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# An Adventure Concerning Identity: The Use of Folklore and the Folkloresque in Murakami's Hitsuji Wo Meguru Bōken (A Wild Sheep Chase) to Construct a Post-Colonial Identity

Jessica Alice Krawec

Western Kentucky University, jakrawec@gmail.com

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AN ADVENTURE CONCERNING IDENTITY: THE USE OF FOLKLORE AND THE  
FOLKLORESQUE IN MURAKAMI'S *HITSUJI WO MEGURU BŌKEN* (*A WILD  
SHEEP CHASE*) TO CONSTRUCT A POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY

A Thesis  
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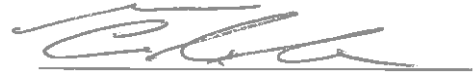
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By  
Jessica Alice Krawec

May 2018

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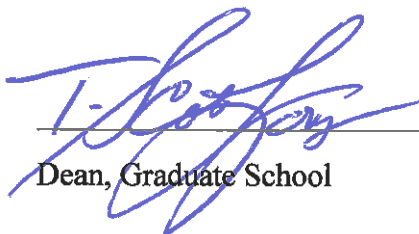
Tim Evans, Director of Thesis



Kate Horigan



Tim Frandy



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Dean, Graduate School

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Jessica Alice Krawec

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Directed by: Tim Evans, Tim Frandy, Kate Horigan

Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology

Western Kentucky University

This thesis examines the use of folklore and the folkloresque in Haruki Murakami's novel *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, or, as it is translated by Alfred Birnbaum, *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Murakami blends together Japanese and Western folklore to present a Japan that has been colonized by a post-national, global capitalistic force. At the same time, Murakami presents a strategy to resist this colonizing force by placing agency onto the individual and suggesting that it is still possible to craft a meaningful identity within the Japanese/Western blended, globalized society in which these individuals now exist.

Alongside examining the use of folklore in this novel, issues of translation are also considered by comparing Murakami's original Japanese text to Birnbaum's English translation. The fields of folkloristics and translation studies inform this comparison, and a new way to discuss translations (especially those that come from a text in which folklore is central) is developed. These two major threads are pulled together in an analysis of Murakami's role as a multinational writer. His blending of multiple cultural references and languages make his message on constructing an identity from a globalized culture more accessible to those outside of Japan; rather than focusing on what is lost in Birnbaum's translation, this thesis uses a folkloristic perspective on translation studies and explores how Birnbaum expands upon Murakami's process.

## Introduction

In his own words, Japanese author Haruki Murakami is “a kind of outcast of the Japanese literary world ... [and] an ugly duckling. Always the duckling, never the swan” (Poole 2014). Despite being massively popular amongst his fans—both in Japan and internationally—Murakami’s style of writing seems to have struck a nerve in Japanese literary critics and contemporary Japanese writers. His tendency to insert references to Western popular culture without any equally obvious references to “Japanese art in any medium ... rankles some Japanese critics to this day” (Anderson 2011). They describe his work as being *バター臭い (batakusai)*—butter-stinking or smelling too much like butter—that is, “obtrusively Westernized” (Kiriyama 2016:107). Nobel prize winner Kenzaburo Oe saw Murakami’s “scorn for Japanese literary tradition, conversational writing style, and constant references to Western culture ... as an assault on Japanese literary conventions,” calling him a “lightweight pop talent” when Murakami’s works first began to gain popularity (Hegarty 2011).

Murakami—a man who ran a jazz club in his twenties before deciding to write his first novel while watching a baseball game, and started this novel by first writing it in English and then translating it back into Japanese (Anderson 2011)—is seemingly baffled by his critics’ responses. It is, however, hard to tell what Murakami thinks about things when he is asked about them in interviews; his answers to the same questions can change drastically between interviews. In one interview he states, “When I write a novel I put into play all the information inside me. It might be Japanese information or it might be Western; I don’t draw a distinction between the two” (Harukimurakami.com 2002). In

another he declares his desire to escape “the curse of Japanese” (Anderson 2011). Murakami seems to enjoy creating a certain level of mystery around himself, especially in the few interviews I have found that were conducted by Japanese journalists. In one such interview, interviewer Ms. Mieko Kawakami writes about how Murakami only gave a single-word answer to the questions she felt were most important—that is, questions about gender and feminist issues (Kawakami 2017). For the most part, however, Murakami avoids doing any interviews with Japanese interviewers, choosing instead to “keep a low profile” and spending most of each year at his home in Hawaii (Kelts 2009). According to him (in a non-Japanese interview), “they [Japanese writers and literary critics] hated me, so I left” (Kelts 2009).

Western scholars such as Will Slocombe make the argument that Murakami's “Western mode of writing [that] is evident throughout Murakami’s works . . . suggests an annihilation, not ‘translation,’ of culture” (2004:5), and this is why his critics and Japanese contemporary authors react so negatively to his works. However, I would make the case that there is a larger, more complex, argument being formed in Murakami’s writing about Japanese identity. One of his novels in particular, *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* (literally *An Adventure Concerning Sheep*, but translated by Alfred Birnbaum as *A Wild Sheep Chase*) is, in Murakami’s own words, “a mystery without a solution” (Rubin 2002:81). Please note that, to make it clear which version of this novel I am citing (Murakami’s version or Birnbaum’s), I cite quotations from Murakami’s original Japanese version as *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, with any quotes from the second volume being specified as coming from volume II, while the first volume is cited simply as



*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*. Any quotes coming from Birnbaum's translation are cited as *A Wild Sheep Chase*. In *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, we see a search for a post-modern, Japanese identity that does not have a clear solution (Strecher 1999, Strecher 2002). But in considering Murakami's use of folklore—both Japanese folklore (it is there despite critics stating there is nothing Japanese in Murakami's works) and American folklore or Western folklore more broadly—we see Murakami adding his own point of view into the quest for national identity.

Through the use of folklore, Murakami places his novel's Japan into a postcolonial framework—it is a Japan that has been colonized by Western consumerism. While Japan is not traditionally considered a postcolonial space (with the exception of the Ainu), Murakami is portraying post-national, global capitalism as a colonizing force. By using the term postcolonial in reference to Japan, then, I am referring not to any particular person or persons that have forced assimilation upon Japan, but to a Western concept of consumerism that has had a significant effect upon Japanese culture. In Murakami's novel, Western culture pervades every inch of Japan, from American style houses in the most rural of areas, to the use of Western idioms and expressions in the everyday lives of Japanese individuals. But this is not all folklore does in this novel. Murakami also uses both Japanese and Western folklore to begin constructing a new, postcolonial identity that involves actively choosing elements from both cultures in meaningful ways, thereby resisting the Western concept of consumerism and, in (re)connecting to the past and to other people, forging a blended identity that is still meaningful to Japanese individuals.

Murakami is, in a sense, a cultural mediator. He blends multiple cultural references in such a way that they do not contradict each other, and can be used together to express his own messages. His multinational use of folklore and languages leads to his novel being more easily accessible to those outside of Japan; as shall be discussed later in this introduction, and in more detail in the conclusion, Birnbaum's English translation of this novel turns into an expansion of Murakami's mediation—one in which the message of navigating one's globalized culture to find one's own identity is still preserved.

### **A Summary of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken***

*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* takes place in Japan during the 1970's—the novel's first few parts are labeled with dates, the first being November 25, 1970, and the following titles make it clear that the rest of the novel is set eight years after that date. It is a first-person novel that follows a character with no name; scholars, critics, and fans alike tend to refer to this character simply as 'Boku,' the Japanese word for 'I' that men use when referring to themselves informally, and what *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*'s protagonist calls himself in the original Japanese version. Boku is not the only character to lack a name, either. In fact, in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, the only character who has an actual name is Boku's cat, いわし (iwashi), Sardine (or Kipper, as Birnbaum translates this name into in *A Wild Sheep Chase*); Kipper obtains his name from the antagonist's chauffeur, who also happens to have God's telephone number.

The novel begins in Tokyo, Japan (and the story remains in Japan throughout its entirety, although with the multiple mentions of Western material culture and music, it is

perfectly easy to imagine this taking place in America). Boku learns of the death of an ex-girlfriend—a woman he can't recall the name of, even after he attends her funeral.

Afterwards his wife leaves him, but eventually he meets his current girlfriend, a woman with ears that may or may not have special powers. She predicts he will receive a phone call about sheep. Not long after that, Boku's business partner, J (a nickname given to him by the locals because his Chinese name is too hard to pronounce) calls him about a mysterious man demanding their agency stop using an advertisement that contains a picture of some sheep. This man, known as the secretary of "the Boss" (or "Sensei" in the Japanese version), later meets with Boku and demands that Boku track down one of the sheep in the same advert.

This particular sheep, marked with a star on its side, has supernatural powers and is able to possess people. Though its true goal is never revealed, Boku learns that the sheep possessed the Boss for a time to gain its own political and economic power in Japan. The Boss is now dying, the sheep leaving a large brain tumor in the Boss after it left him, and the Boss's secretary is eager to find the sheep again. He tries to threaten Boku into finding the sheep for him, and while the threats don't really seem to bother Boku much he eventually decides to go along with it anyway—mostly because he doesn't have anything better to do. So he begins his journey to Hokkaido (the place where the picture of the sheep was taken), the northernmost island of Japan that was also the native lands of the Ainu—Japan's indigenous people—before Japan colonized it.

The other characters in this novel that are important in this thesis's analysis include the Rat/Nezumi, the Ainu youth, and the Sheep Man. The Rat and Boku have an

already established friendship before the beginning of the novel; he had disappeared before the start of the main plot, but he is also the character who sends Boku a photo of the mysterious sheep, which is what begins the main story. The Rat is found at the end of the novel, but he is already dead and Boku only talks to his ghost. He had been possessed by the sheep but managed to go to the rural area that Boku finds him in, and then kill himself, thereby stopping the evil sheep from its dastardly but unclear plans.

The Ainu youth is a character that Boku does not actually meet in person. Boku learns about this character through a history book about the small, mostly abandoned town he's heading for in Hokkaido. The Ainu character helped the founders of the town find the place they eventually settled, and then stayed with them to continue offering aid. He ends up being assimilated into the Japanese culture and suffers an extremely depressing death.

The Sheep Man is a difficult character to discuss briefly, and he shall take up a fair amount of discussion in the next chapter. Boku finds this strange fellow—a short man dressed in a sheep costume, but with real horns protruding from his head—when he reaches his final destination in Hokkaido: a rural pasture deep in the mountains, with a single American style house that no one lives in. It's eventually revealed that the Sheep Man is actually a form of the deceased Rat.

### **Writer and Translator**

*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* was translated into English by Alfred Birnbaum. An American by birth, Birnbaum first came to Japan when he was only five years old, where

he states he learned Japanese only to “promptly [forget] everything when [his] family moved away” (Birnbaum 2013), and then learned it again when his family returned ten years later. He is now a professor of creative writing and translation at Waseda University’s School of International Liberal Studies in Japan (Penguin Random House 2018).

What is perhaps most noticeable in comparing interviews with Birnbaum and those with Murakami is how similar their views on translation and writing in general seem to be. Birnbaum claims to have avoided formally studying Japanese until he started attending a university in Japan, and that, instead, he has a more natural feel for translation as he didn’t “have to learn either English or Japanese as foreign languages” given his early childhood experiences with both (Birnbaum 2013). This “feel for a language” is what Murakami cites as most important in translating a text (Harukimurakami.com 2002). Murakami is no stranger to the task of translation; in between writing his own works, he has also translated “some 25 books by American authors including F Scott Fitzgerald, JD Salinger, Raymond Carver, Truman Capote, John Irving and Paul Theroux” (Brown 2003).

Murakami’s own experiences in translating English into Japanese gives him the ability to review his own works after they have been translated from Japanese into English. He states in one interview that he might find a few mistakes which leads him to “call the translator” (Bausells 2014), but what these mistakes are he does not say. Instead, he insists that non-Japanese speakers should “relax,” because they are not missing anything by not reading his works in Japanese (Bausells 2014). Of course, ever the

mystery, he is not consistent with this response. Murakami's own reactions to his translated works (at least the English versions) have ranged from "when I read it, it's fine for me! I don't know what's going to happen next!" (The Guardian 2014), to "my books exist in their original Japanese. That's what's most important, because that's how I wrote them" and Murakami fears that "reading his own work in another language could be disappointing—or worse" (The New Yorker 2013).

It is not clear how much say Murakami has in who translates his texts, but Birnbaum is one of three primary translators of Murakami's works (the other two being Jay Rubin and Philip Gabriel), and Murakami at least has the authority to say whether a translated version of his work can be published outside of Japan (Wetherall 2008). Jay Rubin has also stated that he works very closely with Murakami when he is translating one of his works (Godoy 2013), and Murakami's statement that he will call the translator if he sees a mistake implies that he has this relationship with his other translators as well.

## **Literature Review**

### *Folklore in Literature*

Before Dundes' 1965 criticism of how folklorists were studying folklore in literature, the common approach to the task was to pick out those elements that could be identified as folklore, such as folkloric motifs or proverbs, and compile these into a neat list. There was, however, no greater attempt at interpretation on the use of this folklore. Instead folklorists were more interested in comparing this mined folkloric data of motifs

and other elements of folklore that can be easily placed into a list in order to “corroborate their authenticity and social circulation” (Bacchilega 2012:449).

Dundes eventually insists that the folklorist must begin to do some interpretation, to avoid creating a “beginning without [an] end” (Dundes 1965:141). This call for interpretation beyond labeling a text as authentic or not has, according to Frank de Caro and Rosan Augusta Jordan, become the “currently accepted perspective on the study of folklore in literature” (2004:13). De Caro and Jordan also expand on Dundes’ two-step process (identify and interpret) in examining folklore in literature, stating that it is a “three-step process at least” (14), by posing the question of *why* authors use folklore in literature. They conclude with the argument that it is equally important for the folklorist to “look also at conceptions of how folklore fits into culture” (15), and how this may have influenced the author’s decisions to use the folklore that he or she did. In *Re-Situating Folklore: Folk Contexts and Twentieth-Century Literature and Art*, de Caro and Jordan stress the importance of considering the contexts (both historical and social) of folklore, stating that how the writer re-situates folklore (from its previous context into a literary one) adds to interpretation.

They also discuss the two ways they have identified in which folklore can be re-situated: methods that are mimetic or referential can both be utilized by writers (10). At their most basic, mimetic is used to describe when a writer “re-situat[es] a folk context, which may or may not embed ‘items of performance’ (that is, folk texts) in an imagined context” (9); referential describes when a writer refers to a piece of folklore to call “attention to meaning” (8). There is quite a bit of overlap between these two terms. As de

Caro and Jordan's later chapters show, writers very rarely mimic folklore without using it to create meaning as well.

In their chapter "Somebody Always Gets Boiled: Reworking 'The Robber Bridegroom,'" de Caro and Jordan analyze both the mimetic and referential use of folklore and the ways in which writers Eudora Welty and Margaret Atwood "[adapt] folk plots ... [to] structure meaning" (53). De Caro and Jordan describe the ways in which these two writers utilize and re-situate the same folktale known as "The Robber Bridegroom." Of particular note in their discussion is their argument that Welty does not include the folktale "as part of the fictional lifeworld" (69) the way Atwood does, but instead uses it to "structure the plot (and the overall form) of the book." Atwood uses the folktale to provide "background reference" (70) by, for example, having her characters mimic the personalities of the characters in the tale, whereas Welty imitates the plot and "style and mood" (55) of the folktale in order to create a more modern version of "The Robber Bridegroom."

Murakami's method of re-situating folklore seems to be a combination of the tactics that Atwood and Welty take. In regards to the mimetic act of "imitat[ing] or otherwise adapt[ing] the stylistic conventions and form of a particular genre of folklore" (6) that Welty demonstrates, Murakami uses the form of folklore genres to "shape the outline of [his] narrative" (de Caro and Jordan 2004:268). *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* is created through a mixing and blending of several genres. The hard-boiled detective genre persists throughout (though at times becoming a clear parody of itself), while the folkloric genre of myth is subtly included by Murakami's own admission. It is



important to note that Murakami does not necessarily define myth in the same way that folklorists do. According to Murakami, myths “are the prototype for all stories. When we write a story on our own it can’t help but link up with all sorts of myths. Myths are like a reservoir containing every story there is” (HarukiMurakami.com 2002).

