

PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC

Faculty of Arts

Department of Asian Studies

BACHELOR'S THESIS

Female Characters in Haruki Murakami's "Trilogy of the Rat"

Olomouc 2022

Supervisor:

Balázs Horváth

Mgr. Sylva Martinásková, Ph.D

I declare I have written my bachelor thesis independently under the guidance of my supervisor and that I used only sources listed in the bibliography.

Annotation

The objective of this thesis is to analyze the female characters in *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *A Wild Sheep Chase* by Murakami Haruki and to add to the growing body of literature on the author. Focusing on questions of difference and depiction, we went through the novels one by one providing examples and close reading of parts of the text. In the end, we found that female characters in these works adopt a secondary role and that their depiction is exclusionary.

Keywords: Haruki Murakami, Japanese literature, Japan, fiction, female characters, Rat Trilogy

Number of pages: 39

Number of characters: 67 755

Number of sources: 13

I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Sylva Martinásková, Ph.D for her help, counsel, and patience.

Table of Contents

Annotation.....	3
Introduction.....	7
1 Haruki Murakami's Life and Writing Style.....	8
2 The Narrator.....	11
3 Women in <i>Hear the Wind Sing</i>	12
3.1 Women from the Past.....	12
3.2 Women from the Radio.....	14
3.3 The Nine-fingered Girl.....	15
4 <i>Pinball, 1973</i>	18
5 <i>A Wild Sheep Chase</i>	21
5.1 Power and its Forms.....	21
5.2 Histories of Men and Women.....	23
5.3 Women in <i>A Wild Sheep Chase</i>	25
5.3.1 The Girl with a Name Forgotten.....	26
5.3.2 Different Women, Different Treatment.....	28
5.3.3 The Rat's Former Girlfriend.....	29
6 Women and the Other World.....	32
Conclusion.....	35
Resumé.....	37
Bibliography.....	38

Editorial Note

For transliteration of Japanese names and expressions, this paper uses Hepburn romanization. Japanese names are not in their traditional order. The paper here uses the usual English order of names; that is, first names first, last names last.

Introduction

Haruki Murakami's popularity gave way to a rich criticism of his oeuvre both within and without Japan. The criticism ranges from psychoanalytic—be it Freudian, Lacanian, or Jungian—to the exploration of the rich symbolism and imagery present in his fiction. However, his work has also gathered attention for his depiction of female characters.

This paper adds to the body of critical literature that argues that the portrayal of women in Murakami's fiction is problematic. The scope of this paper is Murakami's first three published books: *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *A Wild Sheep Chase*. They are commonly referred to as the "Rat Trilogy" or the "Trilogy of the Rat."

The main goal of this work is to show the ways in which women in the Rat Trilogy are secondary or complementary to the male characters, and that they only constitute the background or the setting of the given novels. This is done by first grouping the female characters and then providing a close reading of crucial parts of the texts.

This thesis is comprised of four parts. In the first part, we introduce the author, Haruki Murakami, in broad strokes. We touch upon the essential events in his life, his reception, and some of his works. In the second part, we briefly introduce the protagonist of the Rat Trilogy and his typical characteristics. The third part is the analysis itself. Here we examine each novel in separate chapters. These chapters begin with a short introduction to the plot of the given novel and continue with the analysis of the female characters. The analysis concentrates on the grouping of female characters, and their differences to male ones. We also analyze the roles these women take in the narrative of the given novels and the positions that they occupy in this fictional world. The last part examines women in the Rat Trilogy that seem to have similar otherworldly characteristics and also examines the role that these women have in the stories that unfold in the novels.

1 Haruki Murakami's Life and Writing Style

Haruki Murakami was born in Kyōto in 1949. He is considered one of the most important writers of the end of the 20th century. Even though his first novel, *Hear the Wind Sing*, was successful, critical success came with his third book, *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Albeit, only with the publication of *Norwegian Wood* he managed to achieve a major breakthrough, both nationally and internationally.

His body of work is deemed to be postmodern. A great example of this is *A Wild Sheep Chase* where he plays with the structure of the formulaic detective story.¹ Furthermore, his books have been described as surrealist together with having the elements of magical realism.

Growing up, Murakami found joy in reading the likes of Dostoyevsky, Kafka, and Balzac. As a consequence their influence is visible in his works. In his first two novels—*Hear the Wind Sing* and *Pinball, 1973*—the story is enclosed in a dark, brooding, and lost atmosphere which can invoke similar feelings as in the works of Kafka.

In addition to the influence of European writers in his work we can also see a cultural mark of the United States of America (US). Not only the literature of the US, but also its politics and pop culture. He quotes lyrics of pop songs, and many of his characters listen to famous bands from the US. A more subtle example² of US influence on his work is in *Pinball, 1973* where he makes a quip at president Richard Nixon:

You could probably erect bronze statues of every American president (assuming you are willing to include Richard Nixon) with the coins you will lose, while your lost time is irreplaceable.³

Of course, Murakami's Japanese audience would not understand this joke unless they are familiar with Nixon's presidency. But it is not unusual for Murakami's books to be less available for the Japanese readership for the benefit of the American.⁴ Despite his love for reading, he could not imagine himself as a writer, which in turn stopped him from trying out writing in his teenage years and twenties.⁵ Instead, he found a passion

1 Strecher, "Beyond "Pure" Literature," 360–361.

2 Chozick, "DE-EXOTICIZING HARUKI MURAKAMI'S RECEPTION," 63.

3 Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, 21.

4 Chozick, "DE-EXOTICIZING HARUKI MURAKAMI'S RECEPTION," 63.

5 Murakami, "Jazz Messenger."

for music. So much so that after finishing his studies at Waseda University he opened a jazz club in Tōkyō.⁶ And his passion for music manifests itself, for example, in the “Trilogy of the Rat” where the nameless main character and his friend keep returning to a jazz bar. Additionally, it can be seen in other supporting characters having jobs as record store clerks. However, probably the most visible evidence of his love for music is the constant reoccurrence of it. Be it a character, a place, or even a metaphor, in some shape or form, we can be sure to find music in his novels.

As with any other artist, he and his works have been put under scrutiny. A common criticism of Haruki Murakami is his “non-Japanese” style. Or as Kenzaburō Ōe, author and Nobel laureate, famously put it: “[Haruki Murakami] writes in Japanese, but his writing is not really Japanese. If you translate it into American English, it can be read very naturally in New York.”⁷ This claim is not unfounded. Murakami used to translate the manuscripts that he had written in English to Japanese thus creating a unique style for himself.⁸ This brought his language further away from the literary Japanese that we find in the likes of Kenzaburō Ōe. Even though the Japanese language does not require the use of pronouns when it is clear of what or of who it is being talked, in Murakami’s books we find plenty of them.⁹ This and his common usage of phrases that are translated to Japanese makes his language sound “non-Japanese” making Ōe’s claim warranted.

