

## Is the 'Post-' in Postwar the 'Post-' in Postmodern?: Rethinking Japan's Modernity in Works of Murakami Haruki

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### **Abstract:**

In modern Japanese history, the postwar experience has often been depicted as a story of war victims' endeavors to rebuild the nation from the ashes. "Sengo" (postwar) is considered a new history as if the nuclear bomb had completely eliminated the preceding period from the chronological table. "Sengo" is an ambiguous period with no clear end date (if it has ended). It is actually a signifier that produces a convenient legitimacy for Japan to claim a new history and ignore the painful memories of the people who fought the war for the nation. By the late 1960s, people's hard work was rewarded with the proud middle class identity, the high standard of living (with television sets, refrigerators and washing machines), and an illusion of freedom based on democracy. In reality, however, postwar Japan is a highly controlled society in which those who were once committed to die for the emperor were transformed into "salary men" who would die for the nation's economy.

**Keywords:** Cultural studies | Japan | Modernity | Post-World War II | Imperialism | Post-colonial | Murakami Haruki

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

**IS THE “POST-” POSTWAR THE “POST-”IN POSTMODERN? :  
RETHINKING JAPAN’S MODERNITY IN WORKS OF  
MURAKAMI HARUKI**

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Introduction

In modern Japanese history, the postwar experience has often been depicted as a story of war victims’ endeavors to rebuild the nation from the ashes. “Sengo” (postwar) is considered a new history as if the nuclear bomb had completely eliminated the preceding period from the chronological table. “Sengo” is an ambiguous period with no clear end date (if it has ended). It is actually a signifier that produces a convenient legitimacy for Japan to claim a new history and ignore the painful memories of the people who fought the war for the nation. By the late 1960s, people’s hard work was rewarded with the proud middle class identity, the high standard of living (with television sets, refrigerators and washing machines), and an illusion of freedom based on democracy. In reality, however, postwar Japan is a highly controlled society in which those who were once committed to die for the emperor were transformed into “salary men” who would die for the nation’s economy.

In this regard, the “post-” in postwar simply grants a new name of democracy for the same old imperial rule. Although Japan’s colonial expansion was stopped with its surrender, the end of the war did not stop the “modern” from seeking the power to control. The imperial energy that once implemented modernization / industrialization / westernization internally, as well as external colonization over Asia, survived the war and rebuilt postwar Japan. In other words, Japan is colonized by the modern and this highly controlled society does not allow its members to develop individuality. Instead, it provides them with a ready-made collective identity. Consequently, the modern continues as long as the period of “sengo” lasts.

In this paper, I rethink modern Japan’s cultural formation by reconstructing its modernization in the framework of the postcolonial. I am aware that Japan is not a postcolonial society, and my attempt challenges geopolitical particularity of the postcolonial. However, colonization does not take one form. It occurs not only at the political level but also at cultural, individual, psychological, and physical levels, which do not discriminate based on the place of occurrence, if being colonized is to be deprived of freedom of choice. If we see the high degree of control of today’s Japanese society as a continuation of imperial rule, its (post)modernity is considered a version of (post)coloniality. In addition, modernization in the western sense does not always fit the non-western societies and in Japan’s case, its trajectory to the modern is especially

unique in terms of its recognition of Orient as well as Occident. I regard that the postcolonial is a localized version of the postmodern and it gives a necessary theoretical framework to identify the source of Japan's modernity.

In Japan's modernization, the West occupies a curious position. The process largely took place in the Meiji period (1868-1912) during which Japan went through both political (the Meiji Restoration) and cultural changes (westernization/ industrialization/ internationalization). Soon after that, Japan also fought two major wars and, in one sense, being an imperial power was a major outcome of Japan's modernization. Simultaneously, imperialism produced a complicated cultural identity based on Japan's relation not only with the West, but also with the rest of Asia. Although Japan's modernization process cannot be discussed without its dependency on the western cultural identity, it must be emphasized that it was not forced by the West.

Japan accepted western influence and voluntarily depended on the western cultural identity. I regard this process as self-colonialism. Self-colonialism is a Japanese version of modernization that assumes a binary opposition between the advanced West and backward Asia. It westernized Japan in the name of modernization and transformed it into a West-like imperial power, leading Japan to hold a dual identity of Orient-Occident (Asia-West) during World War II. Once the war ended, however, Japan sought a new "Japanese" identity. This explains why vast numbers of publications called "Nihonjinron" (theory of Japaneseness) were produced in the 1960s and 1970s and gained popularity. Nihonjinron provided theoretical identification of Japanese society and people, and its popularity among the general audience indicates people's satisfaction with the meta-narrative that defines the "Nihonjin" (Japanese) identity. In one sense, "Nihonjin" is a creation of the modern.

The large interest and acceptance of collective identity that Japanese show raises a question: Is it possible for one to decolonize himself from the modern and to be an individual? In order to seek an answer to this, I examine Murakami Haruki's early works and investigate the meaning of the modern in relation to the value of individuality in postwar Japan. In Murakami's works, the condition in which people are rewarded with the "West" in return for being controlled is well described through his protagonists' lives which are full of western cultural logos. His trilogy, Kaze no Uta o Kike (Hear the Wind Sing) (1979), 1973 nen no Pinboru (Pinball 1973) (1980), and Hitsuji o meguru Boken (A Wild Sheep Chase) (1982), deals with the time in between the 1960s and 1980s. His protagonist is the postwar generation youth who was born in the late 1940s and has participated in the Zenkyoto movement (the Joint Campus Struggle Movement) in the 1960s, which is presented as the last battle of people against the State-system. Murakami's textual endeavors reveal the hidden but continual rule of postwar Japan by the modern imperial energy, and his protagonists try to be individual by rejecting pre-made identities and by detaching themselves from society. Through his works, Murakami challenges meta-narrative provided by the State-system and attempts to end long-lasting "sengo."

### Autonomy of Modernization

By the term “modernity” I broadly refer to the consciousness of progress that values science and rationality in contrast with traditional or indigenous cultural values. Although modernity, in the western sense, may symbolize the desire to define truth, a degree of modernity of any non-western society can actually be measured by its level of penetration by the West. If the goal of modernity for non-West is to claim western cultural identity, the modern refers to the First World identity, and modernization functions as a tool for the non-West to obtain a membership to enter the western sphere, which simultaneously means to let the West enter its space. Thus, the deeper the non-West goes into the western sphere, the more the West penetrates its home.

Today’s Japan is considered a highly westernized non-western society, and in discussions of its rapid modernization, most theorists come to an agreement about its uniqueness in absorbing western culture. Since the Meiji period (1868-1912) Japan has been accepting western influence without resistance. A high degree of penetration of the West observed in modern Japan’s cultural space affirms western hegemony. Although the popular idea of the time, “Wakon Yosai” (Japanese soul, western talent) suggests the logical separation between Japan and the West, in reality modern Japan adopted not only western technology but also a western cultural identity. However, modern Japan’s cultural formation did not emerge from geopolitical invasion by the West. Its unique relationship with the West can be attributed to the fact that its modernization coincided with the time of nation-making, which provided Japan with an opportunity to develop nationalism while assimilating into the “borrowed” western cultural identity by creating a Japanese version of the West (J-West) in the name of modernization. In order to investigate how modern Japan manipulates the idea of the modern to maintain the coexistence of tradition and modernity, I first examine how Japan’s modernization is perceived from both Japanese and non-Japanese perspectives.

Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian think that Japan’s repeated exposures to the superior outside civilizations of Korea, China, India, Portugal and Spain in its pre-modern history, resulted in its inability to develop interiority and autonomy, consequently suffusing Japan’s history with “the sense of the dominant other and its own marginality.” At the same time, its experience with others has enabled Japan to be successful in trading. They suggest that the source of the cultural uniqueness seen in Japan’s modernization process is its “near colonial encounter” with the West, which offered Japan the privilege to know the West from a distance.<sup>1</sup>

Johann Arnason suggests that “absolutising the West” must be avoided, and the relationship between modernization and westernization should be kept open to question. He defines modernity not as a label for western supremacy, but as an essential part of the self-articulation of the West in which its encounters with the Others should not be

ignored. He asserts that westernization and modernization are complementary aspects of the historical process in which the adoption of the West, whether enforced or voluntary, occurs at different levels. Recognizing the relative weight on westernization in its relationship with modernization, Arnason points out that Japan's case discredits what is called the "latecomer thesis," which asserts that in the effort to catch up with more advanced societies, less advanced societies are likely follow a common pattern. He sees the Japanese version of modernity as a prominent example of "interpenetration of tradition and modernity." At the same time, he attempts to reinterpret Japan's tradition and regards Tokugawa Japan under its *sakoku* (self-imposed seclusion) policy (1635-1854) as a "pseudo-traditional society" where a germ of modernization is already observed without permanent contact with the West.<sup>2</sup>

Fuminobu Murakami also asserts the possible autonomy of modernization, which suggests that modernization including westernization was a choice Japan has made. He defines the terms "modern/modernity/modernism" not as spatio-temporal concepts but as an ideology that values ideas such as power, ideals, enlightenment, the future, development, progress, advancement, and evolution. Although modernist ideology was accelerated by the eighteenth century's Enlightenment project, it existed before and it still does. Like Arnason, (Fuminobu) Murakami also thinks that in Japan's case, the seeds of its modernization already existed during the Edo period (1603-1867) even though modernization now only appears as "nothing other than westernization."<sup>3</sup>

What these theorists commonly recognize in modern Japan's cultural formation is a slippage between westernization and modernization as well as the autonomy of its modernization. Modernization can occur autonomously without the West's coercion, although westernization has become a "standard" value for Japan's modernization upon its contact with the West. This idea allows us to see westernization as a political strategy that Japan imposed in order to catch up with the advancement of the modern. In fact, it reflects the popular doctrine of the Meiji period: "Wakon Yosai (Japanese Soul, Western Talent)." It is the dichotomy that separates Japan from the West and assumes the separation between Japanese spiritual life and material way of life. It teaches that Japanese spirit should not be corrupted by foreign influences.<sup>4</sup> Although the idea of "Wakon Yosai" suggests that modernization does not affect Japanese identity, and westernization is a mere strategy to enrich the nation, Japan actually adopted western identity as well.

The autonomy of modernity also affirms the existence of Japan's "indigenous" energy that is equivalent to western colonialism/imperialism. Miyoshi calls non-European colonialism, including Japan's "secondary colonialism." He recognizes a nativist reaction against European imperialism in Japan's imperialist aggression, and he sees it as an attempt of "a homegrown version of imperialism" to improve western imperialism.<sup>5</sup> Indigenous imperialism fueled Japan's self-westernization process in the name of modernization. I am aware that my argument suggests that modernization is inseparable from colonization. However, I stress that colonization I discuss here is not

the one implanted by the West, but by Japan's own imperialism. Agreeing with the assertion of Miyoshi and Harootunian that Japan has never been hesitant in depending on the Other in terms of its identity construction, I believe that indigenous imperialism also led Japan to develop the dual identity of Orient-Occident as well as colonizer-colonized during World War II.

### Self-Colonization and Dual Identity

The Meiji Restoration (1867) is usually discussed as the beginning of Japan as a nation. Upon opening of its ports after Commodore Perry's visit in 1853, new and advanced culture from the "West" (America, England, Russia, and Holland) amazed Japan and prompted its modern industrialization based on the idea of "Fukoku Kyohei" (Enrich the country, Empower the military). Japan went through not only political but also the cultural reformation called "Bunmei Kaika" (civilization/enlightenment) during which everything from the West was credited as "better." Incidentally, the construction process of the nation-state was largely affected by the presence of the West. I regard Japan's acceptance of the West as self-colonialism. It is a Japanese version of westernization in which Japan willingly took the inferior position to the superior West.

The significant difference between enforced colonization and self-colonialism lies in the presence (or absence) of people's resistance towards the new (colonizing) cultural value. Because of the absence of resistance, coexistence of tradition and modernity in Japan takes a rather flexible form as shown in westernization of tradition and Japanization of modernity. In its hybrid-like space, the "West" was a material goal as well as a status symbol. In fact, this was the original goal of the implementation of "Wakon Yosai." Self-colonialism rapidly industrialized Japan and transformed a new nation into a West-like military power. At the same time, the concept of "kindai" (the modern) became a popular topic among intellectuals in the 1940s. Through his extensive research on the famous symposium "Kindai no Chokoku" (Overcoming the modern), Takeuchi Yoshimi demonstrates how Japan negotiated its cultural identity upon encountering European modernity.<sup>6</sup>

In his paper titled "Kindai no Chokoku" (1959) Takeuchi analyzes the ideas shared by intellectuals of the time in terms of their recognition of Japan's modernity in the global context. In this symposium, the idea of "overcoming the modern" was discussed as a common goal of the intellectuals in order 1) to overcome "Chiteki Senritsu (intellectual trembling)" which emerged from the conflict between "Seiyo Chisei (Europeanized intellect)" and "Nihonjin no Chi (Japanese blood)," 2) to break through people's indifference towards "Japan's new spiritual order," and 3) to overcome the individualism of intellectuals in our culture's various fields.<sup>7</sup> In his discussion of modern Japan's identity with the West as well as the rest of Asia, Takeuchi favors one of the participants, Kamei Katsuichiro's interpretation of "Daitoa Senso (The Great East-Asian

War, which was later called “Taiheiyo Senso /Pacific War)” in relation to postwar Japan’s war responsibility.

Kamei argued that the war was “Shokuminchi Shinryaku Senso (War of colonial invasion/ invasion against China)” for which Japan should be responsible. At the same time, Japan fought against the western imperialism without intending to take over the United States, England or Holland as its colonies. In Kamei’s logic Takeuchi recognizes the absence of the universal values that encompass both the East and the West to judge imperialism. Consequently, Takeuchi observes the double structure in the Great East-Asian War. He notes:

This double structure involved the demand for leadership in East Asia on the one hand and a goal of world domination by driving out the West on the other. These two aspects were at once supplementary and contradictory. For while East Asian leadership was theoretically grounded upon the European principle of opposition between the advanced nations and backward nations, this was opposed in principle by Asian decolonization, which saw Japanese imperialism as equivalent to western imperialism. Japan’s “Asian leadership” had to be based on this latter Asian principle in order to gain recognition from the West, but because Japan had itself abandoned this principle, it had no real basis of solidarity with Asia. Japan advocated Asian on the one hand and the West on the other. This impossibility produced a constant tension, with the result that the war spread beyond all bounds without any resolution in sight. The fate that led the Pacific War to become an “eternal war” was determined by tradition. This represented the “glory of the state.”<sup>8</sup>

The Great East-Asia War/Pacific War appeared to be the reflection of Japan’s inner conflict, and it actually gives the impression that if Japan had been more independent, war might have been avoided. Japan’s dual identity is directly rooted in its tendency to depend on other cultures for its identity.

Takeuchi’s recognition of Japan’s imperialism also supports the claim that Japan has a homegrown imperialism. It also offers logic to the coexistence of Japan’s colonial invasion and anti- (western) imperialism. Japan’s anti- (western) imperialism is not a negation of its own imperialism. In order to take the leadership of Asia, Japan first must have colonized the rest of Asia, which endowed Japan with the western/colonizer identity. Then, its Asian leadership must have been granted by the West. In this way, Japan placed itself in the paradox whereby it must have become the West in order to be Asia. To be more specific, Japan had to become the West (westernized) in the Oriental sphere and (modernized) Asia in the Occidental sphere.

Takeuchi does not hold a very high opinion on Japan’s dual identity. In his essay, “What is Modernity?” he suggests that Japan is “nothing”:

For there is here no resistance, that is to say, there is no wish to preserve the self (the self itself does not exist). The absence of resistance means that Japan is not Oriental, but at the same time the absence of the wish for self-preservation (the absence of the self) means that Japan is not European.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, Takeuchi sees Japan as nothing because it does not have “self” to claim to be either the Orient or the Occident, and his claim demonstrates his modernist view of the world in binary relationships. Takeuchi thought that modernity for the non-West was its subjugation to the West’s control, and that the modern Orient was born through the Orient resistance to invasion and exploitation by the West. He was aware that Japan’s will to resist was weak.<sup>10</sup> As Sakai suggests, Takeuchi’s attitude toward modernity reflects his ideal vision of the Orient as the power entity to oppose western aggression. Thus, Japan’s willingness to accept anything western led him to liken westernization to surrendering or giving up subjectivity, which is a state of being colonized.<sup>11</sup> Takeuchi identifies the “modern” that the symposium attempted to overcome as “modern” Japan that was subjugated to the West.<sup>12</sup>

