TRANSCENDING THE GAP BETWEEN AMERICAN AND JAPANESE THOUGHTS: A CROSS-CULTURAL READING OF HARUKI MURAKAMI'S AND TRU45MAN CAPOTE'S LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract: Haruki Murakami's literary works are replete with imagery derivative of Western culture. Indeed, the title of Murakami's first novel, Hear the Wind Sing, derives from a phrase in the last sentence of Truman Capote's short story "Shut a Final Door." Thus, some have proposed that Murakami's works are more redolent of American features than his Japanese culture. However, situating both works in their respective sociocultural and literary traditions demonstrates that whereas Capote's story embodies core features of the American tradition and is particularly evocative of Emersonian thought, Murakami's novel is imbued with elements of the Japanese Buddhist tradition. Nonetheless, the two perspectives, and hence the two fictions, share a similar worldview and way of thinking that extend beyond dichotomies between the East and the West. Thus, the Eastern and Western texts illuminate each other in their understandings of human existence and its relation to memory.

Introduction

As scholars of Anglophone literature in Japan point out in their articles and books on Haruki Murakami, Murakami's literary works are often described as showing more American literary features than Japanese ones because they lack elements of Japanese traditional culture. For instance, Inuhiko Yomota, a presenter at the 2006 international symposium and workshop "A Wild Haruki Chase: Reading Murakami around the World; How the World Is Reading and Translating Murakami," supported by the Japan Foundation, points out that "Murakami's novels are largely devoid of anything suggestive of […] traditional 'Japaneseness'" (Yomota, 2008, 35). His fiction is certainly full of elements identified with Western and American cultures. Further, Murakami's works have many affinities with those of the American authors Truman Capote, John Cheever, and Raymond Carver, among others. The title of Murakami's first novel, *Hear the Wind Sing* (1979), even alludes to the last sentence of Capote's short story "Shut a Final Door" (1947): "So he pushed his face into the pillow, covered his ears with his hands, and thought: Think of nothing things, think of wind" (Capote, 2004, 134). A central theme in both works is memory, especially of painful experiences, including violence and death, both psychic and physical. Thus, Murakami's career started under the significant influence of Capote, an American author, through an adaptation of his ideas. Murakami even translated Capote later in his career.

However, some scholars have noted Japanese traditional elements in Murakami, perceiving intertextuality between his works and Japanese classics such as *Ugetsu Monogatari* (*Tales of Rain* and the *Moon*) by Akinari Ueda (1734–1809) and other aspects of traditional Japanese thought, possibly under the

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influence of Murakami's father, who was a Buddhist monk.

Despite such elements and because of the prominence of representations of Western culture in his works, should we say that Murakami belongs to the American literary tradition? Should we instead consider his novels to be typically Japanese literary works? Additionally, should we think of Capote's philosophy and view of the world as, whether like or unlike Murakami's, exemplary American ones simply because he is an American writer? No quick way forward appears: drawing such a clear contrast in and between their philosophies is impossible. Murakami's novels show some elements of the Japanese Buddhist tradition, and Capote's works are tied to traditional American thought elements. However, the cultural difference between East and West is not a primary divide. Instead, the ideas on human existence and their relationship to memory seem unexpectedly similar. Here, the author reads the works of Murakami and Capote, focusing on *Hear the Wind Sing* and "Shut a Final Door," to identify their differences and similarities in the way of American schools in comparative literature studies. First, the author locates them in their sociocultural and literary traditions and then identifies the philosophical similarities between the focal works and their respective literary traditions, adopting a cross-cultural reading of the elements of wind and circle, which are the characteristic motifs in these texts. This comparison makes Eastern and Western philosophies illuminate each other beyond the gap between their sociocultural backgrounds.

I. Murakami's Fictional Works and *Hear the Wind Sing*

Murakami's fiction as a whole, characters often appear in settings that the reader can identify concretely and easily. Among these are frequent descriptions of buildings with emblems of transnational companies based in the United States, such as Nike, McDonald's, KFC, etc. The prevalence of the American standard of politics and economics worldwide is a phenomenon of the contemporary globalized society. Thus, these references allow readers worldwide to easily imagine towns and cities familiar to them in the scenes of Murakami's fiction. By contrast, while he describes the world on the ground concretely, he always considers Japan's subterranean world with its links to violence and death. Murakami confesses that "subterranean worlds—wells, underpasses, caves, underground springs and rivers, dark alleys, subways—have always fascinated me and are an important motif in my novels. The images, the mere idea of a hidden pathway, immediately fill my head with stories." He goes on to say that "a fictional race called Yamikuro have lived beneath us since time immemorial." The Yamikuro, according to Murakami, are "horrible creatures" that control the ground, and "ordinary people, however, never even suspect their presence" (Murakami, 2003b, 208–9). Additionally, Murakami explains that "the key to understanding Japan is through the notion of violence" (Buruma, 1996, 60), implying that the Yamikuro underground has committed all of the violence in Japan since time immemorial.