The archetypical Murakami protagonist is the bored and disinterested narrator. He, aside from some of his short stories it is always a he, goes on journeys. Murakami’s fictional world also contains many recurring themes and objects. Places that often appear in his works are wells and tunnels that usually lead to unusual locations. Sometimes characters communicate to these strange places through a phone. Cats become symbolic animals in the imagery of his books.

Apart from his fictional works Murakami wrote several non-fiction books as well. An example of this is *Underground* which is made up of a series of interviews conducted by Murakami with people who were affected by the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō Tokyō subway attack. In this work, he experiments with literary journalism.

6 Murakami, “Jazz Messenger.”

7 Ishiguro and Oe, “The Novelist in Today’s World,” 118.

8 Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, xiv.

9 Strecher, “Beyond “Pure” Literature,” 356.

In this chapter we saw a critically acclaimed author whose body of work contains many constants. One of them is his usage of language, his “non-Japanese” style, which makes his writing more accessible to international audiences. His interests, like music, are also part of these constants. Many motives and themes seem to reappear in his works, be it his archetypical protagonist, wells, or cats. However, in the end, we hope that the female characters as they are in the Trilogy of the Rat will not remain constant in his works.

2 The Narrator

It is difficult to speak of Haruki Murakami's first three novels without ever mentioning the protagonist. It is also ironic to begin an analysis of female characters by first talking about a man. In our case, however, this is unavoidable. After all, the story in the novels that we are examining is about him and his journeys.

The first difficulty that we encounter when talking about the protagonist of the Trilogy of the Rat (the first three novels' collective name) is that he does not have a name. In the Japanese version of the novels he refers to himself with the first person pronoun "boku." Because of this, in many critical texts he is referred to as "Boku" as well. In this text, however, we prefer the naming: the "Narrator."

Who is this Narrator then? What becomes clear from the start is that he is disinterested and passive towards the world that surrounds him. We can see this, for example, in *Hear the Wind Sing* where it seems that nothing motivates him. Event happens after event and he lets all of them transpire. He does not stand in the way. Yet sometimes a manic desire befalls him like in *Pinball, 1973* where for a time he gets completely immersed in his search for a pinball machine. Sometimes he is forced to search; in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, he has no option but to go on a quest for a special sheep. His attitude towards events, however, still remains disenchanted.

The Narrator's interactions with others seem to be similarly indifferent. Most of the conversations that he has almost as if emanate boredom. However, throughout his quests he also makes genuine connections. Here we can mention the Nine-fingered Girl from *Hear the Wind Sing*, for example, even though their relationship started out with difficulties.

His quests or journeys are simple. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, his journey is the relationship that he develops with a girl who he meets at his friend's bar. In *Pinball, 1973*, as mentioned above, he goes on a search for a pinball machine. It is a special pinball machine on which the Narrator used to play with his late girlfriend. Before his search, however, he courses through places about which his late girlfriend used to tell stories. In *A Wild Sheep Chase*, as the title of this novel suggests, the Narrator is forced to go on a quest to find a special sheep. Later, however, he finds out that the true aim of his search

was to find his friend, the Rat. Here we see a pattern in the Rat Trilogy, especially in *Pinball, 1973* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*. The Narrator always goes on quests to find someone or something that he has lost. What is of note as well is that he does not change at the end of his journeys. From begin to end he remains the same.

The Narrator, simply put, chooses to live a measured life. He tries his best not to fall into extremes. Along the way he also tries to be nice. However, towards some things and some people he seems to turn a blind eye and chooses not to notice their difficulties.

3 Women in *Hear the Wind Sing*

Broadly speaking, women in *Hear the Wind Sing* can be put into three groups. First, we have the girl with nine fingers. This novel is centered around the relationship between her and the protagonist, that is, the Narrator. Second, there are the women from the Narrator's past. They live in the Narrator's memories. Third, we have two sisters who appear for a brief period in the novel. There is no direct relationship between them and the Narrator. He hears them through the radio.

Some women in the novel do not fit into any of the above groups. They are the women who are mentioned but not much is said about them, for example, the Narrator's grandmother in the beginning of the novel; or who are, along with men, solely part of the setting of certain scenes.

3.1 Women from the Past

Our examination begins with female characters who constitute a part of the Narrator's memories. This means that they are not found in the ongoing plot of the novel. Rather they are introduced to us in a later chapter where the Narrator shares his memories, or at the very least his recollections thereof, of the three girls with whom he has slept so far.

The first of these girls is the Narrator's classmate. Their relationship is presented as a typical high school love: both of them young and believing that they have found true love. His only memory of her is of an evening when they made love. That evening can be summarized by three words: bushes, where the act happened; clothes, which he remembers in great detail; and the newspaper, on which the act happened. Other than these he does not remember anything about her. They broke up after graduation. It is sudden and its reason so trivial that the Narrator does not even remember it.

The second girl from the Narrator's past is a hippie. They meet during the antiwar demonstrations at Shinjuku station. She is penniless and has no place to go; and even if she wanted to she would not be able to because the night they meet the protests are so violent that no public transportation is in service. The Narrator wants to help her out, although he cannot tell why. He invites her to his apartment. There they spend the next

week in a routine. Since the Narrator has already prefaced the girls' introduction with the fact that they are the women with whom he slept so far, it is appropriate to mention that sex is part of this routine. One day, however, she suddenly leaves taking hers and some of the Narrator's stuff and leaving behind a note that says: "Asshole."¹⁰

The third girl from the Narrator's past is at the library when they first meet. There is not much time spent on her in the chapter where the Narrator talks about his past relationships. What is revealed to us is that she has committed suicide. However, moving forward, much more time and attention is paid on the third girl. The Narrator sporadically turns back to her.

In the remaining sections about the third girl from the Narrator's past he reveals three things which are somewhat loosely connected to her: a quote, his *raison d'être*, and the nature of memories.

The first is a quote. The Narrator reads it in a book about the witch hunts by a French author half a month after the girl's death. Unlike Derek Hartfield and his books, however, the French author, Jules Michelet, and his work, *La Sorcière*, where the Narrator finds the quote, are not fictional. The quote under consideration is connected to the girl in two ways. First and foremost, it relates to her studies since she was a French literature major. Second, the content of the quote itself relates to her death. It speaks of a prosecutor who is feared so much by witches that rather than getting caught by him they have committed suicide. However, it seems that these two similarities to his third girlfriend are accidental for the Narrator. He rather finds the prosecutor's phrase "So well do I deal out judgements"¹¹ much more amusing and memorable.

The second is his *raison d'être*. In the section containing it the Narrator remembers the time when the girl made him think about his life's purpose or his reason to live. It reminds him of a time when he tried to convert his life into numbers. This means that he was counting certain events or moments in his life, for example, the number of cigarettes that he has smoked or the number of people that have boarded on a train. The reason he wanted to do this is to be able to express something to others because that might prove that he exists. Here we see the desire to communicate and its inevitable failure on the part of the Narrator. This theme is a recurring one in *Hear the Wind Sing*.