Oring has defined myth with a focus on the community’s regarding the narrative “as both sacred and true” (Oring 1986:124). More recently there have been critiques to this definition, particularly in that definitions such as Orings were “a consequence of a complex and far from consistent blend of European ideological, philosophical and aesthetic motivations” (Wessels 2012:30). In regards to Chinese myths, Yang Lihui has defined myth as simply “a genre of verbal art” (2015:365) that describes the origins of culture or life in general. This ongoing debate on how to define myth, while interesting, is not particularly relevant to this thesis—I shall be using Murakami’s definition of myth as a working definition within this work. While Murakami does not seem to see myth as something nonfictional, he does apply a certain level of sacredness to them in that he views them as the first stories that all others are connected to in some way. Of course, his own definition of myth was stated in a discussion about classical Greek myths, narratives that have already moved into a genre that a folklorist would define as a folktale due to the modern world seeing them as fictional. Murakami’s view on Japanese Buddhist myths—which he also uses in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*—is less clear.

Regardless, Murakami uses both classical Greek myths and Japanese Buddhist myths in similar ways. He mimics their forms to place his characters into a myth-like setting, and from there he explores issues of individuality and spirituality. He also uses

specific myths to comment upon certain personalities and actions that his characters take, in a way that is very similar to Atwood's use of folklore.

Because of the closeness between Murakami's definition of myth and the folkloristic definition of folktale, it is almost to be expected that there will be frequent blending between these two genres. However, while there is some blending to be found, Murakami mostly keeps them separated by using myths and folktales for different purposes. His allusions to Western and Japanese myths, when combined with his use of Japanese Buddhist proverbs, construct a world in which both Japanese and Western culture can lead to a loss of individual identity. His use of folktales, on the other hand, when combined with the folkloresque, suggest a means to actively construct identity in a Japan that was colonized by Western consumerism.

Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffrey A. Tolbert's *The Folkloresque* describes elements in literature that *seem* like or *feel* like folklore. The folkloresque is a kind of "invented" tradition used to insert a certain degree of authenticity into a text. As an example, author H. P. Lovecraft frequently mixes folklore and the folkloresque. Lovecraft "uses texts that are not traditional (i.e., he wrote them), but their structure or style builds on established patterns, they use traditional motifs within an original narrative, or they incorporate believable contexts that give them an air of traditionality" (Evans 2005:119).

To investigate that which has the "odor of folklore" (10), Foster and Tolbert break the folkloresque into three main categories: "integration, portrayal, and parody" (15). Evans' essay on the works by Neil Gaiman (among other essays in this edited volume) describes integration; he argues that "folklore and the folkloresque may give writers

sources of content, structure, texture, setting, characters, and many other elements, but they also provide authenticity, a sense of connection between an author's text and his or her evocation of tradition, which may imply a continuity with the past ... or with cultures with which the author feels a connection" (64-5). Portrayal is less concerned with how folklore and the folkloresque is integrated into works of popular culture, and more how these concepts (along with folklorists) are portrayed in pop-culture. For example, in Tolbert's essay on the video game series *Fatal Frame*, folklorists are portrayed as both helpful and dangerous "dabblers in occult rites" and folklore itself is "frequently connected with the supernatural" (127). Bill Ellis' essay, "The Fairy-Telling Craft of *Princess Tutu*: Metacommentary and the Folkloresque," describes the parodic use of folklore (which, despite the name, does not always imply a form of mockery but rather simply requires a "self-aware use of folk material" (231)), which creates a form of metacommentary. These last two are less relevant, as the majority of Murakami's use of the folkloresque can be categorized under the integration label.

Integration is heavily used by Murakami, and this mix of "actual and invented folklore" (Evans 2005:123) can be easily found in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*. Just as a brief example of this, Murakami eventually sends his characters in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* to a small town in Hokkaido called Junitaki. Junitaki is not a real town in Japan, and yet Murakami creates a history (through both "official" sources such as a history book, and through oral narratives from other characters) and a physical description for it that gives readers familiar with Hokkaido the sense that Junitaki is a reference to a real town called Bifuka—so much so that Bifuka has become "a place of pilgrimage for

fans” (legendarytrips.com 2015). The folkloresque is used not just for this historicity but also in Murakami’s creation of an original *yōkai*—a class of supernatural creatures—that blends together Western and Japanese cultural references while still maintaining that “odor of folklore” (2016:10) that Foster and Tolbert argue is the single defining component of the folkloresque. The folkloresque also becomes central in the use of proverbs—particularly in Birnbaum’s translation of proverbs.

De Caro and Jordan have discussed the re-situated use of proverbs in fiction, though the concept of the folkloresque does not enter their analysis (while the folkloresque is a more recent term, the concept of invented traditions is not unique to Foster and Tolbert’s work). Their chapter on how Chinua Achebe uses proverbs in the novel *Things Fall Apart* discusses how using proverbs in one’s everyday life illustrates the ability to communicate well within one’s culture or group (94). Not only are they used to “characterize fictional human encounters” (94) to give the characters in the novel a more realistic feel, but the use of proverbs also creates a cultural context for the reader, explaining to readers the society the character is in and “suggesting the restraints within which he must operate and aspects of the background against which he will be judged” (97). Still other uses include conveying meaning, or conveying a lack of meaning, depending on how the writer uses them. De Caro and Jordan argue that, in the modern world, proverbs split into a dichotomy of meaningfulness (due to the assumption that if a proverb has lasted this long, it must be worth keeping around and it must mean something) and shallowness (due to it being “a very conventional wisdom” [116]).

This duality gives writers plenty of room to play with the use of proverbs and create parodies, “imply the absence of meaning,” or “work in the interstices between communicative power and questioned meanings by both referencing the rhetorical abilities of proverbs while also—through irony, through allusion, through indirection—calling into question the presumed social meanings of traditional sayings” (116). Of particular importance is their description on how Forster uses proverbs in *A Passage to India* to “work out the idea that the two cultures operate with quite different conceptions of truth and language and how truth and language interrelate” (101).

Michael C. Strecher has pointed out how Murakami sometimes uses direct translations of American expressions and idioms (Strecher 1998), and this can be found in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* as well. In re-situating American expressions (both in context and language), and Japanese proverbs (in context only), Murakami plays with the idea that proverbs express universal truths in a similar fashion that Forster does. When Birnbaum translates the novel, he replaces Japanese proverbs with English-language ones. Changes across translations are to be expected, of course, but with the changes he makes he also inserts some degree of the folkloresque in the sense that he purposefully substitutes folklore to “provide authenticity, a sense of connection between [the] text and his ... evocation of tradition, which may imply a continuity with the past ... or with cultures with which the author feels a connection” (Evans 2016:64-5).

Most of the substitutions Birnbaum makes have certain connections to the folklore Birnbaum is replacing. His substitutions are not random, but instead convey similar (or perhaps more relevant) meanings to an English-speaking reader. This use of

folklore is more than just a desire for authenticity or connection to particular Western culture(s)—it is re-situated folklore specifically chosen because of, and informed by, the original Japanese text. In the case of translated texts, then, it seems necessary to create a third category of re-situated folklore to add to Caro and Jordan’s list; alongside referential and mimetic uses of folklore, there can also be an echoic use—folklore used that imitates the original in certain ways and was inspired by the original, but is its own, separate element (or sound) as well.

Much of de Caro and Jordan’s *Re-Situating Folklore* involves an understanding of intertextuality, and this new category of echoic folklore is no exception to this. In summarizing Julia Kristeva’s essays “Word, Dialogue and Novel” (1966) and “The Bounded Text” (1967), Bacchilega writes that

“intertextuality ... is not the dialogue of fixed meanings or texts with one another; it is an intersection of several speech acts and discourses (the writer’s, the speaker’s, the addressee, earlier writers’ and speakers’), whereby meanings emerge in the process of how something is told and valued, where, to whom, and in relation to which other utterances” (2012:453).

She describes genre as a “framework” as well, thereby allowing writers to emphasize meaning by connecting their text with a particular genre (and echoic folklore is both referential in regards to the connections between the translated text and the folkloric genres of the language the text has been translated into, and also in regards to the connections between the translation and the original text’s use of folklore). The term

‘intertextual’ itself came from Kristeva, who wanted to stress the fact that texts are not “closed system[s]” (Alfaro 1996:268). The concept of intertextuality is applied in considerations of the re-situation of folklore (more-so in de Caro and Jordan’s referential category than the mimetic category, although, again, these categories tend to blend together anyway) and the folkloresque—particularly in Murakami’s case, his folkloresque elements have a deep intertextual discussion on Japanese nationalism.

### *Scholarly Work on Murakami’s Novels*

Similarly to how folklore and popular culture were once described as opposing elements, Japanese pure (*jun*) literature and mass (*taishuu*) or popular literature are described in contrasting definitions by Japanese literary critics. Murakami’s use of fantasy, mystery, adventure, and detective story in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* “nudge the novel in the direction of the ‘popular’ ... [but] there is enough of the ‘pure’ and ‘serious’ about the work ... to have held critics back from dismissing it merely as popular stuff” (Iwamoto 1993:296). In fact, “distinguished writer Kenzaburoo Oue” sees Murakami’s “adversity against established norms ... as the defining feature of ‘pure literature’” (296). Iwamoto goes on to argue that Murakami is easily classed as a postmodern writer due to his obvious “indifference to the categories of writing into which Japanese works have been habitually and rigidly placed, as though the author were intent on collapsing hitherto sacrosanct boundaries” (296).

Iwamoto also discusses how the protagonist of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* “may well be viewed as an exemplar of the diffusion of the ego, the dispersal of the self, the

death of the subject, that are an integral part of postmodern discourse” (297). He relates this to the Japanese concept of *shutaisei*, “a word that came into existence in the pre-World War II period to deal with the Western idea of individualism which entered the country in the nineteenth century, when its modernization process began” (297). Basically, *shutaisei* can be thought of as identity on a more individual level as opposed to a communal identity, and Iwamoto spends most of the rest of his article exploring whether *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*’s protagonist even has this, since the main character has an “absence of an interiority and in his relations with other people” (297) through most of the novel.

In his 2016 article “Haruki Murakami and the Chamber of Secrets,” Matthew Strecher continues the discussion of identity in Murakami’s works. In comparing ideas of the soul between Murakami and *Harry Potter* author J. K. Rowling, Strecher discusses the soul as “a kind of unique, living, organic ‘narrative’” which is, in the case of Murakami, “locked in perpetual struggle with doctrines and dogma—again, ‘narratives’—that belong to and originate with others, whether these be social, political, religious, or other sets of beliefs” (33). Whereas the character Harry Potter has set core values that he rarely shies away from, Murakami’s hero in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* “brings with him nothing more than a firm sense of individuality ... which stands against the insidious efforts of the State to determine his values for him, and thus co-opt him as one more faceless entity in their homogenized mass society” (34).

While Japanese critics struggle to place Murakami’s works within their spectrum of pure vs mass literature, they do frequently criticize his novels as being *batakusai*—



butter-stinking or smelling too much like butter—that is, “obtrusively Westernized” (Kiryama 2016:107). Even Murakami’s writing style in his native Japanese “disturbs Japanese native speakers, who find something vaguely off-center, almost foreign in it” (107), as his style is “reminiscent of styles found in the Japanese translation of foreign literary works, most notably American literature” (107)—the disturbed reader that Kiriyama mentions in this quote would seem to be more applicable to Japanese literary critics, who are more strict in how they define Japanese literature (almost to the point of sounding vaguely nationalistic) than Murakami’s actual readership. While Strecher examines this in terms of how Murakami’s works are translated into English, Kiriyama uses this critique to raise the question of what it is, exactly, that is being presupposed as being Japanese (106). In particular, Kiriyama is interested in what Murakami thinks is Japanese, and although he does not answer this Kiriyama does discuss Murakami’s concern with “the conflict between an individual and what he calls ‘the System [the collection of factors that regulate individual’s lives]’ ... [and that] the odds are ... against individuals” (114).

Susan Fisher, in discussing *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, argues that “since the entire novel is devoted to the somewhat ludicrous search for a sheep, one can perhaps assume that the real target of the quest is ‘modern Japan’ itself” (2000:162). Very little work has been done on Murakami’s use of folklore in his novels, but Susan Fisher is one exception to this, as she examines Shinto and folk-religious images in his novels. Fisher argues that the appearance of wells are a frequent occurrence in Murakami’s work (and, indeed, a well is briefly mentioned in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*). The well can be viewed as both

“Murakami’s persistent interest in the myth of Orpheus: after all, [the protagonist] goes down into the well in order to find his lost wife whom, ultimately, he cannot regain. But the well also has intriguing connections to ritual patterns in Japanese folk religion” (166), leading to parallels of Japanese shamanism (167). Fisher goes on to say that “set against this description of the ‘other world’ journey [that occurs through the well] in Japanese folk religion, [the protagonist’s] experiences seem less like wild invention, and more like a deliberate re-casting of ancient folk tradition” (167).

When considering the novel *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* Fisher writes that “[while it] contains explicit references to the Greek myth of the poet/musician Orpheus ... it also has echoes of the underworld encounter of Izanami and Izanagi [the Shinto gods credited with creating the earth],” with a reference to leeches and maggots which eventually came to infest Izanami when she entered the underworld (161). Water and flow are also brought up by Murakami, which, according to Fisher, “point also to a Shinto or folk religion context” (167), with water acting as a purifying agent when the protagonist “return[s] to the ordinary world” (168). Fisher does not explore in any great detail this juxtaposition of Western and Japanese narratives, but as shall be discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the blending of cultural references is central to Murakami’s major messages (this is the case, at least, in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*). There are more Buddhist references than there are Shinto ones in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, likely because Murakami has set up his novel to be a quest for identity, and he finds creative ways to blend Buddhist beliefs of selfhood and reincarnation with Greek narratives of heroes striving to make their names known.

### *Translation Studies*

While discussing the history of translation theory, Lawrence Venuti explains that “the formulation of concepts designed to illuminate and to improve the practice of translation did not exist in classical antiquity. When commentary about translation first appeared in the West, it tended to take the form of passing remarks, not systematic arguments, and it was situated in the academic discipline of rhetoric” (2012:13). Venuti describes how translation was first used to study and create “new and better speeches” (13), and through these studies Romans developed two main methods of translation: an “instrumental method,” which focused more on the ideas of the text in question and served to “preserve the general style and force of the language” rather than translating “word for word” (13); the second method can be seen as the opposite of the first and was practiced by “the grammarian or ‘interpreter,’” who did translate word for word for the purpose of “linguistic analysis and textual exposition” (14).

The instrumental model persisted into present day translation studies, refined into the theory that “treats translation as the reproduction or transfer of an invariant which the source text contains” (Venuti 2012:483). The grammarian’s method was replaced by the hermeneutic method, an approach that assumes “language is creation thickly mediated by linguistic and cultural determinants ... [and] treats translation as an interpretation of the source text whose form, meaning, and effect are seen as variable, subject to inevitable transformation during the translating process” (483). Whereas the instrumental method seems to assume a single, universal message that can be found in the original text and

then conveyed across languages, the hermeneutic method treats translations as a variant of the original text, with an acceptance of the inevitability that meanings will change as the translator re-contextualizes and interprets the original text into a “form ... [that is] specific to the translating language and culture. ... A translator can achieve a formal or semantic correspondence by developing an analogous style, for example, or by relying on dictionary definitions, but the translation will nonetheless vary the form and meaning of the source text” (498).

Venuti argues that the hermeneutic method is not only a more logical approach to translation, but also more ethical since, “on the one hand, it yields the most incisive description and explanation of a translated text and its relations to its source; on the other hand, it promotes an ethics of translation that ... lays out the possibilities for innovation and change, for the creation of values” (485). I find Venuti’s discussion of the hermeneutic method to be particularly appealing, especially in terms of viewing a translation as a variant of the original text. As Dell Hymes has said on the communication of folklore, the “re-creative aspect is both inevitable and desirable” (1975:356); thinking of translated texts as another way to communicate similar (echoic) folklore is an important perspective to take in analyzing not just what is lost in the changes that are made, but also what is gained. Attempting to view Birnbaum’s translation of Murakami’s novel as an exact copy, just in another language, rather than a variant of the original, could lead back down that familiar road of seeking a label of authenticity that folklorists have long been trying to avoid. Further, Baccilega writes that translation is often an act of domesticating a text (2007:138), and so we can see the re-situated folklore of the

translator as being some sort of domestication—that is, the translator will use folklore relevant to his or her own culture and the groups that he or she identifies with (or is trying to sell the text to), and we can perhaps learn more about the translator’s culture from a translated text than we can the original writer’s.

