

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Death in Haruki Murakami's Novels: Shadow, Soul, and Sex

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Abstract: From medieval to modern and postmodern times, thoughts about death have been among the most important subjects in literature. Among writers who have discussed death, Haruki Murakami addressed not only the notions of death and life after death but also the nature of death through existence. His point of view becomes metaphysical reflections. Through cultural semiotics, psychoanalysis, and existential theory, I show that death is associated with mythical thought and the hybrid between Japanese cultural tradition and Western existentialism. In Murakami's novels, death represents *Mono no aware* and the beauty of melancholy presage. Life after death is associated with shadow, soul, and a new existence in which death and sex have expressed the desire for eternal freedom. Death is a mixing body and soul, nature and culture. Through death, Murakami created new aesthetic categories.

Keywords: death, shadow, soul, metaphysical destiny, *Mono no aware*, freedom, Murakami

Haruki Murakami is a writer who has received special attention from scholars worldwide. It is difficult to identify whether his writing belongs to the modern or the postmodern, pure literature or popular literature, the familiar or the exotic, reality or magic, and Japanese literature or non-Japanese literature. His work expresses the historical discourse and identity in contemporary Japan. In his novels, the concept of death and life after death is associated with the complexity between the modern and postmodern, reality and magic. At the same time, through death, Murakami created new aesthetic categories—otherness.

No matter how diverse, the cultures of all nations share a common foundation in human psychology.

Therein, great feelings, such as love and fear of death, exist. Death is always a major concern of humanity. The secret of immortality and escaping death have been the subjects of many myths and ancient stories. The trace of death in myths has become an obsession in modern and postmodern literature. Fiske (1969) had pointed out the concept of life after death. He supposed that although their ritual practices of death are significantly different, humans share the same death experience: ordeals of fasting, isolation, silence, wandering, and transformation (Fiske, 1969, p. 265). From this point of view, he concluded that the concept of life after death is a step into a new existence of power and freedom.

Death becomes an aspect of magical realism in Murakami's fiction. Iwamoto (1993) pointed out that Murakami had created a novel storytelling strategy with the fragmented structure, the nameless figure, the faceless narrator, and the death of the subject. In addition, Strecher (1998) discussed that Murakami's novels are on the borderline between real, unreal, and surreal, or even the hyperreal. He pointed out, "surely the end of the novel suggests neither the reaffirmation of life over death nor of clarity and truth over mystery and doubt" (Strecher, 1998, p. 365). He also noted that Murakami is interested in the "empty narrative" (Strecher, 1999, p. 263–298). In another study, Strecher (2011) explained why and how Murakami became a global phenomenon. According to Strecher (2011), Murakami mentioned contemporary issues such as historical discourse, loneliness, boredom, impotence, and significant allegorical content. Strecher (2011) was particularly interested in metaphysical thinking.

Strecher (2011) showed that it is not difficult to see that Murakami's works have two parallel worlds: the real world and another world. The other world is the land of death, the forbidding place. With both fanciful and vague images, Murakami's novels have mentioned the psychological traumas of humanity, such as fear of "hunger, cold, darkness, solitude, illness, death" (Strecher, 2011, p. 858). Strecher (2018) also showed that Murakami's novels go beyond the "pure literature" (p. 255–263), which is one of the strongest didactic elements to express a distinctly Japanese cultural subject. In Murakami's novels, Strecher (2018) created an "empty narrative" model resulting from a juxtaposition narrative, which represents the fantastic and the mundane. His work establishes a dialogue between readers and the author. It naturally leads readers to participate in the reading process whereby they can rewrite the story through their own experiences. Thus, Murakami's fiction raises open questions which could have multiple answers.

In addition, Cassegard (2001) commented on the particular nature of modernity in Murakami's writing. An important premise of this study is the shock category, which is crucial for understanding the difference between the perception of the modernity of Benjamin and Murakami. Benjamin is a theorist of modernity who most explicitly has based his theory on the experience of shock. In other words,

the shock becomes the reason for the heightening of consciousness in modernity. In Murakami's novels, vulnerability (necessary to be shocked) is replaced by resignation and intense indifference. His protagonists are neither happy nor sad, neither lonely nor loved, neither replete nor empty. They simply exist. They feel pleased with loneliness and death. The absence of shock leads his works to the naturalization (Cassegard, 2001).

