliest science fiction stories, the widespread access to information was a trope. Now it is reality, when one can access more data from the past few years than existed in all of humanity's history. Easy access to information was beginning at the time of this story's writing; it continues to grow ever easier, though access to information does not always mean that one fully understands it. "The Strange Library" seems to critique this existence. The Sheep Man goes on to say that this happens in libraries everywhere, which requires the question: if, in the contemporary economy, everything must have a price or be pushed aside, what is the price for accessing all this information? If information isn't free anywhere, there must be a price to pay. In "The Strange Library" the price

of access to information is to consume but not use this information, seen through the Protagonist's unwilling embrace of the tax collector's life in the book that he reads, and then be consumed by the system that is providing this information. As one's presence online continues to be mapped and sold to the highest bidder, it seems likely that the price for our access to information is the same.

The Protagonist is particularly susceptible to this form of control. He repeatedly remarks on his inability to say "no" to authority. "Why do I act like this, agreeing when I really disagree, letting people force me to do things I don't want to do?" His inability to say no is problematic, because all he has to do is deny that he is present in the labyrinth of his own free will, and it seems he would be able to leave. When the Protagonist meets the Sheep Man, the Sheep Man is shocked to see him. "Holy moly, you came here to read, for real?' 'That's right,' I answered. You mean you *really and truly* came to read those books (italics are the translator's)" This, of course, is before the Protagonist understands that the reading room he is en route to is actually a jail cell, but he begins to have doubts about the safety of this adventure from the moment he knocks on the door to Room 107. Could the Protagonist have left the labyrinth if he told the Sheep Man that he was not there to read? The Sheep Man's insistence on the words *really* and *truly* give the reader the feeling that he would have. Perhaps the Old Man would have just put him in the cell anyway, but his will to fight against his imprisonment would have been different. His imprisonment is analogous to the contemporary subject's enthrallment in the consumer society. There is always the ability, however difficult it may be, for the consumer to remove himself or herself from the consumer society. Similarly, it is possible to withdraw from the information consumption society as well. However, many consumers lack the ability to say no to either system.

In the end, it takes a cast of characters to help the Protagonist escape from the Old Man's prison. Rather than resist, the boy allowed himself to be chained because the Sheep Man would be physically punished, showing the importance of external over the internal in the story. In his captivity, he meets another character, simply known as the Girl, who is able to convince him to leave the prison. His conversations with the Girl lead him to mentally latch on to his mother and pet starling, both lost to him in his former life outside of this prison. Because of his new-found interest in the Girl, he is able to discover the courage to leave the prison along with the Sheep Man, who manages to find their way out. She is unable to escape, having faded along with the moon, but embodies the Protagonist's now deceased starling, which grows large in the mouth of the dog the Old Man uses to try and keep the pair from leaving Room 107. When the starling becomes too large for the dog to control, the Protagonist is able to escape.

This final scene shows the way out of the consumer identity. The Protagonist makes the link between his mother and the starling and the Girl. The Girl tells him that in this room, many worlds are scrambled together: including his world, the Girl's world, and the Sheep Man's. In this scrambled world, which is another sign of the "other side", anything can be brought into existence. The Protagonist is living the life of an Ottoman Empire-era tax collector, The Girl inhabits the Protagonist's "life" in the book that he is reading, and the dog that the Old Man uses to guard the door out of Room 107 is the very same dog that the Protagonist says bit him earlier in his life. By latching on to a part of one's own identity: such as the boy's mother or pet starling, or the Sheep Man's doughnuts, and asserting one's identity through that object, and then by letting go of that obsession, one is able to escape this scrambled world.

But this is also a danger, as in this scrambled world where all worlds are brought together, anything that one latches onto can also be used against the individual. The Old Man

kills the pet starling and uses the dog that bit the Protagonist to try and subdue him. Only when the Protagonist sacrifices everything, symbolized by his ability to forget that he left his new shoes in the cell, is he able to assert his identity and escape Room 107. Escape comes at a high price. When he leaves, the Sheep Man, who escaped with him, is gone, back to his own world. The Girl never really escaped; she embodied the dead starling. It seems unlikely that she left with them. Upon returning home, the Protagonist's mother makes no mention of his absence or of his starling. Then his mother dies and he is completely alone, showing the real cost of asserting one's identity, which is isolation and peripheralization from the consumer society.

"The Dancing Dwarf"

Peripheralization is a theme in "Odoru kobito (The Dancing Dwarf)" as well. In "The Dancing Dwarf," the "other side" is a forest dream world where the dancing dwarf who gives the story its name is exiled. The dwarf is the product of revolution: he was born "in the North country" and made his way south to the village where the Protagonist now lives to fulfill his desire to dance. After a revolution removed from power the royalty for whom he had danced, the dwarf exiled himself to the forest. He is a bizarre figure; his dancing is described as chaotic with every part of his body moving in all directions and somehow coalescing into emotionally moving dancing. The Protagonist watches the dwarf with amusement, but quickly realizes that the dwarf is not all that he seems to be. As the dream begins to merge into reality, the dwarf tells the Protagonist that he will "live in the forest. And every day you'll dance with me...It's been decided...No one has the power to change what's been decided (245)." His statement isn't a warning, it is a statement of fact, almost an order.