### *A Note on Authenticity*

As mentioned earlier, much of early folkloric scholarship on folklore in literature has focused on determining authenticity (or lack thereof). This label has also been used in the past by folklorists who were interested in issues of translation. Over concern for the *losses* incurred through translation, Johann Gottfried Herder “linked authenticity and truth to original language” (Bendix 1997:38). But as Regina Bendix later argues, the concept of authenticity implies that anything not labeled as ‘authentic’ becomes ‘inauthentic,’ and attempting to create this distinction can glorify or “nostalgize the homogenous ... thus continually upholding the fallacy that cultural purity rather than hybridity is the norm” (9).

The act of translation is nothing if not a hybridizing of cultural references. Folklorists are not strangers to translation—as Elizabeth Fine discusses, what folklorists do is text making, but when we transcribe we translate (Fine 1984). Further, every time the folklorist writes an ethnography he or she is translating a group’s culture into an academic text, or more broadly into a text for others outside the group to be able to read and reach some sort of understanding of the group in question. The scholar presents how he or she conceives of a culture (though the scholar’s viewpoint is mitigated by methods

of reflexivity in ethnographic work). In a similar fashion, Birnbaum's translation presents his (a more Western) conception of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, one that has most Buddhist beliefs and spirituality removed in order to put forward a Japan in this novel that is not exotic but familiar to the English-speaking reader.

Earlier in this review I mentioned Birnbaum's use of the folkloresque in his substitutions to create a sense of authenticity. Foster and Tolbert argue that our focus should not be on questions of genuineness or authenticity such as the kind that Dorson raised, but on why the commodification of folklore is so successful (9). They are, however, speaking to the scholar, who had a responsibility to remember that 'authenticity' is a construct. This does not mean that authenticity does not exist, however; the concept of authenticity is very real for many people (Kodish 2011:36), and in my discussion of the folkloresque and authenticity I am speaking not of my own judgement upon the text, but of Birnbaum's active use of the concept of authenticity to appeal to the reader. For example, Birnbaum changes many of the Buddhist proverbs in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* into English-language proverbs; this makes the text feel more relevant to an English-speaking reader, since such proverbs are much easier to understand and identify with. By using this authenticity, Birnbaum presents a Japan that is familiar rather than exoticized, expanding upon Murakami's reach as a multinational writer.

### **Chapter Outline and Methodology**

Chapter One focuses on oral and narrative genres of folklore. It is divided into three major sections: proverbs, myths, and folktales and legends. The major focus of this

chapter is on the ways in which Murakami re-situates both Japanese and Western folklore. The ways in which Murakami re-situates folklore makes it difficult to separate out into either a strictly mimetic or referential category, and so I mostly treat de Caro and Jordan's two categories as one category. When discussing this novel in terms of de Caro and Jordan's work, I simply refer to 're-situated' folklore rather than arguing for one category or another. Murakami mimics folklore to set up plot and characters, but also uses this same folklore to refer to a deeper, cultural meaning that he then uses to put forward his own ideas and messages to the reader, thus placing his use of folklore in both categories at once.

Murakami uses proverbs and myths together to highlight how individuals in this postcolonial world are isolated, deprived of identity, and unable to form meaningful connections between each other. At the same time, Murakami's use of Buddhist myth in particular places his novel into a more spiritual setting that, in the end, even as it works with Western folklore to isolate the main character, Boku, it gives *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* a myth-like framework in which the novel becomes a myth itself (in Murakami's definition of a myth being a prototype for other stories).

Through his use of Ainu folklore, Murakami introduces a theme of colonization to which he then applies to not just Japan's indigenous people but to the whole of Japan, portraying Western consumerism as a colonizing force that has pervaded Japanese culture. This sets up his other uses of folklore to describe ways in which Japanese individuals can live within a postcolonial world. In his re-situation of other genres of narrative, Murakami draws out the blended nature of Japanese and Western culture, and

forms the argument that separating them has become impossible. Instead of rejecting Western culture, *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* shows how Japanese individuals can actively choose elements from both cultures that are meaningful to the individual and restore connections between people and the past that were previously lost through Western consumerism. The second chapter discusses this newfound agency in greater detail. Also discussed in this chapter are the changes that Birnbaum makes in his English translation, particularly in his translation of proverbs. It is here that I show how the category of echoic folklore might be used in translation studies from a folkloristic perspective.

Chapter Two focuses on material culture and the narratives that (both Japanese and Western) objects embody. A structuralist perspective is used to analyze the appearance of the architecture that Murakami introduces, and this is combined with Michael Ann Williams's argument that how buildings (and the rooms within) are used is just as important as their physical appearance. The use of architecture in this novel develops Murakami's argument that it is possible to use Western culture to live as a Japanese individual. His other uses of objects expand upon this and reveal the potential agency that individuals have in (re)creating an identity within a postcolonial framework.

The conclusion of this thesis more fully integrates the two main body chapters together, and also reflects on future steps that might be taken in this research. In particular, there is much to be expanded upon in terms of analyzing proverbs. My method of finding proverbs used by Murakami was to closely examine Birnbaum's English text, locate the proverbs that he used, and then compare those to Murakami's text. While this is what forms much of my discussion on the perspective a folklorist might take on



translation, there are, no doubt, many other uses of proverbs that have yet to be analyzed between *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, or even just within *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* by itself.

## Chapter One Narratives

This chapter closely examines how Murakami uses oral genres of folklore; its main focus is on narratives. Murakami uses both Western and Japanese expressions in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*—of the English-language expressions that he does use, Murakami tends to translate them from English into Japanese in a very literal way, such that when they are read in Japanese they sound awkward to the native Japanese speaker. Of course, when Murakami's work is translated into English, the translator is able to easily put Murakami's awkward translations back into their natural English forms. Changes begin to occur only when considering the translation of Japanese proverbs and expressions, especially those that are connected to Buddhist spirituality. While Birnbaum's translation erases certain references to Japanese spirituality, in using the category of echoic re-situated folklore (as discussed in the introduction) it is possible to see these changes not as a loss per se, but more of an expansion of Murakami's blending of Japanese and Western cultures.

In *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, Murakami uses the Buddhist references that he does in combination with both Western and Japanese myths to frame his own novel as a spiritual journey—a myth in itself. Through this journey, Murakami at first appears to be presenting individualism as a means to spiritual transformation, but the ending of the novel flips this idea of spiritual transformation through individualism on its head and instead claims that these cultures—Japanese and Western—can isolate individuals and

cause them to lose any meaningful identities. His use of folktales, Ainu lore, and historicity suggests that removing Western culture from Japan is not possible. His use of Ainu lore further makes the statement that Western consumerism has colonized Japan, resulting in a blended culture and making Murakami's novel a postcolonial neo-myth that posits the idea that individuals must choose what elements of each culture are most useful in (re)creating a meaningful identity for themselves.

### **1.1 Proverbs**

Akio Nakamata has described a tendency Murakami has to use expressions that aren't used in Japan but “give off the uncanny feeling one gets when reading English idioms translated literally into Japanese” (Zielinska-Elliott and Kaminka 2017:179)—for example, Murakami writes a sentence that, when translated directly from Japanese into English, reads awkwardly as “An early rising bird is able to catch a lot of worms.” When his work is translated into English, the translator just naturally changes it to the actual expression of “the early bird catches the worm.” Murakami seems to be using folkloresque American proverbs (folkloresque in the sense that, given the way he translates them to read awkwardly in the Japanese language, they *seem* like Western proverbs but the way in which Murakami decides to word them makes them invented references to those proverbs) to give his novels a sense of foreignness, to add to his writing style that makes Japanese readers feel like they're reading a novel that has been translated into Japanese (Zielinska-Elliott and Kaminka 179).

Murakami seems to use similar tactics in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, as well. While I have no doubt that there is more than one example of this occurring, Naomi Matsuoka identifies one such instance that appears as Boku's wife is explaining why she is leaving him near the beginning of the novel. In the Japanese novel, Boku's (ex-)wife states that “でも、あなたと一緒にいてももうどこにも行けないのよ [Demo, anata to isshoni itemo mou dokonimo ikenaino yo]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 39). According to Matsuoka, this phrase:

“in Japanese ... sounds unnatural and even contradictory. Literally it means, ‘I’m not able to go any other place as long as I stay with you.’ Actually this phrase contains Murakami’s literal translation of the American idiom ‘going somewhere’ in the sense of progressing or achieving, something which is not idiomatic in Japanese” (1993:435).

Birnbaum translates the phrase into this very idiom, and the unnaturalness is lost once it is put back into English: “But I’m going nowhere staying with you” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 25). A major theme in the beginning of the novel is loss—the novel begins with the death of a girl Boku used to know, and then immediately in the next chapter describes his wife leaving him. By expressing a large part of this loss through an American idiom, the implication that America might have something to do with this loss is formed. It seems likely that Murakami is playing with the idea that “most believe that frequent divorce originated in the United States and parts of Europe in the 1960s and then spread to the rest of the world ... [this is] what scholars have often called a ‘divorce revolution’” (Fuess 2004:1). In fact, during the Meiji period (Japan’s period of modernization and

industrialization, 1868 - 1912 [Irokawa 1988]) Japan did begin to adopt a system which involved court intervention, a system that “resembl[ed] that of many contemporary Western nations” (Feuss 101).

But Boku’s wife does not use the court system and instead simply leaves when Boku doesn’t raise any protests, a method of divorce that is a more “indigenous solution” (Feuss 101). This mutual agreement style of divorce was the only method of divorce before the Meiji era, and is still common today; Japan does not share the same taboos on divorce that many Western countries have through their histories with Christianity (Feuss 5). What was more significantly affected by the changes brought about during the Meiji era was who initiated the divorce in the newly adopted court system method—with more Western ideas of feminism being brought into Japan, “wives initiated most divorce suits under the Meiji Civil Code” (Feuss 129). The use of an American idiom allows Boku’s wife to explain her departure—she is now ‘going somewhere,’ both literally and, one would assume, metaphorically—and her explanation is Western in a literal sense and, perhaps, in a more metaphorical sense as Japan’s adoption of Western feminism resulted in women no longer needing marriage to survive. However the separation itself is more Japanese.

An interesting parallel of sorts to Boku’s separation from his wife occurs when, near the end of the novel, Boku also ends up losing his girlfriend. This event occurs when, tasked by the mysterious character known only as ‘the Boss's Secretary’ to find a special sheep, Boku and his girlfriend find an American-style farm house in rural Hokkaido, Japan. The day after entering this house, Boku meets The Sheep Man, a

character dressed up in a sheep costume. Even as Boku struggles to figure out who this strange character is, The Sheep Man claims to have driven Boku's girlfriend away and that he'll never see her again. He goes on to state that Boku deserves to lose her. The exact words that Birnbaum uses is "Justdeserts" (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 298)—note that Birnbaum writes all of the Sheep Man's dialogue without any spaces; Murakami's Sheep Man speaks in typical Japanese. Murakami originally wrote "その報いだよ [*sono mukuida yo*]" (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 152), which can be seen as a more informal version of the Japanese proverb 因果応報 (*ingaouhou*), which can be translated literally as "karma retribution" but is more equivalent to the proverb "as a man sows, so will he reap" (Buchanan 1965:105).

Murakami's choice of phrase has much to do with Buddhist doctrine in its reference to karma, or "moral retribution" (Keown 1992:19). It is also an element that Birnbaum removes in his translation when he translates the above line into "Justdeserts," perhaps because a non-Japanese, English speaking reader would not be able to fully appreciate it—karma is more complicated than getting what one deserves in one's current life; it also affects how and where one is reborn (Obeyesekere 2002:2). In a discussion of the referential use of proverbs in *Re-Situating Folklore*, de Caro and Jordan argue that using proverbs in one's everyday life illustrates the ability to communicate well within one's culture or group—they act as an easy to understand "'shorthand' method ... in order to characterize a situation" (2004:94), and are therefore useful to writers in the same way that they are useful to oral speakers. Not only are they used to "characterize fictional human encounters" (94) to give the characters in the novel a more realistic feel,

but the use of proverbs also creates a cultural context for the reader, explaining to readers the society the character is in and “suggesting the restraints within which he must operate and aspects of the background against which he will be judged” (97). In Murakami’s case, we see a shift from his use of American idioms in the beginning of the novel to explain a loss, to a Buddhist proverb to explain a similar loss. With both being used to explain similar situations, the differences lie in how they create separate cultural contexts for the reader and imply a shift in how loss is being understood. In the first case, with the use of a Western proverb, loss is understood as coming from a more selfish standpoint. Boku’s wife is not satisfied with her life and so leaves him at a time in which he needs some sort of emotional support. Boku loses his wife because he lacks the ability to empathize with her needs. With the Buddhist proverb, loss comes more from a sense of responsibility. Boku’s girlfriend leaves not because she necessarily wants to, but because if she doesn’t then Boku will not be receiving his proper punishment, as dictated by the karmic judgement he receives.

At the same time, considering these expressions on their own (without a consideration of the other genres Murakami uses—a discussion that will follow shortly) shows a certain amount of shallowness in both. De Caro and Jordan argue that, in the modern world, proverbs split into a dichotomy of meaningfulness due to the assumption that if a proverb has lasted this long, it must be worth keeping around and it must mean something, and shallowness due to it being “a very conventional wisdom” (116). Both the American and the Japanese expression attempt to explain a significant event in Boku’s

life, but they do not suggest solutions nor do they by themselves repair Boku's apathy towards both his (ex-)wife and girlfriend.

In the original Japanese version, this particular reference to a Buddhist proverb works together with Murakami's use of myth to make Boku's journey parallel a Buddhist pilgrimage, an idea that shall be further explored in the following section on myth. The removal of Buddhism in the translation takes away from these moments of intertextuality, and this is not the only place where more spiritual implications are removed by Birnbaum. In *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, Chapter 24 is called い,わ,し,の誕生—*iwashi no tanjou*; Iwashi's (or Sardine's) Birth. This is the chapter in which Boku's cat gets a name. Despite this name being simply Sardine, Murakami adds a comma-like punctuation called “*bōten*” (Seats 2006:209) between each character of Iwashi. This is done to create a sense of spiritual reverence for the name, stressing the importance that Murakami places on individuality and implying a “blessing [of] the birth” (Seats 209) that Iwashi experiences.

The context in which Iwashi receives his name is more Christian than Buddhist—when asked what she thinks of the name, Boku's girlfriend states that it is “*なんだか天地創造みたいね* [*nandaka tenchi sōzō mitai ne*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 237), or “It's like being witness to the creation of heaven and earth” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 179), and immediately afterwards Boku states “*ここにいわしあれ* [*koko ni iwashi are*]” (238), or “Let there be Kipper” (179). However when considered in just a Christian context the scene is more humorous than anything else. The name Sardine/Kipper is silly when being compared to the creation of everything. The chapter's title in the Japanese



text, however, seems to serve to bring in a more Buddhist flair with its revering of a name like Sardine. In Buddhism, anything (including sardines) can be sacred “if a person believes in it” (Crane et al 2012:83); in fact, there is a Japanese Buddhist saying that Yasuaki Nara, a professor at Komazawa University, translates as “even the head of a sardine can be an object of faith” (Nara 1967:1).

When Birnbaum translates this title, he turns it into “One for the Kipper” which, while Westernizing it and making it perhaps more relevant to a British reader, also creates a reference to “win one for the Gipper,” an American expression which means to do something in memory of someone important. His translation carries, as best it can, the same message that Murakami creates with his title; it focuses on individuals, and has an implication of something being done for someone special. The use of a proverb implies that there is some sort of wisdom being transmitted, however the spirituality from the original title is mostly gone, and the specialness Murakami places on an individual’s name (no matter how simple) is not translated.

In a consideration of how Murakami’s novel and Birnbaum’s translation are organized by chapters, there lies a construction of a cultural framework that works to fit the novel into their respective reader’s culture. The first three parts of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* are labeled simply as dates, whereas Birnbaum only gives *A Wild Sheep Chase* a date for Part One, and then calls Part Two “July, Eight Years Later” and Part Three “September, Two Months Later” (as opposed to Murakami’s “第二章 1978/7月 [Part 2 July 1978]” and “第三章 1978/9月 [Part 3 September 1978]”). Murakami’s style has the start of the novel mimicking that of a diary, which calls back to a Japanese literary genre

known as *shishousetsu*, or the “I-novel” (Fowler 1992). This genre emerged during the Meiji era; inspired by Naturalism, this genre “brought new meaning to the ‘self,’ ... not by an assertion of individuality but by its reversion to *selflessness*, as exhibited in the protagonist’s return to the comforting embrace of nature, family, and tradition” (Fowler 15).