Meanwhile, Chozick (2008) suggested that Murakami's works rarely mention contemporary Japanese culture, although American culture is frequently referenced. I analyze the psychological construction of exoticism as an aesthetic of unperceived familiarity. He showed that the conceptualization of identity (based on a nationalistic paradigm) might no longer have much value (Chozick, 2008). Moreover, Reiko (2013) showed that death is considered a mirror reflecting itself. Life after death could be happier than real life. Life was always filled with feelings of loss. "Born to die" becomes the reason for human existence.

In this paper, I consider death from the approach of semiotics, psychoanalysis, and existential theory. I analyze the death in Murakami's novels to argue that death is not only a complexity between rational and mythical thought but also the symbols representing the hybrid of cultures. I show that through magic realism, Murakami has expressed the notion of death, life after death, pain, and metaphysical destiny. In his view, death is associated with *Mono no aware* [The impermanence of being and beauty], the melancholy. Life after death is associated with shadow and soul, with a new existence in which death and sex have expressed the desire for eternal freedom. This article focuses on the concept of death and life after death containing the hybrid between Western existentialism and Japanese culture. Through the interdisciplinary approach, the paper proposes the process of rereading Murakami's novels.

The Complex Relationship Between Reason and Mythical Thought

Morin Edgar is a French philosopher and sociologist very well known for his work on complexity and "complex thought." Montuori (2013) said that in Morin's view, complex thought "informs a reframing

of such legendary conceptual duets as unity and diversity, order and disorder, unity and multiplicity, the one and the many” (p. 15). Morin’s works focus on “instance on the way individuals are in society but society is also in individuals and the way human beings create a culture that in turn creates human beings” (Montuori, 2013, p. 15). Morin (2003) explored death cross-culturally in religions and spiritual traditions, throughout human history, and in the sciences. Finally, Morin (2003) observed that death is associated with not only reasoned thought but also mythical thought.

Western and Eastern people share the same experiences of death. Even for people who believe in life after death or the resurrection, death is still a subject of anxiety and sadness. The concept of death is similar in both Western and Eastern philosophy. It expresses the fracture between spirit and body. Heidegger (1962), an existential philosopher, showed that the subject of death is not only immortality and life after death but also the nature of death during one’s existence. He considered that being is the only way to understand the existence of creatures. According to Heidegger (1962), only humans can question and think about their existence. *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962) is one of the most important philosophical works of our time, a work that has influenced philosophy, literature, and psychology. In his major work, Heidegger (1962) thought about human nature as a whole. He wanted to know human existence in totality through death. Heidegger (1962) said that “every day being towards the end, and the full existential conception of death” (p. 299). From his point of view, death is an existential understanding. Also, understanding is the existence’s way of death. Humans know that death can happen at any time – anywhere. We face the end and death is a part of our being. Death puts our existence into perspective.

In Heidegger’s *Ideas About Death*, Zohreh (2015) pointed out, “Heidegger understands death as the ability of Existence to die at any moment. Existence means that any moment could be its own” (p. 97). Zohreh (2015) further discussed Heidegger’s ideas about death, “knowledge about death leads to the understanding of Existence and that knowledge of Existence will result in knowing the universe” (p. 93). In other words, existence is the concept of death. Death is not only indispensable but also metaphysical. In the face of nothingness, humans understand that the

limits of reason and logical thought are incapable of dealing with death. Edwards (1975) also showed that “Heidegger is quite right in describing death as a total absence” and “death is the total absence of experiences and behavior, the annihilation of all consciousness, the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself” (pp. 557–558). In addition, Blackham (1961) observed the resolution of personal existence in a choice of death as “the capital possibility informing all other possibilities” and treated it as “the necessary structure of personal existence without which it simply dissolves” (p. 107).

Moreover, in death, mythical thought interacts with reasoned thought. Animals know how to run away from death and fear death. When they feel death, they even have strategies to avoid it. However, the idea of death in animals is still different from that in humans. People can identify the idea of death and practice funeral rituals. The contradiction of humans is to accept death, but at the same time, they deny death. This is also the origin of dual characters in prehistoric myths and rituals where humans can appear as ghosts, shadows, or rebirths associated with new existence.

The consideration of death hurts people. This is the consequence of rational thought. Also, this trauma leads to the myths of an afterlife. The latter is considered the result of mythical thinking. To overcome fear and anxiety, humans imagine a world after death. The more painful, the more people try to deny death. So, the denial of death nourishes the myths of the next life by souls.