The Protagonist works at an elephant factory. His village is known for this line of work and the local bar and dance hall are connected to the factory. This factory becomes a parody of

the production side of contemporary consumer society. It is an enormous enterprise, comprised of at least eight stages and hundreds of workers. All labor is compartmentalized; partners work together as members of large teams that perform a specific task in the creation of “reconstituted” elephants. One stage is focused on trunks, another on heads, another on ears and so on. Each month the teams change stages and uniform colors and work on a different part of an elephant in order to “form a complete picture of what an elephant looked like (245).”

Why are these elephants created? If the factory workers do not know what one looks like, it stands to reason that they have never seen a real elephant in the world, despite working at an elephant factory. Where do all of these elephants go? A public monopoly purchases them in order to protect the elephants from improper use, though by whom the story narrator never says. What happens to them after that? They are branded and then released into the jungle. Why does society need these elephants? Because they do not reproduce fast enough to meet the demand. The factory takes an elephant, separates it into five parts and creates four artificial parts to go with one of the real parts and then releases the elephant into the world. Society loves elephants, needs elephants, and so the elephant factory fills this need. It is a beautifully absurd parody of supply and demand. After reading the description of the factory, one cannot tell if the demand created the supply or vice versa. One cannot tell why there is a demand at all. These elephants are not pets, they don't seem to be used for food, they just exist, and more of them exist at Christmas time.

No wonder the Protagonist feels the need to justify his work. But even this justification is not sufficient for him to find fulfillment in these tasks. At the time of the story, the Protagonist is working in the ear section of the factory. He and his partner find no satisfaction in this work, as they did in the head or trunk sections. Instead, they complete their assigned duties as quickly as

possible and then listen to music and read in the afternoons. All of this free time is what allows the Protagonist to begin to wonder and ask questions about the dancing dwarf. His partner tells him of an old man, from before the revolution, who told stories about the dwarf before the Protagonist came to work in the factory. This old man is able to fill him in on the details of the dwarf: he danced in the village, then moved to the palace and danced for the Emperor, and then a year later the revolution began, ultimately the revolutionaries won and executed the Emperor. The dwarf, it turns out, has the ability to make hidden emotions come out through his dancing, and it is hinted that this ability, directly or indirectly, caused the revolution.

This raises an interesting dilemma. If the dwarf caused the revolution by directly manipulating emotions, why is he forced out by the revolutionaries later; and if he indirectly caused it, why can't he get in the good graces of the revolutionaries? It would seem that he is directly influencing emotions, and the best example of this is the Protagonist himself. Not long after the dream, a new and beautiful girl begins to work at the factory. She catches the eye of everyone, but she ignores all their advances. When the Protagonist finds an excuse to meet her, she rejects him like all the others, but he becomes convinced that he must have her.

This new-found desire gives the dwarf the way to reveal his real goal: to inhabit the Protagonist and use him as a source of energy. The girl loves to dance, and the Protagonist cannot dance well enough to win her heart, so the dwarf proposes a deal. The dwarf will inhabit the Protagonist and through his dancing help him win her. The protagonist and the woman will have intercourse, and then the dwarf will leave his body, but if the Protagonist speaks a word, he will be possessed by the dwarf forever. The Protagonist manages to avoid speaking, but not without the dwarf making the girl appear to be a rotting corpse as they begin intercourse, showing definitively that the dwarf had bad intentions from the beginning.

In the end it is all for nothing; the way the Protagonist dances tips off the authorities, and the police are in pursuit of him for information about the dwarf. He loses everything he had before and can only choose between submitting to interrogation by the authorities, where it will seem as if the dwarf is still inhabiting him, or actually allow the dwarf to possess him permanently. Herein lies the danger of the “group narrative.” By giving himself over to the dwarf, he gives himself over to a form of “group narrative,” a system that seeks to replace his individual Self with something that can be easily controlled by the dwarf. His work did not provide him with a sufficient sense of self; but just as importantly, the narrative that he uses in place of the Self, symbolized by the dwarf, leaves him with no option to find his own sense of self. He either must submit wholly to the narrative, or return to the consumer-centered dominant narrative, and hope for the best.