In the perspectives presented by Japanese historians, Iwao Koyama and Masaaki Kosaka in 1942, Sakai sees that they recognize the goal of Japan’s modernization as “to change the world so that the Japanese would occupy the position of the center” and anything western was approved in order to achieve this goal. Japan’s moral superiority over China was already assumed, and World War II was to decide the moral superiority of the East or the West, which Sakai compares with the idea of Takeuchi that war was still between Chinese and Japanese moralities.<sup>13</sup> If this moral superiority is determined by the hierarchical order of universality and particularity, universality must be claimed by the colonizer who reduces the colonized into particularity. In short, Japan’s attempt to be universality can be viewed as a reflection of its colonialism/imperialism over China. However, I am skeptical about Koyama and Kosaka’s view of World War II in terms of Japan’s ambition to be the center of the world. Rather, I believe that Japan wanted to be recognized by the West as being number one in Asia. In other words, Japan’s intention was not to be universality but to be the best particularity. This actually echoes Takeuchi’s view of Japanese culture as “Honor Student Culture” and its progress as “the slaves’ progress.”<sup>14</sup>

Sakai criticizes Takeuchi’s argument that “Japan is nothing” because of “the absence of resistance” or “the absence of the self-maintenance wish,” insisting that the nation without a strong national identity could not have fought war for fifteen years.<sup>15</sup> However, Takeuchi’s claim can be read that “Japan is nothing but a West or Asia.” In other words, he suggests the need to address the issue regarding the Japanese identity that Sakai calls “a strong national identity.” In fact, H.D. Harootunian values Takeuchi’s recognition of modern Japan’s struggle between “Western knowledge” and the “blood of the Japanese.” Through “the disjunction between native wisdom and western rational knowledge,” Takeuchi reassesses Japan’s modernization process which “slavishly aped the West while subverting Japanese intelligence” and redefines Japan’s modernization as



a unique process, which cannot be simply labeled as westernization. He attempts “to find a way to conceptualize a modernity that was made in Japan.”<sup>16</sup> For Takeuchi, “overcoming the modern” means releasing Japan from western control. He attempted to release Japan from the paradox in which it must become the West in order to be Asia by claiming a “Japanese” identity.

Takeuchi thinks that the “overcoming the modern” symposium raised the issue of Japan’s dual identity in a timely manner but failed to generate any solutions for it, and “disappearance of these aporias [Kamei suggested] prepared the intellectual ground for Japan’s colonization” in the postwar period when westernization was taken by Americanization.<sup>17</sup> Japan’s self- colonization is rooted in its dependency on other cultures and it eventually puts Japan in the paradox. However, upon loss of the war, Japan lost this dual identity as well. Thus, Imperial Japan’s paradoxical double consciousness actually made postwar Japan an identity-orphan until “Nihonjinron” was introduced.

### Nihonjinron

The following quotation from Japan: Profile of a Nation shows typical rhetoric used in writings on modern Japanese history:

The defeat of Japan in 1945 under atomic clouds brought the Allied Occupation, demilitarization, dismantling of the old industrial combines (zaibatsu), renunciation of divinity by the emperor, a new constitution, democratization, and a new educational system. After a painful period of postwar rehabilitation, the Japanese economy began to surge ahead in the 1960s and 1970s.-----The nation’s continued prosperity has been based on a security treaty with the United States, a consistent stress on economic growth and business-oriented policy making, an emphasis on education, and the frugality, energy and sustained efforts of the Japanese people.<sup>18</sup>

“Sengo” (postwar) presented in this writing is a story of the war victim. Its main focus is the effort Japan made for its recovery from the painful experience of war. This kind of narrative has dominated postwar history education as well as the media’s representation of modern history. Together with the essentialist ideology of Nihonjinron, Japan’s self-victimization has offered the ideal logic to generate Bildungsroman-like narratives in which the diligent Japanese collectively became a hero.

Nihonjinron in general attempts to generate a positive national image and it often focuses on the uniqueness of the Japanese people. John Lie notes that the Nihonjinron writings existed already in the pre-modern period. While the early Nihonjinron writings expressed “a prevailing sense of Japanese inferiority vis-à-vis the West,” more recent writings focus on Japan’s equality or even superiority to the West. They gained popularity after the rapid economic growth of the 1960s when they began to claim more

positive elements about Japan, and Ezra Vogel's Japan as Number One (1979) became one of the all-time best-selling nonfiction books in Japan.<sup>19</sup> In this context, public (both national and international) recognition of the Japanese as a single race became important, and thus, monoethnic and homogenous Japan was born despite its multiethnic and multicultural reality. Interestingly, the nation that was a proud "empire" during war claims to be "Tanitsu Minzoku Kokka" (mono-ethnic nation) in the postwar time.<sup>20</sup>

The main event usually discussed in *Nihonjinron* is the most positive event of postwar Japan, the "economic miracle" that was achieved by the hardworking Japanese. While postwar Japan's history education presented the modern history as hardship of wartime and terror of Hiroshima, the *Nihonjinron* writings of the 1960s and the 1970s supplemented history by offering "positive episodes" and "character analysis." During the postwar reconstruction, these two together generated what I call "Bildungsroman from the ashes" for Japanese to believe in. The *Nihonjinron* writings commonly stress one or two features of "Japanese national character or collective psychology such as curiosity, collectivism or self-uncertainty." The only taboos of *Nihonjinron* are "to say that Japanese are just like other people or to question the category itself."<sup>21</sup> Although it can be contended that the popularity of *Nihonjinron* in the 1960s and 1970s was agitated by the self-defense mechanism of postwar Japanese against an inferiority complex towards America and guilt consciousness towards the former colonies, it also shows that Japanese are interested in being unique "collectively." Thus, postwar Japan continues to be eager to be the best "particularity" in the eye of the West.

Sakai points out the recent theoretical shift the modernization theorists have made by defining modernization not as Europeanization but as Americanization. This version of modernization, he adds, has generated "a new kind of historical narrative," whose universalism avoids overreliance on European national history. Instead, it offers a potential frame in which any society can rationalize itself. However, as a result of rationalization, the society appears similar to America. Although he sees a double structure of universalism and particularism in the American-centered world perspective, he also recognizes their mutual reliance, for "universalism is a particularism thinking itself as universalism" and in the end they are both intertwined with nationalism. At the same time, he asserts that economic and political superiority of the most advanced particularity (or universality) can stabilize or legitimate its domination over others.<sup>22</sup>

Sakai seems to suggest that adoption of universality does not always reflect the geopolitical power struggles between more advanced and less advanced particularities. Rather, it is identity politics of a society with less advanced particularity. Regarding Japan's dependency in terms of its identity construction, he notes that Japan becomes aware of its "self" only when it is recognized by the West. He sees Japan's historical relation with high cultures (mainly China and America) as parasitic despite its particularism that is evident in "*Nihonjinron*." Japan's particularity must be recognized by the West. To be more exact, Japan must represent its particularities that are

recognizable by the West. Ironically, the idea of particularism itself is of western origin.<sup>23</sup>

I apply Edward Said's idea of Orientalism to figure Japan's Nihonjinron's stance in a postcolonial cultural frame. I am fully aware that Said's idea of Orientalism is historically and geographically specific, and Japan is absent in his scope as neither the "Oriental" nor the imperialist. However, I am convinced that Orientalism does not discriminate based on the place of occurrence. In fact, I think that Imperial Japan held a view of the Orientalist, and it Orientalized Asians including itself. Said claims Orientalism as a collection of dreams, images and vocabularies. He writes, "The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire."<sup>24</sup> Modern Japan accepts universalism of the West in order to be particular, and Nihonjinron Orientalizes the Japanese collectively to differentiate them from westerners.

Yoshioka Hiroshi thinks that "Japan was so quick to westernize itself that it avoided political colonization" and became a part of the West as far as its adoption of the imperialist mind is concerned. Westernization was not forced on Japan, and therefore, Japanese people lack the consciousness of cultural contradiction between the West and themselves. Yoshioka calls this modernization process, "internalized colonization," in which every Japanese is a colonizer of his own mind. This type of colonization is possible only through the absence of a conscious subject and in Japan's case, rapid modernization was realized for this very reason. He also asserts that Japan can make up its own self only through the eyes of the other and they define themselves through their internalized eye of the West, which echoes the generally accepted idea that Nihonjinron's representation of the Japanese is based on Japanese acceptance of western stereotypes of themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Yoshioka names the "samurai" as an example of a stereotype, yet, thinks the image of samurai is not a mere acceptance of stereotype but Japan's desire for cultural essentialism. He also points out that Japanese "enjoy representing themselves as samurai just as much as the West enjoys accepting Japanese in that way" although the samurai is now as exotic to Japanese.<sup>26</sup> This type of self-essentialization has become possible only because Japanese adopted the Orientalist's view to see themselves. It is, in fact, to realize "Wakon Yosai" by learning Japanese soul through the western point of view. In the Orientalist's view, the Orient cannot represent itself. In this way, Orientalism and imperialism mutually justify each other in Japan's case as well.