The subterranean world of the Yamikuro is the site of the past, and the world above ground is that of the present day. To examine this more closely, Akiyoshi Suzuki (2013) superimposed a map of ancient Japan on a map of Japan of the present day and found that the actual buildings and places that are mentioned in Murakami's novels tend to be located above archaeological digs, such as an

ancient tomb, a cemetery, a crematorium, and a ritual site. In other words, these sites in Murakami's works are built on top of places where the dead are concealed. Additionally, it is common for Murakami's characters to walk along the edge of a cape or on a ridge by the sea. In ancient thought, as Shin'ichi Nakazawa (2005, 60–61) states, this juncture between land and the water's edge is a contact point between those who are living in this world and the dead in the other world and, in ancient thought, they represent entrances into the world of the dead.

Characters in Murakami's novels very often walk above the archaeological digs, on the edge, and on the ridge. As an example, the author takes Suzuki's (2013) analysis of the route that Watanabe walks with Naoko, who reminisces about her dead boyfriend, Kizuki, in *Norwegian Wood*, from Yotsuya, through Iidabashi, the old castle moat, Jinbocho, Ochanomizu, and Hongo, to Komagome. This walk is special for these characters and thus significant to the novel. The group often walks together in Tokyo, but only the route between Yotsuya and Komagome is described in detail in the text and given in Watanabe's memory after Naoko's death. Additionally, Naoko shows a mysterious frame of mind, as if something controls her walking. When the couple arrives at Komagome, Naoko asks Watanabe, "Where are we?" (Murakami, 2003a, 23). How can we understand what has happened to her? See Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows a map of Tokyo that identifies the route she and Watanabe walk, and Figure 2 shows a map of ancient Tokyo superimposed on the present-day map.

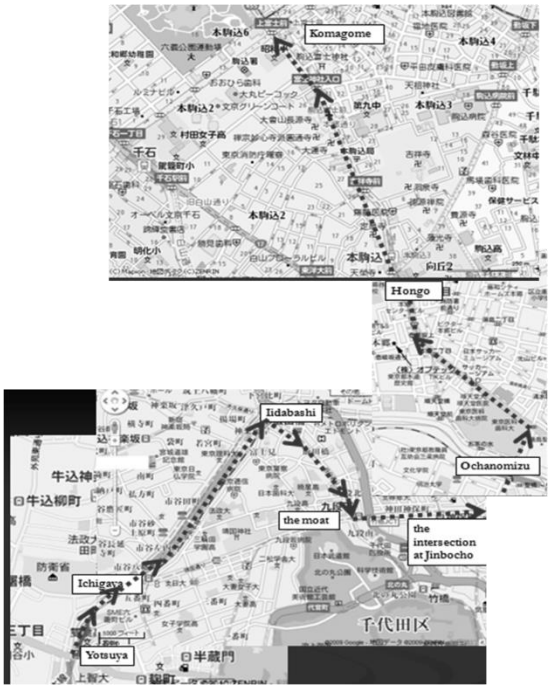

Figure 1: A map of Tokyo that identifies the route Naoko and Watanabe walk (Adapted from Suzuki, 2013).

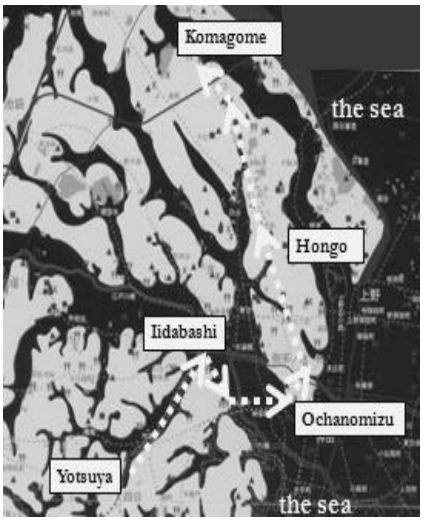

Figure 2: A map of ancient Tokyo superimposed on the present-day map. The arrows in white are the route Naoko and Watanabe walk. The black spaces are the sea and the white spaces are the ground. Dark areas and dingbats in the white spaces signify ancient ruins (Adapted from Suzuki, 2013).