“An Independent Organ”

The final story in this analysis, “An Independent Organ,” shows the unsatisfactory nature of devotion to the consumer system. The story is narrated by a novelist, Tanimura, who appears to be modeled after Murakami himself. This novelist begins the story by theorizing the existence of people who, “thanks to a lack of intellectual acuity—live a life that is surprisingly artificial” (77). The main character Tokai is one of these people. A friend of the narrator’s from his squash club, Tokai is a cosmetic plastic surgeon, one of the most excellent examples of a career whose role is dependent upon the consumer. His clients are primarily women who desire a change in appearance, and he discusses his female clients in detail with his friend Tanimura.

Women make up the bulk of Tokai’s clientele and are the primary concern in his life. Tokai is a “confirmed bachelor” who lives in a trendy part of Tokyo and is never emotionally connected with his many (as many as four at any given time) married or committed-to-another

lovers. He uses these women only for intellectual and physical stimulation. In this sense, Tokai is a hedonistic consumer; everything that he does is focused on the goal of pleasure for himself. He does not even control his own life: he trusts his every move to his gay male secretary, who is seemingly no threat to the committed heterosexual Tokai because of his homosexuality. When things get too close for Tokai, he withdraws; as a “veteran bachelor” he seems to have a knack for cutting things off with a woman before she gets too attached to him, or before her “real” partner finds out about her infidelity.

Despite this, his isolation is similar to that of the typical Murakami protagonist. He, like the examples in the previous chapter, is isolated during his search for his sense of self. Also like those other examples, Tokai finds this Self in the form of a woman, with whom he falls in love despite his best attempts to avoid just that. His attempts to fall out of love with her are interesting because they also betray a focus on the consumer. He tries to disconnect from her through her imperfections: “I mentally list as many of her defects—her *imperfections*, I should say. And I repeat these over and over in my head like a mantra...(88, italics are the translator’s). His manner of disconnecting is much like a shopper attempting to talk one’s self out of an impulsive purchase, looking over the product and trying to find as many flaws as possible to force oneself to put the item back on the store shelf. Much like this shopper though, Tokai finds that instead of disconnecting with the woman, he becomes more attracted to her. He finds her negative qualities attractive and isn’t sure what number of negative qualities is too much for him anyway. In truth, she is “a complete presence...all of her good qualities are tightly bound into one core. You can’t separate each individual quality to measure and analyze it...It’s what’s in her core that attracts me so strongly. Like a powerful magnet (91).” This core is very similar to the “black box” or the “core being” that comes up so often in Murakami’s novels. She has become more than some

casual lover to Tokai; she has become the very Self that he lost in his many years as a cosmetic plastic surgeon and member of the consumer society.

The feelings that Tokai has for her makes him realize his own incompleteness. After reciting a Fujiwara no Atsutada poem: “Having seen my love now/ and said farewell/ I know how very shallow my heart was of old/ as if had never before known love,” he tells Tanimura that he now understands what the poet meant by the feelings invoked by the poem and that he wishes that he could have felt this way much earlier in his life, because now he is questioning everything and asking himself: who is he? He is only his career: a plastic surgeon, like his father before him. He is skilled in this work and was satisfied with his professional life and his personal life, but now something is missing for him. He finds common ground with a Jewish doctor in Auschwitz that he read about, and whose story he relates to Tanimura. It is worth quoting the passage in full:

When I read this, it shocked me. If the time and place had been different, I might very well have suffered the same terrible fate. If for some reason—I don’t know why—I was suddenly dragged away from my present life, deprived of all my rights, and reduced to living as a number, what in the world would I become? I shut the book and thought about this. Other than my skills as a plastic surgeon, and the trust I’ve earned from others, I have no other redeeming features, no other talents. I’m just a fifty-two-year-old man. I’m healthy, though I don’t have the stamina I had when I was young. I wouldn’t be able to stand hard physical labor for long. The things I’m good at are selecting a nice Pinot Noir, frequenting some sushi restaurants...choosing stylish accessories as gifts for women, playing the piano a little...But that’s about the size of it. If I were thrown into a place like Auschwitz, none of that would help (94-5).

His crisis is clear. Love is not the real reason why he is hopelessly focused on this woman or why he rages when she is not around; it is because through her he has begun to question his very existence. Who is he? What has he to show from a life of consumption? What use are the skills of a consumer society in a crisis situation, like Auschwitz? This is a question that he cannot answer, and he seeks the answer from a girlfriend who cannot truly answer it for him either, as she is married with a child and cannot connect with him on the level he desires. So he comes to Tanimura, who advises him to think of himself as “just a human being, with no special qualities (95).” To which Tokai replies, “at my age the past weighs me down. It’s not so easy to start over (96).” It is clear from his response that he cannot give up his life of consumption, and this leads to his tragic fate.