Boku does, in fact, end up traveling to rural Japan, though there is not much comfort to be found there due to the “karmic retribution” he experiences. Further, the style of the I-novel begins to break down the more Boku becomes involved with the supernatural elements in the story. The starting method of labeling each part with a date ends after Part Three, right when the concept that the main plot is going to involve sheep is introduced. After that, time is not mentioned in any of the titles until the very last chapter right before the epilogue, but that is not a specific date and only gives the time of day. This removal of time from the chapters that frame the story parallel the story itself as Boku reaches the farmhouse in rural Hokkaido where “死んでしまった時間の匂いがした [*shindeshimatta jikan no nioi ga shita*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 132), or “time was dead in the air” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 282). The breakdown of time within the novel mimics the narrative style of the folktale in that folktales can take place in any time and are generally non-specific about what time the tale takes place in (Bascom 1965:5-6). With this play on structure, Murakami moves his story from an I-novel world and into more of a folktale world.

Birnbaum’s translation does not as strongly parallel a diary or the I-novel style in the beginning, and so the breaking down of time throughout the novel is not as obvious in

the English version. While this loss is unfortunate, since framing the novel and its theme of individuality within a spiritual context is important to Murakami's use of myth in this novel, if we consider these changes through the category of echoic re-situated folklore (discussed in the introduction), we see that there is something gained alongside what is lost. While the spirituality is mostly removed with the changes Birnbaum makes, the conversations between characters become more relevant to an English-speaking reader. "Just deserts" and "one for the Kipper" may not be Buddhist, but they still carry echoes of the original text. "Just deserts" still implies a judgement of sorts in that Boku is getting what he deserves, while, as mentioned earlier, "one for the Kipper" still carries a sense of reverence even though that reverence is not quite as focused on the individual that Murakami's Japanese chapter title is.

The insertion of English-language proverbs also makes them folkloresque in the sense that they add a level of authenticity to Birnbaum's translation. Because he is translating someone else's work, his changes make it *seem* like those were Murakami's original words. This creates the impression that Murakami had been using these English-language proverbs all along, and using them in Japanese contexts. Murakami is already mediating between Japanese and Western folklore by blending separate cultural references together in such a way that they do not contradict each other. Birnbaum expands upon this mediation by first creating the impression that Murakami had originally used even more Western proverbs and expressions than he actually did; and second, by placing these Western expressions into a Japanese context and making them work just as well as if they were in a Western context.

## 1.2 Myths

In a discussion on classical Greek myths, Murakami has described myths as “the prototype for all stories. When we write a story on our own it can’t help but link up with all sorts of myths. Myths are like a reservoir containing every story there is” (Murakami 2002). This definition shall be used as a working definition for myth in this thesis, regardless of any folkloristic definitions. He does not discuss any Japanese myths in this interview (or others), so it is not as clear if he considers these in the same way. The narratives he uses from Japanese Buddhism are still considered sacred today, but the way in which he re-situates them is similar to his use of Greek myths—there does not seem to be any more sacredness attached to them than there is to the folktales and legends that he uses (which will be discussed in the following section).

While Murakami does seem to have a distinction between myths and other tales, due to his describing them as a *prototype* for other stories, I shall be discussing the myths that Murakami uses as though they are secular folktales rather than a sacred narrative that Murakami believes to be true. I only separate them out into a separate section from my later discussion on folktales because of Murakami’s more subtle distinction between myth and tale. At the very least, he seems to be applying some sort of secular sacredness to myths in that they are, in his eyes, the first stories that create all other stories.

However, with the working definition of myths as stories’ prototypes, it becomes more clear how Murakami has re-situated these narratives into his own. Murakami incorporates at least two myths in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*: “Jason and the Golden

Fleece,” and “The Journey of Zenzai.” The first is a classical Greek narrative in which the titular hero, Jason, is tasked by the evil king Pelias to find the golden fleece in order to reclaim his throne from Pelias. The second is a narrative from the Buddhist Sutras, in which a young man named ぜんざい (Zenzai), or Sudhana in the Indian version, is “guided on the Buddhist path by fifty-three spiritual friends” (Quinter 2015:143). Boku in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* does not meet anywhere near fifty-three other characters during his journey, however there are many other parallels between his journey and Zenzai’s. Murakami uses this myth to frame the novel in a more spiritual or Buddhist perspective, a similar tactic to some of his chapter titles. Since Murakami uses both of these myths in the same novel, they eventually inevitably become entangled and blended together. I will first discuss them separately (as much as I can) and then explore how Murakami brings them together.

In analyzing Murakami’s use of myth, most scholars have focused on his use of classical Greek myths (Strecher 2011). This is a logical place to start, since Murakami himself has only ever discussed (however briefly) his use of Greek myths (Murakami 2002), and has never said a single word about Japanese myths. Finding Greek narratives was where I began my own search for re-situated myths in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*. Given that the main character, Boku, is tasked with finding a sheep by a man who threatens to ruin Boku’s life should he refuse the quest (therefore making this man the villain), it seems an easy connection to make between this novel and the Greek myth of Jason and his quest for the golden fleece.

The use of Greek myth in Japanese popular culture is not a foreign idea to Japan. Several manga and anime draw heavily on Greek mythology, and other Japanese writers have drawn from these myths as well (Haase 2008:549). Therefore, whether the reader of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* is Western or Japanese, the use of a classical Greek myth will not go unnoticed. By using a myth to set up the start of the novel's main plot, Murakami creates the impression that Boku is about to set off on an epic quest. Except Boku has no interest in doing anything interesting. The character of Boku becomes a parody of the ancient Greek heroes, who never hesitated to make a name for themselves or perform great deeds. Boku, on the other hand, has no name within the novel and has no desire to leave his home. His exact words in describing himself are, in part, “...凡庸な人間です (bonyouna ningendesu),” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 217), or “...I am an utterly mediocre person” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 163).

To make Boku the exact opposite of the boastful heroes from Greek myth is, perhaps, to make him more relatable to the modern reader. Who would immediately jump to the task of seeking out a rare sheep just because someone completely unknown to you demanded it? At the same time, Benjamin Garstad discusses how heroes of Greek myths have always been portrayed as individuals who “lived more or less as ordinary men” until fate called on them to accomplish great things (2014:229). These Greek heroes, then, represent the best or most heroic that society has to offer. When the best society has to offer is a man who doesn't want to leave his material comforts to immediately save himself and his business partner and friend, Murakami seems to be making a critique on modern society: it is an extremely apathetic and materialistic one. With the frequent

mentions of Western materials (to be discussed further in chapter two), it would appear that Japan's modern society is too fixated on the Western world.

The Boss's Secretary also plays an eventual role in this critique. As the threatening figure who first gives Boku his quest to find the sheep, the secretary plays the role of Pelias from "Jason and the Golden Fleece." He takes over the Boss's business when the Boss falls ill due to the sheep's influence; although the Boss is not Boku's father, there is still some impression that the secretary has, in a way, "usurped" the Boss's throne as he claims all of the Boss's possessions and businesses for himself. While he is not trying to get Boku killed with this quest, he does knowingly send Boku into the possibility of becoming possessed by the sheep. His desire to gain more power by finding the sheep is the secretary's sole purpose, just as Pelias acts to maintain the power he already has by trying to get Jason killed. In *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, the Boss's secretary's single-mindedness for obtaining power creates a villain—one that is a foreigner—in a world that strives for nothing more than creature comforts.

During the climax of the novel, it is revealed that the secretary knew exactly where the sheep was all along, and was only using Boku to lure it out. This sets up the secretary as more than just being Pelias's equivalent. He is more of an all-knowing character that manipulates the people around him and pulls on their strings from a distance. After their initial meeting, Boku and the secretary only communicate via telephone—this is an important point, as the Boss's driver claims to be able to communicate with God over the telephone. With the Boss's secretary being not fully Japanese himself, but Japanese-American (which adds an extra element of foreignness to

him), Murakami frames the secretary as being similar to one of the all-knowing, all powerful Greek gods—the secretary is not quite of Japan (according to Boku), and uses the telephone to communicate with Boku in the same way that the driver claims God communicates with him. Except the secretary is not *all*-powerful. Next to the sheep, he has limitations. Without the sheep's powers he ends up being killed by Boku (or, at least, the end of the novel heavily implies that the secretary is killed in an explosion that Boku sets off, though Murakami does not actually describe the man dying).

Afterwards, the Boss's driver cannot get ahold of God on the telephone. Was this Japanese-American—one who was trying to gain more power and control over Japan—God? Perhaps the Boss's driver was too fixated on modern technology and was letting himself be scammed. Or, perhaps the Boss's secretary becomes a metaphor for what other Japanese people have criticized Japan for: becoming too Western. This is a critique that Murakami is familiar with, even within Japanese critiques of his own writings. The Western world has, according to these critics, taken over too much of the Japanese culture, threatening to destroy that which makes Japan unique. The Boss's secretary, then, represents the fear that the Western culture is becoming too powerful in Japan. His connections to Western myth and gods only exaggerates this.

With the re-situation of a Western myth, we find a critique of apathy and materialism, along with an exploration of how powerful Western culture now is in Japan. Next I examine his use of a Japanese Buddhist myth. Susan Fisher has identified the ways in which Murakami has used the Shinto creation myth of Izanami and Izanagi in his 1985 novel *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* alongside the Greek myth of Orpheus (Fisher 2000),



arguing that Murakami uses Shinto beliefs to create symbolic meaning. Murakami, then, re-contextualizes religious sacred myths as tales to frame his own stories as something more than secular. He does the same thing with *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, only with Buddhist narratives rather than Shinto.

Murakami's grandfather was a Buddhist priest, so Murakami is more than likely familiar with Buddhist sacred texts. The story of Zenzai describes a young man who is sent on a journey by a Buddhist teacher to walk the Buddhist path. While on this spiritual pilgrimage, Zenzai meets several teachers who guide him, until eventually he obtains "the Buddhist training equal to that of a bodhisattva [a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings]" (Usui 2007:32).

It is the teachers that Zenzai meets along the way that are particularly interesting. While he meets the expected Buddhist monks and nuns, he also learns Buddhist lessons from laypeople, including a courtesan (Usui 32). Boku's girlfriend is a call girl, and also ends up being his most reliable guide in searching for the sheep. Her large ears—perhaps reminiscent of statues and paintings of the Buddha, who is also depicted with abnormally large ears—give her the supernatural ability to make plot-relevant predictions.

Zenzai's journey ends with a Buddhist lesson on the "relationship between illusion and reality" (Eckel 1992:4) when he reaches a dwelling that he "first sees ... from the outside as a vast interconnected representation of reality; then he enters the dwelling and sees it filled with reflections of hundreds of thousands of other dwellings, all equally magnificent and vast" (Eckel 20). Boku's journey comes to an end when he reaches an American-style house in rural Japan. Upon entering this house, Boku

experiences a sense of vertigo that he eventually describes as time dying. He also finds a mirror that, when looking through it, puts him in another state of vertigo and makes him feel as though *he* is the reflection and the real Boku is on the other side of the mirror (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 181; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 319). It is this same mirror that shows Boku that The Sheep Man is not actually there in reality, clueing Boku in to this character's true identity (the Rat's ghost).

With Boku retracing the steps of his friend, the Rat, he embarks on a pilgrimage of sorts. Murakami uses a Buddhist myth to make Boku's journey a spiritual one. Of course the Buddhist pilgrimage ends where it begins, to represent, it would seem, "the Buddhist concept of rebirth" (Usui 26). The use of a Buddhist proverb to explain the loss of Boku's girlfriend as his "karmic" punishment emphasizes not only the Buddhist nature of this journey, but also implies a rebirth on the part of Boku—he has done his pilgrimage, he is given judgement, and he then returns as someone who is supposed to be more enlightened than when he left. Boku does return to where he started his journey in the epilogue, however whatever enlightenment he received is not similar to the enlightenment the Buddhists hope to gain—that is, to be freed from "all suffering or sadness" (Eckel 177) by becoming unattached to the world. While Boku's return is marked by no longer being attached to the material world—implied by him giving all of his money to his business partner—it is also accompanied with sadness and loneliness as he sits by the beach and cries. While this might be interpreted as Murakami questioning how fulfilling being unattached to the world can actually make someone, I believe that

Murakami's true message in this can only be understood by considering the two myths—Greek and Buddhist—together.

Susan Fisher, in discussing *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, argues that “since the entire novel is devoted to the somewhat ludicrous search for a sheep, one can perhaps assume that the real target of the quest is ‘modern Japan’ itself” (2000:162). Fisher's choice of wording is apt; Murakami sets up this search for the sheep as a heroic quest straight out of a Greek myth. If the true goal is to find a modern Japanese identity, then Murakami's re-situating of a Buddhist myth alongside it makes it a sacred and spiritual quest, one that can only be taken up by average Japanese citizens represented by Boku. Like most Greek myths, the climax is a show of the hero fighting against evil as he sets up a bomb to kill the Boss's secretary, but despite the end of his journey he is not celebrated and ends up exactly as he left—alone, and with no name, although now he is much more aware of how miserable he is (and is, perhaps even more alone than before, as his girlfriend with the large ears is still missing from when she disappeared back at the house that the Rat's ghost was residing in).

Murakami's early framing of *Hitsuji wo Meguru Bōken* as an I-novel adds to this ending in that the I-novel created a “notion of individualism as a form of isolated self-contemplation [and the I-novel itself] may have been the only avenue to spiritual independence in a society that placed severe constraints on interpersonal relations” during the Meiji era (Fowler 15). Thus the beginning of the novel would clue the Japanese reader into the idea that the novel is going to be a spiritual journey that celebrates isolation from society, only for Murakami to turn this on its head with an

ending that portrays this very isolation as a negative thing. Further, the use of an American idiom in the beginning of this quest to describe why Boku has lost his wife, and then a Japanese Buddhist proverb to explain why he has lost his girlfriend, raises the question of whether or not there is any significant difference between the two cultures—both lead to loss, and even moving from one to the other does little to reconnect Boku to any kind of meaningful identity.

Boku's search for the sheep ends in failure—the Rat had killed it long before Boku arrived. Upon both destroying the American-style house in rural Japan, and killing the Boss's secretary along with it, the most powerful symbols of Western culture that Murakami creates in this novel are gone. But this does not lead to a successful (re)discovery of a Japanese identity. Instead, it only leads to more of the same, and Boku is “reborn” into a position worse off than he was before. In using myths, Murakami creates the impression that simply shedding whatever is deemed as *batakusai* (obtrusively Westernized) will not necessarily lead to a unique identity for Japan within the modern world; Japan has adapted parts of Western culture into its own identity for so long now that they have become a natural element of Japan, and eliminating those parts might lead to even more uncertainty.

### **1.3 Folktales and the Folkloresque (and a Legend)**

What we glean from Murakami's use of myths is complicated when we take into account his use of folktales and the folkloresque. Three characters shall be considered in this discussion: that of the sheep, Boku's girlfriend with the large ears, and also the Rat.

Both of the male characters are the result of Murakami integrating and parodying several different forms of folklore, and their influences on Boku's girlfriend create a further integration of Japanese tales and folk beliefs. The Rat is an integration of both a folktale and a legend, and his character combined with that of the sheep works to question whether eliminating the Western elements of culture from Japan is even feasible.

The sheep, with its ability to possess others, is highly reminiscent of Japanese folktales about supernatural creatures known as *tsukimono* (つきもの), or possessing/haunting thing. The key element of the *tsukimono* is that, while it is possessing its human victim, it tends to force some of its own characteristics—both physical and mental—onto the human. For example, if one were to be possessed by a *kitsune* (きつね), or fox spirit, then the human victim may sprout a fox tail or ears, or take on a more fox-like behavior. Near the end of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, Boku comes across the Sheep Man, a character that is eventually revealed to be a form of the Rat's ghost. Before Boku realizes this character is really the Rat, the Sheep Man looks nothing like Boku's deceased friend. Boku even comments that the Sheep Man moves similarly to the Rat, but it can't possibly be him due to the height differences (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 156; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 300). Being under five feet tall is not the only change the Rat undergoes in this form; he is also wearing a sheep costume, complete with floppy ears held up by wires, and has real horns protruding from his head.

Both Patricia Welch (2005) and Matthew Strecher (2011) have highlighted the sheep's symbolism as representing Western consumerism. If that is the case, then being possessed by the sheep is not just being possessed by a folkloresque supernatural entity,

but it is being possessed by consumerism. To be so possessed by this culture that one takes on actual physical attributes of it speaks to how powerful it has become in Japanese society—and, indeed, we see many hints of this before Boku even learns of the sheep when the reader learns how materialistic Boku is to the point that names of people aren't even important to him. It is also notable that it is a sheep that represents this consumeristic possession. Murakami takes full advantage of the Western concept of “sheeple”—a blend of ‘sheep’ and ‘people’ that implies they follow along blindly.