¹⁰ Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, 48.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 53.

This section ends with the Narrator remembering how many cigarettes he has smoked until the girl's death.

The third is the nature of memories. More precisely the memories of those who die young. The Narrator laments that they stay forever young in our memories. Even though he remembers certain things about the girl he can hardly picture what she looked like. He has a photo of her when she was 14 years old. According to the Narrator that was the best year of her life. However, that too vanished in moments. The Narrator does not know the reason why the girl has committed suicide, but he thinks that nor did the girl.

What role do these women play for the Narrator then? What is their function in the narrative? Of course, all three of them are connected to him sexually. However, if we take a closer look we can find another commonality between these relationships. All of them end suddenly and without any reason for the Narrator. These past meaningless relationships develop his numb stance towards any other future relationship.

3.2 Women from the Radio

In *Hear the Wind Sing* there is a radio station called NEB Radio. Through this station the Narrator indirectly interacts with two women. The radio host of this station calls the Narrator one day. Apparently, a girl called in and wanted to dedicate a song to him. To see if the Narrator can guess from whom is the dedication the radio host asks him if he can remember a girl who gave him a record during their school days. Although with much difficulty, he remembers an event where one of his former classmates lost her contact lenses. The Narrator helped her find it and as a gift of gratitude she lent him a record. Unfortunately, the Narrator lost it.

The Narrator is prompted by the call from the radio to go and give back the record to the girl. The following day he decides to go to a music store, so that he can buy the same record that he has lost. With the record bought, the Narrator is trying to find his former classmate. This is where difficulties arise for him. He tries phoning in to their old school office thinking that they might know something about her, but he has no luck there. Then he calls his former classmates. None of them know anything about the girl. The Narrator also visits their high school office. Here he finds out that the girl was attending college, so he calls there. At the college, however, they say that she dropped out for

health concerns. This, the Narrator finds strange. Why would she drop out of college instead of taking a leave of absence? The reason for this is revealed later in the novel.

Toward the end of *Hear the Wind Sing* we are once again listening to NEB Radio. This time, however, the radio host reads a letter. It was from a sick girl who is one of the fans of the radio. The letter says that her sister dropped out of university, so that she can be with her. From this we know that the girl, the former classmate that the Narrator was searching for, is with her sister at the hospital.

At first it may seem that the sisters do not have much significance for the story. However, on a closer look it is clear that, they too, had a function. That was to break the Narrator's passivity. And, as we will see, they were not the only ones.

3.3 The Nine-fingered Girl

The Narrator and the Nine-fingered Girl meet for the first time after a night at J's bar. The day after, the girl wakes up naked and oblivious to what has happened. The Narrator is laying next to her and watching her. For obvious reasons, the Nine-fingered Girl is antagonistic towards the Narrator. She starts asking questions from the Narrator about last night.

The Narrator tells her that he found her in the restroom of J's bar. She drank so much that she was laying there unconscious and unable to walk properly. After finding her purse and figuring out where she was living, the Narrator and the Rat brought the girl back to her apartment. The Narrator decided to stay with her because of a past experience of his friend dying under similar circumstances.

The Nine-fingered Girl's unsympathetic attitude towards the Narrator makes him frustrated. However, what is of notice is that the girl is concerned with what she might have said the night before. Of course, only later we find out that she has been pregnant at that time.

The second time the Narrator and the Nine-fingered Girl meet is at a music store where the girl works. The Narrator is trying to buy some records for one of his ex-classmates and for the Rat. At this time, the girl without a little finger is still furious and mad at the

Narrator. So much so, that when the Narrator tries to invite her for dinner she not only declines but also expresses her discontent for him.

The turning point in their relationship occurs after these two unfortunate meetings. One day the Nine-fingered Girl calls the Narrator to apologize for the mean things that she said. Afterwards, the girl invites the Narrator for a drink to J's bar. He accepts both the apology and the invitation. Although, to the former his reaction is indifferent.

The girl with nine fingers has been already waiting for the Narrator when he arrives at J's bar. Their conversation at J's bar is where we discover two things. First, the girl's relationship to her family and the reason behind her having only four fingers on her left hand. At first she is reluctant to talk about her family but soon she opened up. Her father was dead for quite some time. With her mother she only communicates yearly once on New Year's Eve through letters. Her twin sister as well lives miles away from her and they were hardly in touch.

Taking a step back, we can notice what the relationship between the Narrator and the Nine-fingered Girl tells us about them. First and foremost, we can see that in their relationship it is the girl who goes through change. From the beginning of *Hear the Wind Sing* all the way to its end, the Narrator remains static. His views and attitude towards the world do not change. Even when he gets into a delicate situation, like the one at the start of his relationship with the girl, he does not try to explain himself. He believes that what he does is the right thing to do. The Nine-fingered Girl, on the other hand, has to go through an internal change. She has to realize herself that the Narrator is different than what he at first seems to be.

Women in *Hear the Wind Sing* have a special role in the narrative of the story. They are the ones through which we get to know the Narrator and the ones that push him along the narrative. His past relationships with the three women that we analyzed in the section "Women from the Past" seem to be the cause that made him inexpressive in his relationships of the present. The women that we meet on the radio take up a double role. They push the Narrator out of his passivity and it is thanks to them that he can once again meet with the Nine-fingered Girl. They also show the reader his "niceness," that he is willing to give back what he got even after a long time. This "niceness" is what he

fails to prove to the Nine-fingered Girl when they first meet. Lastly, the Nine-fingered Girl when she changes her opinion of the Narrator proves to him what he knew from the beginning of the novel: that he is a “nice guy.”

4 *Pinball, 1973*

The second book in the Rat Trilogy, *Pinball, 1973*, takes place three years after the events of *Hear the Wind Sing*. After the death of his girlfriend, Naoko, the Narrator is trying to cope not only with his sense of loss but also with the disappearance of his friend, the Rat. Before long, he meets “the Twins” in a similar way to how he encounters the Nine-fingered Girl in *Hear the Wind Sing*. The difference being that this time the Narrator wakes up next to the Twins after he got drunk. For the Narrator the Twins look identical, even though, the Twins claim it to be otherwise. He asks for their names but the Twins insist that the Narrator should be the one who gives each of them a name. Consequently, the Narrator decides to call one of them “208” and the other “209” due to their T-shirts having these numbers.

Soon, the Narrator starts a translation company with one of his friends. There they hire a young woman as an assistant. The Narrator spends most of his time either in the company, or with the Twins until midway of the book. There he suddenly remembers the pinball machine on which he used to play at J’s bar. Not long after, his vivid memories of pinball come forth and he decides to look for this machine.