Japan's well-controlled "sengo" has been successful both internally and internationally. Internationally, it has achieved high economic growth, and internally, it has provided people with western convenience, capital based entertainment, and an illusion of freedom of choice. This is still a continuation of "Wakon Yosai" modernization. In addition, the J-West dwellers are not aware of their lack of subjectivity.

Fuminobu Murakami thinks that “a happy society of contented people will emerge if we discard evolution.”<sup>27</sup> In this sense, postwar people are happy hard workers, who are content with being generalized and represented by the meta-narrative, *Nihonjinron*.

### What is the “Post-” in Postwar?

Jean-Francois Lyotard defines the postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives. He sees narratives as determiners of criteria of competence and therefore, they are legitimated in the culture where they belong to. He also points out that the nation (people) and /or political institution of people formulates prescriptions that have the status of norms. He further names two major versions of the narrative of legitimation as follows: “humanity as the hero of liberty” that is attained through primary education and direct control over the training of the people and “spiritual and moral training of the nation.”<sup>28</sup> Most interestingly, he asserts that transmission of knowledge (education) is “to supply the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institution.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, meta-narrative has lost its credibility for legitimation of knowledge in postindustrial society and/or postmodern culture since World War II.

If we apply Lyotard’s definition to Japan’s case, its postwar period should become a synonym to the postmodern. Postmodernism can be broadly viewed as a reaction against modernism and totalization of culture. In Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, Frederick Jameson sees the concept of the postmodern as “an attempt to think about the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically.”<sup>30</sup> In Japan’s case, its historical amnesia seen in *Nihonjinron* discredits the postmodern’s concern of historicity. It does not seem that postwar Japan fits his prescription. Most of all, how can we locate postwar “Bildungsroman from the ashes” in the postmodern that is famously anti-metanarrative?

Let us turn our attention to the mischievous role of the “post-” in postwar Japan. The “post-” in postwar is a magic word in Japan’s modern history (The Japanese word, “sengo” is broken down to “sen”=war and “go”=after). It is as if the “post-” is a switchboard to change junctions of history and it gives an illusion that the end of the war is a new beginning. In fact, Arnason considers 1945 as both an end and a beginning. He rather emphasizes the importance of discontinuity of modernity although he does not deny the continuity of the bureaucratic core of the state as well as the Tenno ideology.<sup>31</sup> Lyotard’s description of the modern system can be applied to modern Japan especially because *Nihonjinron* is Bildungsroman, by which I mean that it is a narrative of education for the “System” to educate people (the nation). However, the fact that *Nihonjinron* gained its popularity in the 1960s and 1970s discredits Lyotard’s prescription of the postmodern condition, if he suggests that World War II is a turning point between modern and postmodern. Popularity of *Nihonjinron* actually proves that there still is the modern interest in meta-narrative in postwar Japan. In fact, *Nihonjinron* illustrates what Arnason calls “the bureaucratic core of the state.”

On the contrary, Harootunian sees a long continuing process of modernity in postwar Japan and grants that “postwar” is a cultural trope, from which Japan’s “cultural amnesia” conveniently emerged. He expresses his concern with contemporary Japan’s obsession to return to its origin by resurrecting lost traditions against modernism and imposing an essentialist idea of cultural homogeneity. In this context, modernism is taken as a “cultural mistake” which is now conquered by postmodernism. He is against the view that the modern has ended at some point in Japan’s history, and asserts that postwar Americanism destroyed Japan’s memory of modernity.<sup>32</sup> If the “post-” in postwar is a reaction to the modern, continuity of the modern should not occur. In postwar Japan, the same ideology of modernization still motivates Americanization (the most powerful universality for Japan). That is, modernization as ideology never ended with Hiroshima. Ironically, however, the very idea that has produced the Bildungsroman aspect of *Nihonjinron* is based on the view that a completely new identity emerges from the dramatic end of war.

In “Is the ‘Post-’ in Postcolonial, the ‘Post-’ in Postmodern?” Anthony Appiah sees postmodernism as “retheorization of the proliferation of distinctions that reflects the underlying dynamic of cultural modernity, the need to clear oneself a space.” Postmodernism allows the same proliferation of distinction as modernism had begun, rejecting the modernist claim of the triumph of the reason.<sup>33</sup> Appiah’s idea explains continuity of the modern after space clearing. If the “post-” in postwar is the post of the space clearing, its effect was more powerful than the one in postmodern. It actually cleared out the space in Japan’s modern history. This framing is similar to Harootunian’s idea of postwar as a cultural trope to fetishize the war experience of the defeated nation. He asserts that from the moment the war ended, Japan was destined to live not in time but in the space of a defeated nation, and there the trope allows the present to write its own history.<sup>34</sup> This is exactly how “Bildungsroman from the ashes” manipulates the nation’s war experience. The “post-” works as a space clearing trope in “postwar” and the modern including its imperialism continues. In this condition, being a postmodern writer means to reveal continuity of the modern as we shall see in texts of Murakami Haruki.

#### Postmodernism and Murakami Haruki

Hakutani Yoshinobu notes that Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida have viewed Japanese culture as decentered, and based on this decenteredness, Hakutani regards Japanese culture as essentially postmodern.<sup>35</sup> Arnason also explores John Clammer’s idea that Japan has been a postmodern society in which the meta-narratives have never been important. This perspective is based on the idea that postmodern characteristics are rooted in Japan’s indigenous tradition and Japan’s premodern/non-modern cultural stance is now identified with that of anti-West. In this sense, the postmodern can be seen as a mask for continuation of tenno ideology (anarchism).<sup>36</sup> On the contrary, Miyoshi and Harootunian claim that we should not confuse Japan’s non-modernity with the West’s

postmodernity. In fact, many theorists recognize the gap between western postmodernism and what is labeled as “postmodernism” in Japan.

Toshiko Elis remarks that “the current debate on postmodernism in the West reflects the willingness of theorists to view critically the state of their own culture and position in society in relation to the social and cultural heritage of their society” and points out a strong connection between postmodernism and poststructuralism.<sup>37</sup> She asserts that postmodernism is an imported concept for Japan and it is misleading to regard postmodernism as culturally dominant, although Japan shows numerous characteristics that can be classified as a society of late capitalism. She disagrees with the position of examining non-western society using the West as the point of reference for comparison, and asserts that Japan’s economic stance and the willing acceptance of postmodernism by Japanese media and academia do not indicate that Japan has overcome the modern.<sup>38</sup> She argues that there is a necessity of localizing the postmodern, and her position is similar to that of Takeuchi regarding the absence of universality to judge both Europe and Asia. In Japan’s case, if it has its own modernity, its postmodern should also be a Japanese version.

Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann Arnason classify approaches to Japan’s postmodern debate into three patterns: 1) clear separation of modern and postmodern, 2) postmodern as part of modern, and 3) postmodern as reorientation of modernity. They note that the third pattern is an accommodating position between the first and the second and in this pattern, the “post-” has a double-edged meaning to refer to “the break with a preceding constellation as well as the re-appearance of interrupted and forgotten themes of modern culture.”<sup>39</sup> It seems as if the definition of postmodern defines the way we perceive the modern. Tomiko Yoda thinks that Japan’s postmodernism is a peculiar brand of modernity and it is made into an industry by the media “that swallowed up and spouted out the metacritique of postmodern consumer society itself as a commodity.”<sup>40</sup> Although her research focuses on Japan after the 1990s, the significant role the media play in Japan’s cultural formation that she points out here is also applicable to postwar culture in general, especially because of Japan’s high literacy level. Her idea that Japan’s postmodern is a variation of modernity is shared by Karatani Kojin. Karatani observes the postmodern thoughts in Japan’s early modernity, which makes Japan’s modernity partially anti-modern. He sees a paradox in this idea that the modern must be the postmodern to be the modern.<sup>41</sup> What these discussions commonly suggest is the uniqueness of Japan’s postmodernity as well as modernity. It may be fair to say that postwar Japan’s cultural stance is shifting from the modern to the postmodern. However, its postmodernity is not the same as that of the West. This also raises a question: What is the postmodern in postwar Japan?