The map of Figure 2 indicates that Naoko walks with Watanabe along the edge of the tong-shaped cape and that ancient graves and ruins lie beneath her. She is thus symbolically and even literally walking on the border between this world and another, the present and the past. While Naoko is walking with Watanabe above ground, she is walking with the dead Kizuki underground in her memory; thus, the dead Kizuki appears to be dragging her into his world, the other world. Additionally, her death is linked to the history of Japan as well. Naoko walks through Yotsuya, Ichigaya, the old castle moat, Ochanomizu, Hongo, and Komagome, sites of violence and death since the oldest times in Japan. One legend tells that Komagome was named after Yamato Takeru-no Mikoto, a mythical famous man who contributed to the violent nation-building in Japan by the Yamato dynasty. He had a fiery temper and was distinguished for his valor. Komagome is thus directly connected to the origins of Japan, which began with violence and death. In Japan, Naoko is hurt by Kizuki's death, continues to live with him in her memory, and finally commits suicide. She lives on the border between this world and the next and is dragged into another world. The maps of her route are an image of Naoko's life and death. This kind of route also finds expression in Murakami's other fictional works, as Suzuki (2013) argues in detail.

As Murakami sometimes writes a passage and a fiction in Japanese after thinking in English, as is the case with *Hear the Wind Sing*, it is notable here that an anagram of Yamikuro, the creatures that live underground and control the violence above ground, is "I mark you." In short, the past and the dead control the living above ground through memory, as if the spirit of a place possesses the living. It can be seen as a Japanese-style spirit of place in that it controls the living and repeatedly drags the living into the subterranean realm. It sometimes victimizes them but makes them, who live separately and indifferent to each other in contemporary Japan, develop personal relationships and even friendly ties with each other through their memory of the dead. Thus, in Murakami, the dead are a

memorial bridge that not only pulls the living into the subterranean world, in other words, into death, but also ties together the living, in other words, into a unity, as Ujitaka Itō (2008, 32–43) explains in detail. It imagined the lack of a border between the living and the dead, the present and the past, has been seen as a feature of Japanese thought.

Links between the edge of the water and memory and between physical and psychic violence and death appear repeatedly in Murakami's novels. They are present in his first work, *Hear the Wind Sing*. It and other repeated features can make his novels seem stereotyped. The narrator-protagonist in *Hear the Wind Sing*, remembering his female friend, says, "When I'm back in town in summer, I always walk the same streets she walked, sit down on the stone steps of the warehouse, and gaze out to sea, all by myself. And just when I feel like crying, I never can" (Murakami, 1987, 125). His summer memories of the girl, who "only had four fingers on her left hand" (Murakami, 1987, 28), are the subject matter of *Hear the Wind Sing*. Like other Murakami characters, the girl's mind is also occupied and controlled by her violated memory. "If I keep to myself and stay real still," she says, "I start to hear voices. All sorts of people telling me things… People I know and people I don't. My father and mother and teachers from school, all sorts of people" (Murakami, 1987, 113), and "most of them are giving me hell. The likes of you oughta drop dead, that kind of thing. Or else it's dirty stuff" (Murakami, 1987, 113), and "I hate everybody" (Murakami, 1987, 112). The narrator, who is often presented in this friend's company, is often preoccupied with the past, especially by the memory of his dead girlfriend, recalled through the existence of the girl with four fingers. He spent time with this girl over a summer, and he is writing his summer memories in a novel, the book that the reader has as *Hear the Wind Sing*. The wind of the title, a reference to the last line of Capote's "Shut a Final Door," always reminds the narrator of his dead girlfriend, bringing to mind also the memory of a waterfront. The narrator kept company with his dead girlfriend "between August 15, 1969, and April 3 of the following year" (Murakami, 1987, 77). [1] However, she committed suicide during the spring vacation from school. Her memory becomes part of the wind and the dusk; as the narrator puts it: "The following spring, she hanged herself in a scruffy patch of woods next to the tennis court. Her body went undiscovered until the beginning of the next semester. Two whole weeks it swayed in the wind. Now no one goes near those woods after dusk" (Murakami, 1987, 63).[2]

The link between the wind and dusk is repeated daily with the girl with four fingers. For instance, in chapter 18, just before the narrator takes a phone call

[1] For reference, August 15 is the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II. On April 3, the first Japanese, Jinmu, who built Japan, passed away. Moreover, the day that follows, April 4, is, in Murakami's favorite metaphorical way of thinking, "four-four," or death, because "four" is an ominous number in Japan because it has the same pronunciation as "death" (*shi*), as often referred to "Shikoku," as the world (*koku*) of the dead (*shi*), that Kafka visits in Murakami's novel *Kafka on the Shore*. In this sense, the days when "I" kept company with the four-finger girl should be analyzed from the viewpoint of Japanese imperialism, the imperial system, and the war. This argument, however, will be considered in a future paper.

