

Time, Body, and Non-Japanese in Murakami's Works: From the Viewpoint of Japanese Modernisation

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This paper examines the symbolic and cultural significance of the 'time' and the depiction of the body as a machine and as an accessory in Murakami's novels, in terms of his reaction to post-modern Japanese society.

In the process of modernization, the Japanese experienced two noteworthy changes in the history of time: one was the adoption of the Julian calendar in 1873, and the other was the spread of quartz clocks in the early 1970s. Especially, regarding quartz clocks, the Japanese watchmakers, such as Seiko and Citizen, were proud of their advanced technology, and their defeat of Switzerland and America in this respect. In 1969, the first quartz wristwatch, Seiko Astron, went on sale. David Landes, the author of *Revolution in Time* (1983), explains that the application of quartz crystal was remarkable development in the history of clocks.

Murakami's *A Wild Sheep Chase* is set in 1978, and lots of different types of clocks appear in the novel; a wristwatch, an hourglass, a digital clock, an electric clock, a cuckoo clock, a divers' watch, a travel watch and a grandfather clock. Most of the characters wear a wristwatch, and often check the time. After the establishment of Time Day in 1920, the idea of time management widely permeated Japanese modern society. However, the spread of wristwatches had a different meaning in post-modern Japanese society. In *Histoire du Temps* (1983), Jacques Attali says, "a wristwatch, which had been just an ornament in the 19th century, became a common prosthesis in this century." He specified a wristwatch as the first cyborg device. So to speak, the wristwatch was the first cybernetic organism, as if it was buried in the human body.

A wristwatch amazingly changed the idea of body. In Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, the main character, Watanabe recognizes a spring in his body, and gives it thirty-six twists a day. In another work, *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, a wind-up bird is a nickname of Okada, the main character, and he winds the world's spring. Both of

them have the sense of the body like a machine. The view of the body was originally introduced to Japanese society, with the manufacture of large mirrors and photographic technology after the 1840's. In addition, the Japanese body, including facial expression and movement, was remodelled in the process of modernization, idealizing Western styles.

On the other hand, the progress of medical science clarified that organs of the body were changeable, like parts of the machine. Nowadays, the difference between the skin and the clothes is very ambiguous. In particular for the youth, it is very common that the body is changed and processed by accessory and orthopaedic operations. They can easily change their faces by cosmetic surgery, inject silicone into breast, tattoo their arms, dye their black hair, and have their body pierced.

In *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, Murakami explains in detail how a Mongolian officer skins a Japanese agent alive to make him confess. After that, his skin is spread out to dry like a sheet. The skin of the torso is like clothes, even with the nipples instead of buttons. Murakami visited Mongolia in 1994 to collect data for the novel. However, the skinning scene seems to be very exaggerated. The cruelty of the Mongolian may be based on ignorance or prejudice towards people in Mongolia. Needless to say, the Mongolian are physically different from the Japanese. That is, such differences help readers accept the incomprehensible character of foreigners and their unbelievable behaviour.

Murakami hardly ever depicts characters from Asia. The exception is a Chinese bartender named J, in his early works such as *Pinball, 1973* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*. On the other hand, Murakami grew up under the influence of American culture after the Second World War. He often alludes to the names of American popular music and novels in his works. Moreover, he is enthusiastic about running in some major road races such as the Boston Marathon and the New York Marathon. Conversely, he rarely runs road races in Japan. That is, not only the concept of the body, but also his literary world he models the idea of the West, although he is a representative author of post-modern Japanese literature.