The strange mind that has realized death is annihilation but, at the same time, denies death represents a concurrence paradox. There, the notion of death and the obstinate pain of death exist in parallel with the notion of life after death. For that reason, death is the origin of myths and rituals. It raises funeral rituals, prayers to drive death away, worship, and tombs. All rituals have a common element in which death is followed by resurrection.

Finally, death is defined as the aspect that can be lost, can be destroyed, of life. It refers to something that will be lost in the evolution of things. It is attached to the land. People want to believe that there is always life after death. It could be in Heaven or the Hell associated with passing. Death is the apocalypse and the initiation. From ancient times, the mystery of death is still regarded with horror and terror. Death creates the greatest resistance in humans

against the transformation to an unknown existence even more than the fear of being extinguished in nothingness. Death, at this level, is a condition for rebirth at another level.

Death as *Mono No Aware*

Mono no aware is considered the spirit of general Eastern literature. It has become the cornerstone of Japanese traditional culture. As the aesthetic category strongly developed in the Heian period of literature, *Mono no aware* is still a Japanese literature term for the awareness of the fragile beauty of nature and life forms. The elegance and quiet melancholy beauty signified in the image of sadness is proof of the maturity of aesthetic intuition. The sincere emotion indicates a subtle and feminine spirit of Japanese culture that draws the beauty in the eternality, the beauty in perdition, the beauty in rusticity, the beauty in death, and the beauty in melancholy presage.

Our existence in the universe is mysterious for humans. The dream is considered one of the symbols of the unconscious world. It brings the ego to the memory in which the dreamer meets himself in his own fear, longing, loneliness, and trauma. People are surprised and interested in the metaphysical world where they can discover the mysterious, the multi-self, and the complex ego.

As an idea of destroying itself, death induces a contradictory mentality, suffering, and fear in the existing subject. In *El método 5: La Humanidad de la Humanidad. La Identidad Humana*, Morin (2005) said that death is a full and paradoxical expression of the complexity of continuity and rift in our existing processes because death is our universe, physics, biology, and animal destiny. At the same time, death is also the fundamental fracture of our psychological, mythical, and metaphysical connections with that destiny. It is essential that death does not limit itself in any space and time. It exists simultaneously with life.

For that reason, literature constructs fragmented people. They do not have names or complete shapes. They stay in temporary profiles, which can be erased and edited. They dream of a magical world where they can run away from pain. It is the contingency offering the possible reality, “all the possible is in some sense real, and the real includes the possible” (Hollands,

1907, p. 604). Iwamoto (1993) pointed out, “the notion of dispersal and decentering can be sensed in the novel’s supreme indifference to the categories of writing into which Japanese works have been habitually and rigidly placed, as though the author were intent on collapsing hitherto sacrosanct boundaries” (p. 296).

The fragmentation of the self is called “the death of subject itself,” which Fredric Jameson (1991) said is “the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad of ego or individual and the accompanying stress, whether as some new moral idea or an empirical description, on the decentring of that formerly centered subject or psyche” (p. 15). In *Coming Apart: Trauma and the Fragmentation of the Self*, Spiegel (2008) showed that the fragmentation is not multiple personalities existing in one body, but rather that they have less than one – “a fragmentation of self rather than a proliferation of selves”. At the same time, Fuchs (2007) is interested in “fragmented selves.” He described this as a “fragmentation of the narrative self: a shifting view of oneself, with sharp discontinuities, rapidly changing roles and relationships and an underlying feeling of inner emptiness” (Fuchs, 2007, p. 382). It is connected to an incoherence in memory found in individual borderline.

In Murakami’s novels, the memories become the characters, and the characters also become the memories. His novels have explored the human depth in both the conscious and unconscious worlds. The figures feel empty, meaningless, and unstable. They are disillusioned by reality. Sometimes, the characters cannot find a way back to the real world. They feel crushed by the pain inside them. So, they enter a metaphysical world where they feel comfortable and enjoy their loneliness. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku said, “I was feeling lonely without her, but the fact that I could feel lonely at all was a consolation. Loneliness wasn’t such a bad feeling. It was like the stillness of the pin oak after the little birds had flown off” (Murakami, 2002, p. 244). He can be viewed as an expression of the diffusion of the ego and the dispersal of the self.