[2] The last words, "after dusk," are given as "after sundown" in the English translation. The word *yūgure* in *yūgurego* in the original Japanese version includes the time when the sun is still above the horizon. Hence, the author changed "after sundown" to "after dusk."

from the girl, "an evening shower had come through, large wet drops leaving the foliage outside all moist, then abruptly departed. As soon as the rain passed, there arose a damp southerly breeze bearing the scent of the sea" (Murakami, 1987, 58). In chapter 22, the girl with four fingers invites the narrator to her home for "a pleasant evening out" (Murakami, 1987, 70), and while they are eating dinner together, "little by little a breeze was finally bringing some cool air through the open window" (Murakami, 1987, 71). In chapter 35, when the girl, whom the narrator has not seen for about a week because she has had an abortion, is walking along the waterfront with him "in the amazingly brilliant sunset," "a breeze rustled through the willows, a reminder, however slight, of summer's end" (Murakami, 1987, 110–111), "an evening breeze was blowing in off the water through the whispering grasses as dusk slowly gathered" (Murakami, 1987, 112), and "the smoke wafted into the sea breeze and slipped us past her hair into the darkness" (Murakami, 1987, 113).

As Yoshio Inoue (1999) points out, Murakami's novels feature a common pattern in which a dead woman is overlaid upon a living woman in front of a male character[3] ; through this feature, the past of the male character seems to control his present. In this case, the girl with four fingers is overlaid onto the narrator's dead girlfriend. Here, a living person exists on the border between this world and the other world, between the present and the past, and between the world above ground and the subterranean world. It is expressed in scenes where the narrator is often found in the bay area, just as Watanabe and Naoko in *Norwegian Wood* walk on the edge of the cape, where the narrator's memory of the four-finger girl is almost always associated with dusk, the time between daytime and night, also an image of the interaction of the living and the dead in Japanese cultural contexts. The past, in its role of controlling the narrator's here and now, can be seen by comparing similar sentences. In chapter 35, while the narrator walks with the girl with four fingers, he feels that "the bloom of summer came home to me after all these years. The tidewater smell, the cry of distant steam whistles, the touch of girls' skin, the lemon scent of hair rinse, the evening breeze, fond hopes, summer dreams" (Murakami, 1987, 114). However, in another chapter, while he is sitting in a reclined seat in a car with his eyes closed, "just listen[ing] to the sound of the waves mingling with the thud of the [tennis] ball being hit back and forth," "a faint sea scent, together with the smell of hot asphalt, reminds" him "of summers past. The warmth of girls' skin, freshly washed button-down shirts, the smell of cigarettes smoked in the changing room at the pool, sudden flashes of things to come, never-ending dreams of summer all. Until one summer (when was it now?) the dreams just didn't come back" (Murakami, 1987, 84). His dead girlfriend committed suicide in the woods next to the tennis court, and the dream of "summers past" is drawn from memories of the time when he began keeping company with her, on August 15. The dream, however, "just didn't come back." Similar memories that integrate death, wind, dusk, water, and the scent of summer come to him as he walks with the girl with four fingers.

The literary origin for this overlap between a woman and other women in an integrated memory may have been in Jules Michelet's *La Sorcière*; the narrator of *Hear the Wind Sing* refers to this book in the context of his dead girlfriend.

[3] Many scholars point out this matter. For instance, Inoue (1999) focuses on the resemblance between female characters' hair and ears.

Michelet, in his work, draws one witch overlapping with many witches. His idea for this technique may stem from his own professional and personal experiences. He wrote *La Sorcière* after losing his wife and his girlfriend. As Jean Giono notes, in Michelet's reading of ancient writings, in his own listening to the voices of the dead as the head of the Historical Section at the National Archives, or his loss of both of his beloved women in swift succession, he could have concluded that there exists an eternal life beyond personal death or that no person ever dies; he might have discovered for himself a unity of human beings in an eternal project described in each human body (Shinoda, 1983, 316). In addition to this overlapping, Michelet also showed interest in waterfronts and the sea as places of life and unity, as seen in his *La Mer*. For these reasons, Michelet and Capote likely significantly influenced Murakami from his earliest published writings. In any case, we can say that the idea of a porous border between the living and the dead is not only found in Murakami's or Japanese thinking. However, we cannot ascribe Michelet's idea to French thought or traditional French culture. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, where the narrator's dead girlfriend is linked to the girl with four fingers, the wind is seen to appeal to the narrator's senses and reminds him of the past, which is sorrowful to him. From this perspective, the wind has a kind of violence in his thinking.[4] Listening to an old record, the narrator hears the lyrics, "Don't think twice, it's all right" (Murakami, 1987, 91). However, they sound to him like "Think of nothing things, think of wind," echoing the last line of Capote's "Shut a Final Door."