Following a long search, the Narrator finally finds the pinball machine at an abandoned warehouse. There, surprisingly, he does not play pinball on the machine, rather he has a romantic conversation with it. What we would not expect is that the pinball machine talks back to him. The Narrator’s journey soon after ends. He meets up with the Twins for a final time and accompanies them to a bus station where they say their last farewells.

While the Narrator is searching for the pinball machine, Rat is on a journey of his own. In contrast with the Narrator, his journey is much more melancholic and brooding. Rat is searching for a way out of the town where he lived most of his life. He feels as if he cannot separate one day from the other, so he wanders around the town, goes to J’s bar or visits the woman he is seeing. Although with difficulties, Rat finally gathers up the courage to tell J that he is going out of town and that he might not even come back. Rat

leaves town but it pains him that he was not able to tell his girlfriend that he is going away.

In *Pinball, 1973*, we can observe a commonality between the female characters with whom the Narrator interacts. That is, that they are caretakers. Caretakers in a sense that they tend the spaces in which the Narrator lives or works. These spaces can be rooms or the kitchen of his company or his apartment. In addition, these women can be caretakers in a sense that they make food and prepare drinks for the Narrator. For instance, at the time when the Narrator is describing his company we see that the Narrator's assistant is the only one who takes care of the rooms or makes drinks or "set[s] out traps for the cockroaches."¹² Once she even darns the Narrator's sweater.

Similarly, the Twins tend the Narrator's apartment. They, however, not only keep the rooms in order but also prepare food and drinks for him. Moreover, the Twins seem to know the apartment better than the Narrator himself. We see this when a repairman from a phone company arrives at the Narrator's apartment to replace the switch panel. The Narrator has no clue where the switch panel could be. When the repairman, however, meets the Twins, they can immediately tell him where it is. The Twins even considered it to be obvious, for the Narrator's surprise.

The third example of female characters being caretakers is in the Narrator's reminiscence of his college years. At the dormitory where he used to live no one had a phone. For this reason, the only way for someone to reach the students was calling a payphone near the dormitory. However, they never knew who was calling, so at times when they picked up the phone they had to search for the actual call recipient. Because of this, the Narrator often had to go to a certain long-haired girl's door in order to give her the phone. Once the long-haired girl visits the Narrator, she sees that his room is bare and empty. She decides to make tea for themselves and as a thank-you gift leaves the box of teas, that she brought with her, at the Narrator's place since the next day she has to go away.

What is of notice in these examples is the Narrator's negligence to care for spaces. He rather leaves these spaces for others to look out for them. In this case for women. However, his negligence only comes from his passivity to the world around him. He is

¹² Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, 24.

not acting because he hears the assistant tell him that she does not mind darning his sweater, and because he sees that the Twins do not mind cleaning his apartment. He is inactive because others have already acted for him.

In contrast, while women are taking care of spaces, both the Narrator and the Rat can go on their own journey. The protagonist is prompted by the sudden reappearance of his intense passion for pinball to go on a quest for a rare and special pinball machine. Rat, in the meantime, is trying to escape the monotonous days that the town brings for him.

If we take into consideration the observations above, that is: (1) women are taking care of spaces and (2) men are going on journeys, then this creates an interesting context for a conversation between the Narrator and his assistant in chapter 12. During dinner at a restaurant, to where the assistant invited the Narrator, she expresses her concerns and worries about her future. Their conversation goes:

“But I’m only twenty,” she went on. “I don’t want to end up this way.”

We were quiet as the waiter laid out the food.

“You’re still young,” I said after he had left. “You’ll fall in love, get married. Things will change one after another.”

“No, nothing will change,” she whispered, deftly removing her lobster’s shell with her knife and fork. “No one will fall in love with me. I’ll be darning sweaters and setting out crummy cockroach traps until I die.”

I sighed. I felt, all of a sudden, that I’d aged several years.

“Look, you’re cute and charming, and you’ve got long legs and a sharp mind. You can even shell lobsters. Things will go fine.”¹³

What we can see here is a double standard. Both the Narrator and Rat could escape every-day life for a while. Be it for a trivial reason, such as the Narrator’s desire to find a rare pinball machine, or something seemingly more profound, like Rat’s search for an escape from the mundane and monotonous days in the town. Meanwhile, all the assistant has to do, says the Narrator, is to wait.

¹³ Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, 78.

5 *A Wild Sheep Chase*

A Wild Sheep Chase is the third book in the Trilogy of the Rat. First published in 1982, this is Haruki Murakami's first novel that he wrote as a full-time writer. The story of *A Wild Sheep Chase* follows the Narrator—the same Narrator as in the preceding two novels—on a quest to find a sheep. However, this sheep is a special one. It has a star-shaped mark and, supposedly, whoever is possessed by this sheep gains control of immense power. That is why one day a mysterious figure appears at the Narrator and his friend's company. He claims to be the secretary of a powerful right-wing political figure called the Boss. The secretary pressures the Narrator to go and find this sheep. Thus, the quest for the sheep begins.

5.1 Power and its Forms

Many critics have identified the depiction of a different form of power in Haruki Murakami's fiction. Kawakami, for example, in "The Unfinished Cartography" argues that the power represented in Murakami's fiction is in contrast with the power that appears in typical *junbungaku*¹⁴ narratives. Power in *junbungaku* is visible and delineated. This means that authority can be located and that for those who want to fight against it they can point towards an enemy. This becomes problematic in Murakami's fiction. The power depicted in his works is elusive and unidentifiable.¹⁵ Authority cannot be pinpointed because it no longer resides in a singular position. In *A Wild Sheep Chase* the invisibility of power is exemplified by the figure of the Boss and the Narrator's quest for the Sheep. The Boss is a shadowy figure who controls much of Japanese media from behind. His character represents the hidden nature of power by being out of sight of the public who consumes the media and its products controlled by him. The Narrator's quest represents the individual's blindness to power. The Narrator sets out to find a special sheep and only later he realizes that his goal was not to find the sheep but his friend, the Rat, so that he can be installed to the top of a new power structure.

¹⁴ High or pure literature.

¹⁵ Kawakami, "The Unfinished Cartography," 309–310.

While power in the Trilogy of the Rat is elusive, it has certain features that are of importance to our analysis. By taking a closer look at positions of power, we can identify one of power's special characteristics: it is patriarchal. In the Trilogy of the Rat, we can organize these positions of power into three distinct categories: (1) big business, (2) small business, and (3) knowledge.

Firstly, we have big business. This category is defined by lucrative adventures that allowed its participants to get hold of great amounts of wealth and by extension to political power. Here we find the Boss and his secretary from *A Wild Sheep Chase* and the Rat's father from *Hear the Wind Sing*. As mentioned above the Boss controls Japanese media. He managed to gain control of it thanks to the war between China and Japan. By capitalizing on this war, he amassed a fortune large enough to become influential in post-war economics, politics, and media. His secretary is essentially an extension to his power. He tries to find the Boss' successor. The Rat's father belongs to this category as well. In *Hear the Wind Sing*, he is introduced to us as a businessman who gained much of his wealth on Japan's wars, namely, the Second World War—especially when it spread to the South Pacific—and the Korean War.