Further, the sheep's folkloresque connection to a Japanese supernatural creature leads into an interesting parody of Japanese nationalism. Michael Dylan Foster discusses the “*yōkai* boom” beginning in the 1980s in Japan, during which the broad category of *yōkai*—a class of supernatural creatures that includes the *tsukimono*—began “to gather momentum in both academic and popular media” (2008:205). Foster adds that “one element of this putative boom ... is the continued production of new *yōkai*” (205). These invented *yōkai*, alongside their older counterparts, acted (and still act today) “as icons of a shared rural history ... represent[ing] characters from a presumed national memory” (207). The *yōkai* in Japan represent a continuity with the past as well as Japanese fears of becoming disconnected with a rural/past/traditional Japan (Foster 2008). Murakami's sheep *yōkai* has similarities in Timothy H. Evans's discussion of H. P. Lovecraft's “invention of tradition” (2005:119); according to Evans, “Lovecraft uses texts that are not traditional (i.e., he wrote them), but their structure or style builds on established patterns, they use traditional motifs within an original narrative, or they incorporate believable contexts that give them an air of traditionality” (119). Murakami

invents a supernatural creature that builds on more “traditional” Japanese versions, creating a folkloresque creature that *feels* traditional and has that “odor of folklore” (Foster and Tolbert 2016:10), but with a dash of Western culture mixed in as well.

Evans's essay on the works by Neil Gaiman is used (among other essays in *The Folkloresque*) to describe the integration of folkloresque elements, arguing that “folklore and the folkloresque may give writers sources of content, structure, texture, setting, *characters*, and many other elements, but they also provide authenticity, a sense of connection between an author’s text and his or her evocation of tradition, which may imply a continuity with the past” (2016:64-5, italics mine). In using an invented, folkloresque East-West blended *yōkai*, Murakami forms a commentary on Japan’s connections to the past, and the traditions and identity that are assumed to result from this. Through a *yōkai* that is part Western, Murakami creates the impression that Japan’s past has never been pure Japanese.

The connections between Japanese folklore and Japanese national identity are not unique to the 1980s. Japan shares the same nationalistic ghosts in folklore that Roger Abrahams describes as existing in Europe’s conception of folklore. About a century after folkloristics emerged in Europe with the purpose of preserving the past and true spirit of the nations within (Abrahams 1993), Japanese scholar Yanagita Kunio developed folkloristics in Japan with the same mission in mind. After Japan went through its industrial revolution in the late 19th century, by “the early 20th century *yōkai* came to be

associated nostalgically with the pastoral landscape of a disappearing Japan” (Foster 161).

For Murakami to invent a Western *yōkai* during the *yōkai* boom of the 1980s critiques the modern Japanese nationalism that is implied when Japanese critics declare something as being “too Western.” The sheep in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* absorbs its victim’s personality, completely changing the people it possesses as demonstrated by both the Boss (who is left in a comatose state with a brain tumor slowly killing him) and the Sheep Professor (who has nothing left to his personality aside from a newly formed obsession with finding the sheep again). It is individuality, and the desire to retain that individuality, that ends the sheep; the Rat, desperate to retain his memories and own personality, kills himself to kill the sheep that has possessed him. Interestingly enough, after it is revealed that the sheep is killed and during the epilogue is the only moment when Boku makes a reference to one of Murakami’s earlier works. *Yōkai* are meant to be “icons of a shared rural history ... [and] represent characters from a presumed national memory” (Foster 207). The sheep is the only thing that disturbs this sense of a single, national identity. With the sheep destroyed in the novel, it would seem that there is now a reconnection with a past that is purely Japanese. However, the reference to one of Murakami’s earlier works that Boku makes is in requesting his business partner obtain a pinball machine and a jukebox for their bar—even with a connection to the past (re)formed, Western culture remains and the Japan in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* remains transformed by its encounter with the West even after its removal.



The feasibility of removing anything to do with Western culture is first questioned by Murakami in the form of the sheep. The character of the Rat, when considered alongside two particular folk narratives, adds more to this discussion. During the same period that folkloristics was emerging in Japan and the *yōkai* boom was in full effect, a select number of folktales were being selected by the Japanese government to represent the nation—these stories were then told to young children in schools across the nation (Antoni 1991:160-1). One of the narratives selected was a translated version of one of Aesop’s fables: tale type ATU 110 Belling the Cat, or the Japanese title *nezumi no chie* (ねずみの知恵)—The Wisdom of the Mouse/Rat (Antoni 161).

Perhaps Murakami’s invention of a Western *yōkai* is also a parody of the government choosing a Western fable to partially represent the country. At the same time, the story also fits in well with the Rat’s plot line. The fable describes a group of mice who are always hunted by a cat; desperate to stop the cat, the mice come up with the idea to put a bell on the feline so that they will always hear it coming. While the idea is a good one, none of the mice are brave enough to risk getting close enough to the cat to stick a bell on it. The fable concludes with some variation of the moral that it is “easy to propose impossible remedies” (Aesop 1867:80-1).

Murakami’s character the Rat is in part a folkloresque entity that refers back to this fable. The feasibility of removing Western culture from Japan is put into question when the Rat not only comes up with a plan to kill the sheep but actually successfully does so. When Boku later meets the Rat’s ghost in the form of a man in a sheep costume, the Rat is wearing a bell pinned to his outfit. The sheep has been rendered harmless by

the Rat, but its effects upon Japan still remain. Perhaps rather than destroying Western culture in Japan, the Rat's character represents a domestication of it. Even as he is transformed by Western culture possessing him, he transforms the West into something harmless, and it is this new, domesticated version of the West that continues to exist in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*'s Japan.

In order to do this transformation, however, the Rat must isolate himself from the rest of society in order to protect it from the more antagonistic version of the sheep. This self-isolation draws heavily from a Japanese narrative mostly told in folk songs about a man named なかむらじろきち (仲村次郎吉), Nakamura Jirokichi (1797 - 1831), more popularly known by his nickname ねずみこぞう (鼠小僧), Nezumi Kozō. This Nezumi (Rat/Mouse) is very similar to Europe's Robin Hood; folk narratives depict Nezumi stealing from the ruling samurai warlords of the time and generally causing trouble for the ruling class for the sake of the lower classes. The story ends when Nezumi is caught and beheaded, but before his execution he divorces his wife (or wives, depending on the version) so that they will no longer be associated with him. The story of Nezumi has frequently been adapted into popular culture forms of media, from short stories to plays. In 1969, one of these plays, *nezumi kozō jirokichi* (ねずみこぞじろきち), “attempts to place the experience of the atomic bomb in the broader context of Japanese history and the Japanese people's struggle to escape political oppression. This struggle is represented in the relations of the Guardian, who symbolizes the present emperor, with ‘The

Rats' (the five manifestations of Nezumi Kozō), regarded as the defenders of the weak” (Takaya 1986:515).

The story of *Nezumi Kozō* is, among other Japanese folk hero legends, a story about “correct[ing] the wrongs done by [an] unjust social system” (Prusa 2016), despite their acts of “committing extra-legal violence” (Prusa). In *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, the violence that the Rat commits is towards himself when he commits suicide—an act that, in Japan, is “far from being an expression of worthlessness or bleak despair (though it may be these as well)—[it] can be seen as braver, more ironic, or more aggressive than it would be for a Western person” (Iwasaka and Toelken 1994:36).

Sato Mikio has pointed out the similarities between the Rat’s death and the suicide of Yukio Mishima—an author who was also a nationalist who had founded a militia that attempted a coup d’etat with the goal of restoring the Emperor’s pre-war powers. After it failed, Mishima committed *seppuku* (ritual suicide by disembowelment) (Mikio 2006). Both *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* and *A Wild Sheep Chase* begin on the day that Mishima’s death was discovered by news media, except in the novel Boku cannot hear what is happening on the television because everyone else around him is too loud and talking about their own lives. Mishima’s death goes unnoticed by Boku and the others around him.

There seems to be a connection between Mishima’s death and the Rat’s own suicide. Both the Rat and Mishima had the idea to restore Japan to a past state—but in connecting the Rat’s story to a legend about a Robin Hood figure that, in the end, can only isolate himself to save those he cares about, and to a fable about proposing

impossible remedies, Murakami implies that it is impossible to restore the Japan that people might be nostalgic for; in fact, with the further detail of Boku and others not noticing Mishima's death, and nobody except Boku knowing about the Rat's death, it would seem that trying to follow through with one's proposed but impossible remedy results in one doing it alone, as the rest of society is too busy with their own lives to become involved.

Boku himself only becomes involved when his girlfriend pushes him into it. Many literary critics have made the argument that Murakami is sexist in his portrayal of women characters—they show up when needed for the plot, have little to no personality, and then disappear again. However, this is an argument that could be made for most of Murakami's characters, regardless of gender (and is also, in fact, characteristic of many narrative genres). In the case of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*, Boku's disregard of his girlfriend's name, and his attraction to just her ears—implying he sees her more as an object than a person—fits in with the theme of the novel. Boku is materialistic throughout much of the story, as is much of Japan in the entirety of the book. As discussed in the section on myths, Boku has a spiritual transformation of some sort by the end of the novel (though the positiveness of this experience is rather ambiguous). The spiritual aspect is not limited to myth, however; in using the story of Nezumi Kozō, Murakami connects his story to a well of Robin Hood-like characters that are—in both Japan and the West—emblematic of a certain 'spiritual' inclination: possessions are irrelevant for them (Warshow 1948:), and they become the exponents of the victory of spirit over material things (Buruma 2001).

Spirituality is further implied in certain folkloresque elements that Murakami adds, particularly those to do with Boku's large-eared girlfriend. Her sudden disappearance near the end of the novel mimics a common motif (D2095. Magic disappearance [Thompson 1955-8]) in Japanese folktales in which a character (not the protagonist) disappears. In Japanese folklore, "sudden disappearances were often attributed to the spirit realm, as many believed that spirits took the person away to the spirit world (Reider 2005:9). The disappearance of Boku's girlfriend is used to apply suspicion upon the Sheep Man (who tells Boku that she's safe and simply left the mountain), and also to add another connection between Boku's girlfriend and the spiritual world. She is shown to have the ability to accurately predict the future very early on in the novel, implying she has some sort of connection to a more spiritual world. But her disappearing right when the Sheep Man is introduced adds an interesting layer to her character, especially when considering her alongside Japanese shamanism.

Ichirō Hori has conducted a survey of Japanese narratives of multiple genres that "since the earliest times [have depicted] Japanese women ... on occasion ... [as] possessors of spiritual power" (Hori 1975:233). He has paid "considerable attention to the shamaness as a 'mediator' between the world of men and the world of the gods and spirits" (Hori 232). Further, Yanagita's work describes two categories of Japanese shamanesses: The first, *tataki miko*, is made up of those women who are "attached to large shrines [and] perform sacred dances at festival times" (Hori 232) while the other consists of the aforementioned mediums (*kuchi-yose*) who have a more mysterious lifestyle; "where they live is not usually known. A shamaness simply walks into a village

from some place ten or twenty miles away, holds seances for those who come to her, and moves on” (232), disappearing without anyone knowing where she might be going next.

Boku’s girlfriend walks to the Sheep Man’s location, and while there is no séance she only leaves when the Rat’s ghost appears in the form of the Sheep Man. The Sheep Man states that Boku’s girlfriend wasn’t supposed to be there in the first place:

“You confused that woman. ... She wasn’t meant to come here [You confused that woman. ... She wasn’t meant to come here]” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 298). While at first it would seem that the Sheep Man is simply stating that she should not have come to this rural area of Hokkaido, a different meaning emerges in considering the 1994 sequel to *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*—*Dance Dance Dance* (*Dansu Dansu Dansu*; ダンス・ダンス・ダンス)

—in which we follow Boku as he tries to find his girlfriend. He never does, save for the moments when she appears to him in visions to help him solve a mystery of the death of a different call-girl. Perhaps the Sheep Man meant that, instead of her not being meant to follow Boku, she was not meant to be in any *physical* place. Boku’s tendency towards materialism is very possibly what confused her until they reached a place where time holds no meaning and where it is easier for spirits to come and go. It is here that Boku’s girlfriend fully becomes a mediator between the physical world and the spiritual one. With this connection between Boku’s girlfriend and shamanism, her sudden disappearance is more than the typical supernatural motif from Japanese folktales.

In this way, Murakami starts to tie together the sense of spirituality from the Buddhist myth of Zenzai to the supernatural motifs of Japanese folktales. In one of the essays in *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture* (2003), Trudier Harris-Lopez

has argued that genre is less about strict categories and more about the intertextuality of any kind of genre classification system. With Murakami's defined differences between myth versus folktale being even less strict than other generic definitions, and his belief that myths are a reservoir for all other stories, the tying together of these two genres is almost to be expected. But what is Murakami's main goal in intertwining myth and folktale together? One possible answer to this question comes in the consideration of Ainu folklore: it is to form a resistance of sorts against Western consumerism that has colonized Japan.

#### **1.4 Ainu Folklore**

The Ainu are the indigenous people “of the northern part of the present-day Japanese Archipelago” (Walker 2006:4-5). From the moment that the Japanese encountered the Ainu, there has existed a struggle for colonization on the Yamato's side, and political and cultural independence on the Ainu's (Walker 2006). The northern-most island of Japan, Hokkaido, has been perceived by Japanese historians as being very similar to the American wild west—Takakura Shin'ichirou, for example, “a pioneer in the study of the Ainu, wrote in the early 1940s, the high point of Japanese imperialism, that the history of Japan is the history of national development based on continuous expansion” (Walker 7), creating similar arguments as that of Frederick Jackson Turner and his thesis “on the role of the frontier in forging American political and cultural life” (Walker 6-7).

Murakami seems to poke fun at this idea when he sends his characters in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* to a small town in Hokkaido called Junitaki. Junitaki is not a real town in Japan, and yet Murakami creates a history for it through both “official” sources such as a history book, and through oral narratives from other characters. The official history book on Junitaki discusses its development via the colonization of the Ainu, but Boku interjects during certain parts to comment on the writer of this book (for example, Boku dryly comments on the author’s love for hypothesizing (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II: 75; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 237) after reading the suggestions that the Ainu youth’s name implies some sort of manic-depressive disorder (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II:72; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 234) and that he stayed with the Yamato settlers because “おそらく好奇ふのためであらう” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II:75), “maybe he was curious” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 237). It is also in this history book that Murakami uses much of the Ainu folklore (and Yamato folklore about the Ainu) that he does.

The story of Junitaki begins with a small group of farmers trying to evade their debts, so they hire an Ainu youth to lead them through the wilderness of Hokkaido to a place that no one else would ever want to look for them. The Ainu youth is one of the few characters to actually have a name (besides Kipper the cat) in this novel, although Murakami only tells the reader what it translates as from Ainu into Japanese, and does not give the actual Ainu name. It is interesting to note that Murakami highlights this character having a name *before* the Ainu youth is assimilated into Japanese culture; after he is assimilated, Murakami describes the Ainu youth as losing that name—the process of colonization seems to be viewed by Murakami as a powerful force that can strip people



of their identity. Here also is another place where Murakami's original novel differs in a significant way from Birnbaum's translation. Murakami writes that the Ainu youth's name translates into "*tsuki no michikake* [月の満ち欠け]" (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II:72), which Birnbaum translates as "Full Moon on the Wane" (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 234). However *tsuki* refers to just the moon, not whether it is full or not, and *michikake* refers more to the phases of the moon than just when it is waning.

The moon is an important element of Ainu folk beliefs. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney discusses the binary system of how they perceive time—one is either in a super-Ainu phase, which is the time of gods and demons, or one is in an Ainu/human phase of time. This is in part connected to the phases of the moon; the latter half of the lunar calendar, or when the full moon is on the wane, is a time of the Ainu (Ohnuki-Tierney 1969:71). It is not clear if Birnbaum knew anything about Ainu folklore when he was translating Murakami's novel, although the change seems too specific to be a coincidence. This translation makes the Ainu's eventual adoption of a Japanese name much more poignant when he translates Murakami's line of "*kare wa mō 'tsuki no michikake' dewa naku natta no de aru* [彼はもう「月の満ち欠け」ではなくなつたのである]," (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II:76)—or "he is no longer 'Phases of the Moon'"—as "No more 'Full Moon on the Wane'" (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 237). For those who are familiar with Ainu folklore, Birnbaum's line (perhaps coincidentally) creates a stronger impression of the Ainu being colonized and absorbed into Yamato Japanese culture; to no longer be 'Full Moon on the Wane' implies that the time of the Ainu is also ending.