Unlike Naoko in *Norwegian Wood*, the narrator in *Hear the Wind Sing* is never dragged by his memory into the world of a dead person. In other words, he never commits suicide. Like Watanabe in *Norwegian Wood* keeps concentrating on writing a novel, the narrator in *Hear the Wind Sing* also writes not to live in the past but *here and now*. This attitude is totally different from that of the fictional American novelist Derek Hartfield in *Hear the Wind Sing*. Influenced by Hartfield and the Rat, the narrator's friend, the narrator begins to write his novel, though some critics believe that Hartfield was the only real influence on him. Hartfield finally jumps off the Empire State Building as the culmination of his philosophy, but the narrator denies this. The narrator writes, "The words 'idea of the universe' by and large equate with the concept of 'barrenness' in Hartfield's usage" (Murakami, 1987, 100). For Hartfield, although human life is eternal, life in this world has no meaning. He asserts, for instance, "I swear to tell the truth. Life is empty" (Murakami, 1987, 100). Additionally, Hartfield says in his novel *The Wells of Mars*, "we are wanderers through time—from the birth of the universe to its death. For us, there is neither birth or death. The winds we are" (Murakami, 1987, 103).[5] In short, to become wind is to run away from an empty

[4] There are other examples of wind being tied to death. For instance, just after her abortion, the girl with four fingers says, "Nothing but bad news. It's like there's always been this terrible blowing overhead" (Murakami, 1987, 117). As for the Rat, "come evening with its cool breezes bringing the barest hint of autumn to the place," when the girl had the operation, and he was depressed, "the Rat would switch off beer to start in on serious quantities of bourbon on the rocks as he fed an endless stream of coins into the counterside jukebox and kicked at the pinball machine until the 'TILT' sign came on and J was more than a little ruffled" (Murakami, 1987, 88–89).

[5] For reference, the Japanese also viewed wind as a soul running in the universe, but this view disappeared around the end of the seventh century. See Sasaki, 2010, 111.

life. For Hartfield, only leaving this world, that is, becoming wind, has value.

To write a novel while following Hartfield's philosophy cannot be a way for the narrator to help himself, as he chooses to live even though the wind always violently reminds him of the sadness of his past. It relates to the influence of his friend, the Rat. Even though the narrator confesses Hartfield's influence on him, Hartfield's thinking only triggers the narrator, who feels empty because he lost his girlfriend. However, the Rat's later influence is profound. The Rat also suffers from the memory of his girlfriend, saying, "Whenever I write something, I'm always reminded of that summer afternoon and the thicket around the tumulus. And here's what I'll be thinking. How great it'd be if I could just write for the cicadas and frogs and spiders, and for the summer grass and the breeze" (Murakami, 1987, 97). The Rat starts writing a novel with the feeling that "it's either write for myself … or write for the cicadas" (Murakami, 1987, 95). The Rat continues, "Whenever I write something, I'm always reminded of that summer afternoon and the thicket around the tumulus. And here's what I'll be thinking. How great it'd be if I could just write for the cicadas and frogs and spiders, and for the summer grass and the breeze" (Murakami, 1987, 97). The Rat confesses, however, "Not one line. Can't write a thing" (Murakami, 1987, 97). Still, he continues writing novels. Here, the Rat is writing not for the cicadas but for himself, as the narrator does later. Additionally, the "summer afternoon and the thicket around the tumulus," which the Rat remarks on, remind the reader of the beginning and end of the time when the narrator spent with his dead girlfriend. A tumulus is where a dead person is buried; the narrator met his girlfriend on a summer afternoon, and she died in a thicket in the woods. Catching the breeze, the Rat took a walk with a girl in the afternoon and came to a place where a dead person was buried:

> A few years back, I went with this girl to Nara. One miserably hot summer afternoon. We strolled on the paths through the hills [for almost three hours], never meeting up with anybody the whole time. Only wild birds that'd take off with a shriek when they saw us coming, or overturned cicadas beating their wings trying to right themselves on the paths between the rice paddies…. After walking a while, we sat down on a smooth, grassy knoll and wiped off the sweat, refreshed by a breeze that blew our way. Spreading out below the knoll was a deep moat and beyond that a mound of an island. The lush, somber green overgrowth of an ancient tumulus (Murakami, 1987, 95–96).[6]

Here, the Rat, who had earlier acknowledged the transience of human existence, saying, "Everybody's gotta die sometime" (Murakami, 1987, 14), realizes that everyone, both the living and the dead, the people above ground and those underground, and everything else, including the wind, insects, and water, is in unity within the universe. The Rat says,

> The author looked at the tumulus in silent awe, training my ears to the breeze that blew across the moat. The feeling that moment was, well, indescribable. No, it wasn't even a feeling. It was like being totally enveloped. What with the cicadas and frogs and spiders and breeze, they all fused into one and were

[6] The author put "for almost three hours" in brackets because the time is mentioned in the original text in Japanese, while it is dropped in the English translation.

drifting through space (Murakami, 1987, 96).