Many theorists from both Japan and overseas find postmodern characteristics in Murakami’s works. Elis names Murakami as a representative figure of a new trend of Japanese literature, recognizing Jamesonian characteristics in Murakami’s texts such as the transformation of reality into images, and pastiche, as well as nostalgic themes

through fragmented images of the past. Most of all, she observes a fundamental suspicion towards words. She sees Murakami's non-modernist features in his perception of history as well as absence of his sense of place. Yet, she avoids labeling him as a post-modernist.<sup>42</sup> Fuminobu Murakami also sees (Haruki) Murakami's detachment from rationalization, emotionality, totalization, and individualization as what Jameson calls one of the features of postmodernism. He thinks that through adopting western theories we are able to see Japanese culture from a different perspective, and at the same time it opens up a new dimension of postmodernism, feminism, and postcolonialism. For him, Murakami deconstructs two modern ideologies: "strong is good," and "love is beautiful."<sup>43</sup>

Rebecca Suter points out that Murakami has been criticized for his lack of political and social commitment, but he is defined as a postmodernist by many critics based on the fact that he is not a modernist. She recognizes both modernist literary strategies in his use of language and postmodern characteristics in his use of metafiction. She defines him as "para-modernist who relates to modernity and modernism not as past but as foreign things." She thinks that Murakami's relation to the modernist and postmodernist literature is akin to Homi Bhabha's idea of the colonial mimicry, through which he makes not a passive imitation but "a parodic incorporation that transforms the original and destabilize it."<sup>44</sup> Matthew Strecher differentiates Murakami's postmodernism from that of Jameson in terms of his treatment of liberation of the human spirit. Strecher thinks that Murakami sees "the potential for liberation of expressions, new modes of looking at the world" in postmodernism. In other words, Murakami uses postmodernism, especially magical realism, as a technique to deliver his political messages although Strecher does not necessarily see him as a postmodern writer.<sup>45</sup> These critics above commonly recognize Murakami's postmodern features. Yet, they are reluctant to call him postmodernist.

Murakami's works can be read as a reaction to the "modern" that seeks totalization. In this sense, he may be labeled as a "postmodern" writer. However, the "modern" he is against is very specific. Considering his early works are set in the 1960s and 1970s and throughout his works, many of his protagonists are deeply concerned with the failure of the Zenkyoto movement in the 1960s, the "modern" he deals with can be specified as "postwar." The time frame he deals with also coincides with the time when the Nihonjinron began defining who the Japanese were. In this regard, he is a post-"postwar" writer as well as a post-Bildungsroman from the ashes writer who reveals the continuation of the modern imperial rule in the postwar and who refuses the ready-made identity. I see Murakami as a cultural ethnographer who uses postmodern techniques to end Japan's long "postwar" period, which calls for a new reading strategy. I place his works in the postcolonial discourse to analyze them in the framework of area studies, which allow us to localize what is broadly called as postmodern.

### Murakami as a Post-postwar Writer

Murakami usually makes a hero (or anti-hero) out of an ordinary Japanese man of the postwar generation whose life is designed by postwar education, democracy, capitalist values, and American cultural icons such as music, films, and events, while his mind produces indifference and suspicion and some disorientation towards all the elements of his life mentioned above. Certainly, this is not a type of hero who stars in “Bildungsroman from the ashes.” In the first place, his protagonist is not a team player who fits in the System. In his trilogy, Hear the Wind Sing (1979), Pinball 1973 (1980), and A Wild Sheep Chase (1982), as well as its sequel, Dance, Dance, Dance (1988), Murakami uses the same first person narrator, “Boku” (In Japanese it means “I” used by male speakers) through whom he creates an urban life full of western cultural logos.<sup>46</sup> Each work is set at different points of the protagonist’s life during the 1970s. The first of the trilogy, Hear the Wind Sing depicts the slow but nostalgic summer time during his student year. In Pinball, 1973 and A Wild Sheep Chase, he is a young professional, and he lives a sophisticated urban life in Tokyo.<sup>47</sup>

In these works, Murakami shows persistent concern with the year, 1969, which makes careful readers wonder about the significance of it. The 1960s is generally recognized as “Kodo Seichoki” (the period of economic high growth) and Japan’s successful recovery from World War II, and its new membership in the world is symbolized by the Tokyo Olympic Games held in 1964. The continuing growth of the Japanese economy during the 1960s allowed people to be proud of their middle class identity with their newly purchased television sets, refrigerators, and washing machines. However, there were also political struggles and protest rallies organized to protest the United States-Japan Security Treaties as well as anti-Vietnam War movement. “Zenkyoto” (the Joint Campus Struggle movement), which was deeply involved with these revolutionary activities, peaked in 1969. Although Zenkyoto is usually symbolized by the large riots at Tokyo University and Nihon University, it was originally organized by many universities individually to protest against various campus struggles. It eventually became a joint campus organization with its main goal to protest against the government’s Imperialistic Establishment. However, once the movement went beyond campus struggles, the organization no longer remained spontaneous. It became highly hierarchical and transformed itself into extremists. As a result, many participants left the organization, while its leftish political justification was suppressed by the government. Thus, Zenkyoto gradually collapsed, and many students went back to class. It can be contended, however, that Zenkyoto (especially at the beginning stage) was the last battle the postwar Japanese fought against the System.<sup>48</sup>

As Strecher notes, some critics such as Norihito Kato and Saburo Kawamoto see Murakami as “a potential spokesman for the younger members of the defunct Zenkyoto movement of the late 1960s.”<sup>49</sup> Kuroko Kazuo sees a shadow of the Zenkyoto movement throughout Murakami’s trilogy and thinks that the death of the “Sheep” symbolizes Murakami’s emancipation of himself from the spell of Zenkyoto.<sup>50</sup> There is an obvious indication in Hear the Wind Sing that Boku was active in the student movements in 1969.



He tells his girlfriend about the campus strikes and riots and shows her his front tooth that was once broken by a riot policeman. She asks:

“Do you want to take your revenge on the police guy?”

“Never,” said I.

“Why not? If I were you, I would find the guy and break his teeth with a hammer.”

“I am not you. And it is over now. In the first place, all the riot policemen look alike. I don’t think I can find him anyway.”

“Then, it is meaningless”

“What is?”

“Your broken tooth.”

“Yes, it is,” said I. (my translation)<sup>51</sup>

In this short conversation over dinner, Boku clearly presents his recognition that his battle is over. In short, the Zenkyoto generation’s attempt to fight against “sengo shihonshugi” (postwar capitalism) and its imperialistic establishment failed. Thus, imperialism continues to rule people under the mask of democracy. Moreover, the System gives people a ready-made identity to represent them.

What matters here is that Boku calls the event of 1969 “meaningless.” The meaninglessness Boku feels towards the event is perhaps shared by the Zenkyoto generation because of the way it was dismissed. In fact, Murakami takes a cynical view towards the decline of Zenkyoto through Boku’s friend, Nezumi (meaning “rat”). When Boku asks Nezumi why he quit college, Nezumi implies that he was active in the Zenkyoto movement. He says:

I got sick of it, maybe. But I did my best in my own way. I can’t even believe how well I did. I even cared about other people and got beaten by the police because of that. But when the time came, all went back to their places. In the end, I did not have a place to go back to. It was like playing musical chairs. (my translation)<sup>52</sup>

Murakami’s metaphor of musical chairs suggests that the Zenkyoto movement itself might have been an illusion of freedom given to the postwar generation by the State-system. People in the game believed that they were fighting against the State-system, thinking the music was their spirits. But when the music stopped, their spirits died out and each one got back to the chair he/she had had before. Therefore, there was no reason for them to play the game in the first place.

Kuroko regards the Zenkyoto movement as an experiment of emancipation of the people. Although the novel’s rhetoric emphasizes Nezumi’s (as well as Boku’s) indifference over the matter and makes it sound as if he has lost his place in society without knowing it, Kuroko thinks that it was Nezumi that made a choice.<sup>53</sup> Nezumi

choose not to give up the spirit and did not take a chair although there would have been one for him. In this way, his fight is not over yet and he actually puts himself in the situation where he needs to seek his own words to represent himself. In response to Boku's question about his future plan, he says:

"I am thinking about writing a novel. What do you think?"

"Go ahead and write one."

Nezumi nodded.

"What kind of novel are you thinking about writing?"

"A good kind. For me, I mean. I do not think I have a talent. But at least, it has to be a kind of novel that enlightens me. Otherwise, it will be meaningless, I think. Right?"

"Right"

"Whether I write it for myself or for cicadas."

"Cicadas?"