The girlfriend who causes him to question everything about his life turns out to be little different from the Old Man in “The Strange Library.” All that she wants from him is to profit from his productive labors in the consumer system. Unlike the boy from that story, Tokai is unable to break free from this trap. Instead, he spends almost all of his money, the only thing that connects him to his identity as a consumer, and she leaves him for a third man. This conclusion to their relationship breaks him, and his fate shares similarities with that of the Auschwitz victim’s fate he so feared. Tokai’s secretary relays to Tanimura that he found the plastic surgeon in his apartment, surrounded by the horrible stench of unwashed clothes and body, spoiled food, and grime. Tokai himself looked like a mummy, and he had completely separated emotionally from the world. He died of heart failure because he refused to eat, and in the end, he looked like a concentration camp victim, thus predicting his own end through his obsession with the Jewish doctor. Tokai’s refusal or inability to connect with his own sense of self was his downfall.

In “The Strange Library,” Murakami parodies society’s consumption of information

through the librarian and the boy, who passively consume books at the expense of interpersonal contact and at the expense of their own freedom. The story shows the steps one may take to assert an individual identity through the boy-protagonist, who asserts his identity by connecting to aspects of his non-consumer life, namely his pet starling and his mother. “The Dancing Dwarf” parodies a consumer-oriented supply and demand system by creating a society with a bizarre need for more elephants than can be produced naturally, whose production is controlled by a public-private monopoly. And through the young-male protagonist the story shows the danger of rejecting consumer society and replacing one’s consumer identity with another, insufficient one. This danger is shown through the protagonist’s dissatisfaction with his work creating ears for the reconstituted elephants. The insufficient identity that he attempts to replace his consumer identity with is shown through his possession by the dwarf, which ultimately leads him to choose between returning to the consumer society to face imprisonment or death for his association with the dwarf or be possessed by him forever. Finally, in “An Independent Organ,” Murakami creates a character, Dr. Tokai, who devotes his whole life to consumerism, focusing entirely on his job as a cosmetic plastic surgeon and his superficial need to consume women emotionally and sexually. This left no room for individuality, as even his dating schedule is controlled by his secretary. When Tokai finds himself in a crisis of identity as he ages, shown by his fear of sharing the same fate as the doctor in Auschwitz that he reads about, Tokai’s fragile sense of self, created solely through his ability to consume and create products for consumption, collapses around him, resulting in his demise.

These three stories are overall all quite dark. The boy in the “The Strange Library” loses his friends from the library, his pet starling and his mother. The factory worker in “The Dancing Dwarf” makes love (if only for a moment) to a rotting corpse and loses all his connections in

service to the dwarf. And finally, Dr. Tokai in “An Independent Organ” shuts himself off in his apartment, literally starving himself to death after his lover leaves him. These three dark stories show characters who end up in isolation, but only “An Independent Organ” shows the emotional toll of isolation. The boy goes from isolation to isolation, but aside from mentioning how he is now alone, never shows the emotional toll that his isolation has on him. The factory worker is alone in body, but not in spirit since the dwarf has possessed him. Dr. Tokai goes into a self-imposed exile when his heart is broken, and in isolation allows himself to fade away. Even in this story though, it could be argued that it his heartbreak, not his isolation that finally finishes him off. After all, the secretary seems to have no one but the doctor in his life, yet he is finds purpose in the work that he adopts. The novelist does not mention anyone else in his life, yet he moves on. Just as in his novels, isolation is not a consequence of asserting an identity, but the cost of it. For the boy it becomes an acceptable cost, but for Tokai it is not. This could account for their difference in reaction to their isolation. In three concise packages, Murakami is able to continue the criticism of Japan’s consumer society that he began in his longer writing.

Conclusion

The Global Appeal of Murakami as a Function of His Critique of the Commercialized Individual

Murakami Haruki's global popularity cannot be denied. His novels have sold millions of copies in Japan domestically and hundreds of thousands more in international markets. His writing style is one important part of his global appeal. Particularly early in his career, but even in his most recent works, he commonly uses Western popular culture references, rather than Japanese ones, to give his stories color and to place them in time (*Dances with Sheep*, 1). No doubt this tendency is due to his love of American novelists and jazz, but the result is that his stories are quite approachable in the world that has been colonized culturally by the West. Few readers need an encyclopedia to know when the Beatles released "Love Me Do," whereas many readers outside of Japan would need one to know when enka singer Hibari Misora's hit "Yawara" was popular. His international style is not just apparent to the international reader; it is apparent to the Japanese reader as well. Pronouns like *boku* and *anata* are used far more often than the typical Japanese reader or speaker is used to, and he often uses obscure kanji or alternate pronunciations, creating a style of written Japanese that is almost foreign to the native Japanese speaker.