In *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (*Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru*), Mamiya perfectly represents the “dead” proposed by Murakami (1993). Mamiya signifies both the ego and the super-ego. Mamiya’s ego is the ego of the soldiers when he fights to forget himself. To protect his homeland, they fight and die. However, all his sacrifice does not have sense since it leads to devastation and death. Sometimes, an overwhelming

hallucination drives an individual human being to slowly unraveled while moving silently through the desolate landscape. This land is a fixed mirror image of hunger and thirst, darkness and silence. It implies a further content of fasting, solitude, and wandering. However, back from the war, Mamiya is in a living death state. He feels alien to himself. The reality of life is an obsession, mirage, and horrifying death that haunt him for the rest of his life. He causes an incredibly empty, hollow feeling inside him. Exactly why this should be, he could never explain to you with any precision and does not bring anything to a conclusion. The character feels terrible about it afterward. Nothing would make him happy. He weakly hopes the memory was nothing but a dream or a delusion. But each time he tries to push the memory into the dark, it comes back stronger, “like cancer cells, these memories have taken root in my mind and eaten into my flesh” (Murakami, 1993, p. 213). Murakami’s character exists in the fragmentation of rejection and confession. In his work, the obsession of Mamiya and others with death creates a quiet melancholy, empathy, and pain in the fragile human destiny.

Kafka on the Shore (Murakami, 2006) has a multi-layered fabric where the complex fantasy creates two separate parallel novels. The first novel is told by Tamura, a 15-year-old boy running away from his home to escape the gruesome Oedipal prophecy (someday he will murder his father and be with his mother and his sister). He is an assistant in a library where he can see a living ghost and the soul of a young girl named Miss Saeki. The second story is told by Nakata, an aging simpleton who never recovered from his war affliction. These narrators lead the reader into the metaphysical world where a cat and people carry on a conversation, the rainstorms of fish fall from the sky, and people can communicate with the souls of the dead. The existence of living spirits and wandering ghosts are not “apparitions of dead people but emanations of hidden desires and negative emotions” (Amitrano, 2015, p. 211). In *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka Tamura symbolizes the dialogue of the sexual instinct (the desire to live) with the Oedipus complex (the fear of death). His tragedy is the conflict between his instinctive obsession and escaping his fate entirely. Nakata’s death, when entering the world behind the stone, is associated with “human sacrifices” (Carrasco, 2013, pp. 209–235). Saeki’s death is the decision to escape the sad memories. Johnnie Walker’s death

expresses the loneliness and hopelessness when he cannot control his destiny. Kafka’s death represents the precariousness and fragility of life.

The psychological trauma of death makes these characters lonely and fearful. It leads humans to a meaningful life via sacred destiny or existential importance. In another way, they are limited by their choices because they have unforgettable memories. However, they feel free to choose life and presence on earth with bodily functions rather than mere existence. Fiske (1969) also pointed out, “a distinction must be made between survival in the world of the living by memory or by posterity and survival on a plane of existence beyond mortal life” (p. 249). Humans fear death because they have never fully lived. Contingency can propose many forms of reality. Existence is faced with the fear of inexistence. Thinking about death can be one of the efforts that “allow existence to achieve integrity” (Zohreh, 2015, p. 6).

Fragmented people have expressed a sense of reality as nothingness, chaos, and instability. The fragmentation is based on the doubt about the continuity of life. Humans do not accept a life without meaning or purpose. To live and to contemplate, they need many layers of reality. So, death is not only a decomposing body but also the death of the subject. The dialogue of the fragmented self expresses an effort to keep the processes of subjectivization.

In Murakami’s novels, death signifies *Mono no aware* of Japanese cultural tradition. Death is considered not the opposite of life or annihilation but another existence, continued existence. It deeply expresses the fear of death and the calmness in the face of death. Death is not the end of life but a holiday from which you will never come back. The longing for death, the idea of dying, and the thought of death hover over people. Death becomes even more desirable than life. It is the other life that is a repetition of this life. The concept of death is associated with the “patterns of Japanese culture” (Benedict, 2005). Murakami’s novels raise the reader’s experiences and lead them to the unconscious world where their thought is waiting to be awakened. Murakami’s novels display the concern of identity and the desire to recapture the past in order to rediscover the loss of the sense of identity. Murakami has described a contemporary Japan where people doubt “the existence of a serious philosophical and spiritual gap” (Strecher, 1999, p. 298) between their past and today.