Secondly, we have small business. Here we find the proprietors of small businesses whose political influence is minor compared to the category mentioned above. The Narrator, his friend, and J belong here. All three of them are the owners of some kind of an establishment. The Narrator and his friend are the proprietors of a copywriter company and J is the owner of a bar.

Lastly, we have a category where we find characters who are the keepers of knowledge. This knowledge can be of history or of some type of an obscurity. We are going to examine in depth the former in the following section so here we focus only on the latter. In the Trilogy of the Rat, we find two characters that possess highly specific knowledge: the Sheep Professor in *A Wild Sheep Chase*, who is an expert on sheep, and a university lecturer in *Pinball, 1973*, who has an unusual encyclopedic knowledge of pinball machines.

We said that power in Murakami's fiction is elusive. This elusiveness, however, has its limits. When we look at the positions of power, we can see that they are restricted to

men. Women are not close to sites of power and seem to be limited to secondary or complementary positions—mostly by being employees.

In summary, we saw that in the Trilogy of the Rat men are in power and we saw certain positions which grant power to them. The same, however, cannot be said about the female characters. They mostly take up posts that are below the positions that we have mentioned here. Even if they wanted to change their place, they would run into difficulties.¹⁶

5.2 Histories of Men and Women

Postmodernism gave birth to historiographic metafiction. This genre is a form of theoretical fiction that problematizes the division between historiography and fiction and tries to bring them closer together. Not to make history into fiction, nor fiction into reality but to show that the two use and employ similar methods. In this way, it tries to contest history's claim that it is more objective and more "real" than fiction.¹⁷ One could also argue that historiographic metafiction is trying to return to the past since the division between history and literature is a recent invention. It is only after the 19th century that literature and history have become separate subjects.¹⁸

Historiographic metafiction's methods are various. It can bring the subject to the foreground, which is usually hidden behind grammatical features which in turn make the text seem objective.¹⁹ While, in general, history writing tries to hide or make the narrator disappear, historiographic metafiction deliberately makes the narrator's presence visible and at times even intrusive. This way it questions the text's legitimacy and draws the reader's attention to the fact that behind a historical text there is a subjective author who not only gets to choose the sources and the perspectives for their narrative but also has the privilege and power of creating historical knowledge.

Japanese authors as well used historiographic metafiction (for example, Kenzaburō Ōe in *The Silent Cry*), however, their main goal is not to problematize the truthfulness of history writing. Strecher identifies in Japanese literature a new form:

16 See section "Pinball, 1973."

17 Strecher, *Dances with Sheep*, 158.

18 Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 105.

19 Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, 66.

“relief historiography.”²⁰ The questions asked in Japanese literature are about perspective. When making certain historical events into facts they choose peripheral or marginal events rather than significant or “main” ones. Thus the readers are presented with a relief of history from which they themselves have to find the remaining parts in the negative space. What this means in practice is that authors might write about, for example, the Zenkyōtō²¹ protests but choose to foreground private events. We can see this foregrounding in the opening chapter of *A Wild Sheep Chase*. This chapter contains two deaths: one is the death of a girl who the Narrator used to know at university and the other is the death of Yukio Mishima. Here the significance of Mishima’s suicide is placed into the background, while the girl’s death is foregrounded. Murakami, therefore, problematizes a “significant” historical event by emphasizing a private one. In brief, the focus in Japanese literature is not on truth, but on perspective.²²

What perspective is then taken in *A Wild Sheep Chase*? Here we would like to argue that it is in the male characters’ hands to control and create history. In the section entitled “Power and its Forms” we saw that knowledge, besides other things, is in the possession of male characters. This also seems to be true for historical knowledge. However, as we will see, men not only possess historical knowledge, but they also have the privilege to create it. We can find two examples of this in *A Wild Sheep Chase*: first, the history of a township called Junitaki-cho, second, the history of the sheep.

The author of the *Authoritative History of Junitaki-cho* is a man. This in and of itself is not problematic, but it shows consistency with the fact that in the world of the Trilogy of the Rat male characters are the ones who possess knowledge. However, we would like to also highlight the professions of this author. We mentioned that history and literature were a single inquiry and only later it was divided. The author of the history of Junitaki-cho was a literature graduate who later worked as a local historian at Junitaki-cho. We would argue that this is a reference to the nature of historiographic metafiction. What makes this even clearer is that this author also liked to hypothesize as mentioned multiple times by the Narrator. Now, what kind of history is created here? The township’s history is told from the perspective of an Ainu youth who leads a dozen of

20 Strecher, *Dances with Sheep*, 167.

21 Japanese student protests in the late 1960s against the continued presence of the U.S. military in Japan. The protests ultimately fail yielding no result.

22 Strecher, *Dances with Sheep*, 167.

farmers deep into Hokkaido. They are trying to escape debtors. Women in this history are only mentioned as workers on the field whose working times had to be interrupted because they had to give birth. For the history of Junitaki-cho they might even seem unimportant, pushed into the landscape of the history told.

The history of the sheep with the star-shaped mark is a symbolic representation of the history of modern Japan.²³ This sheep can enter into human bodies, thus possessing them and granting them immense power. The first victim of the sheep was the Sheep professor. He has awoken the sheep and brought it to Japan. There the sheep left him and possessed the Boss. When the sheep went into the Boss, he had completely changed. The last victim of the sheep is the Rat who stops the sheep's plan by committing suicide. Taking into consideration the carriers that are related to the people who the sheep possessed we see common types that appeared since the Meiji Restoration.²⁴ They are the symbolic representation of modern Japanese history.

The above mentioned histories of Junitaki-cho and of the sheep have certain similarities. In Junitaki-cho's history we encounter both men and women. However, the author of Junitaki-cho's history chooses the perspective of the Ainu youth and dwells on lives of women in the new township only when it comes to child-rearing. The sheep's history is that of powerful men. Moreover, this history seems to be exclusive to men. The complete history of the sheep can only be put together towards the end of *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Until then, it is told in fragments. First is the Boss' secretary, then the Sheep professor, and lastly the Rat that share the sheep's history with the Narrator. Both histories, therefore, are about men told by men.

5.3 Women in *A Wild Sheep Chase*

We encounter many female characters in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Some are merely mentioned during narration, while others occupy a role in the narrative. In the first group we can mention the Narrator's former wife, and his classmate in the third grade. They merely appear for instant in the novel. The Narrator's former wife in the beginning, while the two of them are having a divorce. The Narrator's classmate

23 Murakami, *Postmodern, Feminist And Postcolonial Currents In Contemporary Japanese Culture*, 22–23.

24 Ibid.

appears as a nostalgic image. Seeing a piano player at a lounge, the Narrator is reminded of his classmate and he reminisces of her. In the second group we find the Girl with the Ears, Rat's former girlfriend, and the Narrator's late girlfriend.