In and out of Japan, but particularly out of Japan, his international style is what makes him so popular. Matthew Stretcher recollects that Murakami succeeded in the 1980's when the U.S. was particularly receptive to East Asian, and especially Japanese culture (*Dances with Sheep*, 6). Japan was newsworthy because of its rise to the position of the second largest economy in the world. Fear of and interest in Japan from American observers led many to be deeply interested in Japan. But in Murakami's fiction, the presentation of traditional Japanese

culture was “augmented by a more realistic acknowledgement of Japan as a modern world superpower (*Dances with Sheep*, 6).” Not just a nation of ancient traditions, Japan is a nation of cutting-edge technology and a love of Western products and culture. When the first English translation of a Murakami novel, *The Wild Sheep Chase*, appeared on American bookshelves, his international style helped him stand out from more traditional Japanese novelists. In addition to being the right time for a Murakami novel to reach Western readers, it was also the right novel for the time. The postmodern traits of *The Wild Sheep Chase*—such as a preference for plurality over singularity; suspicion toward reality; and blurring of cultural borders—were familiar issues to the Western reader (*Dances with Sheep*, 4).

Since this debut, Murakami’s international appeal has grown. In the world literary canon, his work has thrived. Critical works discussing his work abound, and several conferences have been held in recent years to discuss his impact on world literature. His postmodern appeal cannot be the only reason for his popularity, and Murakami himself does not identify as a postmodernist. What might be another reason for this appeal? Shozo Fujii, comparative literature professor at Tokyo University, notes the tendency for Murakami’s popularity in China to coincide with rapid economic growth rates in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Beijing, in that order (Shozo, 88). Murakami’s Russian translator observes that Murakami’s protagonists are aware of their loneliness and alienation, and often ask the question “Who am I?,” a question that Russians often asked themselves after the fall of the Soviet Union, a period that also corresponds with his popularity in Russia (Logatchov, 74). His Korean translator concurs, noting that the core of Murakami’s South Korean fandom is the “386 generation:” born in the 1960s, students in the 1980s when South Korea’s student movement was at its peak, and came into middle adulthood with the rise of South Korea’s economic boom. Even in this movement’s success, there was a

sense of loss with the end of the movement and the activists' disappearance into South Korea's consumer society (Kim, 67). For South Korean readers of Murakami's fiction, his cool and detached tones depict a way to live in the modern capitalist system (Kim, 70). And finally, while Murakami is the global representative of those writing in Japanese (Yomoto, 35), this very globalization is disorienting to the modern reader as nationality becomes the defining spirit of globalization, writes novelist Richard Powers. "Globalization, in its massive, expanding enterprise, destroys the familiar and local, while rendering bafflement ubiquitous. In the world of high-tech, late capitalism, the banal exists right next to the inconceivable and the miraculous (Powers, 51)." Murakami's appeal then, exists in his ability to capture the disorienting nature of the new globalized, "rapid capitalist" world; to commiserate with the sense of loss that comes with the new order; and to show a way forward.

In this thesis, I briefly traced the history of the Japanese consumer and Japan's consumer society. From at least the beginning of the Meiji era, Japan has sought to modernize its society. This modernization led to the development of the Japanese middle class and the creation of the Japanese consumer, exemplified by the salaryman. The economy was the focus of development until the Pacific War interrupted industrial development in favor of military expansion but became the focus again after the war. Through direct intervention during the Occupation period and indirect intervention after the Occupation, the U.S. worked to influence Japanese economic development and was instrumental in creating a strong capitalist partner for themselves in East Asia. After a series of booms, the Japanese economy grew to be the second largest in the world and remained so until well after the real estate bubble burst in the early 1990s. Years of sluggish economic growth have followed.

Throughout the years of economic prosperity, there were those in Japan who were not

satisfied with an identity focused solely on consumerism. Being a consumer was considered to be an important part of being a good patriotic citizen in Japan, and those who sought something else were often dissatisfied with life in Japan. Such dissatisfaction led to a series of mass student protests in the 1960s, first against the ANPO treaty and then against the same treaty's renewal and the Vietnam War. Those involved in student protests also attempted to change society to focus less on consumerism through acts of individual change known as "everydayness." Murakami Haruki was part of those protests, and when the protests failed and many of the former protesters conformed meekly with the Japanese consumer society, he and many others became disillusioned with the whole experience. Murakami's first novels depict this disillusionment. At the same time, he explored the mind and the process of affirming an individual identity. Through this exploration and affirmation, he makes a political statement in response to the consumer society: that an identity based on consumption is not sufficient for satisfaction in one's life.

His novels attest to this fact, and so do many of his short stories. Three stories were discussed in this thesis. In "The Strange Library," Murakami parodies society's consumption of information and shows the process one may take to assert an individual identity through the boy-protagonist of this story. "The Dancing Dwarf" parodies a consumer-oriented supply and demand system, and through the young-male protagonist shows the danger of rejecting consumer society and replacing that consumer identity with another, insufficient one. In the final story discussed in this thesis, "An Independent Organ," Murakami creates the character, Dr. Tokai, who devotes his whole life to consumerism, focusing entirely on his job, his superficial needs, and leaving no room for individuality. When Tokai finds himself in a crisis of identity as he ages, his fragile sense of self, created solely through his ability to consume and create products for consumption,

collapses around him, resulting in his demise.