This awareness of an eternal life in which everything and every creature is integrated shows, despite Yomota's and others' assertion of a non-Japaneseness in Murakami's works, that it is a typical Japanese way of thinking, as acknowledged by Seiichi Takeuchi (2007, 207–18), who indicates this element in Murakami's fictions, based on Murakami's understanding of the Japanese Buddhist tradition and a comparison to Western ways of thinking.

In the Rat's mind, there is no hierarchy between life in this world and death, or the wind, as he terms it. He believes that everything and everyone, the living, the dead, plants, and the wind, are united and eternal. Although he accepts mortality, the Rat chooses to live in this world in a way that follows the traditional Japanese way of thinking, where there is no border between this world and the other, where they are in unity. The narrator also chooses to live in this world, accepting the transitory nature of human existence and upholding belief in the eternal life of the human being, as when he says, "we're only one small part of the scheme [evolution of the universe]" (Murakami, 1987, 110), but, unlike Hartfield, he does not commit suicide. Suffering from his memory, that is, from "wind," which reminds him of his sorrowful past, the narrator chooses to remain in this world, following the Rat in writing a novel. Put another way, the narrator chooses not to *become* the wind, in this sense, but to *hear* his memory or the voice of his dead girlfriend; in other words, to hear the wind sing.

Ultimately, the Japaneseness of Murakami's novel is closely bound up with Murakami's private life and the genealogy of Japanese literature. Murakami's father was a Buddhist priest who preached about the lack of a border between the living and the dead and upheld the importance of a holistic view of being. Murakami recalled that in his childhood, he learned about the concepts of life and death in Buddhism through haiku (Japanese seventeen-syllable poem) ceremonies where he was taken by his father (Inoue, 1999, 47). Murakami was certainly heavily influenced by his father in his way of thinking concerning the borderlessness between the living and the dead. However, he probably also had Michelet in mind in writing his novels. In this connection, we can remember that the wind has been used as a trigger for remembrance and as a bridge between husband and wife or between sweethearts living far apart in Japanese literature at least since *Man'yoshyu* (The *Anthology* of *Myriad Leaves*), compiled in 750 CE (Sasaki, 2010, 103–18, 288). In these ways, Murakami's novels are rooted in the Japanese tradition.

II. Capote's "Shut a Final Door"

Turning to Capote's "Shut a Final Door," we find that Walter, the protagonist, also suffers from his memory. It is not a memory of death like that which causes pain to the narrator in *Hear the Wind Sing*; instead, Walter is accepted by no one, and at its bottom of this is his memory of his father's rejection of him, like the girl with four fingers in the novel by Murakami. Walter lives in New York amid the prosperity that followed World War II, but he perpetually feels rejection by and alienation from others. As Helen S. Garson (1992) points out, this experience essentially represents a cycle of psychological violence for Walter: "Margaret, who scrawled lipstick on his photograph, Rosa, who rejected him, Anna, who

called him a female; Miss Casey, his algebra teacher, who failed him, and finally, Mr. Kuhnhardt, who has with him a new protégé, a creature without a face" (39). To escape this endless torture, Walter, recalling his childhood with his mother in Saratoga, goes to that town. However, even there, he cannot escape his memory. Just as a woman overlaps with other women in Murakami's fictional works, and just as a witch overlap with other witches in Michelet's *La Sorcière*, when Walter meets a disabled woman, he seems to see on her face the faces of people who have alienated him, perceiving "Irving, his mother, a man named Bonaparte, Margaret, all those and others: more and more he came to understand experience is a circle of which no moment can be isolated, forgotten" (Capote, 2004, 132). Running from Saratoga, Walter goes to New Orleans, in the heart of the Deep South, and a dead end for travel within the United States. In that city, he stays in a hotel. In this story, Walter suffers from his memory, recalling the sorrow of his human relationships to date, ending by saying, "Think of nothing things, think of wind," with his head covered by a pillow.

With this last phrase, he indicates an intention to forget his sad memories, especially those of his father. As Garson (1992) puts it, "Walter's dream tells of hatred and rejection. Unprotected and alone, he is symbolically castrated by his father, who is the first to victimize him" (39)[7] Like the narrator in *Hear the Wind Sing*, who sees his dead girlfriend in the face of the girl with four fingers, an unknown person who appears in front of Walter, as noted in the passage quoted earlier, is connected by him to the memory of others from his past, symbolized as a circle, with a point of origination in Walter's father, who alienates him. It finds expression in Walter's dream on the train to Saratoga, where he sees cars in a line headed to a funeral hall, where the first car is Walter's father. With the door open, Walter's father invites his son to sit beside him in the car. However, when Walter approaches him to get into the car, his father suddenly shuts the door. "'Daddy,' Walter yells, running forward, and the door slammed shut, mashing off his fingers, and his father, with a great belly laugh, leaned out the window to toss an enormous wreath of roses" (Capote, 2004, 130). Each car going to the funeral holds a person from whom Walter feels alienated, and they do the same thing that Walter's father does. This dream expresses Walter's memory of his life, in which, at first, everybody seems to be friendly but finally is very cold to him. It is presented in the image of the cars heading in a line directly to the funeral hall. Walter feels that his own life shows a repetition of the alienation that began with the estrangement from his father. His dream shows that his father is in the first car and rejects him.