In Murakami's writing, the idea of the phases of the moon ending speaks both to the time of the Ainu coming to an end alongside their gods, demons, and other related folk beliefs, but it also refers to Yamato folklore at the same time. The moon used to be central to Japanese culture—before it entered its industrial revolution and the government began to adopt Western culture in its process of modernizing the country, the lunar calendar was used (and later replaced by the Gregorian calendar (Hasegawa 2002:151)). Festivals and shrine observances were timed by the phases of the moon (Mayer 1989) and even story-telling events for children were planned around an “annual, and in some areas, monthly, moon festival” (Adams 1967:107), which, after the industrial revolution in Japan caused the adoption of an education system for all children rural and urban, became less popular due to children having less time at home and more time studying printed tales in the classroom (Adams 1967).

The Ainu youth's story in Murakami's original Japanese novel has less to do with the Ainu themselves being colonized, and more to do with drawing parallels between how they were colonized and Japan's industrial revolution. The character that the history book in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* follows is also a reflection of Boku. His character development is almost the exact opposite of Boku's; the Ainu youth starts off being so attached to the world that the loss of the settlement's first crops due to locusts causes him to cry; the second time the locusts come he is less attached and doesn't shed a tear. Boku starts off attached to material objects—things he doesn't necessarily need to live such as crops—and extremely emotionless. The novel then ends with Boku crying at the beach, having formed more meaningful attachments to both things and people.

They are both, however, alone and isolated at the end of their respective stories in this novel. The Ainu character dies on his farm, surrounded by the sheep he had been raising and his sheepdogs. The dogs may very well be a re-situating of Yamato folklore about Ainu—many of the more racist myths about Ainu origins depict them as being the descendants of dogs (Siddle 1996). The way that this character dies, isolated from other humans and mourned by his animals, mimics those tales of the Ainu being less than human. However the way Murakami situates this belief into his novel turns this stereotype into something tragic. What is most important to note about the Ainu character's isolation is that it came not from the Yamato characters but from the sheep farm—with his family gone, the Ainu character is the only person remaining who can tend to his sheep; the major influencing factor in the Ainu character's isolation is having to care for something that was imported from the West. Boku's isolation is also not enforced by anyone in particular, and comes more from society not showing any particular interest in individuals, despite Boku making what seems to be an attempt to reconnect with it by keeping his business partner's bar debt free and requesting the pinball machine and jukebox out of pure nostalgia. Both are victims of changes brought about by (the) sheep.

The changes that Birnbaum makes around the Ainu character in *A Wild Sheep Chase* puts the focus on the Ainu, and while this creates a much more sympathetic view towards the indigenous people it also seems to distract from what Murakami is attempting to do by bringing in this story in the first place. While Murakami does take a sympathetic view towards the Ainu, the story of this particular Ainu character seems to be

less about the Ainu people and their treatment by the Yamato, and more about the concept of colonizing in general. By drawing these parallels between the Ainu character and Boku, Murakami's novel becomes more than just a story about a sheep possessing Japanese people—it is a story of a colonized Japan. The colonizers of this Japan are not physical people coming in to force an assimilation, however; instead, Japan has been colonized by a new form of colonial forces: those that are post-national and global capitalist.

The Ainu's story and the theme of colonization bring together Murakami's use of other genres of folklore and the folkloresque. By introducing this theme and the Ainu character through a history book made up by Murakami as much as the town is, Murakami brings into play *gishi*, or “false history” (Clerici 2016:250), an emic term for histories “purported to uncover the secrets behind real historical events” (251). Nathan Clerici makes the argument that “*gishi*, stripped down to its essence, reflects the desire to ‘narrativize’ ... [in such a way to] make the world speak itself and speak itself *as a story*” (252).

Of course, the very act of historicizing is to create a narrative; *gishi*, then, seems to act as a counter narrative, since “the effect of *gishi* is to question the truth-value and authority of existing social and historical narratives. Though *gishi* is ‘false history,’ the intimacy of social and historical problems makes *gishi* as much a narrative of society as of the past” (Clerici 253). By using *gishi* in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, Murakami “uses history, models, and ‘fake history’ to craft a narrative that is not entirely factual or fictional” (Clerici 260). Junitaki is not a real town in Japan, and yet Murakami creates a

history and a physical description for it that gives readers familiar with Hokkaido the sense that Junitaki is a reference to a real town called Bifuka. The Ainu's story, then, brings Murakami's novel outside of pure fiction and blends the boundaries between fiction and reality.

In much the same way that Evans describes Philip K. Dick's novel, *The Man in the High Castle*, as "challeng[ing] the authority of any unifying discourse" by "challenging narrative coherence" (2010:378), Murakami uses *gishi* to question whether boundaries between fiction and reality even exist. Clerici writes that "...without clear boundaries in the first place, there is nothing to be crossed" (260). History becomes another narrative genre, one that Murakami can play with just as much as he does with the other genres he uses.

Murakami's choice of using the Greek myth "Jason and the Golden Fleece" as a starting point makes his novel about a quest (for identity), but the physical object of the sheep that Boku searches for is the very thing that takes away the identity of those it possesses, and the broader symbolic meaning it has as representing consumerism is what has been criticized as destroying Japanese identity as a nation. Since the sheep is a metaphor for the West, and the Boss's secretary forces Boku to go on the quest to find it, then by introducing the theme of colonization, the quest for the sheep becomes a forced attempt to empower Western culture, just as the Ainu youth is forced into raising the sheep that made the uniforms he buried his sons in, simply because that was the only option available to him as Junitaki developed.

Boku's story is a story of going back to the past—or at least to a place where time starts to degrade. In considering the theme of colonization, it is also a story of reversing colonization—of attempting to reverse any changes made during and after the Meiji era. However, the references to the Buddhist myth of Zenzai eventually portray Buddhism as counterintuitive and perhaps even irrelevant to Japan's current society, just as the Ainu character's beliefs were not understood and eventually mostly eradicated by the others in the settlement. The spiritual elements that Zenzai's narrative brings into *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* also give the novel itself some semblance of spirituality, more so than other genres would. The folkloresque elements that refer to and mimic Japanese folktales, and the re-situating of folktale motifs, help to eventually take the story out of present time and place—blurring some of the boundaries between myth and folktale. The use of legends ties the novel back into a historical past by connecting the Rat to the nationalistic writer, Mishima—but this past is one that is no longer relevant to society.

*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* is not just an answerless question in search of a post-modern identity; it is Murakami's attempt to create his own myth. In the sense that Murakami defines myths as the prototypes for all stories, this novel represents the beginning of a postcolonial Japan in the sense of Japan being colonized by the West (and not so much in the sense of the relationship between the Japanese and the Ainu). It is a Japan that has been changed by Western culture but has also retained many aspects of its own. In the ending of the novel, when Boku requests a jukebox and pinball machine, Murakami shows not only that Boku has reconnected with his past, but is also navigating this new post-modern Japan by *choosing* what parts of Western culture he wants, rather

than being consumed by material objects the way he was in the beginning of the novel. Boku's rebirth does not coincide with a bringing back of a Japan from the past; instead, it describes the start of a Japan in which society has the agency to decide what elements from each culture are most suitable for the country. Chapter Two shall explore this idea further, in a consideration of Murakami's use of material culture.

## Chapter Two Material Culture

Chapter One of this thesis showed how Murakami blends together folk narratives to write his own neo-myth that positions Japan into a post-colonial frame. It also briefly showed an example of Murakami using material objects to negotiate what parts of Western culture should remain in Japan. Whereas in the beginning of the novel *Boku* simply describes the objects he uses, in the end he actively chooses Western popular culture objects that he wants in his life—such as the pinball machine and the jukebox, items that have a meaningful relevance to his own life. This is not the only place where Murakami uses material objects to bring a certain amount of agency into a world that is having all will-power sucked away by the sheep. This chapter, then, focuses on material culture (both material objects and the narratives that are embedded within them). Through architecture, Murakami shows how Western-style buildings can still be relevant to Japanese values and beliefs. Personal agency is an important theme that Murakami constructs through his use of material objects; by finding meaning in objects (even Western objects) through memories attached to them, the characters in Murakami's novel begin to eventually resist Western consumerism and build a new identity for themselves.

There is a continued negotiation occurring between Western culture and Japanese culture, particularly in the way that Murakami describes architecture in the places that *Boku* visits. Murakami's descriptions of homes invokes themes that are similar to those found in H. P. Lovecraft's writings as described by Evans:



“Lovecraft used folklore and material culture in his stories in two interrelated ways: to create a sense of place and to evoke the past. Setting is so crucial in most of his stories that it cannot be separated from character. Lovecraft saw place, or groundedness, as the center of his own identity and the basis for any true art or civilization. This groundedness must be based on history and tradition” (2005:118).

Murakami uses place to explore the idea of a national Japanese identity in a Japan that has been colonized by Western consumerism. There are three places that this thesis focuses on: the building that the Boss built, Boku’s apartment that he shares with his (ex)wife, and the American-style home that Boku discovers in rural Hokkaido. The Boss’s place is a discordant blending of Japanese- and Western-style architecture. The Boss, possessed and controlled by the sheep/consumerism, throws together elements that look good separately, and that symbolize high status and wealth. But Boku finds this building distasteful, and it ends up expressing very little about the inhabitant save his wealth.

Boku’s apartment is not given much of a physical description, but it still reveals a collapse of family values and intimate relationships—and all of this occurs in the kitchen, a room that, in Japan, is meant to be central to family gatherings. Murakami then uses the American-style house in Hokkaido to argue that individuals can restore these family values—and other Japanese values—with Western architecture; it is not so much the architecture itself that describes identity, but how the architecture is used and how much value people place upon it (both the builders and the inhabitants).

When Boku arrives at the Boss's base, Murakami spends several pages describing the grounds around the building and then the building itself. Both of these are a mix of Western and Japanese elements. The grounds are described as

“丘の両脇には狭い石段があつて、右手に下りれば石灯籠と池のあり日本風の庭園、左に下りれば小さなゴルフ・コースになっていた。ゴルフ・コースのわきにはラムレーズン・アイスクリームのよ  
うな色あいの休憩用のあずまやがあり、その向うにはギリシャ神話  
風の石像があつた [*Oka no ryōwaki ni wa semai ishidan ga atte, migite  
ni orireba ishidōrō to ike no ari Nihonfuu no teien, hidari ni orireba  
chīsana gorufu • kōsu ni natte ita. Gorufu • kōsu no waki ni wa ramu  
rēzun • aisukurīmu no yōna iroai no kyūukei-yō no Azuma ya ga ari, sono  
mukou ni wa Girisha shinwa-fuu no sekizō ga atta*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru*

*bōken* 111).

Birnbaum translates this into

“Stone steps led down both sides of the hill: the steps to the left descended to a Japanese garden with a stone lantern and a pond, the steps to the right opened onto a small golf course. At the edge of the golf course was a gazebo the color of rum raisin, and across from it stood a classical Greek statue in stone” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 80).

There are a couple of differences between the two texts to note: first, Boku emphasizes that the gazebo is a Japanese style one; second, Birnbaum changes the directions in which Boku finds the Japanese garden and the golf course. In the Japanese version, Murakami writes that the garden is to the right and the golf course is to the left, but Birnbaum flips these. Throughout the novel, Birnbaum is consistent with this division—wherever Murakami describes a clear divide between Japanese and Western elements (although ‘clear’ is certainly debatable, since it is at the golf course and across from the Greek statues that Boku sees the Japanese gazebo), Birnbaum ensures that the Japanese elements are to the left, and the Western elements to the right. Murakami does not maintain this and has no issue with occasionally describing Japanese elements as being on the right.

Birnbaum’s consistency creates a stronger impression that these divisions are strict, whereas Murakami’s style seems to imply a more haphazard approach in which these divisions—while still existing—are not quite as strict and can be moved around; there is more wiggle room, so to speak, to play with this division. It seems possible that Murakami makes this division more strict to play with the idea American ethnocentrism. By placing all Japanese elements to the left, he creates the impression that the Japanese culture is more West than the Western cultural elements (which are placed to the right). If this is the case, then this acts as another example of Birnbaum attempting to create a Japan that is familiar to the English-speaking reader, rather than exotic.

The building itself is described almost as if it is a living creature: “それはなんと  
いうか、おそろしく孤独な建物だった。…行く先のわからないまみやみくもに

進化した古代生物のようにも見える [Sore wa nanto iu ka, osoru shiku kodokuna tatemonodatta. ... Yukusaki no wakaranai mama yamikumo ni shinka shita kodai seibutsu no yō ni mo mieru]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 111-2). Or, as Birnbaum writes, “It was—how shall I put it?—a painful solitary building. ... It was that kind of building, some ancient life-form that had evolved blindly, toward who knows what end” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 81).

The “evolution” of this creature is then described, from its beginnings as a “明治風の洋館造り [Meijifuu no youkandsukuri]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 112), or a “Meiji-era Western-style building” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 81). Then another wing of the same style was added on. While the intention was not bad, according to Boku (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 112; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 81), he describes the finished product as unpalatable; specifically, he compares it to “serving sherbet and broccoli on the same silver platter” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 81)—“ちょうど銀の平皿にシャーベットとブロッコリをもりあわせたような感じだった [chōdo gin no hirazara ni shaabetto to burokkori wo moriawaseta yōna kanjidatta]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 112).

The additions to this building are described by Boku as “思想の相反性 [shisō no sōhan-sei]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 112), which Birnbaum translates as “the ‘mutual opposition of ideologies’” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 82), but more literally translates as ‘Reciprocity of thoughts/ideologies.’ Boku’s explanation as to what he means by this is translated more literally by Birnbaum: “It bespoke a certain pathos, rather like the mule who, placed between two identical buckets of fodder, dies of starvation trying to decide

which to eat first” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 82). The decision to go with the opposite of Murakami’s original choice of wording is striking. Perhaps Birnbaum’s change from ‘reciprocity’ to ‘mutual opposition’ was made because he was focused on Murakami’s description of the separate architectural styles from Japan and the West not meshing well, but it does not really fit with the reference to Buridan’s ass that is created during Boku’s comparison of the building’s pathos and the mule who can’t decide where to eat.

Murakami, on the other hand, focuses less on the actual architecture and more on the people behind the creation of that architecture; the reciprocity that Murakami describes creates the impression of the architects taking what they see as the good parts from both sides—Japan and the West—without really thinking about the final product. In not thinking of how that final product will turn out, and instead overwhelming it with elements that do not combine, the building is starved of any meaningful message or goal—it evolved “blindly, towards who knows what end.”

Boku sums up this building with the following statement: “様々な時代が生んだ様々な二流の才能が莫大な金と結びついた時に、このような風景ができてあがるのだ [Samazamana jidai ga unda samazamana niryū no sainō ga bakudaina kin to musubitsuita toki ni, kono yōna fūkei ga dekiagaru noda]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 113); “The monstrosity stood simply for money, piles of it, to which a long line of second-rate talents, era after era, had availed themselves” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 82). Since this building was constructed for the Boss, and the Boss was possessed by the sheep, it seems that the sheep’s consumerism has removed any sense of meaning from either

culture by insisting on architectural elements that look good separate and imply a high status, but do not combine well; since Boku describes the architects as “second-rate,” he seems to be placing some of the blame on them for simply going along with the creation of this “monstrosity” without really caring or having any pride in their jobs. The loss of willpower and disconnect with identity shows itself blatantly in the creation of this particular building.

But the actual structure of buildings is not the only thing that Murakami describes in his novel. As Michael Ann Williams has argued, *how* buildings—and the rooms within them—are *used* is just as important or perhaps more important than their physical structures (Williams 1991). We do not get much of a description of the inside of the Boss's building; Boku meets with the Boss's secretary in a Western-style room (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 113; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 83), where he is then threatened and tasked with finding the sheep. Since he leaves soon after and never returns, there is not much sense of what else actually occurs within this building besides an impression of greed and a seeking of power. There are, however, three other buildings of note in which Murakami gives greater detail on the social contexts: the home of Boku's late ex-girlfriend; Boku's apartment that he shared with his (now ex-) wife; and the Western-style home in rural Hokkaido that is Boku's final destination.

Even before Boku hears anything about sheep, Murakami describes a breakdown of meaningful relationships between individuals and within families. The novel begins with the death of Boku's ex-girlfriend and Boku going to attend her funeral. The funeral is held at her childhood home, where her parents still live, though she had left when she

turned sixteen (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 10; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 4). The house is described simply as a “木造住宅 [*mokuzō jūtaku*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 10), a wooden or wood-frame house—Birnbaum goes with “wood-frame” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 4) in his translation. The yard is small and has a garden that is left out of Birnbaum’s translation; in both versions the yard is not in use and an old ceramic brazier is left abandoned there (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 10; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 4). The description of the funeral is short, with Boku giving little description of it and having seemingly no thoughts about it. Boku describes his departure as a wordless exchange between himself and his ex-girlfriend’s father in which they both simply lower their heads at each other as Boku passes by.