Thus, in Murakami's novels, death has created a psychological reality of contemporary people with insecurity, anxiety, and self-questioning in the face of their own death. There, humans can find mythical thinking of original cultures about the fracture of the continuity in human existence. *Mono no aware* nourishes the Japanese aesthetics, which is not only desolate but also splendid, not only fragile but also stable. The notion of the fragility and the existence of metaphysical destiny are the philosophical backgrounds of Murakami's artistic thinking.

The Expression Living in Death

Bataille was a French scholar whose writings cover many fields such as literature, philosophy, anthropology, economics, sociology, and history of art. His works include essays, novels, and poetry which explore erotism, mysticism, surrealism, and transgression. Especially, he is well known for erotism. *La Littérature et le mal* (Literature and evil) is one of his famous essays where literature, the flesh, and the devil are clarified clearly. In this book, he said, "L'érotisme est, je crois, l'approbation de la vie jusque dans la mort" [I believe erotism is the affirmation of life, even in death] (Bataille, 1957, p. 12). According to Bataille (1957),

De toute façon, le fondement de l'effusion sexuelle est la négation de l'isolement du moi, qui ne connaît la pamoison qu'en s'excédant, qu'en se dépassant dans l'étreinte où la solitude de l'être se perd. Qu'il s'agisse d'érotisme pur (d'amour-passion) ou de sensualité des corps, l'intensité est la plus grande dans la mesure où la destruction, la mort de l'être transparaissent. Ce qu'on appelle le vice découle de cette profonde implication de la mort [Whatever, the foundation of sexual effusion is the negation of isolation of the ego which feels the pleasure of embrace exceedingly, forgetting myself, or the solitude of being is lost. Whether it is pure eroticism (love-passion) or flesh sensuality, the greatest intensity is when the destruction and death of the entity is revealed. What is called the vice stems from this deep implication of death]. (p. 13)

In *Death and Sensuality* (Bataille, 1962), the close relationship between death and sex is clarified by the concept of "Herrschaft" and "Transgression." Bataille (1962) showed that *Herrschaft* is a finite point and a state in which life exists for a period of time, whereas Transgression is an act or a process of violation of a law or moral rule. The nature of sex is the disintegration of the body and the appearance of the death of essence. So, sex is considered the transgression of the borderline between life and death. With the ambition to overcome prohibitions, sex is the expression of living in death.

The outstanding feature of traditional philosophy is the binary logic, which leads to the opposition between body and soul, nature and culture. This point of view raises the notion of being as a cultural animal. So, the natural aspects of human beings need to be controlled and managed. Therefore, human cultural discourses are legalized and placed at the center, whereas natural human discourses are removed and placed at the periphery. However, modern and postmodern philosophy overcome the binary logic of traditional philosophy. They show that human nature is a mixing body and soul, nature and culture. Human existence is the notion of death and the finitude of life. Therefore, people are invaded by the infinite, especially the infinite, in the experience of religion and sexual pleasure. Sex is not only a biological activity but also strictly related to moral standards, taboos, rituals, and myths associated with specific cultural origins.

Japan is a country frequently facing disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Then, the free and indiscriminate sexual concept is a way to exist with this precariousness. For example, at the Utagaki festival, each person can make love with any partner. Japanese literature is "love" literature that considers sex as an aesthetic category. In Japan, love and sexual issues are rarely judged by ethics, religion, class, and gender. They nourish the impermanence of the sadness and beauty.

In Murakami's novels, sex is a metaphor to show his concept and interpretation of life. For example, in *Norwegian Wood* (*Noruei no Mori*), *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (*Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru*), *Kafka on the Shore* (*Umibe no Kafuka*), *A Wild Sheep Chase* (*Hitsuji o meguru boken*), and *Sputnik Sweetheart* (*Suputoniku no koibito*), the characters have sex to fill their loneliness because they are alone in love and sex. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* is a sexual story between

brother and sister. *Kafka on the Shore* is the obsession of a son who wants to kill his father and make love with his mother. *Sputnik Sweetheart* mentions gay sex. *1Q84* describes the unusual sexuality between the Leader and the Virgin. Rebellion expresses a reality beyond the limits. Murakami's novels express contemporary Japan's spirit with loneliness, death, and sexuality. His writing about sex is like the nude paintings created not only by the passionate taste of sensuality but also by the elegance and transient beauty of Japanese aesthetics.