In this way, Walter recognizes his life as enclosed within a small circle. This circle metaphor is repeated in "Shut a Final Door." For instance, in the first chapter, Walter suffers from his human relationships; as he says, "He said you said they said we said round and round. Round and round, like the paddle-paddle ceiling fan wheeling above; turning and turning, stirring stale air ineffectively, it made a watch-tick sound, counted seconds in the silence" (Capote, 2004, 118). In the second chapter as well, Walter says something similar: "Listen, the fan;

[7] Garson suggests that Walter's suffering is due to Capote's poor relationship with his father and mother. In addition, although the author cannot go into details here for reasons of privacy, the dead girls who frequently appear in Murakami's novels, who resemble each other in their hair and ears, are also based on a painful experience with Ms. K.Y.

turning wheels of whisper: he said you said they said we said round and round fast and slow while time recalled itself in endless chatter. Old broken fan breaking silence" (Capote, 2004, 126). The images that appear in these statements suggest that Walter is unable to leave the circle of rejection and alienation. In addition, Walter says in chapter 6, "there was to this network of malice no ending, none whatever" (Capote, 2004, 139), and in chapter 1, "the slow-turning fan; there was no beginning to its action, and no end; it was a circle" (Capote, 2004, 118). In another seven places in this short story, Walter is depicted as perceiving his sorrowful daily life as a circle. Walter is miserable from living within a circle and tries to "think of nothing things, think of wind" to remove himself from the circle.

Walter's impression of his life as a circle can be seen to be an American way of thinking in general, not Walter's or Capote's personal view, as can be seen, for example, in the following sentences: "An eye, the earth, the rings of a tree, everything is a circle, and all circles, Walter said, have a center" (Capote, 2004, 118). This sentence reminds us of the notion of human daily life espoused by the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's impact on American literature, education, and culture has been profound. His essay "Circles" (1841) describes daily human life as a circle. A comparison of the passage of Capote quoted above with the beginning of Emerson's "Circles" is illuminating: "The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end" (Emerson, 1990, 173). It can be seen that both Walter and Emerson remark on eyes, the earth, and the natural world in the same order, regard everything as a circle, and see the circle as having a center, although Walter does not mention that God is at the center.

Other similarities between Walter's thinking and Emerson's can be found. As mentioned earlier, Walter regards conversation as a circle, and so does Emerson. Emerson states, "Conversation is a game of circles. […] When each new speaker strikes a new light, emancipates us from the oppression of the last speaker, to oppress us with the greatness and exclusiveness of his own thought, then yields us to another redeemer, we seem to recover our rights, to become men" (Emerson, 1990, 178). Additionally, Walter stays in a hotel room whose door does not seem to open. The narrator says, "There was a window in the room, but he could not seem to get it open, and he was afraid to call the bell boy (what queer eyes that kid had!), and he was afraid to leave hotel, even a little then he would be lost altogether" (Capote, 2004, 118). Emerson also describes a room that a person enters, whose door does not seem to open, saying, "The last chamber, the last closet, he must feel, was never opened" (Emerson, 1990, 175–176). Moreover, Walter tries to forget his memory in the hotel room, saying, "Think of nothing things, think of wind," and the story ends. Emerson's essay "Circles" concludes with a passage that includes the phrase "lose our sempiternal memory" (Emerson, 1990, 184).

Furthermore, one of the four main themes of Emerson's "Circles," as assessed by Stephen Barnes, concerns living *here and now* and not being obsessed with memory. This theme, Barnes (2001) points out, considers that "life is very much about moving on, casting off, and in many cases, forgetting. Emerson prefers to put the past behind him. There is too much pain, sorrow, and regret to do otherwise." Barnes (2001) continues, "Not only is the past constantly receding as we move ever onward, but so too should our attachment to it. Emerson admits that he would not be who he is without his past, but he also

claims that it is by his past that he is able to live fully in the present, forgetting and moving beyond his previous attachments."

It seems clear that the views of Emerson influenced Walter's mindset; Emerson's tremendous influence on American thought, therefore, seems to make Walter the epitome of Americanness. The author has not found evidence of a direct relation between Emerson's writings and Capote. However, there may have been a connection with Emerson in Capote's mind, as suggested in George Plimpton's Reminiscence of Capote. Plimpton (1998) says, "I remember a wonderful conversation I had with him about the transcendentalists and Emerson and so forth and he was wonderful" (49).