This scene lacks any ritual or even a single stage of ritual that “corresponds to the mourning stages of the living” (Suzuki 2000:17). Arnold van Gennep (1992) describes death rituals as having three stages: separation, liminality, and (re)incorporation that helps the mourners deal with their loss. Suzuki has used his work in analyzing Japanese death rituals, and makes the argument that Japan holds similar rituals at different periods of time (for example, during the funeral, and then a second ritual is held a few years later to remember the deceased) (Suzuki 2000). In this novel’s funeral, however, Boku comes and goes; the man presiding over the funeral is not a priest—despite Buddhist priests having an important role in “effect[ing] the successful spiritual transformation of the deceased through symbolic ordination” (Rowe 2000:358) in modern Japanese culture—but is instead either the deceased’s older brother or brother-in-law (Boku is not certain what role this man has within the family). The father is described as standing in the

doorway, even though family members typically hold important roles in assisting the priest throughout the funeral service in Japan today (Rowe 2000; Suzuki 2000).

Ritsuko Ozaki argues that because of Japan's retention of "strong Confucian ethics," the family is highly valued "as the basic social unit" (2002:212). However the family of Boku's ex-girlfriend is not really shown as a cohesive unit, and Murakami's description of the yard adds to this impression; in the Japanese text, Boku has an extra descriptive line about the yard that Birnbaum leaves out: "門をくぐると、左手には何かの役には立つかもしれないといった程度の狭い庭があった [*Mon o kuguru to, hidarite ni wa nanika no yaku ni wa tatsu kamo shirenai to itta teido no semai niwa ga atta*]" (10). This can be translated as "As I passed through the gate [of the fence surrounding the family's house], I saw a yard/garden that could be of some degree of usefulness on the left hand side." It is quite common in modern Japan for Japanese houses to be "always enclosed [by a fence of some sort] so that passers-by cannot look into the plot, and people feel secure and secluded this way" (Ozaki 223), thereby making private not necessarily individuals within the home but the home itself from the rest of the neighborhood or surrounding community (Ozaki 212).

The potential usefulness of the yard, then, is something that has not been discovered by the family within the home, and so the yard remains simply a dumping ground for no longer useful items such as the brazier. With the yard as a dumping ground instead of something like a garden (although Boku doesn't really specify what he might consider as a useful thing for this yard to be), the household feels even more disconnected and further away from the concept of a vital, cohesive unit. The human connection



between Boku and his ex-girlfriend's father is also lost. No conversation is held between them, and they do not even make eye contact when they pass each other.

This is not the only place where Boku suffers through a disconnect with another individual that is emphasized and symbolized by the use (or lack thereof, in the case of the ex-girlfriend's family) of the home. When Boku returns to his own apartment after the funeral, he finds his wife preparing to leave him. When he first sees her she is sitting at the table in the kitchen, supposedly asleep—Boku's description of her is that she “彼女は眠っているようにも見えたし、泣いているようにも見えたし、死んでいるようにも見えた [*Kanojo wa nemutte iru yō ni mo mietashi, naite iru yō ni mo mietashi, shinde iru yō ni mo mieta*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 28); “She could have been asleep, could have been crying, could have been dead” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 17).

It is significant that this ambiguity of the wife's status and the conversation Boku has with her shortly after this line takes place in the kitchen. In modern Japanese homes, “the living area has been integrated into the kitchen and the dining area ... [which expresses] the high degree of family integration in Japanese households. ... An open style kitchen allows [women] to interact with the rest of the family who are in the living or dining area” (Ozaki 222). In Boku's apartment, the kitchen is the room where he and his wife break up; the uncertainty as to whether she is even alive or not when Boku first walks in speaks to the falling apart of the family—a theme that Murakami first introduces with his description of the earlier funeral.

It is also in this same kitchen, a place that is meant to represent the focal point of the Japanese family, that Boku thinks about an American novel—which in turn gives him the idea to use an object to represent his ex-wife after she leaves, and he searches the entire house for something to place in her chair at the kitchen table. His ex-wife, however, has removed everything that belongs to her, and so Boku is unable to find anything of hers to use to take her place (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 36; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 23), despite his desperate search for any sort of Western consumer item. Strecher has used Kuroko Kazuo's description of the 1980s as the "'Walkman Era' ... lamenting that 'contemporary man is now capable only of relationships with passive objects'" (1999:285) to interpret many of Murakami's characters, including Boku, as being too consumeristic with the desire to replace people with objects. With this interpretation in mind, then, to have that object that is meant to replace his wife in what should be the center-place of family interactions, creates the impression of consumerism and the high value it places on material objects taking over even the most powerful of relationships.

However, when considering Murakami's other uses of material culture (beyond architecture), another possibility emerges in which objects become the carriers of narratives that serve to connect people together (to be discussed later in this chapter). Another possible interpretation is not that Boku is showing consumeristic tendencies here, but instead his (ex-)wife is as she removes everything that belongs to her (even going so far as to cut herself out of any photographs). Without anything of hers remaining, Boku eventually starts to wonder if she even existed at all (*Hitsuji wo meguru*

*bōken* 37; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 24). Boku has connected people to objects in a very powerful way, where even existence is determined by the use of objects.

These two moments in the beginning of the novel—the home-based funeral and Boku’s divorce inside his kitchen—both share strong connections with the very last place that Boku visits in rural Hokkaido: the “アメリカの田舎家風 [*Amerika no inakayafuu*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 126), which can be translated literally as ‘American country-style home’ and which Birnbaum translates simply as an “American-style” house (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 278). Despite Boku entering such an isolated and rural area—a place that even cars cannot safely reach—he still finds this American-style building. In placing this style of home in rural Hokkaido, Murakami creates the impression that the West’s colonization has reached even here, taking the place of what could have been a Japanese-style home and bringing into question whether Japan has lost its ability to express its own history or traditions, in much the same way that Lovecraft “evoke[d] ‘tradition’ and the ‘the past’ in order to explore a perceived loss of tradition in the present” (Evans 99-100). Murakami does not evoke the past with this house, but he does by sending Boku to this rural area. The existence of this American-style house in rural Japan implies a seeming disconnect between the past and the present—that a Western building can exist in even the most rural place of Japan creates the impression that the West has pervaded Japan for so much of its past that even its rural spaces are not clean of it. What could be a traditional Japanese home is now American.

However, Murakami then describes the house being surrounded by “常緑樹 [*kyōryokuju*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 126), or “evergreens” (*A Wild Sheep*

*Chase* 278). These trees take the place of a fence. As discussed earlier, fences in Japan serve to privatize homes. Upon making the fence around this particular home out of evergreen trees, Murakami creates a reference to Japanese shrine groves, which are, today, typically evergreen forests; these groves are “commonly believed ... [to] have continued since ancient times” (Junichi 2008). With the use of evergreen trees, Murakami both privatizes the house in a Japanese way, and gives the house a sense of sacredness despite it being Western. As Boku surveys the house before entering it, one of his most notable comments on it is that “人の住まない家は確実に朽ちていく。その別荘は疑いもなくあともどりできるポイントを通り過ぎていた [*hito no sumanai ie wa kakujitsu ni kuchite iku. Sono bessō wa utagai mo naku ato modori dekiru pointo wo tōrisugite ita*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 128), or “A house where no one lives goes to pieces, and this house, without a doubt, was on its way there” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 279). The style of the house, then, is not important to Murakami here—instead, what matters most is that the house is a home for someone or some family. Thus how Boku uses the rooms within the house, and how the Rat used them before his death, becomes extremely important.

Because this is an American-style house, the kitchen is separate from the living room. While all major conversations occur in the living room, Boku moves from living room to kitchen frequently, combining the more public space of the living room with the more private kitchen. For the Rat, the kitchen once again becomes central. It is in this room that the Rat kills the sheep by killing himself while possessed by it: “台所のはりて

首を吊ったんだ [*daidokoro no hari de kubi wo tsuttanda*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 197); “I hanged myself from a beam in the kitchen” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 331). Considering that, in Japanese-style homes, the kitchen is integrated with the living area, the Rat performs this act of destroying Western consumerism within what the Japanese view as a family-central room. Since the “Japanese culture maintains stronger group-oriented values, like interdependence, group harmony, and shared responsibility [compared to some Western countries]” (Ozak 212-3), it makes sense for the Rat to perform this act of suicide in the kitchen—if Western consumerism is destroyed, then traditional or more meaningful relationships and family values (those same ones that Boku was shown to be lacking his apartment’s kitchen) might return. What better place to do this than in the family room?

It is also in the kitchen that the ghost of the Rat (disguised as the Sheep Man) tells Boku’s girlfriend to leave. He then reports his actions to Boku: “台所のドアから顔を出して、あんた帰った方がいいって言ったんだ [*daidokoro no doa kara kao wo dashite, anta kaetta kata ga itte ittanda*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 150); “stuck our head through the kitchen doors said you better go home [“stuck our head through the kitchen door said you better go home”]” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 297). This repeat performance of a break-up occurring in the kitchen happens under different contexts. The spiritual undercurrents behind the departure of Boku’s girlfriend are discussed in Chapter One of this thesis—in short, she leaves to further her connection with the supernatural and as part of Boku’s karmic judgement; her departure is less for herself and more to

fulfill some sort of shamanic duty. The Sheep Man further critiques Boku for only thinking of himself while he was with his girlfriend (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol. II 151; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 298). Boku's (ex)wife leaves with the perhaps more selfish reasoning of wanting to go somewhere (both physically and idiomatically). A sense of responsibility is stronger in the girlfriend's departure, one that is brought forth by the ghost of the Rat, who is using the kitchen as the central point to restore Japanese values.

Just as Lovecraft gave “lengthy descriptions of decayed colonial houses and churches [to] prefigure the protagonist's discovery of the decay and corruption of the people who live in them” (Evans 118), Murakami uses architecture to symbolize how people are living within. The Boss's abode is pure consumerism, and his secretary seeks even more power than what he has come to have, even though he is not possessed by the sheep itself. The outside of Boku's apartment gets no description, and the relationship between him and his wife is basically nonexistent. Upon reaching the American-style house, an interesting negotiation is raised between the more static, Western rooms and a more Japanese way of living.

The beginning of the novel shows a death of family—both literally in the death of a daughter (Boku's old girlfriend), and metaphorically in Boku's divorce. There is no communication between those that are still living, and rooms are not really being used the way Japan would have them being used. However, in the American-style house at the end of the novel, the Rat uses the kitchen to kill himself in an attempt to restore what is being lost. Murakami shows how even in Western-style buildings, inhabitants can still use rooms in the same way as in traditional Japanese buildings. It is not so much the

architecture that is important to Murakami as it is how the architecture is treated and used. Just as Williams has argued about architecture, understanding the vernacular leads to a greater understanding of the building; this can be expanded upon and used to say that understanding the vernacular is vital to interpreting how buildings are used in this text. In the novel's Japan, which has been colonized by Western consumerism and where Western-style buildings have been constructed in the most rural of places, it is possible to live not as a Westerner and to choose how Western material objects are used and what they mean to the individual using them.

Individual meaningfulness seems to be very important to Murakami, and is exhibited in other material objects that he uses in his novel. One of the major examples of this is Boku's use of cigarettes. Murakami mentions several different brands that are all from American producers. How Boku consumes cigarettes in this novel seems to demonstrate his evolution from being a mindless consumer to something more than that. Boku doesn't describe his cigarettes in any meaningful way and merely reports what brand he is currently using until he arrives at the Boss's place. Here he finds a silver cigarette case and a lighter with an engraving of a sheep on it (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 115; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 83). With this symbol of consumerism in hand, Boku ends up stealing the lighter—accidentally at first, but once he's realized he still has it with him he decides to keep it, leaving his disposable Bic lighter in the chauffeur's car as compensation (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* 200; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 149-50). His reasoning for keeping it is that he likes the feel of it and describes it as seeming so natural in his grip that it was something he could have been born with (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*

200; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 149). But this is, of course, not something he was born with, and it has no significant meaning behind it beyond just feeling good in his hand.

His smoking habits continue until he reaches the rural house in Hokkaido. Here, he decides to quit smoking altogether. Although he at first tries to explain this change from a more practical perspective—there are no stores around, so “what was one to do?” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 160; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 304)—he then decides that compared to losing his girlfriend, “喫煙を失うことはごく些細なことのようには思えた。そして実際にそのとおりなのだ [*Kitsuen wo ushinau koto wa goku sasainakoto no yō ni omoeta. Soshite jissai ni sono tōrina noda*]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 160), or “losing smoking was trivial. And indeed it was” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 304). Even when, much later on, he is offered a cigarette from the expensive silver case he had encountered back at the Boss’s place, he refuses (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 215; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 345-6).

Meanwhile, the Sheep Man takes the cigarettes that Boku has left (three packs, and with Boku’s permission), and is constantly leaving cigarette butts around the house. Despite being the ghost of the Rat, who does *not* smoke according to Boku (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 144; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 291), this particular form of the Rat, one at least partly still possessed by the sheep, does, implying a more internal addiction to consumerism that individuals must fight within themselves. The idea of consumerism still exists in this place (and in fact takes on an almost tangible presence) but Boku still decides that there are more important things, things with more meaning, than those that allow for blind consumption.



In the case of the Rat, he does not come to this rural area because he believes it to necessarily be the best place to kill the sheep; instead, he goes there because it was his family's vacation home, and he was feeling “感情的 [shinjyōteki]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 195), or “sentimental” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 329). Despite seemingly not caring much for his father, the Rat still views the house as a bearer of valuable memories—so much so that it is the place the Rat returns to in his final hours. More than that, his final act before hanging himself is to wind the old grandfather clock in the living room, even though he tells Boku he has no clue why he did so (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 197; *A Wild Sheep Chase* 331). This act of winding the clock despite knowing he is going to die symbolizes a decision of choosing what will continue on without him. He does not want time to stop in this house and make it—and whatever memories it contains for him—obsolete.

For Murakami, material objects are worth keeping if they hold some meaningful significance for someone—no matter the origins of that object, be it from Japan or from a more Western country. The narratives that an individual can embed into a material object can become “...遠い昔に死んで誰からも忘れ去られてしまった人々を思い出させた [...tōi mukashi ni shinde dare kara mo wasuresararete shimatta hitobito wo omoidaseta]” (*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* vol II 225), or “reminders of persons long dead and forgotten” (*A Wild Sheep Chase* 350). More broadly speaking, material objects seem to have the ability to connect people to each other and to the past.

The beginning of the novel shows a disconnect between objects and people as Boku frantically searches for some sort of object to represent his wife after she leaves, but fails to find even a single article of clothing. As Boku goes through his journey, he begins to lose his own consumeristic tendencies, as represented by the use of cigarettes, particularly in the rural house in Hokkaido, and replaces it with the realization of the value of individual human beings. There are also objects like the jukebox and pinball machine, which carry treasured memories of the past for Boku; his requesting their return to his business partner's bar is similar to the Rat's act of winding the clock right before his suicide—both actions show an active choice to keep such memories alive by maintaining the objects they are connected to through to the present. This act of choosing meaningful objects rather than blindly consuming them (a process that is also described in Murakami's use of architecture) is also a tactic proposed by Murakami to resist how Western consumerism has colonized Japan.

With both architecture and other material objects, Murakami makes the point that it is up to the individual using them to ascribe meaning to them and make them useful in constructing a postcolonial identity. Because Murakami has so successfully blended together Western and Japanese folk narratives (discussed in Chapter One), the Boss's building is a striking example of when this type of blending does not work—that is, when consumerism is behind its construction. Murakami's act of blending together various cultural references creates a much more globalized culture, but he leaves it up to the individual to determine one's own identity within this globalized society.

There are elements from both Japan and the West that can be important and meaningful to Japanese individuals, as described by, for example, the kitchen in both Boku's apartment and the American-style house in rural Hokkaido. In the first, Japanese values are shown to be collapsing in a more traditional Japanese kitchen; they are then restored in an American-style kitchen by the Rat. Objects such as the jukebox or the pinball machine are, despite being Western, still important to Boku's identity, and in using them he restores a sense of his past self that he chooses to have continue into the present. It is *these* elements, ones that are important on an individual level (or at least not at a mass-consumer level), that should be blended together, regardless of what nation they actually originate from.