Through the Oedipus complex's rebirth in contemporary Japanese literature, Murakami had pushed the suffering close to pure love. In *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka feels lonely from his childhood. This is a forever loneliness and inherent suffering of humanity. The incestuous sex signifies the deepest silence of humanity. Humans are different from other animals because we respect the prohibitions. However, humans simultaneously overcome and violate the prohibitions. So, Murakami's works show an ambition to be a free transgressor. Humans are put beyond moral standards and social rules. His characters love their loneliness with pleasure. Therefore, his works raise the desire toward honesty.

Murakami considers sex experiences as a way to escape the authority of social order. At the same time, humans only have real freedom in life after death. So, in Murakami's novels, death and life after death are associated with sex. The surreal sex expresses impossible sex, such as making love by phone or making love between souls. With the dream of making love with each other, his figures can find the feeling forbidden by social and moral rules. The dream is a picture of the universe's loneliness. Therefore, in his writings, death is signified by sex and pleasure, which are considered to be the loss. By the transgression in sex, his novels construct the space in which life and death, suffering and happiness, past and present, reality and magic are not opposites.

In Murakami's novels, sexual pleasure is described as lively as in a romantic movie. In *Norwegian Wood*, a moonlight blends with the curves of the Naoko's body. It raises an erotic sense. Murakami (2001) wrote,

Bathed in the soft light of the moon, Naoko's body had the heart breaking luster of newborn flesh. When she moved - and she did so almost imperceptibly - the play of light and shadow on

her body shifted subtly. The swelling roundness of her breasts, her tiny nipples, the indentation of her navel, her hipbones and pubic hair, all cast grainy shadows, the shapes of which kept changing like ripples spreading over the calm surface of a lake. (p. 154)

Naoko is a beautiful girl. Her body is marvelous and alluring. When Toru holds her and kisses her naked flesh, he feels a strange emotion and an imbalance. Holding Naoko in his arms, Toru wants to explain to her that he is having sex with her now, he is inside her. It is nothing but the touch of two bodies. Murakami describes sexual feelings rather than sexual acts.

In *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, a moonlight caresses Creta Kano's flesh. Her body is wrapped thinly by the moon. She holds the different parts of her body out to be bathed in the moonlight. It is incredibly beautiful. As if she was taking a bath, her head, her shoulders, her arms, her breasts, her tummy, her legs, and the rest are dipped into the moonlight.

In some creation myths, humans believe that the night represents the parent of day and the water of the earth. The spirit of night is the Great Mother and her firstborn is the moon child. Out of the darkness, death comes with light and life. A human can find a closed relationship between moon worship, earth worship, and water worship. The latter represents the feminine, the passive principle in nature. In *Life Symbols as Related to Sex Symbolism*, Goldsmith (1924) said,

Moon was supposed to exercise a generative influence on nature, and the light of the moon on growing crops was believed to be more beneficial than the scorching rays of the sun. It was also thought to be the source of all moisture and that everything from the sap of plants to the blood of all beings and animals was vitalized by the water of life which the moon controlled. (p. 154)

In other words, the feminine, water, life, death, and sex are infused with the light spirit of the moon. The moon is a sexual metaphor. This cultural symbol is associated with negative space, whereas the sun is associated with positive space. At the same time, the moonlight only appears in the night together with the dark (negative). Humans have long recognized the relationship between the moon and the tides, and the

mysterious connection between the lunar cycle and the physiological cycle of women.

It is not difficult to imagine that the moon is the land of the dead or souls regenerating. With its recurring nature, the moon is an asteroid holding the rhythm of life. The moon leads to concepts of fate after death and liturgy. In Murakami's novels, sexual pleasure is often associated with moonlight, but the moon is also considered "the first death." It is the transition between death and life. Therefore, the moonlight symbolizes sex, which expresses the living in death.

Murakami also describes sex associated with a well. In some cultures, people worship rivers and wells. The well is considered the place of gods. The blood of god flows in the sacred waters. It is also a symbol of the soul and feminine things. The well appears as a consolidation not only of paradise, earth, and hell, but also of water, earth, and air. It is not only the interconnection of life but also the residence of death. By going down to the well, Murakami's characters express the concept of life as a pilgrimage where he can talk with the soul.