Still, while Emerson uses the image of a circle to express a better life and insists on finding means of expanding the contour of the circle, Walter sees such circles as walls surrounding his suffering of daily life, which he cannot escape from. The phrase "Lose our sempiternal memory" at the end of Emerson's "Circles" comes in the following context: "The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory, and to do something without knowing how or why; in short, to draw a new circle" (Emerson, 1990, 184). To "lose our sempiternal memory," one should live in *here and now*. Emerson wrote "Circles" after he lost his wife, just as Murakami and Michelet wrote their books after they lost the women they loved. [8] As Barnes (2001) states, Emerson, using the metaphor of a circle, insists that a person should live in *the here and now*, even while burdened with a sad memory. Walter also becomes absorbed in dancing to music for no reason, [9] and then, when he stops dancing, he suddenly hears a strange voice on the phone, which is, as Kenneth T. Reed (1981) points out, "in the gruesome short story 'Shut a Final Door' where the phantom telephone caller who plagues Walter Ranney is a part of Ranney himself," his own voice, or that of his memory. Basically, unlike the words of Emerson quoted earlier, Walter, who is not "surprised out of" his "propriety" nor is doing "something without knowing how or why," simply seeks to forget his bad memories, covering his head with a pillow. This reflects his desperation, where he does not try to "draw a new circle" (Capote, 2004, 125). If a person does so, as Emerson writes, he or she can realize "one man's justice is another's injustice; one man's beauty, another's ugliness; one man's wisdom, another's folly; as one beholds the same objects from a higher point" (Emerson, 1990, 180). Walter, who does not seek to draw a new circle, thinks that his own justice is the same as another's, believes that everyone is his enemy, and hates his father. Walter cannot "behold the same objects from a higher point." Regarding a room that seems not to be open, Emerson regards it as a room where "there is always a residuum unknown, unanalyzable" and "that is, every man believes that he has a greater possibility" (Emerson, 1990, 176), while Walter just becomes desperate about his own life in the room. As Garson (1992) comments on this passage, "Walter Ranney, having fled to a 'town of strangers,' can go no further. Although he has 'traveled to the end,' that is, the end of his own personal road, there is to be no escape from the fear that has become his constant

[8] Again, although the author cannot go into details here for privacy reasons, Murakami lost his girlfriend before writing the novel.

[9] In Murakami's novel *Dance, Dance, Dance*, the protagonist dances to music without any reason to forget his sad memory.

companion. Like the ceiling fan he watches on a hot August night, in a hotel room in New Orleans, 'there was no beginning … and no end'" (33).

Walter cannot escape his circle and is surrounded by a wall of his own negative memories, which begin with the memory of his father. "Think of nothing things" and "think of wind" means forgetting his sad memories. From this perspective, the idea of the wind in "Shut a Final Door" signifies dissociation, following Emerson's way of thinking as a representative American philosopher. In contrast, Murakami's concept of wind signifies association, following the Japanese tradition.

Conclusion

Hear the Wind Sing, Murakami's first novel, lays before the reader two types of human existence as a universal means of being. One of these, proposed by Hartfield, is that the being that is possible in this world is inferior to being in the universe as a whole, and as a result, Hartfield commits suicide. The other, proposed by the Rat, gives an acceptance of life's brevity, in which every human being will die, where the dead, the living, and nature, including the wind, are nonetheless in unity. For this reason, the Rat continues living. The narrator also continues living, just like the Rat. The narrator, who appears to be absorbed in Western culture, nevertheless follows a Japanese way of thinking, which *Hear the Wind Sing* presents to the reader. Capote's "Shut a Final Door," whose last phrase, "Think of nothing things, think of wind," was the source for the title of Murakami's *Hear the Wind Sing*, presents a person who lives life based on Emerson's "Circles" but who is not saved by Emerson's wisdom. These are the foundational differences between the two works.

However, the ideas they present in the background, or those of Rat and Emerson, unexpectedly have a great deal of similarity. There are 51 references to the wind in Emerson's essays, and in his writings, thinking of the wind often means listening to the voice of nature and understanding the way that all people and all things are a unity,[10] which resembles the Rat's Japanese way of thinking. In "Shut a Final Door," Anna, one of Walter's girlfriends, suggests to him that a human being is "eternal and in a unity with the universe" (Capote, 2004, 125). Walter, however, does not accept this way of thinking. The narrator in Murakami's novel and Walter in Capote's short story have a similar view of the world and way of thinking, extending beyond the East and West. The differences between them are not constrained to the concept of Japaneseness and Americanness but to the protagonists' attitudes toward life and association or dissociation. That is why their novels circulate in the world beyond their socio-cultural differences in their birthplaces.

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[10] The author searched Emerson's texts in Ralph Waldo Emerson Texts (n.d.).

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