Throughout this thesis, questions arose, usually from the scholarship of other critics. What kind of society does consumerism lead to? What are the long-term effects of a consumer-oriented identity? The stories analyzed in the final chapter were chosen in part to answer these questions. The societies that Murakami's stories create are often bizarre and otherworldly, or maybe alternate-worldly. In our reality, libraries do not hold a boy captive to allow his brains to be consumed by a resident and dwarves do not possess bored factory workers through dancing. Instead, our society impresses on the young to be members of a predatory social media landscape that consumes data as quickly and efficiently—and often just as devastatingly—as the society that Murakami creates in “The Strange Library.” A young man may not be possessed by a dwarf but may become addicted to the products that he buys with his labor, so much so that they possess him. These societies that Murakami creates in these stories are predatory, and ours is not much different.

What are the long-term effects of a consumer-oriented identity? In these predatory societies, the long-term effect is that one is eventually broken. The factory worker loses everything, even when he rejects the dwarf's attempts to possess him. Dr. Tokai is broken in mind and spirit when his girlfriend rejects him. The long-term effects of an asserted identity in a consumer society may not be much better. The boy in the library loses all of his friends, his pet, and his mother by the end of the story, and is left isolated and peripheralized. In our society, it is hard to disentangle one's self from consumerism. So many people are defined by their possessions—the brands they wear, the car they drive—that it becomes hard to define oneself in other terms. Those who define themselves through anything internal—sexual identity might be a good example—are often marginalized long before they are accepted. However, even those who

define themselves through the internal often find themselves embracing *things* to express this identity.

Much work has been done in the English-language scholarship on Murakami Haruki's critical view of consumerism, particularly in his long fiction. My research uncovered few critical essays in English on Murakami's critical view of the consumer society in his short stories, a deficiency that I hope in some small part to rectify with this thesis. There are certainly further avenues to be explored in this area of Murakami scholarship. First, his most recent novel *Kishidancho Goroshi (Killing Commendatore)*, recently translated into English by Philip Gabriel and Ted Goossen, could prove to be another comment on Japan's consumer society. Another area might be the recent development of young writers, particularly in East Asia, who have begun to emulate Murakami in their fiction. Do these writers only emulate his writing stylistically, or do they emulate his themes as well? Finally, from a comparative stand-point, how have other affluent nations around the world developed their own Murakamis? As noted by the essayists in *The Wild Haruki Chase*, Murakami's popularity grows with rising affluence. It stands to reason that rising affluence in a nation might produce a writer who critiques that very affluence in his or her own way.

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Appendix B

A Short Biography of Murakami Haruki

(Translated from *Bessatsu Takarajima 743: Bokutachino Sukina Murakami Haruki*, 2013)

Early Life

Murakami Haruki was born in Fushimi, Kyoto on January 12, 1949. Soon after, his family moved to Kamogawa, Nishinomiya, Hyogo, and after that they moved to Ashiya. In 1961, he entered Ritsumeido Middle School in Ashiya. In 1964, he entered Tachikobe High School in Hyogo, where he was a member of the newspaper club. He entered Waseda University, primarily in the Literature and Theatre Department, in 1968 after failing to gain admittance the year prior. He lived in Mejiro Private Dormitory's Wakeijuku for around half a year; after that he moved to Mikata, Nerima, Tokyo. While at Waseda, in 1969, he wrote and published "The one problem. There is no communication! From the '68 Film Group!" in *Waseda*, the school journal. In 1971, he married his classmate Yoko. They moved in with Yoko's family in Bunkyo, Tokyo; he described their moving day as "trying to discover a spiral cat." In 1974, he opened a jazz cafe called "Peter Cat" in Kokubunji, Tokyo. A year later, in 1975, he graduated from Waseda University's Literature and Theatre department. He moved the café to Sendagaya, Tokyo in 1977.

Early Career

In June of 1979, *Hear the Wind Sing* won the Gunzo New Writer's Prize. The next month, in July, it was published. The following June, in 1980, *Pinball, 1973* was published. His first translation, *My Lost City* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, was published in May of 1981. Two months later, in July, *Walk, Don't Run*, which he co-authored with Murakami Ryu, was published. At the end of the year, in November *Let's Meet in Dreams*, a collection of short stories co-written with

Itoi Shigesato, was published. He made the decision to be a full-time writer in 1982. Giving up the cafe, he moved to Funabashi, Chiba. He then served as a member of the editorial committee for *Waseda Literature* until March. In October, *A Wild Sheep Chase* was published, then in November it won the Noma Literary Newcomer Award. Around this time, he began running regularly. *A Slow Boat to China*, his first book of short stories, was published in May of 1983. Two months later, in July, he translated and published *Where I'm Calling From* by Raymond Carver. That same month he took his first international trip to Athens and ran the original Marathon course on his own. In September, *Kangaroo Communique* was published; and in December, *Happy End at the Elephant Factory*, which he co-authored with Mizumaru Anzai, was published.