5.3.1 The Girl with a Name Forgotten

We begin by examining the first female character that we meet in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Since she is not named in the novel, we refer to her as the Girl or as the Nameless Girl in this section. The chapter where we get to know her is the prelude. In fact, this is the only chapter where she appears. It narrates the Girl's death, her past, and the relationship she had with the Narrator. This chapter is not constructed chronologically. It begins with the Girl dying in a car accident and the Narrator going to her funeral. This is where, later, the next chapter begins. However, the prelude continues by recounting past events in an interruptive manner. The Narrator's thoughts and his personal memories disrupt the narration of the past he shared with the Girl.

For the first time the Narrator and the Nameless Girl meet in a coffee shop at the end of the 1960s. The coffee shop is described as a place that is permanent and stable. Although it is not an extraordinary locale, the Narrator still finds constants in it: "hard rock and bad coffee."²⁵ The Girl is part of these constants as well. She is described as someone who would "always be sitting in the same spot, elbows planted on the table, reading."²⁶ The image of the coffee shop with the Girl inside of it creates a contrast between them and the events in the background. From the text we can only guess what these events are (likely the Zenkyōtō protests²⁷), but they still leave a mark on the atmosphere of the prelude. The Narrator talks about the atmosphere, the air of this time, as follows: "[It] was alive, even as everything seemed poised on the verge of collapse, waiting for a push."²⁸ Therefore, the events of the late 1960s create an ambiance of unpredictability and instability.

The Narrator and the Girl spend the autumn of the 1960s together, but the following winter and summer, they do not meet due to the aforementioned background events and

25 Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 4.

26 Ibid.

27 On Murakami and the Zenkyōtō protests see Strecher's *Dances with Sheep* and Murakami's *Postmodern, Feminist And Postcolonial Currents In Contemporary Japanese Culture*.

28 Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 4.

the Narrator's personal matters. However, their relationship begins anew next autumn in the same coffee shop where they met the first time. This is also the first time they have slept together. Here the Narrator realizes that he knows almost nothing about her past. He can remember only a single substantial fact. That is, she had a falling out with her father and had to leave her home and school. The Narrator tells us that she spent her days similar to the time when they first met: sitting in coffee shops, reading books, and sleeping with men.

From autumn, when the Narrator and the Girl finally meet again, to the spring next year, they spend their days in a routine. On Tuesdays, she would visit him and the two would spend the night together. The following Wednesdays, they would go on their, as the Girl calls it, "Wednesday afternoon picnic." She calls it such because every time they go out to the college campus and lay on the grass the scenery reminds her of picnics. While they are there, motionless, around them, people, nature, time are in motion. This is similar to how the Narrator, in the following paragraph, describes the environment in which he finds himself. He feels stuck and unable to go in any new direction while the world is in motion, leaving him behind.

The last two scenes in the prelude tell how the relationship between the Narrator and the Girl turn away. The first of these scenes narrates the events of a day in November. The Narrator and the Girl are out on a walk. Concerned, she confronts him that lately, he has been unapproachable and that she feels lonely with him. The Narrator feels sorry that he makes her feel this way, however, he does not know what is going on with him, nor how much time it would take for him to figure things out. The Girl, knowing that he is not at fault, wants to know how much time it would take for him to solve his problems but since he cannot answer that question it leaves her upset. The last scene recounts a night at the Narrator's place. The Girl wakes up in the middle of the night, sobbing. He comforts her and lets her speak. She wants to know if he has ever thought of killing her. He says jokingly that he is not the "killer type." She then foretells her death which is where the prelude ends.

A couple of paragraphs before, we touched upon the fact that at the very moment the Narrator brings up the time when he first slept with the Girl, he realizes, or rather is reminded of, how little he knows about the Girl. Here, we would like to highlight that

this realization comes about through the connection of two things: one, the two of them sleeping together, and two, the fact that she might have talked about her past with the Narrator when they were in bed. Both of these are connected in some shape or form to the idea of a “bed.” The reason why we emphasize this type of connection of passages is because it is common to the prelude. Sections containing thoughts and sections narrating events are connected through similar kinds of connections. Another example of this type of transition is at the time when the Girl explains why she likes to call their “Wednesday afternoon picnic” a picnic. The following paragraph where the Narrator describes the situation he got himself into mimics the girl’s description of picnics.

Reading the prelude we will not find the Girl’s name. The Narrator succinctly remarks that he has forgotten her name. This “forgetting,” however, is not a mistake or a fault in the Narrator’s memory. He chooses not to remember her name. After the revelation that he has forgotten her name the Narrator says that he “could pull out the obituary, but what difference would it make now.”²⁹ Yet, before this, he has already heard the Girl’s name at least once. The prelude begins with the Narrator’s friend reading the obituary to him on the phone. He even goes to the Girl’s funeral. At one of these events he must have heard or seen her name, but he stays reluctant not to remember it, thus making his “forgetting” seem on purpose.

5.3.2 Different Women, Different Treatment

In the section above, we have mentioned the fact that the Narrator forgets the Girl’s name. However, the Narrator is not the only one who does not know her name. Not long after that the Narrator tells us that he has forgotten it we find out that even others were not referring to the Girl by her name. He shares with us that when a conversation came to the Girl people would refer to her as: “Back then, there was this girl who’d sleep with anyone.”³⁰ As we later find out, for the Girl, sleeping with someone is an act by which she gets to know people or through which her world comes together. While one could argue that it is problematic that a female character can only navigate herself in the world through an act with men, we would like to propose that what is happening to her is in fact a differential treatment based on her unconventional mode of being. By this we

²⁹ Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 5.

³⁰ Ibid.

mean that her name gets reduced and diminished because of her liberal view of sex. This is also similar to how the Girl with the Ears is treated.

The Girl with the Ears has an unconventional identity. Her only natural gift is her ears. Furthermore, they are so important to her that she says: “I am my ears, my ears are me.”³¹ This means that she identifies with her ears. Other than her ears we might find surprising that she has three occupations. Firstly, and most importantly, she is an ear model, but she also works as a call girl, and as a proofreader at a publishing house. It is not difficult to notice that both the Narrator and the Girl with the Ears, think that from the aforementioned occupations she is the most well-suited for ear modeling. One, however, starts to wonder: why does she have three occupations? From the text we can clearly see that she cannot live off of her natural gift. The Narrator explains that there is no problem with a natural gift like having beautiful ears “until you consider how extremely limited are the opportunities for a commercial ear model.”³² That is to say that identities which are not profitable become disadvantaged simply because they do not provide much useful value to the system represented in *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Therefore, she needs to work at multiple places.