"Right." (My translation)<sup>54</sup>

Nezumi says that he wants to write for little insects, frogs, grass, or winds whose existence he "experienced" when he visited an ancient tumulus. I see Nezumi's decision as Murakami's desire to make 1970 a new beginning. What Nezumi wishes to write is a post-Bildungsroman novel that represents little "individuals." Yet, Nezumi also adds that he has not written anything and even feels that he cannot write. Murakami reminds us again that people of the Zenkyoto generation are placed into the State-system as parts, and they do not possess language to represent themselves.

The State-system's control is also depicted through Boku's childhood experience with a psychologist he was taken to by his parents who were concerned with his autism-like taciturnity. The psychologist says to him:

Civilization means communication. If you cannot express it, it does not exist. That means zero, you see? If you are hungry, all you need to do is to say, "I am hungry." Then I will give you cookies. Go ahead. Eat. (I picked up one cookie.) If you don't speak, no cookies for you. (The doctor, with a mean look, hid the plate of cookies under the table). Zero, you see? You don't want to talk but you are hungry. You want to express your hunger without words. It's a gesture game. Go ahead. Try.

I made a face while holding my stomach. The doctor laughed. That's indigestion.

Indigestion..... (My translation)<sup>55</sup>

For about a year, he visited the psychologist every Sunday afternoon and received treatment which came with coffee rolls, apple pies, pan cakes, sugar coated croissants, and so on. He even had to go to the dentist because of all the sweet snacks he was given. His condition continued until the age of fourteen:

It sounds unbelievable but in the spring of my fourteenth year, I started talking all of a sudden. I do not remember what I talked about. But I kept talking and talking for three months as if I tried to fill fourteen years of blanks. Then, when I finished talking in mid-July, I ran a high fever and missed school for three days. When I recovered, I found myself being an ordinary boy who is not either talkative or taciturn. (My translation)<sup>56</sup>

Kasai Kiyoshi thinks that what is symbolized by “jozetsu” (unusual talkativeness) set in between “mukuchi” (taciturnity) and “heibon” (ordinary) is the mysterious center of Murakami’s world. He sees taciturnity as Boku’s rejection of language, and moreover, it is rejection of ideological community (based on religion, law, and system) symbolized by the language. It needs to be clarified that what Boku is rejecting is not the West but the system that uses the “West” as a reward to control people. Boku’s “jozetsu” stage, then, is the symbolic stage when he attempts to counter the System by using the language. However, in the end, he is assimilated into the System as an ordinary person.<sup>57</sup> In fact, if we regard the psychologist as the System’s elite (colonizer) who manipulates the language, this whole episode can be examined through a postcolonial perspective. The young Boku is given sweet snacks in return for learning the colonizer’s language and symbolically, his teeth were ruined by sophisticated modern “western” sweets.

In his early works, none of Murakami’s characters were given real names. Contrastingly, Murakami uses many concrete nouns that represent American culture to describe their lives. In Hear the Wind Sing, “Boku” and Nezumi often go to a bar owned by a Chinese man called “J.” They drink beer and eat sandwiches and fried potatoes. Nezumi’s favorite snack is pancakes with Coca-Cola poured over them. Boku listens to the Beach Boys and reads Derek Hartfield.<sup>58</sup> Miyuki Yonemura among others sees Murakami’s open devotion to American culture in his references to American literature, films and music. However, she also points out that Murakami presents his own version of America as metaphor.<sup>59</sup> As Yonemura suggests, the imagery of “richness” of modern America is observed in following description of the refrigerator ad Boku sees:

Next to the old YMCA building, there was a new but cheap-looking building with a huge billboard of the latest model of a refrigerator. A woman around thirty years old with an apron, who looked anemic, was happily holding the door. Thanks to her, I was able to see the inside.

There are ice, 1 liter vanilla ice cream, and a bag of shrimp in the freezer. In the refrigerator, there are eggs, butter, Camembert cheese, boneless ham, fish, chicken legs, tomatoes, cucumbers, asparagus, lettuce and grapefruits. On the door, I see three bottles of Coca Cola and beer as well as a carton of milk. (My translation)<sup>60</sup>

The novel is set in 1970. It was during the time Japan’s postwar economic miracle brought prosperity to all middle class families who could now afford a television set, a

laundry machine, and a refrigerator. In this sense, this billboard symbolizes Japan's postwar achievement, and interestingly, the food displayed there is mostly of western origin that was foreign to premodern Japan. In fact, this modern westernized life style distributed by the media is the reward the State-system endows people with in return for their subjugation. This Japanization of the West manufactures the West as a simulacrum, and it is this invented "West" that Japan lets colonize itself. In other words, Japan is a colonizer and the colonized at the same time. As for Boku, his life style is akin to the condition of "colonial mimicry."

Homi Bhabha asserts that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" and defines it as "the sign of a double articulation: a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power."<sup>61</sup> Young Boku was not able to represent himself because he did not have a language of his own. He is taught to desire to reform himself through mimicry, and at the age fourteen, his mimicry became good enough to give him quasi-subjectivity (or what Bhabha calls "sly civility") to talk. Bhabha writes:

Mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance. Then the words of the master become the site of hybridity- the warlike, subaltern sign of the native- then we may not only read between the lines but even seek to change the often coercive reality that they so lucidly contain.<sup>62</sup>

In Boku's case, the aftermath of his warlike talking is his missing school for three days, which may be the most rebellious action a fourteen-year-old can take against the State-system. However, after three days of high fever, his "sly civility" disappears, and he becomes somebody "ordinary" in a controlled society where people are provided with a ready-made identity and language to represent them. Upon reception of it, they lose an individual identity of their own. In 1963, after three months of aggressive talking, he subjected himself to the System as an ordinary person. And he lost his battle again in 1969.

After the year 1969, however, Boku continues to challenge language in a rather innovative way, using numbers. Boku describes his obsession with numbers as follows:

The third girl I slept with called my penis "your *raison d'être*."



I once attempted to write a short novel about the "*raison d'être*." Although I never finished the novel, I kept thinking about *raison d'être* and ended up with a strange habit of transforming everything into numbers. For about eight months, I was obsessed with it. When I got on a train, I first counted the numbers of passengers. I counted every single step of stairs. I took my pulse whenever I

could. According to my records, between August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969 and April 3rd in the following year, I attended 358 lectures, had sex 54 times and smoked 6921 cigarettes.

During that time, I seriously thought I was able to deliver some kind of message to others through numbers. Moreover, I thought as long as I had something to tell others, I could prove my existence. Needless to say, however, nobody was interested in the numbers of cigarette I smoked, steps I climbed or the size of my penis. I lost my *raison d'être* and became alone.

☆

It was for this reason that I say I was smoking the cigarette number 6922 when I learned that she had died. (My translation)<sup>63</sup>

It is hard to ignore the “*raison d'être*” of numbers here. Many critics agree that Murakami’s use of dates and numbers is one of his unique characteristics. Maeda Ai sees Murakami’s uses of numbers as his challenge against language and thinks that he depicts a person in the shape of language.<sup>64</sup> Michael Seats thinks that Maeda’s argument is a fundamental inquiry to postmodern foregrounding of language. He regards Murakami’s sign system as “indicative of the operation of a simulacral process in the representation of the Japanese self (*jiga*) in contemporary fiction.” He also asserts that Murakami’s writing challenges the essentialist notion of Japaneseness which dominates the “*shishosetsu*” (I-novel, confession style novels).<sup>65</sup> Yet, Maeda and Seats would agree that Murakami’s overuse of numbers is to create some type of an outline of a person. Murakami uses numbers as a new set of vocabulary to depict a Japanese individual, and his overuse of numbers articulates his political strategy. It is the way he battles with “language.” Further, I argue that through numbers he reveals the essentialization (generalization as well as Orientalization) of people by the State-system. He shows how people’s lives in the controlled space can be enumerated. Most symbolically, in *Pinball 1973* Boku lives with a set of twin girls wearing sweat shirts with the numbers 208 and 209, which is the only tool for him to tell one from the other.

In *Pinball 1973*, Boku works as a translator in the little company he and his friend started. He is twenty four years old now and ironically, manipulation with language has become his occupation. In fact, the catch phrase on their business brochure reads, “There is nothing one cannot understand if it is written by someone.” He works as a mediator between two languages, which implies his in-betweenness. In this novel, he listens to “Rubber Soul” and reads Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. Boku says that this is a novel about a certain pinball machine that was too sophisticated to be appreciated by many before its disappearance. He makes interesting remarks:

The progress of the pinball machine and of Hitler exhibit certain similarities. Both have dubious beginnings, coming on the scene as mere bubbles on the froth of the times; it is through their evolutionary speed rather than any physical stature per se that they acquire their mythic aura. And of course, that evolution came

riding in on three wheels; to wit, technology, capital investment, and last but not least, people's basic desires.<sup>66</sup>

Boku looks for a pinball machine and after a brief reunion with "her" (the machine), he moves on. That is, evolution/modernization continues. Both the pinball machine and Hitler were treated as errors modernity produced. In fact, the imaginary American writer, Derek Heartfield kills himself by jumping off of the Empire State Building with a portrait of Hitler in his hand. The concept of modernity's error is taken over by the sheep in his next novel.