## Conclusion

Chapter One of this thesis focused on oral narrative genres, while Chapter Two discussed material objects and the narratives these objects embody; this conclusion will more fully integrate these two chapters and the issues of translation raised in them. Haruki Murakami uses both narratives and material culture (both the physical objects themselves as well as the narratives and beliefs embedded within them) in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*. Narratives that are not attached to material objects—particularly myths combined with proverbs—serve to highlight how individuals in this postcolonial world are isolated, deprived of identity, and unable to form meaningful connections between each other. Material culture is used to explore ways in which this doesn't have to be the case, and serves to bring individual characters together through the narratives that are embedded within the physical objects. Architecture in particular is used to show ways in which the characters can use more Western-style buildings to live in a more Japanese way, and Murakami also inscribes meaningful memories into other material objects—such as the grandfather clock for the Rat, or the pinball machine for Boku—that serve to remind these characters about the importance of intimate relationships.

Though the use of material objects to fight against the theme of isolation may seem like an ironic choice on Murakami's part, especially given his anti-consumerist standpoint, it actually fits quite well with his major themes. De Caro and Jordan discuss the re-situation of quilts and the folklife surrounding quilts, as being “one means of speaking” (de Caro and Jordan 2004:151), and Murakami seems to take this same view

on the material objects that he uses in his novel. Presenting many different voices to say similar things—be they objects or a combination of Western and Japanese narratives—is something that Murakami does frequently throughout. Murakami translates the myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece to fit it into an apathetic society, one in which what should be the heroic character does not care about reputation, grand rewards, or performing great deeds. This is, instead, a quest for the average Japanese individual (represented by Boku), and the idea of this quest being *only* for the average, everyday citizen is emphasized by Murakami's use of a Buddhist myth alongside the classical Greek narrative of Jason. Murakami brings these myths together even more tightly when he uses them to present the same message—a critique on how both Japanese and Western culture can be isolating.

In translating objects to be more like narratives themselves, with messages of their own, Murakami explores how objects are used and how, when they are used in meaningful ways, they can act as counter narratives towards the very consumeristic society that brought in many of those objects in the first place. Material objects can remind people of the past and (re)connect individuals to each other by being symbolic of memories or beliefs, whether they are seen as being more Western or more Japanese—this is a rejection of both Western consumerism and the Buddhist doctrine of making oneself unattached to the material world (Gould 1992). Murakami's use of objects as narratives serves to fill in the gaps that narratives *not* attached to objects highlight.

As discussed earlier in Chapter One of this thesis, Murakami uses folktales and legends, Ainu lore, and *gishi*—"false history"—to introduce the impossibility of ever returning to a precolonial state (for example, the folktale "Belling the Cat" plays a central

role in Murakami's argument that removing Western culture from Japan is an infeasible idea). With material culture and the narratives therein, he explores a way for Japanese individuals to create a meaningful life for themselves out of both Western and Japanese culture. Western materials can easily be part of a Japanese identity, without transforming Japanese individuals or society into an imitation of the West.

This novel is a hybrid novel, one made up of many different genres and languages that Murakami uses to transmit his own ideas. Murakami takes English phrases and expressions and translates them into Japanese, and then insists that if any of his works are to be translated into a language other than Japanese then they have to be translated into English first; any translations that are done into languages other than English are to be done from that English translation and not straight from his original Japanese version (Hijiya-Kirschner 2014). While Murakami has not made any statements as to why he wants his works to be translated in this manner, it seems likely that his reasoning for wanting the English translation to be done first is because his knowledge of the English language allows him to work closely with the translators so he has some say into how it is done—although neither he nor the translators have said how much input he actually gives (or how much of his input is used by the translator)—his style of translating English folklore into Japanese may also have something to do with this. Murakami becomes a mediator of multiple cultural references by finding ways to connect them and have them work together to express his own messages. In this way, Murakami's novel speaks to a multinational audience as well as to a Japanese one, calling for individuals to craft identities that are meaningful to themselves within postmodern, globalized societies.

But does this message remain in the actual translated versions of Murakami's work? This thesis has also considered the differences between Murakami's original Japanese novel and Birnbaum's translation. As is discussed in both chapters, there are seemingly small differences that lead to large reinterpretations of the major themes of the novel. The comparisons that were made were informed by translation studies. Both Vicente Rafael and Kay Hamada have made the argument that it is impossible to translate both text *and* meaning; translation, according to Rafael, is "incapable of fixing meanings across languages. Rather ... it consists precisely in the proliferation and confusion of possible meanings and therefore in the impossibility of arriving at a single one" (2012:465), and Hamada posits that readers of a translated text are only able to experience a "rough equivalent" of the original's meaning(s) (2012:53).

Within translation lies "the possibilities for innovation and change, for the creation of values" (Venuti 2012:485), therefore making the translated text a *variant* of the original, not a copy. Even though many of the words remain the same (as much as translation will allow), what is left out and what is added injects each text with its own cultural elements to make the narrative more relevant to its audience. As Dell Hymes has said on the communication of folklore, the "re-creative aspect is both inevitable and desirable" (1975:356). This seems to be true for folklore that is being translated as well. The translator cannot help but insert at least some degree of his or her own aesthetics into the text—even as I was translating Murakami's work myself, most of the longer conversations I had with the Japanese language faculty that helped me with this were on

how to make literal translations flow better so that they sounded more natural to an English speaker, without changing too much of the original sentence's meaning.

But translation goes beyond mere aesthetics; Cristina Bacchilega writes that “regardless of whether a specific translated text domesticates, defamiliarizes, or does both [to the original text], the cultural practice of translation always requires some inscription of naturalized expectations and interests” (2007:138). With the substitutions that Birnbaum makes, he seems to be domesticating Murakami's novel so that it is more understandable to an English-speaking audience—for example, Birnbaum seems to think that the Sheep Man's statement of “just deserts” is more easily recognized and understood than a Japanese Buddhist reference to karma. Upon translating a text, then, a different culture, along with its norms, values, and worldview(s) are injected into the text. More specifically, it is the culture and knowledge of the *translator*—and the groups that that translator identifies with—that are being used to interpret the text into a different language.

Translation, then, also includes the substituting of folklore. Birnbaum not only changes words into another language, but Japanese folklore into folklore from English-speaking areas —this includes changing Japanese folkloresque elements into Western folkloresque as well (not so much in the case of the sheep creature, but certainly in terms of some of the Western proverbs or expressions Murakami uses). Given what scholars of translation studies have said about the act of translating, these changes come as no surprise. However, to more effectively analyze the changes that Birnbaum makes, particularly from a folkloristic perspective and especially when folklore is so central to



the text, de Caro and Jordan's concept of re-situated folklore becomes useful, although it is necessary to expand upon it a bit. The act of re-situating folklore into literature is in itself a kind of translation—writers are using folklore within a different medium and context to communicate their own messages. Translating what has been re-situated, and substituting those elements for different, other re-situated elements of folklore in order to fit better into a different language is an extension of this.

For example, for the most part Birnbaum replaced Buddhist folklore with English-language folklore that did not express the same degree of spirituality that Murakami had in his original Japanese novel; however, many of Birnbaum's substitutions were made to be as close as possible to Murakami's original meaning, but also to be more relevant and easily understood by his English-speaking readers. Birnbaum's choice of substituting "just deserts" in place of Murakami's original proverb that references "karmic retribution" still expresses that sense of Boku receiving some kind of retribution, but in a way that, as discussed earlier, would perhaps be more easily understood by the English-speaking reader than a reference to karma might.

Birnbaum's substitutions are themselves re-situated folklore, but his choices are also heavily influenced by the Japanese text as he translates it. Perhaps, in addition to the categories of mimetic and referential folklore that de Caro and Jordan discuss, there should be a third category when it comes to translated texts: echoic folklore—folklore that can be referential, mimetic, or both as it is re-situated into literature, but the decision to use this folklore has been affected to some degree by the folklore from another culture. Birnbaum could have just as easily used any number of English-language expressions

that convey the meaning of an appropriate punishment being doled out, but “just deserts” seems to be, at least in Birnbaum’s eyes, the closest equivalent—at the very least, both the original Japanese expression used and Birnbaum’s substitution imply the possibility of a reward, as well, since Boku is told he is receiving what he deserves.

In creating a third category that acknowledges the re-situated folklore was influenced or inspired by the text the writer is translating, it might become easier to talk about how multi-layered a translated text can become; such texts are informed by the original language version, but the translators also substitute in folklore that works independently of the text being translated. In translation studies, the substituting of one culture for another during the translation process has been described as a “negotiation between two cultures” (Trivedi 2007:280), although their focus so far still seems to be on meanings that are lost when translating culture-specific words.

The translator’s use of folklore is referential or mimetic not of the original writer’s culture, but of the translator’s, and yet that same folklore is also relevant to the original text’s use of folklore and therefore not entirely independent of that original text. ‘Echoic’ folklore seems to (mostly) capture this complex situation. It is its own distinct element of folklore, and yet the choice of using *that* element over another is influenced and inspired by another; the translated folklore carries echoes of the original text with it, but is also its own, distinct element that sounds different, or carries a different meaning, to whoever hears it.

This creation of a third category in de Caro and Jordan’s work helps to remind us to see translated works as variants of the original text, so that our major concern won’t be

to focus too much on what might be lost in the translation, which is a familiar issue in earlier folkloristic discussions of translation. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, Regina Bendix has pointed out that focusing on issues of what is authentic can lead down dangerous paths that are not beneficial for academic research. If the focus of my comparisons had been on viewing Murakami's original novel as the authentic version, and Birnbaum's as a (sometimes disloyal) inauthentic copy, his expansion on Murakami's international inclusiveness would have been missed. Therefore, it seems that considering translated texts through the perspective of a folklorist would entail seeing translated texts as variants, each one localized in varying degrees to the translator and his or her culture and folk groups.

The question should not be whether Birnbaum's translation is particularly close or truthful to Murakami's version. Birnbaum seems to be claiming this story for American and British readers, creating a localized variant that makes it more approachable for the English-speaking reader—Birnbaum's audience. Perhaps this, then, should be the focus of translation studies—not how “accurate” or “authentic” a translation is, but what it says about the translator and the group(s) that the translator identifies with, and the group(s) that he or she expects to make up the audience or readership. Of course marketing plays a role in this as well, but focusing more on Birnbaum's *A Wild Sheep Chase* as a separate novel—one that is perhaps informed by Japanese folklore and literature, but not Japanese itself—would be a more worthwhile exercise than simply pointing out what is lost when compared to the original.

In examining Birnbaum's translation, by using the category of echoic folklore it is easier to see how Birnbaum expands upon Murakami's mediation of Japanese and Western folklore. Birnbaum navigates around Japanese cultural references and finds similar elements of folklore with similar (but not exactly matching) elements in American and British folklore to present a Japan that feels familiar even to a non-Japanese reader. This is not the exoticized and romanticized Japan created through the Western concept of Orientalism, one that views Asian cultures as undeveloped and static (Said 1978); this is a Japan that the English-speaking reader can feel instantly familiar with and identify with. Viewing his translation as a variant avoids the issues that arise in attempting to see translation as a copy of something—rather, it is a part of a creative and (re)creation process that adds to the original text in its own way. While the Buddhist spirituality is lost, Birnbaum replaces it with folklore he sees as being more relevant to his English-speaking audience, and with similar meaning(s).

Still, there is a question of appropriation that has yet to be addressed. Birnbaum's re-writing of a non-Western novel to fit Western norms certainly raises this issue, and is complicated by the fact that his translation is sold under Murakami's name as if the translation really is an exact copy of Murakami's original novel despite the changes Birnbaum makes. However, it is important to keep in mind that this translation was approved for sales outside of Japan by Murakami himself, and this is not the case for all of his works that have been translated—only more recently did he approve the translations of some of his earlier works, including 1973年のピンボール (*Sen-Kyūhyaku-Nanajū-San-Nen no Pinbōru*), *Pinball, 1973* (English version sold outside of

Japan starting 2009), the novel that he briefly alludes to near the end of *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*. While he has not said what it is he expects from the translated versions of his work, he does seem to take a very active role in shaping them into something he is at least satisfied with. Perhaps since much of his work begins in English and is translated by him into Japanese, Murakami's role as a multinational writer is fulfilled by Birnbaum and his other translators.

The folkloresque also plays a role here, though Murakami and Birnbaum utilize it in different ways. Murakami uses it to mostly comment on postcolonial efforts to eradicate anything Western from Japanese culture. The sheep, an East-West blended *yōkai*, is a folkloresque creation, one which Murakami uses to present the idea of Japan and the West becoming so blended that it is impossible to separate them out now. In replacing the folklore of the original with his own, Birnbaum gives *A Wild Sheep Chase* a more traditional and authentic feel than if he had translated *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* more literally.

Just as an example of this, the chapter title "One for the Kipper" probably communicates more meaning to the English-speaking reader than the more literal translation "The Birth of Sardine" or "Sardine's Birth" would have. "One for the Kipper" *feels* folkloric, even if it was not what Murakami had originally written; "Sardine's Birth" does not. Birnbaum's substitutions retain that sense of authenticity that, ironically, would have been lost had he kept the folklore of the original. Murakami's use of the folkloresque is more directly related to commentary upon the postcolonial experience—namely in arguing that Western culture is a part of the Japanese identity now, and in

presenting a more globalized culture. Birnbaum expands upon this globalization with inventions that sound like traditional Western folklore and that create the impression that that was what Murakami had in his Japanese novel.

### *Next Steps*

There is still much that can be discussed within Murakami's novel. My method of locating proverbs was limited, and a native Japanese speaker might recognize more uses of proverbs—especially those that Murakami might only reference through a related word or through a play on language—and, more broadly speaking, other uses of genres from Japan besides proverbs as well. Other works by Murakami would also provide valuable comparisons. Birnbaum is one of Murakami's main translators, but Jay Rubin is another American translator who has worked on many of Murakami's works; sometimes, as in the case of ノルウェイの森 (*Norwei no Mori*)—*Norwegian Wood*—both Rubin and Birnbaum have translated the same novel (though not at the same time). An interesting analysis to make would be to see how Rubin's translations compare to Birnbaum's, and how both of those compare to Murakami's work. On a related note, a lot more could be added into the discussion as Murakami as multinational writer if it could be made more clear what sort of relationship Murakami has with his translators; while he does seem to have some sort of say into the translation process (and a final say on whether these translated works can be sold outside of Japan), it is not clear how much input he actually gives—for example, was it his decision for Birnbaum to replace Buddhist proverbs with American or British ones?

The sequel to *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, Murakami's 1994 novel ダンス・ダンス・ダンス (*Dansu Dansu Dansu*)—*Dance Dance Dance*—might also add to Murakami's stance on postcolonial and postmodernity issues of identity. Parts of this novel were considered in this thesis when relevant, but a closer analysis of the entire novel is something that has yet to be done (from a folkloristic perspective or not). In this novel, certain characters have actual names now (though this doesn't include Boku); Boku returns to some of the places he went to in *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken*, only to find them changed and more urbanized than before. On just a preliminary glance, it would appear that Murakami delves deeper into a discussion of rural versus urban places, and the role that they play in identity; finally, Murakami seemingly inserts himself into this particular novel by having his characters briefly discuss a writer called "Hiraku Makimura"—an anagram of Murakami's name, who they state is "not such a bad person. No talent though" (2010:118, translated by Birnbaum). Exploring how Murakami represents himself in this novel would no doubt add much to the discussion on how he defines identity.

### *In Conclusion...*

*Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* is a postmodern novel that argues for constructing one's own identity within a globalized, consumeristic society. Murakami uses folklore and the folkloresque to show how any culture is capable of isolating individuals—that one culture is not inherently better than another (since his use of Western and Japanese myths both

end in the same result of sadness and isolation)—and to create a tactic to counter this isolation and (re)form meaningful connections both to the past and to other people. Murakami places a high value on the power of the individual. Western consumerism is something that the individuals in his novel must fight against, both within themselves (symbolized by the sheep's possession of individuals, or by the addictive nature of the cigarettes Boku used to enjoy), and from outside sources (such as when the Boss's secretary forces an empowerment of consumerism by sending Boku to find the sheep and bring it back).

This novel's hybridity of genres and languages make it easier for other nations outside of Japan to access it, and its formation of identity within a more globalized society—an identity that individuals can still claim belongs to a particular nation if they so desire—is readily translated into *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Perhaps even more significant than the preservation of Murakami's major message within the English translation is the fact that Birnbaum's translation also extends Murakami's role as a multinational writer. This is something that would have been difficult to discuss without a consideration of echoic folklore—a category created through a dialogue between folkloristics and translation studies. Clearly these two separate fields have much to offer to one another; *Hitsuji wo meguru bōken* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*—texts in which folklore and translation are central to the expression of themes and ideas—are both examples of how folkloristics and translation studies can be brought more closely together.



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