In March of 1984, *Wave Picture, Wave Stories*, co-authored with Inakochi Koichi, was published. In July he went to the U.S. for about 6 weeks, and he published *Firefly, Barn Burning and Other Stories* and *Murakami Asahido*. At the end of the year, in November, he moved to Fujisawa, Kanagawa, and then to Setagaya, Shibuya at the beginning of 1985. In June, *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* was published. The next month, his translation of Raymond Carver's *At Night The Salmon Move*, and in September, his translation of *The Wreck of the Zephyr* by Chris Van Allsburg were published. In October, *Dead Heat Carousel*, a collection of short stories, was published and *Hardboiled Wonderland and the End of the World* received the Tanizaki Prize. At the end of 1985, two co-written books were published: *The Sheepman's Christmas* with Sasaki Maki in November and *Movie Adventures* with Kawamoto Saburo in December.

Bestseller Life

At the beginning of 1986, he moved to Oiso, Kanagawa. In April, *Second Bakery Attack*, in May

his translation of *Setting Free the Bears* by John Irving, and in June Murakami Asahido's *Counterattack* were published. In October, he traveled to Rome and the Spetses Islands in Greece, during which he began writing *Norwegian Wood*. After that, he traveled to Mykonos, *Afternoon on Langerhans Island* was published, and his translation of *The Wreck of the Zephyr* received the Japan Special Award for Picture Books. To begin 1987, he traveled to Palermo, Sicily. In February, he began a nine month stay in Bologna and published *The Scrap, 1980's Nostalgia*. In April *Land of the Rising Sun Factory*, cowritten with Mizumaru Anzai, was published. He returned to Japan in June for a short stay. Next month, his translation of *World's End*, a collection of short stories by Paul Theroux, was published. Two months later, in September, *Norwegian Wood* was published. Murakami Haruki's career would never be the same. He returned to Italy to stay in Rome until the fall of 1988. His translation of CDB Bryan's *The Great Dethrifle* was published in November, and in December his translation of *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg was published.

Murakami's first publication of 1988 was a translation of Truman Capote's "I Remember Grandpa" in March. He began a month-long stay in England, where he began *Dance, Dance, Dance*. After his stay in England, in April, he published *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Book*, a collection of translated F. Scott Fitzgerald stories. In August, he traveled to Greece and Turkey, where he wrote a travel book called *Rainy Season*. Then, in September, *And Other Stories: 12 American Novels* was published. In November, *Rainy Season* was completed and *Dance, Dance, Dance* was published. In April of 1989, his translation of Raymond Carver's "A Small, Good Thing" was published. He traveled to Rhodes, Greece in May and around the same time *Murakami Asahido HiHO!* was published. In July, he traveled to West Germany and Austria. The next month, his translation of Chris Van Allsburg's *The Stranger* was published. In October,

he went to New York to promote his American publications and published his translation of Tim O'Brien's *Nuclear Age*. To end the 1980's, his translation of Truman Capote's *One Christmas* was published.

At the beginning of the new decade, he published *TV People*. In June of 1991, both *Far Drums* and *Paparazzi* were published. The next month saw the publication of *Murakami Haruki Zensakuin*, the first collection of his work. *Rainy Season* and his translation of *What I Talk About When I Talk about Love* by Raymond Carver were published in August. His translations of Tim O'Brien's short stories were collected into a volume called *Let's Talk About The Real War* and published in October. In November, his translations of Truman Capote's *Christmas Memory* and Chris Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* were published. In 1991, he published two more translated works: *Please Be Quiet*, a collection of Raymond Carver works, and *Swan Lake* by Mark Helprin and Chris Van Allsburg.

"Exile"

At the end of 1991, Murakami began a stay at Princeton University as a visiting researcher and then as a visiting lecturer on Contemporary Japanese Literature; this stay would last until August of 1993. In July of 1992, he traveled to Mexico. His experience there is included in *Frontier*; *Frontier*. In September, the fourth volume of Raymond Carver translations, *Fires*, was published. *South of the Border, West of the Sun* was published in September. In March of 1993, he published *Silence* and a translation of Ursula K Le Guin's *Catwings*. A translation of *The Widow's Broom* by Chris Van Allsburg was published in June, and the sequel to *Catwings*, *Catwings Returns*, was published in November. In the Fall of 1993, until the Summer of 1995, he stayed in Cambridge, Massachusetts and worked at Tufts University.