The Girl with the Ears, however, faces differential treatment at one of her workplaces as well. At the publishing house, where she works as a proofreader, she is sent out to “make tea, run downstairs (...) and buy erasers.”³³ She was not targeted for personal reasons. People at the company make her do errands because she is an unmarried woman.

In brief, the Nameless Girl and the Girl with the Ears have nontraditional identities. The former has a liberal view of sex and the latter is gifted with an unconventional natural talent and is unmarried. Because of them, both the girls are treated differently.

5.3.3 The Rat’s Former Girlfriend

About half way through *A Wild Sheep Chase* begins Part Five of the novel, entitled: “Letters from the Rat and other Assorted Reminiscences.” The chapters in this part

31 Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 27.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid, 28.

follow the Narrator as he visits J and a woman who, as we later find out, is Rat's former girlfriend.

The Narrator has received two letters from the Rat. In them he writes about his life after leaving town. The infamous picture of the sheep with the star-shaped birthmark is enclosed in these letters as well. For us, however, the Rat's second letter is more significant. In it he makes a request of the Narrator. He wants him to go and see people to whom he has forgotten to say goodbye. Among them we find J and the Rat's former girlfriend.

Following the Narrator's visit to J's bar, he calls the Rat's former girlfriend. He tries to explain that he received a letter that was addressed to him but it feels like that the letter was actually meant for her. Surprised and dumbfounded by the fact that the Rat has not written to her directly, she still decides to meet the Narrator after she learns that the Rat left him in a similar way.

The day after their call, the Narrator and the Rat's former girlfriend meet at a coffee lounge. At first, they talk about their occupations and about how long each of them has known the Rat. Soon, however, she begins to describe her life before meeting the Rat. She says that the time when the Rat disappeared was exactly like the time of her first marriage. Talking about herself, she says: "I was always the one who waited, until I got tired of waiting, and in the end I didn't care."³⁴ She was waiting during her first marriage and when she stopped caring, she got divorced. Similarly, she waited three months for the Rat, following his disappearance, after which she stopped caring. Soon after her first marriage she moved to the town. She recounts her life there this way:

(...) I was alone in this town. Living a life that was, well, rather unreal. I hardly knew anyone, rarely went out, had no romance. I'd get up in the morning, go to the office, draft plans, stop by the supermarket on the way home to shop, and eat dinner at home alone. I'd listen to FM radio, read, write in my diary, wash my stockings in the bath. (...)³⁵

As we see above, her life in the town was monotone. She spends time alone and in a routine day by day. For five years she lived like this, however, things change once the Rat arrives. She says:

³⁴ Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 98–99.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 99.

I guess it took someone as unreal as him to break through my own unreality. It struck me the very first time I met him. That's why I liked him. Or maybe I only thought so after I got to like him. It amounts to the same thing either way.³⁶

She was not able to break from her life of predictable routines and habits. In order for her to break with it she needed the Rat to arrive.

In the Trilogy of the Rat we can see similar patterns repeating. Women, in this world, are unable to bring about change for themselves. They either help the male protagonist, or they need to wait for something or someone to bring about change. They are, ultimately, passive.

³⁶ Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 100.

6 Women and the Other World

In Haruki Murakami's fiction, we often find unreal and magical situations. They seem just as much unexplainable to us, the readers, as it is to the Narrator. However, they can be thought of as events or entities that are part of what Strecher calls the "other world."³⁷ Compared to Haruki Murakami's later works this other world is not that visible in his first two books. If we take a closer look at the text, however, we can notice a gentle introduction to the other world in his first novel.

In *Hear the Wind Sing*, the Narrator talks of Derek Hartfield. He is a non-existent author who had a great influence on the Narrator. In one of the chapters in the middle of *Hear the Wind Sing* the Narrator describes the story of one of Derek Hartfield's novels. This part of the novel is an embedded narrative. Through this narrative we meet for the first time with Haruki Murakami's metaphysical realm, the other world, that is prominent in his later works.

This embedded narrative tells the story of a boy who is exploring the wells of Mars. In the wells he does not feel hunger or thirst and does not notice the passage of time since his watch has stopped working. Then, all of a sudden, he hears the wind speaking to him—this is from where the novel gets its title. The wind tells him that he has been walking in the wells for more than one and a half billion years. Curious, the boy asks the wind how it is able to speak. The wind's reply is: "Me? No, the words are yours. I'm just sending hints to your mind."³⁸ Soon after, the boy shoots himself. In this short example we find a couple of characteristics of the other world to the likes of the halting of time and places that are cold and dark.³⁹

Of course, we can find the other world not only in embedded narratives, but also in the novels' main narrative. One of the more interesting examples of this is a car crash. In an early chapter of *Hear the Wind Sing* the Narrator talks about his first meeting with the Rat. After getting drunk and driving a sports car into a stone pillar none of them got

37 More on the nature and form of the "other world" see Strecher's *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*.

38 Murakami, *Wind/Pinball*, 81.

39 Strecher, *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 72–73.

hurt. The fact that they survived the accident without a single scratch is a sign that it did not happen in reality. The car crash happened in the “other world.”

The above given example also becomes a proof for Strecher and his argument in *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami* that throughout the Rat Trilogy the Narrator’s friend, the Rat, has existed only inside the protagonist’s mind and that the question of whether the Rat has ever existed outside of it cannot be answered accurately.⁴⁰ Of course, this is not the only sign that the Rat is an alter ego of some sorts for the Narrator. During *Hear the Wind Sing* a lot of the times what the Rat does is analogous with the Narrator’s actions. For example, the novel starts out with the Narrator sharing with us his attempt to write down his experiences of a certain summer. Soon we find out that the Rat too is about to write a novel. When the Narrator finally starts seeing the Nine-fingered Girl, the Rat too finds someone.

The fact that the Rat exists in the other world becomes important when we categorize the female characters in the Rat Trilogy according to their connection to the other world. Women can be part of “this world” or the “other world.” Women who are part of this world are, for example, the Narrator’s former wife at the beginning of *A Wild Sheep Chase* or the woman he talks with at J’s bar in *Hear the Wind Sing*. Women that are part of the other world include the Nine-fingered Girl from *Hear the Wind Sing*; Naoko, the Twins, and the woman that the Rat is seeing in *Pinball, 1973*; and the Girl with the Ears that wield special powers from *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

The Nine-fingered Girl’s connection to the other world is subtle. On the last night that the Narrator and the Nine-fingered Girl spend together she tells him that sometimes she hears a voice urging her to die. This voice is the same as the wind that speaks to the boy on Mars; this is the voice that speaks from the other world.