Unlike the first two novels of the trilogy that consist of film-like segments, A Wild Sheep Chase carries a clear story line, and the protagonist's life becomes more realistic in one sense and more magical in the other. Murakami attempts to reveal the unnaturalness of Japan's system-controlled modernity through Boku's adventure to chase the sheep. The novel is set in 1978. Boku is now twenty eight years old. Boku still works at the same office as a translator as well as a copywriter, which is symbolic. He is involved in a strange sheep-searching adventure because of the photographs of sheep he used for his job. It was, in fact, Nezumi who sent him the photo and asked him to publicize it somehow. The photo has caught the attention of the personal secretary of a powerful (but physically dying) right-wing politician, Sensei (the Boss), for one of the sheep has a star-shaped mark (the Sheep). Boku is told that the Sheep possessed the Boss since 1936 and kept him in his political power for over forty years. However, it has left the Boss. As the owner of the photo, Boku is forced by the secretary to find the Sheep with the star mark. Thus, he and his new girl friend leave Tokyo for Hokkaido, where they meet the Sheep professor who was once possessed by the Sheep while he was engaged in governmental agricultural research in Manchuria. Boku learns that the Sheep was originally from the Asian continent (it probably possessed Genghis Khan once) and used the Sheep professor as a vehicle to come to Japan with an evil ambition. After he left the Boss, the Sheep attempted to possess Nezumi, who is the son of an influential capitalist (although his father never appears in the story, I regard him as a representative of the comprador class). However, Nezumi killed himself with the Sheep inside him.

In this novel, Murakami presents sheep as something brought by modernization and abandoned as the modern moved on (just as we see in the constant model changing of game machines). The following quotation illustrates the situation of the sheep in Japan:

Even today, Japanese know precious little about sheep. Which is to say that sheep as an animal have no historical connection with the daily life of the Japanese. Sheep were imported at the state level from America, raised briefly, then promptly ignored. That's your sheep. After the war, when importation of wool and mutton from Australia and New Zealand was liberalized, the merits of sheep raising in Japan plummeted to zero. A tragic animal, do you not think? Here then, is the very image of modern Japan.<sup>67</sup>

This is a tragic situation produced by Japan's eager modernization, which can be discussed in a postcolonial perspective. It is easy to read the sheep as the Diaspora. In fact, the sheep may represent ethnic minorities in Japan, especially the Korean populace who were brought to Japan as forced laborers. The Sheep with the star mark symbolizes the dark side of modernization (colonization). I believe that the "darkness" Murakami is concerned with is comparable to that of Joseph Conrad. In fact, the connection is implied by Murakami by the book of Conrad that Nezumi has left in his bedroom. Kato Hironori points out similarities between the film Apocalypse Now and A Wild Sheep Chase and thinks that the novel is inspired by the film based on Murakami's remark on the film elsewhere.<sup>68</sup>

Murakami's anti-modern/anti-System view is clearly shown in these works. He presents Japan's modernity as something unnatural and grotesque. In the following description of the Boss's "Meiji-era Western style manor", Murakami depicts the mismatched appearance of Japan's modernity:

It was ---How shall I put it? --- a painful solitary building. Let me explain. Say we have a concept. It goes without saying that there will be slight exceptions to that norm. Now, over time these exceptions spread like stains until finally they form a separate concept. To which other exceptions crop up. It was that kind of building, some ancient life-form that had evolved blindly, toward who knows what end.<sup>69</sup>

The Boss symbolizes the unity of political power and the capitalist money, and his mansion represents Japan's modernity including its darkness. As we see in his description, Murakami treats modernity as if it is a living organism that never stops evolving without knowing its purpose. Any system or ideology is man-made. However, once it is established, it becomes a living organism and starts controlling people in order to maintain its life. In Japan's case, the process of modernization itself has become an organism that colonizes people's minds, giving them a ready-made identity.

Edward Said thinks that Kurtz and Marlow in Heart of Darkness are "ahead of their time in understanding that what they call 'the darkness' has an autonomy of its own, and can invade and reclaim what imperialism had taken for its own." He further claims that Conrad's limitation is that he could not see the end of imperialism and emancipation of natives as a conclusion, despite his recognition that imperialism was "pure dominance and land-grabbing."<sup>70</sup> However, Said also fails to realize that autonomy of the darkness will not stop when natives invade and reclaim their lands. It is this immortality of darkness that Murakami is concerned with. Although Murakami sees the same darkness as Conrad and Said, his observation is much more acute, which makes him truly ahead of our time.

## Conclusion

I interpreted Murakami's persistent referral to the failure of the Zenkyoto movement during the 1960s as his political message, which distinguishes him from those who preceded him. Matthew Strecher notes the lack of political opposition after the Zenkyoto resulted in a controlled society in which consumerism has replaced opposing political ideologies and mass desire has been controlled through education, mass media and industrial production.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, people in this controlled society are trained to feel satisfied with a high standard of living, which is regarded as a proud achievement of postwar reconstruction, and their satisfaction is evident in the popularity of the *Nihonjinron* writings. In this society, the collective identity that I call "Bildungsroman from the ashes" was promoted and it was allocated to people to manipulate their lack of individuality.

From the beginning of his writing career, Murakami has maintained his position as a writer of the Zenkyoto generation, and he presents the Zenkyoto movement in the 1960s as the last battle of people against the State-system. Throughout his major works, he inserts his concern with (or lament for) the Zenkyoto through the personal history of his characters. However, his first person narrators are not the confessioners of their personal matters but the spokesmen of our time. While "I" characters in works of Mishima Yukio or Kawabata Yasunari represent modern individuals at the personal level, Murakami's "Boku" is a collective "I" who is more politically represented. In fact, Murakami creates an ironic situation through battling against collectivism with collectivism. This is the significant difference I recognize between Murakami's works and Japan's self-confession style novels called "I-novels." Murakami's avoidance of personalization is also observed in his no-name characters, which appeared "new" to Japan's literary criticisms. Here again, I emphasize that Murakami defines Japan's modernity from a non-modernist perspective, revealing its imperial nature. I recognize his goal as to end the modern and decolonize Japan from the modern, which also means to end postwar. In this regard, he is a post-postwar writer.

I positioned Murakami's "newness" in an ambiguous space in between postmodern and postcolonial. This reflects the stance of today's Japanese culture, which is unique and does not fit into any particular cultural framework. What we are concerned with as the postmodern decenteredness can be read as the postcolonial issue of hybridity. The overlaps of postmodern and postcolonial open up a useful space to produce a counter narrative against modernity, which, in Japan's case, still continues. All the more, the application of postcolonial theories places Murakami's attempt to decolonize modern Japan in a new theoretical location.



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<sup>1</sup> Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian, Introduction, Postmodernism and Japan, by Miyoshi and Harootunian (Durham: Duke UP, 1989) x-xi

<sup>2</sup> Johann P. Arnason, “Modernity, Postmodernity and the Japanese Experience.” Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity, ed. Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann P. Arnason (New York: Kegan Paul, 2005)12-19.

<sup>3</sup> Fuminobu Murakami, Introduction, Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Culture: A reading of Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana, Yoshimoto Takaaki and Karatani Kojin, by Murakami (New York: Routledge) 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Sugimoto, 183.

<sup>5</sup> Masao Miyoshi, Off Center: Power and Culture Relations Between Japan and the United States, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991) 40-41.

<sup>6</sup> In July 1942 a group of intellectuals gathered in Kyoto to discuss the theme “Kindai no Chokoku”(Overcoming the modern). Participants were Hideo Kobayashi, Keiji Nishitani, Katsuichiro Kamei, Fusao Hayashi, Tatsuji Miyoshi, Tetsuraro Kawakami, and Mitsuo Nakamura. Takeuchi notes that the phrase “Kindai no Chokoku” gained popularity among intellectuals during the war. The symposium was held and published by Bungakukai (Literary Society) between 1941 and 1942.