However, in his writings, the protagonists go down to shallow wells which do not have water. These wells represent dead space, which is the residence of wandering souls. For example, in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, in the dream, Creta Kano goes down to the well to discover her inner world. Her dream contains the secrets of the unconscious, including repressed feelings, complexes, hidden phobias, and desires. Touching a dream is regarded as living in a philosophical spirit. By a journey to another world in the well, Murakami showed the philosophical concept of human existence. Human is the subject that carries the whole universe inside. Each person is an existential universe between reality and imagination in which the limit cannot be detected. Men of the past and present have the same desire to discover the secrets of the universe and existence.

Death as a Pain and Metaphysical Destiny

Throughout history, science has tried to demonstrate that the impossible is completely possible through inventions. However, the possible always seems to be impossible in philosophy. On the way to exploring the secret of the unconscious, philosophy and

literature share the same point of view. The notion of impossibility is associated with religious desire. People imagine an impossible world because it nourishes the charm of art, which expresses strange contexts that people can experience safely. In these realms, humans consider death not only as metaphysical pain but also as a new existence of greater power and freedom.

Japanese traditional culture belongs to the plurality associated with uniformity and homogeneity. It needs a scope to maintain, control, and assert power. However, in Murakami's novels, the cultural polyphonic portrait represents an appropriation associated with a borderline. It creates possibilities to become the otherness. Via special deaths, Murakami thought about metaphysical destiny. Each character is not only unique but also dual. They are both strange and familiar. With his magical realism style, Murakami has woven a Japanese cultural picture. The writer has created the cultural polyphonic portrait and the polymorphic portrait of existence. It is the hybrid between tradition, modern, and postmodern; between East and West; between reality and magic; between center and periphery. His works open the possibility where literature does not establish new principles but offers different choices. These options are open and unfulfilled. They raise the notion where people and culture are the possibilities than the completed natures. In that sense, death is considered adventures and games. It is not only social destiny but also private stories. Finally, each person carries his or her metaphysical destiny.

Murakami's literature introduces a new kind of readers who need to have a different reading process. The writer has blurred the borderline of traditional aesthetic categories. He creates the aesthetic of the otherness. In his works, death is the mixing between Kafka's absurdism and Raymond Carver's existentialism. At the same time, death also expresses the spirit of Shinto with the concept of fragile and transient life. Therefore, in otherness, Murakami reflects the nature of human existence. Dialogue with the otherness is a way of filling the culture.

Through death, Murakami has extended the notion of identity, which is associated with the otherness. In his writings, otherness is the beauty of loneliness, the beauty of the violation of prohibitions, the beauty of death, and the beauty of unstable existence.

Conclusion

Humans obsess about death and simultaneously deny death. Humans not only fear death but also are interested in understanding the secret of death. In literature, humans can experience death by their imagination. Death becomes a literary symbol with which a writer can express the notion of human existence. The writer is interested not only in physical death but also in mental death. Especially in a postmodern time characterized by chaos, contingency, and fragmentation, death is considered as the identity of a person, as the meaning of existence. Through magic realism, Murakami expressed the notion of death and life after death. Death is seen as a complex between rational thought and mythical thought. The traces of myth are rebirthed in motifs such as dreams, the Oedipus complex, making love in another world, and going down to another world in the well. These motifs show the fracture and deconstruction of postmodern times. Through death, Murakami describes the essence of loneliness in which self and other are different.

Especially, Murakami discussed the notion of existence by death. In his view, the sexual experience is considered as the affirmation of living in death. It gives humans the ability to overcome the power of social order. At the same time, life after death is associated with shadow, soul, and a new existence in which death and sex express the desire for eternal freedom.

By death, Murakami reflects metaphysical destiny. This destiny is not only happiness but also sadness. Murakami's novels do not help readers understand the other but help them understand the self. In his writings, death is associated with a new paradigm of literature. In life after death, literature leads to otherness. This otherness expresses the identity of the self in their existence.

In his novels, Murakami showed the beauty in death and melancholy presage. Death is considered not the opposite of life, not annihilation but another existence, continued existence. It is a mixing body and soul, nature and culture. The notion of the fragility and the existence of metaphysical destiny is the philosophical background of Murakami's artistic thinking. The death expresses the hybrid between Western existentialism and Japanese culture.

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Declaration of ownership

This report is my original work.

Conflict of Interest

None.

Ethical clearance

The study was approved by my institution.

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