Naoko is the Narrator’s former girlfriend in *Pinball, 1973*. She functions as a storyteller and a crucial element in the Narrator’s past. She tells stories of places from her past to where the Narrator travels later in the novel. In his memories, Naoko appears at times when they used to play on the so-called “Spaceship” pinball machine. This is the famous machine which becomes the object of the Narrator’s search. Naoko is so important to him, that she is the only character mentioned by name not only in *Pinball*,

40 Strecher, *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 79.

1973, but in the whole trilogy. At the end of the novel, when the Narrator finally “meets” the pinball machine and has a conversation with it, it seems, from the way they talk like old time lovers who after a long time finally meet again, that the pinball machine is actually Naoko as a nostalgic image from the Narrator’s memories. This is similar to the Twins who can be thought of as nostalgic image of the past before the Rat left town.⁴¹

The woman with whom the Rat has a melancholic relationship also belongs to the category of women that are connected to the other world. As we have seen above, the Rat exists in the other world, therefore, their story in *Pinball, 1973* is also part of the other world. Theirs is a story of lovers who slowly drift apart from each other. Interestingly, the woman and the Nine-fingered Girl from *Hear the Wind Sing* seem to be connected. We see a hint for this in the way the two women are initially introduced. Both of them are shown to be strong from the outside but with a hidden inner fragility.⁴²

The last female character we mention here is the girl with the magical ears from *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Thanks to her being connected to the other world she is able to see the future at times. In the beginning of the novel, when she and the Narrator are passing time together, she warns him to pick up the phone when it is ringing. She is aware not only of the fact that someone is going to call the Narrator, but she also knows that the call concerns a special sheep.

Who are these women who are connected to the other world? From the role that they occupy in the Rat Trilogy and from their special connections, they can be interpreted almost as shape-shifting and clairvoyant “witches” who accompany the “hero” along his quests.

41 Strecher, *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*, 28–29.

42 Ibid, 81.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to show in what ways are women in the Rat Trilogy, that is, *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball, 1973*, and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, secondary to male characters and that they only compose the background. After the preliminary introductions of the author, Haruki Murakami, and the protagonist of the Rat Trilogy, we showed the problematic points of each of the novels.

At first, we saw that women in *Hear the Wind Sing* carry only secondary functions; that is, their main role is to present certain attributes of the protagonist to the reader. We also grouped women that appear in the novel into three categories: women from the past, women from the radio, and the Nine-fingered Girl. Upon grouping them, we showed the roles that each of them take in the novel. Other than connected to him sexually, the women from the protagonist's past take up the role of influencing his stance towards future relationships, thus developing the protagonist's personality. Similarly, we saw that the women from the radio are in the novel for the protagonist. They show the reader his other characteristics and push him out of his passivity. We showed that much of this is true for the Nine-fingered Girl as well. During the novel, she is the one who has to change in the relationship between her and the protagonist. She has to adapt to and understand the protagonist. Thus all women in *Hear the Wind Sing* seem to be there for the protagonist.

In *Pinball, 1973*, we showed that female characters are not given the same opportunities as to the male characters. When women want change they have to wait, while this does not apply to the protagonist nor to his friend, the Rat. We also showed that women in this novel help tending the places where the protagonist lives.

In the section about *A Wild Sheep Chase*, we found out how this novel mirrors patriarchal structures. We showed that women in the Rat Trilogy cannot be in positions of power. We presented the fact that in *A Wild Sheep Chase* women are excluded from the histories not only in their content, but also in their creation. We also showed that at times the protagonist purposefully forgets the names of female characters, that women who possess unusual identities are treated differently in this fictional world, and that

women most often are unable to change unless a male character is introduced into their lives.

In the last section, we saw the female characters that are connected to the other world. They assume a supportive role for the protagonist on his quests throughout the Rat Trilogy. We saw this especially with the Twins in *Hear the Wind Sing* and with the girl who has magical ears in *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

What this research implies is that female characters in the Rat Trilogy have two possible characteristics: they are either narrative tools for the development of the protagonist's personality, or their depiction mirrors patriarchal structures. As a final note, however, it is important to mention that the scope of this study is limited to the Rat Trilogy. Haruki Murakami has written female characters as protagonists in his oeuvre, such as in the short stories *Sleep* and *The Little Green Monster*, and female characters in his other novels may reflect other trends than the ones shown here.

Resumé

Táto práca sa zameriava na zobrazenie ženských postáv v knihách *Počúvaj pieseň vetra*, *Pinball 1973* a *Hon na ovcu* od Haruki Murakamiho. Jej cieľom je poukázať na to, že ženské postavy v tejto trilógii sú druhoradé, dopĺňajú mužské postavy a sú súčasťou prostredia kníh.

V prvej časti sa zameriavam na Haruki Murakamiho a jeho tvorbu. Spomínam jeho postmodernú tvorbu, jej rysy a opakujúce sa témy a tiež ako je ovplyvnená americkými autormi. V ďalšej časti sa sústreďujem na hlavnú postavu, ktorá je rovnaká vo všetkých troch románoch. Nasledujúce časti sa zaoberajú ženskými postavami v jednotlivých románoch. Postavy som kategorizoval a predstavil som kritické čítanie kľúčových častí textov.

Pri analýze diel som poukázal na to, že ženské postavy v tejto trilógii slúžia na zobrazenie určitých mužských vlastností. Taktiež som poukázal na vzťahy medzi mužskými a ženskými postavami, ktoré odrážajú patriarchálnu štruktúru.

Bibliography

- Chozick, Matthew R. "DE-EXOTICIZING HARUKI MURAKAMI'S RECEPTION." *Comparative Literature Studies* 45, no. 1 (2008): 62–73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25659633>.
- Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo, and Oe Kenzaburo. "The Novelist in Today's World: A Conversation." *Boundary 2* 18, no. 3 (1991): 109–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/303205>.
- Kawakami, Chiyoko. "The Unfinished Cartography: Murakami Haruki and the Postmodern Cognitive Map." *Monumenta Nipponica* 57, no. 3 (2002): 309–37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3096769>.
- Murakami Fuminobu. *Postmodern, Feminist And Postcolonial Currents In Contemporary Japanese Culture: a Reading Of Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana, Yoshimoto Takaaki And Karatani Kojin*. Hoboken: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2005.
- Murakami Haruki. "Jazz Messenger." Translated by Jay Rubin. *The New York Times*, July 8, 2007. Accessed December 2, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/08/books/review/Murakami-t.html>.
- . *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Translated by Alfred Birnbaum. London: Vintage, 2003.
- . *Hear the Wind Sing/Pinball, 1973*. Translated by Ted Goossen. London: Vintage, 2016.
- Strecher, Matthew C. "Beyond "Pure" Literature: Mimesis, Formula, and the Postmodern in Fiction of Murakami Haruki." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 2 (1998): 354–378. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2658828>.
- . "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki." *Journal of Japanese Studies* 25, no. 2 (1999): 263–98. <https://doi.org/10.2307/133313>.
- . *Dances with Sheep: The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2002.
- . *The Forbidden Worlds of Haruki Murakami*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.