<sup>7</sup> Yoshimi Takeuchi, “”Overcoming Modernity,” trans. Richard Calichman, What is Modernity?: Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi (New York: Columbia UP, 2005) 114.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>9</sup> Yoshimi Takeuchi, “What is Modernity?” trans. Richard Calichmna, What is Modernity?: Writings of Takeuchi Yoshimi (New York: Columbia UP, 2005) 64.

<sup>10</sup> Takeuchi’s idea appears similar to that of Edward Said’s Orientalism. However, it should be noted that Takeuchi died in 1977 before a Japanese translation of Edward Said’s Orientalism became available in 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Although Takeuchi thinks that westernized Japan gives its subjectivity to the West, in my self-colonization model, people give up their subjectivity to the State-system and receive a high status western identity in return.

<sup>12</sup> Takeuchi, 132.

<sup>13</sup> Sakai, 113-114.

<sup>14</sup> Takeuchi, 66-67.

<sup>15</sup> Naoki Sakai, “Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism,” Postmodernism and Japan (Durham: Duke UP, 1989), 114-119.

Sakai refers to Takeuchi’s article, “Kindai towa nanika (What is Modern?).”

<sup>16</sup> H. D. Harootunian, “Visible Discourses/Invisible Ideologies” Postmodernism and Japan, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harootunian (Durham: Duke UP, 1989) 72-75.

<sup>17</sup> Takeuchi, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Kodansha International, Japan: Profile of a Nation (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994) 37.

<sup>19</sup> John Lie, Multiethnic Japan (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001)150-151.

<sup>20</sup> In 1986 Prime Minister, Yasuhiro Nakasone blamed the presence of African Americans and Hispanics for the decline of American intelligence levels and proudly

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called Japan “Tanitus Minzoku Kokka.” This extremely ethnocentric remark upset not only minorities in the United States but also the non-Japanese populace in Japan. However, the image of Japan as a homogenous society has been widely shared by many Japanese. In “Critical Texts, Mass Artifact: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan,” Marilyn Ivy writes that Nakasone created “a narrative of legitimation in which Japanese superiority depended on density of information and capacity to read.”

<sup>21</sup> Lie, 151.

<sup>22</sup> Naoki Sakai, “Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism,” Postmodernism and Japan, ed. Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke UP, 1989) 97-98.

<sup>23</sup> Rebecca Suter, The Japanization of Modernity: Murakami Haruki between Japan and the United States (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008) 32. Suter notes that particularism was first presented as the founding characteristic of Japanese society in the publications of Ruth Benedict (The Chrysanthemum and the Sword) and Edwin Reischauer (Japan Past and Present).

<sup>24</sup> Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1979) 202-203.

<sup>25</sup> Hiroshi Yoshioka, “Samurai and Self-Colonization in Japan,” The Decolonization of Imagination: Cultures, Knowledge and Power, eds. Jan Pieterse and Bhikhu Parekh (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1995) 102-107.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 102.

<sup>27</sup> Murakami, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1979) 23-32.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>30</sup> Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham: Duke UP, 2001) i.

<sup>31</sup> Johann Arnason, “Modernity, Postmodernity and the Japanese Experience,” Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity, eds. Yoshio Sugimoto and Arnason (New York: Kegan Paul, 1995) 16.

<sup>32</sup> H.D. Harootunian, “Japan’s Long Postwar: The Trick of Memory and the Ruse of History,” Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present, eds. Tomiko Yoda and Harootunian (Durham: Duke UP, 2006) 99.

<sup>33</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodern Post- in Postcolonial?” Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader, ed. Padmini Mongia (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996) 61.

<sup>34</sup> Harootunian, 101.

<sup>35</sup> Yoshinobu Hakutani, Postmodernity and Cross Culturalism (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2002) 26-27.

<sup>36</sup> Arnason, 26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Toshiko Ellis, “Questioning Modernism and Postmodernism,” Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity, eds. Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann Arnason (New York: Kegan Paul, 1995) 138.

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<sup>38</sup> Toshiko Ellis, “Questioning Modernism and Postmodernism,” Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity, eds. Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann Arnason (New York: Kegan Paul, 1995) 133-139.

<sup>39</sup> Yoshio Sugimoto and Johann Arnason, introduction, Japanese Encounters with Postmodernity, eds. Sugimoto and Arnason (New York: Kegan Paul, 1995) 4.

<sup>40</sup> Tomiko Yoda, “A Roadmap to Millennial Japan,” Japan After Japan, ed. Yoda and H.D. Harootunian, (Durham: Duke UP, 2006) 34.

<sup>41</sup> Kojin Karatani, “Hiho to Posotomodan” (Criticism and Postmodern) in Sai toshiteno Basho (A Space as a Difference), (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007) 136-138.

<sup>42</sup> Ellis, 144-145.

<sup>43</sup> Fuminobu Murakami, Postmodern, Feminist and Postcolonial Currents in Contemporary Japanese Culture: A Reading of Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana, Yoshimoto Takaaki and Karatani Kojin (New York: Routledge, 2005) 6-8.

<sup>44</sup> Suter, 5-7.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew Strecher, Dance With Sheep: The Quest of Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies U of Michigan, 2002) 20.

<sup>46</sup> In the afterwords of the original Japanese version of Dance, Dance, Dance, Murakami himself declares that the first person narrator, “Boku” is the same person who appears in Hear the Wind Sing, Pinball, 1973, and Wild Sheep Chase.

<sup>47</sup> Most of Murakami’s works are set in Tokyo or partially in Tokyo. Exceptions are Hear the Wind Sing (set in Kobe) and several other short stories. The following are set partially in Tokyo: Wild Sheep Chase (set in Tokyo and Hokkaido), Dance, Dance, Dance (set in Tokyo, Hokkaido and Hawaii), Kafka on the Shore (set in Tokyo and Shikoku), and Sputnik Sweetheart (set in Tokyo and Greece).

<sup>48</sup> Kazuo Kuroko, Murakami Haruki: “Soshitsu” no Monogatari kara “Tenkan” no Morogatari e (Murakami Haruki: From the Narrative of “Loss” to the Narrative of “Transition”) (Tokyo: Bensei, 2007) 14-19.

<sup>49</sup> Strecher, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Kuroko, 81.

<sup>51</sup> Murakami, 90-91.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 117.

<sup>53</sup> Kuroko, 17-25.

<sup>54</sup> Murakami, 117-118.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> Kiyoshi Kasai, “Toshikankaku toiu Inpei” (Urban Sense as Hideaway) Murakami Haruki Studies 01, eds, Kuritsubo Yoshiki and Tsuge Teruhiko (Tokyo: Wakakusa, 1999) 213-214.

<sup>58</sup> Derek Heartfield is supposed to be an American writer who killed himself by jumping off the Empire State Building. Hatanaka Yoshiki thinks that this imaginary writer is modeled after Robert E. Howard. His name is spelled originally with Japanese scripts as dereku hatofirudo. Alfred Birnbaum and Jay Rubin spell it as Derek Heartfield while Michel Seats writes it as Derek Hartfield. I have adopted Birnbaum and Rubin’s spelling.

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- <sup>59</sup> Yonemura Miyuki, “Poppumasuta to <Shinbei> shikou” (Pop master and Pro-Americanism) Murakami Haruki: Tema, souchi, kyarakuta (Haruki Murakami: Theme, Setting and Characters), ed. Tsuge Mitsuhiko (Tokyo: Shibundo, 2008) 145-152.
- <sup>60</sup> Haruki Murakami, Kaze no Uta o kike (Hear the Wind Sing) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2007) 122.
- <sup>61</sup> Homi Bhabha, Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994) 122.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 172.
- <sup>63</sup> Murakami, 95-96.
- <sup>64</sup> Ai Maeda, “Boku to Nezumi no Kigoron” (Semiotics of Boku and Rat), Murakami Haruki Studies 01, eds. eds, Kuritsubo Yoshiki and Tsuge Teruhiko (Tokyo: Wakakusa, 1999) 29.
- <sup>65</sup> Michael Seats, Murakami Haruki: The Simulacrum in Contemporary Japanese Culture (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006) 137.
- <sup>66</sup> Haruki Murakami, Pinball 1973, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985) 26-27.
- <sup>67</sup> Haruki Murakami, A Wild Sheep Chase, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (New York: Vintage, 1989) 130.
- <sup>68</sup> Norihiro Kato, Murakami Haruki ronshu (Tokyo: Wakakusa Shobo, 2006) 9-13.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 81.
- <sup>70</sup> Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Vintage, 1994) 30.
- <sup>71</sup> Matthew Strecher, Dances with Sheep: The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 2002) 77.