1994 was a busy year for Murakami Haruki. In January, *Sudden Fiction*, co-authored with Robert

Sheperd and James Thomas was published. *Lonely Foreign Language* was published in February and *Elephant/A New Path to the Waterfall*, the sixth collection of Raymond Carver translations was published in March. The first two parts of his next major work, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* were published in April. In May, he met with visiting professor at Princeton University Kawai Hayao for conversations; these conversations later this became a book. In June he traveled to Mongolia and Inner Mongolia in China, and included these experiences in *Frontier, Frontier*. His translation of *The Sweetest Fig* by Chris Van Allsburg was published in September, and *Carver's Dozen*, another collection of Raymond Carver's stories, was published in December. Also in December, *Useless Landscape*, co-authored with Inagoshi Koichi, was published.

Return to Japan

In 1995, he returned to Japan, around the same time as the sarin gas attacks in Tokyo and the Great Hanshin Earthquake in Kobe. From June to August, he returned to the US and traveled across the North American continent and Hawaii, an experience he wrote about in *Frontiers, Frontiers*. In addition, in June, *Murakami Asahido: Crazy Night Short Stories* was published. Then, in August, the third part of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* was published. When he returned to Japan that summer, he held a reading in Kobe to benefit earthquake recovery. His interest in the sarin attacks sparked a series of interviews that he held with victims throughout 1996. In January of 1996, his translation of *From Birdland to Broadway* by jazz bassist Bill Crow was published. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* was also awarded the Yomiuri Literature Award in January. In April, another collection of his translations of F Scott Fitzgerald's works, collected in *Return to Babylon*, and *Ben's Dream* by Chris Van Allsburg were published. *Murakami Asahido Journal: I Discovered A Whirlpool Cat* was published in May. In October, his translation of *Rolling Stones* contributor Mikal Gilmore's book *Shot in the Heart* was published. Then, in

November, *Lexington's Ghost* and in December *Murakami Haruki Meets Kawai Hayao* were published.

In March of 1997, *Underground*, a book chronicling his interviews with the sarin gas victims, was published. In May, he walked from Nishinomiya to Kobe, another experience that is chronicled in *Frontiers, Frontiers. Murakami Asahido: How I Was Trained* and his translation of *Wonderful Alexander and the Catwings* by Ursula K. Le Guin were published in June. In September, a fifth collection of Raymond Carver translations, *Where Water Meets/Ultramarine*, was published. A book for young readers, called *Young Reader's Short Story Guide* was published in October. Then in December, *Portrait in Jazz* was published. After many years of travel, *Frontiers, Frontiers* was published in April of 1998, with a photo essay book published in May. In June, *Fluffy*, was published. *CD-ROM Edition, Murakami Asahido: Surf City* was published in July. A collection of Mark Strand's work, published as *Dog's Life*, was released in September. The Kuwahara Takeo Award-winning sequel to *Underground*, called *Underground 2: A Place That Was Promised*, which contained interviews of Aum Shinrikyo cultists, was published in November.

In February of 1999, *Revised Elephant Factory Happy Ending* was published. Murakami's next major novel, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, was published in April. A revised edition of *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* was published in May, along with a translation of Grace Paley's *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*. In December, *If Our Words Were Whiskey* was published. His collection of short stories written after the Great Hanshin Earthquake, *All God's Children Can Dance (after the quake in English)* was published in February of 2000. In May, *You Say Mondays are the Worst* was published. Then in July, his translation of Bill Crow's other book, *Jazz Anecdotes*, was published. *Let's Ask Murakami-san*

and *Again Tom Bathed* were published, followed by a translation of *Call if You Need Me* by Raymond Carver in August. In October *Translation Talks* was published, and Murakami moved back to Oiso. *Sydney!* was published in January of 2001. In April, he published *CD-ROM Edition Murakami Asahido: Smeljakov vs. Oda Nobunaga Ieyasu Servant Troupe* and *Portrait in Jazz 2*. *Murakami Radio* was published in June. His translation of *Jane on Her Own* by Ursula K Le Guin was published in September.

Present

Since 2001, Murakami Haruki has published five novels and one collection of short fiction, along with many short stories in various publications. In 2002, *Kafka on the Shore* was published, and won the 2006 World Fantasy Award and the 2006 Franz Kafka Prize. His next novel was *After Dark*, published in 2004, followed by *1Q84* published in 2009 and 2010. Then in 2013, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage* was published. His most recent novel, *Killing Commendatore*, was published in 2017. Since 2006, Murakami has received numerous literary awards, including the 2006 Frank O'Conner Short Story Award, the 2009 Jerusalem Prize, the 2011 International Catalunya Prize and the 2016 Hans Christan Andersen Literature Award. In 2018, he reached an agreement with his alma mater Waseda University to house his manuscripts, documents, and record collection.